

Adventure Travel

Jim Fanizzi - Using a Real Learning Experience



In an article in the Staten Island Sunday Advance dated August 16, 1985, M. Karlin Trachman wrote about using learning experiences in your business.

More and more executives in the business world are trying new techniques to bring across certain innovative ideas. One such technique was experienced recently by Jim Fanizzi, the president of going Places Travel Agency in Castleton Corners (Staten Island).

He attended a seminar with four other people...The program in which they participated was part of the Outward Bound experience.

Outward Bound offers adventure tours in such places as Maine, Colorado, Oregon and the state of Washington. In this case these five people were going to go down the rogue River in Oregon - one of the wildest and roughest in the Northwest. the trip involved passing many rapids, "white watering," so to speak, and was being filmed by two photographers who were preparing an instructional film for IBM....

There were two instructors who taught this, but the others were all novices. They did start out down the river that day, and all went well. Each person realized he or she had to do his or her part, for the experience was to be an individual one.

The second day they were on their own; the instructors were no longer with them....

"I remember thinking," Jim recounted, "This is no big deal. We can handle it. This is nothing but a joy ride." But that was to change radically.

Suddenly Jim found himself in the water. He had fallen out of the boat into what resembled a whirlpool. He recalled people trying to help him, but not being able to. What had happened was the boat he had been in had gone into this mass of swirling water sideways, rather than straight ahead, causing it to be positioned in such a way that he slid easily into the water.

The river was moving extremely quickly past him, and he was being pulled down by the force of the water. He realized he was in a pocket, or "hole," in the water and the second boat, containing the instructors, flew by just as Jim surfaced.

He then went down again, for what he describes as "what seemed like hours."

But one more boat came along, and fortunately was positioned correctly for the occupants to be able to help. They threw Jim a line, which he was able to catch. He was then hauled out, some the worse for wear.

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"We realized," Jim pointed out, "that this was the turning point in the entire experience. The next day we could have decided to walk away from the incident and not return to our boat, or we could have asked that the instructors be with us, or we could return to our original situation. Similar decision making is necessary constantly in business - the need to 'return to the boat' is always there."

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"Has it changed your life?" we asked Jim Fanizzi

"You can be sure it has," he replied. "I don't think I'll ever be the same person I was before I got into that raft."