

Workplace spirituality



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Introduction Many organizations require their employees to manage their emotions while working with coworkers and customers. However, employees are constantly under stress which may render the effectiveness of his or her work ethics. Workplace spirituality is the method of incorporating one's personal idea of " spirituality" in their daily work schedule. Spirituality can give a sense of balance and security to many individuals and therefore improve their organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

Organizations are beginning to incorporate spirituality in the workplace in order to enhance organizational performance and increase the development of business ethics. The importance of a business to incorporate spirituality within the workplace will continue to influence the culture of business in the anticipated future. Origins Workplace spirituality is an idea that originated in the early 1900s that answered to the cruel and heartless business culture that dominated North America (Barrett pp. 1) Businesses have implemented various practices which allowed or encouraged practicing religious beliefs while in the workplace. Such practices may include respecting religious and spiritual diversity in the workplace, supporting faith-work integration efforts, and providing concrete opportunities to apply one's religious and spiritual worldviews in one's current job in ways that advance the goals of the organization" (Duffy pp. 5). Workers constantly feel overworked and unappreciated. Their work may have fulfilled their security needs; however the human being requires more emotional and spiritual attention. Corporate America soon began to understand this concept in the early 1900s when they recognized emotional intelligence enabled individual development. Firstly, workplace spirituality became measurable by identifying the extent

to which an individual displayed specific behaviors. Secondly, it became apparent, through research and measurement, that emotional intelligence was one of the strongest predictors of success in the workplace” (Barrett pp. 1). A great influence and example of spiritual harmony is represented in ancient Chinese culture, more particularly Daoism. The movement was started by philosopher Lao Tzu who taught it was important to incorporate spirituality in one’s life in order to have a central balance.

Lao believed this balance was necessary for success, and that one will not be able to perform to his or her highest potential if that balance was disturbed. “ The role of the leader is to provide a paternalistic and nurturing environment. The mystical figure, Lao Tzo was a profound believer in the inherent goodness of humankind. Ultimately, he promoted the benefits of harmonious personal relationships” (Rarick pp. 2). It is natural for a human being to perform better while they are in a comfortable state of mind, and Lao is a prime example of that.

Lao was an exceptional leader and teacher whose lessons are still being practiced across the world. His guidance has taught others it is possible to balance both your emotional and physical well-being. Spirituality vs. Religion
When looking at the term “ spirituality” it can often be confused with the term “ religion”. Although spiritual and religious beliefs may be harmonious, it is important to understand that they are not necessarily identical and have two separate meanings. Spirituality is not about following a certain practice or uniform belief; it is relative to the individual.

A study of spirituality in the workplace published by Sloan Management describes “ the basic feeling of being connected with one’s complete self, others, and the entire universe. If a single word could best describe spirituality and the vital role it plays in a people’s live, that word is interconnectedness” (Garcia-Zamor pp. 4). If spirituality and religion were compliments, it would then be extremely difficult to make everyone content, especially in the United States where various religions are practiced. Since spirituality is universal, it should be easily integrated or at least accepted within a company.

Employee Self-Acceptance It is not enough for employees to feel efficient; they must also feel a sense of peace and acceptance within themselves in order to feel completely satisfied. Workplace spirituality is an important research area for business because it provides the well-being of individuals and organizations (Nooralized 1). Before this recent movement of incorporating spirituality at work, employers suggested to the employee to leave their personal life at home and separate business from individual concerns. Employers are still stressing this idea today and it is likely some people are allowing their personal lives to affect their work. Companies are now beginning to add work-and-family-programs and a variety of other benefits aimed at helping employees to achieve balanced lives (Garcia-Zamor pp. 6). Companies want to obtain an employee who will bring creativity and personal talents to the work. Therefore by incorporating spirituality at work, it can increase an employee’s morale and commitment, and reduce stress and overworking. Both Employees and employers want to find meaning and purpose to what they are doing in the workplace by

incorporating spirituality. In most of today's corporations, the central focus persists to be on observable, external, controllable, empirical, and materialistic variables, which has led to the creation of ' a world without depth' and the isolation of the soulful aspects of work life" (Karakas pp. 5). If these values become the only means of operation by a business it is possible their future earnings will suffer. The notion that material success will lead to an individual's well-being does not correlate. This relates to the old saying that " money does not buy happiness" which is what many people often think.

