

¹Spirituality in the Workplace

by

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Most people have work that is too small for their spirits.
Studs Turkel

*This is the true joy in life; the being used for a purpose
recognized by yourself as a mighty one.*
George Bernard Shaw

After ten years as a consultant in American business organizations, I have come to the conclusion that most employees perceive work as a never-ending struggle which requires them to prove their worth constantly, to live in perpetual fear of losing their jobs, and to remain on constant watch, lest others around them impede their efforts or take recognition for their accomplishments. Further, judging from the nervous laughter I hear from employees when I discuss it, most people suffer from what I call the “Sunday night syndrome.” This is the tendency to “count down” the remaining leisure hours on Sunday evening prior to bedtime. The way most people feel about work is characterized by the person who says, “Hmmm. It’s 7 o’clock. My bedtime is 11 o’clock. Therefore, I have four hours of freedom left before I’m back into the grind.”

For those who have sought to build a management career in a business organization, work also often represents a never-ending series of political moves and territorialism, as well as “packaging” and “selling” oneself so that one might become and remain acceptable to those whose favor might pay off in promotions.

This is the kind of “cold war” most employees feel they engage in relative to their jobs. They steel themselves against the worst in their jobs, go along with the aspects that are tolerable,

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and give in totally on other aspects so that they might retain employment and extract the monetary and status rewards that “compensate” them for their pain and sacrifice. In short, most people do not *like* their jobs very much.

When people do not like their jobs much, when an inordinate amount of energy goes into bickering with co-workers, feeling exhausted and over-worked, and into molding and shaping the character to be acceptable at promotion time, productivity suffers, stress-related symptoms of emotional and physical distress emerge, and character development is stifled.

If it is true that most organizations are characterized by dehumanizing policies and practices such as these, and if it is true that most employees feel used and burned out, resulting in lowered productivity, why do such work climates persist? Obviously they don’t exist in *all* companies as Peters and Waterman (1982) found, but where they do, such work climates exist because of the cultural hypnosis we have about the essential nature of a business organization.

For most workers, managers, and executives I have worked with in the last 10 years. business organizations are seen as cold, impersonal machines that take raw materials, capital, and people in one end, perform some transformation, process, or service, and produce money out the other end—or should. According to this model, the primary objective of a business is monetary: shareholder equity, return on investment, and other financial measures. People are seen as “resources,” and whole departments are set up to “manage” them and make their performance more predictable and profitable. In the prevailing model, the ideal business posture is characterized by words such as “competition,” “aggressive,” and “winner.” “Our business is only about making money, one executive said to me, “and the only way we can do that in our industry is by keeping everybody uncertain and mean—inside the company and outside of it.”

I do not endorse this model of a business organization. I have nothing against competition or making a profit. Like one of the executives quoted in Peters and Waterman’s *In Search of Excellence* (1982), I believe profit is like health—the more of it the better but it is not a legitimate enough reason, by itself, for a business to exist.

In my view, the prevailing model of business-as-machine results in practices which are harmful to employees, to society, and ultimately, to the “bottom-line.” Before I go into detail about more socially responsible models of business, however, I would like to relate an anecdote, which I think, will reveal how the prevailing model of business is injurious. The anecdote has to do with a chance encounter with a man named Mike who was a participant in a stress management seminar 18 months earlier. Mike is a middle-level executive in his company.

When I saw Mike this time, we were going through the line in his company’s cafeteria. I did a double take—he had lost a great deal of weight. “I almost didn’t recognize you. You’ve slimmed down, Mike!” I said.

“Yeah, I lost thirty-pounds. They came off quickly following my coronary by-pass operation,” he replied. Joining Mike for lunch, I was fascinated by his story.

When he was a participant in the stress management seminar, Mike claimed to have no tension at work—the only stress in his life was at home, he said. His job was great, he insisted, yet he revealed a tendency towards violent anger at home. And he had a striking way of “relieving” it. “Oh. some days I come home from the office and feel some tension, and I usually yell at one of the kids or my wife. Occasionally, if things are *real* bad, I’ll go into a downstairs closet and punch out holes in the sheetrock. Scares the hell out my family, but I always calm down.”

