

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

How Passion in Your Work and Life
Can Turn the Ordinary into
the Extraordinary

The

Fred

FACTOR



Mark Sanborn
with a Foreword by John C. Maxwell

Praise for
The Fred Factor

Sanborn soars with *The Fred Factor*... His system works and can not only change your life but just may jump-start the career of the person sitting next to you.

—TIM SANDERS, consultant and author of *Love Is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends*

The Fred Factor is a powerful, poignant parable of success. It's about going the extra mile and always doing more than is expected. It is revolutionary yet simple. It is life changing.

—BRIAN TRACY, author of *Focal Point* and *Goals: How to Get Everything You Want—Faster Than You Ever Thought Possible*

Goodness is in shorter supply than is necessary. *The Fred Factor* is about how all of us can add to the goodness in the world through simple daily acts that touch the lives of others.

—JIM CATHCART, author of *The Acorn Principle*

The Fred Factor...reminds us of the difference one person can make. If you are ready to move to the next level, both personally and professionally, read this ingenious book.

—MARY LOVERDE, consultant, speaker, and author of *I Used to Have a Handle on Life but It Broke*

The Fred Factor is a superb extension of Mark Sanborn's wisdom and substance. It'll only take you a few minutes to read, but it's guaranteed to give you a lifetime of value.

—NIDO R. QUBEIN, chairman of Great Harvest Bread Company and author of *Stairway to Success*

The Fred Factor is the perfect one-hour read. You cannot finish it without feeling compelled to go the extra mile for others.

—JIMMY CALANO, cofounder and former CEO of CareerTrack

The Fred Factor...will not only inspire you, it will empower you and your team to make every day a masterpiece.

—TERRY PAULSON, PhD, speaker, and author of *They Shoot Managers, Don't They?*

The Fred Factor celebrates "normal" people offering extraordinary services.

—LORI WIECHART, Training Coordinator and Quality Leader, Sonnenalp Family of Resorts and Hotels, Vail, Colorado

Mark Sanborn has built a clear, easy-to-understand road map to...knowing the *difference*...every single person can make.

—BOB DANZIG, former CEO of Hearst Newspapers, speaker, and author of *The Leader Within You*

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Names in some stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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To my sons, Hunter and Jack—I'm proud to be your dad.

To my wife, Darla—I'm blessed to be your husband.

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So many friends in the National Speakers Association have inspired, instructed, and encouraged me over the years. Being a member of this fine organization has added tremendously to my personal life as well as my professional life. There are too many speaker-pals to mention by name, but you know who you are. Please also know that I am grateful.

My wife, Darla, has been my biggest fan and encourager. She has proofread many manuscripts, listened to countless speeches, and supported my unusual road-warrior lifestyle. She has, as always, my undying love and gratitude.

And, finally, to the many individuals—some whom I've met and others whom I've only heard about—who live the spirit of the Fred Factor every day and make life fuller and richer for others—I tip my hat to all of you.

FOREWORD

Now and then you discover a book that's so inspiring you find yourself immediately making a list of people you know who *must* have a copy!

That was my response upon reading *The Fred Factor* by Mark Sanborn.

This small, engaging book, based on a true story, delivers a potent motivational message that will supercharge your attitude toward work and life. Let's face it, if a guy named Fred, who has a less-than-glamorous job working for the U.S. Postal Service, can serve his customers with exceptional service and commitment, what opportunities await you and me to help others and, in the process, achieve deeper personal satisfaction?

If I were to write out a list of individuals who would benefit from reading *The Fred Factor*, I would include:

- My employees and business associates— for they will learn the secret behind how to better serve their customers.
- Professional acquaintances in management positions— for they will be shown how to inspire an entire organization to seek unprecedented levels of excellence.
- My family members—for they will discover the benefit of showing genuine appreciation to those they love.
- Graduating students—for they will find extraordinary

insights on achieving lifelong success that are not taught in classrooms.

- Finally, I would wish to place the book in the hands of everyone I know who wants to turn the mundane moments of life into extraordinary experiences.

There are four basic principles that define the “Fred Factor.” I won’t spoil your excitement of discovery by sharing what they are here. But I promise that if you take Mark Sanborn’s advice to heart and begin living a more “Fred-like” existence, you will never view yourself, your value to others, or your importance in the world in the same way again. Not only will you affect your *own* sphere of influence for good, but you will gain the skills to help *others* become “Fred’s” as well.

Perhaps what I like best about *The Fred Factor* is that this is not just another parable about how to make life work better—as valuable as those fictional stories can be. What makes this book special is that Fred’s story is *true!* And in addition to Fred’s own story, the book introduces us to many other real people who are making a difference in the world in environments as diverse as a doctor’s office, a restaurant, a classroom, and a home.

I urge you to do something special for others *and yourself*—incorporate the “Fred factor” into your life.

—JOHN MAXWELL



PART 1

WHAT'S A FRED?

THE FIRST FRED

Make each day your masterpiece.

—JOSHUA WOODEN, father of John Wooden

I first met a “Fred” just after purchasing what I called a “new” old house. Built in 1928, the house was the first I’d owned and was located in a beautiful tree-lined area of Denver called Washington Park. Just days after I moved in, I heard a knock on my front door. When I opened it I saw a mailman standing on my porch.

