



# **Management as a Spiritual Practice**

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## Preface

Managers are struggling today! Pressure at work is non-stop. We work and live in a frenetic business world driven by global economics few managers truly understand. Someone said that working for a corporation is like being on a non-stop treadmill – if you ever slow down or take a pause you cannot ever catch up. Executives, who have faithfully kept up the pace, over many years, can suddenly find that their lives have become out of sync with their values and the people closest to them. The following perspective was written for management practitioners – people who are mindful of being a manager and who wish to perform a better job. This paper offer managers a path that can help you to regain balance between the world of work and your inner-self. There is a way to connect your deeper values, your spirituality, with your daily work.

There is, of course, a distinction between spirituality and religion. Viewing workplace spirituality through the lens of religious traditions and practice can be divisive to the extent that religion can view itself as the one path to God and salvation. It may exclude those who do not share in a denominational tradition leading to social and legal conflicts in the workplace. Translating religion into workplace spirituality can foster zealotry at the expense of company goals and decrease morale.

Spiritual concerns are separate from the sharing of the beliefs of any particular religious group. Religion is concerned with the claims of a faith tradition. Spirituality is concerned with the human spirit, for example, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, and a sense of harmony between oneself and others. This paper considers the meaning and power of spirituality in the workplace as perceived through a management lens.

Management and leadership have been written about extensively by numerous authors. There are many articles, books, research papers and dissertations that treat these subjects separately or as being closely related even as one. As a result of my education in management, extensive reading of the literature, research, observation, over 35 years' experience in industry and having worked for over 35 managers during my career, I have observed examples, in individual executives, that offer evidence that leadership and management are inherently intermingled and that they are separate subjects. I view them as both being combined in some cases and as being separate in others. My words are not to debate either perspective but present what managers of companies must begin to address within their realms of influence. Whether or not it is called management or leadership, from your perspective, Corporate America is at a crossroads!

## Introduction

Managers in companies have always coped with change, driven by external and internal forces, but never more so than during recent years. Through a concept known as 'agency', companies depend on managers, at all levels of the organization, to ensure that the work of the enterprise is properly performed. Management serves as the company's backbone by which the organization is able to perform its work, achieve its intended goals and ensure the company copes with ongoing change. However, managers are not always equipped for these challenges. Being a manager, regardless of the manager's level in a company, is a significant responsibility because managers by definition hold a position of trust.

Being in a position of trust allows management to inherently exert influence over employees especially subordinates. Managers, at all levels, are in a unique position to influence others in the workplace. Managers through their interaction with their team members can: (1) inspire employees by setting an example, (2) positively influence employees' lives, and (3) help employees reach life goals. The fact that managers influence employees' lives through their regular interaction creates a spiritual potential, an opportunity to foster spiritual development. Today, many employees will spend over 50 years of their lives working full- or part-time, which is longer than they expected to work when they began their careers. In spite of this long commitment to working, something vital is missing, which is spirit... spirit within us as individuals and as a community at our places of work. Company management, at all levels, has a responsibility to address this spiritual void.

Through their words and actions, managers can "lift employees up" or "tear them down", knowingly and unknowingly. One positive or negative statement or action, by a manager, can affect a person for years. To this end, managers have an obligation to think beyond "management by spreadsheet" whereby all decisions are driven by numbers. Numbers should not drive business; business should drive numbers! Unfortunately, many managers have been trained to believe that unless something can be measured precisely it has less legitimacy. Worse, that unless something cannot be measured precisely, it is without meaning.

Business is often considered hard, hierarchical, controlling, and determined by financial considerations. Spiritually-oriented employees sometimes forget that it is impossible to run a company without structure and financial control. Business-oriented employees sometimes forget that it's impossible (or at best, grossly inefficient) to run a business without spirit. A poll by KRC Research, in *USA Today*, found that 6 out of 10 employees say workplaces would benefit from having a great sense of spirit in their work environment. Achieving a greater sense of spirit requires considering the unseen.

While management is expected to make decisions in a rational manner, intuition and feelings are an integral part of sound decision making: The process of thinking requires feeling, for

feelings are what let us understand all the information that we cannot directly comprehend. Reason without emotion is impotent. In fact, managers make better decisions when they accept their feelings during the decision making process. As we shall see, the “soft-side” of management is not an option at all!

Today’s knowledge workers produce information, facts and ideas. Employees producing the information, facts and ideas want involvement; they want to manage their own work lives and level of competence. Successful manipulation of knowledge requires flexibility and adaptability. Corporations, which are bureaucratic in nature, constantly seek efficiency and tight management control. David Whyte expresses the paradox of working in a corporation: “The corporation is at once the larger body that allows the employee to achieve things beyond their power alone and the parent who tells the child exactly how things are going to be. The corporation both dispenses power to the employee and renders that same person powerless.”

Bureaucratic organizations expect employees to arrive at work at a given time, perform a predetermined set of activities, rest at appointed times and continue their work until another shift of workers replaces them so that the work can continue uninterrupted throughout the year. Employees are expected to behave as if they are parts in a machine. Companies that routinize every aspect of the workplace steadily erode the human spirit and capacity for spontaneity at work.

Traditional management approaches are not suited for allowing knowledge workers to have greater self-determination and recognition of their deeper needs at the workplace. Employees witness pain and suffering in society every day. They sense that something is missing in their lives and have found that the rewards of the workplace do not satisfy their hunger for a framework of meaning in their lives.

We will consider how managers can regain a sense of purpose while they positively influence other people’s lives and a wiser way to serve their employees, company, and community, and in the end bring higher productivity and satisfaction to all. Workplace recognition of spirituality not only leads to beneficial personal outcomes such as serenity, job satisfaction and commitment but they also deliver improved productivity and reduced absenteeism and turnover. Before considering higher-level management responsibilities, let us briefly consider the basics of management. Companies are better served when their managers have an understanding of management fundamentals.

