Put Your Spirituality to Work

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

3.22 A Global Soul for a Global Society

> We as business leaders must commit to a new, spiritual-based "response-ability" as we participate in a world transformed by globalisation and technology.

WHILE SPEAKING at the 2004 World Urban Forum in Barcelona, Spain, we were acutely aware of the global consciousness that is fast-becoming a reality in our world. But how do business leaders embrace this global consciousness from a spiritual basis? While pondering this, we found a speech given by Steven C. Rockefeller in August, 2004 at the University of the Philippines[1].

Steven Rockefeller, Chairman of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, worked with a large number of international groups to produce the Earth Charter[2] – a UN initiative calling for establishing "a sound ethical foundation for the emerging global society and to help build a sustainable world based on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace". In his speech, he gave a unique perspective about globalisation:

> *A new planetary civilization is beginning to emerge, and it is interconnecting all cultures. The communications, transportation, and economic systems that are creating this global society are expressions of an industrial-technological society. In order for this new planetary civilization to fully realize its potential, it must generate a spiritual and ethical consciousness consistent with its geographical, ecological, intellectual, social, and economic situation.*
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> *We are globalising the outer world, and I doubt we can stop the process even if we wanted to. We can, however, work to guide and shape the process by giving it a soul – that is by creating an ethical vision of where we want the process to go and committing ourselves to it in a spirit of solidarity and hope. This is the inner globalisation that must occur to build global cooperation and community and reverse negative trends that threaten the future.*

Willis Harman, renowned futurist and author of *Global Mind Change*, points out the important relationship between this new planetary civilisation and business leaders:

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[1] A full copy of the speech can be downloaded from:
http://www.rmaf.org.ph/Awardees/Lecture/LectureRockefeller.htm
[2] A full copy of the Earth Charter can be downloaded from: www.earthcharter.org

Leaders in world business are the first true planetary citizens. They have worldwide capability and responsibility. Their decisions affect not just economies, but societies… and the world problems of poverty, environment, and security. World business will be a key actor in the ultimate resolution of the macro-problem; the business corporation is far more flexible and adaptive than the bureaucratic structures of government.

In practical terms, this means that we as business leaders must commit to a new, spiritual-based "response-ability" as we participate in globalisation and technology, no matter how large or small our role may be. In his speech, Steven framed this spiritual perspective about global consciousness:

The objective is to give the emerging global consciousness the spiritual depth – the faith and wisdom – needed to build a just, sustainable, and peaceful world community and to protect the integrity of Earth's ecological systems. In and through this process, the modern world created by science, technology, and globalisation has an opportunity to find its spiritual centre. This is the spiritual challenge presented by industrial-technological civilization in the twenty-first century.

For Steven, one of the key forces for bringing about this new civilization is the transformation of the world's religions based on a global, universal spirituality. The ideas he offers are twofold, and apply equally to the world of business. The first impact of a planetary spiritual awareness would be a deep respect for the diversity of cultures and life around the world:

… a planetary spiritual awareness will embrace an ethic of respect for other traditions and an openness to learn from others, while remaining faithful to its own particularity. It will seek the divine as the spiritual centre of the greater community of life in all its cultural and biological diversity.

The second impact would be the emergence of a strong sense of character:

It will pursue spiritual disciplines that involve a quest for purity of heart and clarity of mind. It will embrace a practical ethic that is world affirming and life affirming and that expresses itself in and through compassion, love, tolerance, justice, environmental protection, and peace.

Finally, Steven underscores the importance of bringing about this global consciousness based in spirituality:

It is doubtful whether humanity can find any lasting solution to the big problems it faces without taking this spiritual challenge to heart.

So, ask yourself: *How can my organisation contribute to the emerging spiritual-based planetary consciousness, locally and globally?*

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