“Good morning, Mr. Sanborn!” he said cheerfully. “My name is Fred, and I’m your postal carrier. I just stopped by to introduce myself—to welcome you to the neighborhood and find out a little bit about you and what you do for a living.”

Fred was an ordinary-looking fellow of average height and build with a small mustache. While his physical appearance didn’t convey anything out of the ordinary, his sincerity and warmth were noticeable immediately.

I was a bit startled. Like most of us, I had been receiving mail for years, but I had never had this kind of personal encounter with my postal carrier. I was impressed—nice touch.

"I'm a professional speaker. I don't have a real job," I replied jokingly.

"If you're a professional speaker, you must travel a lot," said Fred.

"Yes, I do. I travel anywhere from 160 to 200 days a year."

Nodding, Fred went on. "Well, if you'll just give me a copy of your schedule, I'll hold your mail and bundle it. I'll only deliver it on the days that you are at home to receive it."

I was amazed by Fred's conscientious offer, but I told him that such extra effort probably wasn't necessary. "Why don't you just leave the mail in the box on the side of the house?" I suggested. "I'll pick it up when I come back into town."

Fred frowned and shook his head. "Mr. Sanborn, burglars often watch for mail building up in a box. That tells them you're out of town. You might become the victim of a break-in." Fred was more worried about my mail than I was! But it made sense; he was the postal professional.

"Here's what I suggest, Mr. Sanborn," Fred continued. "I'll put mail in your box as long as I can get it to close. That way nobody will know you're gone. Whatever doesn't fit in the box, I'll put between the screen door and the front door. Nobody will see it there. And if that area becomes too full of mail, I'll just hold the rest of it for you until you come back into town."

At this point I started to wonder: Does this guy really work for the U.S. Postal Service? Maybe this neighborhood had its

own private mail-delivery system. Still, because Fred's suggestions sounded like a terrific plan, I agreed to them.

Two weeks later I returned home from a trip. As I put the key in my front-door lock, I noticed my doormat was missing. Were thieves actually stealing doormats in Denver? Then I saw the mat in a corner of the porch, concealing something. I lifted the mat and found a note from—who else?—Fred! Reading his message, I learned what had happened. While I was gone, a different delivery service had misdelivered a package sent to me. The box had been left on somebody else's porch, five doors down the street. Noticing my box on the wrong porch, Fred had picked it up, carried it to my house, attached his note, and then tried to make the package less noticeable by placing it under the doormat.

Not only was Fred delivering the mail, he was now picking up the slack for UPS!

His actions made a huge impression on me. As a professional speaker, I am particularly adept at finding and pointing out what's "wrong" with customer service and business in general. Finding examples of what's "right" or even praiseworthy is much harder. Yet here was my postman, Fred, a gold-plated example of what personalized service looks like and a role model for anyone who wants to make a difference in his or her work.

I started using my experiences with Fred as illustrations in speeches and seminars that I presented across the United States. Everyone wanted to hear about Fred. Listeners in my audiences

were enthralled, whether they worked in the service industry, at a manufacturing company, in high-tech, or in health care.

Back home in Denver, I occasionally had a chance to share with Fred how his work was inspiring others. I told him one story about a discouraged employee who received no recognition from her employers. She wrote to tell me that Fred's example had inspired her to "keep on keeping on" and continue doing what she knew in her heart was the right thing to do, regardless of recognition or reward.

I related to Fred the confession of a manager who had pulled me aside after one speech to tell me he never realized that his career goal all along was to be "a Fred." He believed that excellence and quality should be the goals of every person in any business or profession.

I was delighted to tell my postman that several companies had created a Fred Award to present to employees who demonstrated his trademark spirit of service, innovation, and commitment.

And one fan of Fred once sent him a box of homemade cookies in care of my address!

On the first Christmas after Fred became my postman, I wanted to thank him more formally for his exceptional service. I left a small gift in the mailbox for him. The next day I found an unusual letter in my box. The envelope had a stamp on it, but it wasn't canceled. That's when I noticed the return address; the letter was from Fred the Postman.

Fred knew it would be illegal to put an unpostmarked letter

in the box, so even though he personally carried it from his house to my house, he had done the right thing by placing a stamp on the letter.

I opened the letter, which said in part, “Dear Mr. Sanborn, Thank you for remembering me at Christmas. I am flattered you talk about me in your speeches and seminars, and I hope I can continue to provide exceptional service. Sincerely, Fred the Postman.”

Over the next ten years, I received consistently remarkable service from Fred. I could always tell which days he wasn’t working my street by the way the mail was jammed into my box. When Fred was on the job, all items were neatly bundled.

But there was more. Fred also took a personal interest in me. One day while I was mowing the front lawn, a vehicle slowed in the street. The window went down and a familiar voice yelled, “Hello, Mr. Sanborn! How was your trip?”

It was Fred, *off duty*, driving around the neighborhood.

After observing his exemplary attitude and actions, I concluded that Fred—and the way he did his job—provides a perfect metaphor for high individual achievement and excellence in the twenty-first century. Fred—and the countless other Freds I’ve met, observed, or been served by in numerous professions—inspired me to write *The Fred Factor*. It contains the simple yet profound lessons all the Freds around the world have taught me.

Anyone can be a Fred! That includes you! The result will not just be extraordinary effort and success in your work. You’ll find yourself living an extraordinary life as well.