



VOLUME 1

An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis



SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS A-K

Photo: Bruce Dale, National Geographic Photographer

A research project conducted by the Global Dharma Center



VOLUME 1



SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS A-K

A research project conducted by the Global Dharma Center

COPYRIGHT PROTOCOLS

The Global Dharma Center (GDC) has created a knowledge-base from its “Spiritual Based Leadership (SBL) Research Programme” from which researchers, teachers, students, authors, consultants, and leaders may draw material for their own purposes. GDC’s writings and research are volunteer service work, with the intention to make the results of our service projects freely and widely available to anyone in the world, with no-cost access and downloading at www.globaldharma.org/sbl-research.htm.

In that spirit, please note the following protocols for using any portion of the SBL knowledge-base:

1. You may use up to a total of 3,000 words in any single published work (article, workbook, book, or other publication), workshop, presentation or speech without any further permission. If you wish to use more than 3,000 words in any single published work, workshop, presentation or speech, you must first secure written permission by contacting GDC at hello@globaldharma.org.

2. Whether you use more or less than 3,000 words, the following acknowledgement must be stated:

Quotations extracted from the public knowledge-base of the “Spiritual Based Leadership Research Programme” are © 2006 by the Global Dharma Center (GDC). GDC retains the copyright to all excerpts from this knowledge-base.

3. If you wish to use more than 3,000 words in any single published work (article, workbook, book, or other publication), workshop, presentation or speech, you agree not to receive any personal income (such as royalties or fees) for that work, workshop, presentation or speech, except as noted in #4 below
4. If (a) you wish to quote more than 3,000 words in a published work, workshop, presentation or speech, and (b) you work for an established educational institution teaching *students or faculty*, or for an organisation teaching *employees* – then you may receive your salary for that time as payment permitted under these protocols.
5. You are permitted to charge money in relation to the use of excerpts from the GDC/SBL knowledge-base only to reimburse direct expenses such as materials, room rental and food provided for a workshop, travel expenses, etc.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, please contact GDC and we will be happy to help you. Thank you for serving others in the spirit of this volunteer programme!



© 2010 Copyright Global Dharma Center. All Rights Reserved.
www.globaldharma.org/sbl-research.htm

Volume 1 – Spiritual-Based Leadership Interviews (A-K)
Volume 2 – Spiritual-Based Leadership Interviews (L-Z)
Volume 3 – Spiritual-Based Leadership Interview Excerpts
Volume 4 – Stories from Spiritual-Based Leaders

ISBN: 1-886-112-32-0
ISBN: 1-886-112-33-9
ISBN: 1-886-112-34-7
ISBN: 1-886-112-35-5

TABLE OF CONTENTS

7

INTRODUCTION

9

**Floridas Aguenza, President and COO
Plantersbank, The Philippines**

22

**John Behner, former Country Manager
Nabisco, El Salvador**

43

**Philip Budin, CEO
Royaltons, USA**

54

**Francisco Roberto Canada, Partner and Director
Errepar S. A. Publishing, Argentina**

63

**Amber Chand, Co-founder and Vice President of Vision
Eziba, USA**

85

**A. K. Chattopadhyay, Senior Vice President
ACC Limited Refractories Division, India**

96

**Stephen Covey, Vice Chairman
FranklinCovey, USA**

114

**Alvaro Cruz, CEO, I.C.M. Ingenieros Ltda
and former Governor of Cundinamarca, Columbia**

124

**Federico Cuneo, Chairman
American Glass Products, Peru**

135

**Thomas Daugherty, Vice President of Spiritual Care
and Values Integration, Methodist Health Care System, USA**

148

**André Delbecq, former Dean
Santa Clara University School of Business, USA**

169

**Carol Franklin, former Head of Human Resources, Swiss Re
and former CEO, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Switzerland**

180

**Rajan Govindan, former Senior Managing Director
Bankers Trust, USA**

193

**Niels Due Jensen, Group Chairman
Grundfos Management A/S, Denmark**

205

**Niran Jiang, CEO
Institute of Human Excellence, Australia**

217

**Victor-Krishna Kanu, Director
African Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Zambia**

232

**Lars Kolind, former CEO
Oticon, Denmark**



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

INTRODUCTION

The overall purpose of the Spiritual-Based Leadership Research Programme is to contribute to the emerging field of, and the consciousness about spiritual-based leadership in work organisations worldwide, by making high quality and reliable data, information, knowledge, and development methodologies about spiritual-based leadership easily accessible.

While consciousness about spiritual-based leadership is relatively new in the work world and as a field of study, we feel it has gained a strength and momentum such that it deserves a focus of research at this time.

The following are the *intentions* and *rationale* that underlie our engagement in this research:

- Many people are sceptical about the mix of business and spirituality. Some people are positive about business and sceptical about spirituality: “You can’t really be competitive in business if you’re spiritual.” Some people are positive about spirituality and sceptical about business: “Business greed is too corrupting for spirituality to make a difference.” Our intention is to address views such as these by investigating if and how business can be effective while operating from a consciously held spiritual basis.
- Traditional business goals typically focus on financial/productivity gains. Texts from spiritual traditions worldwide propose that there is a much more profound role for human endeavour – that of selfless service to society and the spiritual upliftment of everyone. Our intention is to help investigate how business goals can be defined and prioritised from a spiritual basis, and how businesses can thrive and evolve from that basis.
- The students and faculty at universities as well as consultants and organisational leaders require examples of, and knowledge about, spiritual-based leaders in work organisations. Our intention is to provide an easily accessible knowledge base and website, which will include cases, stories, examples, and analytical data for class work, teaching, and publications.
- There may be significant, demonstrable differences among spiritual-based leaders in their perspectives, qualities, and attributes. The practices and processes of spiritual-based leaders might also vary depending on the type of organisation (family owned, publicly traded, etc.) and the cultural traditions of the society the organisation operates in. Our intention is to develop a typology for these diverse types of spiritual-based leaders and to identify a framework within which people can consciously develop themselves as spiritual-based leaders.

Distinctive characteristics of this research programme:

- It is defined from a consciously held spiritual basis.
- Participation in this programme will be an opportunity for everyone involved to grow in their spiritual character, knowledge, and practice in the world.
- It will include spiritual-based leaders that are leading in work organisations in a variety of cultures and traditions around the world.
- The programme directors, researchers, and spiritual-based leaders will contribute their time, energy, and talent on a voluntary basis. All findings, information, and publications (other than published books) will be available at no cost.

Programme Directors:

This programme is the coordinated, volunteer effort of: Debra Miller, William Miller, Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen, and Dr. Peter Pruzan.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an
interview with:

**FLODELIS F.
AGUENZA**
The Philippines



Interview conducted 25 August 2004

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation: Planters Development Bank (Plantersbank)
Location: Manila, The Philippines
Industry: Banking
Position: President and COO
Years in Position: 12 (23 total years with Plantersbank)
Gender: Female
Age: 62

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Same
Current Location:
Current Industry:
Current Position:

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 30

University Degrees: Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Major in Economics, University of the Philippines; Post graduate studies in Economics, Ateneo de Manila University, The Philippines

How to refer to Floy Aguenza:

“President and COO of Planters Development Bank in The Philippines”

CAREER

Career History

I had no brilliant, eloquent answer to the question, *'how do you see yourself 5 years from now?'* when I was being interviewed for my first job with a bank after graduating from college. Though I knew I would become a good career person, I had no grand ambition of heading a company, spiritually or otherwise, much less play a role in the development of the small and medium enterprise (SME) industry in the Philippines. It just goes to prove however that God has His ways of accomplishing His plans through us, unwilling or unwitting we may be at the start. I am an unlikely protagonist, among many other esteemed companions, in an unlikely journey.

My career as a banker began much like any other. I joined a commercial bank as a management trainee and then became an Executive Assistant to the Executive Vice President. From there I ended up as the head of Human Resources, Corporate Training, Research and Corporate Communications for that bank. This bank is where I met my colleague who is now my CEO, Chairman and friend. Though I had given my heart and soul to what I was doing, he and I faced some dilemmas. We did not agree with the way the bank was being run by the owners, so we made a decision to leave. However, while he went to buy a small bank (the bank we now work for – Plantersbank) with a grand ambition of turning it into a big commercial bank, I took the opposite route.

I was disheartened so I decided to retire and focus on my family. During that time, I was able to travel and take up Chinese painting. After five years, however, I was beginning to feel 'brain dead.' I would run into former colleagues who would ask what I was doing and why I was wasting my time.

One day, my colleague who bought Plantersbank asked me to join him and head the bank's core business which is the loan side. I knew from working with him that he was a man of character and integrity – he believes that this is the only way to keep good professionals. By that time, my idealism had adequately recuperated and I was ready to get back on the road but was somewhat hesitant because I lacked experience in this particular field. He encouraged me and expressed confidence in my ability to learn, so I toughened up and took on the responsibility. I learned the lending business and became an Executive Vice President. That was 23 years ago.

And thus unfolded a truly unique and worthwhile journey. Somewhere along the way, this bank, which was intended and being groomed for the big league, had found a new calling. During the times when it was starting out as a small bank in a provincial town, it had no choice but to cater to the small businessmen of the area. For many of these businesses, this was their first experience with formal banking and they saw that it was a better alternative to paying high interest in the informal market. We worked closely with them, giving them the proper guidance, and their businesses started to flourish. We saw the impact our bank was making within this small community and it touched our hearts in a special way. From then on, we made a decision that we would continue to serve this niche no matter how big we would become.

Over the years we have begun to earn the respect of the larger banks. The assets of our bank are now about US\$670 million and we have around 900 employees. Many of the businesses we financed in those early years have grown with us. For some, we started by giving them small loans like 500,000 pesos (US\$10,000), but now we are giving them loans up to 100 million pesos (US\$2 million).

Current Responsibilities

1986 marked the end of a 20-year dictatorship and a new beginning for the Philippines. The Chairman was offered a position to head a large government bank but, since it would require him to divest of the bank which was trailblazing a path for the underprivileged SMEs, he had to decline. But when the offer again came 10 years later, this time to be ambassador to the U.K., he took the opportunity to serve the country full time. When I asked him who would take over, I was surprised with his answer: *'you.'*

To be honest I have always seen myself as a good number two person and was perfectly convinced that someone else should be assigned the top job. I was fearful of the responsibility because the top position is where the buck stops. Throughout my career, I had always had someone I could consult with. But he reasoned, "If I bring in someone new to head the bank, it would be too big a risk." I told him I would pray about it.

Once again, as in the first time he invited me to join the bank, I had a major decision to make that required me to go beyond my comfort zone. And for the second time, I felt God's leading and decided to accept the offer. My prayer at the time was, "Lord, I really don't want this position, but if you want me to do it, so be it, I know you will provide me with the resources to do it." I truly believe that it is only by God's grace that we accomplish anything. Little did I know, however, that this new path in my career as a banker would run hand-in-hand with my spiritual growth.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

I believe in God the Father and Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and that we were placed on this earth for a purpose. I believe we have been given our life for a reason, that there is a purpose for our life and we need to discover what we are here for. The truth is we are here to do good – to make the world a better place, to be a better person, and to help others to have a better life. This is what I keep trying to do everyday.

When confronted with a situation, I am basically guided by the question, “What would Jesus do?” I read an exercise in a book by a Jesuit writer where he talked about seeing Christ in others and helping others see Christ in you. And I try to do that. All of these help me to cope as my day unfolds and, most especially, prepared me for what would be one of the greatest challenges in my life.

Spiritual Theme

“What would Jesus do?” “What would the Lord do?”

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

I came from a Catholic upbringing, observing all the rituals as most Filipinos do. We're born, baptised and schooled that way without much of a choice. However, apart from religion, I have always found great comfort in my faith.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

I went to a Catholic girls' school that was run by the nuns of our convent. Then I went to a large public university, the University of the Philippines. I never thought that I would be the head of a company; I just knew that I would be a good career person. Wherever God has put me, I have always tried to do the best I can. I like to improve things; this is how my mind works.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

Challenges are part of life. I know I need God's guidance to go through life's struggles, so I make it a point to start and end my day with prayer. I pray and meditate every morning. I also pray in the car while on my way to and from the office. I draw spiritual nourishment from books which I keep on my nightstand for easy access. I try to hear mass two to three times a week.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

In the early years of my marriage, I was focused on my family and career so my spiritual deepening came much later. A particular turning point was the example of neighbours who had the courage to really live out their faith, unlike many who are what we call Sunday Catholics. I was encouraged as I thought to myself, “If this family can live their faith like this, then I can also.” I believe the Holy Spirit prompted this thought and that I was open to it because I was already spiritually inclined. The destination was there and this was the push, although in some ways it was more comfortable to just be involved with my own family concerns. It took some maturity for me to begin to deal with a larger community in a spiritual way.

They invited me to a prayer meeting and, though I felt uncomfortable at first, began attending regularly. My inhibitions ebbed away as people shared their experiences and my faith deepened by the joy of helping others. Since then I have been more involved with our church; I am the chairperson of our social outreach group where we have programmes to help the poorer members of our community, such as giving them loans for their livelihood enhancement project. I vividly remember the time when we lent money to a group of women from the poor communities to buy Singer sewing machines. You could see on their faces that they were overwhelmed with joy, for this was the first real object of value they had ever owned.

One of the most revealing stories I've heard about God's love was told to us by one of these women. One day, she left for the market with only one peso in her pocket, not knowing where she'd get the money to buy what her family needed. As she prayed, she looked down – and there on the road was a twenty peso bill. She was overjoyed, knowing that God had provided for her family's needs. From this, I realised how God really loves us and takes care of us even our simplest needs. We shared tears of joy as we listened to these stories.

We have set up a cooperative for the economically depressed area around our parish. Today, the cooperative has grown and flourished, providing loans for working capital for very small entrepreneurs. The cooperative also set up to inculcate good values for its members such as financial discipline, honesty and integrity, responsible parenthood. The cooperative has grown to 3,000 members from our original 15, and resources have ballooned from the original 30,000 to 20 million pesos (US\$400,000.). It is a God-given privilege that has enriched our lives as much as we've enriched theirs.

There are still struggles along the way. One time a co-worker in the parish asked, "How come we always end up doing all of these things and yet there are many others who say they want to help, but when I call them to let them know how they can help, they are always busy?" It's easy to get frustrated but we try to remember that God calls people in His own time. We cannot judge those who may not be prepared – we were once like that too.

This work I do for other people has helped me to grow spiritually. I feel that since I have more material resources I can help and I am glad for the opportunity. I believe we should go out and share whatever talents we have with our community, our workplace, our parish, and even our country and the world at large.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Exposing employees to spirituality

I believe that people who are well-balanced and spiritual make better employees. I spent a lot of time thinking about how to help nurture the spiritual growth of our people. So I decided I wanted to see how I could expose the employees of the bank to spirituality. Traffic here in Manila is quite difficult, so many of our employees leave their homes very early in the morning, sometimes 5:30 or 6:00 am, and they get back home to their families at 7:00 or 8:00 pm or some even 9:00 pm. So since they spend most of their waking hours in the bank, we must try to help them without sacrificing the objectives of the bank.

We started with letting our people attend retreats as part of our training activities. I send the bank's branch managers and male officers personal letters of invitation to spiritual retreats, and the turnouts have been quite good with very positive feedback.

Instituting Prayer. I was the only woman in the management committee. Typically, Filipino men are not very comfortable about spirituality, as this goes against the Filipino macho culture. But knowing that our Chairman was himself quite open, I suggested we start our meetings with prayers to which he readily agreed. That was the start of our practice of starting all meetings with a prayer and all important initiatives and occasions with the Holy Mass. This is also how the ecumenical Plantersbank family prayer has developed. We also created a prayer and meditation room where the staff can go if they need some time alone or to pray.

Our Plantersbank family prayer is:

*Lord God, Heavenly King and Father
We thank You for Your continued presence among Your people.
Grant that we may learn
To exercise responsible stewardship
Over all the resources You entrust to us,

That we may consciously use our talents and skills
For the glory of Your name
And the betterment of our fellowmen,
And that our day-to-day decisions
May be in accordance with Your Most Holy Will
Lord, help us to see in every client
An opportunity to be of service
And to be a blessing to the life of another;
To find in our fellow workers
A greater inspiration to give our best
In everything we do.
Teach us always to be Your disciples
That we may establish Your kingdom in the marketplace
So that at the end of the day
We may humbly present to You
A Bank that is worthy of Your presence
A Bank with a heart...
A Bank with conscience and compassion*

*Planters Development Bank.
All these, we pray
In Jesus name. Amen.*

Conducting worship services. Later on, we began the Wednesday and Friday masses. We asked Fr. Armand Robleza, who conducts our retreats, to be our official Chaplain and to guide our spiritual programme. He has been doing this for the last 13 years. We also conduct worship services for those belonging to other denominations which I also try to attend. To this day, I get letters from some of our staff thanking us for these opportunities for spiritual development.

Each year also begins with a grand celebration of thanksgiving to God where officers from our head office and the more than 65 branches all over the country come together to praise and thank God for the blessings, pray, review the past year, recognise people and events, and offer our plans for the coming year.

Since there is a small minority of our employees who are not Catholic, we have worship services for them. I myself also attend worship services of faiths other than mine because I want the employees to feel that they are not marginalised because they are of a different faith. Any time something happens, such as a death in the family, I consciously go out of my way to show that I am concerned about what has happened. We want our employees to be happy and fulfilled working for us and we want our customers to be happy. We really do mean this.

Second Story – Dealing with an organisation-wide crisis

Early on in my presidency, the bank's Treasury Department was unwittingly dragged into a government security controversy. As you know, by the very nature of our business, it is a no-no to be involved in any controversy, much more with anything that tends to put doubt on the capability and stability of the bank. We thought it was unfair to drag the name of the bank into the issue when it was not clear how things happened or who was accountable for it. But we can not do anything as the publicity that accompanied the controversy got out of hand. I had to deal with it head-on.

When it happened, it felt like the heavens had fallen on my head. I was on my way home when our Controller called me on my cell phone and told me there was a problem and that I should come back to the office. Then he gave me the news. I prayed to the Lord to be with me during those difficult times. I feared that because of the bad publicity, the bank might suffer a run, and no bank, no matter how strong, can survive a run.

The first thing I did was to find out exactly what happened, the extent of the problem, and the consequences. I ordered a full-scale audit and had everything accounted for. We have a very good back-room operation (the area of the bank where they do electronic and paper processing), so within a short time I knew exactly what the problem was.

My Chair was in the U.K. at the time and I felt that I needed to first let him know what had happened since he is the largest shareholder of this bank and would be the one most hurt by this. So I called him and gave him the difficult news. The good thing about him is that he is a very grounded person; he did not show any sign of weakness or anger. I think in many ways he and I are like the yin and yang. He was really a rock in this situation. I was starting to panic, but seeing that he was steadfast really made a difference for me.

That was one of the worst crises of my life. The controversy dragged on for weeks. I woke up each day dreading to go to the office. I said to the Lord, "If I knew this would happen, I wouldn't have accepted this position." But I had to be strong for all the stakeholders of the bank. Every

morning I prayed and intentionally put on a smile because I knew that everyone was watching me. I knew it was important to put on a strong front. I even deliberately chose to wear bright coloured dresses during this period!

It was a tremendous responsibility. I was consoled by our people in the organisation who held together and stood strong. From the beginning, we kept our people informed of our actions and decisions, especially the branch managers who were at the forefront, they having direct client contact. They worked very hard to convince our customers that there was nothing to be worried about. Some of them were even willing to pledge their own personal assets to show their customers the confidence they had in the bank. Fortunately, they never had to put their assets at risk because the customers were convinced that there was indeed nothing to be concerned about.

And then there were prayers. Everyone was praying. We knew we could not get out of these troubles without the Lord's help.

The crisis lasted for about a month. Public confidence was soon restored and we emerged as a much stronger organisation. In hindsight, I knew there was a purpose for this happening. Without it, we could have been susceptible to even larger disasters. It opened our eyes to the weaknesses of our systems and processes and the need to strengthen further our controls. When the financial crisis hit the Asian region and the Philippine banking industry in 1997, the bank was prepared. The controversy prepared us for tougher times and strengthened our faith in God.

Third Story – Supporting our customers' values

Growth in the early years was sure and steady. We knew we were doing something good and took one sure step at a time. Part of our approach is to establish close relationships with our customers, most of whom run family-owned businesses, and support them not just in their financial requirements but in other ways which enable them to run their business better. We go to their place of business to observe how they run their business and treat their employees. Yes, we want to lend to companies and businesses which are anchored on the right values. For example, if their employees are exploited and mistreated, then they are susceptible to labour problems which affect their capacity to pay their loans.

When talking to new customers, an important part of our credit process is finding out about the character and lifestyle of the principal. This is something we have learned through experience. We have developed our own approach in helping SMEs manage their finances and provide them the proper tools and guidance to build their business. Over the years we have been able to proactively see how events that are happening in their personal lives will affect their business. So we are able to step in and give them advice or market linkages. In this, we become a part of their lives, helping their business as financial advisors and even more than that; we become friends.

One of the ideas I have had is to open up our spiritual programmes to our customers who run small and medium-sized businesses. This would go beyond giving them technical assistance and linking them up to markets. This time, it is aimed at helping them build their own spiritual culture. It's a bit daunting to think about, but I know we can start slowly. Even if we're busy, I want to devote time to this. This is one way we can expand beyond the boundaries of our bank.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

It is very clear in our minds that our business must be profitable to be sustainable – of course, this bank has been set up by the shareholders and they expect a good return. However, equally clear to us is that it is not profit at all costs. This must be balanced with all of the other concerns of the organisation, and its role in society. In our case, profitability and social impact are fundamentally intertwined.

Sometimes we do face certain dilemmas. From time to time, we have had to foreclose on our customers' property and that is difficult. When that happens we first try to work with them before foreclosing and then we give them all the chances to recover their property. In this we know that we have been fair to our customers and we can sleep at night. In some cases we do have to go to court in order to recover assets. Corruption is still a problem in our country and giving bribes is a common practice, but we do our best to remain ethical in these situations and have been able to truly make a stand.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

I considered myself successful when I reached the presidency, which is more than I ever thought I would be, with my soul and self-respect intact. I haven't 'sold my soul' or made compromises where my principles were concerned. This is where it is a gift to be working with like-minded people.

Through the years, my parameters for defining success have slowly evolved. I believe we are here to do good – to make the world a better place, to become a better person, and to help others have a better life. In the Bible it says that God will ask you what you have done with your talents, so I feel blessed to have been given this opportunity as a leader to help others grow spiritually.

'Success' to me is when the people I work with have become better because of their association with me. I want to give our employees a better life. I hope that I have moved people to become better, to become closer to God, and to be spiritually stronger. I know that this is not by my own strength; it is because of God that I am where I am. The situations I find myself in, and the comfortable and good family life I have, are blessings coming from the One upstairs, the Lord our God.

Financial success is not the 'end all' here in our bank. We do not step on each others' toes to get where we want to be. I don't see in our organisation that kind of wanton ambition that I see in others. I believe success lie in the values we live as an organisation, in living by a certain code where we treat each other and our customers with fairness and caring. Our strength is our people.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

Even though we are a development bank, we follow commercial objectives and work towards financial and productivity goals and a healthy bottom line. Plantersbank is the 7th most profitable private domestic bank in the country in terms of ROE. In terms of total resources, it is the 21st largest bank in the country today, out of 41 universal and commercial banks, about 100 thrift banks, 5 development banks, and about 800 rural banks. So although we are larger than half of the commercial banks, we have resisted converting our license to such because we are

committed to our market and our developmental mission of helping small and medium-sized businesses grow. The impact that we have made to the lives of the many small businessmen we have dealt with in the process of doing business has inspired us to continue to deal with this sector.

We are the only development bank that is partly owned by multi-laterals such as International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Netherlands Development Finance Company (FMO), a Dutch development bank. Altogether, they make up 40% of Plantersbank. They invested in our bank because they saw our developmental impact and how we are serving as a catalyst for economic growth because of our work with the small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

It was only in the last 3 to 5 years that the world has recognised the role of SMEs in achieving real and sustainable development. Multi-lateral banks are changing their strategies that usually involve large infrastructure projects – assuming a trickle-down effect that would help alleviate poverty – and are now finding ways to ignite economic development from the bottom up by empowering the SMEs.

We are indeed blessed that we saw this opportunity in SMEs a long time ago. Intuitively we loved what we were doing and it is now being recognised here in the country and even in the region. I understand that there are very few banks like ours, and so we are being held up as an example, that a bank, a private one at that, can be a catalyst for growth and development. Both our Chairman and I have been asked to speak to national and international audiences of bankers to share our expertise.

Developing an Organisational Culture

Changing the culture of an organisation requires you to unify the values and to live them. So we have lots of different activities and programmes where we try to embed the values throughout the organisation at each level.

At one point we could really see the Lord moving through our organisation. We came up with an official culture change and transformation programme called “Whole Heart and Mind – the WHAM Way” which embodies our vision and mission, our beliefs and our values, and clearly defines the character that we want for our bank.

Under this programme, we have different levels of activities to bring our employees together and inculcate these values throughout the organisation. The senior officers meet regularly to discuss business, and simply to bond together and have fun. The middle level officers have their own group called the Middle Management Council. They too meet regularly and they get updated on corporate developments, and also to bond and have fun together. For non-officers, we have Staff Circles with the same format as that of the senior and middle-level officers.

Some of the ways we try to embed the organisation’s values is to do skits and have competitions; we all have a fun time and we like it. The feedback on these programmes is very good. It’s a way to reinforce the core values of our organisation as well as our vision and mission. These are creative ways of learning while having friendly competition and bonding. It is also a way of deepening value formation in the bank.

Of course, the best way to develop a culture is to live it out in practice. If our employees see us living what we espouse, it flows down through the organisation. There is no substitute to living out

what you are saying. I know that it is important for me and the other officers to set this kind of example. I am trying to give our employees a better life.

I also believe that the right people are sent to us at the right time. This is especially true for our key officers who lead the bank. At one point, I did have to focus on getting the right person to head our human resources. I approached the head of our corporate communications but she said that she didn't feel qualified to be the head of HR. I told her, "It's not a mystery, I know you can learn." To give her some time to learn her new job, I hired a consultant who was an ex-monk who was also doing work with Citibank and other big corporations. When we talked, I found a resonance with him and he agreed to work with us to help transform our organisation and build a spirit-based corporate culture. Working together, they have been able to actualise our vision for a truly spirit-led organisation.

We also have a technical consultant who had previously worked with the local Jesuit university on their programme on inner healing and the six stages of psycho spiritual growth. I believe that she too was sent to us at an opportune time, so we sat down with her to see how she could help our people. We realise there are a lot of wounded souls here and we worked with her to bring in her expertise. We also have another consultant who is doing some training with us and is willing to help us build our spiritual culture, without taking any fees.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

Businesses have a role to play in nation building and in building the character of the people. If we all do something, we can all gain. In this we are very blessed. Through our work with the small and medium enterprises, we are able to take part in the economic development of the Philippines and set an example for corporate social responsibility. We feel that it is God Who has made us who we are.

One of the Philippine President's major strategies is an SME development programme with the goal of generating about 6-10 million jobs in the next 6 years. Employment is at the heart of her campaign. She is my neighbor and she knows what we do at the bank and the awards we've won, how it serves entrepreneurs and provides jobs.

Plantersbank has been cited as an example because we are leading the way and encouraging other banks in working with small and medium enterprises. Of course you do basically the same amount of work whether the loan is 100 million pesos (US\$2 million) or 2 million pesos (US\$40,000), so many of the other commercial banks would understandably go more for the big-ticket items. But we have proven that serving this segment can be done profitably, especially if you put your heart and mind to it. We have said to ourselves that, no matter how big we get, we will remain committed to the small and medium enterprises.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

I have a group of colleagues from other organisations who get together for lunch in my office once a month. We would just share how spirituality was playing a role in our work. They found it difficult in their multi-national companies. They'd say I was lucky because I was at the top and my Chair thought the same way.

Relationship with Major Stakeholders

I think that business has a purpose that is beyond just benefiting the shareholders. Of course this bank has been set up by the shareholders and they expect a good return, but it should not be at the expense of everything else. It can be done with a balance. Businesses must do what is good for the country and for the people. Businesses must live by the right values, not just strive to be number one while sacrificing all else.

I believe that if businesses will do the right things that in the end everyone will be a winner and our country will also win. There are more and more people in business here in the Philippines where spirituality is becoming recognised. Even in business associations here, we start with an invocation prayer, especially a prayer for the country.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

I didn't start my work with this bank with a grand vision to lead this bank spiritually. It just came. I realised one just has to be open to the prompting of the Spirit, to take the time to dwell in the stillness of one's heart and to listen to God's leading. Learning to look within helps us to put things in the perspective of His great will and wisdom, to find opportunities in challenges and, most especially, to let Him fulfil His purposes for you and through you. I know when I started at this bank I was just focused on dealing with my own area of control. I felt that if I could influence my area, then that was where I would start. From there it began to spread throughout the whole bank to now become a way of life.

I believe the quest for spiritual-based leadership is a continuing journey. God knows our hearts. Though I once almost gave up because of frustration, He called me back and enriched my journey with a truer sense of direction – a professional, personal, emotional, spiritual investment with returns beyond measure. I look back and see His hand that has guided me through this wonderful path and I look forward with confidence and anticipation for the plans He has in store for me.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

I try to leave things up to the Lord. One time we extended an offer to a vice president and he declined. We were all initially disappointed, but then as it turned out someone else even better came to us. While the first one was a very confident person, I think the second one was more in alignment with our values. So I pray for all of these things.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

The advice I would give to those who want to be spiritual-based leaders would be to look within their hearts because the opportunities are there. The Lord will open up the way; the Spirit will open up the way. If you sincerely want to do something, you can do it no matter what level you are at. Then it can spread from there when other people see what is happening in the group. Prayer is very powerful, that's why I started with that in my group.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an
interview with:

**JOHN R.
BEHNER**
El Salvador



Interview conducted 2 February 2004

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation: Nabisco
Location: Cuscatlan, El Salvador
Industry: Food
Position: Country Manager
Years in Position: 20
Gender: Male
Age: 66

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Retired from Nabisco
Current Location:
Current Industry:
Current Position:

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 40

Previous Positions/Organisations: Labour relations with California Trucking Association, Western Trucking Employers, Inc., and National Trucking Employers, Inc., USA; owner, Commercial Behner, El Salvador; owner, Cosecha Dorada SA de CV, El Salvador

University Degrees: BA, University of California, USA

How to refer to John Behner:

“Former Country Manager for Nabisco in El Salvador”

CAREER

Career History

I started with a work ethic when I was very young. I was always an honest, hardworking, German-work-ethic-type. Even when I was in elementary school, I was doing odd jobs like cutting the holly off of the bushes, making a wreath out of it and selling it to the neighbours. The idea of the deferred gratification was part of my upbringing. It was entrained in my personal make-up. My father was in the Second World War most of the time when I was young, so I didn't have too much of a relationship with him, and my mother worked as a teacher, trying to make ends meet.

I was very organised with respect to working; it came naturally to me. When I started in 7th grade, I would get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and tend to my paper route. And at 6 o'clock, I would go to the golf course and look for golf balls, which had been lost by the players the day before. Then I would go to school, and as soon as I was out of school I would go back to the golf course and collect more balls. I also had a shoeshine-business, and during the weekends I carried golf bags for golfers. By the time I started university I had saved US\$5,000., which was a lot of money at that time; so I was able to pay for my own education. I grew up in Southern California, and all the time I went to the University of California at Los Angeles, I worked at different jobs.

After graduation in 1959, the first job I got was in my speciality, labour relations. I worked for the California Trucking Association as a secretary to some of the people who were negotiating contracts. And as I got to know the people, I became one of the negotiators and also administrator of contracts, and of their health, welfare and pension funds. Most of the negotiating was done with the Teamsters Union.

As the bargaining unit for the truckers expanded in the USA, an employers' confederation was formed called Western Trucking Employers, Inc., covering the 11 western states. I became a negotiator for this confederation. Later, as the bargaining unit came to cover the whole of the United States, I became an employee of the National Trucking Employers, Inc. This was during the evolution of the trucking industry in the United States where long haul transportation became the norm, and you could use the same two drivers from coast to coast – one in the sleeper's cabin and one driving. Negotiating labour contracts was a very frustrating type of business, and our counterpart, the Teamsters, was not the best union in the world, to put it mildly. I spent hours and hours locked in hotel rooms with their negotiator; but looking back now, I find that it was a very valuable experience.

My wife is an El Salvadorian, and in 1967 we decided to move to El Salvador in Central America, because we thought it would be a better place to raise the kids. The first thing I did was to form my own company, a real estate business. But that didn't last too long, because I was approached by some people whose original idea was to raise turkey eggs to send to the United States; but that idea didn't work out very well for them, so they became turkey producers. They had a lot of turkeys on their hands. Being in the real estate business, I had found an office for them, when one day they approached me and said they had a problem and wanted me to help them solve it. They took me to the public cold storage area, where a room was filled up to the ceiling with dressed turkeys, and the temperature wasn't that good. They were going to lose them, if somebody didn't do something. I still had a lot of contracts for selling property, so I offered to help them on a part time basis.

In El Salvador the traditional turkey sandwich is almost a national dish, so I approached some of the places where they sold these sandwiches, and the turkeys were very easy to sell. In about 60 days, I had sold the whole cold room full of turkeys. The people I worked for were really impressed and asked me if I would like to be their distributor for the whole of Central America. At that time there were no facilities for frozen food in Central America, the trailers were just regular trailers, and the supermarkets had these box-freezers where you pull up the top. It was right before Christmas time; they had enough new turkeys they were dressing them, so I agreed to give it a try. From there I started a frozen food distribution company.

I filled barrels full of water, put the turkeys in them, and then put them in a blast freezer so they came out like a rock. We put them on containers and shipped them to Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala in one day and Costa Rica in two days. They arrived perfectly, had just started to thaw when they got there, and then they could be taken out and put in chest-freezers.

Little by little I started adding other products. I had frozen fish, duck, hens, chicken, mostly meat products, but also strawberries and some frozen vegetables. It was a booming business, but like most businesses in Latin America, it was not booming enough for me to hire a good, well educated manager, and to pay him a good salary so I could sit back and enjoy the fruits. The problem was being able to go off and take a vacation, and my kids were still young, so I couldn't let them take over.

After about seven years, someone gave me an offer to buy the business, and I decided to sell it. Right after I sold the business, I became a vegetarian. Since I knew all the clients, I suggested to the fellow who had bought the frozen food distribution business that I would help him, so he could get to know the clients at a promotional dinner at a hotel. We put all the products out on a table and invited everybody to come and have dinner, in that way he could get to know all my former customers.

At that time in 1976, a multinational food company had an opening for a general manager in El Salvador. The regional manager for this company, which became Nabisco in 1981, came from Guatemala to interview me for the job of general manager. He was staying at this hotel, and I asked him to join us at the dinner party. He was so impressed that immediately he told me he wanted me to be the manager.

When I started as manager, the company was very small; it only had 25 employees. They had just had a big theft, because some 'wise guy' had been putting less gelatine in the boxes, and then he would package many other boxes for himself and sell them on the side. I guess when they found an honest person, they were really happy, and also making money for the company was important.

When I took over nobody in the company had a college education except myself. El Salvador is a small country, and in order to make the budget goals, I kept adding products. For example, we ended up packaging milk and making pineapple jam. We moved the inventory very quickly, and if something didn't move very well, we would just stop it and start something new that made money. Everything that happened in 20 years was growing that little nucleus; we were making profits of millions of dollars in the end, and we had 300 employees. All of the key ratios were very, very good.

Serving everyone is extremely important to me. This idea of serving – and for me, trying to see God in everyone – was my cup of tea. First of all, we were having fun. What we were doing was a positive thing, making healthy products for the public. We had a wonderful relationship with our clients, and I had good relationships with my employees. The economic outcome was the result of

this philosophy; the employees prospered, the company prospered, and everybody was happy in what they were doing. We didn't really have any disgruntled people; we didn't have complaints that people were being exploited. Probably, with that many people, there most likely were a few people who didn't think that things were just as they should be, but people stayed for many years, we had very little turnover.

In 1981, at the yearly review of salaries, where you might get an increase of maybe 5 percent, I told my boss, "Instead of giving me a salary increase, why don't you give me six weeks of vacation?" He looked at the numbers, and said, "OK, we'll do that". That year I didn't get a salary increase, but every year after that I did. The six weeks of vacation permitted me to go to India to see my spiritual teacher twice a year, three weeks on each trip, and I tried to put it together with Christmas or some other holiday, so sometimes I could stretch it to four weeks at a time. That also became a thorn in the side of the people in the home office, because I had more vacation than they did.

I retired from Nabisco in 1997 when they made the decision in New York to close down the plant in El Salvador and just leave a little distributor there for the main products, which were on their list. They offered me a package to retire, which I accepted.

I should have stopped working at that point, but you get these ideas and see all these opportunities, so I started a telephone company. I had public telephones all over El Salvador with people out installing these telephones. It was a very good business. I would be visiting India, these telephones would be working, and I would be making money! That lasted for five or six years until competition got a lot more difficult. I decided to get out of it – I sold part of it and shut down the rest.

