



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

3.17 TAP THE SPIRIT OF ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

When leaders create their organisational values from a spiritual basis, they will naturally be universal and unitive; and will guide the employees to be concerned with all others – all stakeholders – rather than just “me or us”.

IN A PREVIOUS ARTICLE, we wrote about how to have your values be “all for one and one for all.” We explored the difference between values that have a spiritual-basis versus values based in self-centredness. But what does this mean to a leader of an organisation?

As a spiritual-based leader, it is natural that you want a strong foundation of organisational values, and want your employees to work from a strong foundation of personal values. In that light, what difference does it make for you to foster an environment that nurtures spiritual-based values?

Take two organisations, both with the same stated value of being customer-focused: “We care for our customers.” One would care for their customers because they know it is the best way to get them to spend money, and thus maximise their market position and revenue. The second would care for their customers because they sincerely want to give the best value and treat them as they themselves would like to be treated.

In other words, one company would be customer-focused out of self-interest (to “get”), while the other would be customer-focused out of a sincere sense of serving (to “give”). Self-centred values are always separative, with a mentality of “me first” and “us vs. them”, even with customers. But when leaders create organisational values from a spiritual basis, they will naturally be universal and unitive. These values will guide the employees to be concerned with everyone – all stakeholders – rather than just “me or us”.

As an illustration, when Dr. A. K. Chattopadhyay was Sr. Vice President for Associated Cement Company’s Refractory Division, he told us a story about how he faced a challenge with a customer:

A man who had previously worked for ACC supplied and installed some refractory material for one of our customers. He told this customer that he was an ACC employee and claimed that the material had come from ACC, which was not true. So the client agreed to let him do the work because he used the ACC name. It so happened that the work that he did failed after two months.

The customer came to me and talked with me about what had happened. In this situation, we had no legal obligation. But I felt it was our moral responsibility to stand behind this job because this customer gave the job to this man based on the ACC name. I replaced the material and sent my engineer out to install it. We lost heavily as there was no income whatsoever on this job. Even though I faced a lot of audit queries about this, I had the support of ACC management behind me.

What was the spiritual basis from which Dr. Chattopadhyay made his decision with this customer?

I feel that my very existence has a spiritual purpose. If I am here, I have a purpose to serve; God has created me not just to hover around and do nothing. My spirituality has grown slowly, especially as a leader. I can remember thinking that if I react in a certain manner it may do harm, and if I react in a different way it will not harm. This is how it began to grow in me and I still think that way today.

While it may seem that being self-centred is natural to being successful in business, we have found the opposite to be true in the long term. As Dr. Chattopadhyay concluded:

For me, spirituality is when we do not think in terms of these short-term gains. When I gave the approval to have our people install new material for this job, I clearly told them, "I am willing to take this loss, because I know there is a much bigger gain."

When leaders start working from the mindset that, "Yes I love society, I love my colleagues and people," then this will be transmitted to all the levels of the organisation and society. Then our actions will definitely bring prosperity to all of us.

So, ask yourself: *What is the motivation behind my organisation's values? How can I nurture organisational and employee values that are spiritual-based?*

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