## The Basics

How many of us would say that we have or have had a “great manager” during our careers? What makes a great manager? I have had over 35 different managers during my 35+ years in industry. I have seen the “good, bad, and the ugly” in terms of managerial competence. Some employees sought a management position while others unexpectedly found themselves in this

role. There are numerous reasons why employees accept promotions and find themselves in the role of being the 'boss'. Are they truly prepared for this important position? Do they understand how their words and actions affect their subordinates? Do they know the basic functions of management? Two noted management scholars, Luther Gulick and Henry Mintzberg, are worth considering.

Luther Gulick, a social scientist, wrote the *Notes on Theory of Organizations*. He identified seven activities or 'principles of management': 'planning' – a sense of where we are and where we are headed; 'organizing' – having a vision or plan, and the necessary resources; 'staffing' – the right employees in the right job; 'directing' – managing employees; 'co-coordinating' – executing while considering work-related elements; 'reporting' – periodic, objective assessments of results; and 'budgeting' – planning and tracking the financial means to produce results. These basic principles dominated management education for decades with a manager being primarily viewed as a generalist.

Management literature mentions additional attributes of professional managers: (1) decision maker... the manager must be willing to make decisions, (2) leader... thousands of books and articles exist on the subject of leadership, yet it remains an elusive quality, (3) an organization resource... a facilitator who can remove obstacles to getting the job done and provide subject matter expertise, and 4) manager of knowledge... responsible for the dispersion of explicit and implicit knowledge throughout the company. Removing obstacles that deter employees from being able to perform their work is a direct way for a manager to increase productivity. Managers can be the ultimate corporate resource. Managers should leverage their skills and knowledge to help employees leverage their own skills and knowledge.

Henry Mintzberg, a leading management thinker, offers important observations concerning management: (1) management is not a science; science is about the development of systematic knowledge through research. Management is a practice, which includes "science" meaning analysis, "art" meaning vision, and "craft" meaning intuition and experience; and (2) management is not a profession; science, engineering and law are professions because they teach a set body of codified knowledge. Even though few employees would trust an engineer without formal education to design a bridge, we have millions of people working as managers who have never spent a day in a management classroom. Being a competent manager requires having significant abilities.

Competent managers have another key ability – anticipation. This ability means being able to perceive an opportunity or problem before others see it. Being able to anticipate opportunities or challenges presumes that the manager has an understanding of the larger environment within which the firm operates especially market forces that can eventually create conditions leading to lay-offs.

Today, corporations feed our economy, communities and families, yet can do much to break apart those same communities and families who work for it. One of the most intractable problems faced by managers is the issue of lay-offs. Managers, at all levels of companies, find themselves on both sides of this issue – perpetrators and victims. No other activity, in the workplace, destroys trust and morale more than lay-offs. What drives this brutal industry force?

## Lay-offs: A Corporate Elixir

Lay-offs were once a rare event that had a social stigma. A tight labor market i.e. having low unemployment naturally serves as a barrier to lay-offs. This barrier has come down as a result of unemployment and reduced labor needs caused by ubiquitous technology, globalization and other factors. The launch of the reengineering fad of the 1990s began a process that allowed lay-offs to become ingrained into the practices of corporate management. Paraphrasing Hammer and Champy, “reengineering has nothing to do with downsizing. Reengineering is not restructuring or downsizing! Downsizing means doing less with less; reengineering, by contrast, means doing more with less.”

Reengineering is an opportunity for the company to identify employees who can be re-trained to perform work needed elsewhere in the corporation... an opportunity to invest in employees to keep their skills up-to-date. This can minimize hiring while avoiding increasing levels of salary. Regardless, reengineering initiatives became synonymous with downsizing. Downsizing offers corporations an instant opportunity to boost the stock price and provide tax write-offs. How can a CFO resist this elixir? The potential for being able to conduct business as usual with fewer employees became the end goal.

Martin Ford offers a haunting and powerful vision how the progression of and integration of technology, into corporations, will severely and negatively impact employment in the future – blue and white collar. As he states, “ If an affordable machine can do nearly any routine job as well as a human worker, then what business manager in his or her right mind would hire a worker?” No more vacation, safety rules, sick leave, payroll taxes, family leave, or poor performance issues! Technology already replaces tellers, mechanics, IT employees, toll collectors, welders, customer service representatives, nurses, reservation agents, cashiers, retail workers, teachers, bookkeepers, secretaries, sales people, architects and more, and the managers who used to manage these people. White collar workers beware! As businesses seek new efficiencies, especially during market downturns, through investing in more technology, they find that they are able to avoid rehiring displaced workers once a recovery develops.

Lay-offs have become a common rite of passage. Each lay-off has become the victim’s problem, not society’s, or somehow the victim’s fault and once people shifted to this view, employers became free to incorporate lay-offs into their routine operating tactics. Mergers and acquisitions (M&A), outsourcing, reorganizations, migration of factories to lower-wage cities and countries, plant closings – all require acquiescence to lay-offs.

Mergers and acquisitions are particularly treacherous. M&A is an industry to itself, well established and lucrative. These tumultuous contests for ever greater “shareholder value” more often than not sacrifice long-term investment for short-term gain in these financial transactions.

The single-minded goal of primarily and exclusively enriching shareholders is a failed philosophy. Newly created so-called value is extracted from suppliers, communities, in the form of tax credits or gifts, and employees, and then transferred to the corporate and financial (insider) shareholders. When you consider that only 30 percent of M&A activities are considered successful, you begin to appreciate the damaging impact of this ongoing exercise. When employees do not trust their management's decisions and actions, little else matters: not productivity, not quality, and not management's speeches.

## What Happened to the Workplace?

William Greider identifies a fundamental disconnect that underlies our capitalistic system: "Our economic system inevitably consigns employees to a life-long series of dispirited trade-offs between their lives, values and social obligations, on one hand, and the demands of abundance on another. Allowing the market mechanism to be the sole director of the fate of human beings and our environment would result in the demolition of society. Labor, as a market commodity, cannot be shoved about, used indiscriminately, or even left unused without affecting the person who happens to be the laborer without disposing of the physical, psychological and moral components attached to that laborer". It was different years ago.

