



# PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

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## 1.6 DEFINING SUCCESS FROM A SPIRITUAL VIEW

Success at work takes on an expanded meaning when we draw from a sincerely held spiritual view of life. And all of the “traditional signs of success” are not results we must strive to achieve -- they come naturally.

**WHAT ARE** the traditional ways in which people define “personal success at work”? For many, it means one or more of the following:

- Earning enough money to be materially comfortable in life
- Progressing in one’s career path
- Gaining positional power and status
- Producing high-quality work
- Helping to grow/build an organisation or business
- Helping to grow people, personally and professionally
- Serving customers or clients
- Benefiting other stakeholders, such as society and the environment
- Providing for the well-being of future generations

*How about you? In traditional terms, how would you define your “personal success at work”?*

Have you ever thought about defining your success at work from a *spiritual point of view*? For most people, success at work takes on an expanded meaning when it is drawn from a sincerely held spiritual view of life. For example:

- Sincere Buddhists think in terms of “right livelihood.”
- Sincere Christians see Jesus’ life as a model of always being in service to others.
- Sincere Muslims follow the words of Muhammed: *Riches are not from abundance of worldly goods, but from a contented mind.*
- Sincere Hindus, drawing from the Vedas, focus on generating wealth (*artha*) within the larger priority of contributing to the well-being of society (*dharma*) and satisfying desires (*kama*) within the larger journey of spiritual fulfilment (*moksha*).

Taken together, these various spiritual teachings point to “selfless service to others” and “spiritual growth” as the basis of work success.

*How would you define your “personal success at work” from a spiritual point of view?*

In order to do this, start by defining what spirituality means to you, in your own words. Then, using this spiritual definition as a basis to draw from, identify what success at work means to you.

A perfect example of all this is Joanne Zimmerman, CEO of one of the largest hospitals in the western United States. Her definition of success is based on her spirituality and is naturally about serving others even in the smallest day-to-day details:

*For me, spirituality is the expectation of the opportunity to live and hope and love and understand that there's a world larger than I can see. Every answer will not be on a spreadsheet. It all comes from a position of Love... I believe daily that each one makes a difference. It's not all about big things. Even giving directions to a visitor can make a difference. At the end of each day, I find one thing where I made a difference.*

Now, take a look at your traditional definition of success at work and your definition of success from your spiritual view of life. What differences do you see between the two? What shifts in focus do you see between the two? Does one or the other seem more inspiring and uplifting to you? And if so, which one?

In the most general terms, “success” is achieving what we have predetermined to do. Ultimately, we have found that when we “predetermine what to do” *from our spiritual view of life*, we look forward to each day with great enthusiasm and clarity of purpose. We find meaning to otherwise mundane affairs. We feel inspired to give selfless service to others. And we gain the deepest satisfaction and feeling of sincere success.

We have also found that when we unfold our work from a spiritual basis, all of the “traditional signs of success” listed at the beginning of this article are not results that we must strive to achieve -- they come naturally. Also, these natural results both support our own personal well-being and inspire us to serve others in the best ways possible. Thus “having the best of both worlds” is an apt expression when your sense of success at work is based on your spiritual view of life.

So, ask yourself: *What are the “natural results” I might achieve in my work, based on my definition of success from my spiritual view of life?*

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This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: The Basics*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of “spirituality and human values for leadership and work”, visit our website: [www.globaldharma.org](http://www.globaldharma.org)