In the seminar, Mike maintained that the nature of work was “dog-eat-dog.” He worked in an all-male environment featuring a lot of competition, and he claimed to enjoy the

challenges. “I’m a survivor,” he said. In a part of the seminar on the relationship of work to stress and health, Mike disputed the claim that one’s feelings about one’s job have a dramatic impact on one’s health. He especially disliked my claim—backed up by research data collected in his company—that when one feels that one must routinely compete with others in the course of one’s work, symptoms of physical illness are likely to develop.

As Mike listened to my presentation, he said audibly two or three times, “I don’t believe it.” I asked him what he didn’t believe. “I don’t believe what I think you’re trying to get at. I think you are trying to suggest that people can feel differently about their jobs than they do normally. What you are trying to say is that people in business should matter to each other, they should feel like their work contributes to some social good, that they don’t have to go home tired each day.” “Well,” I said, “that’s over-stated, but you’re getting my point all right.”

Mike vigorously maintained that being in business means you have to be tough; the weak have no place in business and should get out for their own good and for the good of the company. “Okay,” he said, “if a person really hates his job, he might get sick. But it isn’t the company’s fault. The company isn’t in the business of trying to make people happy at work. The purpose of the company is to make money.”

One coronary by-pass operation, 30 pounds lighter, and 18 months later, Mike’s philosophy had changed. That day in the cafeteria, Mike said, “You know, when I was in the hospital, I began to reevaluate my life. My family life had some troubles so I set some goals about that. But the pain of my life that gave me the most trouble was my job. I almost died in the hospital. I was off work for three months. And in all that time, during that entire trauma, do you know how many of my co-workers reached out to me? Only two—my boss and my secretary.”

Given all this, did Mike still believe that business has to be dog-eat-dog and impersonal? Yes. Lie maintained that it would be nice if work could draw out the best in people, but he still believed it was impossible. “That’s just the way business is,” he said. When I asked him how he now deals with the tension this creates in him—desiring a supportive work environment and thinking it to be impossible—he said, “Oh, I now put my best energy into other things like my family and my hobbies. Compared to before, I’m just putting in my time here now.

There are many people like Mike reporting to work every day, people who are cynical and tired, who have given up and who are content to make it to quitting time. Daniel Yankelovich (1982) reported that a majority of American workers admit to working less hard at their jobs today than 10 years ago, even though larger aspects of their jobs today ‘are under their personal control. Most people felt that while they still believed it to be morally important for them to work hard, they didn’t foresee any social or personal benefit deriving from their effort; someone else just becomes richer.

Most managers and executives haven’t given up trying to be acceptable and admired by their organizations. On the contrary, as Maccoby (1976) found, employees at this level put enormous energy into shaping and molding their character, perceptions, and expectations so that they will more closely fit that which is perceived to be valued by their company. Since most business organizations are set to function as money-generating machines, the result is an executive population with highly refined skills of the head, as Maccoby said, but not of the heart. In other words, these men and women, with the encouragement and reward of their companies, gradually strip themselves of their own ability to feel, to empathize, to take a stand on values they hold dear.

When our institutions require us to shape and strangle our natures, or when we cannot understand and become enthusiastic about their objectives, a part of us dies inside. I call that part

our spirit. The business organization which is able to tap into its employees' spiritual centers, to liberate their spirits, and to give them something to rejoice about is the company which is most fit for human habitation, and other things being equal, the most profitable as well. The failure of our

current business model to enlist employees in some kind of unselfish, nonquantitative "cause" is at the root of most productivity problems in the United States.

Reading how the Japanese create a sense of family among their employees, how their employees feel a sense of commitment to the enterprise, and how their employees seem to be enriched rather than "used up" by their work experience, I conclude that something other than quality circles and lifetime employment is behind it. I am impressed by Pascale and Athos's (1981) account of such organizations, especially when I read about the "spiritual values" underlying their efforts (such as their concern for collaboration and harmony).

We don't usually think of the term "spiritual" when we discuss corporate life. To most of us, business organizations are anything but spiritual. Most likely, we think of them in terms of money and the pursuit of power. Yet, when we ignore the spiritual values at work we inhibit the best in people.