Our grandparents often worked for the same company for many years; their entire career in many cases. A friend told me that her grandfather worked at the Weyerhaeuser Paper Company for 52 years. He received a letter and cigar from the president of Weyerhaeuser when he retired. Her grandfather was very proud of receiving this recognition from the president of the company! Today, this seems unbelievably quaint.

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Ford had an assembly plant in Michigan that employed over 75,000 employees. Generations of families worked at this plant. Management and the workers lived in the same town, shopped in the same stores, went to the same churches or synagogues, belonged to the same civic associations, and helped each other when an emergency arose. There was a 'social contract' in place between the company and the workers; you do your part and I will do my part... an accepted belief in security of employment. There was a sense of balance. This was not a perfect world but there was a level of stability.

The five largest U.S. corporations in 1960 were GM, AT&T, Ford, GE and U.S. Steel; in 2009 the largest employers in the U.S. were Wal-Mart, Target, UPS, Kroger and Sears. (Nine of the top 12 employers in 2009 were retail chains including Home Depot, Walgreens and Supervalu.) What is different between these two lists? What happened to American manufacturing and its preponderance of middle-class jobs? We are still number one in the world in terms of manufacturing value-added. We are accomplishing this level of productivity with far fewer employees because of productivity gains created by the pervasive use of telecommunications, information technology and robotics. There are ongoing debates concerning the real impacts of



technology and globalization on American manufacturing. Regardless, there are far fewer American manufacturing workers today than in the past.

The real-time nature of information technology creates an expectation of “instantaneous action” even for complex problems. On-line systems create an atmosphere of constant reporting and control. Productivity can be continuously measured and displayed thereby creating constant stress on employees. Technology has had good and bad effects in corporations without a consideration of humanity. Additionally, there are other external forces that impact the workplace.

## The Rise of Institutional Investment

During the Reagan administration 401(k)s were launched, which were originally meant to supplement company pension plan. Over time companies began to abandon their long-held responsibility for employees’ retirement. Relaxed anti-trust regulation allowed large conglomerates to be broken up and parts sold to competing firms... one third of the Fortune 500 disappeared during the 1980s. Other change was prescient: The President fired FAA air traffic controllers’ who had gone on strike. Some corporations began to think, “If the federal government can fire union employees on strike then maybe we do not have to pay unions as much attention”. These activities collectively further heralded the demise of the social contract!

Until the 1970s large corporations were generally owned by millions of households across America each typically holding 50 or 500 shares of stock. Corporations, in general, at that time had lots of small shareholders. Then in the 1980s, as mentioned, 401(k)s began to emerge. This had two major effects: (1) companies no longer had to worry about having enough money for employees’ pension funds in future years (another nail in the coffin of the social contract), and (2) the rise of the mutual fund market which included mutual funds managed by companies for example Fidelity, Vanguard, and American Funds. There were \$135 billion in mutual fund assets in 1980 and then grew to \$12 trillion in assets in 2007.

Over time some mutual funds acquired up to 10 percent ownership in various publicly-traded firms. Mutual fund managers began to directly influence corporate governance. They began an intense focus on share price, corporate performance and decisions that affected share price. Share price is a reflection of many things including corporate structure, business strategy and how the market values the firm’s anticipated model of efficiency. With CEOs and top management being increasingly rewarded with generous stock options, driven by the level of the firm’s stock price, a change began creating unforeseen consequences which adversely affect American industry and employment.

## Major Consequences

Business pressure, from mutual fund managers and market analysts, had two major consequences. First, a new organization structure began to evolve that engendered a new corporate operating model. Companies moved towards a network model of corporate organization. Over time the stock market began to value intellectual property (IP) such as brand, innovation, and image over tangible assets. Overhead was reduced by getting rid of fixed costs e.g. factories and minimization of overhead - activities that were not part of the firm's core business, therefore, jobs and functions were outsourced to reduce costs. Firms began to focus more on IP and brand, and less on actual production and delivery. Hence, the rise of the network model of corporate organization: Coca Cola, Sara Lee and Dell exemplify this operating model.

Second, finance began to dominate all business functions throughout the enterprise. Finance was no longer a leg of the corporate stool together with operations, marketing and strategy formulation/implementation; it became the entire stool! Accountants became "reality constructors", exerting a powerful influence on the company's culture. Accountants persuaded top management that the accountants' interpretive lens of "financial performance" must be given priority in how the company will be managed. Finance, since the late 1980s, has been relentlessly driving down variable costs. This phenomenon has become known as financial reductionism.

Examples of variable costs are (1) marketing, (2) internal R&D, (3) strategy formulation and implementation, and (4) human resources. Reduced funding for internal R&D has impaired innovation across America. Innovation requires years of consistent funding that may or may not realize a payoff from myriad research projects. Results of innovation are not predictable and do not lend themselves to strict budgetary controls. Strategy formulation and implementation, a vital corporate function, are often discussed by top management but have suffered greatly subject to the results of the latest quarterly numbers.

Human resources has experienced a steady erosion of investment in such areas as benefits, career counseling resources, employee advocacy, paid internships, recognition and reward, 401(k) plan investment, and skills training and development. This singular, financially-oriented focus for business contributed to the "quantification" of everything at work: resources, time, assets, metrics, and employees. This and the ongoing demise of the social contract have had a huge dehumanizing effect in the workplace.

How does a manager lead when employees are reduced to being cells in a spreadsheet? How do we hold on to a rapidly disappearing social contract? Management has a new set of challenges today. It must bring balance to a work environment that rarely appreciates employees beyond their ability to achieve profit-related goals. Firms that put profit at the top of

their agenda, making all else subordinate, will soon begin to lose their competitive edge; they run the risk of losing sense of purpose. For pragmatic reasons, managers must return humanity to the workplace; they must return human values to corporate America. How can this be achieved?

