



Spirit in the Workplace

**Sermon Delivered at the Main Line Unitarian Church,
Devon, PA 9/1/02 (Labor Day Weekend)**

Richard McKnight, Ph.D.

Here we are on Labor Day weekend and our topic is “spirituality in the workplace.” The subject matter and the holiday may coincide, but the rest of the congregation is off having fun at our church’s annual camping retreat and you have to listen to me. Work, indeed!

“Spirituality” and “workplace”: What an odd juxtaposition of terms! Almost an oxymoron. In my remarks this morning, I am going to make the case, however, that workplaces are more spirit than anything, and that when all is right with a workplace, our spirit soars. In addition, although not always, productivity increases, too.

My remarks this morning will not be limited to formal workplaces, what is going on when they are good to be a part of and bring out our best. Instead, I will have something to say to everyone here about work, whether you are employed full time in a big corporation, work for yourself, devote your efforts mostly to home or volunteer endeavors, or are retired.

This morning I will also claim that most adults have a ministry of some sort, whether employed in a formal work setting or not. Indeed, as I will claim, having a ministry, at least by my definition, is an essential aspect of healthy human life. Further, I will claim that to the extent that one performs one’s ministry effectively, one lessens the stress in one’s life and increases the joy. Hopefully, 20-minutes from now, you will understand more about your own ministry and will be more able to pursue it more enthusiastically.

You may be sitting there asking yourself, “What qualifies this guy to talk about spirituality in the workplace?” Even if *you* aren’t, *I* am! It’s very tempting to slide off

this by saying, “I am qualified to be up here speaking about this subject because Stephan Papa talked me into it.” While true, this wouldn’t fully answer the question.¹

Here is how it went. I remarked to Stephan that one of my daughters asked me, “Does our minister take requests for sermons?” Getting a kick out of it, I communicated this exchange to Stephan. He explained that while he isn’t a Top 40-radio station, he is always interested in what congregants want to hear him speak about, especially the kids. My daughter didn’t really have a specific subject in mind, but I did. I told Stephan that the most interesting sermon (well, “discourse”) I ever heard his predecessor give was on the importance of finding the ministry in your work. I mentioned that I had been waiting for 20-years for that sermon. Intrigued, Stephan invited me to sit with him to discuss the subject. In advance, I sent him a copy of a chapter I wrote for a book entitled *Transforming Work*. The chapter title was called, “Spirituality in the Workplace.” Stephan Papa is a pretty slick operator: before I left his office, I had agreed to deliver the sermon myself!²

The vantage point for the observations I will be making about work this morning is that for the last 20 years, I have been self-employed as an organizational consultant advising executives on how to transform their companies into places that bring out the best in their workforces. I maintain that this is more important than attending to physical capital, financial capital, or whiz-bang technology. Further, I believe—and there is ample evidence to support me in this—that the human spirit, when cooperatively and artfully applied to a task can replace all other forms of capital. In pursuing those beliefs, I practice something called, “Organization Development.”

Perhaps for this morning, more important than any of this, however, is that I am a seeker after the truth and have always been able to ask a penetrating question or two.

So, here are the questions guiding this talk:

1. Can a workplace feel like a home for our spirits? (Studs Terkel once interviewed hundreds of people about their work and wrote a book called *Working*. His conclusion? “Most people have work that is too small for their spirits.”)
2. If a workplace can feel like a home for our spirits, what does that look and feel like and what are the benefits?
3. What does it mean to be a minister and to minister?

¹ Since others besides those in my congregation will be reading this, I should explain that the Rev. Dr. Stephan Papa is the senior minister at the Main Line Unitarian Church.

² The complete reference is “Spirituality in the Workplace,” in John Adams (Editor), *Transforming Work*. Miles River Press, 1984. This book was reprinted in 2000. This chapter has been the impetus to at least one best selling book and has caused a score of complete strangers to take my hand in theirs when they have associated me with the piece. I remain proud of it.

