



...a frank discussion about team building, with Best Selling Author, **Mark Sanborn**

Illustrations: Martin Losoviz

TEAMFRED

By **Todd Nordstrom**

There are those unique instances in life, as children and adults, when we learn something brand new—we're excited, and the information captures our interest beyond imagination. For just a few seconds it feels we're the only people who are privy to the new insight. That is, of course, until we realize that everybody is talking about the same thing. Fred is a good example of this phenomenon—everyone is talking about him. But, why?

If this is the first time you're hearing of Fred, trust us, it won't be the last. But, who is Fred? Where is he? And, why are we talking about him?

Go Jobing sat down with Mark Sanborn, nationally renowned speaker and best selling author of *The Fred Factor* to get an inside glimpse of this national phenomenon—the “must read” book about a postal carrier named Fred that seems to be the buzz of the business world.

“In a nutshell, Fred was the dream postal carrier,” says Sanborn. “Honestly, how many of us have ever expected anything more from a postal carrier than for our mail to end up in the mail box every day? I never expected more. But, my expectations weren't good enough for Fred. He went out of his way each morning to ensure that I received the best possible service—that everyone on his route received special service. Those were Fred's expectations. He wasn't going to gain financial benefit from his great customer service—from knowing everyone on his route by name, and understanding their special needs. Fred simply took pride in his work. In fact, he took so much pride in his work that he inspired me to write a book about him.”

So, Sanborn did write a book about Fred—quite possibly making him the most famous postal carrier in the world.

“It's easy to find faults in this world,” says Sanborn. “So, when we find extraordinary examples of people or companies doing things the right way, with the right attitude, it's definitely worth taking notice. Fred is one of those examples. But, *The Fred Factor* isn't just a story about Fred. And, it's not just my story. It's not even your story. It's our story—together. It's about all of us—because we all get to choose our own attitude.”

Unquestionably, Sanborn appears as if he was born to motivate—as a speaker and a writer. He's one of those people that can captivate your interest with every

word—even when he doesn't think he's on stage. His language has a tendency to clarify life—sweeping away all the clutter that typically gets in the way.

“It doesn't matter what you do,” says Sanborn, “What matters is how you approach what you do in life. There are no insignificant or ordinary jobs when they're performed by significant and extraordinary people.”

That's a sentiment that most of us in the recruiting and HR world have touted for quite some time. But, is it possible for a recruiter to spot a Fred personality during an interview? And, once hired, would it be possible to create an entire staff of Fred-like personalities where every employee could bring their diverse talent to compliment the team?

Is “Team Fred” truly possible?

“Absolutely,” says Sanborn. “I think we need to start by saying that different people find their passion in various ways. For example, I became a public speaker not because I was good at it, but because I was horrible—that's where I discovered my strength. And, that's where you start—looking for a person's drive.”

Sanborn is a prime example of drive, passion, and persistence. His speaking career began at the age of 10 when his 4H group asked for volunteers to provide short speeches. “To this day, I don't know why I raised my hand,” he says. “But, I did. I gave my speech. And, it was so bad that I knew I never wanted to feel that way again. That's when I began speaking everywhere I could throughout the community. I think I was kind of a novelty act at first. But, as I grew, I got better. I continued to enter speech competitions through high school and college. Eventually, I became President of the National Speaker's Association—all because I raised my hand that day.”

Sanborn continues, “So, how do you spot a person who is truly passionate? First, I think a recruiter needs to ask

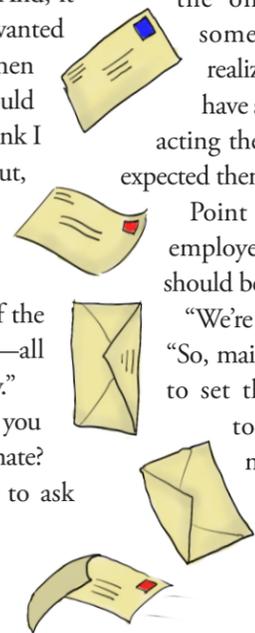


themselves if they are a Fred. Are you, as the recruiter, passionate about what you do? It's human nature to be attracted to people who share similar qualities and attitudes. That's how we choose our friends and significant others. So, when you're recruiting, first determine if you are passionate about what you do.”