When I use the term spirituality in this chapter, I refer to an animating life force, an energy that inspires one toward certain ends or purposes that go beyond self. We can never observe this force directly. It only can be inferred from behavior and social customs. It can inspire superhuman efforts to accomplish something, such as those demonstrated by outstanding athletes, star salespeople, creative laboratory researchers, or first-rate supervisors.

A model that presents the business organization as a cold, impersonal machine denies humanness. People have needs in three areas: body, mind, and spirit. Yet most companies, if they acknowledge that people have needs at all, act as if there are only two requirements for producing good work: money and job security. Enlightened business people are beginning to understand that there is much more to performance. As documented by Peters and Waterman (1982), employees perform most energetically, creatively, and enthusiastically when they believe they are contributing to a purpose that is larger than themselves: in other words, when they have a *cause*. The role of purpose in our lives is central to any discussion of spirituality in the workplace.

THE PURPOSE OF PURPOSE

In her survey of 60,000 Americans, Sheehy (1981) sought to discover the characteristics associated with well-being and general life satisfaction. Sheehy found 10 hallmarks of well being which distinguished people who were well satisfied with their lives from those who were not. The most important factor found to be characteristic of happy, contented people was, "My life has meaning and direction." Specifically, these people's lives are devoted to something outside themselves.

According to Sheehy, this characteristic correlates most closely with optimum fulfillment in life. Happy people find meaning and purpose through involvement with something beyond selfish concerns, like doing something for others and pursuing various social objectives. Most people in her study, when asked if they were devoted to some purpose or cause outside of and larger than themselves, said "No." By contrast, the most-satisfied people in her study, those who

said “Yes,” were also free of emotional and physical symptoms of distress and had the best outlooks. Sheehy found that one’s purpose need not be so lofty that pursuing it will result in sainthood. Most of the purposes held by her satisfied respondents were earthly, but all of their “causes” went beyond their own self-serving concerns and enhanced their world. Many were active in community work; others, in their church; and one, a small entrepreneur, was committed to creating a business organization that enhanced the lives of his employees.

Having a clear sense of transcendent purpose—one that goes beyond oneself—has a number of positive consequences. It provides us with a source of enthusiasm and energy and a goal to strive for. We envision something, which we might, by expenditure of effort, achieve. We are clear as to how others will benefit from our efforts. Purpose is a catalyst for our conduct. A life purpose gives meaning to our lives and allows us to take comfort when we are faced with misfortune. Victor Frankl’s (1959) account of life in Nazi concentration camps is a magnificent testimony that those who have clear, transcendent purposes fare far better under extreme hardship than those who do not. Perhaps the most important aspect of a transcendent purpose is simply that it makes us feel good. As Sheehy suggested, having a transcendent purpose results in being in love with the world.

Much of my work with executives involves helping them become clearer about the presence or absence of purpose in their lives. Through guided fantasies, relaxation, and drawing I help them gain clarity as to what they stand for and/or what they want to stand for. I ask them to fashion their purpose into a one-sentence statement. Nearly all of these statements reflect humanistic values and have a beautiful, poetic quality about them. Here is a sampling:

- I am loving and caring with everyone in my family so I can flourish and they may grow.
- I am bringing peace and contentment to myself and others by accepting imperfection in myself and others.
- I am wrapping others in love and happiness and opening myself to the world.

These executives are reminded of what they usually already know but don’t often act upon—a life centered around a clear purpose is totally integrated. What goes on inside—feelings, attitudes, plans, hopes—is reflected in our behavior. Our principles, values, and—ultimately—our behavior stem from and are consistent with our purpose. Indeed, our lives are *on purpose*; we have intention and direction.

Are *all* possible purposes actually life-enhancing? Our history is full of monsters whose purposes were clear. From Sheehy’s study, it would appear that decades of speculations by humanistic psychologists and religious thinkers are right: the kinds of purposes which make one fall in love with life, and want to contribute to others’ falling in love with life, are the purposes which contribute to one’s psychological and physical well-being and to a more generalized social well-being.