4. What are the benefits, if any, of our ministering to others? Spiritually? Psychologically? Business-wise?
5. Lastly and most importantly, what is *your* ministry and what is going on when you are able to freely and fully minister to others?

Starting with the end in mind

In *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*, we are told that we should “begin with the end in mind” and, when it’s all over, we should “sharpen the saw.” Sharpen the saw means, in part, to reflect, to meditate, to think deeply, to learn. And I hope you will allow yourself to do this morning. But don’t sit back too far, because here is the “end” I have in mind: first I will work, then you will. I plan to speak for about 15-minutes and then I am going to ask you to turn to someone close to you to have a discussion. The theme of that discussion will be “What is my workplace like and what is my ministry?” If you do not go off each day to a workplace, or don’t think of yourself as a minister, don’t worry; you can still answer the questions.

Is this an important subject? Today?

Perhaps at the outset, I ought to acknowledge that “spirituality in the workplace” is either the most important and timely subject imaginable or the most laughably naive. Ours is a time when most of us are sick with stories of workplace greed and celebrity CEOs who care about nothing more than their own self-aggrandizement. Noting that we are facing “a once-in-a century confluence of events [that] is turning our world upside down,” *BusinessWeek’s* August 26th (2002) issue offers “25 Ideas for a Changing World.” These ideas are offered as antidotes to “the unexpected bursting of the tech bubble, the unnerving terrorism of September 11, the shocking revelations of corporate corruption, and the dramatic decline in equities and personal wealth.” And what is the very first idea? “Have CEOs remake their companies into paragons of corporate responsibility, luring investors via their virtue.” I hope you do not think of me as cynical, but I am not holding my breath.

What is spirituality in the workplace?

Before I can address the question “Can the workplace seem like a home to our spirits?” I first want to take a stab at defining what I mean by the term “spirituality.” In 1984 when I wrote “Spirituality In the Workplace,” I defined spirituality as “an animating life force, an energy that inspires one toward certain ends or purposes that go beyond one’s self.” I wrote that “The business organization that is able to tap into its employee’s spiritual centers, to liberate their spirits and give them something to rejoice about, is the company that is most fit for human habitation, and, other things being equal, the most profitable as well.”

Today, it seems *slightly* different to me. Here is how I am using the term spirituality today. It has four components. As I read them, I encourage you to think about the environment in which you expend your greatest effort, whether that is a school, the home, a volunteer organization, or a business, and ask yourself to what degree this “workplace” *induces* the following feelings in you. Keep track of your responses on the handout. [The handout is the last page in this document.]

1. In my workplace, I regularly feel important, significant, and valued.
2. In my workplace, I regularly feel competent and capable.
3. In my workplace, I regularly feel loveable, likeable, and good.
4. In my workplace, I am able regularly and meaningfully contribute to a socially beneficial cause that I feel passionately committed to.

You will notice, of course, that my definition of spirituality is partly psychological in nature and partly sociological. This reflects my professional training and personal inclination. It seems to me that you can feel important, capable, and loveable—all psychological states—without being in any way religious. In fact, these feelings relate to what psychologist Will Schutz defined as “fundamental interpersonal needs.” Additionally, you can feel passionately committed to a selfless cause—a sociological concept—without being religious. But you can’t feel all of these things in any measure without wanting to jump up and down with gladness and exultation. But is this spirituality? To a theologian, perhaps not. To me, yes. And creating workplaces where people bounce off the walls with enthusiasm for their work, for one another, and for themselves is my professional quest, my ministry, if you will.

Let’s recall that last criterion for a second: “regularly and meaningfully contribute to a socially beneficial cause that I feel passionately committed to.” On this subject, here is a wonderful quote by George Bernard Shaw:

*This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a **force of nature** instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances...*

I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live.

Clearly, Shaw experienced himself a connected to a great cause! Later, when I discuss the concept of ministry, I will come back to the issue of purpose.

Can a workplace feel like a home for our spirits?

