



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

3.9 CREATING A GROUP SPIRITUAL THEME

When you identify a shared sense of spiritual meaning in your workgroup, you establish a firm foundation for your group members to work according to its most deeply motivating sense of what's important to them.

MANY YEARS ago, the Hewlett-Packard Corporation surveyed their 200 most consistently successful leaders to discover their common management practises. One of their key practises was to create a set of values for their own workgroup, independent of but related to the company values. Then they measured every decision they made in the workgroup according to these values.

You as a leader can also do this by asking each person in your workgroup to identify one personal value they would like to have incorporated into the way your group works, day-to-day. Post each person's answer on a large sheet of paper and ask the group to look for (a) commonalities and (b) important "unique" values. As key themes emerge, you can synthesise them into a set of 4-6 core values for your group – values by which to measure everything you do as a group.

Now, suppose you were to explore even further – to discover the spiritual roots of those values? By doing so, you can establish a shared sense of spiritual meaning that motivates everything your workgroup does together. Ananth Raman, president of a manufacturing firm, told us how he made this transition:

Values such as truth, respect, equanimity, honesty and integrity are the core values that became very strong for me when I went into business. On the surface, these values seem more on the ethical side. But as I began to look at things more spiritually, I discovered deeper values within each of them. For example, I realised that it's not just a good business practise to be ethical in dealing with others; I'm actually the same as everyone else, and we all come from the same Divinity. As I continued to look at these ethical values from a spiritual perspective, each of them became stronger.

To create a safe, open climate for discussing the spiritual roots of your group's values, be sure to focus on the inclusive nature of spirituality, rather than on religious differences – while also honouring the diverse spiritual views of life that your group may have. A great way to start this process is to pose self-inquiry questions such as: "What does spirituality mean to you?" and "How can we appreciate work as a chance for spiritual growth?"

Then, have each person clearly define their own spiritual view of life and identify a concise “spiritual theme” in 4-6 words. Some examples that people have shared with us are:

- *Spirituality is “inspired responsibility towards people, other living beings, and the world... seeing and relating with Divinity in every aspect.”*

Spiritual Theme: “Noble actions, feelings, thoughts and responsibility.”

- *Spirituality is the inner part of our humanness. It is our inner force.*

Spiritual Theme: “To know thyself.”

Have each person share his or her spiritual view of life and related spiritual theme with everyone else. Get to know the spiritual themes of others by making nameplates for their desk or nametags, or creating a poster with these spiritual themes. Use the group’s imagination to come up with creative ideas to bring this spirituality alive. Then select a common work situation and have each person say how that situation looks through the lens of his or her spiritual theme.

Once everyone has become comfortable with this, have a dialogue about what might be the essence of your *group’s* spiritual theme. Continue to fine-tune this until you ultimately create a word-crafted statement of the group’s spiritual theme. Once this group spiritual theme has emerged, you can begin to ask, “Using our spiritual theme as a guide, how should we approach this situation or make that decision?”

As new people come into the group, take the time to have them share their spiritual views of life and their spiritual themes. Use this as an opportunity to evolve the group spiritual theme over time. This is a powerful way of continuing to tap into a shared sense of spiritual meaning for all the work your group does together.

So, ask yourself: *What is my own spiritual view of life and related spiritual theme? How can I begin to engage others in identifying their spiritual themes and creating a group spiritual theme?*

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