The pursuit of two purposes at once is a source of conflict, and unresolved conflicts result in stress symptoms. When we try to pursue two objectives, such as accumulating wealth and serving our God or country or family, we experience distress. Psychoanalysts have been writing about this for nearly a century, and one religious leader—Jesus—addressed it 2000 years ago. According to him, one cannot serve two masters.

We also experience distress when our institutions do not share our purpose. Such is the case, I believe, with a growing number of employees who can't find much to identify with in their companies. Their performance tapers off and they develop physical and emotional symptoms of distress. People are becoming more aware of the psychological and physical costs of putting forth great efforts in service of the American Dream. They are discovering that it may be to the company's advantage for them to relocate every 18 months, but it certainly isn't to their own or their family's advantage. They resent being used up and spit out. It is conventional business wisdom that the purpose of business is to increase shareholder equity, but of the employees Eve observed, fewer and fewer are willing to devote their lives to the shareholders.

Since becoming interested in the importance and benefits of transcendent purpose in life, I have made a practice of interviewing people I meet who seem contented. This tests my hypothesis that contentment is associated with an intention to transcend one's own concerns, to become connected to some higher good. I was impressed; for example, with an elegant, 74-year-old man I met one day. "I wouldn't dream of retiring," he told me. "I'd miss the people who come into my business every day. I love people. And besides, they seem to need someone like me to bring smiles into their day. I am in the fur business. Most of my customers are wealthy. But, you know, having money doesn't bring happiness like so many people think. I tell people I'm in the fur business, but I'm really in the joy business. I keep going because I believe people need help in feeling a little more joy in their lives". He had more energy and enthusiasm than any of the several people he brought smiles to that day (including me!).

THE PURPOSE OF WORK

As I listened to a corporate president speak to a group of managers about his career not long ago, I felt an overwhelming sadness when he made the statement. "If it weren't for the money and prestige I'd lose, I'd go back to my old sales management job tomorrow. I loved that job." This executive, widely known for the stress he causes for others in his organization and his own coronary-prone behavior, went on to describe how frustrating it is to get anything done in a large organization. He deals with these frustrations, he said, by working on antique cars on weekends. When Sunday ends, he puts away his tools, heaves a big sigh, and prepares to trudge back to the office. "You have to realize," he said, "that working isn't fun very often."

This is a vivid description of a person who is alienated from deep meaning in his work. He is hardly alone. Most people who have chosen corporate life have known these feelings. Judging by the dramatic rise in the number of stress-related problems among Americans, *most* of us feel alienated. But most of us press on, blind to what really ails us.

Those familiar with managers and executives in American business know that among this group the work ethic is not dead or even dying. Toward what end do so many strive? Maccoby (1976) saw it as the advancement of their own career. They will make enormous sacrifices for it, will bend over backwards to avoid "making waves" in favor of it, and will treat themselves as an object by "packaging" and "marketing" themselves to advance it. Fromm (1976) claimed that this "careerism" qualified as a religion, if one accepts religion as "a frame of orientation and an object of devotion." The consequence of such an orientation to work, according to Maccoby, is that we begin to view life and work as a game; to become motivated primarily by competition, winning, and achievements; and to begin valuing shallow emotional attachments, both at home and at work. (Deeper relationships at home and work impede judgment, it is reasoned.)

For a growing number of employees, such a work ethic is becoming less compelling. Yankelovich (1981) observed that people all over the country are reconsidering the relative merits of conventional objects of success—such as a promotion—and are beginning to place higher value on less financially rewarding, but more personally satisfying, achievements such as closeness to self, family, community, and nature.

Almost everyone has come across numerous accounts of successful executives leaving high-paying jobs at their career peak to run restaurants in Vermont or to run a charter service in the Bahamas. Are they kooks? Are they sufferers of terminal mid-life crisis? I think not. I agree with Ferguson (1980) that in many cases, “The mid-life crisis may be due in part to the cumulative effect of denial, the sudden thrust into consciousness of pain that can no longer be sedated.” Most employees are in pain from one of two sources: 1) either they are devoted only to non-transcendent materialistic purposes such as career advancement; or 2) they have a transcendent purpose that doesn’t mesh with the purpose of the company they work for. Those in the former category are usually unaware of their distress (although a heart attack can do wonders for awareness sometimes), while those in the latter category are acutely aware of the split between their purpose and that of the company. If they are lucky, they can find jobs in other companies where there is more affinity, but companies with goals that transcend profit are still rare.

