



A vacationing American businessman standing on the pier of a quaint coastal fishing village in southern Mexico watched as a small boat with just one young Mexican fisherman pulled into the dock. Inside the small boat were several large yellowfin tuna. Enjoying the warmth of the early afternoon sun, the American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish.

“How long did it take you to catch them?” the American casually asked.

“Oh, a few hours,” the Mexican fisherman replied.

“Why don’t you stay out longer and catch more fish?” the American businessman then asked.

The Mexican warmly replied, “With this I have more than enough to support my family’s needs.”

The businessman then became serious, “But what do you do with the rest of your time?”

Responding with a smile, the Mexican fisherman answered, “I sleep late, play with my children, watch ballgames, and take siesta with my wife. Sometimes in the evenings I take a stroll into the village to see my friends, play the guitar, sing a few songs...”

The American businessman impatiently interrupted, “Look, I have an MBA from Harvard, and I can help you to be more profitable. You can start by fishing several hours longer every day. You can then sell the extra fish you catch. With the extra money, you can buy a bigger boat. With the additional income that larger boat will bring, before long you can buy a second boat, then a third one, and so on, until you have an entire fleet of fishing boats.”

Proud of his own sharp thinking, he excitedly elaborated a grand scheme which could bring even bigger profits, “Then, instead of selling your catch to a middleman you’ll be able to sell your fish directly to the processor, or even open your own cannery. Eventually, you could control the product, processing and distribution. You could leave this tiny coastal village and move to Mexico City, or possibly even Los Angeles or New York City, where you could even further expand your enterprise.”

Having never thought of such things, the Mexican fisherman asked, “But how long will all this take?”

After a rapid mental calculation, the Harvard MBA pronounced, “Probably about 15-20 years, maybe less if you work really hard.”

“And then what, señor?” asked the fisherman.

“Why, that’s the best part!” answered the businessman with a laugh. “When the time is right, you would sell your company stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions.”

“Millions? Really? What would I do with it all?” asked the young fisherman in disbelief.

The businessman boasted, “Then you could happily retire with all the money you’ve made. You could move to a quaint coastal fishing village where you could sleep late, play with your grandchildren, watch ballgames, and take siesta with your wife. You could stroll to the village in the evenings where you could play the guitar and sing with your friends all you want.”

Sensing skepticism from the fisherman, the businessman moves onto the next boat and finds a more receptive fisherman. The two, sensing an obvious business opportunity, decide to go into business together. They raise a venture capital round and a year later, return to the pier outfitted with a dozen high tech fishing boats.

Immediately, the price of tuna at the pier drops threefold with increased supply, forcing the young Mexican fisherman to increase his hours at sea just to maintain his existing standard of living.

Shortly thereafter, all of the shallow water tuna have been caught and the young Mexican fisherman discovers his tiny boat is incapable of deep water fishing. Because of his limited savings, he does not have enough capital to invest in a deep water fishing boat and he is forced to sell his tiny fishing boat for pennies on the dollar as scrap because advances in technology have made it obsolete.

After discovering that there is limited demand for an employee whose only skills are watching ballgames, playing the guitar and taking siestas, the young Mexican fisherman finds his only option is to take a job working minimum wage on one of the businessman’s fishing vessels.

Several years later, the fisherman’s joints are shot through from the hard manual labor of operating on a commercial fishing vessel and an ill timed lift of a 150lb pallet of tuna finally causes his back to give way, causing permanent crippling. The fisherman discovers intensive lobbying from the businessman has weakened workplace protection rules and the fisherman is

summarily let go with only a paltry settlement.

After years of expensive medical treatments and crippling bills, the fisherman is finally forced to sell his land, passed along to him from generation to generation, to a development conglomerate run by the businessman who is buying large tracts of the entire village.

Unbeknownst to the fisherman, the businessman has lobbied for the village to turn into a protected nature reserve, allowing for the rehabilitation of the environment and the restocking of fish in its pristine waters. The businessman painstakingly recreates the quaint, coastal charm of the village he once visited, making it a paradise where the wealthy flock to when they want to retire into a life of easy indolence.

Finally, 15 – 20 years after the original conversation, the fisherman and his wife are found dead in a homeless shelter. Meanwhile, the businessman retires to the village having made two successive fortunes first in fisheries and then in real estate development. He spends his days sleeping late, playing with his grandchildren, watching high def ESPN ballgames on a 70" TV, and taking siesta with his wife. He occasionally strolls down to the village in the evenings where he regales his fellow millionaires with the story of how he found an unexploited niche in the marketplace and then took full advantage of it to make the fortune that got him to the comfortable retirement he enjoys today.