It is possible for a person to feel alone and separated while he or she is at work as well. Many times a person is stuck in a cubicle or have little to no interaction with others while at work. This can leave an employee to feel unappreciated, unsatisfied, or burnt out. " Burnout occurs when people do not have adequate emotional resources to meet their work demands and/or strains of interpersonal stressors" (Byrne pp. 4). Responding to these feeling that employees have seems necessary in a business, especially if the employer wants the employee to go exceed any expectations.

Dr. Richard King wrote this excerpt on his presentation on spirituality. " It's the journey, not the destination, that's important" (King pp. 4). Workers are looking to enjoy their lives, and since works takes up a majority of their life, they deserve to be happy on the job. Spirituality and Business Ethics In a society that emphasis the value of business ethics, it is hard to believe that the idea of workplace spirituality is just beginning to be a trend in the business world. There are many spiritual principles that are reflected in business ethics.

People continuously try to balance their family, friends, and work to a point that makes them both happy and successful. Michael A. Sontoro writes in his book, *How Western Business Can-and Should-Influence Social and Political Change in the Coming Decade*, “ the very idea of a human right would be meaningless if it did not by definition imply that other actors, including corporations, had a correlative moral duty to avoid violating that right directly or indirectly” (Herman pp. 5). Corporations have the responsibility to make sure the individual is able to express themselves in a way that can make them happy.

Of course there are limitations including distractions, safety, and respect for other employees. Yet if an individual is able to balance oneself without distracting others, and in turn be more effective for the company, an organization should be able to accept it. Personally I had the opportunity to interview the Vice President of Hitachi Data Systems, Gary Pilafas, who has worked with the company for over twenty years. Hitachi is a very successful international company that is currently ranked number one in the world for business ethics. Pilafas states, “ It is a common understanding that we are created equal, but different.

We all understand and except that we share different cultures. However, the fact that we are able to create such a powerful business under those pretenses is the most rewarding” (Pilafas). Hitachi is able to incorporate workplace spirituality in that people are able to freely express themselves. For the company knows, the more comfortable the person, the more successful the business will be. Organizational Growth and Productivity It is important for a company to experience a low turnover rate with its

employees to reflect the company's success and positive future development.

Organizations that incorporate spirituality provide opportunities to experience greater personal growth and development (Nasina pp. 4). An individual's spirituality allows for personal growth. Therefore, if a business decides to help employees with their personal growth, the employee may be more committed to the business. " The work spirituality is a determinant of affective organizational commitment as it adjusts employee's behaviors and cognition towards work, thus creating a strong association and a sense of wholeness among them (Usman pp. 1).

When the employee feels happy and is safe to express their spirituality, it is more likely they will be committed to that business longer. An organization should emphasize workplace spirituality in order to improve productivity. Since spirituality can cause one to feel good about oneself and what one is doing, there is a greater interconnectedness with the workplace and a greater sense of loyalty (Gross-Schaefer pp. 2). The workplace can become more involved with one another as people become more comfortable in the working environment. Everything could feel more at ease and less intimidating.

People who are well respected have a higher degree of self-esteem and treat others in a more dignified, civil and honest manner. (Gross-Schaefer pp. 2). The company as well can become more productive once people are able to easily work and communicate with one another. Conclusion Spirituality in the workplace creates a new organizational culture in which employees feel

happier and perform better. It gives employees the motivation to work as well as increase work retention. As employees begin to feel more accepted in the business's community, they will want to give back to the company by putting forth their best efforts.

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