A *Business Week* article on corporate culture (1980) noted that employees cannot be fooled; they know and understand the real priorities of the corporation, regardless of what is said in the annual report. At Pepsico, for example, the first and foremost object of devotion is beating hell out of Coca-Cola. One Pepsico executive said careers ride on tenths of market share points. If one is continually threatened with termination by a drop in market share, it is hard to remember that one’s purpose in life is to contribute, for example, to the advancement of peace.

Increasingly, Americans are concerned about all aspects of health. They are concerned with their fitness, their emotions, and the “healthiness” of associating with certain work associates, friends, and even relatives. Many people have divorced because their relationship with their spouse was not “healthy.” In addition, millions of people are buying books on stress and reading about the consequences of working in any environment that does not bring out their personal best. Some young people, like many that responded to Ferguson’s *Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980) questionnaires, seem to reject the idea of a career altogether. A young truck driver, asked what he intended to do with his liberal arts education, answered:

“I will practice living. I will develop my intellect, which may incidentally contribute to the elevation of the esthetic and cultural levels of society. I will try to develop the noble and creative elements within me. I will contribute very little to the grossness [sic] of the national product”. (p. 332)

As Ferguson analyzed the questionnaires of Aquarian conspirators—people dedicated to a vision of a world of wholeness and harmony—she found among them a strong desire to make a life, not just a living. They were seeking a vocation, not just a job or career. For them, work had or, they believed, could have, the quality of a “calling” in which what is given comes from some very deep inner reservoir of intention, not merely the desire for money or status. For the person with a vocation, work becomes a positive contributing factor to mental health. Some people use

their sense of purpose like a beacon; it guides them to ever-increasing congruence of head, heart, and hands. For them, greed and ambition are clearly not enough. As Yankelovich (1981) noted, such people are beginning to pursue an “ethic of commitment,” in which they seek to give more than they take from society.

Evidence that business people have such desires is available. For example, I was fascinated by a 1983 television interview with Stanley Weiss, president of American Mineral, Inc., and founder of Business Executives for National Security, an organization composed of high-level corporate executives who oppose the nuclear weapons buildup. Only half-jokingly, Weiss said, “Being dead is not good for business.” Another such group, the American Committee on East-West Accord, is devoted to a nuclear arms freeze and to improving relations with the Soviet Union. Robert Schmidt, vice chairman of Control Data Corporation and a member of this group, said the nuclear arms race is “the biggest single threat I can think of” (Graves, 1983). Such executives hardly conform to the “organization man” stereotype in which profits are all-important.

THE SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATION

In *In Search of Excellence*, Peters and Waterman (1982) demonstrate that a spiritually oriented business organization is not only conceivable, but also desirable in financial and human terms. They give marvelous examples of successful companies in the United States, which promote transcendent values. The authors studied 75 companies, which were judged excellent according to various financial and other measures. One of the eight characteristics of these companies is of particular relevance to our discussion here: these great companies bring out the best in employees by helping them find transcendent meaning in their work.

In these companies, the primary role of top executives is to articulate meaning and vision for employees and to create an environment of clear intent. The values expressed almost always go far beyond financial objectives. In research that preceded (but was reported in) *In Search of Excellence*, the authors found that companies whose only articulated goals were financial did not do nearly as well financially as companies that had more fundamental values. The founders of some of America’s oldest and most venerable companies were often visionary and spiritual men (e.g., Thomas J. Watson, Sr., of IBM and J. Howard Pew of Sun Oil). These companies retain their founders’ visions nearly as strongly today as when they were personally at the helm. In such companies, executives go far beyond the normal bounds of business life to care for employees and for the larger culture surrounding the business. Pew, for example, refused to lay off employees during the Depression. Watson, in the days preceding World War II, had the word “PEACE” hung beneath his famous “THINK” signs wherever they appeared in his plants and offices. These leaders, paternal and moralistic though they sometimes were, tried to provide a spiritually uplifting climate. This paid off for them in terms of employee morale and loyalty, as well as in profitability.

