

LEADERSHIP OUTSIDE THE BOX: THE POWER OF NURTURING THE HUMAN SPIRIT AT WORK IN AN ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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ABSTRACT: The human spirit is an untapped resource that can fuel organizations in this era of globalization. While workplace spirituality is often seen an abstract philosophical construct that may be defined differently by each individual who studies it, fulfillment at work, shared values and sense of meaning along with a sense of belonging or connectedness are largely agreed-upon aspects. When attention is given to these arenas of human behavior, higher levels of engagement that lead to stronger performance and increased satisfaction can be achieved. A new mindset for leadership and education at all levels, local and global, and in all kinds of organizations is proposed to bring the human spirit into the light as a key resource for excellence, esprit de corps, and high performance. Tapping the power of the human spirit has become an educational and international requirement given the challenge of globalization.

Keywords: workplace spirituality, engagement, culture, values-based leadership, globalization

Workplace spirituality is often seen as an abstract philosophical construct that may be defined differently by each individual who studies it (Case & Gosling, 2010; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2011). However, the overarching agreed-upon definition includes fulfillment at work, shared values and sense of meaning, and a sense of community or connectedness at the individual, group, and organizational levels (Case & Gosling, 2010; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003). It also involves shared values between the individual and organization, a belief that one's work contributes to a higher purpose in a meaningful way (Friedman & Friedman, 2014; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2011). Spirituality at work does not necessarily connote religious involvement but rather personal philosophy and individual values, although religion may be an important part of this for some people (Friedman & Friedman, 2014; Milliman et al., 2003). When implemented appropriately, workplace spirituality recognizes everyone as individuals with inner lives in which their career or job is only a part of the larger organism and supports the universal human search for a higher purpose or meaning in their existence and work (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Milliman et al., 2003). This recognition and subsequent encouragement of individuals to express their inner selves in their work leads to positive employee work

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attitudes and habits, reduced employment churn and absenteeism, and increased organizational commitment (Milliman et al., 2003; Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2007). Applying this concept in this era of globalization may benefit all stakeholders, including employees, owners, suppliers, customers and consumers as well as educators and students of Western and Eastern societies. Enhancing the inner lives of employees by helping them find personal fulfillment in their jobs oftentimes increases employee productivity and organizational success while raising awareness of corporate social responsibility (Chalofsky, 2010).

The Rise of Workplace Secularism in the Global Economy

Modern society's emphasis on secularism in the workplace was popularized by Western European and American rises to power in the global economy (Milliman et al., 2003). The concept of rationalism being founded in secularism and necessitating the dissociation from religion was Western in nature and quickly spread through the culture of global capitalism as established by these two Western powers (Milliman et al., 2003). While capitalism power and prevalence can be easily seen today in workplaces, including businesses, shopping malls, and government organizations all over the globe, there is a growing interest human values and the spirit of the individual. For example, 80% of first-year college students expressing interest in spirituality (Friedman & Friedman, 2014).

Modern connotations of the term "spirituality" in Western cultures tend to be heavily religious in nature (Case & Gosling, 2010). The integration of religion into the public spaces of work and economy is typically frowned upon in modern Western society, where the separation of church and state has extended by implication to a separation of church and public spaces (Milliman et al., 2003). In many areas, religion is now considered to be part of the individual and group private domain. Violating the taboo by bringing it into a public space is met with attitudes ranging from discomfort to anger, and actions from protests to lawsuits (Bubna-Litic, 2012; Case & Gosling, 2010; Tourish & Tourish, 2010). Bubna-Litic (2012) took a novel approach in the implementation and ideation of spirituality in the workplace, defining it as less of a value-add and more of a necessary social responsibility of corporations to provide for their employees.

Indeed, spirituality—and religion that is sometimes associated with it—is a deeply personal belief system that helps shape individuals and is a large part of their personality and expression thereof (Friedman & Friedman, 2014). Its extreme importance to an individual's sense of identity and life-meaning is precisely why its integration should be encouraged in the workplace. Workers are expected to separate the work-self from the personal-self between the punches of the timecard. This practice can lead to a reduction in the feeling of an employee's alignment with organizational values as vocalizing their own values is often prohibited by company policy, especially those parts of spirituality related to religious or political creeds (Milliman et al., 2003). This rigid compartmentalization of identity imposed on workers by the employing organization also leads to employees feeling that their work is devoid of personal or higher meaning

(Chalofsky, 2010). Instead they are simply accomplishing rote tasks or following orders or operating within limited degrees of freedom and self-expression.

As Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003) found, through quantitative analysis, greater perceived experience of personal purpose and meaning in one's job as well as a greater sense of community at work are both associated with a greater intrinsic work satisfaction, greater job involvement on the part of the employee, and a greater sense of organizational-based self-esteem. A sense of alignment with organizational values and community also lessens the likelihood that the individual will quit. All three aspects--community, sense of alignment, and personal purpose and meaning--were positively correlated with increased commitment of the individual to the organization. Therefore, the more spirituality and spiritual expression that leaders allow individual employees to breathe into their work, the greater employee morale and engagement, coupled with a decrease of employee churn (Milliman et al., 2003). This concept of employee engagement through caring for the individual worker by nurturing the human spirit is largely only new in implementation and not in ideation as it has roots in the works of Max Weber, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Michel Foucault, and many other social scientists, although in many cases their intentions for this expansion were solely utilitarian (Case & Gosling, 2010). It is important to recognize the possibility of organizations using workplace spirituality solely as a commodified means of increasing production to the detriment of the worker (Case & Gosling, 2010; Milliman et al., 2003). With an understanding of globalization as the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture with the objective of shared benefit, partnering spirituality in the workforce with an increasingly global reach makes sense for the individual, the collective, higher education and the corporate structure.

Global Applications of Nurturing: Eastern Versus Western Environments

In recent years, workplace spirituality has been defined and implemented in many different ways and types of workplaces (Case & Gosling, 2010; Friedman & Friedman, 2014; Milliman et al., 2003; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). However, this article focuses attention on nurturing the human spirit at work, an aspect of workplace spirituality, as an integral growth-oriented force in this era of globalization. The deepening Information Age has brought with it global connectivity and with that connectivity has come instant news cycles, greater attention to issues outside one's native country, and a sense that we are "all in this together," as voiced by numerous political, social, and spiritual leaders. There is a growing realization that what happens in one part of the world impacts other parts of the world, sparking not just a self-interest in work events but a growing interest in others. Encouraging leadership that focuses on the spiritual nature of all people is deemed a worthy cause, though not without its challenges on many fronts. This approach to leadership requires an almost anthropological understanding that different cultures may define workplace spirituality in many different ways due to their own particular histories and cultural relativism. It also necessitates strong interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, courage, effective relationships

between management and employees, and a global perspective (Chuang, 2013; Fairholm, 2015). These traits are not new to leadership, but magnify in importance and oftentimes take different forms when considering employee relations in light of generating understanding in multicultural environments, both within an organization and between organizations within the global economy (Fairholm, 2015). This cultural understanding may be defined as cultural relativism, an axiomatic anthropological principle established by anthropologist Franz Boas: a person's belief systems, values, and behaviors must be viewed within the context of that individual's own culture in order to be truly understood by others (Stocking, 1966). Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) recognized cross-cultural applications as a limitation in their study of workplace spirituality in a Thai Buddhist-centric organizational environment. In their study, the company examined was well known for the strong Buddhist traditions fostered by the company. The authors acknowledged that the prevalence of these traditions within the company and the predominant culture of the locale may have consciously or subconsciously made the employees more aware of the spiritual aspects of work (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). Therefore, this situation may have made the individuals more likely to respond positively to workplace spirituality and the survey provided by the authors.

This scenario is quite different from Western work cultures such as the American workplace environment, which tends to be highly secular. In fact, spirituality in the workplace is not typically encouraged and in many cases discouraged, and so individuals and organizations may have quite different understandings of and reactions to the concept of workplace spirituality (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). The same is true in the arenas of higher education, especially in business and medical schools.

As culture is a superorganic concept that is constantly changing through societal development and reinforcement of values, organizations would need to consistently integrate new cross-cultural information to maintain a relevant and competitive company culture within the workplace and the global market (Chuang, 2013). Values may be thought of as a tether between the individual self and the collective society that informs decision-making processes and partially determines behaviors performed by the individuals and societies that share in them (Cheng & Fleischmann, 2010). Societal values are both products and reinforcing components of culture. According to renowned sociologist Emile Durkheim (1960), the importance of value-effect on guiding behaviors and decisions extends beyond the individual realm and goes so far as to guide the collective consciousness of societies. Since organizations are built by groups of individuals who hold values, the shared values hold significant influence over corporate policy and strategy (Cheng & Fleischmann, 2010), thus making values such as workplace spirituality applicable to both individualistic and collectivistic societies in the context of globalization. Gupta, Bishnoi, and Mathews (2012) recognized this phenomenon in their study of workplace spirituality in Indian society. They discussed the concept of spirit at work as being a Western need, but caution that Eastern societies should also take this into account in the globalization of the economy due to the large Western cultural influence on modern world economics, industry, and politics (Gupta et al., 2012). These authors view workplace spirituality as not only a benefit but as necessity for successful operation within the global economy. However, they also understood that the model they put

forward contained different criteria than those included in many Western workplace spirituality studies (Gupta et al., 2012; Milliman et al., 2003). This foundation opens the discussion of various forms and approaches to nurturing the human spirit in the context of globalization.

