



## California Dreamin'

By Steven L. Anderson, Ph.D., MBA

A few weeks ago winter was really getting to me, so I called a friend and asked him if I could come out for a short visit. He graciously accepted my request and soon I was on my way to California. Shortly after getting off the plane and giving one of my best friends a big hug after a five year absence we took a drive to the beach.

It did my soul a great deal of good to stand on the pier and watch the surf beneath an azure sky interrupted by only an occasional puffy white cloud. What caught my attention as I stood on the pier; however, were the forty or so surfers who were catching waves beside the pier. It was fun to watch them work their tails off to ride the swells. I was struck by the amount of work it took the wetsuit clad ocean inhabitants to catch a wave that only lasted a few seconds. I conservatively estimated that they were working ninety percent of the time and enjoying the wave ten percent of the time. "That must be a lot of fun," I thought to myself to be worth all that effort.

As I watched the surfers I thought to myself, "This is a lot like life." We live for the few seconds where we catch the wave and its energy propels us forward, but most of life is just plain hard work. Many people spend their lives complaining because they think the waves should be easier to surmount, or they wish a "tasty wave" would come along more often. Others are afraid to swim so they watch from the shore, mere spectators in the game of life. They spend their lives imagining what it would be like to catch a wave, but alas their dreams will never be fulfilled. You have to get wet to get what you want in life.

Many people work very hard to get up on one wave and then wonder why they just can't surf that wave for the rest of their lives. But a wave only has so much energy. Any effort we expend can only propel us so far. Eventually, we must crash back into the water and start the mundane work of searching for another wave while we spit out the saltwater we just ingested. In my opinion, these people are so close to really having a great life; they just can't sustain their effort over time, so they eventually wash up on shore, content to be spectators once more.

In my opinion true happiness lies not in catching the wave, but in falling in love with the entire process of becoming a great surfer; the swimming, the wiping out, the sea sickness, the hard work, and catching waves. There is great joy in becoming a master of our chosen craft. Happiness lies, not in playing, but in doing the hard work necessary to become the best we can possibly become at something, especially if that something then allows us to serve our fellow man.

Here are some tips about becoming a master surfer:

- 1) Find something to do that you love so much you would do it for free. And then do it so well people will pay you to do it. Then you'll never have to work another day in your life.
- 2) Forget about progress. Fall in love with process.
- 3) Expect it to hurt. Most of life is painful, but when that pain becomes meaningful, it is tremendously fulfilling.
- 4) Know that you can become world class at something. There's only one of you. As Ingrid Bergman said, "Be yourself. The world worships an original."

See you at the beach dude!

Incidentally, I found a great article similar to this one as I wrote this article. You may enjoy it as well.

<http://www.christine.com/2008/06/16/surfing-as-a-metaphor-for-business-and-life/>