If successful companies state goals beyond profit, what are they? For IBM, the overarching goal is customer service. For Delta Airlines, it’s service plus creating a “family feeling” within the company. At Caterpillar Tractor, there is a commitment to “48-hour parts service anywhere in the world.” At a very successful real estate firm in San Francisco, the goal is “to create and play games together transcending economic limitations in a satisfying environment.” J.C. Penney Co. is still operating on “The Penny Idea,” which entails, among

other principles, “to expect for the service we render a fair remuneration and not all the profit the traffic will bear.” Pascale and Athos (1981) described this kind of goal setting in depth and referred to such goals as superordinate.

Superordinate goals characterize many Japanese companies. They have identified goal types, which include emphases on: the company as an entity (emphasizing that the company will be one which people are proud to be associated with); the company’s relationship with customers, employees, and internal operations; the company’s relationship to society and the state; and the company’s relationship to the culture, including its religion. In the latter case, the company commits itself to advancing cultural values such as honesty and fairness.

Spirituality goes far beyond what is typically thought of as “religion.” Where religion refers to a set of beliefs, creeds, and rites, spirituality is the more general need for which religious practices are a vehicle. A spiritually oriented business organization would seek to create a climate, which meets as many facets of this need as possible.

My interviews with contented people have revealed the following facets of spirituality:

- enthusiasm about life
- a clear sense of purpose which is integrated into their daily activities
- acceptance of self and others (with all our faults, we are still a noble)
- lives lived gracefully (let things take the time they take, take time to enjoy others, are perpetual students of life)
- orientation towards giving and away from taking
- optimism
- peacefulness
- routinely demonstrated courage (e.g., are willing to state the unpopular opinion or disclose their true feelings)

Contented, purposeful people are enthusiastic about life! Robert Johnson (1977) noted that in the original Greek, the word enthusiasm means “to be filled with God.” He observed that when a person is “filled with God,” he or she tends to be highly creative. We need enthusiastic employees in our organizations, whatever the nature of their personal God.

Excellent companies understand the value of employee enthusiasm and emphasize its importance in company policies and practices. For example, at Hewlett-Packard one of the three requirements stated as essential to corporate objectives is enthusiasm. Highly contented people have a clear sense of purpose, which is integrated into their daily activities. So, too, does the spiritually oriented organization. A lofty-sounding statement of purpose in the annual report means nothing if company policies, procedures, and structures do not support it. Peters and Waterman found that top executives of excellent companies function to ensure that no corporate

decision affecting internal or external practices runs afoul of the company's purpose. If the Dayton-Hudson Company, for example, which states its purpose as serving the business, social, and cultural needs of our communities'' (Ouchi, 1981), were to begin retailing inferior goods at inflated prices to migrant workers, employees would quickly recognize dissonance between policy and actions. It takes very few infractions of company purpose for internal integrity to be lost.

Alignment is a unifying concept describing the meshing of purpose with organizational practice. This perspective reminds us that organizations, like individuals, are made up of parts, designed to serve some whole. The major aims of aligning an organization are: 1) to harmonize the relationships among its various parts (person, team, department) so that each understands and contributes to the purpose of the whole; and 2) to clarify the organization's relationship to the larger purposes of human evolution and environmental health—the spiritual uplifting of the larger culture. Alignment results in lessened competition among component parts of the system and in greater support for continued existence from the surrounding culture ("Project Update: Organization Alignment," 1981).

Whereas alignment specifies the need for conceptual harmony between organizational units and organizational purpose, the picture is incomplete if we do not consider the emotional tone of the organization. *Attunement* has to do with the desire of all system units and members to work harmoniously together; the tendency to see the needs and concerns of the whole as the needs and concerns of the individual and *vice versa*. Organizations that are attuned are characterized by love: members display empathy, caring, understanding, tolerance, mutual support, and forgiveness. Whereas alignment tends to evoke excitement and drive, attunement is a softer, moderating force. It tends to balance the drive and excitement by helping us keep in mind each others' needs and our own sense of what is right in terms of our own transcendent purpose. [Chapters 5 and 7 have elaborated on these concepts.]

