

Absolute Involvement

As redundant as the nine-to-five is said to be, there is an equal amount of redundancy regarding the discussion of employee detachment, disengagement, and grueling boredom. Linda Greenlaw describes the polar opposite of such by casting light on her all-encompassing career as a fisherman and captain in *The Hungry Ocean*. Greenlaw's complete involvement in her fishing profession shows her development from crew to captain in addition to the immeasurable list of responsibilities required of her including pre-departure preparations, the determination of goods, a grocery list, hiring and firing crew, fixing machines, learning to use new oceanographic and geological technologies and services, and maintaining good relations with crew, management, and competitors. While simultaneously navigating and strategizing new methods for fishing and leadership success, Greenlaw keeps in mind the business (i.e., the price of fish), safety, and timing of her work and makes every effort to avoid oversight. Greenlaw's divulgence of the superstitions of fishermen illustrates just how totally involved she is in all aspects of her profession.

After a straightforward series of academic education through college, Greenlaw decides to use her liberal arts foundation and activeness to propel herself into the fishing profession. Having grown up on the Isle au Haut, Greenlaw's affinity to the sea was already very strong. According to George R. Houston, Jr., "When you have learned to think and reason, to compare, to discriminate, to analyze, if you have refined your taste, formed your judgments and sharpened your mental vision, you have acquired an 'education' and are prepared to take up any calling."

Starting off as crew herself, Greenlaw sincerely understands all levels of fishing. As a captain, Greenlaw openly involves herself with the crew maintaining authority and reasonable flexibility. Toward the beginning of the book, Greenlaw sympathizes with the feelings of her crew, "I glanced out the back windows to the stern deck, where my five-man crew stood facing aft. I knew they would stand there until they saw Gloucester totally disappear, until the last speck of green sank into blue. I always did when I worked as a crew member" (p. 35). This shows that she does not lose sight of what it was like to not be the captain. Although Greenlaw adheres to nearly all of the crew laws at sea to ensure the safety and well-being of the crew, she does admit to turning a blind eye to smoking cigarettes in the outdoor areas. This reasonable flexibility helps to demonstrate how keeping employees happy and hardworking sometimes requires administrative give and take.

Moreover, Greenlaw masters the ability to trust her crew. While deep sea fishing, she describes the incredible "flow" of her team all the while maintaining full leadership. "The men worked like well-programed robots. I hadn't given a single order in four days. A nod, glance, or raised eyebrow was all that was needed as the men performed all duties expected of them" (p. 186). Greenlaw's trust enables her crew's overall performance as well as cohesiveness. Nevertheless, crew selection or hiring new staff in any organization or workplace, is always unpredictable. Greenlaw admits that, "Determination, perseverance, and resourcefulness are hard qualities for a captain to measure in prospective crew members while hiring at the dock. These attributes don't

come to light until needed; this is what makes hiring a green guy risky” (p. 237). Though Greenlaw does not discount the gamble associated with hiring someone inexperienced, she is still willing to teach someone with an open mind and willingness to learn.

Greenlaw’s tremendous skill for problem solving not only teaches, but also inspires. She is capable of onboard makeshift engineering as well as dispute resolution. As Mike Rose put it, “To work is to solve problems.” What Rose calls “thinking-in-motion” essentially sums up Greenlaw’s month-long journeys in the deep ocean waters. Her leadership is demanded on both the technical and social levels mitigating problems, reducing chances of errors, and providing solutions (or bandages) to civil crew relations. Greenlaw’s quick decision making, although unpopular at times (p. 228), demonstrates her true know-how and competence. Rose says that “sensory data” plays a huge role in the workplace where everyday situations, “demand judgment, the weighing of options, the consideration of multiple variables, and, occasionally, the creative use of a tool in an unexpected way.” In this way, Greenlaw attributes some of her new uses for old things as, “good ol’ Yankee ingenuity” (p. 236).

Crediting much of her leadership training and fisherman know-how to Bob Brown and Alden Leeman, Greenlaw explains how Brown and Leeman exemplify what it means to be a good fisherman, captain, and leader. Brown’s tough management and high expectations pushed Greenlaw to constantly challenge herself. Because the hard-nosed Brown relentlessly encouraged Greenlaw to reach higher and out-perform herself, Greenlaw was able to achieve paramount success as a fisherman. Meanwhile, Leeman advised Greenlaw to recognize and remember that the wishes of the captain are always different from those of the crew. However much this made Greenlaw uneasy at times, she never writes of a dislike of her captainship.

Greenlaw’s career development is applicable to other kinds of work and careers as we can learn that the “journey” through a career, or out of a career, is a complex interaction of academic and non-academic education, dedication, involvement, as well as intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. In addition, the journey itself can hone some of life’s greatest leadership skills including directing and getting along with others, managing people, trusting staff, taking on new and different challenges, being prepared, leading by example, and always, always, always continuing to learn.