



## PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

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### 3.10 BE THE CULTURE, BEFORE CREATING THE CULTURE

The executives must first embody the spiritual foundation that they want to create in the culture, before asking others in the organisation to do the same.

**IF YOU'RE** an executive who's committed to leading from a spiritual basis, you've undoubtedly considered its implications on your organisational culture. And you've probably wondered, "Can a group of executives generate a spiritual foundation that revitalises the culture of an entire organisation – from which even its mission and values can emerge?"

For us, the answer is undoubtedly "Yes." Four years ago the board of directors of the Methodist health care system in Texas (USA) decided to reinvigorate its organisation. They hired a new CEO and the executive team developed a new statement of beliefs, mission, vision and values. Their belief statement is a wonderful example of establishing a spiritual foundation from which the entire organisation can grow. It starts by saying that their health care system is intended to provide quality health care services. Then it adds:

*As it fulfils this purpose, the system participates in the redeeming activity of God that makes the world a better place for all humankind. This health system is based on the belief that God can heal through the lives, actions and words of a person, regardless of various religious perspectives. Therefore, in all endeavours the Methodist health care system strives to treat everyone it serves as a person of sacred worth and value, created by God.*

Their mission is an extension of this spiritual foundation: "To provide high quality, cost effective health care that delivers the best value to the people we serve in a spiritual environment of caring in association with internationally recognised teaching and research." Similarly, they built their five core values – Integrity, Compassion, Accountability, Respect, Excellence: "I CARE" – upon their spiritual belief statement.

Words are nice, but what does it take to bring statements like these alive in the day-to-day work of people in the organisation? The first step is for executives to be honest with themselves: "How well can we as executives actually live and work in accord with our own spiritual view of life and the spiritual foundation we've identified for the organisation?"

William once worked with an entire executive team who approached this kind of transformation in their organisational culture in a most wise manner. The essence of their creed was:

*We have to be the culture before we can change the culture. We will have to embody this change ourselves for at least six months – so there is no question that we are walking our talk – before we ask the rest of the company to align with this change and to follow our lead.*

Without exception, every spiritual-based leader we've interviewed has reinforced this same attitude about changing their organisational culture from a spiritual perspective:

*If someone wants to become a spiritual-based leader, they must first put themselves in order. After that everything will follow.*

*The power of example is important; you must practice what you preach. You must express what you believe, with your deeds, as best you can. Be open about it and invite dialogue.*

*Before you implement any of your core values, which to me is the same as my spiritual values, be sure that you have sound faith in those values.*

The next step is for the executives to continually explore, feel and share their own experiences of beginning to live and work from the spiritual foundation they have created. This could include discussing questions openly like, "How has the spiritual foundation of our organisation impacted our leadership?" G. Narayana, Chairman Emeritus of Excel Industries, Ltd., shares why this is an important step:

*To bring spirituality into work, first of all make it a group process. The moment you make it a group process you are touched with God.*

Ultimately, the executive team must embody and energise the spiritual foundation, mission and values so strongly that its words and concepts are alive and pulsating throughout the day-to-day reality of the business. Then and only then should the executives think about a process of dialogue and inclusion with all the employees of the organisation.

So, ask yourself: *What is the opportunity for our executive team to make spirituality the basis for the culture of the organisation? How would I start to identify a spiritual foundation for the entire organisation?*

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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](http://www.globaldharma.org)