Most of us are so jaded by our past experiences in non-loving organizations that we can't even imagine what such an organization might be like! Yet most of us have experienced working as a member of a temporary project team or have been part of a community or religious group that brought out our best. We probably experienced sadness when we left the group. Such sadness is evidence that attunement probably characterized the group. We don't feel ground down and used up by such experiences—we feel enhanced.

Love is a powerful concept. The mere description of a business characterized by love (to the uninitiated) provokes strong reactions. On many occasions, I have asked groups of managers and executives to imagine a business organization that has virtually no selfishness; that cares about them as individuals; that is a refuge of sanity and peacefulness from a chaotic and hostile world—always with the same result. The majority thinks it's impossible to achieve. Many seem so fearful and suspicious of love in general that they claim they would prefer to work for an organization where the norms are more competitive. Sometimes we prefer the undesirable "known" to the more desirable unknown as a protection against the pain of dashed hopes.

By inference from Peters and Waterman's work, the importance of attunement and alignment is intuitively apparent to the leaders of many excellent companies. These concepts have decidedly practical consequences as well as being emotionally satisfying. As Roger Harrison points out [Chapter 7], we have created a world in which it is increasingly difficult to compel anyone to do anything. Outstanding business leaders understand that you really can't get

people to do things; you can only encourage them to want to do things. And this encouragement is not through fear, but through meaning, love, and hope.

Increasingly, I find that business executives long for a work experience which reinforces their connectedness to a larger whole and which cultivates within them a set of aspirations which transcend narrow personal concerns. Following a lengthy management development experience, one manager wrote:

“When I first heard your ideas about what a business organization could be like, it sounded to me that you were describing a change from a cold and indifferent profit production plant to 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 adds 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.”

AIDING AND ABETTING SPIRITUALITY IN THE BUSINESS ORGANIZATION

The fundamental requirement for business organizations to be more concerned with our spiritual nature is a radical change in the way the purpose of business is conceived. If we ask a businessperson what the purpose of business is, we probably will be told without hesitation: “to make a profit.” If we press the subject, we also may hear something about “providing jobs” or “keeping the economy going,” but we will hear very little about people, their need for meaning, or uplifting contributions to human life. If we are to increase productivity in this country, we must change this paradigm. We must acknowledge that among the primary business products of any company are its internal culture and its impact on the communities in which it operates. We have created businesses, which have become cavalier with respect to these products, resulting in a widely shared view that, within the narrow letter of the law; anything goes as long as profit results.

The most promising long-term strategy for changing this perception is to change the business school curriculum. Educational institutions are the articulators and transmitters of culture. If our business schools continue producing thousands of MBAs with a “profit only” perspective about business, organizational change agents who want to foster more humane businesses will have a never-ending job.

What can be done internally in a company to increase its attention to spirituality? The best answer is implicit in the Zen dictum, “Find the parade and get in front of it.” There is considerable evidence that a growing segment of the American workforce already desires greater significance in its work. Most of us are tired of working for companies that grind us down and offer money and status in return for our stressful, alienated lives. This feeling extends, I believe, to the very top of the organization. I have had numerous conversations with top-level executives who privately mourn having spent so much of their lives serving organizations that won’t miss them when they retire and don’t seem to fully value them now. As one oil company executive

said sadly, “There will be no flags flying at half mast at any service stations when *I* retire.” This executive, however, like so many others who have been culturally “hypnotized,” still maintained that an uplifting business climate is sheer idealism.

Yet it is this strong desire for closeness, for collaboration, for being part of something larger, that represents the open door for change agents. What we can imagine, we can create. We can begin to imagine alternatives if we take our pain seriously. That is what creativity is all about: acknowledging our present discomfort with what is and beginning to consider new ideas, which might change our circumstances and feelings. In a climate of cynicism, alienation, and fear, the person who is able to articulate a vision of hope and connectedness is the one who, if persistent and respectful of the audience, can generate enormous energy to achieve it. This is the most needed role of organizational change agents today, whether the change agent is a manager, executive, or consultant.

