

The Orlando International Airport's food court underwent a renovation — and now includes a huge tank to soothe travelers as they hurry through.



Business owners find that customers enjoy having some fish to look at.

How Fish Promote Better Business

BY PATRICIA KNIGHT

When we visit an office building or other place of business, it's always a pleasant surprise to see an aquarium. More and more businesses are including fish in their surroundings. It seems that just as home aquarists reap the benefits of bringing the underwater world into their homes, business owners are finding that those benefits extend into their endeavors, as well.

There are several reasons that fish are brought into a business environment, reasons that vary depending on personal preference and the nature of the enterprise. Aquatic life can bring tranquility and color to an otherwise uncomfortable situation, make businesses more pleasant to customers and can simply bring additional interest to an office or store. These are all good reasons to keep fish in a business — but do fish really have the desired effects on the visitors? Is it worth the extra time and effort involved to care for fish in an already busy workplace?

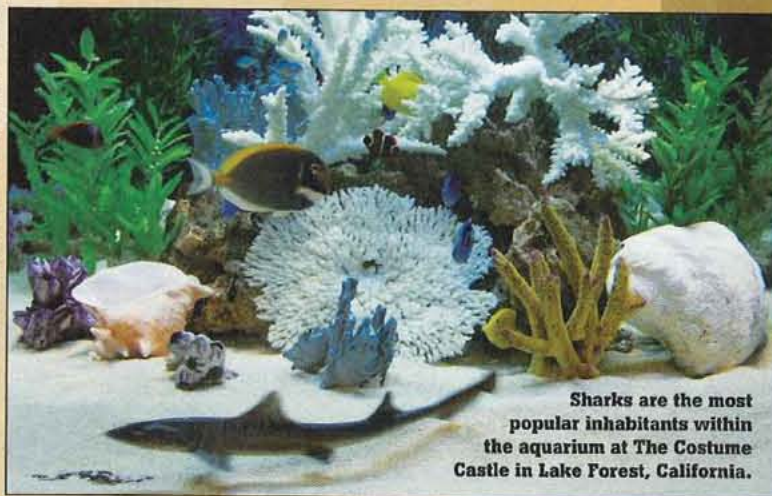
Taking a look at various locations, from fun to serious, we'll hear from proprietors about whether they believe fish really enhance their businesses.

THE COSTUME CASTLE

The Costume Castle, located in Lake Forest, California, stocks aisles of costumes and accessories. Surely, a costume shop already holds an ambience of enjoyment, as customers come by to purchase fun attire. And the owner of The Costume Castle, Dave Huffman, decided to add an aquarium to add even more appeal to his shop. The tank in The Costume Castle is a big one — 650 gallons — and houses gray smoothhound sharks, a blue tang, yellow tang, powder blue tang and a California ray. The tank has a port-hole on one side, and the only way to access the back of the aquarium is through a locked door.

At one time, Huffman had a restaurant with three aquariums, which he says were interesting and fun. Huffman feeds the fish in the tank he currently keeps at the Costume Castle, while an aquarium service called Age of Aquariums takes care of the maintenance. He purchased sharks for the tank because he believes they are fascinating to people. Finding the perfect mix for this tank was not automatic: First, the tank housed various sharks, later fish only, then sharks and fish together.

The Costume Castle tank has had its share of behavioral issues, too. The fish did not always get along. Huffman says that the aquarium previously “had some



homicides” within its walls, but he points out that the tank is now stable.

Although fish homicide may sound like a less-than-ideal situation, the aquarium has produced positive results. The customers enjoy the tank, and not surprisingly, the sharks are the most popular aquatic residents at The Costume Castle. Customers take special notice of them, proving that these magnificent marine animals have induced some intrigue in his store, so much so that Mr. Huffman invites everyone to, “Come on in, and see the sharks!”



Joseph Smolenski of the New Hyde Park Funeral Home, in New Hyde Park, New York, says that visitors' compliments about the aquarium are "universally and unanimously appreciative."

THE NEW HYDE PARK FUNERAL HOME

Adding interest is only one purpose an aquarium can fulfill. In places like the New Hyde Park Funeral Home in the village of New Hyde Park (in the Long Island area), New York, the tranquility of a fish tank helps to comfort mourners. In situations like these, every little bit helps — and in this case, some of that relief comes from the fish in the aquarium that Joseph Smolenski, Jr., owner and president, has brought into the funeral home. He says that the aquarium benefits the funeral home, bringing to it a sense of peace and calm — "and therefore to the psyche [of] the families and their guests."

Smolenski had the idea of bringing the tank into his facility, as well as the tank design, and he had the 320-gallon aquarium installed by Cavataio Aquariums in Central Islip, Long Island, New York, which also maintains the aquarium. Fish housed in it include lionfish, blue tangs, harlequin tuskfish and pufferfish. Since it has been installed in the lobby area, the aquarium has been garnering the attention of children, which allows their parents to meet guests.