## Spiritual Practices of Management

Spiritual development is a life-long journey... a process that requires honest even brutal self examination and a passion for understanding our core being. Spiritual is defined as “pertaining to the spirit or its concerns as distinguished from bodily or worldly existence...”. Practice is defined as “performing or doing repeatedly in order to acquire proficiency”. Spiritual practice means to deliberately perform activities that strengthen non-worldly understanding and perception.

Elements of a spiritual practice may include seeking to understand our deepest values, ethical boundaries, one’s relationship to God or what we consider to be ‘a higher power’, and/or our responsibilities to nature. An important spiritual issue, for many employees, is to understand their deeper responsibilities to family, friends, fellow employees and even strangers. Pondering spiritual issues is a life-long process. It requires asking complex questions and usually receiving bits of information, over time, that generate more questions, some answers to which may be found at many places including the workplace.

Managers spend hours each week frequently interacting with employees. This interaction can contribute to and can be a part of a spiritual journey; we cannot leave ‘our souls at the door’ especially in an era when work is becoming 24x7, which has a dehumanizing effect. Employees want to be acknowledged as whole persons in the workplace. Corporations, by their nature, consider employees in quantitative terms, for example, as full-time equivalents (FTEs), as having a performance rating of 4.36, or as being a \$32,000 overhead cost factor. There must be a countervailing force to this business dynamic.

Through development of a spiritual framework, which serves to increase our spiritual understanding, managers can return a sense of balance to the work environment. By helping employees on a more meaningful level than is normally provided, if at all, in the workplace, management will be helping themselves and the company. Management will be advancing its spiritual development by bringing humanness back into the workplace. As Jeffrey Pfeffer stated, “Driving a wedge between work and life is a fool’s errand. The idea that you can separate those two is just impossible”. There are eight spiritual practices management can employ that will help bring humanness back into the workplace: compassion, gratitude, integrity, intrinsic meaning, mindfulness, sacrifice, personal social responsibility and work-life balance.

## Compassion

Human beings in companies cannot act like machines because they carry their personal problems, feelings and emotions to the workplace. Managers cannot motivate employees and improve productivity if they are not sympathetic and empathetic to their employees. Managers must consider employees as human beings with each person being a unique bundle of strengths and foibles that can best be perceived through a lens of compassion. The Random House College Dictionary defines “compassion” as “a feeling of deep sympathy for another’s sorrow or misfortune”. Some managers may claim that compassion has no place in Corporate America. This way of thinking is antiquated!

Companies that do not understand the importance of compassion towards their employees will not thrive. According to a survey conducted by Cornell's Johnson Graduate School of Management, executives from Fortune 1000 companies said, "Compassion will be one of the most important characteristics business leaders will need for success...." The majority (58 percent) of these executives strongly agreed that corporations have a responsibility to address social issues such as work and family, diversity, equal rights and the environment. The concept of compassion in the workplace may be better understood through an example.

I noticed Mitch, a senior salesperson who worked for me, would quietly leave the office for a few hours during the day about twice a week. His absence was sudden and secretive in nature. While Mitch was a popular person at work, he struggled to make his sales quota. I had spent time with him helping him prospect for business and gave him extra leads to help him generate new business. Still, a revenue stream never developed.

Finally, one day I called Mitch into my office for a chat about his mysterious disappearances. Mitch explained to me that he was an active sponsor in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). He had had a serious drinking problem himself, which cost him dearly before he joined AA years ago. Mitch said he owed a lot to AA and had to be available to help others. He said he, “truly knew their pain”. I said little. I decided to leave Mitch alone. I felt instinctively the help he was providing to others in need was important in a broader sense. Mitch understood the professional versus personal trade-offs we all must consider. He fully understood his obligations at work. There was no need for me to say more. He continued to work with AA members on a regular basis. I continued to work with Mitch to help him make his numbers.

When management is more concerned about production than the employee’s well being, it tends to ignore employees’ problems. Production-centered managers do not necessarily get more productivity nor will ignoring employees’ problems and needs make managers successful. Balance between production-orientation and employee-orientation can foster management success. Managers must not ignore personal problems of their subordinates because having problems is part of being human. A manager must be attuned to employees’ problems and crises to demonstrate concern. Managers cannot fix all problems but they can demonstrate caring and empathy.

Daniel Goleman shares that “in a survey of employees at 700 companies, the majority said that a caring manager was more important to them than how much they earned. The same survey found that employees liking their manager were a prime driver of both productivity and the length of time they stayed at that job”. Gary Vaynerchuk, an entrepreneur, said during a National Public Radio (NPR) interview, “Caring is a discriminator... and it doesn’t cost.” While Gary was primarily speaking about customers, caring about employees can be a discriminator too. Caring for employees does not mean the paternalism of yesteryear but authentic caring, which requires honesty, attentiveness and sincerity. This will go along way to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

The lack of compassion is evident in corporate America today. Corporations exploit employees taking what they need while ignoring the rest. Employees give their lives and even their health to their respective companies. Today, individuals and even whole communities find themselves being thrown away when they have no further use to the company. After all our market economy is a Darwinian struggle for survival and this means that failures on the part of corporations must be accepted too for the whole system to work. When we accept a capitalist economy as the final solution to all of our economic problems, then we commit ourselves to a morality of success and willingness to condemn failure. This creates a world of work without compassion, where only the toughest survive.

As people work longer and longer hours, companies loom as employees’ substitute family and social network – yet most people can be tossed out at the will of management. This inherent ambivalence means that in most companies, hope and fear run rampant. The issue of “at will” employment serves as a prime example how corporations seem to operate within the boundary of the law while overlooking their moral obligation to employees. It is estimated that 70 percent of American workers are subject to the at-will rule, as compared to approximately 10 percent who are union workers and 15 percent who are public employees. The common law basis of at-will employment emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and means that businesses should have the freedom to discharge or retain employees at-will for good cause, for no cause, or for even bad cause, without being guilty of an unlawful act.