Discussion

Implementing workplace spirituality with a distinct focus on nurturing the human spirit in Western societies requires the openness of organizational leadership to try something new in a largely secular society often riddled with lawsuits of perceived offenses based on expression of various beliefs within the workplace. Friedman and Friedman (2014) discussed the success experienced by Southwest Airlines (SWA) in using workplace spirituality to enhance employee, customer, and shareholder satisfaction. By using profit-sharing instead of pensions, encouraging employees to offer personable and fun service, and making a positive contribution to the world by offering low fares to people who might not otherwise be able to afford them, SWA created an organizational community and culture (Friedman & Friedman, 2014; Milliman et al., 2003) based on love, the heart of spirituality in most of the world's religions and spiritual paths. Although SWA is known to pay the highest wages within its industry and have the lowest prices, this company also has exceptionally high employee productivity, with many employees choosing to continue working even after having been made millionaires by virtue of their profit-sharing (Friedman & Friedman, 2014). However, as appealing as such results may be, getting everyone on board with an arguably successful concept of nurturing the human spirit in a global economy can be a difficult task.

Although SWA has experienced much apparent success as a result of their spiritual values-based model, many other companies within their own industry have not yet emulated their ideas (Friedman & Friedman, 2014). Encouraging organizations that operate within the global economy to adopt workplace spirituality requires the bridging of understanding between individualistic and collectivistic cultures in the East and West to find points of shared organizational and personal understanding to facilitate more productive cooperation and partnerships. Sledge, Miles, and Van Sambeek (2011) discussed the importance of culture as an influence in international business in their study of workplace spirituality and multiculturalism of businesses in Canada, Mexico, and the Netherlands. Some researchers argue that globalization will result in a single unified world business culture, while others contend that national cultural diversity will persist within the realm of the global economy (Case & Gosling, 2010; Sledge et al., 2011). In their exploratory study, Canada and the Netherlands were highly individualistic and Mexico was collectivistic, but the authors found that the businesses studied within the three countries shared motivating factors that bridged cultural divides (Sledge et al., 2011). However, they also cautioned against attempting to fit a single model of workplace spirituality across different cultures as individuals in the study seemed to define it differently. This situation is something the authors recognized as possibly being influenced by loss of meaning due to translation and interpretation (Sledge et al., 2011).

Gupta et al. (2012) proposed the implementation of a cultural officer to assist in the transition to and maintenance of workplace spirituality within organizations integrating this concept into their work environment. This position would operate independently of Human Resources and be part friend, philosopher, motivator, arbiter, mentor, coach and guide to employees, while also working with public relations in representing the organization as a conscious one in regard to corporate social responsibility (Gupta et al., 2012). Additionally, this position could plausibly be quite beneficial as an operative within the workplace spirituality of the global economy. Ideally the cultural officer would be present in organizational meetings between companies from different ideological backgrounds or act as an informational resource prior to meetings to aid in the cultural relativist understanding of each group. This process would aid in promoting mutual understanding of collectivistic versus individualistic organizations and in the mediation of any disagreements resulting from cultural misunderstandings on the individual, group, and organizational levels. This position could also be charged with ensuring that workplace spirituality is executed appropriately to prevent exploitation of workers. In areas with unions, the cultural officer could also serve as a liaison with the union and/or the internal Human Resources Department to ensure that employees are treated justly and ethically.

This paper's first author twice held positions akin to the "cultural officer" Gupta et al. proposed. The first was as head of a program entitled Project Miracles, a turnaround initiative at AT&T Consumer Products in the late 1980s. So-named by the division president Kenneth Bertaccini, the values-driven initiative was designed to nurture employees as people (distinct from workers) and give them tools to live a more fulfilling life. In less than two years, business results improved dramatically, staving the sell-off of the division (Rutigliano, 1996). The second experience of the author was as Manager, Culture Transformation at a nuclear power plant in the United States with 1800 people from 1998-2003. Initiatives created focused on healing what the President and Chief Nuclear Officer articulated as "the broken spirit of the nuclear business unit." Step-change improvements in safety, productivity, morale, and job satisfaction resulted (Rutigliano, personal communication, June 12, 2003).