Current Responsibilities

Retired.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

Spirituality is the application of the human values - truth, right conduct, peace, love and non-violence - in your way of doing things. But it's also more than that. It's trying to see God in everyone and trying to interact with everyone on a very loving basis, seeing everything as being perfect, and not pointing your finger at anyone or anything.

Each of the human values that you are trying to live and put into practice comes out in reflections of what you are doing. Like driving a modest company car, not having the biggest, latest model. When there is an emergency situation, and there is no other vehicle, you loan your company car or your own personal car to be used for the emergency. Being spiritual is being humble and trying to help. It includes keeping expenses to a minimum and not wasting the utilisation of space and equipment. We shouldn't waste time. Also, water and electricity is to be taken care of, because the resources really belong to everyone, if we waste it, we waste it for so many people.

Spiritual Theme

"Realising God by serving others."

Only saying "serving everyone" does not include that, which is the most important to me, which is to realise my oneness with God.

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

Religious beliefs generally have to do with the way you worship God, the ritualistic part of worship. Spirituality is more the practical application. I also see spirituality as having a personal relationship with God.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

What is my goal? It is to become one with God. In my personal life as well as at the workplace, I follow and apply very seriously the "Nine Points Code of Conduct" and the "Ten Principles" of the Sathya Sai Organisation of which I am a member. I have been active in different ways in this organisation since 1980 and a central co-ordinator for Latin America since 1995. The values I apply are not only the five fundamental human values, but also all the related values coming from these principle values. In any circumstance I look at what are those values and try to apply them

Consciously Growing Spiritually

One of the most important things in my life has been to have a sense of balance, especially in a situation when you have many people who are dependent upon you. You have to have good health, and you have to have your mind always very alert. To meditate and exercise was a very important part of my regimen. By 5 o'clock I would be out either jogging or doing yoga, the food being vegetarian, and practically no social life. In the evenings I was reading good spiritual texts. It kept a real nice balance. Meditation was very important, devotion, as well as the service activities with the Sai Organisation.

We had a beach house that used to be part of our 'God' before we knew our spiritual teacher, Sathya Sai Baba. The beaches in El Salvador are very beautiful, and every weekend we were at the beach with the kids at the swimming pool. Almost immediately after coming to know Sai Baba, we sold the beach house, because we realised that weekends were the only times we had when we could do service. So we got rid of it and tried to devote our time to doing service activities.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

I have improved a great deal as a spiritual-based leader. My drive for material accomplishments is much less, and also my desires have come way down. The ability to introspect, to try to see myself is getting better. To have your partner involved is a good thing. My wife and I have been on the same path for 40-odd years. It's good to have someone else on the path with you, someone who understands what you are doing.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Serving in a crisis condition

A guerrilla war was going on in El Salvador for about 12 years. At one time there was a major invasion of the capital, San Salvador, by the guerrilla forces. A lot of mercenaries, young kids who were sort of idealists, coming from Cuba and the USA, had joined the mercenary forces and were going to “liberate the poor and suppressed peasants in El Salvador”.

The war was going on all over the city, which had about 1½ million inhabitants at the time. As we were in the food-business, we looked at how we were able to feed the people. Our employees would call us every morning. Since they lived all over the city, we would know where the fighting was going on and where it was calm. So we set up a whole system in which all the salesmen would go to one area of the city where there was no fighting going on that day, and start taking orders as fast as they could. The next day there might be fighting in that neighbourhood, and we couldn't deliver the orders they had taken until later, but then all the salesmen would go to another neighbourhood where there wasn't any fighting. In that way we were covering the whole city little by little.

We also set up a system of transportation for the employees. For those who could get to the downtown area, we sent vehicles. Then they went up about half way to where the plant and the offices were, stopping at a supervisor's home. From there they would call the office – this was before the cell phones – and find out if the coast was clear, because sometimes there would be fighting near the plant or the offices, but most of the time they could come and go to work. We usually had a few employees who couldn't come, but we paid everybody while this war was going on. People were taking risks to get to work, but they all saw their mission as feeding the people.

Second Story – Getting customers and employees on their feet again after an earthquake

In 1986, there was a big earthquake in San Salvador, so we got a little experience in dealing with a crisis. One of the first things we saw was that all the supermarkets, which were our biggest clients, were affected; all their merchandise was all over the floor. They had a tremendous job of trying to clean what was saveable and to throw out what was broken and maybe take some kind of inventory of it. We also saw that our production lines were useless, because if the supermarkets could not put our products on their shelves, what good was it to produce it? So we shut down our production lines and sent the salesmen to all the major supermarkets. They offered them a team of our production people to help them clean up. We did this very successfully, and we were the only company that did it. All the supermarkets were happy to get this kind of service, which didn't cost them anything. It only took about a week of very concentrated effort. It got them on their feet faster, and so we could start selling faster.

We took stock of our employees, and we had nine employees who had lost their homes. Since we had shut down the production, our maintenance department wasn't doing anything. So we asked these guys to go and rebuild the homes of these nine employees on a temporary basis. In an earthquake, what happens is that the floor is still there, and the toilet is still there, but the roof and the walls may have fallen down. Temporary structures were put up in the nine homes, and the employees were very grateful. El Salvador gets earthquakes periodically. In 1994 when we had another earthquake, we were all prepared, because we had already gone through the big one in 1986.

Third Story – Looking after our customers

I believe that to be available for clients is a spiritual thing. We sold products to the countries around us and one client from Nicaragua always came on Sunday nights. He would go to Guatemala, buy a lot of things and then come through El Salvador on his way back to Nicaragua. On Sunday nights you couldn't ask somebody to go in and open the warehouse and dispatch, so I would do it. I would personally go over there and dispatch this fellow. He would come through there maybe one Sunday night a month, and if I was in India or otherwise away, I would ask one of the salesmen to sacrifice his Sunday night. We would take care of this fellow; he was a good client. This kind of little extra, that you can be sure to be taken care of, you don't find that in many companies. This goes hand in hand with making good on any kind of an error you have with your clients.

We would sell a lot of baking powder. We manufactured it. Sometimes, when the bread didn't rise, the first accusation was that something was wrong with the baking powder. We'd make good on that. We'd say to the client, "Anything we sell you, we guarantee, we stand behind it." The bakers would call us and say, "This baking powder isn't working; the bread won't rise." We'd send a technician to analyse what they were doing and since they had lost a batch, we would give them a couple of cases to make up for it, even if it wasn't our fault. If it were our fault, we would look into the formula to see if there was a little change, which might be needed. Baking powder is a very delicate product, but we would always respond.

Another example: People would buy a bunch of gelatine – let's say there was some offer where they would get one case free if they bought ten, so they would buy the 11 cases. Maybe for the size of their business that was too much, and they would call us a year later and say, "Well, we have six cases of gelatine here that we haven't been able to sell, and they've expired." Now what would you do? Would you change it? Would you change it for something else? Or would you say, "Well, you bought it, so you eat it!" Those persons aren't going to take a loss; they would try to sell it at a reduced price or try to do something with it to get their money back. So we would always change it. That was our rule. You're losing money when you do that, but at the same time you are protecting your name, your client's interest, and indirectly you are protecting your own interest. I would say that it is a spiritual outlook to sacrifice and not just look at the bottom line at that moment.

Fourth Story – Teaching human values to the managers and to young people

At a certain time, we decided to do some combined publicity for the company and human values training. We went to local high schools and offered them an opportunity for the students to come to the plant. We had an auditorium, and I had each of my managers talk about one of the five human values, truth, right conduct, peace, love and non-violence, and how it affected his area.

The Controller would talk about *truth*, how truth is important in doing the bookkeeping, the accounting, paying the taxes, etc. The Sales Manager would talk about *right conduct*, how you have to treat the customers correctly. The Plant Manager talked about *love*, because he had to keep everybody in harmony, so the production would be good. The Quality Control Manager would talk about *peace*, that if you do your work right, you will be tranquil, because you'll know that the quality of all the products is fine. The Maintenance Manager would talk about *non-violence*, that if you weren't polluting and contaminating, then you would have non-violence.

The amazing thing was that the students would come in batches of a hundred, filling the auditorium. The managers were the ones who benefited the most, because they had to learn

about these values to talk about them. Then they started seeing how the values worked in their job. The students would also understand the values in relation to a work ethic.

After the talks we would take them on a tour of the plant and give them free cookies and so on. We did it frequently to have an outreach to the high schools, and as a result, the young people would apply to work with us, because they liked what they saw, so we had a good pool of resources.

Fifth Story – Bringing people up from within

As a General Manager, I wanted to help our employees to be satisfied with what they were doing. So I always tried to promote from within the organisation and not bring people from the outside to take over supervision or managerial positions. When the people know that they can move up in the company, and they see examples of others who have moved up, they think that this is a great place to work, that the future is bright here. So they'll do a better job.

One guy who was there when I came was the street guard at night and a student at the university during the day. He would look after the property, walking up and down at night, making sure that nobody was going to break in. When he graduated, we made him a salesman. Later he became a sales manager, and when I left the company he got his own distribution company.

Many of the salesmen worked themselves up to supervisory or sales manager positions. Other employees may have started in the factory bottling something, and then as we saw that they had possibilities, they might work themselves up to a supervisory position. Generally we moved people up. This kind of work ethic creates a lot of satisfaction.

As to the training in the organisation, it was very important that the people understand what they were supposed to do. I didn't like to send people outside; I liked to get them trained on the job. This was my own personal experience as a young man. Recently graduated from college, my first job was washing barrels at the Union Oil Company. In supervisory positions, they should get involved with the people that they have to supervise, doing what the people are doing, so that they learn that way.

We also had a study programme, where we would pay the tuition for studies that were relatively related to what they were doing in the company. A secretary could study English, for instance, and in the accounting department the boys could take computer courses, and it would be paid for. Even some of the production people who were doing a little bit of clerical work would be able to take computer courses, and the company would pay for it. So we actually had a very paternal and very good relationship from this standpoint. The people appreciated this. It goes back to the love I talked about, just taking care of the people.

Sixth Story – Ensuring discipline through strength and humility

The authority structure was such that, in terms of discipline and guidance of the people, each of these department heads would have to go through the personnel manager to recommend that somebody be disciplined. Then they would all have to meet and listen to why the person wasn't doing what he was supposed to be doing, before anything would take place.

This was sort of a check and balance, because if somebody got mad at somebody else, they just couldn't take it out on the person unilaterally. They had to go with the person to the personnel manager and sit down and listen and find out what had really happened. In that way, you limited

the authority of your department heads. That was very important, in order that things would work well. I wouldn't get involved, unless there was some really gross abuse of authority.

Every year we did a survey of our employees' satisfaction, and we tried to make sure that we were getting better. When we could detect areas where we were not doing so well, we would put a lot of attention on that. I was a real stickler on morality, and this was one way for me to check.

For instance, in Latin American countries all the men think of themselves as lovers, and they don't look at it as being immoral. For them, it's just part of a normal, macho behaviour. One of the questions, which the employees would answer anonymously, was if they had a problem with sexual harassment. By the numbers I could see if it was serious or if there were only one or two cases. We would pick up the answers by department; in that way we could see where there might be a problem, and we could put more attention to it. We would especially look at the supervisors, because they could threaten by saying, "You'll lose your job, if you don't go out with me." We wanted to keep this type of thing under control. I let people go for that – I would throw the guy out. Everybody knew that I was really strong on that, so they were very careful.

What do you do in a situation when you get mad at somebody, and then you cool off and figure that maybe you were a little bit wrong? I actually had this situation. I can remember one day I got really mad at a lady who handled the merchandising in the supermarkets. I don't remember for what reason, but I really got mad at her and told her off. I didn't fire her or anything, just told her that she was doing wrong, and I balled her out for it. Then I thought I was really mistaken. I got into my car and drove to the place where she was working and apologised to her and told her, I was sorry. Ever since that day that lady would have done anything for me and for the company. She had been there before me, and when I left she was still there. You have to be humble, even if you are the boss.

Seventh Story – Basing pay on productivity

Wage and salary administration is an area where there has got to be a tremendous amount of balance and care taken, so that there are not inequities. We did not have to say that everybody would get a 10 percent wage increase, because we did not have any unions. When there is a very paternal type of administration, there is really no way to have a union.

As to salary administration, I would say, "OK, this year there has been quite a bit of inflation, let us try to give wage increases of say between 5 to 15 percent." But not even the 5 percent was necessarily guaranteed. If somebody wasn't working very well, they wouldn't get anything. It was a way of motivating and at the same time slapping their hands if they weren't really doing a good job; but you have to be very, very just. We would ask the department head to grade and recommend, and then sit down with the personnel manager and talk about each individual case – and there were 300, so it took time. Then they would pass it to me, and I would look through it and occasionally recommend a little change. Surprisingly enough, over the years it worked very well. The people accepted it, and they tried to do better when they didn't get as much as they thought they should have. But we had to be very equitable.

I think that from the spiritual angle, people appreciate it when you evaluate them for what they really do that is productive. Regarding paperwork, it is a necessary thing in most companies, but I was especially negative on any paperwork from salespeople. I told the sales manager that the philosophy was, that the orders that the person brought in every day would speak for what he was doing. Of course we knew who the clients were in the zone, and whom he should be visiting. To have him sit down and say that he went here and there, and that he visited 30 clients and 15 bought something, seemed like just an enormous amount of work for nothing. So we asked our

salesmen to spend more time on the street and less time in the office, and to bring in the orders. According to the number of orders that they brought in, we could see if they were doing a good job or not. This worked really well.

I had a philosophy which said, that he who works can make good money, especially in sales, where we paid no salaries, only commissions. This was really a boon since occasionally some of my salespeople would even make more than I did. I would make an example of them, and tell people, "Look at what this person is doing. He makes more than the sales manager, and more than the supervisors." I think this was a grand motivator, not to be tied to the limiting factor of a base salary and a little tiny commission. It's true that sometimes it may have cost the company a little more, but I think that in the long run it didn't.

What actually happens is that the salesmen are paid not on the basis of sales, but on the basis of collection. If a salesman were ill, we would put someone else on his route, not to sell, but to collect what he was supposed to be collecting. Then we would give the sick man probably 50 percent of what he was supposed to get, and the other person would get the rest of the commission. We had to send people out to collect the money for the goods they had been selling. It all had to be done personally - no checks-in-the mail type of thing. In Latin America, unfortunately you cannot just send out an invoice, even if it would be beautiful if it worked that way.

Eighth Story – Taking an interest in the employees

You have to have discipline, but at the same time I always tried to protect my employees, and I was a good friend with everybody. Even when I had 300 employees, I would find time to sit down with each one of them and talk to them for three or four minutes, "How are the kids? How far away do you live? Do you have troubles getting here?"

A lady told me she had a problem getting on the bus to go to work because of troubles with her legs. She only lived about six blocks from the company, so I said, "We'll send a car for you in the morning, don't worry about it." Immediately I asked a salesman, who used to come early in the mornings, to go and pick up the lady, who worked in the accounting department.

The people working for me were very appreciative of the love and the way they were treated, and the personal interest that I showed in them and their welfare. There was an instance when one of the girls in the reception who was pregnant had a miscarriage. One of the accountants made a negative comment about an expense item I had had. She got very, very upset and said, "How can you think of accusing Mr. Behner of anything like that?" She got so upset that she had a miscarriage as a result of it.

She wasn't a spiritual person at all, but afterwards I told her that children who die in that circumstance are very advanced souls, they don't have hardly anything that they need to do in life in order to become united with God. "Your child has had that experience," I said. "Instead of feeling sad, you should feel very happy that you had a child that has been able to unite with God." She was really depressed, but when I told her that, her whole attitude changed.

At the same time, I went up to the accountant, who had said this thing about me and my expense report, and I told him, "I really appreciate your attentiveness, that you catch little things and bring it to the attention of the controller when you have a doubt." I explained to him what the expense was. My expense reports were a joke, because I was a vegetarian and only ate one main meal a day. I would go to New York for a meeting and stay in a cheap place instead of the hotel where the meeting was, to save money for the company.

But sometimes I think I took this looking after the people to an extreme. At one time the police came and arrested one of the workers in the factory. I went to the police station to find out what was going on. I was told that the guy was an armed robber, a member of a gang of robbers, and they had been looking for him. "How can he be working for you?" they asked. "He is one of my best employees in the factory," I said. "No, he's the head of a band of robbers!" They assured me that this was the truth.

I went back to the company and started asking some of the employees about this. They told me they had seen this guy with a gun in his locker. Nobody had ever told me. Somebody else had seen him in a gang when there was an assault in the outlying areas, so apparently he really was a robber.

A few years later I visited a rehabilitation centre, and here was this guy in a wheelchair. "Pedro?" I said, "What are you doing here?" "Oh," he said, "When I got out of jail, I went to the States. I was coming out of a liquor store when there was a robbery, and I got shot. I'm paralysed now, I can't get out of the chair." That was the way he told me the story. Obviously he had been robbing a liquor store and got shot. He got his pay.

I tried to believe in the people, and I think that 99 percent were very, very good. But I had some problems, like right after the civil war, which was finished in 1991. There were a lot of armed robberies then. Whenever they would see a truck without a gun on it, ex-guerrillas and ex-soldiers would assault it. In each of the first three years, we had about 36 assaults on our delivery trucks and on the office itself. I was reluctant to put armed guards on the trucks and at the plant, because I didn't like guns around. But then they were going to cancel my insurance, so I had to do it. That stopped the assaults. It only shows, sometimes you have to do something which you don't want to do.

Ninth Story – Standing firm for having the best

After I met my spiritual teacher, Sathya Sai Baba, I started looking more closely at the products we were dealing with. Nabisco had a big plant in Ecuador where all the subsidiary companies like ours would buy the raw gelatine for their factories. The gelatine was made out of the skins of animals. I started experimenting with a vegetarian gelatine from a company called Kelko, and found out that if we used this instead of the animal gelatine, it would not form mould in the refrigerator after two or three days. To me, that was enough reason to stop buying gelatine from our company's plant, and instead buy it from Kelko. It did not cause good feelings in our company, but they never said, "You have to buy from our company," because I gave them the reason for doing what I did.

The same thing happened with yeast. I found instant yeast in Mexico, which was cheaper, better and faster than the yeast from our company. Yeast was big business. Nabisco had a multimillion-dollar plant in Brazil where everybody in the company bought their yeast, but I bought from Mexico. I was told to buy from our plant, and said, "OK, give me the same price, the same conditions that I am getting in Mexico, and get your product up to standard, and I'll buy from you." But they never could, and I never did. I was firm in trying to get the best products for the people, but it didn't make me too popular with the top part of the company.

Tenth Story – Being creative and innovative

I kept adding new products and doing more and more different things. One was making prepared gelatine. Our company had one of the leading brands of gelatine in the world, but it didn't have any prepared gelatine anywhere in the system. I bought a couple of machines and started making

it, and pretty soon I was selling 5 million bubbles of gelatine just like that. Each one of these frozen bubbles cost 3 cents to produce, and we sold them for 10 cents. As it was the cheapest product in the market, it was a good service for the public.

The school kids would suck on the frozen gelatine. I bought a hundred box-freezers from Miami, Florida in the USA, had them shipped to El Salvador, and took them out to the schools where they were filled with gelatine. All the schools would buy from us. It was a beautiful business, a tremendous thing. We paid for the machinery in two months. The home office was interested, but they didn't know what to do about it and never copied it in any of their other locations. It didn't fit into their scheme of things since nobody else was doing this.

I would do crazy things like suggesting, "Oh, let's sell raisins". The bakeries would buy raisins from us, and when we put them in packages, we could sell it to the public, too. We found out that there was a big demand for raisins. We started bringing two-three containers of raisins to the country. The people who sold the raisins also sold peaches. Then we would buy 20 containers of canned peaches. We continually found these different little niches.

In a lot of the rural areas, they didn't have any electricity, so we sold trailer loads of corn mills, which is a hand mill for grinding corn. A corn mill was an expensive item that we sold to the farmers, and we had the best corn mill in the whole country. But Nabisco had never heard of a corn mill, it wasn't even a food product. They would say, what is this guy doing? We made wonderful money on corn mills. The farmers would buy our brand, because it was the strongest brand. We didn't have a piece in that thing that would break; but we also carried parts in case one of them broke, and we would give the people free parts if something broke in their corn mill.

We were selling soymilk to bakeries when all of a sudden skim milk became cheaper than soymilk, and the bakeries stopped buying soymilk. We had a container load of soymilk and didn't have any place to sell it, so we had to do something. I suggested that we make an attractive box and sell it to the public. We called it "Soya Lac" in Spanish. It sold very well, and then we decided to add five or six flavours so we could get some nice shelf space in the stores. What a beautiful product we had! It was selling like crazy. It was the poor man's soymilk. The only competition we had was a product that came in a can that cost ten times what we were selling ours for. "Soya Lac"? They didn't even know what it was in the home office, and yet, it was producing a lot of money for them.

We had about 300 employees; they were all so good. They were happy, because we kept everybody working. A lady was in charge of re-packing and re-processing damaged products. I noticed there were some questions about doing this, so I told her, "You are in charge of this, and your guide should be: Don't repackage anything, which you wouldn't eat personally." We would get stuff back with a date, which had expired, but apparently it was still a good product. If it was gelatine, she would send it back to the factory and jazz it up having sugar and flavour added to it and then repack it.

When it came down to the emergencies, when we sent all the salesmen out to one area of the city to try to help during the guerrilla conflict, one of the salesmen had a brilliant idea. "Why don't we call on the companies and suggest that they buy staples for their employees like milk and things like that." So we sent all the salesmen to visit the companies. It was a tremendous idea. I think we sold more during the guerrilla war than we did at any other time because everybody tends to stock up at such times. When they are insecure, people buy more, especially food products.

All the things we got involved in weren't necessarily 100% successful. Sometimes we would come up with good ideas but they weren't workable. For example, there is a tradition in Latin America to

sell baskets full of food products at Christmas-time. At one point, we thought, "Wouldn't it be wonderful to put all our products in a Christmas basket and sell it to the supermarkets already prepared?" So we went out to some of the rural areas and bought 5,000 baskets. When it came time to load the truck, we found out that we could only put 50 on the truck and it was full. But then when the order was for 500 baskets, the truck had to make ten trips to deliver them. It took a very long time just to deliver, and we had 5,000 of these things. Even if basically it was a good idea, we had no way of getting them to the market. To be practical, we wound up selling the empty baskets.

Somebody who has a big ego and says, "This is a good idea, it's a good product, and it is going to make money" would continue on, unwilling to admit that he was wrong. So, from a spiritual standpoint, I think if somebody is willing to step down very quickly and take it on the chin when they see they are mistaken, they do not put an ego-sense to it.

Eleventh Story – Treating competitors and distributors with trust and respect

When Nabisco established its operation in El Salvador and I became the Country Manager, they also were the owners of Del Monte, a huge producer of canned fruits. Products from both these companies, Nabisco and Del Monte, were distributed by another company but by the same fellow who was also a good friend of mine. Now, under the law, we could go in and pay an indemnity to that company and just take those products away from him. So he was afraid that this was what I was going to do.

But I was his personal friend. We talked it over, and he said to me: "I want to tell you what happened with Del Monte. When I was a young boy, 26 years old, I went to San Francisco to meet with the people from Del Monte and tell them I wanted to be their distributor in El Salvador. I sat on their doorstep for three days until they received me. I finally convinced them and they gave me the distribution. That was my first product. This is a line I don't want to lose." He said: "I'll make you a deal. If you don't take Del Monte from me, I'll give you Nabisco."

So I said, "Well, we are going to start manufacturing some of Del Monte's products here, and I am going to collect royalty on these products. I'll let these products be sold through you, and you can continue to sell the Del Monte brand and bring other Del Monte products from the USA. But I am going to get the royalty." And so we had a mutually beneficial agreement.

Another very important thing was our distribution agreements. For a while, we distributed for different companies. The philosophy was that there didn't necessarily need to be a written contract to be a distributor, unless the other party wanted it. I would say that if we are doing a good job for you, you won't want to get rid of us, and there won't be any problem. But if you see that there are not enough sales or business, it's not going to be worth your while, and it probably isn't worth our while either. We had these tremendous distribution agreements that didn't have anything in writing, and yet the companies were very happy, and it shouldn't have been any other way.

To get back to this spiritual thing, first of all everybody has to do his own thing and not expect that somebody else does something for him. You should do the best you possibly can. In a spiritual sense, every job that we do is important, however small it is. So, if you have taken on the distribution of a product, from a spiritual standpoint you are going to do the best job that you can possibly do to get that product out to as many people as you can at the lowest price you can. If you do that, the other party is going to be very pleased, and the relationship is going to continue, and then it will be profitable in the long run.

Twelfth Story – Experiencing God’s little miracles

In 1989, I went to India for three weeks while my wife stayed home with the kids. I was travelling with KLM at the time, and when I tried to reconfirm my return flight, they said, “We don’t have your name; we’ll have to put you on a waiting list.” That day my spiritual teacher asked me when I was going back. I told him that I had just checked with the airline, and I didn’t have a reservation. “I know”, he said. “I will tell you when to go.” I thought this meant another weeks’ vacation, great! So I sent a message to the office, telling them that I would be delayed. One week passed, two weeks passed. Then I followed my spiritual teacher as he travelled to different beautiful places in South India, but I couldn’t explain to the people in the office back home what was happening. I could only say that as far as I knew, I was coming back, but I didn’t know when. One day I got a courier message from New York, saying, “Don’t come back. You don’t have a job any more.”

This was around the 1st of June, and I had come to India in February. I didn’t hardly have any more money left, my visa had expired, I had a 45 day ticket which was long gone, and I didn’t have any money with me to buy another ticket. This was long before the days of the credit cards. One day I got a sign from Sathya Sai Baba that I could leave on the 5th of June. The airline said they didn’t have any seats out of the country, but they put me on a waiting list in Delhi. I succeeded in getting to Delhi where at least 20 people were waiting, hoping to get on the overbooked flight. I had my expired ticket, which was also non-endorse-able. Well, a lady came, picked up all the tickets, and put all of us on an Air India flight to Amsterdam where we could get our ongoing flights. In Amsterdam I called my boss in New York, saying that I would come to my office in El Salvador on Monday to pick up my check.

Back home at the company, everybody was happy to see me. Nobody was sitting at my desk, and I called my boss again. After a silence at the end of the line, he said, “Well, we’ve been analysing your situation. We’ve decided to give you a 25 percent wage increase.” 25 percent wage increase? I almost fell off my chair. I had never got more than about a 5 percent increase in my whole life. He continued saying, “We have also decided to consider the time you just spent in India as a paid vacation, and we’ll give you a check for that. And we have been analysing the work you did last year and have decided to give you a bonus for last years’ results.” He gave me so much money... How can you get something like that for insubordination, unless it’s God’s work?

In another example, we would sell products, which nobody else had in the countries around us. At one time, God really helped me. Because of the exchange rate with Europe, milk powder became very cheap, and I ordered about 20 containers of milk powder. I didn’t borrow the money, I had enough money to buy it, but I didn’t know where to put the milk powder, because I didn’t have that kind of warehouse space. I really could have gotten in trouble, because I couldn’t have sold that much, even if I had ‘given it away’.

Then I got a call from a guy working for the USA Procurement Agency, which was supplying the Contras; the Contras, supported by the USA government, were in Honduras, doing battle in Nicaragua. “We need ten containers of milk powder immediately.” I said: “Yes, Sir! I have got it! As a matter of fact I can trans-border it without even getting it through the customs here, because we’ll just re-dispatch it. In that way we won’t have to pay any taxes in El Salvador, and we’ll get it into Honduras immediately. All you have to do is send me a certified check and it’s yours.” We made a bundle. It just went like that. It was all so perfect. God must have done it.

Thirteenth Story – Closing down the company

In 1996, I was in India when I received a cable from the company asking me to go to a meeting on Park Avenue in New York on the 5th of December. Usually we never travelled via New York, except this time we had travelled to India via New York, and I had a flight reservation to arrive in New York on the 4th of December on our way back to El Salvador. So it was perfect for the meeting. Before I left India I asked a friend where I could get a suit and tie, because I hadn't taken one to India, and he gave me the name of a store in Bangalore in South India. There I bought a suit labelled "Park Avenue Style".

At the meeting in New York, they told me that they had decided to close down the factory in El Salvador and offered me an incentive to retire at that time. I saw it as a good opportunity and accepted it. And I believe they were happy to get rid of somebody like me who was a vegetarian having six weeks of vacation when they only had four, and who would go off and stay in India and not come back. I saw them at meetings two or three times a year, but it wasn't like the employees I was with all the time.

They looked at me as being a rebel, because I would do what I thought was best, and not necessarily follow the policies of the company. Although in all the time I was there, they never had any legal problems, they never had any tax problems, never any kind of a problem like dishonesty, which was so common in other companies and other branches of the company. Every year, our company in El Salvador was making more money than some of the much larger companies within Nabisco, because we had so many products.

Why did the parent company in New York decide to shut us down? I think that at the time it was becoming very chic in New York to have centralised manufacturing and downsizing the number of employees, so that there wouldn't be any labour liabilities. In El Salvador, this was a company that didn't fit in anybody's concept in Nabisco.

The sales were going up, the profits were going up. I had three buildings, and I was renting more space. At the head office in New York they wouldn't let me buy a building, "A war is going on in El Salvador. What do you want to buy there for?" they asked.

In the New York headquarters they wanted a slim company. In Central America they owned a building in Costa Rica, and had a long-term lease in Guatemala. My leases were just expiring when they decided to do this. They figured that it was easy to get out of El Salvador and get rid of all the stuff that they didn't know what to do with, and 300 employees, which I felt they didn't care about. This was in 1997. They hired a manager to run the small distributorship that they were going to maintain in the country. In the end they moved the company to Guatemala. When that didn't work, they closed the company in Guatemala and moved it to Costa Rica.

When the whole thing fell apart it was very traumatic for many of the employees. But there's a company called "Little Nabisco" in El Salvador, where all of my production people and many of my sales people went when I left and headquarters closed the plant. Now it's a very booming business. One of its best products is the prepared gelatine, which Nabisco doesn't have anything to do with. When they finally got rid of me, the company immediately started buying non-vegetarian gelatine from their plant in Ecuador, and they brought back their yeast from Brazil. But they can't sell it. They simply gave away the right to selling the instant yeast-product, to a former employee, who is now the number one yeast-seller in El Salvador.

It's strange how the work ethics in a big company like Nabisco are controlled by people in an office in New York, who never get out of their chairs to see what is going on in the field.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

The purpose of a business is to make other people happy, especially your clients and your employees. In business, serving your customers and making sure that your customers are happy is the reason for your business and the reason for your being there. But not only your customers, also your employees should be happy. There should be a lot of employee enthusiasm and satisfaction, and this should be made a part of this energy of trying to do the best they possibly can.

I tried to instil in the employees the idea of serving, and that the reason for them to be there was to serve our clients and to do the best possible job. For example, if they were in manufacturing, they were told to look at the quality of the products as if they themselves were going to eat them.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

The employees' recognition of my love for Sathya Sai Baba and the principles that he represents was to me a very good indication of success. They all knew of Sai Baba as I was spending a lot of time in India. I had Sai Baba's photo in a couple of strategic places in the company, and on the walls of the factory and offices there were Sai Baba sayings, painted by our sign-painter. I met this sign-painter in a rehabilitation centre where I was doing service. He had gotten lead poisoning when he was spray-painting furniture in a closed room, and he became paralysed. Little by little he recovered, so I hired him to paint our trucks.

When I left the company, I didn't really realise how much the employees appreciated what I was doing. When I got back from New York after the top management had decided to close the company as a manufacturing plant, a date was fixed for my leaving. Now, we have a Sai Baba centre in our home and a big terrace outside this centre. A few days before my retirement, some workers showed up and started digging holes in the front yard right in front of the terrace. I asked my wife what these guys were doing. She said that some ladies were going to make a fountain. I thought the ladies were from the Sai Baba Centre and that they would put up a fountain to make it look nice. I didn't pay much attention to it, as it was the last days I was at the company and I was very busy.

The night we were going to have the going-away dinner, I came home to get my wife – and here was this fountain, all lit up, with a Sai Baba statue on top of it, and water coming out from under his feet. Such a beautiful thing! I hardly had time to look at it. Then, at the dinner party, the employees told me that this was their gift, their going-away present for the time I had been at the company.

Another indication of success was when we had a good relationship not only with our employees, but also with our clients, and immediately took care of client needs and were on a first name basis with those people. My clients would even call me sometimes when they had a problem, even about things that didn't have anything to do with their business, and they would look for help from me. One would say, "I owe you money", and we would sit down and I would say, "OK, your business has burned down, how long do you need to get back on your feet? Can we give you more products to start selling? Then we will work out a payment schedule over two or three years. We will keep you as a customer, and you will keep your business." We'd do this, and that

customer would always be faithful to us. Even if our prices were a little bit higher than the competition, they would buy from us because of the love and the personal relationship.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

In a big company like Nabisco, there is a mindset that the home office should decide which products to sell. But here we were in El Salvador, selling 300 different products while there were only 15 products on the product list that we were supposed to be selling. We were generating a tremendous amount of sales and a tremendous amount of cash flow as well as profit for the company. The margins are small in the food business, but if you turn out ten percent every day, you are making a lot of money at the end of the year, and that's what we did.

One of the basic philosophies that we tried to present in the company was that if each worker would work hard and well – better than the competition – they would get more, because our company would prosper. The idea of sharing with the employees what is being accomplished through economy, through harder work, through ingenuity and so on, was really very important. I think all of the employees understood this.

Developing an Organisational Culture

I remember when I was still in high school one summer; I took a job at the Times-Mirror Press. I was a typesetter and I worked two floors below the street. I came to work at six o'clock at night and worked till midnight. Every night Norman Chandler, who was the owner of the Los Angeles Times at the time, would come by. He would say hello to us and stop and chat. This to me was a good learning experience. I saw that when the owner is there and he knows the people, and even if he just says "Hi", it is very important for the employee; he does a better job and is more conscientious in his work.

As a result of this, I used to go into the different parts of the company and get involved maybe for an hour. I would go down and load a truck and work side by side with the people from the warehouse. Now, why would I do that? Well, many times I might discover that there was some part of the floor that had gotten roughed up a little bit, and the forklifts were going over it and tearing up the tiles. They had told maintenance about it, but they hadn't done anything about it. Then immediately I could bring that to the attention of the maintenance department. Or I might discover products in the warehouse that were not moving so quickly. They had been there for maybe thirty days, which is easy to overlook on the inventory list when you have a lot of products.

Just the fact that I would work side by side with the people would give me a chance to talk to them and get to know them a little bit, although I always kept my distance. I wouldn't socialise or fraternise with them off the premises – but work with them, yes. Sometimes these people would come up to me and make a suggestion about improving a process, improving the work that they were doing. Then, if I was alert, I could immediately send people to look into it and see if it was worthwhile. I could talk to the purchasing manager, find out how much he could get, whatever it was that was needed; I could also talk to the maintenance manager to see how difficult it would be to set up whatever they were talking about, and try to put the whole thing together.

As to teamwork, in a spiritual sense, this is working together. The more unity that one can create, the better the workplace will be and more work will get done in less time. For example, in production, we would have a team, a group, which would be responsible for a certain area of the production or certain processes, then they would take turns at the different positions, so that everybody knew every position. This helped a lot. In the sales department we also did a lot of rotation, so that people knew different routes and different customers they had to deal with. It's

hard in the western cultures to create this unity when there is so much individualism with everybody going their own way or trying to pass the buck.

In my position, I required someone in whom I had complete confidence in his or her honesty and ability to carry on when I wasn't present. In my personal case it was my private secretary. Of course, the auditors would always bring up the point that there was a conflict of interest, and that the private secretary couldn't possibly sign checks or anything else. But I had her sign together with the personnel manager who was also a devotee of Sathya Sai Baba and in whom I also had complete confidence. Because of my confidence in the honesty and integrity of these hard working people, and the fact that they knew my philosophy, I didn't worry about titles. I had these people as the ones who could sign checks and take major decisions about any type of action that needed to be taken, although obviously when it was a sales question or a promotional thing other people got involved.

Another thing that was really important in treating the employees well was that I would allow employee loans. An employee could borrow up to one month's salary at no interest and pay it back over a period of time, depending upon the employee's need and family situation. Some paid even in a year's time. The only thing we would ask was that they paid off their previous loan before we made another loan. One other thing we did was to create our own eating-place for the employees. In that way, we could make sure that the food had a good quality and keep prices down. One of the ladies working in the factory liked to cook, so we told her she could have her own business. She made a very good, prosperous business, and later she branched out. Today she has three or four canteens.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

We would do a lot of offers like 'buy six and get one free', or we'd package two items together to create a special offer. As an outreach to the community, we started using invalids for this. We would send this packaging work to the invalids' home. They might stay up all night watching television and putting offers together, and we would pay them one or two cents for each offer they would do, depending upon how complicated it was. With this we were helping a group of people that otherwise wouldn't have been able to get work, and at the same time we could keep this tedious small stuff out of our production department where we had everybody working at full steam.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

We had what you might call an executive committee: the controller, sales manager, marketing manager, purchasing manager, human resources manager, production manager, maintenance manager, quality control and new products manager, systems manager (for computers), warehouse manager and my private secretary. All of these employees were my direct reports. Now this might surprise you, that there would be so many people reporting to me directly, but this came from the example of my spiritual teacher, where he gets involved in all the little details. You may ask, “If all these people are reporting to you, then are you delegating, or are you simply doing all the work?” The answer is that I was delegating, but I was giving them a picture of all I knew.