The question before us at the moment is “Can a workplace feel like a home for our spirits?” Workplace and spirit is a very strange juxtaposition of terms. According to a friend who has spoken Hebrew his entire life, the word “Avodah,” in Hebrew means both “work” and “worship.” While perhaps syntactically kindred in Hebrew, the two have always seemed miles if not light years apart in any language.

We don’t need to dwell on this, but it might be instructive to ponder what prevents our workplaces from being better places to hang our hats. In making these remarks, permit me to draw on my own experience as an organizational consultant. Here are three forces that work against spiritually fulfilling workplaces: cultural hypnosis, the speeding up of our lives by technology, and business schools.

Cultural hypnosis takes two forms: a fear of cross-contamination of the religious and the secular, and patriarchy.

First, the fear of business/church boundary fuzziness. Based on over 100 in-depth interviews with top corporate leaders who claimed to be devout Christians, Laura Nash, a Harvard B-school professor and a Christian, concluded that, “Business people who claim to love their churches have difficulty identifying any ways in which their religion is a positive resource for them in their working lives. Pastors who profess admiration of their leading business congregants simultaneously describe Corporate America as a hotbed of greed and exploitation, a spiritual wasteland, a godless place.”³

According to Nash, the tension between religion and business can be traced to Christianity’s long-standing rejection of business as “a legitimate focus of religious expression” and “deep ideological hostility toward capitalism and the modern corporation.” Because this tension has not been resolved, Nash says, the Christian church has failed its parishioners.

Incidentally, according to Professor Nash, it is because religion has not addressed the needs of people in workplaces, all manner of gurus promoting secular approaches to spiritual fulfillment have sprung up. One needs only to mention the names Stephen Covey, Deepak Chopra, Meg Wheatley, and Dr. Phil to make this point. Nash calls this movement “spirituality lite.”

The other aspect of cultural hypnosis has to do with our conception of what characterizes the best business organization. Many years ago, Harvard psychologist David McClelland noted that most organizations require employees to agree to a number of conditions, none of which ever become conscious. Each of them, in my view,

³ This and the quotes by Ms. Nash that follow appeared in her article, “How the Church Has Failed Business,” in the July/August issue of *Across the Board*, a publication of The Conference Board.

pull in the opposite direction of spirituality in the workplace. These are especially prominent in business. Called it the “patriarchal contract.”

1. I agree to submit to the authority of others
2. I agree to stifle my own self-expression
3. I agree to toil for rewards I may or may not receive at a later point
4. I agree to devote my life to the organization over my family and community
5. I agree not to question any of the above

Regarding technology, the average worker is now accessible thanks to it, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Working in France over the past two years, I have been astonished to learn that even my French clients say that email is the biggest impediment to productivity they face. But still we US workers have it the worst. At 12, we take the fewest number of vacation days each year than any other country in the industrialized world and an increasing number of us feel compelled to check email and voicemail at least once during our vacations. This, in part, is a religious idea. It’s a reflection of Calvinism, “the more you work, the more you progress, succeed, rise in the hierarchy.” But I ask you: how can you exult in gladness and joy if you’re worn out? (By the way, Italians take the greatest number of vacation days at 42, and my French clients—by law—now take 35.)

Finally, the B-schools. BusinessWeek and many investors may currently clamor for greater disclosure, but one wonders: when will “Spirituality in the Workplace, 101” be made a requirement at Wharton? The most recent issue of *Harvard Business Review* may feature an article entitled “The Curse of the Superstar CEO,” but how soon will Jack Welch’s self-congratulatory autobiography (*Jack: Straight From the Gut*), currently at #357 on amazon.com’s list, be replaced by Robert Greenleaf’s, *Servant Leadership*, currently at 4,559?

If a workplace can feel like a home for our spirits, what does that look and feel like and what are the benefits?

If a workplace *can* feel like a home for our spirits, what does that look and feel like, what are the benefits, and what are some examples?

