



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

3.8 BUILDING A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

Before you invite people to return to their spiritual roots and operate in their work from that foundation, always start by doing your own inner homework first.

AS YOU BEGIN to consider the ways to foster a spiritual revolution at work through your leadership, it's natural that you will want to be as inclusive and as respectful as you can with those whom you lead. So, what is the wisest way for a leader to do this?

Before you invite people to return to their spiritual roots and do their work from that foundation, always start by doing *your own inner homework first*. If you haven't already defined the spiritual view of life from which you lead, take some quiet time to do that now¹. As a refresher, here are the two main steps to take:

1. Describe what spirituality means to you
2. Identify a short, summary "theme" to that spiritual view

The purpose of your spiritual theme is to serve as a headline that you can remember easily. Then, you can use it frequently in your leadership by asking yourself: *Drawing from my spiritual theme as a guide, how would I approach this situation or make this decision?* As you consistently draw from your spiritual foundation in your leadership, you will naturally communicate your spiritual strength to others, even without words.

For example, Lars Kolind, former CEO of Oticon in Denmark – one of the world's premier suppliers of products for the hearing impaired – defined his spiritual view of life in this way:

For me, spirituality is the acceptance of the existence of a God, and to adhere to the religion that expresses that belief.

He then identified his spiritual theme as:

To love God and love your neighbour

Now, how do you expand this process of "leading with a spiritual theme" to include the group of people you work with? In this article, we'll address two ways that can help you get started. In these steps, we encourage you to use the word spirituality as openly as you feel

¹ If you need more background and information on how to do this, refer to the articles titled "Shifting to a Spiritual View of Work" and "Defining Your Spiritual Context" in Book 2: *Work as a Spiritual Practice*.

comfortable, though it is not required. In the next article we will share how to be more explicit in creating a group spiritual theme.

The first step is to start by bringing your workgroup together and initiating safe and open conversations. Begin by having people tell personal stories about times when they felt:

- A deeper meaning in their life as well as work
- Guided by an inner wisdom in their work
- A spiritual inspiration in their work

Allow people to share their views on a voluntary basis. This will help them become more comfortable with the idea of discovering and discussing a deeper source of meaning for their work.

As a second step, you can introduce a spiritual theme to your group in a way that is practical and meaningful to their goals and values. For example, Ananth Raman, the president of a manufacturing firm, tells us how he did this to introduce a quality improvement programme in his company:

Since the products we manufacture are made for specific applications it is extremely difficult to standardise things. An expert, however, told us this was all very simple: "You simply say what you are doing and do what you say." But my fellows did not think it was as simple as that. They were still completely worried.

While contemplating this problem from a spiritual view, I realised that all that the expert was talking about was having unity of thought, word and action. So we went all over the company and said, "The company's objective with this quality control system is to have unity of thought, word and action."

This began to catch on and people started raising all kinds of questions about how to operate in this way. I was amazed at the chain reaction that began to occur.

As a result, Ananth began having monthly meetings where his people brought difficult situations to see how they could solve them with a unity of thought, word and action. Since Ananth's leadership came from a strong spiritual foundation, it helped him guide his people to cultivate this quality of inner unity.

As you take these first two steps, ask yourself: *Drawing from my own spiritual strength, what steps can I take to begin to build a spiritual foundation with those whom I lead?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: Spiritual-Based Leaders*. 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