Each one of these people played a really key role. Why would the purchasing manager report directly? He would do so because a lot of our business was just buy-sell, or buying and then re-packaging. I also had to be aware of the currency markets. What is the currency market in Europe, if you are buying in America? When you see that there is a real good exchange rate, you take advantage of it and you buy more. Or maybe we were coming up with a promotion, where the marketing manager talked about building a huge tower in the supermarkets. We would have a contest where a person who could guess how many units there were in the tower would win a prize. By meeting all together, we knew the amount of merchandise we were going to need and the purchasing manager was informed, so he could get enough material for this.

If this is done with a loving attitude, it doesn't create a situation where they say, “No, we won't do anything until John gets here”, which usually happens. The general manager is like the communicator: he's the one who makes sure that everyone is informed and knows what they are supposed to do.

My experience of working for Nabisco was very good, because the head office left me alone. Besides the visit when I was hired, I was only visited two other times in 20 years by any one from a higher office. They left me completely on my own, as if it were my own company; otherwise I probably wouldn't have been there for so long.

Relationship with Major Stakeholders

I treated all the employees as if they were my children. I had a really good relationship with them, and since the head office left us completely alone, we did anything we wanted to.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

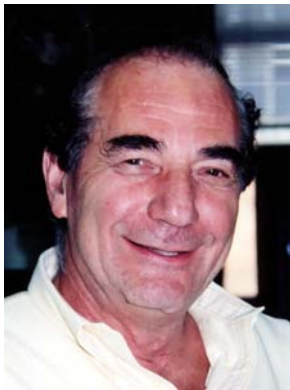
The most important thing I consciously do now is to always ask myself, “What would my spiritual teacher do?” And then I try to do that.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an
interview with:

PHILIP BUDIN
USA



Interview conducted 18 April 2002

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation: Royaltons, Ltd.
Location: New York, USA
Industry: Marketing
Position: CEO
Years in Position: 2
Gender: Male
Age: 61

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Same
Current Location:
Current Industry:
Current Position:

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 30

Previous Positions/Organisations: Chairman, Diversified Investors Corp, USA; Publisher/Chairman, New York Daily Mirror, USA

How to refer to Philip Budin:

“CEO of Royaltons, Ltd. in the USA”

CAREER

Career History

I started out as a trader in a Wall Street company from which I left and started my own brokerage firm in 1967. This firm was very successful, and in 1970 I took over one of the companies I had financed, which was called the New York Daily Mirror. This was a newspaper in New York City. I stayed with that for about a year and a half, and then I retired for about 10 years from the age of 30 to 40.

In 1981 I went back to work. I took over a little public holding company named Diversified Investors Corp. and did some of the same things I had done previous to my coming into contact with my spiritual teacher and spirituality so to speak – except I had a new basis to operate from, and that was equanimity.

My holding company bought a brokerage firm. We also bought the technology to start a company that manufactured and distributed fax machines that were operated by credit cards in public venues. So we were the first ones to have these types of faxes in airports, libraries and other public places. Eventually that company spun off and someone took it public. We had another company that processed debit and credit card transactions for banks and big companies. We sold this company to a large company that was on the New York stock exchange.

This holding company started out with basically just me and then at one point we had a few hundred employees in the various different companies. The stock brokerage firm had a hundred employees, the credit card processing company had 40 employees, and the fax company had 25-30 employees. The revenues were around US\$10 million.

Current Responsibilities

In 1999, I wound down Diversified Investors Corp. and started a little media marketing company; that is the company I am running now. It is a European company based in Gibraltar and its main office is in London; this is just a subsidiary office that I run here in New York.

We deal with internet media companies in Europe such as MP Web, which is an Italian media company that has many information sites. Another company is Eurosport, which is the major television sporting company in Europe that televises every sport 24 hours a day, like ESPN in America. They are customers of ours and we market various products to them. It's not a time consuming business. I am the CEO, my nephew is the President and I have another long-time friend who is an executive. We currently have fewer than 10 people employed although we are situated all over the globe.

At this point I will continue to work unless my spiritual teacher tells me something different or it doesn't seem right anymore. When it is right, work is fun.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

To me, everything is spiritual; it's all God. How can anything not be spiritual? To me death is not bad and there is no right or wrong; I come from my heart and have an equal mind. That's part of my teaching from Sathya Sai Baba, my spiritual teacher in India whom I call Swami. So if I view things from a different standard than the world. It makes me very strange and odd, which I am.

I feel that Swami told me to go back into business, after being retired for 10 years from the age of 30 to 40, so that I could learn that these things can occur from a calm consciousness – that business can be done from an expanded consciousness, from a state of equanimity. In business, I can put on a lot of different hats, but none of them are me.

At the beginning of my spirituality, when I first encountered Swami, I thought that spirituality and money were at opposite ends of the scale. God and dollars did not mix. But then I found that money was just another form of energy; this took me twelve years to learn. I gave away just about all of the money I had made in order to be spiritual because I believed that a rich man couldn't get to God and to God was where I wanted to go. Then I learned the hard way, which seems to be the only way to learn, that this wasn't true.

Spiritual Theme

For me spirituality is equanimity.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

I have meditated in various places around the world. I've sat in caves, I've sat under rock forms, I've sat in the cold and rain, and I've sat in the snow, but I found that I was much more comfortable when I was meditating at my home, whether it was on Park Avenue in New York City or in my country home, than when I was sitting in a cave.

I don't practice a meditation myself anymore. For me every moment is a meditation; every moment is an expansion of consciousness. If I find myself getting out of this state, I am aware of the signs – like something in my stomach tightens up, or my pulse speeds up, or my heart rate speeds up, or the vibration changes. My awareness level is pretty quick and it causes me to laugh at myself a bit. Then I take a breath and say, "Okay, that was cute... what's next?"

I tap into discernment through a combination of opening my heart and equanimity. That is what my spiritual teaching has all been about. When you have equanimity, you are in the moment. When you are in the moment, then you are hopefully as far away from ego as you can be. I don't know many people, if any, who can escape ego. I find it impossible to walk in this world and to interact and relate without ego, without a sense of identity of self. Even as much as we strive to be enlightened hermits, enlightenment does not in this world mean a total loss of self, because if there is a total loss of self, then it is impossible to interact. There is another form of expanded consciousness, which I call equanimity. These are the words and teachings that Swami gave to me. My decisions are made as close to this place as I can bring myself, and it is a combination of heart and head.

About ten years ago, Swami said, "EHV is three HV". Here he was talking about "Education in Human Values" and the three H's he referred to were: head, heart and hands. What this means is that when the idea comes into the head, it should then go into the heart to see how it feels; if it's okay, then the hands carry it out. So this is basically what I have been speaking of. If you have to ask the heart whether it is right or wrong, then you're not there. What I am talking about is a knowing as opposed to a methodical figuring out. It feels "right"; it's not a physical feeling; the mind doesn't really come into play.

To me, there is a major difference between being out in the world and being in a cave. I spent a couple of years in what I called my cave, which was my Park Avenue apartment. I was sitting in my big comfortable easy chair cross-legged and spaced out of my mind meditating almost 24 hours a day, everyday. From that state I had tremendous experiences and insight and wisdom that came to me; however, it was almost impossible for me to interact in the world.

So, a person does need some ego identification as he walks around in the world and interact. How much it comes into play and overpowers us is dependent upon our spiritual training and what we've done to control our mind or let it control us. I think anyone who is out there in the business world and says he is doing it without ego has, in fact, a big ego.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

I consider when I retired at the age of 30 to be the start of my spiritual journey, my looking and seeking. There was a time when my spiritual teacher, Sathya Sai Baba, started appearing to me; it was as if I had no choice. Every time I closed my eyes, he was there. Even when I blinked I would see him. So I would close my eyes more and more and every time I did he would appear and start communicating to me in what I guess you would call non-verbal communication. This went on for 2½ years. From day one, I think the basis of everything he taught me was equanimity. In my questioning him about whether that was the totality of my path over the years, his answer was always, "Yes, that is the key. With that, every door is opened spiritually."

About 1980-1981 I planned to travel around the world with my wife on our sailboat, as I'd been retired for about 10 years, doing a lot of meditating and expansion of consciousness. Everything was arranged for us to travel around the world for the next 5 or 10 or 20 years, if not the rest of our life. The sailboat was stocked, the food was on board, the crew was picked out, and it was about a month prior to our leaving. At that time a friend of mine, who had come with me on my first trip to India to see Sathya Sai Baba, called and invited me and my wife to go to India with him and his wife.

He and his wife were having what they called "a miracle baby". Our spiritual teacher, whom we call Swami, had married them a year and a half earlier and he told them that they should go back to New York and then return to India when she was eight months pregnant and have the baby there. His wife told Swami that she had not been able to get pregnant even though she had been to the best doctors and they had said there was no chance. Swami said, "Yes, yes, I know. Go home and come back when you're eight months pregnant and have the baby here." This conversation kept going back and forth until Swami finally asked, "Do you want a boy or girl?" His wife finally accepted that something strange was going on and said, "I don't care, as long as it is healthy." They went back home, and a year and a half later his wife became pregnant.

So this friend called to invite my wife and me to be at the birth ceremony in India and to be God-parents of the child. This was all to happen about 3 weeks prior to leaving on this sailing journey. Having had some experience with Swami, I knew that there was most likely more than one reason

for me to go to India. I felt he wanted to say good-bye to me, and I certainly wanted to say good-bye to him in the physical prior to making this sailing journey.

So we travelled to India and the ceremony was absolutely beautiful. Then Swami asked me what I was doing. I gave him a great speech telling him what I was doing and at the end he said to me, "No! Go back to work. Your feet in society and your head in the forest, go back to work." Now evidently I didn't like that answer because my head was going from left to right saying no. To me it didn't seem spiritual to go back to work and it wasn't something I wanted to do. He repeated this about nine times and each time he repeated it, I sank a little lower down onto the floor until I finally got the message. Then I just surrendered and said, "Okay, what do you want me to do?" He said, "Don't worry, I will help you."

Now even with that surrender, when I left the room where I and several others were speaking with Swami, I asked everyone what they had heard. I did this just to double check because in the previous years I found that everyone hears different things. This is the only time that I have ever known where everyone heard the same thing pertaining to me! Word for word, the same thing – "Go back to work, get your feet in society and your head in the forest." So I went back to the USA and back to work.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Firing an employee

My firm, Diversified Investors Corp., owned a company that processed debit and credit card transactions. We had an account executive who was handling a large supermarket account for our company. One day this account executive went to the office of the man who was the head of the supermarket chain, but the man wasn't there. Our account executive went into the man's office and was supposed to leave a note for him, but instead he walked out with the man's personal computer. He hid it under a newspaper and then put it in his attaché case, walked out and took it home with him. So, one of our employees, who was in an executive vice president position, took the personal computer from the desk of the top person of this supermarket chain.

I did not find out about it until about a month and a half after it happened when the executive from the supermarket chain personally called me and told me what had happened. Our employee was caught on video actually taking the personal computer. This man had seen the video the evening of the day it happened, called our employee at home, our employee said it happened by mistake and brought him his computer back that night.

I thanked him for telling me and the next day I brought the young man in and I fired him, very calmly, with love and with peace. I knew he had to be let go. Did I feel bad for him? Yes in one way, and no in another. I spoke to him and told him that we all have to be responsible for our actions now or at some point in the future. So I guess in a way he was lucky that this was happening to him now and not at some point in the future, when he might not know what it was happening for. He apologised and said it wouldn't happen again; however, within our company he could no longer have been trusted.

Because he was interested in spirituality, we had a small spiritual talk before he left. We talked about right action, right state of mind, consciousness, and being clear about our goals. I have had some brief contact with him since then; however, my choice is not to associate with him in the future.

Second Story – The role of spirituality and trust in business

When it comes to talking about spirituality in a business setting, I just relax and be myself without an ulterior motive and most of the time it just flows exactly the way it is suppose to. I find that I just talk about what I want to talk about. If I want to speak about meditation or my spiritual teacher, Sathya Sai Baba, or some of the Tibetan Buddhists I know very well, I do so. For some reason my spiritual teacher sent the head of one of Tibetan Buddhism's major lineages to me in New York City and for years thereafter he used to call me Buddha.

An example is a meeting I had with Eurosport. This is a company that is now owned by a French company that owns some television stations in France. We were sitting there with the head of the President of the TV division and I'm talking about meditation. I'm talking about how the 16th Karmapa stayed in my apartment with 14 of his monks for seven weeks and how that was my introduction to Tibetan Buddhism. This man was sitting there with his mouth open listening. I was watching him and said to myself, "I don't know if I just blew this deal or what is going to happen." But it just felt natural to talk about it and so I talked about it.

At the end of my story, he said, "I was in Thailand and I did a Buddhist meditation. It was so great that I went back and spent two more weeks there just doing a Zen meditation. So wow, how is Tibetan different from Zen?" From this we started a whole new conversion. Not only on Zen, but also on meditation and consciousness and from that point forward there was never a doubt that we were going to work together in business. When we can work together spiritually and we're on the same wavelength, I know that everything else will open up; and if we can't work together spiritually, then usually it's not for me anyway.

Our business together is still our business together. Our spiritual connection was the basis for us to move forward on. They are going to do what they do and we're going to do what we do, and the bottom line is if we don't provide them with what they want, then they won't provide us with what we want and our deal is off.

In this case spirituality was the easiest way to open the door to do business together. In the olden days the easiest way to open the door was to go out drinking with someone, but I don't do that anymore.

From this, an open communication was formed. Trust, however, is another thing; it takes a history. We got into Eurosport because the Chairman of the parent company is a dear friend of a good friend of mine from Milan, who happens to be the Chairman of Media Partners, a company I've done business with for a long, long time. There, we have a trust based on experience. So he opened the door for me and told his friend that I was someone he could trust; if I said something, he could take my word for it. So that really had nothing to do with spirituality. The fact that we hit it off on a spiritual nature was great and was just another supporting factor.

I have pretty much always been trustworthy, I would say. When I owned a brokerage firm that did stock trading during the 1960's, it was before the NASDAQ Stock Exchange and before we had all of these machines. There was no recording device at that time, so if Merrill Lynch called me and put in buy or sell orders, the confirmations were written by hand. That evening our confirmations were put in the mail, the mail was picked up the next day and it was probably four days from the date of the trade before the confirmation was received by the other party, both ways, theirs by me and mine by them.

Now if you're any big firm, you're not going to trade with someone where there is one iota of a question mark. So if you reneged on one trade with one firm, you were history. Wall Street was a very small place then and no one would trade with you and so you were out of business. So your word was your bond because you were buying and selling millions of dollars worth of stock every day and the other party was not getting a confirmation on it until four days later. Now in four days the price of that stock could go up or down. There was no tape recording going on of conversations in those days; there was just your word against theirs.

So once we had the history of being trustworthy, we could do business together, and there was lots of business going on every day, thousands of tickets were being written by hand everyday; then we could work through the ups and downs. This was in the 1960's before there were any of these computers. So your word was your bond.

Third Story – Being a spiritual influence to others

I think that part of going back into business in 1981 was interacting with business people who were not necessarily on a spiritual path at the time we interacted. But after meeting me, a lot of them came to me for help and asked me to teach them how to meditate and how to do this and that. I started doing this, and I began to feel uncomfortable about it. So I told my spiritual teacher

what was happening and asked him about it. He said, "Yes, continue to teach them. More will come."

So maybe this is part of the reason why my spiritual teacher sent me back into business, I don't know. But I do know that a whole lot of people are interested in learning how to meditate and are interested in learning how to be calm. It's totally alien to them, and when they interact with me they get high. I'm not doing it; they're just quieting down and feeling the calm.

When someone comes to me, meditation is the primary path that I recommend to them. The meditation I teach to others is to follow their breath and see how long they can do that before a thought comes in. As soon as they realise they can't do this for more than 2 or 3 seconds, they become quite surprised and upset. They become especially upset when I ask them, "If you are not controlling your mind, then who is?" It's a great question and is one that really blew me away. When I tried to focus on something years ago, I couldn't do it. That's when I asked, "If I'm not controlling my mind, then who the heck is?" That was a scary thought, at least to me. So when I am talking to people who are running companies and are in high profile positions and ask them this question, it makes them crazy. Some of them will run away and some of them will really work on it. Either way it is okay with me.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

The purpose of being in business is to make money. The purpose of making money is to pay the bills. Even if you live in a monastery or ashram, you have bills to pay, you must live, you must travel.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

Success for me is being peaceful, being filled with equanimity, which means being filled with love and being in the moment. Doing the appropriate things in the moment is also success to me.

I measure success for the organisation by its profit and loss. If you are in business, then the appropriate thing is to succeed, or to do the best that you can at that and the results are in God's hands.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

The very nature of business is to make a profit. Charitable work is charitable work, while business is by its very definition the making of money, or striving to have it be profitable. So making money and being profitable in the business world is essential. Without it, you will go out of business. Money is just another form of energy and you can use it anyway you choose to use it: for a water project, for a hospital, to put food on your table, or to help other people. One is not more important than the other. Everything has its place.

Whatever service you are providing cannot continue unless you make money. If you are losing money, how can you stay in business unless you have unlimited pockets to cover the loss? If you are going to provide a service, good or bad, in order to stay in business and do whatever you are doing, you have to be profitable.

Ethics is an individual choice and preference. Like anything else, there is good and bad and right and wrong with all issues, as long as you are dealing in a world of right and wrong. If you look at selling gasoline, in one way it is good because it helps people get where they need to go. On the other hand it is polluting the environment. You have to deal with what is, and do what is appropriate to you as an individual. I decide that for myself by what feels good to me. It is a judgment of the heart and mind combined; it is a part of who and what I am.

Even the companies who screen stocks using social responsibility criteria are in it to make money; that's their bottom line. They're not doing it as a social service – they are doing it to get paid and make money. I can't judge whether it is authentic or not. I just know they are not giving away their services and that they are getting paid very handsomely for it. They have found a niche that will allow them to bring money in so they can do what they want in whatever fields they want.

Developing an Organisational Culture

Overall, spirituality helps me in all situations of life. I don't apply it towards business; I apply it towards myself. So spirituality, which to me is equanimity, applies only to me. I cannot enforce it on anyone else. And, applying it to myself allows me to operate in my business world and accomplish what I need to accomplish within an expanded consciousness, with peace and

calmness. I can get angry and I can yell, but it's just a hat that I'm wearing because at the same time internally I feel at peace.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

I think the basic responsibility of a business is to make money; that is its only purpose. If it is a private company, its purpose is to make money for its owners. If it is a public company, its purpose is to make money for its shareholders. Anything else has to do with the individual beings whoever they are.

The people starting or running the business will choose what line of business to go in and how to operate it. Their own spirituality or consciousness, whether expanded or contracted, will determine what line of work they do and how they interact in the community. I don't think it is the business' responsibility to interact in the community; a business is a corporation, period. It is the individuals who run the business that interact in the community and in the world. For example, my personal conscience says that you don't do anything harmful, you don't pollute rivers, you don't commit murder; and that's how I'm going to act whether I'm involved in business or not.

Everything is give and take, but really what it comes down to is individual decisions. We like to think that the company is making the decision, but it is the individuals that are really making the decisions. Very rarely today are these decisions that affect society and the environment being made by only one person; the individuals who sit on the board usually make them.

Today things have gotten a lot better because everything comes to the surface and becomes so public, so quickly. If someone is operating a sweatshop in Nicaragua using child labour or doing something they shouldn't be doing morally, it comes to light very fast and public opinion forces them to change. Everything is becoming transparent.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

In business, I do the best I can do to accomplish what I want to accomplish, and the results are in God's hands and not mine. Not being attached to the results is a very freeing experience and a major part of my spiritual teaching – which is equanimity and being in the moment, each and every moment as it occurs. If you are attached to the result, you are living in the future based upon some expectation from the past. Equanimity puts you right in the moment, every moment.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

To me, life itself is a practice ground for spiritual growth. To some people, being in business might be the worst thing for their spiritual growth, whereas to others it would be the only way for them to get what they need to get. I think spirituality is a very individual thing.

If a person chooses to go into a monastery and live a monastic life, there are basically two reasons for this. One reason is that they are choosing it because they can't make it in the outside world and they are miserable and unhappy and have failed at everything they tried to do. So going into a monastery is just one more thing they are trying to do. They aren't necessarily going toward God; they are running away from something. The other reason for entering a monastic life is that the person feels a calling and a desire to get closer to God or to spirituality, and he or she goes into the monastery going toward that. The same thing applies to people who are entering business.

I don't see any obstacles to being a spiritual-based leader, at any level, personal or business. You are who you are. That's like saying, "What are the obstacles to being Spanish, or Italian, or overweight, or wearing glasses?" Yes, there are prejudices that exist, but to me spirituality is just who you are. I just talk about what I talk about, whatever that is. It might be football or basketball because I love sports, or it might be spirituality. It depends on what's happening in the moment; it's not a pre-planned plot. I try to stay in the moment, whatever the moment is. Like this meeting with you all today: there's no plan, there's no prepared speeches or stories. I just read over your materials and so I'm here.

I think that in the long run it can still be good for students to focus on getting an education just to make money. Without money, it is very easy to turn towards religion as a crutch. However, it's easier with money to turn to spirituality and not get caught up in the stuff that occurs the same in religion as it does in business: the greed, the money and the power.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an
interview with:

**FRANCISCO
ROBERTO
CANADA**
Argentina



Interview conducted 30 January 2004

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation: Errepar S.A., Longseller S.A., Eco.Errepar S.A. and Deva's S.A.
Location: Buenos Aires, Argentina
Industry: Publishing
Position: Director, Partner
Years in Position: 20
Gender: Male
Age: 47

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Same
Current Location:
Current Industry:
Current Position:

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 20

University Degrees: Accountant, University of Buenos Aires, 1977

Language: Francisco R. Canada speaks Spanish. The interview was conducted in English with the help of a Spanish/English interpreter.

How to refer to Francisco Roberto Canada:

"Director and Partner of Errepar S.A., a major publishing firm in Argentina"

CAREER

Career History

When I finished my secondary school, I searched for employment. After seeing an advertisement from an accountant company in a newspaper, I went to the firm and was able to get training to become an accountant, which, together with leadership, is still my profession today.

I had worked at that firm for five years when the owner of the company decided to publish books for other accountants. That was the start of the publishing company 25 years ago. We became strong because we worked very, very hard; we had two years without one single holiday. We worked on publishing and marketing, and in ten years we became a very successful company. Today Errepar is the major company publishing books for accountants in Argentina.

We made some acquisitions in this field and started another company for the publication of books on cultural subjects (psychology, philosophy, spirituality, etc.) and educational books for the different school levels. We also have a company dealing with products from India, including fragrant oils and organic products for health care. The fourth and last company is a firm that produces and sells agricultural products such as wheat.

Current Responsibilities

For many years and up until roughly three years ago, I was managing the editorial staff in the company that published books and other materials for accountants. Now, however, we have general managers in each of the four companies, and a single board of directors for all these companies. The board consists of the three partners who own these companies, and as one of the three partners, I have been on the board from its inception. Together, the companies employ about 300 people.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

To me, spirituality is the search for true happiness.

I have had major health problems all of my life. I was born with a serious heart problem, I went through major heart operations at the age of 18 months and again when I was 10 years old, and in spite of these problems, I always felt God's close presence in my life in the form of Christ or Mary. At the age of 20, I forgot a little about my religious practice, but in my heart I always kept my love for God. I always desired to live a God-loving life.

Lately I have so beautifully seen that all ways, those of religions and even of atheism, whether they are easy or difficult, are leading to God. Even a person who rejects God is searching for God in his own way. I suppose it is our final purpose in the world to understand that all is God, and to help others find God.

Spiritual Theme

Loving God.

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

Spirituality and religion are not the same. Religion is the necessary structure to bring forth awareness of a God-presence in you. This is the first step towards God, which is the first step on the spiritual path. I am a Christian and I have loved my religion all of my life. Especially I love the Christian mystical writers, Santa Theresa de Jesus, St. John of the Cross, and others. They transcend the religion and go beyond it, as true spirituality transcends religion.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

The spiritual purpose of my life is to realise God in my heart, to have God working through my own self. In my meditation, at some occasions, I see the world as being transparent, where all is God. I want this feeling in my life all the time.

In the beginning, work was a burden for my spirituality. But in the last ten years I have come to realise that happiness in life is to do all the work for God, to take part in God's creation, and to leave the fruits of my actions, my products, to God. In doing this, I hope that my products in some way or another send people to Him.

My spiritual principles and values can be summed up in one word: love. I pray that all people can do their duty with love and care. Therefore, as a leader, I make an effort that our companies all do good business, do good work, and make good products in the way of God, without breaking His laws.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

I am a man of silence. For me being a businessman has not always been easy. God gave me this work for me to be able to unite the spiritual and the material world. He teaches me to go through the material world to the spiritual world. All of my life, I have rejected the material world, and still I

have become a big businessman. It is not easy for me to be the head of four companies as a member of their boards. It's difficult, it's a problem; it's not my nature. But I have been guided to do my work, so that I am able to live in the material world and combine work and doing business with spiritual growth.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

On some occasions I want to make myself little. I used to think that expansion was a sin, both as to business activity and status. But then I remember that my spiritual teacher Sathya Sai Baba says, that expansion is not a sin; expansion is God.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Human Values as the guidelines for our business

Like all difficult things, leading a business becomes easier as time goes by. Seven years ago we developed some principles of action in our company. We began to hold weekly meetings where we discuss leadership according to the principles of my spiritual teacher, as we read about them in a book on management, *Sai Baba's Mahavakya on Leadership*, by Lieut. General in the Indian army, Dr. M.L. Chibber. In these meetings we discuss how to grow the company using spiritual principles. Everybody in the company knows that the three owners are all devotees of the same Indian spiritual teacher.

We hold these meetings with the sales managers, product managers, systems managers, and all the staff. We talk about how to apply the teachings and principles of Spiritual Leadership, both at work and in our daily life.

In these weekly meetings we focus on principles based on the human values of truth, right action, love, peace and non-violence - not on religion. We use examples from all religions, but each person has his own spiritual way. The employees accept this in a wonderful way.

When the company went through hard times for a period of roughly three years, the weekly meetings stopped. The difficult times arose when the company was being split from just one firm into four companies, each with its own newly hired general manager and with the three partners as the board for each of these companies.

Recently we have taken up the weekly meetings again, but have changed them. Now the meetings are being run by trainers in each company and on different levels - with the managers, with the middle management, and with the employees. These trainers have been trained in working with the human values, and the first results of the meetings are beautiful.

But not everyone finds working with us to be so beautiful. Sometimes it happens that an employee doesn't get on well with the company. They find that with the family spirit and the spiritual orientation, which permeates our way of doing business, it has a different vibration than they are used to, and so they leave.

When we, the three owners, worked directly with everybody, there was a certain family spirit in the company. When we began growing as a business and then changed the organisational structure by installing general managers for each of the companies, the spirit of the overall organisation suffered. People who have stayed with us through all the 25 years tell us that they feel that with these weekly meetings, which we began again three months ago, the whole organisation, all four companies, are going to revive the old family spirit.

Second Story – Dharmic leadership

A concept from Buddhism and Hinduism, *dharma*, has had an enormous impact on my life. Ordinarily, this term is translated into "right action" or "acting righteously", but to me this term is much more than these definitions imply. For me it really is all about *responsibility*. Given my nature, my wish to be silent, it is difficult for me to be a business leader, but my concept of dharma as *responsibility* has helped me a lot to understand my position as a leader. It has also

helped me to make the difficult decisions I have had to make, such as those dealing with firing people.

Whenever we have to make a decision, and we don't do it in a *dharmic* way, in the long run it becomes obvious, that it was not the right way to decide and not the right decision to make.

On some occasions we have had to refuse publishing a book if it did not align with our principles, even if the book would obviously sell many copies and give financial success to the company. The managers are very focused on earning money, and in many cases they have proposed publications which were not *dharmic* - meaning in these cases that they would not inspire people to act in a proper way. Such books we have turned down.

In the beginning, this attitude sometimes created confusion, but little by little the employees understood that their work, and those affected by our work, was to lead them in the direction of spiritual growth. When we select a book for publication, we focus on quality, in the broad, spiritual sense of the word.

Third Story – Surrendering the company to the spiritual teacher

The company has been through difficult periods, where our spiritual point of view has guided us. Not only during the recent times when Argentina suffered a major economic crisis, but also before then, about 15 years ago, when the company went through a difficult period. What happened was, that we sold much more, than we were able to produce.

All the three owners, who are also the three board members, have the same spiritual teacher. In fact, I took Sathya Sai Baba as my spiritual teacher when the partner who is the major owner of our companies introduced me to his teachings. At that time this partner went to visit him in India, and in a letter from the three of us, symbolically turned over the company to him. After that, we realised which direction to take.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

The book *Sai Baba's Mahavakya on Leadership* by General Chibber has helped me to clarify my thoughts on the purpose of business as seen from my spiritual point of view. The book begins with a message where our spiritual teacher tells the students at his schools and university to always act with high dignity with the people they work with. That is the concept for business we work with, our goal is to make people aware of their inner potentials, to help bring out these potentials, and to always strive for excellence. Excellence is the way that God made the world. I also think this should be the purpose of business in general.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

From my spiritual point of view, success goes beyond success on the physical plane. For me, success is being able to live up to the high principles formulated by my spiritual teacher. For example, though being profitable is necessary for our development, success for the companies is not simply success in the traditional financial sense, but is tied to the principle of selfless service. If we are financially successful, then we can provide extra help to a school based on Sathya Sai Baba's principles that we are supporting in Argentina. If we get more, it is possible for us to give more to others.

As to our earnings, our aim is to use 25 percent of our profits for paying taxes, 25 percent for re-investment, 25 percent for us, and to give away 25 percent in donations. Sometimes we achieve our aims, sometimes we don't.

From a professional point of view I am satisfied with my career. From my personal point of view I feel that now it is my duty to go deeper into spirituality. I would also like to get more free time to dedicate to serving others.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

In our company, we understand that it is more important to focus on making a perfect product, than on financial results. God made the world a wonderful product; we must do the same.

Three years ago, we acquired a company that produces and sells agricultural goods. This we did to make a good investment in harmony with our spiritual views. We wanted to focus on organic products because they are healthier. But this has not been easy and has led to many economic problems. So we decided to move from a purely organic production to what we call a defensible agriculture. We are trying to find the balancing point. This is important in business and in spiritual life. It is the middle way that Buddha speaks of.

Developing an Organisational Culture

The concept we work with is to be responsible, to perform right action, to do what has to be done. In the weekly meetings, we replace the word *dharma* with responsibility: Responsibility for the whole company. Responsibility for the areas the people work in, responsibility in the relationship between the manager and his employees, responsibility in the relationships among the employees, responsibility in the relationship between the manager and his family as well as the employees families, and the responsibility of all of us for ourselves.

The conceptual framework for these meetings has not been written down; it is transmitted orally. Sometimes the managers have to make decisions, which are so subtle, that they say: "Well, there is a thin red line between what is a good decision, and what is not a good decision, between what is right to do and what is wrong to do." We try to make people aware of what has to be done in those situations. For example, some people discover in these meetings their own difficulties in making decisions, and we help them find out how to overcome that. But it's also important to point out that everyone brings not only his or her personal values but also their personal problems (from inside or outside the company) to the weekly meetings. We not only deal with problems of leadership and decision-making, we also go beyond the company and deal with the individual employee's personal affairs that have directly connection with the work. Of course the privacy is always respected.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

One of our activities is publishing spiritual, cultural, and educational books. These kinds of books are a reflection of the view of life shared by all three of us partners. We look upon this activity as a possibility of helping to make a better world.

We are working to include the principles of the human values (truth, right action, peace, love and non-violence), that are so central in our spiritual paths, in the books we are publishing for primary and secondary schools. Our evaluation committee is working on this, contacting our authors and trying to integrate the human values into our books - not only into books about societal affairs, but also in books about mathematics, biology or history. And in all our publications we want to produce products recognised for their high quality. We aim at excellence in everything we do. This also applies to the charitable donations we make, e.g. in supporting schools economically.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

Since all three members of the board follow the same spiritual teacher, our relationships are harmonious.

Relationship with Major Stakeholders

These too are excellent, as we aim at serving others, not just ourselves as shareholders. In particular, we focus on the well being and development of our employees.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

In everything I do, my focus is on God. The Jesuits have a sentence, which I keep in mind: “To a higher glory of God”. I can best grow as a spiritually-based leader by surrendering to God.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

When I was in high school, which was a Catholic religious school, there was a new student who hadn't received the first communion. The director asked me to help the student to be prepared for it, and I explained to that student the basis for communion. We went to church on the day that I finished teaching him. We knelt and I told the new student: “Everything I told you is important, but there is one thing which is more important than anything else – that you love God.” This is my advice for aspiring spiritual-based leaders: “Love God”.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an interview with:

**AMBER
CHAND
USA**



Two interviews were conducted: 15 May 2002 and 15 March 2006

Specific information related to initial interview (in 2002):

Organisation: Eziba
Location: Massachusetts, USA
Industry: Retail Marketing
Position: Co-founder, Vice President of Vision
Years in Position: 5
Gender: Female
Age: 53

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Amber Chand Collection: Global Gifts for Peace and Understanding
Current Location: Massachusetts, USA
Current Industry: Retail Marketing
Current Position: Founder

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 9

Previous Positions/Organisations: Director of Museum Shop, Williams College Museum of Art

University Degrees: Undergraduate, University of Uganda; Masters Degree in Social Anthropology, University of Michigan, USA

How to refer to Amber Chand:

“Founder of the Amber Chand Collection: Global Gifts for Peace and Understanding, an internet-based company in the USA that markets the products of artisans from around the world”

CAREER

Career History

I was born in Uganda of Indian parents. I was sent to a boarding school in England as an adolescent and became very confused as to who I was. So in many ways my journey started at that time, when I began to ask, "Who am I?" I was already clear that I was a product of several cultures. What pulsed through my being was a sense of India, a sense of Uganda, and the European influence. This cross-cultural perspective guided me into my subsequent training as an anthropologist.

I did my undergraduate work at the University of Uganda and spent three years being guided by some of the most passionate professors, from all over the world, who were really interested in Africa. This was a time in Uganda's history when we were beginning to tackle the whole notion of being independent. We were starting to throw off the colonial cloak and ask ourselves some deep questions as to what it meant to stand alone, to be independent. Part of my training as an undergraduate student was to really get both excited and challenged by what it meant for a country to begin to emerge based on profound values that go deep into its heritage.

Around the time that I finished my undergraduate work I did a thesis on the East African Indians. The political climate at that time for Indians was very volatile, very difficult and very challenging; this was around 1971-72. I focused my study on how the Indian people were relating and reacting to the situation in Uganda. After that study I actually became a refugee. It was when Idi Amin was in power and he decided to kick all of the Indians out of Uganda.

I was on my way to Cambridge University in the U.K. to do my graduate studies in anthropology, but was unable to go because my father lost all of his money. I put out a letter to all of the universities that had accepted me and received a full scholarship to the University of Michigan in the USA. So my destiny changed drastically in a short period of time. I arrived in the USA and felt very terrified of the Americans. I didn't really know any Americans at that time, I had only heard about them. I received my masters degree there in anthropology.

I continued my investigation of the Indian people after we became refugees and worked for the United Nations high commission for refugees. I went to Naples, Italy and studied the Indian refugees who had come out of Uganda and were in a camp ready to be sent off either to Canada, Europe or England. I was twenty-three years old at that time.

My career actually started in Cambridge, Massachusetts (USA) at a translation company. This linguistics work was to take manuals, ads, and literature that were in English and translate them into a variety of other languages. I began as a secretary and moved up to become the Director of Marketing. I didn't understand how you could literally translate something directly into other languages. I felt that what we really needed was to understand how to fit American concepts into cultures that were not American. So my interest in cross-cultural studies emerged once again in this company. As a marketing representative I spoke to a lot of different companies about the need for cultural adaptation of their programs, rather than doing just a simple form of translation.

After my first child was born, I left the work world and spent time with my daughter through her early years. Then I took a part time job with a local museum of art where they asked me to take a very tiny shelf of postcards and recreate it into a profitable, viable museum shop. I had no experience in retail, so for the next ten years I worked at this museum shop and became very

interested in merchandising products that were based on exhibitions that would come to the museum. These were products such as: American quilts, Japanese folk art, African masks, Indian textiles. My job was to basically create a wonderful display of products to sell alongside the show.

This is where I began to develop a real instinct and passion for handcrafted objects. This is also when I realised there was such an abundance of exquisite products that were coming from some of the poorest regions of the world. While it made sense that they could be sold in this museum setting, I began to wonder how we could make these products more accessible to a larger market.

Current Responsibilities (interview of May 2002)

INTERVIEWER'S NOTE: *In the first interview in May 2002, Amber Chand was Vice President of Eziba and described her "current responsibilities" at that time in the following words.*

One day I had a conversation with my co-founder, Dick Sabot, who is also my brother-in-law, which resulted in our co-founding Eziba together, which is a privately held equity based company. He had been a leading development economist with the World Bank and then became a professor at Williams College. While he was there he created a very successful internet company, Tripod, which was then subsequently sold to Lycos. We brought together our talents to bring beautiful handcrafted objects to the world using the internet as our major vehicle. We then hired a CEO, Bill Miller, from FAO Schwartz.