While a cultural officer can be a viable component of on-the-job workplace spirituality implementation, initiating understanding of what it means to nurture the human spirit at work could be equally beneficial by including this leadership approach in business school curriculum and leadership development programs of all types (Crossman, 2015; Dhiman & Marques, 2011; Friedman & Friedman, 2014). In addition, entire organizations, such as the Society for Human Resource Management, exist to oversee the impact of globalization on individuals and corporations. There is an industry of trainers who work to assist companies around the world understand the role of culture and spirituality as it relates to shared outcomes and mutual benefit (www.shrm.org). In *The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business*, author Erin Meyer (2014) asserts that the process begins with recognizing the cultural factors that shape human behavior and methodically analyzing the reasons for that behavior. Globalization and spirituality, separately and combined, call for a deeper understanding of the individual within the workforce and the relationship of each workforce in the context of the world

stage. Business curricula focusing on ways and means of nurturing the human spirit can be of tremendous value as a focus in the arenas of leadership, human resources, and organizational behavior, for example.

Colleges are already recognized as hotbeds of cultural change, but corporate business organizations in and of themselves have also become a primary form of social organization in which corporate trends drive even college program transformations (Case & Gosling, 2010). Nearly 60 percent of the top economic entities in the world during 2012 were corporations (Walls & Triandis, 2014). Many major companies, such as Apple and Google, have fostered their own set of cultural values and community (Case & Gosling, 2010). This economic power on a global scale surpasses economic manipulation and results in these organizations shaping consumer lives as well as those of the competing and partnering organizations in socioeconomics, politics, technology, and social psychology (Walls & Triandis, 2014). When this power is coupled with the creation of a corporate culture in companies, it also drives a competitive advantage to obtain the best and brightest individuals to fuel those companies (Case & Gosling, 2010). As best-selling author and California Congressional candidate Marianne Williamson stated, “We can radically uplevel our approach to leadership by focusing on holding the space for the brilliance of others rather than striving to succeed on our own” (Williamson, n.d.). Such a paradigm shift in leadership thinking can produce higher quality outcomes and revolutionize how the concept of success is considered.

In the days before the technological revolution, there was a primary facilitation of exploring personal and shared values and deepening an understanding of other cultures. The practice may appear simplistic now, yet the children who corresponded with pen pals from other countries received an early education in the role of differing cultures in the development of personal values and spirituality and fostered an openness to ways different from a single cultural norm. Perhaps there is a means, in the spirit of globalization, to revive this old practice in the context of our broadening global economy. The Internet has opened the gates of communication in ways previously unimagined. A broader understanding of the ways other cultures integrate spirituality into their workplaces may prove to be a way to reduce the resistance of some American companies to embracing the leadership approach of nurturing the human spirit at work as demonstrated by SWA.

Arianna Huffington addressed the importance of redefining the meaning of success in the modern global economy within her recent book *Thrive* (Huffington, 2014), which includes an excerpt from a commencement address she gave during the spring of 2013 at Smith College. During this speech, she described a work paradigm in which money, power, and well-being are all important components of a successful management scheme and organization. She defines well-being as a human ability involving compassion, giving, intuition, and a sense of wonder. Additionally, Huffington draws upon her own experiences in recommending mindfulness and meditation in the workplace as well as an individual’s personal life to increase quality of life and work. However, although money and power are certainly largely associated with successful businesses, they are counterintuitive to the human spirit and in many ways often drain it. Keeping

Huffington's model of well-being as the deprioritized third metric of success behind money and power is more impetus for employees to be merely invested in their work rather than enriched by it and vice versa. By fostering a sense of the human spirit in the workplace and making nurturing that spirit the top priority, money and success may naturally be increased as employees put more of their heart, soul, skills, talents, and strong work ethic into their tasks (Schultz & Jones Yang, 1999).

An excellent real-world example of this idea comes from Starbucks, a company with a well-established and impactful place in the global economy that also prides itself on corporate social responsibility and workplace spirituality (Behar, 2009; Schultz, 2011; Schultz & Jones Yang, 1999). This mentality is reflected in their mission statement, "To inspire and nurture the human spirit—one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time" (<http://www.starbucks.com>). When Schultz set out to develop Starbucks, he did so with a values-based model of leadership and corporate social responsibility in mind (Schultz & Jones Yang, 1999). As a young man who grew up in the projects of New York, Schultz recognized that organizational success was not possible without the contributions of even the lowest-paid employees and viewed the success, nourishment of inner lives, and care of employees as the responsibility of management (Schultz & Jones Yang, 1999). By encouraging workplace spirituality through viewing employees as people instead of profit components, building trust, and providing a higher fulfillment through corporate social responsibility, Schultz was able to break into the global economy with Starbucks (Behar, 2009). When he returned to Starbucks as CEO in 2008 following its rapid decline, he was able to turn it around again and cement its position as a leading company in the global market through re-implementation of a values-based organizational model, becoming yet another example of spirit at work in action (Schultz, 2011).