Smolenski notes one evening when he arrived at the funeral home, and a guest services associate was speaking with a manager about how to care for a pufferfish that had become ill. The sick puffer had to be removed — in its lethargic state, its tank-mates had begun to consume it. The puffer was moved to a different tank, and the amazing thing is that visiting children asked repeatedly about the sick fish. According to Smolenski, the children were told that "the fish was in the intensive care unit here at the funeral home. That seemed to ease their minds." This anecdote may imply that the children were more involved with the fish than their loss — but that's exactly the point. Their concerns momentarily turned away from their grief.

Children aren't the only visitors who benefit from the fish's presence at the funeral home. The guest service associates are instructed to report to Smolenski all feedback from the funeral home's visitors. The aquarium is so well-received that Smolenski said he had to tell the associates to stop conveying feedback about the tank. "They were universally and unanimously appreciative," he says. He adds that in his funeral home, "Families and their guests want the warmth and comfort of home. The aquarium is a key element in providing that hospitality."



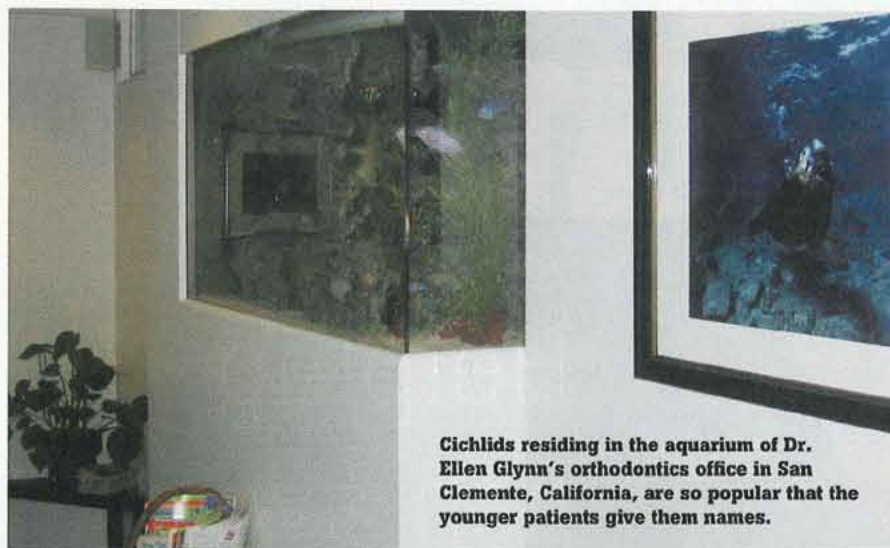
The Orlando International Airport's aquarium is 3,000 gallons, 7 feet tall and has a diameter of 8 feet.

AIRPORT AQUARIUM

ONE MIGHT EXPECT TO FIND a fish tank in private businesses, but what about a more public facility, like an airport? It's hard to miss the 3,000-gallon aquarium at the Orlando International Airport in Florida. The cylindrical tank was built by Living Color Enterprises, Inc., in Fort Lauderdale, Florida — and it's a gigantic aquarium: 7 feet tall, with a diameter of 8 feet. Tangs, butterflyfish, angels and gobies are some of the fish that meet and soothe travelers who are passing through. Fittingly, these fish come from around the globe, from the Caribbean to the Red Sea to the Indo-Pacific.

The aquarium is located in the center of a renovated food court. Good fishkeeping practices were employed when the fish were added: they were introduced gradually, allowing the ecosystem within the tank to become stable.

This airport aquarium was constructed in three-and-a-half months, while installing it took two weeks. But it seems that the effort was worth it. "Watching fish swim in an aquarium is a great diversion for stressed and weary travelers," Scott Nash, president of Living Color states.



Cichlids residing in the aquarium of Dr. Ellen Glynn's orthodontics office in San Clemente, California, are so popular that the younger patients give them names.

COURTESY LISA KING / Pet Product News

THE ORTHODONTIST'S OFFICE

Many doctors' and dentists' offices, and even some hospitals, keep fish tanks in their lobbies and waiting rooms. One such practitioner is Dr. Ellen Glynn, an orthodontist in San Clemente, California. After seeing other offices with aquariums and desiring a focal point for her patients, she decided to put an aquarium in her practice's waiting area. Her Aquatic Sys-

tems custom tank houses various African cichlids and algae-eaters (Aquatic Systems also maintains the tank).

Reactions to Dr. Glynn's tank are encouraging. African cichlids sport bright colors and interesting patterns, and have the potential to attract people's attention. The pretty African cichlids in Dr. Glynn's tank are popular, and the interactions between the fish in this office are apparently a major attention grabber.

And as one would expect in an African cichlid tank, belligerence is evident. Younger patients enjoy watching the fish interact — especially the aggressive ones, which pleasantly distracts them from their impending dental work.

Dr. Glynn says that kids especially like the fish and even name them. She adds that the patients react in a very positive way to the aquarium and that "some find it relaxing." If anyone doubted whether fish tanks really do bring tranquility to the environment, this orthodontist's fish tank helps prove it.

FISH AT WORK

We can see from these examples that fish can fit into the workplace, and business owners don't have any regrets about bringing in some "employees" of the finned variety. Fish add even more charm to pleasant environments, and an aura of peace to places where calm and serenity are most needed. Let's hope that yet more people will discover the benefits of maintaining fish in their places of business, where fish earn their keep simply by adding enjoyment wherever they are found. ♦

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