



Merry Christmas!

A Look Back...

Seven years ago I left my job to pursue an opportunity to re-shape a fishing club. At the time our fishing club was known as The American Fish and Game Club. While much of what we do is the same, much of why and how we do it has changed. Maybe I'll bore you with the what, how and why on some other newsletter.

When you own your own small business you get to do things you could not, would not and maybe should not do when you work for a bigger company. You get to write Christmas Newsletters that say Christmas and not Happy Holidays. You get to give opinions, share your personal life and tell people what you are really thinking.



Reflecting on my 16 years as an account executive for a large printing company, I miss the hustle and bustle of working with lots of other team members. Gearing up for a large presentation for Wal-Mart or Lowes could get my heart pumping. But, this does not compare to the excitement I feel for Private Water Fishing. My thoughts at night were filled with anxiety and my days filled with stress. Today, my thoughts at night are filled with opportunities and my days filled with excitement. I simply wake up each day, feeling blessed to have made such a big decision. My professional life had helped define me and I felt trapped in a job I could not possibly leave. As a seasoned commission sales man I had a book of business that took a long time to develop and it afforded me opportunities to buy and own things that I thought would bring me happiness. But, most of you know, the things have a way of owning you and brings only fleeting moments of happiness. As Henry David Thoreau said, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them." I did not want to be one of those men. It is rare that we can point to any one reason why we make the decisions we make, but rather a series of choices and life experiences that help bring those questions in focus and eventually you have to make the decision to jump. For me the decision to jump is rooted in my faith and the Lord heard my prayers for several years and opened the door for me to step through. I will never know how many doors were opened that I never walked through, or how many times I thought the door was open and after I

went through I was hit with a reality check. But, I now believe this door was opened so that I can experience a whole new profession filled with opportunities to bless others.

Keri, my wife, has been my biggest cheerleader; without her encouragement to jump, with a full understanding in the change of our lifestyle, I would not have felt comfortable in starting this new adventure. Moreover, she has become our QuickBooks wiz and is the person you speak to regarding all things regarding money.

Seth joined our team almost 3 years ago and had to replace big shoes. He replaced Brian who left the company after 8 years to move back with his family in Tulsa Oklahoma. In many respects Brian trained me and as a testament to Brian's character he stayed a few months longer than he really wanted to train Seth. Seth far surpassed my wildest expectations of what an operations manager is and should be. He is wise beyond his years and the voice of Private Water Fishing. Seth's judgment, character and commitment to Private Water Fishing is something that I admire and thank God for on a regular basis.

I would be remiss, if I did not include the importance of our landowners. This group of people, who open their property, their time and sometimes even themselves to our membership. Many have embraced where we want to go with the club, through increased fisheries management, and signed up to be a part of the team of lakes who want to create great fish habitat, grow the food chain, introduce new genetics and harvest fish when necessary.

Lastly, it is our members who make this work for all of us. After working on the "wholesale" side of business for my entire adult life, I was a little hesitant to move to a retail environment. However, our members have been fantastic and are just really looking to spend time with family and friends hunting and fishing in a relaxed environment. The complainants have been few and the compliments have been many. It is great to wake up each day knowing that we have found a business where our customers love to fish and hunt as much as we do.

For the 16 years before I bought the club, I never really enjoyed Christmas, it was the busy season at my job, and I had trouble separating my work from my personal life. Honestly, I still have trouble separating the two, but now I love both my personal and professional life. I hope you will worry less, pray more, tell God what you need and thank Him for what he has done. If you do this God will grant you the peace that passes human understanding. After all, we all could use a bit less stress and a lot more hope, peace and joy.

Our January newsletter will share what Private Water accomplished in 2016 and where we are headed for 2017.

Merry Christmas,

Steve Alexander