The United States is the only major industrial power that maintains a general employment-at-will rule. While at-will employment has come under degrees of legislative reform and judicial activism, the past couple of decades, many companies through choice or ignorance continue to treat at-will employment as the unconstrained law of the land. Employees too often do not understand the current legal environment, within their State, as it applies to at-will employment. They rarely have the resources to engage the company in a legal battle when they believe they have been wrongfully discharged. Employees have to act in terms of what is best for them and their obligations.

An employee’s familial obligations cannot compete with a company’s priorities driven by numbers in a spreadsheet. An executive knows the numbers he/she sees in a spreadsheet but not the human side of employees. I have never seen a spreadsheet with a column titled ‘Compassion’. Employees are no longer viewed as human beings; they have become a black-

or red-colored cell in a spreadsheet. Companies' "early retirement plans" or "employee buyouts" cannot make up for their lack of empathy and compassion over the years.

Today, we see a huge difference between the golden parachutes offered to senior executives versus rank-and-file employees which is further evidence of the increasing disconnect between corporations and their humanity. Action must be taken now, during employees' careers, led by the management throughout the company to demonstrate meaningful concern for employees and their families' well-being. Berkun suggests that management must deliberately create "a nurturing environment" that will help employees help the company.

How can managers ensure they are attuned to their employees' concerns/needs? They must create space and opportunity to listen to employees, such as having a real open-door policy, setting time aside for lunch, brown-bag sessions, coffee/tea chats or monthly meetings where they listen to employees' concerns, ideas, suggestions, accomplishments and wants. They must be willing to listen with sincerity and act when appropriate.

## Gratitude

Gratitude is not just a "feel good" emotion when it comes to company life. It can benefit a company in many ways. Gratitude is defined as being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen. When an employee believes his or her superiors are grateful for his or her work, the employee will benefit by having an improved sense of worth. This improved sense of worth can lead to performance improvement, thereby benefiting the company. Further, the person expressing gratitude benefits from that expression, which also may positively impact the company. For instance, research has shown that persons who are genuinely grateful may be more optimistic, experience improved health, and perhaps even have extended life spans. All of these benefits can potentially be an advantage to the company for which that person works.

William and Debra Miller discuss that gratitude is one of the simpler spiritual practices you can integrate into your daily life. It is as much a habit as it is a mindset or a way of life. In order for gratitude to be fully effective, you should have that kind of perspective about everything in your life including work. Adopt the point of view that every event and the employees around you, whether it seems good or bad, are gifts. That way, you gain a deeper appreciation of little things around you. The book *Learning to Fall*, by Philip Simmons, is a book about gratitude and seeing our many blessings, those that are large, small and almost invisible.

Did you get promoted at work today? Be thankful for the opportunity to contribute more from your new position. Did you lose your job today? Layoffs are frightening; I know. Hopefully at some point you can look forward and consider the opportunity to find a more fulfilling job or for the opportunity to spend more time with your family. View these events as a chance for you to grow and improve your quality of life. Employees definitely appreciate receiving gratitude.

Sarah had performed well on a technology project as a consultant while handling a challenging client. The work on this project was soon coming to an end. The client was not only appreciative of her outstanding work but paid their invoice on time, which was a first for this client! I had thanked Sarah repeatedly for her good work but was concerned because the company had no project on the horizon that required her skills. The company had a record of laying-off employees who could not find a new assignment within two weeks of leaving their current project. This did not seem fair to me especially considering Sarah's dedication and skill.

During a staff meeting with the president of the company, I heard him express concern about our profit margin and having too many employees leaving current projects who could be transferred quickly to other projects. After I left this meeting, I had a quiet conversation with Sarah. I told her that she was vulnerable to being laid off in the weeks ahead and for her to discreetly begin looking for another job. She thanked me for my concern and said little.

Four weeks later, I was told by the president to let Sarah go. When I told Sarah, she told me that she had just received a job offer from her previous employer and could start there in two weeks. She was grateful for me suggesting that she look for a new job when I did. I was grateful for her hard work and dedication, and felt obligated to demonstrate my gratitude. Sarah and I are still friends after many years.

As shown, in this example, managers can actively seek opportunities to demonstrate their gratitude. Saying "thank you" or "you did a good job" are simple ways for a manager to demonstrate their gratitude. I have worked for managers whom I never heard say "thank you" while I worked with them. This oversight suppresses employees' spirit. When management sets a tone of gratitude for opportunities and challenges at work, it can go a long way to help employees focus on their contribution. It can offer employees a sense of appreciation in our frenetic world. Employees can begin to treat change as an opportunity for growth instead of thinking in terms of being a victim. Remember, gratitude is an approach to life that we can freely choose for ourselves.

I am not suggesting that managers begin wearing rose-colored glasses. I am suggesting that by taking a balanced view towards constant changes in the workplace, managers can help their team thrive rather than merely cope!

## Integrity

"I hate my boss", is a comment I have often heard from friends and co-workers. Frequently the cause of this anger is that the person does not trust their manager. At least one third of British workers said, in a survey, that they did not trust their senior managers, especially, during the recent recession. A survey conducted by the Leadership and Management Institute, has suggested that managers at larger companies trigger the least trust.

It is essential that a company's management understand the value of trust and how to promote trust in their organizations. "Long-term success depends upon trust, and employees only trust those who have shown themselves to be honest, accountable and fair-dealing..." according to Theodore Malloch. Competence, integrity and employee rapport are among a few factors that determine organization trust. However, the elusive nature of trust makes it one of the most difficult characteristics to maintain.

Management needs employees to feel that they are valued and trusted, and have them believe that the company is acting with integrity in terms of their well being. In a survey, conducted by Watson Wyatt, 13,000 employees were surveyed in varied job levels and industries. The study revealed that fewer than two out of five employees today have trust or confidence in their senior managers.

Events in the business world have made it more difficult for companies to maintain trust. The Arthur Andersen accounting fiasco, Tyco, World Com, Global Crossing, and Enron are just a few examples among many scandals. The general public holds corporate CEOs in lower esteem than any time in our history because of the crimes and scandals that have been perpetrated by company officials. This leaves a workforce with a cynical view of management based on their observations that management has often set ethical considerations aside in order to maximize the bottom line. As Gareth Morgan states, "focusing on the bottom line should stay at the bottom"! Even in companies that have a clean record, it is the small things that are chipping away at the trust, such as management saying one thing and doing another, forgetting promises, and communicating poorly.