So all of my fascination with cross-cultural studies, bringing worlds together, and finding beautiful things from artisans around the world all came together with Eziba, which is where I am now. "Ziba" is derived from the Persian word for beautiful. Since we started as an e-commerce company, we called the company Eziba.

As a co-founder, my title is Vice President of Vision. While I am always speaking on behalf of the vision of our company, my day-to-day work leads me to do all of the public relations and I coordinate all of these efforts with our public relations agency in New York City. I am also involved with customer relations and I have asked that anytime there is an unhappy customer that he or she speaks to me. So I deal with all of our unhappy customers. And lastly, I work on employee relations. I am in a position where I am everywhere, except in technology, which I have no mastery of. A big part of my work is to cultivate relationships with all of the different constituencies that we have, which includes the artisans we work with. This is a very, very busy job.

We were very clear from the beginning that we wanted to be a profitable company. This was unusual because the arena we have stepped into has typically only been done by non-profit organisations, church organisations, or international organisations like UNICEF. So this was one of the first times an entrepreneurial company was coming along and saying, we are going to be a profitable, sustainable company. At the same time we are going to be a company whose mission is absolutely embedded in the art of giving back.

So, this is a very spiritual mission and vision of contributing to the well-being of artisan communities world-wide by stimulating demand for these products. Because this was such an ambitious goal, we realised after one year that we could not sustain our growth by being just purely e-commerce. So we then added a catalogue and now we send out catalogues to nine million Americans. Last month we opened up our first retail stores, one here in our own community and one in New York City. We have plans now to expand this retail presence around the country. So we are now a multi-channel retail business. We have 25 employees in both our North Adams, Massachusetts and New York offices, and an extensive network of suppliers and artisans in over 70 countries. It is safe to say we work with thousands of artisans.

What sustains us is that we know the vision of this company comes from a spiritual source. It has been a challenging process, and yet from the very beginning we had a tremendous amount of interest from private funding. We came to potential investors with a very strong business model and with a strong sense of how we would grow the business into a profitable enterprise. Our vision seemed very resonant with whomever we spoke to and in our first round of funding we raised US\$48 million dollars. So this gave us a wonderful beginning. We have grown exponentially and are now a multi-million dollar company. In our four years of growth our revenues have increased from US\$200 thousand in the first year to US\$10 million in our fourth year. And we've grown our customer base to 180,000 customers. We plan to be profitable within the next few years.

I head up Eziba's non-profit "Partnership Program" and "Gifts That Give Back" marketing campaign. The Partnership Program is a key initiative at Eziba where we forge alliances with other non-profit organisations that have a resonant mission to support the well-being of communities around the world.

I also work with organisations such as: World Wild Life Fund, Save the Children, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Business Council for Peace, Heifer International, and Women for Women International.

We are more committed than ever to supporting talented artisans around the world and are now perceived as a leading retailer with a socially responsible mission. The Eziba brand is being recognised for its mission, its exquisite collection of global products, and its commitment to support artisans globally. We are also now regarded as a "dot com survivor".

Current Responsibilities (interview of March 2006)

INTERVIEWER'S NOTE: *Almost four years after the first interview in 2002, a second interview was conducted with Amber Chand. Eziba closed their business in 2005. Below are excerpts from that second interview that describe her current responsibilities as of 2006 (for full details of the second interview, see the section on "Stories of Spiritual-Based Leadership" stories #5-9).*

Today I sit here, at my home office, delighted in the enterprise I have now launched. Barely, nine months old, The Amber Chand Collection: Global Gifts for Peace and Understanding is a mission-based social enterprise that supports talented craftswomen in regions of conflict and post conflict. I work explicitly with women who are the inadvertent victims of war, genocide, civil strife, pandemics and natural disasters. Currently, I am working on projects in Israel/Palestine, Darfur/Sudan, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Guatemala. The foundation of the company is built on the successful Gifts That Give Back initiative I spearheaded at Eziba and informed by the lessons I learned at Eziba.

The Amber Chand Foundation has been created as a non-profit entity that will be able to support artisan communities more widely through grants and investments in the future, once the company has met certain financial benchmarks.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

I find that spirituality is a very, very big word. It reminds me of a story my mother told me about an experience she had when she was three years old. She had a chalkboard slate in school and she was asked to write the word “God” on the slate. She began to cry and said, “But God is so big; how do I fit it in my little slate?”

As a spiritual woman, I seek to infuse everything in my life with a perspective some might consider “ other-worldly “ for its experience goes beyond the tangible, that which is understood only through our sensory perceptions. Spirituality goes beyond physical matter for it is the very essence of being. It is the invisible place within me that yearns to connect and experience life in all its marvellous manifestations, no matter how challenging and how difficult it might appear.

My spirituality guides me in many wonderful ways, through writing, poetry, contemplative prayer, and authentic, clear-hearted conversations. It is an invisible, essential place within my being. Frankly, language does so little justice to what it feels like; this is why I have been turning more and more to poetry and contemplative practice as a place to understand the heart of spirituality. Spirituality is a space where the heart resides; it is soul. When I speak of feeling soulful that, to me, is also spirituality. When I reflect on spirituality I literally feel my eyes soften, my body relax into itself, and an experience of peacefulness emerge. There is lightness.

What comes to mind when I think about my overall spiritual perspective is that of a tapestry. A woven tapestry that has many threads weaving through it with a central thread that runs throughout. My spirituality feels like a beautiful, beautiful, strong, powerful, central thread in this tapestry that is my life. My spirituality offers me a quiet backdrop from which to meet the exigencies (demands, pressures) of my life. It is that constant, quiet hum of OM (the sacred primordial sound of creation) in the background, a deep and enduring presence in my life.

Spiritual Theme

Compassion, balance, grace, and friendliness are words that ring as a spiritual theme for me. Yes, this is a “God-being tapestry.”

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

I think there is a tremendous difference between spirituality and religion. Religion for me has been dogma and rules and boundaries and boxes. It has divided and separated people. It may offer many beautiful things like rituals and ceremonies, but to me this is not spirituality. Spirituality has no borders or restraints, it never separates, it always connects. Even though I grew up in a Hindu household, I was encouraged to learn about other spiritual practices, so as a child I attended the Church of England while at a boarding school in England, and over the years I have cultivated a tremendous interest in Buddhism. In the end, I agree with what Sathya Sai Baba, my own spiritual teacher, says: “Religion is the language of love.” I will accept this definition of religion. But when I look at what is happening on our planet in the name of religion, I feel less and less inclined to use that word in my vocabulary. So I do not therefore consider myself as a religious person.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

When I think of my spiritual purpose in life, I think of ways in which it allows me to connect, both internally and externally. In quiet moments, I look to strengthening this place of internal refuge. It is a very personal quiet place within me – an inner sanctuary – where I go to connect with my spiritual teacher, Sathya Sai Baba, whom I like to call “Swami.” The other is the outer pace of action and activity and my spiritual purpose offers me a beacon as I navigate through my daily life discovering ways to connect with others in my life and meet each situation with calm intent. To me this is love in action. In other words, internally, my spiritual purpose is about being in that quiet, reflective, restorative place of inner calm or divine connection; externally, it centres on finding ways to connect courageously with my life experiences from this place of inner calm. Being in the world as a spiritual woman, I really see my larger purpose as that of trying to find a way to experience myself as a being of light, purposeful in my actions, inspired by love-in-action rather than fear.

Often in my most exhausted moments I just see myself putting my tired head on Swami’s lap and he reassures me with a loving gesture of, “There, there.” This vision offers me sustenance and encouragement. From the beginning, I considered Eziba to be an inspired vision from Sai Baba. I saw it as Sai Baba’s company, and in my playful moments I would refer to it as, “Easy Baba.”

I always felt that in founding this company I was following Swami’s guidance and finding a way to bring together my spiritual perspective into a more worldly, business arena. I felt that the opportunity Eziba offered me was Swami’s way of saying to me, “Amber, I think you have been preparing yourself long enough. You have been yearning for this experience. Here is an instrument for you to put into practice what you have internally felt.” This was to be a practice in humility in which I saw myself as simply the flute – his instrument – through which he would play. This requires alertness, trust and surrender. I know it will be challenging but I am so absolutely grateful to Swami for this beautiful company. For me, this company would not exist were it not for Swami’s guidance. Those who know me very well know how I feel about this. And even for those who don’t, when they come into my office they become aware of the significance of Swami in my life.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

I sometimes feel badly that I do not have a regular spiritual practice which requires daily discipline in meditation and so forth. However, my practices are purposefully simple, requiring little time perhaps, but necessitating clear, conscious thought. At every opportunity, I like to imagine Swami walking beside me. It reassures me to contemplate on his Divine Presence – so near, yet so far! Because I am playful and delight in simple pleasures, I enjoy this game of Hide and Seek with Swami. He hides and I seek. Sometimes I hide and he seeks. At other times, I am deeply serious about my contemplative practice, through readings and prayer. I honestly feel that I have this wonderful relationship with Sai Baba and it is this daily invocation that has become an integral part of my daily life, a loving habit.

In my contemplative moments I like to write my reflections in my journal - and I have been doing this since I was 13 years old. I also improvise on the piano. Through both these practices I find a joyful way to totally immerse myself in the creative process and therefore become totally un-self-conscious. For instance, when I sit to write in my journal, I go into a deep state of reverie, close my eyes, and sink down into this quiet place where my pen literally takes over. My writings are guided from deep within! Similarly, at the piano, I like to close my eyes, settle in, and allow my fingers to create melodies that seem to emerge from the depths of my being, inspired from

another place. In neither experience do I need to perform for an audience. It is a time for solitary, un-self-conscious reflection – simply a time for the soul to speak and be heard.

Nature is a wonderful friend and I enjoy my solitary walks in the hills and forests near my house. I have always had a particular fondness for trees – these magnificent living presences. There is one I have named The Buddha Tree, under which I sit and write. I read a great deal and particularly enjoy books on poetry, business, biographies, and spiritually minded books, including those on Sathya Sai Baba.

Yes, in many ways my entire life is a spiritual practice, a prayer. I do evoke this experience in my daily life.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

I grew up in a Hindu household in Kampala, Uganda where daily devotional practices were the fabric of my young life. The name of “God” was invoked in myriad ways and I learned that to offer my life as an expression of Divinity was the noblest path to pursue. I was encouraged to see everything – the ups and downs of my young existence – as an expression of God, and to accept all of it – the full catastrophe of living, you might say!

In 1960, at the age of 10 years, I was sent to a boarding school in England. My parents insisted that I continue my religious understanding by attending the Church of England services. Even though I found this experience sombre and sobering (the English “God” so different from the playful, loving, nurturing God of my Hindu childhood), I continued to sense the profound impact that a spiritual perspective on my life held.

Later, in my late twenties, I came across the path of Sathya Sai Baba. It was profoundly transformative and I felt that my entire life had been a preparation for this “meeting” which occurred through a series of dreams initially.

My spiritual practice is the context for my entire existence – and it offers me deep and rich support as I navigate through life. Service (or seva) is the cornerstone of this practice and I see my entire life as an offering to serve this sense of higher calling or purpose. The company I have created is very much an expression of this sense of service, allowing me to use business as an important and purposeful platform for my spiritual practice, knowing that our work with artisans around the globe – many of who are talented craftswomen – helps to support, sustain and strengthen their lives. This is engaged spirituality – one which I find particularly meaningful and at the heart of my spiritual practice and actions as a business woman.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Developing and energising a vision for the company

My original vision for this company was that it would be an antidote to what I believed was happening on the planet. I noticed that there was a lot of information about the negative aspects of life in many cultures, especially the sufferings of many people. I kept thinking, “Why not create a company that celebrates the most beautiful things that people make?” I felt that the artisans and craftspeople would be the best place to start. I also felt that because these people create from their hands that they would be conduits of spirituality. They have a connection to the earth and through their hands they are able to create and manifest.

I wanted this company to honour and celebrate the creative spirit and to applaud cultural diversity through the crafts we sell. I wanted us to find the best craftspeople all over the world and showcase their beautiful objects to the consumer who appreciates this type of cultural expression. As a result, we are now in over 70 countries throughout the world and have an extensive network through which we source our products. We go directly to some of the countries and get directly involved in some of the villages and cooperatives. We meet with the artisans and create objects that are relevant to the global marketplace while at the same time are authentic to the techniques of their tradition. We have also aligned ourselves with lots of non-profit organisations who help us to find and identify the artisans communities that we want to work with.

In a quiet way it seems as if Eziba is becoming a celebrity company. People are beginning to look at us as a case model of what business can look like if it is truly steeped in a mission that looks at its impact on the people and the planet, as well as profits.

I have actually talked with our CEO about bringing some of this spiritual essence into the lives of our employees. I feel that our employees have all bought into our mission and our business model, but I do not feel that they take pleasure in the daily practice of work in this way. So that is why I have decided to bring someone in to do some ‘visioning’ sessions with our employees. Now that we, the leadership of Eziba, have clearly unveiled our values, I would like for people to see and speak about how they would like for it to be and how they can feel personally empowered and accountable.

I am putting together a small hour-long program for our employees, where we can sit together in conversation and dialogue about the vision of the company... to give our employees a blank canvas and have them create what they would like Eziba to look like. This is very much like the process I have recently been through: “If you wake up in ten years what would you like for the company to look like?” So we are looking at a structured process for this.

Personally, this year, I have invested a great deal of time and energy in supporting the basket weavers of Rwanda, many of whom are widows from the genocide, by bringing their baskets – which I termed Peace Baskets because they were made by both Hutu and Tutsi women in a spirit of reconciliation after the genocide – to market. This was an initiative I led both as a co founder of Eziba and as a founding member of the Business Council for Peace, a newly formed coalition of business women who are supporting women’s enterprises in areas of conflict and post conflict. We have partnered with The United Nations Development Fund for Women in order to do this work. Seeing myself as a peacemaker, committed to building bridges between people who are living in conflict areas of the world has become a new focus for me, and one that I find deeply empowering. Next year I will head to the Middle East and potentially Afghanistan – identifying

talented craftspeople and finding ways to not only bring their craft to the international marketplace through Eziba, but also to strengthen their communities. All of this work is part of my sense of engaged, spiritual practice.

Second Story – Two initiatives to cultivate spirit in the organisation

As a co-founder of this company, I have a very interesting role. I have a tremendous amount of influence, but I have not been interested in seeing it as power. So in everything I do people see me as a co-founder and respect me for that role. It is a status and respect that I hold very humbly.

I know when I walk through this company that employees look to me sort of like a mother, a nurturing spirit. So I try to continually find ways to be that nurturing, reassuring, loving spirit for them. This allows me to authentically be my spirit-self. I am very grateful that I do not have to be any different than who I am. As a result I have been able to actually cultivate a great confidence in others by being more spiritual: they expect it of me, they see it in me, they laugh at me, they dismiss me, all of that.

There are two initiatives that I think my spiritual theme – this beautiful tapestry of compassion, balance, grace, and friendliness – has inspired. I created the first one about a year ago and called it “tea with Amber.” To me this is exactly the way I see that spirit should work in a company. I was inspired to do this when, one day, my heart sank when I realised that the company had grown to such a degree that I no longer knew everybody. I could not see how I could be in the nurturer role if I didn’t know everyone by name. I thought about this and began to search for a way that I could connect with everyone in the company.

So the idea came to me to just begin to have a cup of tea with every person. The first thing I noticed was that my office was not the nurturing atmosphere that I wanted, so I rearranged my office completely. I created a little sitting area where I have some lamps and plants, I got out my lovely Mexican tea set and then I began to invite people to tea.

One by one people began to come and sit with me for tea. Some people were very nervous because they were sitting with the co-founder. I would make them a cup of tea and what I noticed is that once they began to sip their tea, they would start to relax physically. Once we could both relax with each other, then we could actually open ourselves up to the “art of conversation.”

This whole concept has continued to grow and now it is on the website as a column. Who would have ever thought that it would have blossomed so much? What is so wonderful about this is that it is definitely something that the employees look forward to. It has become seen as a very important part of my work in this company and as a way for us to continue to highlight Eziba as a company with a social conscience.

The second initiative I started early on was to speak to the customers who were unhappy with us. I remembered my childhood where my mother and father taught me to treat a guest who came to our house as God. You do everything you can to make their time with you happy and satisfying and comfortable. So during our first customer training, I told them this story. I told them that at Eziba, I like to feel that the customer is God. So when the customer calls, we drop everything and we listen. People actually listened to what I said and thought it was nice.

We have a fabulous customer service group and yet I still want to speak with all of the unhappy customers. It is actually helpful for our employees to see that the co-founder is working alongside them, supporting the larger work, which is to satisfy all our customers. I always pick up the phone and call the unhappy customers. I begin by apologising to them, “I am so sorry that we have

dissatisfied you in some way.” I must tell you that customers are amazed; they cannot believe that one of the founders is taking the time to call them. From this call, I always end up with a happy customer; we usually end up feeling a lot of joy and laugh together. I tell them to call me again if they ever have any problems and I give them my direct line. So it is another way of being thoughtful and it works.

Third Story – Taking responsibility in a downsizing

One of the most painful periods for me as a leader in this company was the time just after the tragedy that happened in New York City on September 11th through Christmas, 2001. We were restructuring the company and looking seriously at our goal of being a profitable organisation.

As a result we had to look closely at areas of the company that were not cost-effective, which then required us to let some people go. This happened very quickly and it was very painful for me. Here was a company that had promoted itself to be a kind, thoughtful, compassionate company and people came to work here because they had a sense of alignment with our mission of doing good for the planet.

And yet, I had to be realistic about the early, start-up phase that we were in. There were no guarantees, we were not a solidly profitable company yet, we were still young and our roots were still not embedded. Once we had communicated to everyone about who would be laid off, we had an open forum meeting with everyone in the company. We clearly expected people to express their distress, unhappiness, frustration and anger. I stood there in front of everyone along with the other members of our senior team.

Even though some people did become quite angry, I could feel my heart accepting all of this. I genuinely felt that there was a reason for all of this anger and frustration and that there was no harm in it. I knew that the last thing we needed to be was defensive. There was a moment when one of our senior members became defensive and it sparked a battle between two wills; it was awful. Everyone looked so sad and devastated. At the end of this, there was just this silence.

I then very quietly went and stood in the centre of the room and I looked around the room at everyone and said, “I am so sorry. I apologise for the way this has turned out.” At that moment the faces of the people began to soften and a spaciousness was created that let them know that this was not about us versus them. It was simply all part of the journey of this company. The apology felt like a quiet, but powerful flame within me.

It was a moment when I stretched inside. I was accepting the responsibility for what had happened in the company and was also acknowledging that there was no right or wrong. It simply was what we needed to go through. I stepped into the circle, stood in my own space, and felt all of it. To me it made a great difference.

Humility would be the word I would use to describe that moment. It was in this humility that I found my greatest courage. Courage to me is not when I raise my voice and act aggressively and defensively against others; it is when I feel responsible and responsive to their needs. In that moment I literally re-defined what a leader was meant to be. We have become so consumed by the idea that leaders are strong and in charge, and that they are the captains of the ship. I am most interested in incorporating the great feminine principles into leadership: bringing in the art of grace and humility, dialogue, soft speech and deep listening, and eyes that may water, and allowing all of that to be there.

This is what it means to me to be a servant leader. This is very much how I see my leadership role in this company; I am founder-servant. I have always known that I was here to serve and anytime I forget this, I lose my way. Without this faith, this spiritual source, I do not feel it would be possible to be an exemplary leader.

Fourth Story – Finding a new vocabulary for business

When we take two seemingly paradoxical worlds such as business and spirituality and try to marry them together, we must find language that people can feel safe with. So to me language is very important. For example, we have a cost-cutting committee at Eziba and I have been thinking about what this is really saying, it is actually quite negative. What if we were to call it the committee of abundance and part of its strategy in creating abundance is to cut costs. So to me language allows us to have a very different relationship with reality and we must be careful in how we use it. We must find the words that allow us to create the kind of reality that we really want. If the basis of all of this is love, which is the antidote to fear, then we must find the language that will literally reflect love in the most pragmatic ways. I also feel that we must not feel afraid to use this kind of language either.

I believe that businesses can play a role in finding the new vocabulary for this spiritual dimension and can incorporate it into the very foundations of their organisations. I think it is time to embrace our shadows and to face the dichotomies of “them versus us.” I think that this notion that we are competing against each other has to be profoundly shifted. I do not know how this will happen, but just the fact that we are speaking and opening ourselves up to this possibility is huge at this point. I am just open-eyed and open-hearted at this time.

INTERVIEWER’S NOTE: *Four years after the first interview in 2002, a second interview was conducted with Amber Chand. Eziba closed their business in 2005. In the following stories #5-9 is her synopsis of what happened as well as how she responded and drew from her spiritual view of life to deal with and learn from this difficult period of time, and how her perspective on the failure of Eziba has evolved since then.*

Fifth story – Facing the demise of an organisation

Eziba’s collapse in January 2005 was breath taking! I remember leaving the company offices, with two cardboard boxes of belongings in my hands, numbed by the certain reality that the company had imploded and closed its doors to the world and equally frightened by what the future held for me and my family! Without my spiritual core, I would not have been able to navigate through this tumultuous time.

There is a particular story that each of us will tell about the collapse of the company – each bringing our own nuances and perspectives to the tale. My story ultimately rests on the importance of balance, sobriety, sufficiency, and patient and sustainable growth – as fundamentals in business practice, especially for a company that is founded on a strong mission to support impoverished people around the globe.

From the outset, and as one of Eziba’s co-founders, I had envisioned a company that would incorporate the values of service through enterprise. I believed that it was entirely possible to create a value based company that was inherently spiritual in its ideal, pioneering in its vision and responsible in its structure for growth. I termed it “compassionate commerce”.

My co-founder and partner was my brother-in-law, Dick Sabot a well-regarded development economist and more recently, a successful internet entrepreneur. Dick was ambitious, confident and hard driven, interested in creating a fast-growth multi-million dollar company that would rise to become a profitable leader in the global crafts arena. As Chairman, he quickly and skilfully raised \$40 million in private equity funds within the first year. I, on the other hand, was much more sober in my ambitions, seeking a model for business that would be inspired by spiritual values and grow organically over time. In my view, this was my life work, and so there were no exit strategies for me. Both of us shared a commitment to creating a socially responsible foundation for the business.

Admittedly, I had not received any significant business training prior to having arrived at Eziba from the non-profit museum world so my visionary ideals were still unproven and untested. Whilst Dick focused on structuring the company and putting together a powerful and influential Board of venture capitalists, I focused my attention on assembling a collection of distinctive artisan made products and to becoming the company spokesperson forging relationships with editors, customers, and artisan producers alike.

There was clearly a yin-yang quality to Dick's and my relationship – one in which there was a distinctly feminine and masculine set of principles at work.

There was a tremendous sense of excitement and enthusiasm from all our stakeholders when we launched in 1999 - for what we all collectively experienced as an innovative, internet based, socially responsible model for business that sought to “change the world by hand”. But there was also an accompanying sense of intoxicated exuberance! By the time the company launched, it was surprisingly valued at \$100 million without having sold one object; Forrester Research, an influential research organisation, touted Eziba as one of the most influential internet companies to watch besides Amazon and Ebay. Forbes Magazine voted ours as one of the best websites around. The accolades were overwhelming and based on the promise for what we aspired to accomplish and not on any particular reality of accomplishment – we had as yet not even proven our business model.

During this era of heady dot-com exuberance, money, especially from venture capitalists, was often recklessly poured into new start-up internet companies which held great promise. Armed with a profusion of cash, Eziba was quickly able to build itself into a marketing phenomenon, with billboards on buses in San Francisco and New York, ads in major national publications and a management team of heavyweights from companies such as FAO Schwartz, L.L. Bean, etc. Money flowed from the company's coffers. And the promise to grow into the world's leading retailer of global crafts supporting millions of artisans continued to be projected. But therein lay the seeds of the company's ultimate demise.

I have come to believe that an overcapitalised company can be just as vulnerable as an undercapitalised company – for unless an organisation is already firmly rooted in its unique mission, confident in its innovative and visionary leadership and willing to grow through its own merits and performance it will not be able to create an enterprise of lasting change. No matter how much money it has! And just as you cannot force a plant to grow quicker than it can no matter how much fertilizer you throw on it, you cannot force a business to grow quickly, no matter how much cash you throw its way. There is an implicit impatience and unsustainability in models of business that set out to grow exponentially within a short period of time.

Excessive money can breed arrogance and a false illusion of stability. And unless it is managed carefully and responsibly and there to support the company in taking its next steps, it can easily turn into a devouring monster. Because Eziba already had \$40 million in investments in its early

days, it felt compelled to spend it, and to build a large operational infrastructure to support it. Big is Beautiful became the aspirational vision.

Even though Eziba's socially responsible mission supported responsible and reasonable growth, its financial infrastructure necessitated a different model – one based on fast growth supported by venture capitalists seeking sizeable returns and an exit strategy. This is the inherent nature of venture capital but for Eziba, it created a dilemma. The internal pressure to grow the business into a profitable venture within a few years informed all of the decisions the company made. And invariably, important decisions were often made in relative haste to ensure that the company's zealous financial projections were met, quarter after quarter, often to the detriment of its underlying mission.

I remember the first time this happened. It was within a year from its launch, and Eziba sent out a small test catalogue during the holiday season of some of its core products. It was an attractive catalogue, maybe 14-15 pages, and it did fairly well. Based on that one time experience, our CEO and management team shifted the business model entirely – now actively pursuing the inherently expensive and capital intensive path of direct marketing through print catalogues. This shook up the roots of our entrepreneurial, internet based foundation. Suddenly, expensive mailing lists were purchased, a slew of catalogue experts and consultants hired, a new office in a major metropolitan city established, a large call centre and warehouse created. The shift was radical and ultimately hurt us. There was now extraordinary pressure to compete with larger catalogue companies, at a time when we were still in our infancy experiencing the fragile pangs of early growth.

Like many businesses, Eziba had numerous ups and downs in the course of its six years. And some of these challenges proved ultimately fatal. From once being a company of great promise and vision, with \$7 million in net sales in its last holiday season, a strong, exciting brand, stores in Boston, Chicago, New York, 60 employees, thousands of artisans supported, it was now required to close its doors in January 2005, at the instigation of its Board. Soon after, the company was put into bankruptcy and by April 2005, the company was acquired by Overstock, the online retailer of clearance goods. A visionary dream had come to an end!

In July 2005, barely six months after the company closed, Dick's "heart literally gave out", through a massive heart attack. He was barely 61 years old. In many ways, through Dick's painful and early death, I saw a certain tragic symbolism for what had happened to this company that had set out with such great promise. Perhaps its focus on rapid and frenzied growth, its abandonment of its core mission early on, and its culture of careless and frivolous expenditure, coupled with a lack of visionary and confident leadership finally drove the company into its death.

Sixth story – The struggles of a dual culture

Eziba offered a remarkable platform to test out new innovative models of business. It also became somewhat schizophrenic as it tried to navigate and make sense of two distinct sets of values.

On one hand there was a culture of innovative entrepreneurship founded on socially responsible practices that highlighted performance and success from the perspective of the "triple bottom line" – its impact on people, planet and profits. Here there was a sense of creating a community rather than a company highlighting the connections that were happening around us – especially between our customers (who were 80% women) and artisan producers (who were similarly 80% women). I was intrigued by this "feminine" conversation happening between people on either side of the world – through stories and handmade products.

On the other hand, there was another structure of thought that we had to deal with. This followed a more traditional, patriarchal form of business culture where investor returns, fast “testosterone driven” growth and heightened profitability were the company’s priority and drove the company’s decisions. In the end, we were not skilful enough as an organisation to bring together these two distinctive cultures. Had we been able to find that necessary balance, weighing the costs of every decision in terms of our mission in the world as well as our financial health, I have no doubt that we would still exist!

Seventh story – Dealing with the pain of a failed organisation

Months before Eziba’s demise, I had a dream in which I was cautioned about the impending tumult of future events and advised to remain very, very calm as the storm whirled around me. The collapse of Eziba was catastrophic – to all its stakeholders! I do not pretend to understand all the minutiae of details that complicated the process, from vendor workouts, banks being paid out before the poorest artisans, legal haranguing, bankruptcy proceedings, acquisitions. But what I remember most was the shock and pain of seeing my colleagues at the company leave – one by one! Desks abandoned, products from all over the world left behind sitting tidily on shelves; offices emptied. We were exhausted and devastated. I was one of the last to leave the building!

It was painful, terrifying and confusing to watch the company collapse at such a startling pace. I felt completely powerless to influence its course during this time - surrounded by legal experts, a disappointed but resolute Board, devastated staff members, vendors clamouring to be paid, customers asking for their products, and the media ready to pounce. Without the anchor of my spiritual practice, I could not have weathered this personal tsunami. For at some level, I knew that Eziba’s meteoric rise and fall were part of a larger archetypal story. That there were to be many lessons learned and that somehow I would find my way, guided by a sense of profound trust in Life and the truth of who I am and what I believe in.

Once before, I had experienced the solid structures of my life implode around me – as a young woman of 22 years old, my family was expelled from Uganda as refugees during Idi Amin’s presidency. We lost everything – our financial assets, our beautiful home on the hill, our possessions, and our country. Through that devastation I had to pick myself up and find my way, trusting that within that experience was also a greater gift. My task was to discover it.

Eighth story – Contemplating a resignation

Two colleagues suggested I resign as the ship was sinking because my reputation in the world would be tainted. I reflected on this deeply. I wrote a letter of resignation that I did not send:

December 27, 2004

Dear Eziba:

A Journey of a Thousand Miles Starts With a Single Step.

We have walked many thousands of miles together, embraced by a vision of what is possible when an enterprise emerges for the good of all, knowing that it offers a sense of responsibility towards those it will serve. As one of its founders, I have always felt that what our vision offered was bold, confident, inspired. We envisioned Eziba as an antidote to globalization, an innovative, entrepreneurial company that saw its social responsibility not as an addendum, but as the core of its very best business practice. We sought a balance between a disciplined

fiscally responsible business and an inspired vision that sought to change the world, 'hand by hand', transforming impoverished communities of talented artisans.

We celebrated the creative human spirit and spoke of the preservation of cultures, social sustainability, and the ecology of business as a holistic model of economic development. Our horizon was one of visionary promise based on the pragmatic realities of sound business practice. We were pioneers seeking to walk a bold course, one that sought to inspire, sustain, strengthen and support the communities that we sought to serve – our shareholders and investors, our customers, our vendors, our employees, and our artisans.

But today, as I stand here, I see around me the rubble of a company that has imploded and finally lost its confidence. A company that in the end, as it desperately sought to survive, made agreements that it could not keep (leaving behind a trail of disappointed and angry vendors, customers and investors). A company, that in its last months, fell prey to bankruptcy laws, and legal manoeuvrings that made no distinction between widowed basket weavers from the Rwandan genocide and large expensive catalogue printing houses. In this world, with all its rationalized legal frameworks, no one could be treated preferentially, each an ironic testament to the democratic principle at work. Was this, after all, what business as usual succumbs to when it takes its last gasp?

Undercapitalized, under financed, poorly managed, misguided, unethical, exploitative, self serving, greedy, arrogant... ...these were now the attributes ascribed to Eziba, the dream child of the socially responsible world, the one that would survive the Darwinian shakeout of dot com failures, the one that would become known as prize-winner in the competitive battlefield. What had happened to this spectacular vision for Business as Unusual?

Charged with creating signature products for the company under its Gifts That Give Back brand, I have made every effort to contribute to the company's revenues and to support its precious mission by launching products that were distinctive, socially responsible, and supported global artisans in vulnerable communities. The Rwandan Peace Basket, the Kabul Bracelet and Jerusalem Candle of Hope were my personal testaments to this work. And now, as I stand here amidst all the legal rationalizations and vendor workouts created with a detachment that horrifies me, it becomes clear to me. I can no longer continue to support an enterprise that has expelled from itself its very moral core, its deepest convictions, its reason for being. How does one defend the fact that, whilst a large Vermont bank is paid off its loan of \$500,000 in December at the height of the company's holiday revenues, some of the poorest producers in the world, the Rwandans, the Bolivians, the South Africans, are not. How does one support this cold and harsh reality?

My voice in the boardroom is a lone voice. My sense of moral outrage is dismissed by litanies of legal rationalities. I am told repeatedly not to push my private agenda. And I realize that I am completely powerless to change the course of Eziba's final destiny. By the very fact that we have not morally stood by the poorest, the most impoverished communities around the world, who have stood by us in our heyday, at this very time as the company is about to suspend its operations, means only one thing-

I MUST CHOOSE TO RESIGN.

I did not send this letter after all. For even though I wanted to walk away and separate myself from some of decisions that were made which I did not agree with, I also felt it irresponsible for me to resign and abandon the company in its dying moment. And as one of its cofounders I felt a particular sense of responsibility – that of a mother wanting to protect her child! Were I to have

walked away, I would never have forgiven myself. It was a painful decision, made at a painful and turbulent time.

Ninth story – Starting a new enterprise

It took me many months to recuperate and heal from the company's accelerated demise. After many months of prayer and reflection, I felt my spiritual teacher's encouragement for me to go back into the world and to continue this work. Beckoning me was the pleading gaze of the artisans I had met on my past travels around the world, who echoed a similar request "Please do not forget us". Even though the structure of Eziba had collapsed, I believed that its mission in the world was still intact. It was with this mind that I launched my own company, The Amber Chand Collection: Global Gifts for Peace and Understanding, an online company that was setting out to create a different model from Eziba's – one more truthfully and authentically in alignment with who I am in the world

Today I sit here, at my home office, delighted in the enterprise I have now launched. Barely, nine months old, The Amber Chand Collection: Global Gifts for Peace and Understanding is a mission-based social enterprise that supports talented craftswomen in regions of conflict and post conflict. I work explicitly with women who are the inadvertent victims of war, genocide, civil strife, pandemics and natural disasters. Currently, I am working on projects in Israel/Palestine, Darfur/Sudan, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Guatemala. The foundation of the company is built on the successful Gifts That Give Back initiative I spearheaded at Eziba and informed by the lessons I learned at Eziba.

In many ways, I am carrying on the vision that Dick and I had created for Eziba in the very beginning: to serve artisan communities around the world by offering them access to a sophisticated international market. But I choose a different business model for growth – and ultimately one that I hope will be sustainable and successful, over time. The Collection is focused, offering lovely handmade gifts whose design aesthetic is guided by me. In this paradigm, Small is Beautiful! I work closely with non-profit organisations who have field operations in these vulnerable regions of the world and are able to offer me both operational and marketing support. All products are shipped from around the world to my warehouse in central Massachusetts, a facility which exclusively hires developmentally disabled adults (most with Downs Syndrome) to package and ship my products. At this time, I am choosing to finance the company solely through family/friends and angel investors who offer loans with a reasonable return. All decisions I make require thoughtful reflection based on the principles of sobriety (vs. intoxication), balance, truthfulness and sufficiency (vs. excess).

The Amber Chand Foundation has been created as a non-profit entity that will be able to support artisan communities more widely through grants and investments in the future, once the company has met certain financial benchmarks. Referring to itself as a *social enterprise*, the company will measure its success in terms of both its financial and social impact on the artisan communities it serves. For instance, in Guatemala, The Amber Chand Scholarship Fund supports primary school children and is funded through purchases of the Mayan Harmony Necklace and Bracelet. In Cambodia, net proceeds from purchase of the Silk Bag of Smiles is donated to the House of Smiles, an orphanage of disabled children set up in the cooperative that supports children who are victims of landmine accidents. In the Middle East, net proceeds from the sale of the Jerusalem Candle of Hope supports the work of the Parents Circle, an organisation of bereaved family members on either side of the conflict who have lost a family member in the intifada and seek reconciliation and healing.

Each of the gifts in the Amber Chand collection at this time – the Jerusalem Candle of Hope, the Cambodian Silk Bag of Smiles, the Mayan Harmony Necklace and the Mayan Harmony Bracelet, Darfur Basket of Strength, Kabul Necklace of Courage – are made by mothers, who through these lovely creative expressions offer us their gift of hope, strength and courage. The gifts are wrapped simply but tastefully, each tied with a ribbon that comes with a special Cambodian Peace Bell – once part of a landmine shell and now melted down in foundries by villagers to adorn their cows and oxen. A simple, but powerful expression of peace emerging from the context of war.

At every juncture, I seek to be in alignment with my mission. I am more than ever convinced that if we are to create businesses with healthy foundations at this urgent time in our planetary evolution, we need to create systems based on balance, wisdom and humility. As a social entrepreneur, my task is to create an enterprise that is fiscally responsible, grows thoughtfully, and impacts thousands of craftspeople in creating a dignified livelihood for themselves. At the heart of this work, are the spiritual principles of “service” and “love in action”. I have no doubt that armed with patience, trust, focused clear effort and humility, the Amber Chand Collection will grow successfully.

I am grateful to Eziba for teaching me important lessons and in illuminating for me that one can indeed create successful businesses that are spiritually inspired – only when this becomes ones singular mission and clear intent.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

I think businesses, through their leaders, need to redefine themselves and redefine the very structures and foundation of their existence. I think that business leaders must literally steep themselves in values, which includes the question of how they are impacting people and the planet, as well as their profits. I believe this must become the continuous question, like a mantra, that business leaders use to ask themselves what it means to be successful and how to go about creating that success.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

To me, in order to be successful I must embrace all three aspects of mind, body and spirit. I see that the three of us who run this company in many ways represent all three of these aspects. To me, our CEO represents the body, my co-founder represents the mind, and I represent the spirit.