Top executives are in the best position to do this. Organization development specialists and other change agents can help executives gain perspective on people’s growing need for spiritual meaning in their work and on people’s basic desire to cooperate in achieving objectives they appreciate as worthwhile, but executives are the ones who actually change business policies, norms, and practices.

Personal conviction combined with moderation and interpersonal skill almost always gets attention. If you are a change agent and have access to top executives, make your approach as personal as possible. Ask her or him what her or his personal experience at work is like. Ask this top executive what others in the organization feel about working there. Ask if he or she doesn’t think that an organization filled with people who regard themselves as family, who are in love with their work and what the organization stands for, will put forth a magnificent effort toward company objectives. Finally, begin a discussion about what has to change in order for this become a reality.

Top executives who seek to promote spirituality, and the coordinated and creative effort it inspires, must be totally consistent in their approach. Every company policy, procedure, and pronouncement must line up with the superordinate goal, even if this means denying opportunities to make additional profit. Pre-employment orientation programs would give job applicants a chance to learn about the values the company stands for before they decide to take a job offered to them. In this way, they would be able to decide whether or not this was a culture they could support and, if so, their investment would be enlisted before they even started work. The company’s reward system would be tied directly to the transcendent goals. Employees who contribute to the achievement of these goals in an unusually effective way would be rewarded; not only in financial ways, but perhaps in released time—to give service to their communities or to advise an executive on company culture for a few days.

In a company with transcendent goals, organization and management development specialists can help managers and executives create organizational forms, which promote the superordinate objectives. Learning how to learn about employee motivation, about how to create exciting organizational visions that support company values, and about how to help workers find their unique niche in the organization is the kind of management development that pays off.

Change agents do not usually have client companies whose top executives request help in making the company more spiritually oriented. Usually, we take the company for what it is now, and do what we can to make it a more uplifting place to work. I would like to share a few ideas about how this might be done through management development programs, since this is a very accepted medium of organizational influence.

Remember the Zen dictum: “Find the parade and get in front of it.” Most managers and executives want to feel like they are significant and that their efforts contribute to something enduring and worthwhile. Like most of us, they want to be saintly, if not actually saints. Management development programs can help them express this side of themselves through values clarification exercises, reflecting on past desirable working situations, constructing portraits of ideal leaders, and helping them understand their personal purpose in life and whether or not it matches their current home and workplace behavior. This should be done in an environment of love, cooperation, and support among participants.

Done creatively, all of this will make managers aware that they are human beings with needs and feelings and that others are, too. Maccoby (1976) called this “the development of the heart.” A key is to create a learning environment in which mutual caring and nurturance are the norms. Managers must experience the emotional truth and desirability of organizations with heart.

The program should give them an assignment to perform—or better yet, have a senior executive give them one—that represents a difficult, long-standing human problem such as how to rekindle employee loyalty following a massive layoff period. Then, by giving program participants mountains of feedback, teach them how to perform this task in such a way that everyone contributes evenly to the work of creating a project organization that fosters the human spirit.

Finally, the program must cultivate the skills necessary to set transcendent goals and teach the participants how to gauge the extent to which their organizations are now achieving them, the degree to which current organizational forms and practices aid or inhibit their achievement, and so on. Teach participants how to be consultants to each other in this process, too, so that a new network begins to form among managers who value cooperation, who know it can work, and who can foster it.

In our attempts to increase attention to spirituality in the workplace, we must keep in mind that nothing very worthwhile was ever accomplished by zealots and moralists. What I am trying to advocate here is gently helping individuals to discover their own uniqueness and to find ways of attaching it to some endeavor above and beyond them. Let’s develop and lead organizations that enhance life, taking the role of nurturing servants, gently guiding our organizations toward ever closer approximations of everyone’s secret ideal: a workplace in which we feel valued and loved, and in which we believe ourselves to be aligned with some great purpose.

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Spirituality in the Workplace

McKnight defines spirituality as the animating life force that inspires one toward purposes that are beyond one 's self and that gives one's life meaning and direction. He describes examples of problems that arise when this force is ignored in organizations. He then illustrates what is possible in organizations where human spirit is encouraged. The chapter closes with a variety of suggestions for enhancing spirituality in the workplace.

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