Economic factors resulting in ongoing layoffs have caused loss of trust on the part of many individuals. This in turn has contributed to poor morale and reduced company loyalty. It gets worse. Layoffs have been shown to increase cardiovascular disease by 44 percent over a four-year period and increase the incidence of suicide. Downsizing has the same effect on employees especially if it is not handled properly or poorly communicated. The remaining employees are stuck wondering, "Am I next?" This has an even more devastating effect on the younger and newer employees who watch managers get terminated or laid off after they have been loyal and served the company for many years. This sends the message that loyalty is not appreciated by companies any more. When the economy improves, these employees may seek employment where they feel more secure.

Other unseen costs of mistrust in the workplace include: decreased employee commitment, and higher employee turnover. Distrustful employees are not as productive. Likewise, mistrustful management wastes time checking up on employees. Therefore, it is imperative that managers maintain trust in their companies as I discovered.

Henry was always pleasant at work and always said, "Yes" when asked to help others. Henry, who worked for me, was popular and liked by customers. I never heard any complaints from anyone concerning Henry. However, he had trouble achieving his quota each quarter. During our frequent account strategy review sessions, Henry accepted all of my suggestions and advice. After a six-month period I finally realized Henry was not following through and getting



results. In spite of our friendship, I knew I had to become more active and get him to focus on his job responsibilities.

There was a large bank in Maryland he was assigned to develop into a new account. I worked with him to develop a detailed, account sales plan. Nothing happened; the plan was never executed. Henry seemed to have no interest in developing business from this prestigious account. He continually agreed with my criticism of his poor performance. I felt it was time to take action.

I wrote a two-page memorandum to my manager detailing Henry's lack of performance and my multiple attempts to communicate my concern to him. After my manager received my memorandum, he asked that we meet to discuss the situation. As soon as the meeting began, my manager praised my initiative and commended the details included in the memorandum. Clearly, Henry was not doing his job. Then my manager explained to me that Henry and our vice president were close personal friends and had been since high school; therefore, Henry was to be left alone. The meeting was over.

This meeting changed the working relationship between me and higher management; I saw a lack of integrity. This incident broke our relationship of trust. I began to frame my recommendations and suggestions in political terms and not what was best for the company. I was no longer candid with my upper management; I did not trust their motives.

Managers must speak, act and follow-up with consistency, honesty and sincerity. In other words they must be authentic. One stupid act or decision can undermine years of working to build trust in a company. Managers must regularly communicate their values, priorities, concerns and feelings to their teams, and provide space to reciprocate with those they work with each day. Developing a well of social capital over time will serve everyone's best interests when a crisis arises and tough decisions have to be made.

## Intrinsic Meaning

Employees come together in the workplace to accomplish what they cannot do on their own... to realize their full potential as human beings. People bring values and attitudes to work that drive their behavior. Work can be a source of pain, drudgery and boredom or a source of joy, energy and fulfillment, or a mix of these elements. Workers who view their work as a called vocation are likely to approach their work very differently than employees who see their work primarily as a means to pay bills.

When employees perform work day-in and day-out that has no meaning or spiritual connection, employees come home each day filled with frustration and even rage in some cases. Much of

this frustration on the part of employees is directed at themselves; they are embarrassed to keep working at a place that is so far removed from who they are at their core being. When work is little more than a necessary evil to earn a livelihood, employees are living with a constant strain on their spirit. A soul deficient in meaningful experience will begin to engineer its escape from organizations holding it in check.

Companies ensure that work is foremost and do not perceive how the soul is the deepest part of being human... the part that integrates the elements of a person thereby allowing them to contribute at a higher level to their work. Managers are the ones who must address this failing. Management's greatest challenge and reward is being able to help employees find intrinsic meaning in their work. In other words, a manager must show employees the deeper meaning of their role in the company and how that role can fulfill an intrinsic need that relates to the employees' deeper values.

Employees who have an intrinsic interest in their work will seek a higher level of achievement. It is management's responsibility to understand how employees view their work and its meaning to the company. The manager must ensure that the employee knows what their work means to the company. Throughout multiple surveys and interviews, performed by Ian Mitroff, the first choice of respondents regarding what gave them the most meaning and purpose in their job was "the ability to realize my full potential as a person". Work can offer employees deeper meaning when their work becomes aligned with the employee's core values.

Meaning can be considered in terms of employees' values, work or in terms of understanding external events that affect the company's viability. When inevitable positive and negative events happen, a spiritual context can help to think about those events in a meaningful way such as asking "What can I learn?" or "How can I grow stronger?" instead of asking "Why me"? When something bad happens, experiencing deeper meaning through ones' work can fuel constructive behavior.

Over the years, I have listened to employees share their excitement when they were beginning a new job that they had wanted for many years. When they described their joy for their new opportunity, I heard them saying that they had found work that had meaning to them down to their core being. Employees want their work to reflect their personal mission in life. As Philip Simmons said, "On some level we are always searching for our life's work, wanting to align our doing and our being with our highest purpose."

Managers must not be afraid to seek understanding of their employee's deeper values and how these values might be realized through work. This may even require allowing a star employee to transfer to another job. I always approved an employee's request to transfer to another department in the company when the matter arose. It was not for me, as a manager, to stand in the way of an employee who sought a different path. My practice of approving these requests, over the years, has paid off many times. However, Fay was a challenge to me.

Fay was one of the younger employees on my team at work. She had outstanding skills and a strong work ethic. She put in long hours each week ensuring her work was properly completed. Fay was born in a country in the Middle East. She was quite concerned about what was

happening to her country and its people based upon events in the news; she wanted to apply her myriad skills to help others. She frequently watched the news, spoke with family members still overseas, and even met with political leaders in Washington, D.C. to see how she might contribute. Her mind was at the office but her heart was thousands of miles away. This internal conflict tore at her being.