As an organisation, there are two ways I feel we should look at success. First, I have communicated to the entire company that I believe our success can only be measured by these three factors: the degree we are profitable; the degree in which we impact people, internally and externally; and the degree that we are stewards for the planet. This is not original, it is the same concept that the Social Venture Network has come out with, the three P's: People, Planet and Profit. This is what they define as the three attributes of a successful company going into the 21st century.

So, this is what I speak about wherever I am in the world, and I believe it completely. Internally, I feel something else in addition. What I constantly remind myself of, and what I ask people in meetings, is to see how we can walk in balance among these three P's. I believe this is how we can navigate through this time when we are working to become profitable.

Second, I feel that in order for the company to succeed, we have to create the space for conversation. To me this is the most connecting, intimate way of creating happy people. If we are going to go out into the world and ask people to look at us as an organisation that cares deeply about the planet, then we have to start in our own home; we must care deeply about our people right here in our own home.

Because a lot of our artisans are women, a lot of our work empowers women to continue their craft traditions, rather than having to abandon their families to go into the city. While most often it is the men who have to leave their families to take up jobs in the city, there are certainly instances when women are expected to do this as well, which fragments the family and impacts the strength of the community. And, many of the artisans are very poor, so if we are successful then these people will also become successful.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

I think that this is a matter of balance. I think it is important for business leaders to really understand what it means to be financially viable. But the attitude of greed and excess has really undermined most businesses. Here at Eziba, we know that a larger company could buy us or that we could go public and sell our stock on the stock exchange, but the question to us is, "How large do we really want to get?" I think that sometimes the idea of becoming a multi-billion dollar

company is so tantalising that people forget what that really means in the lives of the employees. I think that finances must be discussed in this larger context.

Because I am not a financial wizard I do have the capability to listen and observe in a different way. I would love to find a way to create the language to talk about finances in this larger context of how it contributes to the well-being of our people, our community and our society.

To me being productive means that you are producing something for someone else. So yes, everyone must work very hard in order to be productive so the company can be profitable. But there has to be a sense of ownership.

I like to use the word 'creativity' instead of 'productivity.' I think that creativity begins to allow us to look at all of this differently. I feel that creativity allows each individual to feel a sense of meaning and connection to the deeper part of their lives. I have found that the more employees are encouraged to be creative, the more it gives them both a sense of ownership and a feeling that they are contributing to the company. This also gives them a feeling that they are a part of the abundance that is being created.

Developing an Organisational Culture

I see creativity as potential. I am attempting to develop a culture that really impacts, affects, influences and cultivates creativity – where people here feel that they are really encouraged to use their creative potential to its highest manifestation. So whether they are in technology, customer relations, or planning, they feel that they can come and have their voices be heard, and they can truly experience a place where they can celebrate their own creativity. And they are given all of the opportunities to do that. Given that we are honouring the creative act of artisans globally, it only makes sense that we would really, truly encourage this within our own company.

If we look at companies as communities and the employees as the caretakers of those communities, then they will feel that they are working toward the same purpose and that they are aligned with a greater purpose than just their own individual goals. So I think this way of seeing creativity can be beneficial to all.

I am also interested in having this company be more open in its capacity to communicate and to explore what it means to be respectful and respected. Diversity is also one of our core values; we applaud diversity. I would love to see how we can grow in our capability to meet and embrace other colleagues who have very differing opinions to us. For me, that would be to embrace them with compassion, balance, grace and friendliness.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

I feel that businesses as organisations are incredibly powerful and have an incredible capacity to create wealth. I think because of this potential that business has to create wealth so well and so skilfully, then surely we can find ways to create wealth for the planet. Also, as our next step in business, we must look around us and notice that in fact the earth is not able to sustain itself based on our current behaviour.

I like the idea that business can become “a spokesperson” in very legitimate ways for compassionate action in the world. Yes, we can be profitable and yes we can create wealth, and as we do that we can make sure that we are helping the people in our companies, in our communities and societies, and all around the world. And, we can find ways to stop extracting and

exploiting the resources of our planet. I think this is a very poignant time for businesses and I am very hopeful that business leaders will take on this kind of leadership.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

Many of our senior people have come from traditional organisations and so our way of looking at people, planet and profits is new to them. For some it is still uncomfortable, it sounds good, but they don't yet believe that it will really work. I think our challenge is to really show that we can purposefully and mindfully walk in balance among these three components.

I sincerely believe that in order to do this there must be a spiritual source to it. Otherwise it just becomes another ideology or great philosophy. It must be rooted in your being and that's what I am seriously considering now. I wonder what it will take for people to experience this deep, deep belief and I wonder whether it is the role of business to help people find their spiritual source. If so, then how do you put this in the procedures manual?

Relationship with Major Stakeholders

To me, the essence of a successful company is the act of cultivating relationship. There really isn't any big secret to this if we would run our companies like we would a successful relationship. The word "cultivate" itself denotes the fact that it takes time and there must be all of the organic processes in place: you sow the seed, you water the seed, and then little by little the customer begins to grow in their respect and appreciation of your company. I know that every company says that they want to exceed their customers' expectations, for us here at Eziba it is vitally important that we do not pay just lip service to this. And I admit that this is challenging.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

I think one of the greatest obstacles to me being a spiritual-based leader is 'me.' It is my own fears and my own concerns of what other people will think of me that keeps me captive. Until I am able to cultivate the practice of peacefully moving through those moments of fear, I will continue to be my own greatest obstacle.

I believe that as I am attentive to the sense of compassion, balance, grace and the act of friendship, I am able to move through this obstacle of fear. Since the tragedy that occurred in the US on September 11, 2001, I have continued to do what I have always done and have continued to be who I am, but in more ways and with courage. To me, it is a call to action with courage that I am responding to right now.

Yesterday I was in New York City in a meeting with the style editor for House & Garden magazine. It was such a beautiful setting and I found myself feeling and speaking so clearly about my intentions as I spoke to her and her team. I spoke about spirituality and the alignment of business and spiritual values. I felt so much more courageous in this meeting than I ever had.

And I could see that to the degree that I was feeling courageous, they were also feeling this same courage. As I grow deeper in my understanding and commitment to spirituality as the vessel of my leadership style, I believe I will begin to see more and more of an open-hearted response to it. And, when I do meet the people who want to react or who do not want to hear about spirituality and leadership, I must simply allow that to be, embrace it, and not take it personally and get dejected by it.

I am grateful that I have the capacity to use words and that they flow quite easily when I am in the right place. So I am personally going to focus on bringing in more words in my business meetings that reflect these spiritual concepts.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

My spiritual theme of “a God-being tapestry of compassion, balance, grace, and friendliness” provides me with the inner guidance for what I do and how I do it.

I do not feel as if I am an expert on spiritual-based leadership; rather I feel that I am on a quest, a search. So, I come to this whole experience of being a spiritual-based leader in business from the perspective of a seeker, rather than a knower. It is a very humble process and journey for me, and I do not feel that I have the expertise to tell the world how to do it. It is much more of a personal navigation for me.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

If someone were to come to me and seek my guidance on how to live their spirituality in their work, I would first just delight in their question. From the moment of hearing their question I would tell them, “How courageous, how beautiful, how wonderful it is that you have come to me with this concern. Let us sit and have a cup of tea.” Then I would ask them to tell me more about themselves. I believe the guidance would come naturally out of creating the space for the person to begin to unravel their own truth. All I can really give them is the space in which to have this happen.

After this conversation then my main question would be, “Now, how can I support you?” I believe that all of this has to come from within each person. If these kinds of questions began to come from the people in our own organisation, I would create a forum where we could gather and begin to discuss such things.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an
interview with:

**A. K.
CHATTOPADHYAY**
India



Interview conducted 5 March 2002

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation: ACC Limited Refractories Division
Location: Nagpur, India
Industry: Refractory Manufacture and Installation
Position: Senior Vice President
Years in Position: 6
Gender: Male
Age: 50

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Tata Refractories, Ltd.
Current Location: Orissa, India
Current Industry: Refractory Manufacture and Installation
Current Position: Executive Director

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 20

University Degrees: Masters, Chemistry (Honours), Danrupa Ramakrishna Mission, India; Masters and Ph.D., Chemical Engineering and Technology, Calcutta University, India

How to refer to Dr. A. K. Chattopadhyay:

“Former Senior Vice President of ACC Limited Refractories Division in India”

“Executive Director of Tata Refractories, Ltd. in India”

CAREER

Career History

I grew up in a small village. From there my father took us to a town in the eastern part of India where I studied at a local school sponsored by the railway company. I was always number one in the class and stood first throughout my schooling days; I never stood second. Based on this my father obviously tried to put me in a good college.

In those days and even today, Danrupu Ramakrishna Mission was a good college. It is situated near Calcutta on 150 acres of land and is a complete residential college. This mission has a heritage all together different from other universities. It has its own dairy farm, swimming pool, and tailoring centre. Everything is there inside the campus, so once students are inside, they do not have to go outside. In this mission, the monks are the teachers.

I completed my studies and graduated from that college with chemistry honours. Then I studied chemical engineering and technology at the Calcutta University, Department of Applied Chemistry. I had a job for a short time, but it was not to my liking, so I decided to apply for a fellowship to get my doctorate. I was fortunate to get a fellowship and went back to Calcutta University. I researched how we could synthetically prepare raw materials that would someday be exhausted, and I got my Ph.D. with that research.

In my career, I have mainly worked with refractory related materials. Ceramic is a broader term and refractory is one particular subject of ceramics. Refractory is a material that is used to line vessels that undergo high temperature operations.

I worked for sometime in Bihar, which is a state in the eastern part of India. After four or five years there, I shifted to a private company in Balmiers that provided me with a better opportunity. I worked there for almost three and a half years.

Then I went to work for Associated Cement Companies (ACC). At that time ACC was looking for a business revival. They had a plant in Katni that was on the verge of closing down; there was a lot of unrest and a lot of strikes. They were trying to find a different business model and hired me as a part of the new business leadership they wanted. So in 1991 I was brought to the ACC Katni plant as the Deputy General Manager, with the full understanding that after a couple of months I would take over as General Manager.

Current Responsibilities

In those days I was head of operations. Today¹, I am heading up the whole refractory business as the Senior Vice President. We are focused just on the manufacture and installation of refractory lining material. I have two plants that report to me. Along with the plant managers, the managers of marketing, R&D, technology, and such all report to me. We have about 700 employees.

¹ Interviewer's note: At the time of this interview, Dr. Chattopadhyay was the Senior Vice President of ACC Refractories Ltd. Soon after, he joined Tata Refractories Ltd. as Executive Director.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

Spirituality is the manifestation of the perfection that is already there within you. Spirituality is when I look at myself, I look within and not outside, and respond from my inner feelings where we are all perfect beings. I believe that, yes, there is some super power who creates things in a systematic and organised manner and I can align my thoughts with this; this too is spirituality to me. And when I can feel that I have peace in what I have, rather than looking to what I don't have, this is spirituality.

To me, spirituality also means the synchronisation of my body, mind, brain and everything. Sometimes I do act in a different manner between my mind and my body, but I feel that spirituality calls for a synchronisation of all of these things. If I preach something, then I should also follow it. Whatever I do should go with what I think; everything should go in one direction.

I believe a super power is there that we cannot see, but he exists. Somebody is creating this entire universe in a proper manner. My spiritual view of life calls for me to: align myself with a super power; go within myself to find out the reason for things within myself, not looking to the external environment; have faith in others, even when I am cheated sometimes; have a caring nature, which to me is caring for everyone in society, starting with my wife, my children, my colleagues, and all others.

There is so much suffering because of competition among people to see who can have the better shirt, the better house, which I feel is unhealthy. This is the source of many of our problems arising in our society today. I try to stay focused on what I have, rather than what others have. This way of thinking about what I do have, rather than what I don't have, is what I call spirituality. I see harmony in nature; I try to find peace in everything.

Spiritual Theme

My spiritual theme is a combination of the four goals found in my spiritual view of life:

- To align oneself with a super power
- To find out the reasons within oneself
- To have faith in others
- To have a caring nature

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

For me there is a difference between spirituality and religion. I can follow one religion; you can follow another religion. The differences in following one religion or another have nothing to do with the spirituality that is common between them.

Of course I pray to God Almighty, but I don't do rituals and ceremonies like a lot of Hindus do. I do have a temple in my house where God is. I go there and pray for two or three minutes. I don't pray for something specific. I ask to think in a positive way, to think in a way that is good for others, things along those lines. I also ask for courage to face any type of adversity.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

I do 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. I feel that I have a definite role to play. A material example of this would be: when I have twenty shirts in my wardrobe, I should take out one and give it to someone who has only three or four. Because I am fortunate to have more things than others, I must do something for other people who do not have as much as I do. Yes, there is a certain amount of pleasure in this, to both me and to the person who I am giving to.

All of us are going for short-term pleasures and we are ending up with serious problems. Even those who have plenty of wealth are doing these very same things. For me, spirituality is when we do not think in terms of these short-term gains; instead we try to see how we should behave honestly, even if there is no short-term gain.

The other day I was watching a cricket match where the batter hit the ball and the fielder caught it in a very obscure way. So the umpire looked at the fielder and the fielder told him that it was a good catch. However, it was clear to those of us who were watching that the fielder dropped the catch on the ground and then picked it up. Yes, he received pleasure in that moment because he got the opponent out. But that is a short-term gain; he did not win in the long run. In the evening when he is alone, he will definitely think once, twice, three times that he did not do the right thing. Instead, he should have told the umpire that he didn't catch the ball; it hit the ground before he picked it up. Then he would have received a pleasure of a different kind, of a lasting kind.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

I once went to Bangalore with my wife, and her family told me a story about her brother. He had a skin disease when he was a child. They tried all kinds of doctors and medicines, but nothing helped. Somebody told them to take him to Puttaparthi to see Sathya Sai Baba. My in-laws followed this advice and spent time with Sai Baba. Amazingly when they were going home on the train, they noticed that the skin condition had already started to clear. Within fifteen days everything was cleared. He is a fully-grown man now and he has not had any more trouble since then.

I started thinking, "Sai Baba has something that I do not understand." So the last time we were in Bangalore, Sai Baba was staying in his ashram there and we went to see him. In the morning he came to give darshan (blessings of a holy person) and when he came only two feet away from me I suddenly felt a strength inside of me that I could conquer the whole world. It was electrifying. I told my wife that when he was passing by I just felt an inner strength and knew that whatever I needed to do in the future that I could do in a proper manner. So I feel that people like Sathya Sai Baba are in contact with this super power and if we can align with this power we can gain inner strength. When we do this then things go in the proper direction.

One thing I also do is to compose myself each evening. My composure dissipates during the day due to many activities, so I spend some time after dinner to compose myself from the whole day. I think about all of the things I have done that day, where I went wrong and how I can rectify that. Tomorrow I can now start again as a composed man. A lot of things will happen during the day that I cannot avoid, but again in the evening I will compose my whole day in ten minutes. By doing this I go to bed in peace and start the next morning as a very fresh man. I never learned this from anyone; I just began to do it myself. In those few minutes every evening everyone in my house knows not to disturb me.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

When I was in college, I studied in an environment that was very formalised and we had spiritual classes. I got inspired by the monks who had left everything to spend a life there at the college to help the society. There was a flood one time and I saw the monks work almost 14 or 15 hours a day – relentlessly working for the villages that had been washed away. They are highly educated people; they could have found good jobs, but still they chose to sacrifice a lot of things to live this simple life, trying to do good to others.

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. I still make mistakes, but if I do I will try to rectify them.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Supporting a customer when the work was done by someone else

One incident happened sometime back when a man who had previously worked for ACC supplied and installed some refractory material to one of our customers. He represented himself to his customer as 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 happens that the work that he did failed after two months.

The customer came to me and talked with me about what had happened. I went through all of the purchase orders, but could not find one for that specific job. Then he mentioned the name of the man who did the work. I told him that that man had not worked for us for over six months. The customer assured me that this man told him that he worked for ACC and that he was using ACC materials.

In this situation, we had no legal obligation. The work was not done by our people or with our materials. 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.

Yes, it did help us to maintain our reputation, which is important to us. If we ever have material that we have installed that is defective, we will replace it free of cost; that is our culture.

Second Story – Responding to an employee tragedy

One time an employee in our factory got caught in the conveyer belt and his hand was chopped off. This happened during the night and he was taken to the hospital. You can imagine that his family was in total distress. The newspaper came to write stories against me since I was head of the plant, saying that not enough safety measures were being applied.

Personally, I reacted in a totally different manner altogether. I stayed in the operation theatre the whole night that he was being operated on, in order to give moral courage to his family members. I am not a doctor and this was the first time I had ever been in an operation theatre, so you can imagine that with so much blood and all it was a terrific scene; I was not able to eat for two or three days after that.

There were some local union leaders who wanted to influence the head of the local police to arrest me. All of these things happened while I was sitting inside the hospital. I felt a strength inside of me that I could stand up to all of these people who wanted to abuse me, due to no fault of my own. I continued to feel this strength inside me because I knew that I was doing what was good for this man and for his family.

The proper safety measures were there, but unfortunately this fellow had not followed them. He tried to do something in a way that he should not have done, and that is how his hand got stuck in the conveyer belt. But I did not tell any of this to the press or to his family members. I called his family all together and I explained that I would take full responsibility to take care of this man and them. I explained that, "No, we cannot get back his hand, this is most unfortunate. However, we

can give the monetary compensation that needs to be given and we can give him a job where he can still work peacefully without his hand."

I called groups in our company together and explained what had happened and how we handled it. Later, after all of this was over, I reflected back on this strength that I felt and realised it came from my connection with this super power.

Third Story – Turning around a failing organisation

When I initially came in to head the operations of ACC Refractories in 1991, I saw right away that there was a big distance between the management and the workers. There was also not enough information being shared between them, so the workers felt totally disillusioned about what was going on. They had totally lost faith in management. To me, the workers are a part of the whole game and you cannot win the game without taking them into proper consideration.

So I started by working with the people. As a management team, we started working closely together with the factory workers and started sharing information with them. We shared what was happening and what was good or what was bad. Slowly the workers responded to this very nicely. I regained the faith of those people. After two years or so, they began to listen more to us than to their union leaders. So naturally the senior management people became their leaders and this was a big transformation.

The first thing I did was to introduce a monthly meeting, which we called a safety meeting. The idea was to address what had happened in the last month, what our market share was, how we performed, where we went wrong, where we went right, and how to learn from the things we did right. It used to be a one-hour meeting at the gate itself. When the workers came in the morning we were there and we would do some formalities and hold the meeting. We started by hoisting the safety flag. We talked about safety practises, including the accidents that took place in the plants and how they could have been avoided. Then we called a worker to talk about all different kinds of safety. Then we asked the engineers to talk about safety. Finally I would talk about the other things in the company. This became a fantastic thing. After a few months, people were eagerly coming to this meeting to listen.

Then we started a quality circle and brought people together to have interactions. We would visit one operation for the whole day and talk about things. Our people are good people; a few people have simply misguided them. So we tried to bring them into the right kind of attitude. As a management philosophy, we said that we are 80-85% responsible for difficulties with the business, and the workers are 15-20% responsible. That is, if we don't get a good price from the customer, that is management's fault. If we don't buy the raw material at a good price, that is management's fault. If inventory is lying in our yard, that is management's fault. When the material has been given to the worker, then it is their job to process it properly.

As a result of all of this, I also saw how we were doing things that were not getting us anywhere in our business, things that were losing money. So a lot of our business processes and strategies were changed. We looked at our product profile, we looked at our customer profile, and we looked to see if we could do the business in a different way. We phased out a lot of products that were not aiding the bottom line and it was a good transformation. We also got a lot of good support from the corporate office and that was what was needed.

We revived the business, and today I can tell you very proudly that we have grown from a 180 million rupee business (US\$3.8 million at the mid-2002 exchange rate) to 1,950 million rupee business (US\$41.5 million at the mid-2002 exchange rate) last year. The ten times growth

occurred just by using a proper strategy to run the business and giving value to the people. In 1991 we were almost a non-entity and today we are a force to be reckoned with in the country.

Our products are good, our services are good, and our quality is good. During this same period the refractory industry overall was in very bad shape. However, we still managed to grow and grow.

My spiritual philosophy behind all of this was that I was trying to do good for our employees. They were not aware of the things that they were doing that were actually harmful to them. So I wanted to do good and show them how to do good.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

Success in my personal career has been driven by my thinking that we should do things in a fair way: we should do good to the people in the organisation, to our customers and to society as a whole. It is my spiritual thinking that has led me to this. If I have a feeling of loving people, then I can provide a better service to the people. If I love, then I can serve better. This is success.

In order for an organisation to be successful, the leaders must care for people, they must have a proper business strategy, and they should continuously think in terms of not doing any harm to the environment or people.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

If you have a sound policy based on caring for people, not harming anyone or anything, and a sound business strategy, then the financial success will come automatically.

Every time something happens, whether a material fails or does not perform up to standard, people tend to look to the external environment for the cause. Marketing tries to put the blame on production, production tries to put the blame on R&D and it is a vicious cycle. Whereas if all of us were to look within ourselves we would more likely find the answer about what went wrong.

We used to emit a lot of dust from our chimneys at the plant. Then the pollution control board came to us and told us that this was very bad, and that if we didn't do something about it they would shut down our plant. We found that if we put up an electrostatic filter it would be a large expenditure. The immediate reaction by many people was that we could not spend that much money. But then we did more research and had the dust chemically analysed. We found that the dust could be collected and put back into the operation. So we re-looked at the costs in light of this and showed everyone that within one and a half years we could recover the initial costs.

You see the initial reaction that people had come from was their outward reaction to spending the money. But when we went inside and looked for solutions that would not cause harm, we came out with this idea to analyse the material and see if there was something we could do with it.

For me, happy people produce happy results. So productivity is a matter related to people and working toward the happiness of the people. This means that the worker comes, he has a clean environment and he has good equipment. This is based on the premise that cleanliness is Godliness. If the machines are working properly, then we can entrust that man to run the machine in a productive way. Even in my own office, I like to have my files well organised and I ask my assistants to do the same.

Developing an Organisational Culture

I have always believed in one thing: to find out the attitude and self-motivation of anyone whom I am hiring or working with. I look to see if they have the right attitude, if they have a positive frame of mind, and whether they are self-motivated or not. I do not believe that motivation can be prompted by money or outside things; it must come from inside. I ask them questions that help me to see their frame of mind. I ask them what their motivation is and why they want to do

whatever they are doing. By asking questions like this I can usually tell within fifteen minutes what this person is like.

I believe that when a worker comes out of his house dressed in his uniform and carrying his tiffin (food) box, he has a mindset that he wants to work that day. How can he be thinking anything other than this? I used to tell my managers this in response to their complaints that the people did not want to work. I believe we are the ones that have created an environment that has given him the feeling that he does not want to work. Either he does not like this place or the equipment is not working right.

When a man says his prayers and puts on a full uniform and leaves his house at 7:00 in the morning, he has come to work. Let us create a good environment for him to work; that is what I call spirituality. When we create an environment for the people where they want to work, then they will automatically change. I cannot tell them to change; I can only create the environment in which they feel that they want to change.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

Under normal circumstances people are trying to accumulate more and more, but to me spirituality is about sharing with others. If this way of thinking could come in all of us, then society would be a very different society. There would also not be so much unhealthy competition.

If we can build a societal culture from this basis of spirituality, then obviously there would be a society that is almost classless, where all people have what they need. Vivekananda² used to say that every human being is perfect within himself. As I said earlier, spirituality is the manifestation of the perfection that is already there within you. If we can manifest this perfection, we will create good things for the society. That itself will bring wealth to our society.

When leaders start working from the mindset that, "Yes I love society, I care for 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.

² A highly respected and renowned Indian spiritual teacher

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Major Stakeholders

Any organisation that takes care of its stakeholders – which to me means everyone, including employees, customers, and suppliers – is bound to be successful. Obviously there has to be a profitable business strategy, but when that strategy is also founded on sound thinking of positive-ness, you will not want to harm anyone or anything.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

I feel that I as an individual have limitations in a corporate environment. I am in the process of leaving this organisation³ because I feel that I must work more freely. I feel that this can bring wealth to others and to me. I may not be able to fully do this at this time; I may have to work again in a corporation, but I will definitely find an organisation where I have the ability to stretch and do more. I am also working within myself to be in a better framework to make this change.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

I very strongly believe that spirituality is to respond from your inner feelings. When we try to find out reasons from within, then we do not hurt anyone or anything. I believe that when we come from our inner feelings, where we as individuals are perfect beings, then we think in a more positive, more caring, more loving way.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

People who want to be spiritual-based leaders sometimes face conflict when they try to listen to their inner self. They are sometimes afraid to follow their conscience because they do not want to lose money. When I gave the approval to have our people install new material for a job that we had not originally done, we lost a lot of money on the job and I incurred a lot of questions by auditors and other managers. But I clearly told them, “I am willing to take this loss because I know there is a much bigger gain.” This is the dilemma that we must face sometimes, when we listen to our inner mind. We will face opposition and difficulties. However, the more that aspiring spiritual-based leaders do this, the more they will be successful. As a leader I must also help them to achieve these successes. As there are successes, then they will grow in their courage to continue in this way.

³ Interviewer's note: At the time of this interview, Dr. Chattopadhyay was the Senior Vice President of ACC Refractories Ltd. Soon after, he joined Tata Refractories Ltd. as Executive Director.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an
interview with:

**STEPHEN R.
COVEY**
USA



Interview conducted 27 June 2006

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation: FranklinCovey Co.
Location: Utah, USA
Industry: Global professional services
Position: Co-founder and Vice Chairman
Years in Position: 9
Gender: Male
Age: 73

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Same
Current Location:
Current Industry:
Current Position:

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 45

Previous Positions/Organisations: Professor, Organisational Behavior and Business Management, Brigham Young University, USA

University Degrees: MBA from Harvard University, USA; Ph.D. from Brigham Young University, USA and seven honorary doctorate degrees

How to refer to Stephen Covey:

"Vice Chairman of FranklinCovey, a global professional services firm based in the USA"

CAREER

Career History

Early in my career I was professor of Organisational Behaviour and Business Management at Brigham Young University⁴ in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, where I also served as director of university relations and assistant to the president. At present I am Vice Chairman of the global services company, FranklinCovey which focuses on leadership, executive effectiveness, empowerment, organisational change, time management, work/life balance, communication and sales performance⁵.

The company was consolidated in 1997 as a merger of Franklin Quest and the Covey Leadership Centre. Our clients include 90% of the Fortune 100, more than 75% of the Fortune 500, as well as thousands of small and medium sized businesses, governmental bodies and educational institutions. We have global operations in 129 countries, run more than 140 retail stores, and have more than 2,000 associates worldwide who provide professional services, products and materials in 38 languages. We train several hundred thousand people each year in effectiveness, leadership and productivity programmes. We also sell more than 1.5 million books a year and our FranklinCovey Planning System is used by more than 15 million people world-wide. Sales in 2005 were roughly \$300 million.

Current Responsibilities

The merger between the Franklin Quest, which had focused primarily on time management, and the Covey Leadership Centre, where we had focused more on the personal, inter-personal, and the leadership aspects of an organisation, brought together two different sets of curricula.

I provide strategic direction to the board and to the company itself – and I attempt to get us to practice what we preach. But my main interest is in writing and teaching. I find that the administrative work is like the pounding surf; it beats you up and casts you in all directions. So I

⁴ BYU, although open to the public at large, is heavily steeped in the religious beliefs of the “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” which is unofficially but generally referred to as the Mormon Church.

⁵ Editor's notes:

Stephen Covey is an internationally respected leadership authority, family expert, and author who has dedicated his life to teaching principle-centred living and leadership to build both healthy and successful families and organisations. Dr. Covey is also the author of several highly acclaimed books, including the international bestseller, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, which has been called the #1 Most Influential Business Book of the Twentieth Century and one of the top-ten most influential management books ever. It has sold more than 15 million copies in 38 languages throughout the world. Other bestsellers include *First Things First*, *Principle-Centred leadership*, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*, and, most recently, *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*, published in 2004. He is currently (summer 2006) co-authoring six books.

Stephen Covey has received many awards dealing with contributions to peace in the world, entrepreneurial leadership and service to humanity. He says that the most meaningful award he has received is the 2003 Fatherhood Award from the National Fatherhood Initiative – as a father of nine and grandfather of forty-three. Dr. Covey has been recognised as one of *Time* magazine's 25 Most Influential Americans.

pretty much have empowered other people to do all of the business activities, and I just focus mostly on trying to write meaningful books. I am working on six of them right now. They are all co-authored, and I think they will all have wide general appeal because they deal with universal pain. The leitmotif underlying all of them is the role of principles as the timeless and universal basis for lasting effectiveness at the individual and the collective level.

Such principles are fundamental to my thinking and leading, and to the way we organise our company and our work. It is my experience that to know something and not to do it is really not to know it. To be able to leave a legacy that is sustainable over time requires institutionalisation of principles.

I also focus on teaching. I try to get meaningful teaching opportunities so I can really teach rather than just speak – I like to interact, walk around, hear my student's stories and the issues they deal with. My students have been a most highly heterogeneous group, including not only college students, but also business professionals, family therapists, and governmental leaders.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

To me spirituality is three things: First of all, you are dealing with the whole person. That includes the person's spirit or soul. You cannot separate their body or their mind or their heart from their spirit, because they are all so inter-related, and there is a synergistic relationship between all these four dimensions of our nature. Any attempt to compartmentalise will reduce that synergistic effect and it will have negative repercussions on your body, your mind, your heart, your emotions, your thinking and so forth.

Another dimension would be that you are dealing with those principles that are universal and timeless.

Thirdly, spirituality deals with peace of conscience. Obeying or following your conscience, means that you are true to that which you have internalised as being right and this gives you tremendous tranquillity and courage.

When I am in India I always use the "Namaste" greeting, saluting the God within you. I really do believe that we are all children of God, and I often acknowledge that God is the source of the principles and the emperor of all the credit and glory. I say to those who are not of this belief, "That's fine, I respect you as well, I just want you to know that personally I believe that the source of all the principles that give your life its integrity, and its power and it's meaning, all of them link up to the Divine."

Spiritual Theme

One of my mottoes serves as a powerful spiritual theme for me: "Live life in crescendo." In other words, the most important work you'll ever do is still ahead of you.

Another such spiritual theme for me would be: "Educate and obey your conscience." Educating as I speak of it here involves getting into the sacred literature of all the great traditions that have had enduring value and then consciously living true to what you have learned. The more you live true to it, the stronger your conscience becomes. A constant effort is required to stay on track with such stewardship.

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

I make a real conscientious effort in my leadership, writing, and speaking not to refer to any one particular religion, but only to deal with that which is universal. Although I am an active member of the Mormon Church I don't get any Mormon theology snuck into it in some secret way. I have no hidden agenda. I am often asked the question, "How much has your Mormonism influenced your view", and I say, "It has influenced me tremendously, but all that we are dealing with here are principles that are universal and timeless." And then I would say, "If you disagree with me, just tell me which principles you believe in – and do you live them?"

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

I think that our work was born with us, and that it is a sacred stewardship to find and fulfill our work, our duties.

I know through my own direct work with different organisations that in many cases I have inspired and influenced people to change the cultures they live in. People without any formal authority at all and who only have moral authority, which means that they are spiritually minded and live by principles, have been inspired and enabled to change their cultures.

My basic approach to helping people to develop awareness as to spiritual principles is to get them to think in terms of their mission and vision and the values that they want to put into their life, and then how to set up an information and accountability system to get them institutionalised. This applies to both individuals and to organisations.

Over the years I have discovered that when you take a family approach, it instantly helps people to develop that awareness. Everyone loves a family and even if they have had a bad family in their upbringing, they still care about the family as an institution, and, in particular, most care about their own family.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

The practice of reading scriptures every day helps me to become more integrated in my thinking, to be more inclusive and expansive.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

I strive to be a model of the principles and practices we teach in the FranklinCovey organisation. The mission statement of FranklinCovey is: "We enable greatness in people and organisations everywhere."

Our vision is to literally influence billions of people in the way they live and work and achieve their own worthy purposes. That means that we have to have projects that will have great media appeal so that the model can be communicated throughout the entire world.

Our values statement embodies that everything is based on principles which are timeless and universal and also self-evident. In the long run, our success comes only with the success of our clients.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Practicing universal principles

I just finished going through four countries in Africa, three countries in the Middle East, India, and Sri Lanka, with the effort to bring together principles that are universal and timeless. I taught from Hinduism, I taught from Islam, I taught from Christianity. I just did a satellite interview to China explaining what this material can do for a Confucian⁶ nation. I teach the exact same principles no matter where I am and show that there is a universal character to these principles. They are metaphysical, they transcend the outside physical world, and they guide all behaviour, all thinking, and many of them are built into assumptions that people make about nature and life.

If controversies arise or if people start feeling that I am being too religious, I say, “Let’s just stick with those principles that we all agree on. Let’s see if we can follow the principles of fairness, kindness, respect, the development and use of peoples’ talents, having meaningful work, and living with integrity. Let’s see if we can agree upon these, let’s go to our hearts and our souls and live with integrity.” That’s what I am teaching.

Certainly principles have a moral and spiritual foundation, but no religion has a patent on them. They are not unique to any religion. They are universal and timeless. I have seen in organisations throughout the world that when there is a spirit of openness and synergy, all the values an individual organisation works with are essentially identical to those of other organisations. Yes, there are different practices, and the labels – the words used to define and describe the particular values may be different – but what is being said is essentially the same. It all deals with meaning and integrity.

The easiest way to see this is to look at the mission statements that have been produced. Although the organisations, including the leadership that developed the statements, may not at a given moment be living up to what these statements say, the statements themselves are basically saying the same things.

So if people have certain cultural definitions of what these universal principles are, and of what their values are, I say to them, “I’ll just go with yours.” The key is to live the values and to be true to the principles that underlie them, to have total integrity – to be integrated around principles – not around people or organisations. Integrity is the highest form of loyalty – and over time it produces loyalty. It’s far better to be trusted than to be liked.

To be a spiritual-based leader is to have these universal principles integrated in your inner life and to be true to them in your actions, even when it’s dark – when you have power over people and can do things and not be found out. When you have that integrity, then you have peace of conscience.

Second Story – Peace of conscience

⁶ Confucius (551-479 BCE) was a leading thinker, political figure, educator, and founder of the *Ru* School of Chinese thought. His philosophical, ethical and religious ideas provide the basis of a universal moral system that has survived even Chairman Mao’s Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and to this day plays a fundamental, though often implicit, role in the mind-set of the Chinese people.

Peace of conscience is much greater than peace of mind. Peace of mind is wonderful, too, but that's more a function of events, like you've paid your bills, you made the plane on time, and so forth. Conscience means that you are truly true to that which you have internalised as being right and that gives you tremendous courage. Because then you can be strong with a loving spirit. You don't have the ability to be courageous without deep respect and compassion for others. Neither do you experience the opposite – feeling compassionate and kind, and then capitulate on being courageous. Following your conscience is a long term approach to win-win; even though all your decisions may not be popular, you don't ever violate the relationship of win-win towards people.

I think peace of conscience also recognises such a thing as evil. You would go for “no deal” with evil; you would have no real partnership with it. On the other hand, I find that most people see evil in others because they have not truly listened to them. I recently had the opportunity to have a good visit with Nelson Mandela. He was talking about how he saw the goodness in his guards when he was in the Robben Island Prison for six years. He had glimpses of this goodness, and he kept that awareness with him all the time he was in prison. It added to his moral authority which enabled him eventually to leverage towards formal authority as the first president of the new South Africa.

Third Story – Partnerships and principles that prevent crime and build schools

I am spending time now working with leadership problems in crime prevention. One of the books I am working on now is called *Partnering to Prevent Crime and Terror*. Basically it's about a new paradigm of not just catching and punishing criminals, which is a traditional approach to policing, but on how to create a partnership with the community, including the youth and in particular the marginalised youth, and with the parents, and with the schools, so as to be able to create the mores and norms *inside* the culture that enable and encourage acting to serve a shared purpose, in this case to prevent crime.

We have films on my work with crime-prevention. Recently I was with the sheriff of greater Los Angeles County. I asked him, “What is your goal?” and he said, “For Los Angeles to be the best and the safest large city in the world”. I said, “It's way too small of a goal, you have to think in terms of a mega-goal, an extraordinary goal, one that allows your city to be a model for other large cities throughout the entire world, and to send ambassadors out to mentor these cities, so that they can better deal with their crime issues.” Such goals require the creation of the kind of partnerships that I am promoting in my leadership activities. Such partnering definitely is a spiritual approach; it integrates the temporal and the spiritual based on a whole different approach to preventing crime. And crime is going down. Where this approach has been used, the rate of crime is falling and is now reduced between two thirds and up to 90 pct.