For one answer, let’s turn to *Fortune* magazine’s annual “Best Companies to Work For” survey. Every year, *Fortune* chooses the 100 Best from a pool of candidates that ask to be on their list. Most of the score is based on how employees respond to the *Great Place to Work Trust Index*, a survey about the company culture. What distinguishes these companies? Five things.

In the “best companies to work for”:

1. Management is competent and is perceived to have integrity
2. Management supports, cares about, and collaborates with employees
3. Workers see the workplace as equitable, impartial, and just
4. Employees feel proud of their jobs, team, work group, and the company as a whole
5. The workplace is hospitable and “intimate,” it feels like a community

If I don't say so myself, it sounds a lot like the definition of spiritual workplaces I offered earlier. But if I'm a hard-nosed businessman, I am going to care less about how employees perceive the company than how the company performs in the marketplace. So how *do* those “Best Companies to Work For” stack up? It turns out that they differ from the others in at least seven ways.

The “best companies to work for” (and by the way, those best companies are about 50% small companies of 1,000-2,000 employees with names like TDIndustries, The Container Store, and Stew Leonard's):

1. Receive more qualified job applications for open positions.
2. Experience a lower level of turnover.
3. Experience reductions in health care costs.
4. Enjoy higher levels of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.
5. Foster greater innovation, creativity and risk taking.
6. Benefit from higher productivity and profitability.
7. Finally, the publicly traded 100 Best Companies consistently outperform major stock indices (\$1,000 invested in the Best Companies ten years ago returned \$8,188 vs. \$3,976 invested in the Russell 3000).⁴

From two different standpoints, human system and business results, Southwest Airlines is widely recognized to be one of the best companies in America. Here is how Herb Kelleher, it's recently retired founder put it:

Southwest Airlines has a reputation as the wild and crazy guy of commercial aviation. Yet in many ways we are the most conservative company in our industry. We have always maintained a strong balance sheet, watched our costs, and paid as much attention to our financial fitness in good times as in bad. That discipline lets us move quickly when opportunities come our way. From 1990 to 1994, for instance, when the airline industry lost \$12.5 billion, we were able to buy more planes and enhance our capacity to compete in today's growing market.

⁴ See more results at http://www.greatplacetowork.com/gptw/business_benefits.html

But you can't just lead by the numbers. We've always believed that business can and should be fun. At far too many companies, when you come into the office you put on a mask. You look different, talk different, act different -- which is why most business encounters are, at best, bland and impersonal. But we try not to hire people who are humorless, self-centered, or complacent, so when they come to work, we want them, not their corporate clones. They are what makes us different, and in most enterprises, different is better.

I cannot personally claim to have played a part in making great any of those "Best Companies to Work for in America." But I *can* claim to have made a contribution to one of New Jersey's "Best Companies," a large insurance company. In support of its CEO, a project I was overseeing caused, in just one year's time, 20% gains in the perception of 55,000 people that they felt more involved in decisions that affect their work and more committed to the company and its strategy. I am proud to say that because we carefully tracked, via complex statistics, the effect of our work, this was due to the contribution my colleagues and I made. As a result, the spirit in that organization was palpably higher as a result. I can also tell you that because many of the executives did not truly understand what the project was intended to effect nor how to sustain its results, that those numbers have dropped again now that the project is over.

What is a ministry? Why is this is a practical question?

Now let me try to turn from a workplace that makes the spirit soar to the issue of one's own ministry. The connection is this: where there is an uplifting workplace, there are people ministering to one another, whether they call it that or not. It is probably the case that most of the managers in those "Best Companies to Work For" do not think of themselves as ministers, but it seems to me that this is a reasonable word to use in describing what is going when those lovely company cultures are created.

What is it to "minister"? Do *you* have a ministry? It turns out that your coworkers will be happier if you do, and you are apt to live longer, too.

Here is Stephan Papa's definition: To serve other people, a higher purpose, a cause, to serve God. I didn't make enough time to explore the subject in depth with Stephan (I got his definition in an email!), but I feel sure that the key word here is "serve," not God. To serve others is to minister, but you don't have to be religious. Works for me.