Future Research Implications

Future research should include case studies utilizing a cultural officer in multiple Eastern and Western organizations working in conjunction with unions and human resources departments. This would evaluate the best form this position would take, provide areas of potential use, expansion, and improvement, and identify areas of global applicability. More research should also be performed in global markets to determine transcultural values between Eastern and Western corporations, including differences concerning global application of workplace spirituality in individualistic and collectivistic societies. Applying lessons of former generations, new technology allows youngsters to learn cross culturally before entering higher education (<https://penpalschools.com>). Globalization requires new models of learning inserted earlier into the educational experience. In addition, initiating long-term studies of university students, business leaders and employees who have participated in spirit-at-work classes, workshops, and seminars would help determine the most efficient and lasting way to train new leaders in the way of workplace spirituality as a modern management tool and catalyst for workplace transformation. Lastly, cross-cultural studies of workplace spirituality using congruent as well as adapted cultural-equivalent surveys will be important for elucidating the

constructs in workplace spirituality that may be universally understood in contrast with those that may require more work to be applicable in the global economy.

Conclusion

A holistic anthropological perspective may be the key to implementing workplace spirituality in this era of globalization. While Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) found that workplace spirituality is utilized on some scale in Eastern as well as Western societies, there are still many issues to overcome to have nurturing of the human spirit at work commonplace across the globe. Organizations and individuals must maintain a degree of cultural relativism to bridge the gaps between Eastern and Western concepts of workplace spirituality and its components. Additionally, finding common values between individualistic and collectivistic societies will be key to cementing alignment of organizational values on the organization-to-organization level as well as that of individual-to-individual. Finding common values must be done by holistically examining the different cultures involved in the global economy and identifying homogeneous factors to build from before an attempt to create a synergistic relationship between different organizations' workplace spirituality is initiated (Dhiman & Marques, 2011; Fairholm, 2015; Vallabh & Singhal, 2014). Once this is accomplished, the use of a cultural officer derived and expanded from Gupta et al. (2012) would be an excellent solution for bridging cultural gaps in multicultural organizations and partnerships as well as addressing potential employee exploitation. Additionally, adding classes on workplace spirituality and leadership approaches to nurturing the human spirit to undergraduate and graduate business program curricula, workshops, and on-the-job training stand to benefit individuals, employing organizations, and society (Case & Gosling, 2010; Crossman, 2015; Dhiman & Marques, 2011; Friedman & Friedman, 2014). The other side of the world is no longer a ship journey or even a plane ride away; it is accessible with only a key stroke. To assure America's long-term competitive edge in an increasingly global economy, the synthesis of personal values and spirituality and the knowledge of bridging our own culture to others must begin in the earliest opportunities in our country's classrooms. In the context of the global economy and in measurement of company performance, nurturing the human spirit at work is a multifaceted investment that, when implemented thoughtfully and well and for the correct reasons, could benefit all.

Definition of Terms

Workplace spirituality. A cultural and leadership concept that recognizes that people have inner lives, including values and beliefs that should be encouraged in the workplace to enable fulfillment of personal meaning in work and to enhance the work experience.

Spirit at work. Synonym for workplace spirituality.

Globalization. The process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture with the objective of shared benefit, including the corporate and individual benefits derived from promoting spirituality in the workforce with an increasingly global reach.

Corporate social responsibility. The commitment by employing organizations to enhance the quality of life of employees, as well as the community and society in general, while also contributing to economic development.

Workplace secularism. The policy of keeping spirituality in the private lives of employees and out of the public life that is the workplace.

Values. Principles of behavior or judgment related to what is considered important in life and which inform behavior and decisions.

Super-organic. A criterion relating to the structure of culture in society that is independent of members within the society.

Human spirit. The mental, emotional, spiritual, and philosophical components of humanity.

Values-based. A leadership model in which a set of values guides organizational and employee behaviors and mission statements.

Cultural relativism. An anthropological principle stating that the values, beliefs, and practices of a culture must be viewed from the perspective of that culture to be understood by outsiders.

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