The same basic ideas of partnering based on principles are being successfully applied in schools. In the schools I have worked with to introduce principle-based character into the curriculum, the results are measurable and very dramatic. The school principal I have worked with and written about in my recent book, *The 8th Habit*, Mrs. Muriel Thomas Summers, is now totally dedicated to this paradigm of principles and partnership. She is not leading a typical American school, if one exists. It has students from 56 different nationalities, and English is not even the primary language for a lot of these kids. They are mainly from five to 10 years old. Mrs. Summers' vision was to introduce principle-based character education into the curriculum, and to do this by involving her administrators, the faculty and the families in preparing and implementing the new educational processes. Their mission – the school's mission, the students' mission, the parents' mission is to produce the future leaders of the world, one child at a time.

It's working. There is a clear connection between learning and principles, between academic performance and character. In a matter of a year and a half the impact of introducing principle-centred character training was significant, an increase of over 40% in the percentage of students performing at or above grade level in national academic standards. Since then the school, A.B. Combs, has received a number of prestigious awards at the national and state level.

Other schools are duplicating this school's situation. I just ran into a school in Johannesburg, South Africa, where they have done the same thing for a secondary school. The impact on those kids' lives and the impact those kids have on their parents is amazing. A lot of them don't come out of strong homes, so they become transition-figures for their own homes. They go upstream against cultural forces that are pushing against them. They are getting these surrogate parents and this new culture that is building on their spiritual DNA and going right through the cultural DNA of their upbringing.

Fourth Story – Spiritual intention in leadership

I find that spiritual intention drives perception, which drives behaviour, which then drives results. If you actually get a person to think in terms of their legacy, what they are trying to really do in the long run to bless people's lives, it gets them immediately into a spiritual frame of mind. I use this approach all the time in my leadership – and in training people to think in terms of supra-ordinate goals.

Let me give you an example. I was working with a large college in Ontario, Canada. They really had a terrible culture; it was characterised by turfism and fighting and interdepartmental resistances, with everyone looking out for themselves, protecting their own situation, silo thinking, and all that kind of stuff. I worked with them over a period of a year to develop a mission statement that would be supra-ordinate. By this I mean larger than one's self, larger than one's own institution. It took them about two years before there was broad agreement, and eventually what happened was that they developed a mission statement to become the yardstick educational institution for all of the state of Ontario – the institution others could measure themselves against. When they really bought into that intention to leave a legacy, the littleness of their souls completely submerged, and the magnanimity of soul exploded inside them.

I have these eye-opening experiences almost on a daily basis, both in my own leadership work at FranklinCovey and in my work helping leaders of other organisations.

Fifth Story – Practicing empathetic listening

I had an interesting experience recently in India. I had just read the book, *The Argumentative Indian*. Essentially it's a very well written cultural history of India and how the argumentative tendency is part of their cultural DNA. When I got into that, I could see how under developed their country was with respect to teamwork and how over developed their democracy was. They have so many parties and so much fighting and contention. I spoke to an audience of a thousand people about the spiritual principle of *seeking first to understand before seeking to be understood*. I then opened things up to the audience and said, "Let us see if we right now can listen to each other and re-make the other person's point before we make our own." They were unable to do it. So I said, "Let me see if you could ask a question on what we have covered to this point without making an oratorical statement." They were unable to do it. So I had one half of the audience just observe to see if the other half could practice this principle. They could not do it. And they could see that they could not do it.

Then I said, “Look at what has happened to your infrastructure here in India, look at the bureaucracy, the extent of rules and regulations that have taken the place of human creativity – which is really interesting when you consider that you have more knowledge workers in this country than any other country in the world.” I said, “Just look at this! You are capable of transcending your cultural DNA, because deeper than that is your spiritual DNA, it is deep in your natures, you really are capable of doing it.” They were so intrigued with this approach, and I became intrigued with their awareness. Awareness, the space between stimulus and response, is a huge thing to me. They were aware of their cultural DNA. Rather than looking at life *through* it, they now chose to look *at* it. They could then see that true leaders don’t work through systems rather that they work on the systems, and they do this through a principle-centred approach that rests on universal spiritual principles. This was a fascinating learning experience for all of us.

The more I get to know the Indian culture, the more I use this approach, and my audiences and the leaders I speak to know that it is authentic. That it is real. They know I am not some American over there trying to Americanise them. They know that I respect the development over more than 5,000 years of their magnificent spiritual and cultural tradition. I ask them to look at what has happened to this cultural DNA, and I ask them if they can practice a couple of principles. They become amazed and then they become very humble and open to learn empathetic listening – and how to re-make the other person’s point before making your own point, which is a spiritual principle.

Sixth Story – Designing win-win solutions

I am working now with a federal judge in producing another book to be called *Blessed are the Peacemakers*. It’s for attorneys, for those who hire attorneys, for those who train attorneys, and for those who don’t want to hire attorneys. Now this judge is getting so good at designing win-win solutions that he hardly ever goes to court. He gets the plaintiffs and defendants to settle in chambers, not through compromise but through synergy. This approach simply changes the relationship between the parties. Now that he is getting known for this competence he is being used by other judges to train them. And his trial docket (the list of cases to be tried) is several times larger than the dockets of his colleagues because he knows how to do this design work; his competency and his fine character make him trustworthy, and this in turn helps him to establish the trust that is a precondition for win-win settlements. A book I am working on about this for children in elementary school is going to be called *And the Little Child Shall Lead Them*.

Speaking of win-win arrangements in legal matters reminds me of a powerful experience I had some years ago. I worked with a land developer, who was in big trouble. His bank wanted to foreclose as he was not living up to the terms of the mortgage. At the same time as he desperately sought to avoid the foreclosure, he was seeking additional funding to finish and market the land so he could repay the bank – but neither the bank nor other financial institutions would provide such additional funding before he made the overdue payments. All the while, there was lots of legal fighting going on. The legal costs grew and grew while the property deteriorated and was becoming an eyesore for the people who already lived there and for the city. I worked with the developer and he agreed to establish a meeting with the bank officials. The atmosphere was very unpleasant, there was a palpable tension and lack of trust, and the bank officials were extremely reluctant – in fact their attorney had committed them to say absolutely nothing. He feared that any statements they might make could compromise the bank’s position.

I spoke to the group for a long time about principles-centred leadership. Then I went to the blackboard and did the best I could to convey to them our understanding of the bank’s concerns. At first the bank officials and their attorney were quiet, but gradually as we communicated our win-win intentions, based on the principle of seeking first to understand their position before we would

try to have them understand our position, they began to open up. Once they began to feel understood, the whole atmosphere changed. There was excitement, optimism that a peaceful settlement could be arrived at.

After about three hours, although they were still convinced of the correctness of their standpoint, they felt understood. With this, their defensiveness melted away and they were open to listen to the developer's concerns. We wrote these concerns on the other side of the blackboard. All of this led to a deeper understanding around the table as to how poor the communication had been earlier, and as to how many misunderstandings and suspicions had resulted. So now there was an awareness both of chronic pain and the progress being made towards synergy. The atmosphere became positive and creative. At this point the developer made his first recommendations, and all present could see that it was an attempt at finding a win-win solution. Further discussion led to the recommendation being reworked so that at the end of the meeting the developer and the bank's representatives could leave the meeting with a plan that could be jointly presented to both the city and the Home Owners Association. In spite of a number of continuing difficulties, the legal fighting ended and the project was successfully completed.

Developing win-win performance agreements is a central activity of a leader. With processes that create and support such agreements, problems with external stakeholders be transformed into manageable, interactive, interdependent realities where synergies can develop. And also internally such performance agreements can lead to synergistic processes that work – employees can manage themselves within such an agreement's framework, something that is now of vital importance in this knowledge-worker age.

Seventh Story – Institutionalising win-win agreements

One time in the USA I was working with a man whose insurance company was suffering under internal competition. I had attended their annual celebration where about 20 to 30 people received big awards. I asked, "Did you hire the other people as losers?" He said, "Oh, no, they will have their chance next year." I said, "Nevertheless you have got about 800 losers out there and only 30 winners. Everyone can be a winner; you have just got to change your mind-set from scarcity to abundance." He had a fine character and said, "I would like that, but how do we do it?" He didn't know how, it was not a character issue, it was a competence issue.

I said, "Turfism in your company is a result of the way you have designed your reward system; it nurtures cutthroat internal competition." He asked, "What can one do?" I said, "Set up win-win agreements. These are agreements where those you want to inspire participate in designing the agreement – the reward system – where if some achieve their goals, all the rest benefit, this is a win-win system where everyone can win. Get off this internal competition." He had an abundance mentality and immediately responded to the need. Now that he was aware of the challenge, he had to develop the competence for designing and institutionalising participative win-win agreements. He became so inspired that he and his employees designed the new system – and within one year 80 percent of his organisation was producing per person what 3 percent, 30 people, had produced the year before. The pie got so large. Unfortunately, a lot of people operate from the paradigm of scarcity, where the pie is only so large.

Eighth Story – Leading with character and leaving a legacy

The other day I was in Kenya. In my recent book on *The 8th Habit*, I told the story of a man from Uganda named Stone, who was a professional soccer-player. He was well on his way to a career as a professional in Europe, where the big money is, the dream of all the youth there. During a game, someone hit him, on purpose, in a way that severely damaged his knee and ended his

career dreams. Instead of becoming bitter or vindictive or losing himself in self-pity, he has used himself to empower underprivileged young Ugandan boys who would otherwise be lost in life, without marketable skills and with no role-models to follow.

Stone came over from Uganda to Kenya for my presentation. It was a very interesting venue. There was a big building with five different balconies, like a theatre in the round, and he was in the fifth one. In my presentation I tried to get people to see themselves as trim-tabbers, (a trim-tab on a boat is the small rudder that turns the big rudder that turns the entire ship), so they can be change agents no matter what their formal or moral authority is, and take the responsibility to leave a legacy. So during my presentation I showed the film on Stone which is included in the companion DVD to my book, and the audience became totally caught up in that film. They have the kind of poverty and the kind of problems that Stone had. The earlier regimes had literally devastated the institutions of the whole country, and children were often growing up without parents because of the AIDS-epidemics. There were so many orphans, and their living conditions and dreams were not very positive, to put it mildly. As a result, many in the audience were able to identify with Stone.

At the end of the film I said, "Stone, come on down here," and they were blown away. He came down, and then I interviewed him in front of the whole audience about what he has been doing to leave a legacy and how he has influenced tens of thousands of young men. One feminist woke up and said "Why don't you work with the young women?" and Stone just gave a sharp answer: "They don't have the problems that men have." He immediately made sense to her.

This guy is like a Mother Teresa in Uganda, and he is totally dedicated to helping these young men, not just with soccer, but as a life-coach so they can be responsible parents. And now they are coming back to him, showing him their families and the contributions they are making. He is immersed in his spiritual endeavour – serving the people and their communities. What a handsome guy, what a wonderful guy, what character and competence and quality.

Even there, on a stage and not on a soccer field, he was very, very pithy and very to the point in his communication. He said, "I am trying to get these kids to realise that they may lose a match, but they don't need to lose in life." He told the audience how he demonstrates for the young men in Uganda how they can follow their conscience and govern their lives – how they can start by learning to become good soccer players, then how important it is for them to become economically self-reliant, then responsible fathers and citizens. Stone explained how he is helping them transform themselves into trim-tabbers, into young men who have the will and discipline and character necessary to transform their society and to win in life.

Ninth Story – Creating a long-term vision

I worked with two heads of state; one was Fox, President of Mexico. I worked with him when he was governor, and when he became president he asked me to come and spend two full days with him and with all of his people, all of his advisors, and with his entire cabinet, only a couple of days before his inauguration. They had had 72 years of one party in control, and corruption was just the name of the game, so integrated in everything. I remember the first morning he said, "What do you think is the best approach to start with?" I said, "Start with the vision for the year 2025 before you even begin to look at your mission statement for the next six years." That got him so excited that literally we spent at least one of those two days working on a mission statement for the year 2025 for Mexico, and then inside that context, which obviously is a spiritual context, they began to work on the mission statement. They all went to different locations around Mexico to put their arm to the square and declare their assets now so that after six years they would be able to declare them again to show that they did not benefit from governmental service.

I remember once when I was working with the President of Colombia and his cabinet. I asked the president, "What's your goal?" and he said, "To make the country safe." I replied, "That's too small a goal, you've got to institutionalise yourself, and you can do so because you are popular." I said, "What you've got to do is to institutionalise your principles so that the mores and norms of the culture can last and take your place when you step down. Even though you are popular, it's not your charismatic quality that you want to institutionalise, it's the culture." And he did that. As soon as you talk this way to people, immediately it taps into their spiritual nature. They even gave him another four years in office and changed the constitution to enable this.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

Spiritual-based leaders respect others and are guided by the fundamental ethic: service to others comes before serving one's self. From an existential perspective, the *raison d'être* of organisations is to serve human needs. Really, there is no other reason for their existence. Individuals and organisations grow when they give themselves to others. Relationships improve when there is a focus on serving the other, be it at the level of the individual, the family, the organisation, the community, the society, or all of humanity. The phrase so eloquently developed by Greenleaf sums this up: servant leadership.⁷

In short: The purpose of business organisations is to serve human needs. Period!

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

There are two kinds of success. Primary success has to do with strength of character and contribution to others. Secondary success has to do with formal authority and with being rich, famous, popular, and positioned. So moral authority, which is the only real basis on which formal authority can ever work over time and be sustainable, is primary success.

Such moral authority is gained via serving and contributing. It's a paradox that power emerges from humility, while if you borrow strength from formal position you lose power and moral authority; the quality of relationships deteriorates since authentic openness and trust cannot develop if formal authority is not co-existent with moral authority.

Those with high moral authority, people who have character, organisational competence, initiative, positive energy, and respect, have been given formal authority as a result of their living their principles and serving others. The leader's strength of character leads those he or she serves, both within and external to the organisation, to create emotional identification with the leader, as well as with the principles and values the leader embraces. Thus, when such a leader uses formal authority, people follow out of commitment, not out of fear.

What I am saying may sound academic. But I truly know this from my personal experience, from my work with business leaders throughout the world. Time and again I have seen that if there isn't moral authority, what I have called primary success, formal authority cannot be sustained.

As an example, just a year ago I was in Nuremberg, Germany, and saw where Hitler had held his youth-conferences. He would have a million Hitler-youth there. He was mesmerising, visionary and disciplined, passionate, but he had no spiritual principles, he was just driven by ego and by evil forces, so he and his regime were not sustainable over time. But the legacy that has been left in Germany is the loss of spiritual faith as well as the loss of faith in the kinds of institutions that they had believed in before World War II. It has been disturbing to see the absence of faith in Germany today, so many years after the end of the war. So when I work with leaders there, I have them stand back and observe what happened to their cultural DNA, how that developed through

⁷ Robert Greenleaf (1904-1990) was former Director of Management Research at the American telecommunications company AT&T., who developed the concept of servant-leadership. See for example his book: *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, Paulist Press, New York, 1977.

the power of formal authority based on fear rather than on moral authority – and how that is changing now.

Another example, though one I have not personally witnessed, is provided by Mahatma Gandhi. He changed the world, brought England to its knees, and liberated 370 million Indians, without having any political or administrative position at all. The whole world is different because of him. India, with over a billion people today, is an independent democracy because of him. Yet he was never elected to any position and never had any formal authority. His gradual development of humility, integrity, courage, discipline and vision, were all governed by his conscience, by his inner awareness. He demonstrated that leadership can be an enabling art that empowers individuals, organisations and societies to serve others, which is the fundamental reason that we as individuals and collectivities of individuals exist.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

Organisations tend to think more in terms of secondary success, in terms of finances, price-earnings ratios, shareholder value and things like that. It is a fine thing to have both primary and secondary success, because if you don't have an economic engine you just can't keep your growth going. But organisations are not sustainable without primary success – without contributing to others, without moral authority. And this certainly applies in particular to their leaders.

Good organisations have integrity and are known for it with their suppliers, with their customers and with their own people. They consciously attempt to live the principles they preach. Almost all organisations have beautiful mission statements, but most of them are PR-statements. They have not been integrated into the organisation. Such organisations rationalise unethical behaviour in the name of, “the end justifies the means”, where really “end” and “means” are inseparable, the ends pre-exist in the means.

Developing an Organisational Culture

Empowerment leads to the unleashing of human potential. Unleashing of human potential leads to cultural moral authority. And cultural moral authority is the key to the sustainability of the organisation. So empowerment is a precondition for cultural moral authority. But empowerment requires far more than visions and missions – it requires the establishment of structures, or systems, of policies and processes that enable the organisation's members to translate the more strategic goals into their daily practice.

In my book on *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, I called the 7th habit “sharpening the saw”, by which I meant that we must continually renew ourselves physically, socially, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. It's the habit that increases our ability to live the other habits of effectiveness. In an organisational context, sharpening the saw means that the top-people have to be out in the field, and they have to get to know the people they affect and know their families and their situations. This is not a waste of time, it is renewal; if you don't feel the pulse of people, you can't serve them and you can't feel the pulse of God. You can only serve God as you serve other people, and you don't feel the pulse of people unless you also feel the pulse of God, because you know that they are divine brothers and sisters to you.

The problem is, when you are in a huge, growing organisation, how do you do it? It's so abstract; you are so insulated and isolated from what is in fact going on. That is why Jack Welch from General Electric said, “I never really got it until I started having workout-meetings and I began to see the potentials of these people.” Those workout-meetings at GE got very authentic and real.

He describes the movement from the micro-managing from the hierarchy, and making these distant calls that had tremendous impact on peoples' lives – to where he began to realise that the legacy that they wanted to leave for the core competences in GE was the development of distributed leadership everywhere. Therefore he had to be out in the field; he had to listen to the people, talk to them, rather than sit around, talking to his CFO (Chief Financial Officer). He discovered that a primary focus of his leadership was to embed leadership development in GE's genes. Leaders at GE would have to embrace change, become nimble and adaptable, no matter where they were in the company hierarchy. And they would have to develop their organisations so they would not be personality dependent, but system and culture dependent.

In my country the HR (Human Resource) person has kind of been driven out of the front room and replaced with the CFO and the auditors because of the fear of not complying. The new laws have really contributed to a mind-set of compliance.⁸ But complying is not a spiritual principle. Compliance has to come from the heart. There is such a fear of being challenged legally that in many organisations it takes the place of spirituality, and formal authority replaces moral authority. I also think this is one of the reasons why most celebrities have secondary greatness rather than primary greatness – they are constantly being nurtured by the popular culture. But I think to get people to be independent and to then choose to be *interdependent* based on principles is the real challenge to those leaders today who realise that moral authority underlies formal authority, and that the purpose of the organisation is to serve.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

We have to get research going on the dramatic and measurable impact of living by ethical principles in the different realms of life such as business and work, schools, health-care, and churches. Interestingly church-leaders are often intrigued with this approach as most of them live in compartments, and they want to learn how to institutionalise the principles for their churches.

I just finished training all of the Catholic bishops in North America. I was the only outside resource that they called upon that used the scriptures. I basically used the model of John 10 where the Saviour talked about the shepherd, the hired shepherder, and the sheep as three models of leadership. They were so intrigued by this. They admitted that they used mostly fidelity and orthodoxy as the two criteria when selecting a priest to become a bishop. I suggested that they must really include the leadership dimension as well. They should think about matters such as whether the priest they are evaluating has a spiritual vision for leaving a legacy in institutionalising and making people independent of him. They really liked that approach.

I also do a lot of work with Native American Indians. The problem is that they are getting too much into gambling and drinking. Part of that is the heritage of Americans putting them on reservations, where they lived isolated from the rest of the nation, and with very poor opportunities for living either their traditional life-styles, or living up to the “American dream”. This has created the victimise mentality they suffer from today. I think the worst thing that can happen to a people is to feel like they are a product of what has happened to them, because if they look at themselves as victims, they become victims. I have found that the best thing to start with, that has the greatest immediate spiritual impact on a person, is to have them consciously work with their awareness, the space between stimulus and response. If they relate to that honestly it turns them on to no end and enables them to realise – “Wait a minute, I have the freedom, I am not my thoughts, because I can think about my thoughts, I am not my moods, there is a space there where I have the freedom to choose, and if I will follow principles, that space gets larger and larger and larger

⁸ Stephen Covey is referring here to the Sarbanes-Oxley bill in the USA, which holds leaders criminally responsible if their company's accounting is faulty.

and in that way I can become a transition figure in my family and in my business or whatever organisation I belong to.”

As to the responsibility of business as an institution – business has a definite spiritual role as regards its responsibility for the whole because its influence is so enormous. We have enormous trans-national corporations; some of them are more powerful than many national governments. And business leaders are increasingly aware of this relationship between the spiritual and the responsible. They are aware that the human dimension, particularly at the level of trust, is the root source of so many of the problems that follow in the slipstream of globalisation. They know that the soft stuff is the hard stuff – and that leadership is increasingly becoming an art, an enabling art.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

I have several times mentioned the combination of character and competency. Truly, these go together. I am convinced from my experience that these two are of primary importance – and particularly with respect to recruiting and selecting leaders strategically, that is, to ensure the long run survival and success of the organisation. A lacking, a flaw, in either of these two – character and competence – will affect the other, and that will affect the performance of the whole organisation.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

To become a spiritual-based leader, you have to teach the principle of service, to apply it, to live it, and then to be accountable to those you serve. Service can start at the very local level, but real stewardship requires expanding one's vision to include all of the world. I have found that for me to continue to grow in accord with these principles, it really helps me to ponder the scriptures every morning and every night.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

I find that if I carefully ponder the scriptures every day, it affects my spirit towards all people as well as towards my decision-making and my work in general.

I think the major obstacles for a person to be a spiritual-based leader today is selfishness, and having too small a vision about the role played by work in life and about success. Selfish, egotistical people don't feel they have a sacred stewardship. They feel they are kind of the source rather than realising that the Source comes through them. The obstacles are internal; they have pride, corruption, greed, and ask: "what's in it for me?" Instead of being about "thee and thine", it's about "me and mine".

But good character is not enough. A talented person with a fine character and good schooling also needs organisational competence in order to develop organisational trustworthiness. Trust is a function of both character and competency. I run into good people all the time who are honest and talented but who search for competency in organisational design and systemic thinking. They identify strongly with all that I have said about organisational competence, but they just haven't had role models, and they don't know how to institutionalise principles and values. Although they are able to speak about the principles, values and morals, they don't know how to build institutions that embody integrity.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

My advice to aspiring spiritual-based leaders would be: "Write your personal mission statement or creed." This is the most effective way I know to begin to focus on what you really are searching for in life. Developing your personal mission statement gets you to focus on what you want to be – your character – and what you want to do – your contributions and achievements – as well as on the principles and values upon which your character and contributions are to be based. Your ability to change depends on a changeless sense of who you are and what you value. Such a mission statement provides you with the basic direction, the vision and values from which you can

direct your life, establish your goals, and determine the way your energies can most effectively be measured.

I deeply respect the wisdom of Frankl⁹ as to the matter of our mission in life: “Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognise that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible.” So developing a mission statement is not a simple task, it requires considerable introspection, analysis, and thoughtful expression. When developed, it becomes your constitution, it expresses your values and vision, it provides you with the criteria for measuring everything that you do in your life.

Having developed your own mission statement, I would advise a spiritual-based leader, together with his or her associates, to write a mission statement for the organisation. In this process all the associates should be treated as partners, as co-creators. So I would tell the leaders to start the process of developing such a mission statement which embodies vision, mission, values and strategic goals for the organisation. When I say “start the process” it is because ideally speaking, developing the statement should involve everyone in the organisation. This of course may be very impractical in the case of larger organisations. The point, however, is that the process of involving the organisation is as important as the written product and is the key to its use.

And then I would say, “build a complementary team where your strengths are made productive and your weaknesses are made irrelevant.” We are speaking here of developing an organisational design and culture that makes it legitimate for those who see differently and think differently and who have complementary skills to push back on you.

I can ask any audience of business leaders, “How many know what your weaknesses are.” Almost everyone raises their hand. When I then ask, “How many consciously take steps to choose and develop people around you who can compensate for your weaknesses?” only about a third raise their hands. Then if I ask, “How many have empowered and encouraged the members of the organisation culture to push back on you?” I only get responses from about a third of that third.

To encourage members to push back on you takes a lot of courage, particularly if you’re dealing with people that have very strong egos and who think they have a great product, or have a fantastic vision of what they want to accomplish. They just want to drive their goals through, and that is why so many organisations fail within a short period of time, they don’t have complementary teams. They don’t understand synergy.

⁹ Victor Frankl (1905 – 1997) was the Jewish psychiatrist who survived imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp during the Holocaust of World War II (all of his family aside from his sister died in the camps or were sent to the gas ovens). Frankl later played a major role in the development of existential psychology and logotherapy. The quote is from page 172 of his major work, *Man’s Search for Meaning*. In addition, Frankl authored 32 other psycho-spiritual books.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full interview transcript with:

ALVARO CRUZ
Colombia



Interview conducted 17 February 2004

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation:	Cundinamarca (major state of Colombia)	I.C.M. Ingenieros Ltda. (engineering/building company)
Location:	Colombia, South America	Colombia, South America
Industry:	Politics	Building Construction
Position:	Governor of Cundinamarca	CEO
Years in Position:	3	11
Gender:	Male	
Age:	54	

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation:	I.C.M. Ingenieros Ltda. (engineering/building company)
Current Location:	Colombia, South America
Current Industry:	Building Construction
Current Position:	CEO

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 23

Previous Positions/Organisations: Secretary (minister) of Finance (2 years), Colombia; Secretary (minister) of Public Works (2 years), Colombia; Partner and manager of several different companies in the building construction industry

Language: Alvaro Cruz speaks Spanish. The interview was conducted in English with the help of a Spanish/English interpreter.

How to refer to Alvaro Cruz:

“Former Minister of the Government of Colombia and Governor of Cundinamarca, Colombia”

“CEO of an engineering/building company in Colombia, I.C.M. Ingenieros Ltda.”

CAREER

Career History

I have just completed my 3-year period as Governor of one of the states, Condinamarca, in Colombia, and substantially I will tell about my experiences as a leader in the public sector, not in the private sector. I have a private company as well, but for the last five years I have been concentrating on carrying out my political campaign and governing the State.

I graduated as a civil engineer in 1971 and for five years worked in one of the largest hydroelectric companies in Colombia. After that I did both consulting and administration in different companies. From 1980 I had extensive experience in building large dams and large-scale construction in my country. From 1986 to 1988 I was the manager of the largest company that supplies foodstuff in Colombia.

From 1984 to 1989 for two terms I was the representative of three provinces in my state to the House of Representatives. From 1986 to 1988 I worked simultaneously serving as a representative and working for the food supply company. From 1992 to 1994 I served as Secretary of Finance in my state. I also ran for Governor of this state, which is in the centre of the country with Bogota as the capital; but the first time I didn't win. In addition, since 1993 when the engineering building company was founded, I have had an associate partner, and when I serve in a public office, he runs the company, ICM Ingenieros Ltda.

From 1998 to 1999 I served as Minister of Public Works in the state Government. At that point I was not only learning, but also applying the principles of spirituality in my work. In the year 2000 I ran again for Governor. From 2001 to 2004 I served as Governor of this state.

Current Responsibilities

After serving as Governor I returned to my company. It has between 100 and 500 workers, depending upon the construction work we are doing. It is one of the first few companies in Colombia certified both nationally and internationally for excellence in delivering.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

Spirituality is a permanent attention to the inner self. To be able to perfect one's behaviour and attitudes, both inwardly and externally with others, basing one's conduct on the human values of love, truth, peace, right conduct and non-violence. Spirituality is something you must persist in every day, every hour. Together with my wife, I have worked on being able to apply and reflect on this every day.

Spirituality is a permanent way of life where you are working towards attaining two main principles or goals; these goals are love and happiness. At work, if you have a spiritual outlook, you will have a wider outlook, you will be more patient and you will have greater respect for and a better understanding of the people you work with.

Spiritual Theme

Love and respect others.

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

I feel there is a difference, because although religion might be one way of living a life, spirituality can lead into expansion, into greater consciousness. In order to keep their devotees some religions in the West have limited the possibilities of expanding their intelligence for greater discernment about life. However, as our spiritual teacher teaches us, most religions coincide on the basic principles of spirituality: love, respect, human solidarity and non-attachment are taught in these religions. I grew up in a religious environment as more than 90 percent of the Colombians are members of the Catholic Church, and for a number of years I was an active participant in all of the Catholic practices. I believe that if you practice certain principles for a long time, you can evolve yourself spiritually, whether it is within a religion or outside a religion.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

Non-attachment to your work attracts more income and better results. The less attached you are to the fruits of your work, the more you are likely to get higher profits. Simultaneously this has a positive effect on co-workers, because they will be feeling more love and more happiness in working together.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

My wife and I meditate every morning and evening. Every day we also carry out our own private little spiritual ceremony to be able to develop out of the physical plane to the spiritual plane. Before we take our food, we always remember God and give thanks to the Power that gave us the food, and we remember those who prepared it and we give thanks for the opportunity to share food with others.

At my desk at work I keep a little statue reminding me of my spiritual self, and whenever I have a chance, I look at it and remember God.

Long before I started practising spirituality, my experiences in life were that when you treat others with respect, there is a sense of commitment, and therefore the people work better and the results get better. Because of this respect, I have experienced that when I meet workers again who worked for me even 20 years back, we feel a mutual affection between us.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

Through my wife I met my spiritual teacher eight years ago in 1996, and ever since, I have been working with his teachings at a personal level. My most recent experience in trying to apply those spiritual teachings in my job refer to my experiences in government. However it is also very applicable to my work as a business leader in a construction company, as I have seen through my most recent experiences how much love, happiness, and smooth working spirituality brings to the recipients. Spirituality is a way of life.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First a little background information about the country: Colombia has drastically changed from the 1930's when it was primarily a rural country to now, when it is an industrialised country. It has changed from being 75 pct. rural to being 75 pct. urban. This has led to mass migration of rural people moving into the cities and entering the labour market without having training of any kind. Up to 1991 Colombia was a country with a protected and closed economy. As of 1991, it entered into a stage where it was necessary to design some politics for educating the people and giving them skills in order to be competitive. Because the country hasn't been able to train the workforce, the unemployment rate is up to 15 percent, which creates a very difficult situation.

Parallel to this, since the beginning of the 1980's, due to the consumption of hallucinogenic substances in the more developed countries, and due to the fact that Colombia is situated between the two oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific, our country became a corridor for drug trafficking. This has been terribly harmful to the country. It has created a loss of values in society, which has caused havoc throughout society.

Simultaneously, since the 1950's, there has been guerrilla warfare going on in Colombia, which has been related to the drug activities, which are a source of great income generation. There have been a lot of terrorist actions in the last few years, which have their root causes in economic and not just political factors. The previous national government opened up the doors to be able to communicate with the terrorists, however the terrorist groups did not go for dialogue. As of last August 2002, at the same time the government kept the doors open, it also had to take military actions in order to control the terrorists.

First Story – Moral campaign with spiritual values

I will tell about an event, which happened in 2000 when I was about to enter into the competition for governorship, when I was running against very traditional and very strong political forces:

I was visiting Whitefield in South India. On May 7 in the year 2000, the people there were singing devotional songs. The moment they were singing a poem about my spiritual master, I felt like I was experiencing enlightenment. This poem speaks of righteousness, truth, harmony, family, order, and peace. At that moment, when I received the essence of this, I adopted it to be my slogan for my election campaign. I applied it and talked about it in all my programmes and presentations thereafter. In no political campaign before had any politician ever come up with a spiritual slogan describing a moral situation. Adopting this poem really made me win. I always began my campaigns with these words, and I swept the voters:

The poem goes like this:

*“If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character.
If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the family.
If there is harmony in the family, there will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.”*

2½ million people live in this state, which is located around the Capital, Bogota, but does not include it. I took this message to 69 municipalities out of the 116 there are in the State. In many of these municipalities one of the main ideas in my campaign was a mural painted by children where these words would be inscribed on the side.

Second Story – Implementing human values in education

During my governorship I implemented the application of human values in public education with excellent results. It is included in the ten years program for public education, which includes parents, teachers, and the children. The teaching of values has been added to the regular curriculum. We also include the participation of the parents, because 60 percent of the learning takes place in the home.

I motivated the teachers to take the special training courses in human values, and we provided the new technology, which would make the teachers able to teach this. The teachers are trained at the universities. Several universities were competing for the contract for producing the texts for the teaching in human values. The one requirement we gave them was that it should include ethical and moral values such as respect, human solidarity, happiness, tolerance, love and forgiveness. We said, take these values and include them in your texts and in your techniques for teaching. I was able to have this model program for education approved, and it was chosen by the World Bank to be a model for Latin America. The World Bank credit used for this is still continuing and will do so for two more years.

Simultaneously I was able to initiate a type of training for the college graduates. In the year 2000 only 43 percent of the students in our State were able to pass the medium examination, which would allow them to enter higher education. In the year 2002 the number passing the national medium was raised to 67 percent. This happened not necessarily because of the teaching of values, but because of the improvement of the education in general. The rank in the national level of education in 32 states, from 1st to 9th grade in my state went from the 16 place to the 3rd place as to the quality of education.

Third Story – Helping society

Tremendous efforts were invested in social causes. 83,000 children suffering from mal-nourishment were provided a daily breakfast. 140,000 poor children below six years of age were given recreation, including teaching lessons to develop their IQ. 10,000 other children were given medical attention in 50 regional centres for the handicapped. In the families of these children with disabilities, a feeling of participation in society was generated through the integrated programme we established to include the parents, just as in the educational programme.

Fourth Story – Intuition and safety

In my country terrorists want to destabilise the order, and I represented law and order. On one of several occasions of attempts on my life, terrorists had mined my armoured car. Ten minutes before I was supposed to use it, my intuition told me to move to another vehicle. Shortly after, the first vehicle blew up, and I was saved.

Another time I was going to visit one of the most impoverished districts in my state on a Sunday. The Friday before, a peasant came to my Governor-office. For some reason this peasant had been able to bypass the security people, and he insisted on talking to me. He begged me not to go to the section of his town as planned on the following Sunday, because he knew that an attempt to kill me was being prepared. I cancelled my visit and ordered a wide investigation in that area. A ground rocket was found, which would have shot down my helicopter, and other platforms had been prepared for attacks on me during the main meeting, in case they missed the helicopter.

Already in 1983 I listened to my intuition. At that time the company that I was working in as a consultant, was building a major hydroelectric dam. One evening I was talking to the engineering

chief of the night shift; this man was an old college friend. I had asked him to come with me for ten minutes. Because of this, he arrived ten minutes late for work. Just as he was getting there, the engineer heard and saw an explosion at the entrance of a tunnel. More than 130 people were trapped and died. This friend felt that my calling him had saved his life.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

For government it is investing in society. As far as my own business goes, the purpose is personal fulfilment, secondly happiness, and thirdly entering into activities enabling me to contribute to the well being of my country.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

I feel that through achieving my goals, which are happiness and service, I will be able to know and understand myself better. I would define success as being happy, attaining happiness through what I do, and contributing to the happiness of others. Unquestionably, however, when I pursue business activities, it is certainly also with the object of making a profit.

Sometimes I have given up major contracts or possibilities of business in order to be happy and peaceful. There have been a number of occasions where the government invited bids for different contracts. I studied the situations and found that there would be a lot of potential difficulties connected with it. It might be difficulties in getting the right supplies or doing the work in the right way in a certain area of the city or state, or there might be problems arising from employees, and so I wouldn't go for it. Even though there might have been a lot of money involved, I would avoid giving bids in such situations. It would only have given me a lot of trouble; it wouldn't have made me happy.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

I find financial goals secondary to the main goals of happiness and service. If in order to obtain good profits, I have to go beyond my principles or the rights of my workers, I don't do it.

Developing an Organisational Culture

I try to select individuals who are ethical, righteous, honest and loyal to work for me. I tell them this when I hire people. When I was Governor, I had the top-level officers trained and instructed in certain ethical values. Among themselves, the whole group then created a charter of principles that they would go by. These were people I had working for me at a higher level. Some came from the private sector; some were civil servants.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

The world is the sum total of every part. Just as at work, if you make a good team, it is a very positive beginning. If you only have individuals who are not working as a team, you cannot achieve anything. We can achieve meaningful betterment, in Colombia, in my state, and in my company, if we daily perform positive actions, framed in spiritual principles. This applies as well to your family and your colleagues at work, as well as anyone you are associated with, or any person you interact with during the day.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

As the Governor, I found that my politically appointed leaders as well as the leading civil servants did understand me, and that they felt very committed to me as the leader. They very much identified themselves with the causes I was fighting for.

Now I am very much trying to set my main partner in the company on the spiritual path, because he is materialistic. He is a person who suffers if he needs to give increases in wages to the workers. It's a big task facing me now, to try to influence my partner to change. Not only could he himself be happier, he could also make others happier.