A look at several lines of research makes it evident that to serve others is to serve oneself. It's a win-win. One of my favorite books of all time is called *Pathfinders*, written by Gail Sheehy. Based on a study of over 60,000 people, Sheehy found that the people

who live the longest, healthiest, happiest lives are those with a purpose and meaning that transcends their own self-interests. In my terms, they are continually *ministering* to others.

But don't think these people are selfless chumps, because they aren't. They understand the importance of something that the late Canadian physician, biologist, and stress researcher, Hans Selye, called "enlightened self-interest." They take care of themselves, in part, by taking care of others. During a lifetime of research into the causes and consequence of physical illness caused by stress, Selye, completely untrained in religion, philosophy, or psychology, repeatedly found himself faced with philosophical, spiritual, and even religious questions about the lifestyle that leads to the least amount of distress and disease. He concluded in his book, *Stress Without Distress*, that four words sum up the key to living a long, happy and healthy life: "earn your neighbor's love." Selye was making the point that if the key people in your life care about you, they are apt to look out for you and put effort into your getting your needs met. If they don't, watch out.

If you are a manager, however, in a big, bustling business, isn't this just a bit outlandish? After all, aren't you there to deliver results versus make people love you? Years ago, when I used to run an in-depth management development program, I would expound on the philosophy that managers can and should create workplaces where people feel "attuned" with one another (I did not use the word love). Afterwards, one of the participants, Elaine Rose, wrote me a note that said:

When I first heard your ideas about what a business organization could be like, it sounded to me like...a warm family or group of friends. I was profoundly skeptical. I'm not sure, as you suggest, that my organization can ever be really concerned about me, that it can ever get to the point where what we produce and how we produce it add to the life of all. But I want you to know that I listened intently to that sublime idea, and I'm going to do my part—for my own mental health, if not just for the organization.

In terms of *my* ministry, to do what I can to make workplaces "fit for human habitation," this is good enough for me!

What is Your Ministry?

Finally, we come to the most important question of all: "What is *your* ministry and what is going on when you are able to freely and fully minister to others?"

Here are some questions to stimulate your thinking about this subject:

1. In what ways do you serve others?

2. In addition to those who immediately profit from your services, who else might? (For instance, if you are a schoolteacher, clearly your students profit, but don't the parents also benefit?)
3. Where in your life do you feel most uplifted? Think about times when you are the one who is uplifting others and when others are uplifting you. (For instance, you might volunteer in service to the homeless, but you might feel most uplifted when you are shopping at Nordstrom!)
4. Finally, to the nub of it, what is your ministry?

Note that as an organizational consultant, I cannot function without a handout! I am going to ask you to have a discussion with another person about your ministry, but first, I am going to ask you to think about where your ministry takes place, i.e., a workplace where you are most ministering to others. (Give instructions.)

Share With Your Neighbor

[The congregation used the handout; it is the last page of this document.]

Closing Remarks

Many people, like my friend Elaine Rose, initially think of a spiritually fulfilling workplace as a pipe dream. To those who would make of the workplace a more spiritual place, I say, "Keep dreaming!"

First, Hans Selye again:

To make a great dream come true, the first requirement is a great capacity to dream; the second is persistence—a faith in the dream.

To some, the quest to create workplaces that uplift us, bring out our best, leave us feeling important, competent, and lovely is not realistic; it would be a miracle and is not realistic. To them, I offer David Ben Gurion's words. Ben Gurion was the first Prime Minister of Israel. He said:

Anyone who does not believe in miracles is not a realist.

Go forth and make your workplace more fit for your spirit and for the spirits of others. To do so will be good for you, good for others, and good for the bottom line, no matter how you define that term.

Spirituality In the Workplace

September 1, 2002

MLUC

Richard McKnight, Ph.D.

