

A Fish Named Rhonda: On Surviving in Hard Economic Times



Rhonda was a fish. She lived in a fish tank. But of course, she and the other fishes didn't know that. All she and Guy and Polly knew was that things were okay where they lived. Food to eat, shelter from monsters, and most of all, plenty of water to breathe. Occasionally Larry the Octopus would murmur, "Fish should pay attention to certain things, mark my words..." But Rhonda and her buddies had better, uh, fish to fry – so to speak. Rhonda was getting along marvelously, swimmingly you might say, until the day she and Larry debated about who was the savvier. Rhonda felt special because she was the brightest fish in the pond. "Rhonda," the wise octopodnarian admonished, "all I got to say is that smart water-breathers ought to be paying attention to three things: the water level, the grotto in my corner and the round silver thing over in *that* corner."



That piqued Rhonda's curiosity. So she started hanging out near Larry's grotto, especially in the cool depression in the top. She kept an "eagle" eye on the water lapping around the rim of their pond. Not long after that, Rhonda first noticed that the water level had gone down, leaving a telltale ring. 'No biggie,' she thought. 'Guy and Polly don't seem to mind... and there still seems to be plenty to breathe.' Miraculously, food kept falling onto the water's surface once a day, like manna from heaven. Nevertheless, neither Rhonda nor the others could determine what the silver disk in the corner was for. Guy and Polly swam blissfully in circles, unaware of the falling water level.



One bright Tuesday Rhonda awoke in her grotto cubby-hole, took a deep breath of water, stretched her dorsal fin and there she felt... AIR! In a panic she turned to see Larry scuttling away from the tank. When she saw Guy and Polly flopping on the bottom, barely up to their left gills in an inch of water her eyes bulged. 'Larry!' she screamed, 'Thank you for sharing your grotto!' – although she only could manage a stream of bubbles and a wave of her flipper to the wise old octopus. Turning to the opposite corner, she spied a whirlpool. Polly was spinning her way into the vortex. 'Goodbye, Polly!' PLOP. Guy went next, hollering all the way down for Rhonda to help him make it to the grotto...



At first Rhonda resented being restricted to her diminished grotto pool, but she was much happier when it amazingly was transformed into a resplendent new glass pond. She found new buddies. And Larry eventually wandered back in. Rhonda lived happily ever after, although she never did discover what that round silver thing was in the corner

The moral of the story?

- 1. Always listen to the wise, old octopus who lives in the corner. LISTEN!**
- 2. NEVER assume that because things are okay today, and because they were okay yesterday, they are bound to be okay tomorrow.**
- 3. Even if you do not control the level of the water, it's still smart to watch the water level each and every day.**
- 4. It's already too late to fix things after the vortex has begun.**
- 5. Even when the water level stays the same smart fishes will pay attention to their environments. Larry says that when it's not the silver thing in the corner messing up the routine, it's generally either poisoned food flakes or that new fish-buddy named Sylvester the Shark.**
- 6. Staying alive is mostly a matter of paying attention. We survive by learning from our environments – even those things we cannot control. When we just sit still, contented that things will always be fine: That's when we wake up flopping in an inch of water, trying feverishly to avoid the whirlpool drain in our pond.**

So, how do we learn and grow mature?

By managing for results...