Relationship with Major Stakeholders

I was elected the President of the Governors' Federation in Colombia. Among the 32 Governor members I was considered to be not necessarily a spiritual person, but a conciliatory figure, which brings people together. The 19 Representatives and Senators in my State whom I worked with during my 3-year period as Governor approved 100 pct. of my plans and proposals. And at the level of the Republic, at the Senate and in the National Government, I am acknowledged as the man who keeps his word. It's possible that I may run for the Senate in the 2006 elections or after a 3-year period of rest I could be ready to be elected as Governor again, or maybe be appointed for a ministry in the national government. In the meanwhile, I own a successful construction business. But the most important factor is that today I am happy. That is what is important.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

It is important to know how to listen. I would like to do more reading, to be able to contemplate, and to meditate more. I need to realise that not everyone must think the way I do or agree with me, and I must also be able to interpret what people are trying to put forth to me. I see very clearly that if I can do that, I can obtain even better results at work. If I can really see and understand, that this person doesn't have certain skills or needs to learn a little something, then I can work on that. But if I pre-judge my workers or my staff, then a person might be hurt, and there is no co-operation.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

First I need to wait and think in order for me to see, and then to analyse, what the alternative might be to solving a problem. When I say I need to think, it means that I turn inwards. That is where the wisdom of my spiritual teacher is to be found. Later I consult with other people to learn different points of view, and utmost I consult with my wife.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

Above anything, I would stress non-attachment to the material results and rewards of one's deeds and the practice of love; love for oneself and love for others. I would advise aspiring spiritual-based leaders not to offend others, not to judge them, and to try to understand that if another person takes a decision, he is acting in good faith, even though he might have been mistaken. I would also advise them to be ethical and righteous in their actions and to be able to forgive and forget.

I want to add that women have a pre-eminent key role to play in participation in society. I feel that if somehow we can allow women to become the main pillars of the family and the home, a new society can be woven. Women should pay attention to keeping men on the right course, since men naturally are a little more selfish and self-centred, and then they should be able to sweetly guide the men in their daily activities. As the Governor, I had a high percentage of women working at all levels. The main posts were given to women: they were heads of Education, Planning, Finance, Press and Communication. In my private company the main general administrator is a woman.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full interview transcript with:

FEDERICO CUNEO
Peru



Interview conducted 23 April 2002

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation:	Bank of Boston (BoB)	American Glass Products (AGP)
Location:	Peru	Peru
Industry:	Banking	Glass Manufacturing & Distribution
Position:	Corporate Director	Chairman
Years in Position:	5	1
Gender:	Male	
Age:	50	

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation:	Ernst & Young	NGO – Peru 2021
Current Location:	Peru	Peru
Current Industry:	Accounting, Audit and Consulting	CSR and Sustainable Development
Current Position:	Senior Partner	Chair

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 20

Previous Positions/Organisations: Andersen Consulting, Peru

University Degrees: Accounting, Eastern Michigan University, USA

How to refer to Federico Cuneo:

“Senior Partner with Ernst & Young in Peru”

“Chair of Peru 2021, an NGO comprised of business executives working on sustainable development and corporate social responsibility for the country”

CAREER

Career History

I received an accounting degree at Eastern Michigan University in the USA and then I did some masters work, but that got interrupted and I returned to Peru to start working. I first began with Price Waterhouse in Peru, but only for a few months and then went to Andersen Consulting in Peru. This was a good school for my learning. After that I worked for a couple of years as a Financial Manager for a development bank.

In 1985, I went on my own for a year as a consultant and that's when I made an investment in a glass manufacturing company in Peru, American Glass Products (AGP), where I am a shareholder and Chairman of the board today. While I was consulting, a large brewery was a client and they asked me to join them as their CFO. I was the CFO for the first four years and then became the General Manager of their trading company.

While I was doing this, I was also the Chairman of a professional soccer team that was owned by the brewery. This was a major challenge because we wanted to make this team the South American champions. Coming from Peru, we were good, but we were not high in the rankings. Even though we lost in the last game to the team that became the champions, we felt very good about how we did. We actually put a lot of spirituality into this effort and that's how we got as far as we did.

In 1994, I left the brewery and managing the soccer team and tried to recuperate a family business where we made alcoholic beverages. But something happened within me; while I was doing this I began to read about spirituality. Things were not going well and I felt bad about producing alcoholic beverages. I think ultimately this is what kept the company from succeeding. Besides the market situation, I was not involved in the business with my heart. I really didn't want to be the one selling this alcohol, so we sold the company.

I was also doing some investment consulting for a sugar cane trading company from England. I was helping them to buy a sugar cane plantation that they wanted to invest in. They didn't end up buying it, so I bought it and sold it to a different group.

One day, a good friend of mine, whom I had worked with at Andersen Consulting, called me and asked me to go to lunch. We had lunch and he told me that he had decided to retire from Citibank where he had been a banker for 15 years. He told me that the Bank of Boston had looked him up and asked him to run their operations in Peru and that he was looking for a corporate director. I told him that I didn't know anything about banking, but I could recommend someone else to him. He said no, he wanted me to do it. I tried to tell him that I didn't know the difference between the capital markets and lending and that I really didn't know anything about banking. He told me not to worry – that he wanted my leadership capabilities and that he would send me to Boston in the USA to learn the business. We started the operation in Peru and it was very successful. I was the head of their corporate banking in Peru and had business relationships with all of the large local and multi-national corporations. I did this for the last five years and left them at the end of last year.

Current Responsibilities

I believe in synchronicities and that there is a reason for why things happen. I had begun to feel that it was time for me to leave the bank as I was feeling tired of working for a large corporation. But before I resigned, they came to me and offered me a very good package to leave the company. So this gave me an opportunity to have some time with my family and now I am helping to direct the corporation I had invested in back in 1985, American Glass Products (AGP).

We had initially started AGP in Peru and then sold the technology to a company in Columbia. That company went under and so they sold 80% of their shares to a French company. This French company looked down on us because we didn't have a manufacturing plant in Brazil or Mexico. We took note of that and decided to buy a company in Mexico. We shaped up this company and then we found an investment firm in Brazil to help us build a plant in Brazil.

My partner wanted to go into the international markets and become the leading bullet-proof glass manufacturer in the world. I initially thought he was crazy, I told him, "Who is going to believe this group of Peruvians who want to sell glass to the Germans?" We were just a small Peruvian company and yet today we are the largest manufacturing company of bullet-proof glass for automobiles in the world. We are working to supply not only bullet-proof glass, but also sophisticated, difficult to make glass. We sell to Mitsubishi and Toyota in Japan and to the secret service agencies all over the world. It has taken the company 16 years to grow to this stage.

My partner has been quite overwhelmed with all of the growth and there are some challenges we have to work out due to the enormous capital investments we have made. But we have good, sound technology and are considered the top class in the world, so I am confident we will work through everything.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

When I began to feel tolerance, patience and no hatred toward others, this to me was spirituality. In other words, spirituality is being able to connect with the collective soul, the collective intelligence that is fused with God. While I cannot put this into very good terms, I know there is something there that I can relate to and can connect to when I meditate with a good intention. I know that I can obtain the things I need and can give the things that all people need.

One of the things that really struck me the most in one of the books I read was, “Remember, that you are a spiritual being, temporarily in flesh and bone that will go back to eternity. Yet we need to experience being flesh and bone in order to grow as a spirit.” So if we come from eternity and we go back to eternity where there is no time, where there’s no space, then our time as flesh and bone is a mere fraction. This is what has now shaped my perspective of life. In the past, I had some idea of reincarnation, and I believe it more now. But this is not an issue for me.

Since starting on this spiritual journey, my perspectives of life have changed. I now understand that the most important thing is my soul, or my spirit, or my being. Whatever happens to me while I am in this flesh and bone is really a minor thing in my existence. In one way, this is good because I can look back at the bad things that have happened and say that it gave me some experience. However, I feel bad sometimes because I love my kids, my mother, my wife such that I want them to last in my life for eternity.

Another concept that is important to me is the concept of light, the concept of working for the light, receiving the light, and reflecting the light. This is an energetic awareness that is starting to appear in my life now and it is very meaningful to me.

Out of reading one of Thich Na Hahn’s books (a Vietnamese Buddhist monk), the most important thing I retained is that when we pray, God is inside of us rather than out there in heaven as I learned from the Lord’s Prayer – “Our Father who art in heaven”. This has really changed my life. God is not out there; therefore I cannot hide. It’s not like God is a judge to punish me. God is more like a brother that I have inside who is trying to do good for me. I am conscious that I have God inside and so my actions are different. I feel that I let God down when I do things that I am not supposed to do. God is the light that I have inside and is always there.

I think that Joseph Jaworski’s book, *Synchronicity*, really helped me to understand that there is a collective mind and that you can access it and influence things and then things can start to happen. Many things have happened to me like this.

Spiritual Theme

Unity with the rest of the world, love, eternal life and light – those would be words I would use as a theme.

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

Spirituality and religion do meld somewhere, but to me religion is a set of rules, which I think is good; it is an organised thing that you are suppose to learn and follow. Spirituality is more of a feeling that you are a free soul – it is feeling my inner essence. You don’t have to follow any rules

because in essence you work for the collective, so you respect the collective. I don't see the need to create a set of rules or go to church on Sunday. I don't knock it because I think it is beautiful for many people; but to me spirituality is not this, although it can include it.

I think the Catholic Church is very good and, using business terms, it is a very good product for a certain market. However, it is not for me even though I thank God that it is there. Since I began to read many books on spirituality, I respect Christ more, I respect the Bible more, I pray more, and I feel that God lives inside me; however I do not go to church.

I think that in meditation you are connected, and when you pray it has a lot more meaning than when I went to a church and prayed. I find the church to be disruptive because of people talking and impressing others by wearing the best clothes. I pray ten times more now than when I went to church. I love God more.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

One purpose for me is definitely to serve and to live with others. That's why I find it very disruptive when people say that they are very independent and that they can operate without needing anyone else. To me, human beings are social beings. Sometimes I think it would be better if we didn't have phones and we had more time just to sit with people. However, this is quite unreal given the environment we have today. I am always on the internet and I use all of these technical tools too. But I think to socialise and to experience individually and collectively other souls who have been born on this planet is an important mission.

Another purpose for me is to give to others. I can remember one of my secretaries who worked with my check book asking me why I was giving so much of my money away. I told her not to worry, that it will continue to come to me, and it has always been like that. I appreciate Deepak Chopra's principle of giving in his book on the laws of prosperity. I think that when you give more, then you get more. To me this also applies to friendship, to love, to everything. Giving for me is such a pleasure; it is a concept I like very much.

I used to get very upset and feel as if I had been taken if I gave money to someone and they used it for alcohol instead of their kids like they said they needed it for. Now I don't feel that way. I now feel that I have acted in good faith and have done my part and he will have to answer for how he uses it. However, I do try to avoid this happening when I can.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

Once I started reading a lot of spiritual books, I started getting into meditation and really exploring spirituality. I will be the first to admit that I am still a sinner, but this has certainly changed my view of life. I don't believe that there are bad people anymore. I believe that people have bad attitudes, and those attitudes can vanish away. I used to hate; I used to be violent. But now I do not hate anyone and I am not violent.

I now find that my life has a purpose. This exercise of searching has been very good and it continues to grow as I talk to others about it. I was just thinking today, that this conference being held in New York City in 2002, *Spirit in Business*, has been like a great present for my 50th birthday. To be with 500 people who are interested in spirituality is great.

Since I began my spiritual journey, I have always included spirituality in my conversations, whether it was with a boss, or a partner, or people who reported to me, or my kids. I just had an excellent conversation about spirituality with my partner that we had never had in 16 years.

I am convinced that what I am doing spiritually is what I want to do for the rest of my life. I do not leave it when things are going well, like many others do.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

I think my spiritual journey is really the essence of my life. It began around 1994. I had just left the large multi-national corporation I worked for in Peru where I had had a lot of prestige and even coverage in the paper, and found myself really floundering in my family business. I felt very weak at that time and our third child was about to be born. Since I couldn't sleep at night, I was taking sleeping pills because I was so worried about how we would make it financially.

Just prior to our child being born, my wife and I went to relax on a beach in Cancun and I took the book *Celestine Prophecy* with me. It was a great book even though the author, James Redfield, made a lot of mistakes about the Peruvian geography. I found the nine revelations that the book goes through to be very, very inspiring. They seemed to give some explanations for many of the synchronicities that I had experienced. I felt this was a book for beginners like me who had not been aware of these types of spiritual things.

After this, I began to read more sophisticated books written by people such as Aurobindo, Deepak Chopra, Sathya Sai Baba, and Paramahansa Yogananda. This really enriched my life very much. I was raised as a Roman Catholic and all of my understanding of God came from that perspective. And from reading all these different views, it helped me to understand Christianity much better.

People in my life have noticed this continuous change to be more selfless, relaxed, tolerant and patient in my life and have appreciated it. I do still lose my temper every once in a while, but mainly I feel relaxed and can help people understand that it's not personal.

Another thing I have recognised through this spiritual process is that I was in a crisis and I had lost a lot of money, but now I have recuperated all of that. I think this change came from my spirituality.

Before I began my spiritual journey in 1994, I had done several years of psychoanalysis and that was also very helpful. It brought me to a certain level; however, this spiritual process has taken me even deeper.

I have studied spirituality on my own and in groups. The first group I ever became involved with was with Kriya Yoga and then I got disconnected from that group and became involved with another group that was more into the energetic sciences, such as feeling the light, understanding matter, and understanding the spiritual nature of everything.

There was a time before I started my spiritual journey that I had a big misunderstanding with my brother. As I began to delve into spirituality, I called my brother and told him that I no longer wanted to fight with him. I told him that it was not necessary for us to argue anymore; maybe he was right, maybe I was right, but who cares. I told him that I wanted to become friends again and over time we have been able to slowly regain our friendship. This is something that I stepped forward to do.

To me this was an important process. My brother was someone who was important to me and I needed to prove to myself that I could detach from these past difficulties. As I did this, I found that I didn't even need for him to apologise for the things he had said.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Sharing spirituality in business

Around 1996/97, I was in a business meeting where a consultant mentioned something and I responded by saying, “I really don’t want to get into this, because if I start talking about spirituality it could take another hour to discuss.” She thought that was interesting and wanted to talk further in another meeting.

At that subsequent meeting I told her how I felt about spirituality. She then told me about the man who wrote the book *Reengineering Yourself* and asked me if I would come and give a presentation at the same meeting where he would be talking to businessmen. I told her no that I didn’t want to do that because many of those businessmen would know me and they would think that I had started living a hippie life. She said, “No, you need to come and break the ice. There are so many people who are lost and things like this are so important.” So I told her I would do it.

I attended this meeting and I told them what had happened to me. I told them about the crisis in my life that brought me to spirituality. I told them about reading spiritual books and the comfort I had found in meditation. During the hour that I spoke I noticed that the audience kept intense attention on what I was saying. The day after the meeting, the consultant called me and told me that she had reviewed the written feedback and that the favourite topic from the whole meeting was my presentation, even more than the doctor who spoke from a university and the author of the book.

After this I became good friends with this consultant and now we have a group that focuses on the expansion of the brain. We meet every month and people talk about different things. I am always the one who is talking about spirituality.

I think that my role is to convince others that spirituality is an important way to be, not only for themselves, but for the collective. Where I am right now is to expand this message beyond the company that I lead and share it with a larger audience. I was asked by a mining company to go and speak at their annual meeting. This was still quite uncomfortable because they were not up to the topic of spirituality. So I am well aware that for companies to include spirituality into their success pattern is a new thing. But I think we need to jump to that stage; I think we need to go straight to that stage.

After attending this *Spirit in Business* conference (in New York City in 2002), now I can go back to Peru and tell people what it was like. I can tell them that 500 people were there to talk about spirituality in their business. I can tell them that the large corporations were there. So this will help the sceptical people to accept it easier.

Second Story – Solving business conflicts

I think people perceive when you are coming from a spiritual state, or when you vibrate at that level so-to-speak. I think people can see more than the physical. Even though we don’t always realise it immediately, we do perceive when another person is fair or trustworthy, we can see that he has something in him like that. When you have spirituality, then you unconsciously portray it to others.

About four months ago, we were having a very difficult time with some of our regional partners and investors. I approached the upcoming meeting by meditating and imagining their faces as being happy. I imagined telling them at the start of the meeting how I would be straight with what I had to say, and that I wanted the good for all of us.

You must realise this meeting was like a battlefield. We had brought in two lawyers, and they brought in three lawyers who loved to fight. As it turned out, both groups came to a place where they could see that through me we could find a solution to our problem. Since then another problem has come up and now we are in the middle of trying to solve that one.

I think that spirituality and meditation are so useful in business and should become a practice. When there are conflicts between family corporations or between two corporations, they usually put them into the hands of lawyers. This can make it worse and can get very expensive. So I think that people who have this spiritual philosophy of life or this discipline can solve these problems, because both sides can trust them.

Sometimes there is a need for someone who has this spiritual discipline to facilitate or mediate these types of problems because the ego gets in the way. I think people are more willing to put off their ego to a third party like this if that person is a righteous person.

Even though I was not a third party when we were trying to solve this problem, both sides still trusted me. At one point there was a break in the negotiations and they asked me to be involved. I told them that I would not betray my partners for them; that I would only live by my convictions. To me this is an honest way to be in life.

These conflicts are very complicated and I am still in the process of solving them. But if I can communicate at a higher level, or vibrate at a higher level, then I know we can tap into the collective soul where I can really understand their needs and where we can become one with each other.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

To me business is like a game, I always hope to be more profitable of course, but most of all I want the people to have fun and to feel good about what they are doing. Inside AGP, I think of the company as a whole – as a consolidation of the expectations of everyone who is there – whether those expectations are for the environment they work in, or their salary, or a dividend.

Prior to my spiritual journey, if I lost a deal with a potential customer, I would dislike them. I do not feel like that anymore. I don't feel upset if a deal doesn't close; maybe I will have to try even five more times, but then I will close it on the sixth try. This is where my partner sometimes tells me that I am trusting people too much, that I am too innocent. I am not willing to change this; I would rather trust them too much. If they are not trustworthy with me the first time, then shame on them. I will learn from that and not allow them to be untrustworthy with me again.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

I think that the financial indicators and the profitability and efficiency indicators that you set in the company are exercises and are benchmarks that you establish for the company. They are just indicators that you must comply with, but they are not the sole indicators you must have.

I was thinking the other day that I wished the market would value other indicators that cannot be transformed into dividends, like how much you respect the employees and the social and environmental aspects of your business. To me the values are what really count. Even if a company has 400% a year growth, if they treat the people like slaves who are working for them, I would not invest in it. I still see that there is a major divorce between skills and values. This is something we have to merge.

Developing an Organisational Culture

When I managed people at the bank, I told them that I didn't want them to work over eight hours a day because I respected their personal life. I told them not to give me excuses, if they needed to go and take care of a family matter, then they should go. To me this was more important than the work we were doing. If I found people who were working overtime, I told them we should look more closely at why they had to do that. Maybe we were asking them to do too much and we needed to adjust that. This way of being has also allowed me to enjoy my life more. For example, I had always wanted to play the drums and last year I bought a set of drums and started to learn how to play.

I have attended meetings where everyone is so stressed. There isn't enough money to buy supplies, customers are not paying, our bank is reducing our line of credit, these types of things. Being the Chairman of the Board, I ask them, "Why are you so uptight about all of this? We are mainly spiritual beings. Don't let all of this kill you." The General Manager of our plant in Peru is an artist and he loves to paint, even though he now runs the company. I have said to him, "I would love for you to stay here, but you are an artist, why don't you go and paint and leave the company if this is what you would rather do?" This attitude helps him to step out of his problems. One time he told me that his wife wanted to leave the country, so I told him to take her and go and assured him that we would find a solution here if he left. To me his marriage is more important than his position at the company. So this type of attitude helps to relieve these pressures.

There is a saying in Peru that your problems go up enormously at night. So if your life is a nightmare, then your problems are there all the time. I try to help people see their problems from a more spiritual perspective. Sometimes I tell them, "We've come from eternity and we'll return to eternity. Don't lose your perspective of what is most important." I don't mind saying this even in our management meetings; it helps them to see things differently. Sometimes they even say that they need more of this kind of attitude.

Sometimes I do talk about spirituality and how it is above everything. If they are having a bad time, I try to help them see that there is a reason for it. This doesn't mean that I myself never complain if something bad happens to me, but down deep I really know that there is a reason.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

Yes, I know that spirituality can help me individually. However, I want to be involved in something much bigger that has to do with the well-being of the world. I think that business is a good platform to do this because people respect successful businessmen. If we can set examples as leaders, then I think we can change the world. I don't think our major challenge is to have the biggest corporation in the world. I think our major challenge is to have less poor people in the world.

I think the world needs the business segment to be concerned about the good of the whole. I know this may be difficult, but it must start from within. We must all start to look within at our spiritual nature and change from the inside. I cannot imagine all of the good things that business could do for the world if this were to happen. If the people who run the highly successful companies would look inside, I know that they could do a lot more for the world. To me this is an ethical way to do business and there is a responsibility to look into the unethical practices that are being done today and stop them.

I also think that large multi-national corporations need to be much more aware of how they are killing the small producers in the countries they are going into. These small producers are actually the ones who created the market in the first place and they need to be respected. I think that a spiritual approach will help these leaders find a way to resolve these inequities somehow.

I do believe that much of the suffering that people are experiencing in our country and in other continents like Africa is due to karma¹⁰. So we have to help the people understand that they must do good in the environment they are in so that their next lives will be better. In one of the groups I meet with, we identify a major trauma that is happening in the world and we focus our meditation on dissolving that trauma.

¹⁰ In this context, karma is often defined as the "consequences" of our actions.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

My great challenge now is that I am on the board of a group called “Peru 2021.” In that year Peru will celebrate 200 years of independence. So ten years ago someone thought that there should be a group to plan for this. I was invited to be on the board and now I am the Vice President. I am now looking at a way to include spirituality into this agenda.

One of the difficult things I have had to deal with is how to mix spirituality with the pleasures I want in life. I like to have my house well decorated; I like to have a good car and good clothes. This is something I have not been able to resolve yet. I don’t feel good with myself about all of this, but I’m not ready to give it up. To me this is part of the process and it is natural, so this is something I still have to work out.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

When I talk to others about spirituality, I try to use familiar examples that they can understand. One I like very much is the story of a powerful man in Brazil who said that the most important decision he made in his life was to stop working. Although this is an extreme, it means that even though you cannot stop working altogether, at least you can relax and retreat from the everyday world of business and look more inside yourself. Another one is that I remind people that no one dies saying that they wished they had worked more, or that they had made more money.

I also use myself as an example to show them how things are going so much better for me. I talk about the peace of mind I now have and how I feel relaxed in life. I was talking to a prospective partner and he told me that I was too relaxed. I said to him, “Yes I am relaxed; I don’t want to be tense like you. Maybe you should look at being more spiritual so you can also relax.” These are the types of things that I share with people to try to convince them to change.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an interview with:

THOMAS DAUGHERTY USA



Interview conducted 24 May 2002

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation: Methodist Health Care System
Location: Texas, USA
Industry: Health Care/Medical Care
Position: Vice President of Spiritual Care and Values Integration
Years in Position: 4
Gender: Male
Age: 61

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Retired Member, Texas Annual Conference, United Methodist Church¹¹
Current Location: Texas, USA
Current Industry:
Current Position:

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 27

Previous Positions/Organisations: Director, Chaplaincy Services, 1974-1998, Methodist Hospital System, Lubbock, Texas, USA

University Degrees: B.S., Business Administration, Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, Louisiana, USA; M.Div., Theology, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, USA; Th.M., Pastoral Care and Counselling, Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, Ft. Worth, Texas, USA

How to refer to Thomas Daugherty:

“Former Vice President of Spiritual Care and Values Integration with the Methodist Health Care System in the USA”

¹¹ The Methodist Church is a Christian Protestant denomination founded in the 1800's based on the Wesleyan revival in the Church of England, having doctrine that stresses personal and social morality.

CAREER

Career History

My undergraduate degree was in business. I only took those types of courses because I was planning to go to law school and I thought they would help prepare me for that. I went to Louisiana State University law school for one year and had the most miserable time of my life, so as a result I didn't do well. But I did have a highly grace-full encounter with the dean as I was having my exit interview from law school. The dean said, "Tom, you didn't really want to be here in law school did you?" I said, "No sir, I don't think I really did, but how did you know?" He said, "Well, we had all of your grade point average, we had your test scores, and we knew you could do this if you wanted." Then he said something that really stayed with me: "You will be successful when you decide what it is you really want to do and focus on that." And this has been so true throughout my career.

Flunking out of law school was the first time I realised that I was living my life in order to fulfil someone else's expectations. My stepfather, who had been the only father I had ever known since the age of 6, had always wanted me to be a lawyer. I had tried to be a dutiful son and to make everyone else happy. I had not given much thought to what I really wanted to do in life. That experience in law school was a very important lesson in living and in growing up.

After leaving law school, I worked in the life insurance business for a while. It was during this time that I got very involved in the Methodist Church where I lived in Shreveport, Louisiana. I became quite involved in the church activities, and accepted some leadership roles that were unusual in that congregation. As I became more involved in the church and found my work there to be deeply meaningful, I remembered that when I was in high school I had felt a strong identification with the minister of the church where my family worshipped at the time. I had a slight inkling that I was being called to be a minister some day.

Then, in my early 20's, while pursuing a career in the life insurance business and at the same time finding my volunteer work in the local church to be increasingly enriching and fulfilling, that calling to ministry began to return. I did counselling with the pastor of the church, and received encouragement to continue the process of discernment about my calling. I also received some psychological testing and career counselling from a clinical psychologist that pointed out being a minister was in alignment with my personality and skills. So it seemed that I was getting a confirmation of what I had sensed back in high school as God's call to be an ordained minister.

At that point in my life, I decided to answer God's call and become a minister in the United Methodist Church. I went to the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University; that was between the ages of 26 and 30. There is a part of this period that's very important to where I am today. When I was working as a volunteer in my church back in Shreveport, Louisiana, and considering being a minister, one of the things that attracted me to ministry was a desire to help people bridge the gap between what they heard during the Sunday morning worship and what they experienced, and especially lived out during the rest of the week. I wanted to help them make the connection between the two.

The other thing I realised early on was my natural skills in and gifts for pastoral care. My academic work in the seminary was characterised by a heavy emphasis upon courses in pastoral care and counselling. I was very interested in helping people find access to their inner spiritual

resources, the things they had learned during their years of religious development in their community of faith.

After I finished my seminary studies, I went on to do Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and became certified as a CPE Supervisor or a teacher of CPE. CPE is an extension of the theological education that people receive in seminary or theology school. CPE students can be ordained ministers or people from the church. It is an ecumenical and inter-faith educational programme. It is available to people of any Christian denomination or faith group. It usually occurs in a hospital or other health care setting, but some programmes are found in prisons, businesses, and parish church settings. It is experiential education and utilises the case study method of learning.

CPE is based largely upon the premise that the bottom line in ministry has more to do with the quality of relationships that are developed with the people being served and the way the various messages of faith are communicated than it does with the public proclamation of those messages. CPE places heavy emphasis upon the integration of the head and the heart. That is, it has to do with helping those in ministry, whether a minister or person of the church, learn how to serve out of the context of who they are as a whole person, and not just out of what they have learned from an academic perspective.

I was certified as a CPE Supervisor in 1974. My first appointment after my academic and clinical work was to the Methodist Hospital in Lubbock, Texas. They hired me to be director of the small department and to set up a CPE programme. Initially I was a chaplain and spent most of my time out on the patient floors extending pastoral care to patients, their families, and to the hospital staff. As the size of the hospital increased, and as my chaplaincy staff grew, the demands of my director role became greater, and I was in more of a management role. I stayed there for 24 years.

Current Responsibilities

As I was coming up through my career – working as a hospital chaplain and teaching other clergy CPE – one of the things that always bothered me was the gap that existed between the administrative staff and the nurses and physicians. While I was visiting the floors in the hospital, I would find nurses and physicians whose hearts really seemed to be in the right place and who felt a great compassion for their patients. They were genuinely concerned about the suffering that was taking place and they were concerned about intervening in a way that would bring about healing and curing. Then I would go to a department director meeting and I would hear the managers and directors talking about the business side of running a hospital and there just didn't seem to be any connection. In fact there seemed to be a great disconnection between what was happening in the clinical areas and what was happening in the administrative circles.

My concern about the disconnect had its roots in my early call to ministry. I wanted to know: "How could I help the people who worked in the health care milieu, whether they were doctors, nurses, technicians, or administrators, live out their spiritual values in the context of their work? How could I have an impact upon the whole spiritual environment in which health care services were delivered in the hospital, and not just what happened between a chaplain and a patient at their bedside?"

At the time these questions became burning concerns in my heart, I was still at the Methodist Hospital System in Lubbock. I reported to the CEO of the hospital, and so we did talk about these types of things. But yet I still didn't seem to have the leverage that was needed to have my ideas be taken seriously. So when I heard that the Methodist Health Care System in Houston wanted to

integrate spiritual care and spiritual values throughout their organisation, I was attracted to the position they had open and knew this was a chance for me to have a forum to bring about the ideas that I had held for many years. So I interviewed with them and was accepted for this position as Vice President of Spiritual Care and Values Integration beginning in October 1998.

The Methodist Health Care System in Houston is part of the Texas Medical Centre, the largest in the world. The Methodist System has three satellite hospitals in the metropolitan area of Houston. The System has about 8,000 employees. The Methodist Health Care System has always been a leader in medicine locally, nationally and internationally. Probably its greatest international recognition has come from the pioneering work of Dr. Michael DeBakey in heart surgery. It has also been a leader in all the major fields of medicine, research and medical education. It has always had strong leadership from its Board of Trustees and hospital administration, and as a result, it has been and is one of the strongest health care organisations in America from a financial standpoint. In addition it has valued its relationship to the United Methodist Church and its heritage as a faith-based organisation.

My responsibility here is to implement the part of our mission statement that says we provide our services in a spiritual environment of caring, and cultivate that environment through a process we call "values integration". Over the last months we've been through an extensive and intensive process to identify our core values, which are summarised by "I CARE." This is an acronym that stands for our five core values: integrity, compassion, accountability, respect and excellence.

We have been through an evolutionary process as an organisation in the last three and a half years. We have a new CEO and there has been a change in my reporting relationship; I now report directly to the CEO and I also have a seat on his CEO council. So I have a place where I am able to be a part of the major decisions that are being made with the senior management team. This is also a place where we can coordinate and implement this cultural transformation that we are trying to bring about.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

I conceptualise spirituality as the connection among myself, other people and the Divine. It is the common linkage between these three aspects of existence for me. Spirituality is also staying connected with my own spiritual centre, my connection with the Divine – which is an inner place of peace – and then listening to what I hear there. To me the Divine both lives within me and apart from me. I do believe that the Divine is both transcendent and immanent.

While Methodist Health Care System is very definitely a Christian organisation that believes in God, we are also inclusive of all religions. So for me the word Divine is a more inclusive way to talk about God or higher power. I think that all the world's religions have some relationship with the holy, or Divine, so I prefer to use that word most often.

The God within me is that part of me which calls me to deal with my ego and be accountable and responsible for my behaviour. God calls me to live my life with a strong sense of caring, compassion, and love for my fellow human beings. I spent a lot of time and energy examining my inner world and listening to God within. To me, God is within me, but not totally within me; God is also apart from me. When I recognise this and listen to that voice beyond myself it directs me and at the same time sets me free. I realise I live to serve and help make the world a better place for having been here. I try to stay connected with this motivation, even though I realise that there is no such thing as a pure motivation.

Spiritual Theme

One theme for me would be caring and compassion. Another would be faithfulness. A part of that has to do with persistence and perseverance, courage and humility.

For me, the Christian cross itself evokes all of this for me because it is such a powerful symbol of the Divine-human encounter. It represents the very best and the very worst of human experience, and it also represents the ultimate in God's love and compassion for all humankind.

The Divine-human encounter is certainly a theme that expresses all of this for me.

Distinction between Spirituality and Religion

I personally think that spirituality and religion are closely related, and it's not a matter of one or the other. On the other hand, I think the two can be separate for other people: a person can be very religious and not very spiritual, or very spiritual and not religious. For me, my religious life is where I stay grounded with our Christian traditions and where I find a community of like-minded people.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

During a recent workshop, a consultant asked us: "If you were writing a book about your life, what would the title of that book be?" For me, this would be "He made a difference in Methodist Health Care." Most of my career has been in the hospital ministry and with the healthcare systems of the Methodist church. So when I say "Methodist" in this title, it has many meanings. It represents my identity as a clergy member of that denomination, as a participant in the ministry of the church,

the health care of people, and the connection between Methodist Health Care System's overall mission and how that is played out.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

I find it very helpful to participate in worship and to reflect on the scriptures and to hear the language of faith being spoken. It has actually become even more important to me since I have been in this new career position than it has been in the past. This is because the language that is used in this work environment is still so separate from the language of faith. I need this renewing religious connection. By participating in my religious activities, I feel enriched and inspired spiritually, and it gives me what I need to share with others whom I come in contact with during my work.

In addition, my spirituality finds essential nourishment through my private spiritual practices apart from my religious observances. My spiritual practices include prayer, meditation, reading scripture and other spiritual texts and journal writing. My spirituality is also enriched through the many discussions and times of sharing with my wife, through my love of horticulture, especially flower gardening.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

I have had some relationships in my life that have really supported me in my spiritual growth. My relationship with my wife has been central to this; I am very blessed to be married to a person who has a great deal of empathy and understanding. I am more of a feeling person and she is more of a thinking person in our relationship. So she helps me to keep my perspective in many ways.

I've also had my own spiritual teachers, and therapists that I have worked with and they have helped me to grow spiritually. My spiritual teachers since seminary have been preachers and other clergy who inspired me with their insights into the Christian understanding of God and how to live that faith in the world.

My therapists have helped me spiritually because I think the inner world of the individual is so complex and mysterious. Some of my most powerful encounters with the Divine, or the Holy, have been in confronting the truth about who I am as a person and standing in awe of the beautiful work God did when I was created. That confrontation with the truth about me also includes examination of the darker parts of who I am that I do not like to acknowledge and take seriously. My therapists have helped me confront both the light and the darkness within me, and I have brought my spiritual interpretation to bear through my personal spiritual practices.

Some of the consultants who are working with me here at Methodist Health Care System to implement the spiritual care programme throughout the organisation have also been helpful spiritual influences in my life.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Having the intention to make a positive difference

The difference I hope to make here at Methodist Health Care Systems is to enhance the quality of care and the spiritual environments in which that care is given. The title I have now is Vice President of Spiritual Care and Values Integration. Ordinarily, people think the “spiritual care” portion of my title has to do with the chaplains who provide their services in the hospital. While I do have some relationship to the chaplains, they actually report to someone else in the organisation; I don’t have administrative responsibilities for them.

What I have tried to communicate since I have been in this position is that spiritual care refers to a quality of caring that we provide in this environment. It is a quality that connects us with the spirit of the organisation and with the spirit of the Divine, which is in our midst. For me, it is something that involves everyone, and not just the chaplains who will always play a prominent role as well. It is a quality of caring that involves our administration, our board members, our housekeeping personnel, our nurses, our physicians, everyone. So it is comprehensive and inclusive. I am hoping to influence the environment where everyone receiving care in any of our hospitals can feel there is a difference in their care and on some level they realise they are receiving spiritual care.

I don’t think at this point people consciously choose to come to our hospitals because we have a fine spiritual environment. Primarily, they are coming to the Methodist Health Care System because we have a reputation for having the best physicians and the best track record in taking care of their physical problems. However, this Texas Medical Center is full of hospitals; this is the largest conglomeration of hospitals and health care facilities in the world. So there’s something else that I believe does enter into their decision even now, and I think unconsciously people do come here because they expect to receive something different. They may not consciously know what it is, but they feel and expect something different in the environment.

To me, the name “Methodist”, which indicates that this organisation is based in Christian principles, does imply in some way that people should be able to expect a difference in the quality of care they receive and the way they are treated. So my work is about cultivating a holistic, comprehensive spiritual environment where this caring can take place. I think the spiritual and the material aspects of health care and healing were once connected. I want to reconnect the aspects of this environment that have been so long disconnected.

Second Story – Finding strength from a spiritual centre

There has been some resistance to the kind of spiritual change we are working to bring about here in our organisation. As I have encountered people who I fully expected to be supportive of this spiritual approach, due to their position and authority and by virtue of my relationship with them, I have been surprised to discover that some were not supportive, and in some ways were actually acting counter to what we are trying to do.

This has really caused me to come to terms with myself and realise that this whole endeavour is not about me personally. When I have taken these types of experiences personally, I have become immobilised, discouraged and depressed. But when I step back and look inside and listen to that still small voice, I remember why I am here and why God called me here. I realise

that God didn't call me here because this effort was always going to be peaceful and harmonious. It is from this inner place that I can stay the course and persist. It is this kind of struggle with others that has caused me to access this spiritual centre within me.

I do believe that there is a reason that I am here in this position, and I am well aware that this is a big responsibility. I also recognise that getting this job done – transforming this organisational culture to one of spiritual care and values – is bigger than my own individual talents and gifts. So the challenges of this job – working with the dynamics of the organisation, and the resistance to these types of changes that is always present – has pushed me to go deeper and deeper inside, and to deal with my own spiritual understanding of who I am.

I also feel that the supportive relationships I have in my life have contributed to my strength in carrying out my responsibilities here. Besides spurring my spiritual growth, my wife, my spiritual teachers, my therapists, and even some of the consultants we have working with us have also provided an invaluable support to me for doing my job. These are people who really believe that I can do what I am doing and help me to stay in touch with what I really do have to offer this organisation, especially since in many ways I am not a business-minded person.

Third Story – Starting from the top

As I contemplate how to develop the programmes we have here, and how to disseminate our values throughout the organisation, I draw a lot from my background in pastoral care, counselling and teaching. But this is also where I have to recognise my own limitations. This is where one of our consultants has been such a resource for us because she brings a rich background in human resources and organisational development, and I have learned a lot from her. One of the things I have learned from her is that we have to take this spiritual approach into the organisation at all levels.