Discussion

Premise: there is no greater gift (ministry) than that of your attention and careful listening.

1. Tell a (short) story about a time when felt on a regular basis that your spirit was aligned with your work.
2. Think about the setting where you expend the most effort. Using the following scale, place a number in the space to the right to indicate your answers to the following:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree Somewhat / Disagree Somewhat

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

- A. _____ In my workplace, I regularly feel important, significant, and valued.
 - B. _____ In my workplace, I regularly feel competent and capable.
 - C. _____ In my workplace, I regularly feel loveable, likeable, and good.
 - D. _____ In my workplace, I am able regularly and meaningfully to contribute to a socially beneficial cause that I feel passionately committed to.
3. Describe the ways in which you minister to others and who benefits from it.

Would you be interested in discussing these issues in greater depth?

Let me know at:

richard.mcknight@right.com

What Some Readers Have Said About This Piece

I found your discourse excellent, courageous, inspirational. I especially appreciated your definition of spirituality. Thank you for helping me help people find and develop the value in their lives that comes from serving, ministering to increase the goodness of life some call God.

—*Stephan Papa*

I love the piece you presented on your work as your ministry. It's personal, profound and erudite. I love both its content and style. With your permission, I'm going to send it to Marilyn Blair, editor of *OD Practitioner*, and suggest she run it in a future issue of ODP.

Thanks for sharing it with me. It's terrific!

—*Al Fitz*

What most struck me about your piece is both the passion and the ideas; the heart and the mind. Though I've had many conversations with you about this subject, I find new and wonderful things in your words. It made me think about my own life, and helped me to clarify my sense of "workplace" and "ministry." For me, the workplace is extended into every aspect of my working life - the way in which I earn a living and the ways in which I serve others in a voluntary capacity. Your piece helps me to fit it all together. Thanks for the inspiration, my friend.

—*Allen Zaklad*

Thanks for sharing that. It put a lot of thoughts I have had into words and practical experience. Makes you realize why some jobs "fit" and others do not.

—*John Goldener*

It's astounding how in tune you are with the needs of people. Thanks for sharing this with me.

—*Linda Wingate*

Thanks for sending me your sermon. I found it very enlightening in the abstract and could identify with it personally. What wonderful timing, given that during Yom Kippur I spent much time reflecting on both my personal and professional lives.

—*Larry Kahn*

I read your sermon...you are SO GOOD!!!!!! Where do you get the time to read and remember all that stuff you used in there? That was truly inspiring, backed up with so many good quotes and contexts.

—*Linda Ackerman Anderson*

“Spirit in the Workplace” struck me as expressing the ideas which propelled me into human resources. Unfortunately, the organizations I’ve been in for the past eight years have somewhat jaded me, but I took heart from Elaine Rose (a participant in one of your workshops) when she said, “I am going to do my part - for my own mental health, if not just for the organization.” This thought, when I remember it, can help me get through the days.

Thank you, Rick, for taking the time to minister to all of us through your presentation.

—*Phyllis Lewis, Senior Human Resources Executive*

Although admitting that “Spirituality in the Workplace” seems an oxymoron, especially given today’s intense moral diagnosis of world corporations, you seem to have no problem believing that employees can still bring their altar to the workplace and have a meaningful, even transcendent experience. In fact, in your opinion, even given the absence of no priest, vicar, minister or rabbi, the workplace offers the possibility of a manager/employee relationship that could be miraculous, albeit with secular end results—profits and contentment, notwithstanding employee satisfaction.

You don’t seem to have to go out of your way to prove that there’s a point to life, and no, it’s not the decimal. You speak for something that is very simple and very special, easily claimed by a person and workplace after coming to understand spirituality. This is not a type of glib Hallmark spiritual greeting. It is a conversion, of sorts, true, but not religious. It is more a respectful sum of corporate parts. The word “harmony” comes to mind.

Work as sanctuary? Why not?