That makes sense. If we want to hire passionate people, we should internally understand what passion looks like. “If you are a hiring manager or a recruiter, I think it's critical to exemplify the attitude that you expect from job seekers—show them exactly what you expect. And, as if you are managing employees, you need to maintain the responsibility of being a role model. Sometimes, being a role model is not easy. In fact, just the other day my kids were running through the house yelling at each other. Ironically, my reaction was to yell, ‘Stop yelling!’ My wife gave me the look—you know the one where you're doing something stupid? And, I realized how ridiculous I must have sounded to my kids. I was acting the exact opposite of how I expected them to act.”

Point well taken. If you want employees to exude passion, you should be a passionate role model.

“We're all human,” says Sanborn. “So, maintaining a level of passion to set that example can be the tough part. The key to maintaining your own passion every day means



keeping your self current and relevant. It doesn't matter what profession you choose, or what your goals are in life. The key is engaging yourself in your own life—continue reminding yourself of those things that drive you. The only real difference between a rut and grave is depth and distance. So, engage. And, let's get out of our ruts before they get any deeper."

One foot in the grave is the last position any of us want to face in our careers. We all need to keep challenging ourselves and those around us—every day. And, for those of you who have read *The Fred Factor*, the concept of consistent improvement isn't new. Fred, although he wasn't necessarily concentrating on improving his tactical abilities as a postal carrier, he was dedicated to the one thing that mattered most to his postal customers—service.

"Fred's goal was to provide the best possible service," said Sanborn. "And, his reward came from providing the exact same thing—knowing he did it better than yesterday. Think about it. The most difficult part of Fred's job was probably overcoming monotony. And, each one of us will face a different hurdle. For employers, I've always said that the second most difficult job is hiring and retaining people. And, the hardest job an employer faces is engaging those employees."

So, how do you create a team of passionate Fred's?

Sanborn says that anything is possible if we open our minds to truly see each other's diverse talents, differences, perspectives, and their motivations. "In corporate settings, we rarely ask for other people's ideas. Even more rarely do we reward people for their ideas. If we did, we'd quickly create interdependence among team members—not just

a team that depends on one another for tactical purposes, but also for motivational purposes. Attitude changes behavior. And, when you change your behavior, you change your world. If teams are interdependent, their attitudes will change together—they'll continue to grow as a team. It's really as simple as gathering all that passion, and all those different ideas, and combining them into one cumulative expertise."

Hold on, Mr. Sanborn. That sounds simple. But, how do we actually implement that strategy? Can we really stuff all those diverse qualities into one bucket?

"Ha!" he laughs. "Well, I wasn't prepared for this, but I think if you built a team of Fred's, it could be broken down into some easy steps."

Sanborn paused. And, after about three quick seconds of silence, he exposed why he is one of the most sought after speakers in the business world today—Sanborn can break down huge, ideological concepts into simple to use solutions.

And, even more impressively, he broke the steps down into a snazzy acronym to spell F.R.E.D.

"Find the team players," said Sanborn, after pausing. "Look for those people who can demonstrate interdependence. Often you'll be able to pick out the true team players simply by listening to their language. Listen for people who use the word 'we' more than the word 'I' in their conversations. Those people are team players at the core."

"Reward teamwork," he said. "How many companies actually reward people for practicing teamwork? Not many. And, I'm not talking about judging the success of a team necessarily. I think the focus needs to be placed on the teamwork itself—the simple act of people becoming



PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN POWELL

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interdependent."