Fay began to dislike her job. She felt she should be doing something else. I did not know what Fay would decide. Many months were passing by; she was wishing for work that would offer her intrinsic meaning... she wanted to help others in her native country. Later, Fay resigned her job and accepted a contract position that allowed her to work in her native country. I do not know if she found the deeper meaning that she sought.

When an employee works in a routine job for years and is capable of making a larger contribution, does management know why the employee continues to perform the routine work? Employees want to know that their work makes a contribution i.e. has meaning. Teresa Amabile suggests that real meaning requires seeing progress, large or small, every day in their work. Seeing progress is a significant factor for boosting motivation. Results breed results!

Has management asked the employee how he/she feels about their work? Does the employee understand how their job contributes to the company's larger goals? Employees, by-and-large, will accept a larger challenge, opportunity for advancement, and training to develop new skills if given the chance to do so. It is the manager's responsibility to lift employees up and not hold them down!

Constructive dialog on the part of management has the potential to significantly increase productivity. Imagine what would happen if you had a company in which all the employees were doing their life's work. You would have more loyalty, more resilience, more creativity, more innovation, and a deeper sense of self-reliance and self-renewal.

## Mindfulness

Mindfulness, in basic terms, is considering and creating new possibilities. Mindfulness is a state of awareness, being attentive to what is underway, while maintaining objectivity. Adapting what Harry Mills has stated, employees must create a sense of quiet and stillness, which can allow one to have a clearer perspective... to have mindfulness. Mindfulness is about respecting all employees in situations at work. Respect means being tolerant of differences and considerate of other's feelings. Mindfulness implies being non-judgmental. Respect and mindfulness are fundamental traits managers can use to foster understanding and dialog with employees regardless of the pace of work.

We spend much time rushing from activity to activity and trying to get things done. Similarly, we spend a great deal of time either listening to (or trying to distract ourselves from) myriad

thoughts that are floating around our minds. Practicing mindfulness can give us a quiet respite from this chaos. Time spent meditating, reflecting, or just appreciating what is around and within us in a given moment can allow space to detach from and find perspective from stressors especially at work. One author noted that mindfulness, in common parlance, is “noticing what is going on”. It is a higher order of awareness than our ordinary sensory perceptions; it may be a function of a higher developed faculty of awareness.

Successful managers must have mindfulness to ensure they are being attentive to activities, employees and undercurrents at work. They need to learn to maintain a sense of calm and not react to events. They can heighten their sense of objectivity by having mindfulness meaning being open to change and new ideas that are all around them. But this takes practice, lots of practice. Their success in this effort will lead to better communication which in turn will lead to greater understanding leading in turn to greater trust. This may require having a quiet place at work where space is reserved to allow employees time to reflect and consider different perspectives especially before key decisions are made.

A traditional view of rational decision making is that of a process involving four stages: define, diagnose, design and decide. However, this approach is uncommon according to Henry Mintzberg. Decisions do not emerge after a logical process; they erupt. Successful decision making is often a period of groping followed by sudden insight. Mindfulness serves as an enabler of experiencing insights. The phenomenon of having insights can inform sound decision making. It is up to the manager to ensure that the power of mindfulness develops in the workplace, which can be a significant benefit.

## Sacrifice

William and Debra Miller indicate that "sacrifice" is a word that has unpleasant connotations for employees, especially in the workplace. When a manager says, "We have to make some sacrifices around here," it usually means giving something up, or doing without something, either of which may make things more difficult. From its Latin roots, the word "sacrifice" actually means "to make sacred." Following the chain of original meanings, sacred means "holy," "holy" means "whole," and "whole" means "healthy." Thus, sacrifice is anything that takes a situation, and makes it whole and healthy.

Sacrifice inspires us to dedicate the fruits of our actions to benefit the greater whole. Not to sacrifice is to move away from wholeness and health. Sacrifice is a form of generosity by considering others before oneself. In terms of our spiritual development, the purpose of sacrifice is to give us the opportunity to reduce our ego-driven desires.

How can we practice sacrifice at work? One starting point is to be aware of our motivation. If we are motivated by our ego-desires, which are based on separateness rather than our connection

to the greater whole, we will feel that sacrifice means "giving up" something while still feeling a desire for it. If we are motivated from our spiritual source, we will feel that sacrifice means "giving to" something that is bigger than ourselves, thus leaving us with a sense of fulfillment.

One way to tune into our real motivation is whether we are attached to receiving something in return for what we do. In other words, are we primarily motivated by what we might get back or by what we are able to give? The spirit of sacrifice is a fundamental foundation for a healthy workplace and should be a two-way street!

Employees are increasingly relinquishing their pensions, professional development opportunities, retirement or health care benefits for the benefit of the company. Who gains when employees lose their benefits? When employees are asked to "make a sacrifice" at work or constantly work with inadequate resources, management must consider what is being accomplished and not being accomplished over the long haul. Management must consider how management itself will sacrifice too. Will the well-being of employees eventually be improved or are employees being abused by the ongoing need for further sacrifice? It is up to management to answer this question honestly and provide redress as necessary. If not, there will be no trust in the workplace.

## Personal Social Responsibility

Organizations are "open systems" that function within an open system, their larger environment. Being an open system, organizations have inputs, outputs, processes and exchange value with their external environment. They have internal and external stakeholders. Business organizations create what economists call "externalities", which are costs, for example, air and water pollution that are costs neither borne nor paid for by the firm through their normal course of business. In other words, the price the firm charges for their products does not provide adequate income to pay for the cost i.e. adverse effects of their externalities.

Companies that create externalities are getting what economists call a free ride. Costs created by companies' externalities are borne by individuals, communities, and regions, some more than others and still occur today. Mountain-top mining for coal, which creates multiple externalities, is a classic example of this issue. Managers and employees are expected to place mining company interests before their own private interests.