As Thoreau once said, “If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.” Your proven outlook, illustrated within an example of advocating/managing major change for Prudential Insurance, is that in that particular example there only needed to be a clear foundation for each of thousands of Prudential’s disparate souls. Only thousands. But, they did it, gaining positive results of productivity. Happy productivity at that.

Seems simple enough. It seems something that many modern battered, complicated companies could manage. They should manage it. It does require honesty, however. And employing your employees as humanity. And, being simple; something exemplified when less really is more.

—*Bill McKnight*

Richard - I read your document - and liked it very much. as one who works in the business community, you know how valuable the message is. And to temper our message to the business world about the value of spirituality in the workplace, i often recall the words of Hugh Prather *Spiritual Notes to Myself* -"There is no worldly reward for our spiritual efforts. there isn't even a connection. The payoff for turning to god is more god, not more world." Thank you for sharing –

—*Ken Moore*

Thank you so much for sharing your sermon with me... I loved reading it. I remember an article you wrote many years ago on Manageing Stress or Stress in the Workplace, which back then was a resource for me when I was teaching Stress Management. You were a great writer and thinker back then as well as now. What I really like about the semon was: the appreciative approach, the way you weave in many sources and really good quotes, the way you get people to think about themselves and move toward action and the way you share yourself.

—*Loretta Raider*

Corporate Consultant

Thanks for the article. It was great! I think we have all seen the "age of the self involved leader" during the past 10-20 years and the damage it has done to the workplace (and the human spirit). I must work with 10-20 firms a year. It is like visiting the emergency room in the inner city on a Saturday night. The survivors of the past decade of destruction are saddened empty shells.

I have always believed leadership is an awesome responsibility. Not to the company or oneself but to the people you are leading. I have always acted in this way and tried to create a positive, caring, ethical and in fact "loving" environment and have been rewarded with great performance from all the groups I have lead. But, the response from my boss and my peers has been very negative. I think they were a bit threatened.

All in all, you can't separate life from the workplace without damage to the

participants. The human spirit is a powerful thing and when focused it can work miracles.

—Kevin McCormack
University of Alabama

Rick, I read your sermon this week. I absolutely love it. The quotes by Herb Kelleher about wearing a mask and the Gail Sheehy study about people living the longest really resonated with me. Having worked 4 years at a company then cited as "100 Best Companies to work for" I can vouch for the fact that your 4 statements about how one feels at work was the environment at my former employer. Everyone should read your article and contemplate its impact for themselves and their workplaces.

—Barbara Guido

I thought the piece was brilliant, well organized and logically presented. Clearly your ministry. I have stayed away from spirituality because of the religious overtones but your sermon opened a whole new possibility for me. A ministry is a powerful place to come from when I talk about Impression Management and the possibility it is for others to express their joy of the possibility of their ministry.

Thanks for sharing your ministry with me. I hope you don't mind if I share it with Karen. I know she will be proud.

—Donald Kaufman

I do believe that there are, periodically, some companies out there who as a company work to instill a spirit and a higher purpose for what they do. Most I fear do not achieve these purposes much less even strive for them.

I remember one year at Christmas time working with the marketing department of a local Pharma company. In the spirit of the season I asked " don't you feel good about working for a company that saves people's lives?" They looked at me like I was from mars. The only thing that mattered to the brand managers was how many millions their product was producing that year.

I do believe that there is a way, however, for all of us to find the spiritual dimension of our work if we are so inclined and have someone like yourself raising the possibility of it for us. I also believe that people who find this spiritual dimension to their work are likely to be happier in it and more productive for the company.

--Palmer Hartl

I finally had some quiet time to read the document on spirituality in the workplace. Wow, it really made me think. I love the way you captured the reality of the business environment. And, I sincerely hope we can change this to some degree – one can be hopeful. I would love to talk more on the topic as this message will be tumbling around in my head for awhile. If nothing else, I will refuse to compromise my own spirituality and beliefs in return for the unspoken corporate mandate, as I've done otherwise most of my life.

--Karen Schreyer