

THE DAY I INVENTED BILL NYE, THE SCIENCE GUY®

or

HIRE MORE WEIRD PEOPLE

By Ross Shafer

Business Rule #1. Hire more weird people.

Follow that one simple rule and you'll grow your company. Why? Because whenever you hire a clone of yourself - and you want to generate fresh ideas, you know what ideas you'll get?

Yours.

But, if you hire weird people, bizarre people, crawling-up-the-wall people who don't think like you - and don't do what you do in your spare time - you could end up with a huge financial windfall!

That's how Bill Nye, The Science Guy® was born.

And, I should know.

I'm the guy who invented him.

You know Bill Nye as the wacky, animated guy on TV who wears a kooky bow tie and makes your kids laugh while teaching them why eggs float.

But when I first met Bill, I was hosting a local NBC comedy show in Seattle (*Almost Live*) and he was an aerospace engineer for Boeing. At night, Bill would scour the comedy clubs trying to sell his "jokes." But they were mostly engineering jokes. Engineering jokes are a lot like financial planner jokes. "How can you tell an extroverted engineer? (or insert Financial Planner) He stares at YOUR shoes when he's talking to you." Want another one? "What do engineers use for birth control? Their personalities." You get the picture.

Regardless, I still thought Bill was fiercely quirky and I hired him to join our writing team. When he showed up at the first "pitch" meeting (where all of the writers submit their ideas) I noticed something else

peculiar about Bill. Random science magazines kept falling out of his backpack. I'm talking about magazines like, *Mensa & Science Puzzles Monthly*, *Fun with Neuroscience Equations*, and *International Wing Nut Quarterly*. One time, I asked Bill what he did for fun and he said, "Me and some of my scientist friends sit around and misquote Carl Sagan."

Wow. What a blast that must have been.

So, now we have this genius on our staff, and for weeks, Bill submitted one strange (and useless) idea after another.

Then one day, Geraldo Rivera cancelled an appearance on our show; due to the flu. That meant we had an emergency six-minute guest slot to fill.

In desperation, I turned to Bill and pleaded, "*Can you do any kind of funny science demonstration from one of your magazines?*" Without missing a beat he said, "*Yeah, I could do something pretty hilarious with a tub of Liquid Nitrogen.*" Frankly, I didn't even know if liquid nitrogen was legal but we had a show to put on. So I kept riffing. "*I'll introduce you as Bill Nye, our local science correspondent...no wait, I'll call you Bill Nye, The Science Guy. It'll be great!*"

That night, Bill shattered a liquid-nitrogen-dipped onion like it was a piece of glass. He "roasted" marshmallows in the (minus) 325-degree fluid, ate one, and steam blew out of his nose like a dragon!

Bill Nye was an instant hit! Our ratings skyrocketed every time he appeared on our show. So did ad revenues.

Because he tapped into his passion, Bill's enthusiasm turned him into a breakout TV star. He soon left his aeronautical day job in the dust.

Bill created an Emmy® Award winning TV series that is shown all over the world. Teachers everywhere refer to his monthly newsletter and consult his web site in their classrooms. (www.Nyelabs.com). Bill was even asked to join the NASA *Mars Team* and he came up with the idea to

put small sundials on each of the two Mars Rovers (*Odyssey* and *Spirit*) so that kids on earth can see what time it is on Mars.

Bill would be the first to tell none of this would have occurred if we hadn't thought to hire a "weird" person.

I'd challenge you to watch for your own "Bill Nye" in your organization. I'd wager that you may be inadvertently wasting the outside talents of your co-workers. Everyone is harboring hidden talents that could be put to use for your company; talents that would yield enormous profits, ideas, and productivity. What magazines do your people read. What do they surf on the Net? What hobbies are they crazy about? Allow them to exercise their natural passions at work and you'll have a burgeoning revenue stream - and a company ambassador your customers will love.

Another side benefit is that weird people aren't offended if you don't laugh at their jokes. They'll think you just aren't smart enough to "get it."

Ross Shafer is a 6-Time Emmy® Award winning comedian/writer/author of NOBODY MOVED YOUR CHEESE! and THE CUSTOMER SHOUTS BACK! His (14) Human Resource training films are distributed worldwide. Contact www.FinancialSpeakers.com for more information.