Management at firms that create externalities may be ignorant of or choose to ignore the adverse (societal) costs created by their firms. Management becomes so engrained in the culture and practices of a company that they never develop their own management identity i.e. understanding of their personal values versus the company's real values.

What are your values as a manager? Management must accept personal social responsibility for their firm's actions and if their own work contributes to the cost of their company's externalities. This requires courage... personal courage. This issue is separate from corporate social responsibility.

Corporate social responsibility centers on the obligation of corporations to address societal problems. This discussion is about a manager's personal social responsibility. What is the manager's personal code of ethics... personal values? What do you do when you are faced with a decision or challenge that conflict with your deeper values? A manager must routinely consider his/her personal values and ethical boundaries. Ideally, a manager will not be working in a company where his/her personal ethics will be tested over and over. But, this issue does arise... frequently.

A manager must maintain a sense of purpose and meaning for himself/herself. An increased sense of meaning allows us to look beyond ourselves, which can increase our sense of responsibility for our wider community. When a manager is faced with making a decision, initiating a new project, implementing a new policy or other myriad tasks, they should consider the work they are responsible for, the well-being of their employees, the company's culture and its external environment, key stakeholders and the manager's deeper values to ensure balance and fairness. Feeling a part of something greater than ourselves can make us feel less isolated and alone.

Managers must think broadly about their community of stakeholders and set aside time to put action into their personal social responsibility. What are values without action? They are simply thoughts that have no impact. As part of your management legacy, what will be your contribution to the larger community's well-being?

## Work-life Balance

Work-life balance is a broad concept that includes prioritizing between career and ambition on one hand, compared with leisure, family and spiritual development on the other. This concept has become more relevant than ever before as the separation between work and home life has diminished. As the speed and pace of world-wide commerce increases, employers demand ever increasing levels of productivity while at the same time the distinction between work time and home time fades away. When work increasingly gets in the way of living, we will find ourselves disconnected from ourselves and others. This is when our lives become out of balance. We are now experiencing 'weisure', which is derived from combining the words leisure and work. Weisure considers the fact that employees cannot simply turn off a switch from their work lives to their non-work lives.

Some firms have a culture or work ethic where they expect employees to be “always on”... working 60 or more hours per week plus another 20 hours monitoring their smart phones. The U.S. labor force is on the job more than any other industrialized country, and these long hours lead to accidents, hypertension and problems that contribute to a lack of sleep.

Companies ask employees to give more and more but will not acknowledge the employee as a whole person. Employees can nourish their souls on their own time so it seems. The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) improved client service and productivity when insisting that employees take time off including vacations and breaks. As a result, BCG consultants experienced higher job satisfaction, more cooperation at work and improved work-life balance.

Companies are beginning to realize how important the work-life balance is to the productivity and creativity of employees. Research by the Kenexa Research Institute shows that those employees who felt more favorable toward their organization’s efforts to support work-life balance also indicated a much lower intent to leave the organization, greater pride in their organization, a willingness to recommend it as a place to work and higher overall job satisfaction.

Employers can offer a range of programs and initiatives, such as flexible working arrangements in the form of part-time, job-sharing or telecommuting work. More proactive managers can require compulsory leave, strict maximum work hours and foster an environment that encourages employees not to continue working after hours. It is up to management to proactively help employees manage their work-life balance. Otherwise, management may be faced with a serious problem at work one day that could have been avoided.

## A New Direction

Spiritual well-being is not produced when a company focuses on its financial goals to the detriment of all else. It occurs when the management first establishes a healthy workplace culture grounded in meaningful values. When employees have a sense of belonging and a commitment to a common purpose, the company as a whole will be more successful in meeting or exceeding stakeholder’s expectations; this is when the firm’s financial goals can become sustainable.

The function of management has become increasingly dehumanized in corporate America the past 30 years. We must ensure that humanness is part of the company’s management system. This requires leadership in the workplace. Developing and maintaining a spiritual “lens” in the workplace is not easy. It requires management that is thoughtful and sincere, i.e., authentic.

There are four factors that are always interacting in the workplace: task, employees, the environment, and management. This dynamic is a constant force that is often forgotten when addressing issues that arise in the workplace. Almost everyone focuses on the task because it quickly becomes obvious if the work is not being performed correctly. Employees, as a factor, are usually focused on when a problem arises that might interfere with task completion.

The larger work environment has become a forgotten factor as many companies rush to 'hotel' workspace and telework programs driven by shrinking budgets. Scott Berkun reminds us that the work environment, including the physical and cultural aspects, is a key driver for creativity and in turn promoting innovation. There are internal and external dimensions to the 'environment', cultural and social dynamics within the company and myriad external forces that interact with management's decisions and actions each day.

Management, as a factor unto itself, refers to not only the manager his/herself but the broader management system and infrastructure that support the company's management function. A manager's role is not to be a "foreman" but to be the enabler of employees' ideas, which can bring creativity to the task at hand. Management is usually considered within the context of the task, and seldom as a distinct factor. A manager must create space and allow time to ensure issues are considered across all four factors: task, employees, the (internal and external) environment, and the function of management itself. Management's distinct role, in a company, can no longer be an afterthought.

It is time for managers to embrace a new management function – allowing room for and engendering spiritual growth in the workplace. When companies treat employees as whole persons, who have a soul, they will begin to harness the tremendous energy that resides at the core of all employees. Employees who are more highly developed spiritually achieve better results. In this sense, spirituality may well be the ultimate competitive weapon.

In the 1980s, in American industry, there was a debate about whether quality-related programs added to business costs. It was discovered that when quality became an integral part of a company's culture and systems, it actually lowered the cost of doing business. Likewise, so it is with spiritual practices of management! Bringing spiritual practices into the workplace can lead to increased productivity and profitability as well as employee retention, customer loyalty, and improved brand reputation according to a growing body of research. It is time for managers to recognize how their role in this process can bring greater benefit to all stakeholders. These eight spiritual practices can serve as a guide for managers to meaningfully influence employees' lives. These spiritual practices will allow you to make a contribution to people's lives and engender your own spiritual potential.



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