"Educate," says Sanborn. "Employers need to educate their employees on how to work as teams. They need to clarify expectations of what it means to work as a team. And, they need to teach people how to reach beyond the expectations for themselves. Most people won't truly understand how great it feels to excel, unless they make the choice to do it on their own."

"Demonstrate team behavior," Sanborn concludes. "I mentioned this earlier. How can we expect anyone to follow our lead if we don't teach by example? Team work needs to be demonstrated. Sure, it can happen spontaneously. But, there's always room for further development."

And, there it is. That's it. In one simple swoop, Mark Sanborn helped to create 'Team Fred' without blinking an eye.

It's easy to see why the business community is talking about *The Fred Factor*. And, if this was your first introduction to the contagious Fred phenomenon, don't be surprised when you realize, it's not your last. Sooner or later, someone will approach you—excited that they've just been introduced to the world of Fred. When this happens, take notice—another Fred, Sue, Harry, Mike or Michelle is about to approach every task in life with their best foot forward. And, quite frankly, that's pretty cool.

When we all take ownership of our own attitude, results will be delivered—rain, shine, sleet, or snow.

HOW DOES SANBORN DEFINE ROI?

"Most people say that ROI means return on investment," says Sanborn. "And, it does. But, I like to think of it a little differently. Investment doesn't always relate to money. One of the best investments a person can make in their life and their career is simply having a positive attitude."



Mark Sanborn with Go Jobing Editor Todd Nordstrom

RELATIONSHIPS: “Every relationship has value,” says Sanborn. “Investing in your relationships not only can increase your bottom line, but it will increase your passion for life.”

OUTCOMES: “To reach a desired outcome, you must be willing to lead,” says Sanborn. “Yes, opportunities present themselves. But, why wait? Create opportunities and make your desired outcome a reality.”

IMPROVEMENTS: “How often do we all see an opportunity to improve something and never offer the idea to others,” asks Sanborn. “A single idea can produce the most profitable return of all.”

WHAT’S NEXT FOR MARK SANBORN?

You Don’t Need a Title to be a Leader: How Anyone, Anywhere Can Make a Positive Difference.

In his inspiring new book, Mark Sanborn shows how each of us can be a leader in our daily lives and make a positive difference, whatever our title or position.

Through the stories of numerous unsung heroes, Sanborn reveals the keys each one of us can use to improve our organizations and enhance our careers.

Want to learn more?

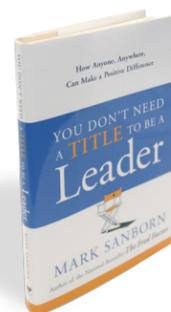
Visit: www.marksanborn.com



Sanborn signing copies of his new book.



Mark Sanborn giving presentation of *You Don't need a Title To Be A Leader*



EDITOR’S ITINERARY

Who’s talking about The Fred Factor?

9:30ish am—Call Mark Sanborn’s Office to confirm interview time.

10:46 am—On the way out to interview, get asked by Karen Chontofalsky, “Who are you interviewing today, Todd?” Respond with, “Mark Sanborn.” Watch Karen lunge out of her chair to enthusiastically perform what appears to be some sort of child-like dance of glee. “I just read *The Fred Factor* this last weekend,” she screams. “In fact, look! I copied a quote from the book to hang over my desk!”

11:30ish am—Begin interviewing Mark Sanborn.

3:17 pm—Receive company wide email photo of Jobing.com team member receiving Fred Award from one of Jobing.com’s clients.

3:18 pm—Think to myself, “Is this irony?”

6:31 pm—Receive phone call from Mom (a V.P. of HR) in Minnesota. She suggests a fantastic chicken salad recipe and then asks if anything interesting happened in my day. “Spoke with Mark Sanborn,” I respond. “Oh! That’s funny,” she says. “I was just going to send you a copy of *The Fred Factor*. I thought you would love it.”

6:33 pm—Think to myself, “I did love it. And, this cannot be irony. Everyone is reading this book.”

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDREW BENEZE



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