However, I knew from the beginning that it had to start at the top, and some of our most difficult challenges have been working with the senior management group. At the same time, one of the most rewarding, spiritually enriching aspects of this endeavour has been watching these same senior people get involved and articulate their own spirituality. The five values we are now focused on, I CARE (integrity, compassion, accountability, respect and excellence), really came together for us in our CEO Council.

While we have a system-wide committee of people called the “Systems Spiritual Care and Values Integration Committee” that generated a lot of the initial thinking about our values, it was the CEO Council that really embraced them; and they continue to be involved in the leadership of what we are doing. They also vacillate and waver from time to time, so I stay connected with them and continue to work with them; this is where my spiritual values and relationship skills have really helped me a lot.

Fourth Story – Integrating values in everyone's day-to-day work

As we move forward with our values integration effort, one of the things we are trying to do is to integrate these values into every aspect of the employee's life cycle: from the application process to the hiring interviews, all the way through the evaluation processes and exit interviews. We want to hire people who are the kind of people who will live these values and will fit with this environment. While we expect people to have the best clinical and technical competence, we feel that this alone is not enough – a person can be competent and capable; however, he or she may not fit into this culture. Living these values, which will in turn cultivate a spiritual environment, is just as important. The way our employees treat each other in their workgroup, the way they treat

their internal customers, the way they treat people who come here to be served – the way they go about treating people is just as important as *what* they do in their job.

The training process we currently have in progress will continue from now on. It will take us twelve months just to train our current 8,000 employees. However, we plan to make it a part of our new employee orientation. We also plan to expand this training as well.

The next phase we will be introducing in the next couple of months is called the “workgroup commitment process.” This is a process in which we ask all executives, managers, directors, and supervisors to engage the people who report to them in a process of looking at and integrating the five core values. They will first ask “Who are our internal customers and who are our external customers?” and “How well are we doing with the services we provide them?” Next, they will take each of the five values and ask “in our particular workgroup what does it mean to...” For example, in our day-to-day working with each other, what does it mean to show respect? This is exploring group-specific behaviours. I, myself, will start this process with the CEO Council.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

Health care is a very complex business and a very complex service. To whatever degree we are successful in bringing all of these complex factors together, I think it can result in people focusing around a central theme where they realise that the reason we are here is that *we care*. This cuts through all of the divisions that can be set up by religions and professional status and keeps us focused on our true purpose for being here.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

What success means to me in my career is a very interesting question because by most standards people would say that I have been very successful. And yet for me, I always feel that there is so much more to do, and there is so much more out there beyond where I am, that success seems to be something that is an unfolding process and not a point or level of achievement.

I think the heart of success for me is to make a difference and to try to do it in a manner where I can stay connected with people, with myself and with the Divine. It's important for me to do this with goodwill, charity, understanding, and compassion; although I cannot say that I am always successful with this part.

In my view, success for Methodist Health Care System would be connecting the world of spirit with the world of productivity in such a way that there is a blending, a “wholeness” that emerges.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

One of the things I like to share with other executives is: *Every figure we see on our financials has behind it another human being who had the misfortune of needing our services. We literally have no funds to operate with unless someone is sick, injured, suffering or dying.* I hope we can come to this kind of merger between Spirit and the world. To me this in no way diminishes the importance of taking a hard look at the numbers. However spirituality enriches the process and gives it a deeper meaning.

Developing an Organisational Culture

Beyond the steps we are taking to start our organisational change from the top and moving forward in phases, for me the most important way that I communicate about spirituality is through my direct relationships with people. This involves listening to people and sincerely hearing the fear behind their concerns. There is a natural element of scepticism that comes in to play here at Methodist Health Care System because over the years there have been programmes rolled out with a lot of fanfare that never really made a difference. So I try to both honour and allay those fears and help them to trust that we are all making a good faith effort to live the values we have set out for the organisation.

As a result we have deliberately avoided making a lot of noise about what we are doing. We're not trying to work completely behind the scenes, of course, because we want to involve a lot of people in the process. But we do let new ideas emerge as they are ready to take hold.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

In terms of our making a contribution to the rest of the world, literally we do serve people from all over the world; we have a very large international clientele. As we are able to serve people from the frame of reference that we care, hopefully they will take away from here a feeling that the quality of service they received not only took care of the physical concern they had, but also left them with a sense of wholeness, beyond what they even expected to receive.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

Relating to the other executives has been personally and spiritually rewarding for me. It has been exciting to see the other executives buy into and support the I-CARE Values. The spiritual dimensions of their efforts have been subtle but they are clearly a part of their involvement. In some cases the executives have found a renewed commitment to their own religious heritage and practice their faith more devoutly than they were before their involvement in the values integration effort here at Methodist Health Care System.

Relationship with Major Stakeholders

Our physicians have become involved in the process in a significant manner. We have had a history in which some physicians were so wrapped up in their reputation as a medical “superstar”; they would mistreat and abuse hospital personnel. The physicians themselves have put a stop to that kind of behaviour. They have embraced our spiritual environment and are being intentional about practicing medicine in the hospitals within the Methodist Health Care System in a manner that is consistent with the values represented in I-CARE.

Our hospital board members have also embraced values integration. They have adopted changes to our policies and procedures, and in some cases, our rules of governance that reflect our I-CARE values. They have also participated in our values surveys in order to be included in the picture of how values integration has taken place at all levels of the organisation.

The Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, the legal owners of the health care system, have been especially pleased with the changes they have seen taking place. The bishop and other church officials have all acknowledged that the relationship between the church and the health care system has never been closer than it is now.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

For me, the biggest challenge in my spiritual growth is with myself, as I work with my own ego and deal with trying to remember that all of this is not about me or what other people think about me. This is really about the people who come to this hospital for our services: the sick, the suffering and the dying.

I think that spirituality is about taking responsibility for what I have control over, which is only my behaviour, and disconnecting myself from the tendency to want to blame others and to shift the responsibility to others. When things are not going well, I still have a tendency to say, “It’s because this person is or isn’t responding as I think he or she should.” This is another area of growth for me, which is to accept personal responsibility for my life, my behaviour and my performance.

As I work with my own ego and my selfish nature, a positive part of this is the desire to achieve and to contribute. However, I am not the kind of person who really wants to stand out. Even though my position calls me to do that, I am really much more comfortable being behind the scenes and helping other people stand out.

I also think I am still growing in my ability to articulate what spiritual care means in an organisation like Methodist Health Care System in ways that people can understand and translate into their work lives.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

I am not a naturally structured person. So for me, processes are more evolutionary and unfold over time. I think that a lot of my guidance and decision making comes as a result of many things I do: my reading, my meditation and prayer, my journaling, and my working with and listening to other people. These all seem to come together for me as an intuitive sense as to what direction I should move in.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

One of the things I worked on last year is developing a model of coaching for spiritual leadership, so this is what I would draw upon if someone came to me asking for guidance in being a spiritual-based leader. Most of this comes from my background in teaching and supervising clinical pastoral education. I would first want to listen and ask them:

What does spirituality mean to you?

What does leadership mean to you?

What are you aware of, right now, about the disconnection between leadership as you now provide it and the spirituality that you've just described?

I would then encourage them to think about which places of disconnection are most important for them to deal with right now and talk about why this is an issue for them. I would also ask them to share examples of how this disconnection has played out in their relationships with other people. I would help them think about and design some alternative ways of handling people and situations that would reflect the spirituality that they described in order to connect their spirituality with their work. Then, over time I would work with them on the issues as they emerge.

One question that continually comes up is: *How can I be tough and exercise discipline with people and at the same time act as a spiritual person?* The assumption is that if you are spiritual, then you must be nice. So I ask them, "Has this always been true? Have you always experienced people who care about you and let you get away with things that are unproductive or self-defeating? Have you ever experienced someone who cared enough to talk frankly and honestly with you about what they were observing and to hold out bigger expectations for you to perform differently?" Most people can identify with these questions and can see the value of looking at discipline from this perspective.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an interview with:

ANDRÉ L. DELBECQ,
D.B.A.
USA



Interview conducted 3 June 2002

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation: Santa Clara University School of Business
Location: California, USA
Industry: Higher Education
Position: Director – Institute for Spirituality and Organizational Leadership,
Years in Position: J. Thomas and Kathleen L. McCarthy University Professor 3 (Institute Director); 10 (Dean of Santa Clara University School of Business); 23 (Professor at Santa Clara University School of Business)
Gender: Male
Age: 67

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Same
Current Location:
Current Industry:
Current Position:

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 25
Previous Positions/Organisations: University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio USA; University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin USA
University Degrees: B.B.A., University of Toledo USA; M.B.A., Indiana University; D.B.A. (Doctor of Business Administration), Indiana University USA

How to refer to André Delbecq:

“Former Dean of the Santa Clara University School of Business, USA”
 “Professor and Director of the Institute for Spirituality and Organizational Leadership at the Santa Clara University School of Business in the USA”

CAREER

Career History

I was twenty-six years old when I received my doctorate from the Indiana University School of Business, which is very young for completing a Ph.D. My interest has always been how innovation can be introduced in complex systems. Early in my career, I was focused on small groups and how they could enhance intra-group creativity. As a doctoral student, I sought to discover every footnote in the literature on creative problem solving in small groups, particularly those connected with the challenges of leading such groups.

After six years of graduate studies, I decided that I wanted to be more fully involved with people in on-going organisational circumstances and to do something with my education that “would serve”. So I went back to the University of Toledo, which was in my hometown, against the advice of my colleagues and some of the faculty who felt that my career would be better served by accepting a position at a major school.

However, I found myself drawn to the University of Toledo. I had two elders that I was responsible for residing in Toledo and returning would allow me to see them through their nursing home period and preparation for death. My main motivation, however, was that I wanted to work in President Johnson’s “War on Poverty”, a set of federal government programmes devoted to the urban poor. Working with The Office of Economic Opportunity (as the community based programmes were called) became a leadership and community change laboratory for me. The University of Toledo had a commitment to connect with and be a resource to the urban problems these programmes sought to serve. The College of Business was led by a wonderful dean named Edwin Hodge, who saw the noble purpose of the business school inclusive of enabling the entire community, including the poor in the community, not just the established businesses.

It’s hard for people to remember how divided our society in the USA was during the 1960’s. Ghettos were real; there was “the other side of the tracks”. Streets or railroad tracks literally divided neighbourhoods and blacks and whites did not interact with each other. One of the experiments of the War on Poverty programme was to provide the first opportunity for the poor people to design programmes themselves, relying on their own community’s leadership. These were called Community Action Programmes.

So I commenced working with black leaders. I had never been in a black neighbourhood and had never talked to a black citizen other than a nurses’ aide that cared for my aunt who had had a stroke. So for me crossing the colour line was like entering a foreign culture right inside the U.S.

I worked very intensively shoulder to shoulder with these community leaders shaping new programs serving the poor. It was a fruitful period in my life. I learned a great deal about the reality of leading groups engaged in complex change. I learned a great deal about trying to communicate across boundaries of the very divided conceptualisation and values that created a chasm between blacks and whites in that period. I learned about the struggle of the urban poor at that time. I came to understand the weaknesses of many of the social programmes and governmental efforts of that period. It was a learning laboratory regarding systemic change efforts.

Seven years later, I took a position at the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 1967. There I received an invitation to participate in research the Business School was conducting where they were documenting and analysing organisational innovations within the National Aeronautic and

Space Administration (NASA). James Webb, then Director of NASA, was convinced that we should remember NASA for what it had learned about managing innovative projects and programmes, not simply for the moon landing. Here was another experimental setting involved in very complex innovation efforts. I participated in the early studies of “matrix” organisation, an organisational form seen as a new way to structure project management.

Each of us involved in this NASA study was expected to carry the lessons of aerospace innovation efforts to another sector of the US economy as a form of “technology transfer”. The sector I chose was healthcare. The University of Wisconsin encompassed a distinguished medical school as well as an emergent health services administration programme. Later I worked with Dr. Alberta Parker, a professor and physician, then director of a research study focused on innovation in primary care medicine at the University of California at Berkeley. We established protocols for helping community leaders to design health programmes. This included travel to the American Trust Territories in Micronesia as well as throughout the mainland urban US.

It was when working with these Office of Economic Opportunity Programs that I developed the “nominal group technique”, one of my signature scholarly contributions. NGT was a protocol allowing a group of individuals who are separated in concept, experience and values to evolve a shared definition of a problem and identify the elements of a satisfactory solution. The work with the nominal group technique and a protocol called Programme Planning – which was a horizontal sequence of introducing change in multi-organisational systems – became my focal scholarship until I came to California in 1979. Note that these early efforts to understand innovation were predominantly public sector efforts. My scholarship and consultation was directed toward medical organisations, mental health organisations, fine arts organisations, and government urban planning organisations.

When I came to northern California in 1979, to an area now known as Silicon Valley, I had had very little prior contact with private sector business. I now found myself in the most dynamic business region in the world. I had grown up and worked in the Great Lakes area – Chicago, Toledo, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and Detroit – yet the economic value of the entire Great Lakes industrial complex was seen as lagging in economic value, while this industry complex occupying the mud flats around San Francisco was rapidly growing.

The business leaders in Silicon Valley obviously knew something about managing change that I, and other organisational scholars, didn’t understand. Despite the fact that I had been a student of managing change, I sensed that there was a new organisation paradigm emerging in Silicon Valley. Consequently, I arrived accepting the position as the Dean of the Business School at Santa Clara University with humility. My continued scholarship during the decade I served as Dean would be devoted to discovering how Silicon Valley Organisations created structures and processes that allowed such exceptional rates of innovation.

Current Responsibilities

I vacated the position of Dean of the Business School in 1989, allowing me to study even more intensely the organisational context of innovation within Silicon Valley until 1998.

It was only in 1998 that I began to engage in a systematic study of spirituality. Prior to that, I had been teaching a seminar where senior leaders came to the campus and entered into dialogue with the MBAs. These and other leaders continued to ask why our University did not have a course that probed the inner life of the leader. Because of their insistent request for such an offering, and inspired by some colleagues who had earlier been engaged in the study of spirituality within the Academy of Management, I finally accepted the “call” to examine the emerging interest

in work place spirituality. I devoted a Sabbatical in 1999 to studying at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and held a Contemplative Practice Fellowship funded by the American Council of Learned Societies, supported by the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

Today I continue to teach a seminar called “Spirituality for Business Leadership” (this course was originally named: “Spirituality of Organizational Leadership”) twice a year at Santa Clara University. I also lead an institute that facilitates dialogue between executives, theologians and management scholars. I am active in the Management, Spirituality and Religion Interest Group of the Academy of Management. But it is important to note that this focus on spirituality constituted a major career shift.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

For me, spirituality is particular to the individual. The journey is undertaken in light of your own personality, life history, education, spiritual tradition or non-tradition. It is that personal journey of entering into becoming the true self. The fruit of becoming is always a change in what you “do”. The test of spirituality is increased compassion and a new way of being present to and touching others.

In the Organizational Behavior Teaching Society (an academic American association focused on teaching challenges for faculty in management studies), we tried to define spirituality for two years and it was very unsuccessful as well as very boring. Then we changed the topic to “How is your spirituality impacting your teaching?” All of a sudden it was one of the most electric conference sessions that people chose to attend. So spirituality is less a matter of definition; it is more a matter of sharing our deep lived inner experience that one taps into and draws from in every aspect of life, including professional/organisational efforts.

Hopefully, an individual’s spiritual journey unfolds towards greater light as opposed to greater darkness; although I believe we have the freedom to make choices, and sometimes our choices lead away from light. So for me, the spiritual journey includes the choices you make in the unfolding inner journey. True spirituality seeks to avoid any dualism between the inner self and outer action. Our actions dealing with the secular and mundane are part of the spiritual journey.

That the spiritual can be integrated with (is not separate from) the secular is an important affirmation for the MBA students and executives who spend time with me at Santa Clara University. They begin to understand with greater certitude that it is in the “now” of the everydayness of their leadership efforts that the spiritual journey is lived and unfolds (if being an organisational leader is their vocational calling). The spiritual journey is engaged as they struggle with their daily tasks including the boring, the mundane, the frustrating, the agonising, and the rewarding.

It is wonderful to watch their increased inner peace even when they have a day that in the past they would have considered to be a day of misery. They develop the capacity to see that even struggles have meaning. They find that there is something to learn in every moment, and by remaining in touch with their inner peace even during trials, they are able to bring a different presence to the challenges. They know all too well that without spiritual awareness such challenges would lead to burnout and dysfunction. So spirituality is no longer a separate part of their lives; it is no longer peripheral to their leadership.

Spiritual Theme

Wonder is the theme that naturally comes to me. I have always loved innovation because I am continuously thrilled to see what was once only imagined (and partially imagined at that) emerge as an institutionalised reality. Innovation scholarship plumbs the mystery of creativity from concept to actualisation within large-scale systems. I have always had and continue to retain a great excitement associated with building collaboration between bright minds seeking to understand a complex problem and engaged in the discovery of a creative solution.

But now my sense of wonder is even enlarged. My eyes are opened to how the unimaginable emerges in all of creation; e.g. in nature in a blossoming flower, in the movements of the tides and

the mysteries of the sea. I am increasingly appreciative of the insights from each of my colleagues when they join together for innovation. So the world is filled with wonder, echoing the limitlessness of the transcendent.

I have always had a good sense of adventure: I love boating, motorcycling, and travel and I am willing to take risks. But in the past these activities have been something that I felt I had to work hard at, something I mistakenly thought depended primarily on me. Now I see such efforts as tapping into a mysterious abundance. I don't do much of anything actually; I realise how little I do. This is not to diminish the importance of what each person does, but rather to increasingly see how God (the transcendent mystery that bears a thousand names), is at work in people and in nature. This allows for increased inner joy even in the midst of the greatest difficulties.

Of course I still have days of great unknowing; I still sometimes experience desolation and anguish. Yet even these experiences don't disturb a deep core sense of peace and wonder as my spiritual journey unfolds. It's as if the fire just gets brighter and brighter as my life unfolds.

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

Spirituality and religion are, of course, not the same. Religion encompasses the belief system (dogma) associated with a world view, patterns of worship and ritual prayer, and brings together a community that shares a particular spiritual path and disciplines.

Spirituality, in contrast, is specific to the individual, and encompasses each person's lived experience. Each individual's worldview is never exactly the same as another's, even if they share the same "religion" since no two individuals have the same DNA, parents, life experiences, etc.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

In the past, I would have talked about my spiritual purpose (in the context of my profession) as encompassing my great joy in being a teaching scholar. I love being an academic. I have had many opportunities to become a consultant, to take an executive post in an organisation, or to work for the government. But I have been able to resist those temptations because I deeply appreciate the academic life. I love the privilege of being able to read and study. I cherish the opportunity to teach. I enjoy sharing ideas through publication. (Writing is a hard discipline for me, so I wouldn't say it is joyful, but it is satisfying.) Thus, in the past, I would have defined my life purpose largely in association with my service serve as an academic. This integration of my work with spirituality is still true; I think one's work is part of the spiritual journey.

But in these more senior years, I am much more content to let God be God, and am increasingly content to simply be in the presence of God without feeling that I always need to be doing something for Him, or anyone else. I have a much greater sense of the abundance of God's action through the cosmos, and the actions of many others. Yes, I am invited to play a part, but I increasingly realise I am not such a major player as I once thought I was. I feel privileged to be a modest contributor, but I know the world isn't awaiting my every word and accomplishment. I now understand God is the master builder so to speak. So I am able to both "be" and "do", whereas I would have defined myself mostly in terms of "do-ing" and less in terms of "be-ing" before my spiritual journey deepened.

This has also changed the way I teach. I now begin my spiritual seminar at the university with silent meditation. When I finish lecturing and the dialog ends surrounding a very complex issue, we return to silence. My seminars begin at 8:30 and end at 14:30 and the last hour is spent in shared silence. Students are given "homework" assignments to write in their journal, but to do so

also following periods of meditation. I am clear that the most critical learning and individual changes that occur within the inner lives of the seminar participants actually happen during meditation. I am a good teacher; I don't mean to minimise the contribution that I make through lectures and dialog. But in general, participant journals do not begin by saying, "During your brilliant lecture..." Rather, their ideas and insights most frequently begin with words such as: "During my meditation I became aware of..." So I know who is truly in charge of the universe now. It is actually very liberating, because I do appreciate what I am called to do and I still have a great sense of joy in it; but I have much less of a concern about being the symphony leader and am simply happy to play my instrument when it is appropriate.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

My first spiritual exercise begins at dawn. I am awakened every morning, much earlier than I would wish, by a four-legged exercise machine. So my first spiritual practice each day is to be accepting of my dog's enthusiasm for dawn. No matter how tired I am, I take him for a morning walk. This requires discipline. It would be easy to be grumpy about Augustus' delight in the dawn, but I've learned not to be grumpy. I just rise and begin a morning walk along San Francisco Bay with this wonderful English Mastiff. Then when I return, I read the newspaper, have a cup of coffee, and eat a light breakfast.

My second spiritual exercise (after accepting the needs of Augustus and walking mindfully) commences when my wife and I read together the Liturgy of the Hours, readings from the Psalms together with prayers and hymns. After praying with the Psalms, I spend twenty to thirty minutes in "apophatic centring prayer". Centring prayer is Father Thomas Keating's synopsis of a form of Christian meditative practice. Centring prayer follows the spirit of the spiritual text entitled *Cloud of Unknowing*. The form prescribes that the minute you are aware of a thought or a feeling, you detach from either as gently as a feather touching a pillow. Then you simply speak a sacred word as a sign of intention to remain open to the presence of the Divine, letting go of the imposition of personal thought or feeling.

So my second regular prayer discipline consists of the Liturgy of the Hours reciting the Psalms morning (and evening) combined with centring prayer.

Outside of prayer, a third conscious practice is to carry mindfulness into the actions of my day. In the Christian tradition, there is the discipline referred to as "living in the presence of God". Lawrence of the Resurrection spoke of the practice. It is the belief that one should commence each task conscious of God's presence, much as a Buddhist seeks to enter each task "with a beginner's mind". The intent is to be fully present to the next task, to be fully present to the next person one meets, and to be present with purity of intention that by doing so the task or relationship is turned into prayer. For example, before I open my e-mail I remind myself that I need to be present to the people who are trying to communicate with me. Before I pick up the phone, I pause to be present to the person calling. Before I begin writing, I try to be present to the truth and beauty in the content and to be mindful of those I will never meet who will read the words.

These are my major daily practices at this point in my life. When possible I also try to attend the Eucharist service (the Roman Catholic Mass) during the week if I have access to a Church. On Sunday this worship is central to my celebration of Sabbath. Since my religious tradition is Roman Catholic, I have usually attended Mass as a form of worship on Sunday. But earlier in my life I tended to return to work tasks after the worship service. Sunday now is a day where I nurture the body and spirit, do reflective reading, enjoy the outdoors, spend time on our boat, but try to

engage no chores and no professional work. I find Sabbath is wonderfully renewing. As a consequence Mondays seem much more sparkly than they used to.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

I discovered very quickly when I became the Dean at Santa Clara University that the decisions that mattered most for someone occupying this senior post involved “strategic decisions”. They were often stimulated by situations that were out of control. In all cases the means and ends were cloudy at the beginning of the problem solving process.

Earlier in my career, as a specialised academic, I could select decisions by accepting problems only in my area of specialisation. Problems outside my “expertise” could be referred to someone else. So as an academic expert I had the privilege of restricting my problem interventions largely to arenas of knowledge that I defined as my domain of competence.

When becoming a Dean, the problems that came to me were basically complex, unsolvable in the short term, and emotionally laden. They often seemed remote from my technical expertise. Yet I couldn't just say, “Sorry I don't want that problem.” Not surprising, I soon turned to prayer. I think that a leader cannot be a leader very long without turning to prayer, however one defines it. In any event, I would find myself either in my office, or in the Mission Church, saying, “I just don't know how I am going to deal with this. I need help and guidance.”

At that time, I knew I didn't know how to pray very well, although in terms of authenticity I actually was praying quite well. Still I didn't think of it as good prayer for two reasons. One, I hadn't often thought of the instantaneous movement of heart as prayer before this time. I had tended to think of prayer more in terms of formulated liturgical prayer. Second, I hadn't before fully understood the need for openness, or what Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit Order calls “holy indifference”. As an expert you tend to ask for help to “succeed” in carrying out what you have confidence is an appropriate course of action. In strategic decisions where both ends and means are unclear, it is necessary not to predetermine or close a problem definition and solution search early. Therefore remaining open to discovery, to the voices of others, and not to succumb to anxiety and fear is a new need one finds oneself praying for.

After I stepped down from my post as Dean, the Jesuits held a meeting of their Western province and I was invited to attend the conference. The Jesuits were gathering to respond strategically as a religious community to the new challenges society was facing at the end of the century. The Jesuit retreat master sketched multiple and seemingly unsolvable challenges. Then he said, “Now, let's go pray.”

The conference was held on the campus of Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. I observed these holy men finding quiet places along a bluff on which the campus is sited and moving into stillness. Before this time, I had never engaged a meditation practice, and I had never been inwardly still. I was a classic hyper-A personality. So in contrast to the Jesuits, I was pacing up and down while observing these men in perfect stillness. I prayed, “God, these men know something I don't know about prayer. Teach me.” I'd never seen people practice such complete quiet and stillness. They came back to the next session inwardly composed, whereas I was anxious.

As a result of this experience, I felt drawn to take a retreat based on the Ignatian exercises, feeling that this formative experience in the Jesuit tradition would help prepare me for more worthy prayer. I knew I was still a spiritual child. Yet I had enough sense to know that prayer really mattered and that I needed to learn how to engage in it. I was inspired by these men, whom I

could just sense that their ability to engage compassionate actions was built on prayer. I believed that prayer would be the path leading to a deepened spiritual journey.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Discovering a spiritual path as a leader

When I first moved to San Francisco in 1979 to become Dean of the Santa Clara University Business School, I was not prepared for the enormous goodness of the business leaders in Silicon Valley. I expected that they would be bright, competent and ambitious; I did not expect to find, by and large, that they were also people of enormous inner spiritual strength and obvious goodness. Their inner spiritual maturity helped to explain their ability to listen to others and to elicit ideas from people of all ranks. It helped to explain the great respect for the younger engineering and scientific cadres that is such a large part of the Silicon Valley story.

Silicon Valley elders knew things about leadership that I had not internalised even after decades of theoretical study. These were people of great power, yet there were subtle nuances about their presence – they were able to be with others in a manner that allowed them to bring out their best ideas and efforts.

As trust built between us, these leaders began suggesting that since we were a Jesuit Catholic University, our business school should have a course dealing with the inner life of a leader. I told them that we already had a distinguished programme in ethics, but this was not what they meant. I told them we had courses inclusive of attention to social justice, and again it was not what they referred to. I really didn't understand with any clarity their request. Spirituality was not at that time a shared concept in leadership dialog. Yet I could intuit what they were speaking of.

I also felt they were asking for something that I could not personally respond to, I suggested that maybe we could find a Jesuit someday to address their area of concern. I actually tried to hire a Jesuit who was well prepared in the area of workplace spirituality, but he accepted a different posting. Still, business leaders were persistent in asking for attention to the inner life of a leader. And, I continued to think that somebody should respond, but certainly not this old sinner.

Finally, at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, a few faculty within the Academy of Management began to publish at the intersection between spirituality and management. Authors such as Jay Conger, then at the University of Southern California, Lee Bolman at University of Missouri, Kansas City, and Bob Marx and Charles Manz at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst were among these early pioneers. I was impressed with their courage, but still thought that spirituality was not a topic I personally could appropriately address.

Toward the end of the 1990's, others were beginning to create forums for dialog regarding workplace spirituality. An important conference was hosted by Chancellor David Scott at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst with the title "Going Public with Spirituality in Business and Higher Education". Further, Bob Marx and Lee Bolman brought several MBAs to the Organisation Behavior Teaching Society. When I listened to these students describing the impact that addressing spirituality had on their perspectives as emergent organisational leaders, I was awestruck. Here were MBAs, who are often cynical regarding the intersection of spirit and work, speaking out of a depth of perspective that was breathtaking.

A few weeks later I was consulting with the University of Illinois Chicago Circle, and a lifelong professional colleague, Elmer Burack, visited with me at the airport while I waited for my plane. He said that he had read a book that changed his life called *From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A*

*Profound New Vision of Growing Older*¹². He subsequently sent the book to me. Rabbi Zalman in this insightful essay talks about the need for each of us to harvest the wisdom of our lives. I now realised that such an effort would have to be inclusive of spiritual wisdom.

A little while later, Peter Frost, a colleague from the University of British Columbia who had just returned from an intensive personal retreat, came to my home for a visit. I asked what he had focused on during his retreat. He replied that he was trying to think how best to use his last years of teaching. He asked me how I thought about the final years of my teaching. In truth I had never framed such a question. But as a result of these experiences I began to think about my final years as an academic; it was timely to do so as I had a sabbatical coming up.

I had intended to study innovation practices in France during my sabbatical. I had made preliminary contacts and had chosen the French city we would live in during this period. While driving to a conference my wife reminded me that we needed to lease our home since we were soon to depart to France for a year. I heard myself say to her, "I don't think I am going to spend my sabbatical in France." I honestly do not think that I knew I was going to say these words. I had not quite admitted the change in plans to myself yet. I continued, "I am going to study at the Graduate Theological Union and try to understand spirituality." She looked at me like I had just slipped off of a cliff and said, "Well, tell me what is going on!"

There's a line in Rabbi Zalman's essay that says if one decides to deepen the spiritual path and prepare to be an elder, than preparation is not primarily about knowledge or learning. Rather, it must be a commitment to deepen spiritual practice. I was well aware that I didn't really know how to deepen my spiritual practice, and my life had hardly been exemplary. So, returning to the Jesuit tradition, I decided my first step would be to undertake the spiritual exercises of Ignatius. I had no idea what they were; yet I knew they would launch me on a life-changing inward journey having heard others speak of their experience. And, they always spoke of the experience as being outside the ability of words to capture.

So, with some trepidation I commenced the Ignatian exercises under the guidance of a wise and compassionate Jesuit spiritual director, opening up my closet of repressed horrors that I had hidden in the depths of my soul and finding God's mercy. I also commenced intense studies at the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley, California in the USA.

As part of my sabbatical, because so many of our students at Santa Clara were from the East, I knew it would be important to study Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism, and not simply my own Christian tradition. I had never read in depth about any of these Eastern traditions. Even inside my own tradition, understanding contemporary spirituality was a new adventure. So I began reading both Eastern and Western literature. In addition, over several months I spent time with and studied under Chungliang Huang who directs the Living Tao Foundation, and is a tai chi dance master. I also studied with Mel McKnight whose wisdom includes North American Indigenous spirituality. However, at the core of the Sabbatical was studying with Frank Houdek, S.J., a leading teacher of spiritual direction at the Graduate Theological Union. I was also gifted with guidance from Rev. James McGee, a catholic priest who was also studying spirituality.

As my understanding grew, I began to put together an outline for a seminar for business leaders. I certainly was not operating out of confidence, but at this point I had discovered what it meant to surrender. For the first time in my life, I was willing to be God's fool. Now this is a tough thing for a senior academic. Your whole sense of self builds on your expertise developed over years of

¹² SCHACHTER-SHALOMI, Zalman & Miller, Ronald S., *From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older*, New York, Warner Books, Inc., 1995. ISBN 0-446-51776-3

scholarly effort. You never give a lecture unless it is learned. The currency of legitimacy is to know all the nuances before you dare to speak. Yet here I was preparing to teach in a new arena of knowledge where I was still a novice.

Fortunately, I had begun to understand that this spiritual path required me to give up the need to be the expert. Once having accepted this truth, preparation for teaching the seminar unfolded with constant surprises. Everything I needed was given to me. People whom I had never met found out about my efforts and provided constant new resources. So the knowledge I needed began to arrive through others.

Of course, I also worked very hard and read extensively. Each week, I wrote a major essay addressing an important topic I planned to include within the seminar. I would deliver the essay to my Jesuit mentor who was directing my reading at the graduate theological union. He was a wise and gentle man. He would close his eyes and in a calm voice, without embarrassing me or creating any discomfort, turn everything I had written upside down. I would return home and revise the essay. Two days later Rev. James McGee would receive the revision. He would frown and scowl as he went over the revision, and suggest many additional needed changes.

I was able to accept this mentoring from them both and from others, and was able to engage in what seemed to be endless revisions without being in the least bit upset. Somehow I was gifted with the beginner's mind and was at peace with my lack of both knowledge and wisdom. This was a very new experience for an arrogant professor – to be comfortable in the beginner's mind.

When I had finished my year and a half of study and preparation, I invited nine of the very best CEOs that I knew in Silicon Valley (executives with reputations for superior leadership within successful organisations) together with nine MBA students to participate in an initial test of the spirituality seminar for organisational leaders. Twelve individuals, equally distributed between the two groups accepted the invitation.

Let me close this portion of my reflection. The efforts to prepare for the forthcoming seminar took me into new spiritual space. It was not simply the newness of the knowledge I was acquiring. It was also my willingness to give up my safety zone of being an “expert” that was an even greater challenge. I had spent my entire adult life becoming an “expert”. I grew up in a modest family, and had been ill with polio when I was 13. As a result I was never able to play sports. So my compensation was to become a very good student and a very careful scholar. This allowed me to ward off feelings of inadequacy. A great deal of my academic “over-achievement” was doubtless born from these feelings.

Now I was launching into a scholar-teacher effort in a new subject matter about which I could hardly claim expertise. I was a 63-year-old spiritual infant and a scholarly novice in a different field. Anything I was going to do had to depend on God and not me. I don't remember where I first read the phrase “willing to be God's fool”. But I arrived at a point where I said, “I am willing to be God's fool.” To understand this you would have had to know of my prior arrogance born of defensiveness; of all the psychic walls I had built to avoid ever being an intellectual fool. I was really stepping off a high cliff, where I knew I could completely fail in this new endeavour.

The night before I was to deliver my first seminar session, my wife asked me if I was afraid. I told her I wasn't afraid – I was *terrified*. I had never said “God” before in a public place, and here I was about to commence teaching a seminar where God must be the centre of what the seminar was all about.

This initial alpha test of the seminar was very successful. Because of its favourable reception, I now have permission to repeat the seminar twice each academic year. Both MBA students and a few practicing executives attend each academic quarter it is offered.

Second Story – Facilitating with silence

I received a great gift by being appointed a “Contemplative Practice” Fellow, a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies funded by the Nathan Cummings Foundation. This grant helped to support my sabbatical in 1999. The Contemplative Mind in Society programme brought academics from law, business, architecture, political science, the arts, religion – from all academic fields to share together how contemplative practice could be included in teaching. I would listen to the stories other academics would tell regarding meditation as part of pedagogy. For example, a trial lawyer or an architect would discuss how they incorporated silence into their teaching. And as I listened I began to consider how meditation could be included in my seminar.

I particularly recall a professor who teaches the Holocaust, Apartheid, and American slavery. She includes all three tragic human stories in one course because she found that if she taught just one instance of great human evil individuals would say, “Look what you’ve done to us/them.” But if she taught the great tragedies together people came to understand that all cultures have histories of human evil. She also discovered that the study of these tragedies left students either with unresolved bitterness or anger. Meditation became essential to absorb these sorrows without disequilibrium.

Returning to my own effort, I began to conceive how to apply meditative discipline as an intervention in situations associated with leadership. For example, early in my spiritual journey, I was co-ordinating an international meeting with academics. We were involved in the leadership of an organisation that was going through a very difficult time of transition. There were some people who had been with the organisation for many years and were very concerned about maintaining important aspects of the culture that had been part of their history. But there were new members who were searching for the integration of new technology and perspectives from their generation. The organisation was also getting larger and needed to become much more professionalised and systematised. All of these elements came together around restructuring the governance of the organisation. People were passionate regarding both the past and hopes for the future. The meeting became more and more tense.

Based on my experience with the Contemplative Mind in Society Fellowship, I suggested the group enter into silence, and simply be with the meta-goals they held in common, letting go of all preferences regarding means. Now I have spent my whole life as a group facilitator, and thought of myself as a skilled negotiator. I am very good at dealing with intellectual challenges and moving toward innovation. But here, for the first time, I did something that I had never done in my life: I facilitated silence. After 5 minutes of silence, I asked the group to reflect out loud regarding the noble purpose of the organisation, what we really wanted the organisation to achieve for others seven generations from now. I then asked them to return again into silence. This time I asked them to reflect on the question: “What are the gifts of each person sitting at this table that we need to remind ourselves of?” After this period of silence I asked everyone to go for a silent walking meditation in the garden. Only then did we come back together to address the problems.

When we returned we had an electric sense of having stood at the edge of a terribly destructive confrontation – one that could have immobilised the organisation for a decade. This destructive confrontation was avoided because we went into silence. Such an intervention would have never occurred to me prior to the deepening of my spiritual journey and the Contemplative Practice Fellowship. It was a very different leadership intervention for me.

I remember reading about the wonder of knowing you have been in the presence of God. I remember at the end of this meeting feeling that whole meeting had changed its character after those periods of silence. I developed new confidence that meditation works in the height of ferocious organisational conflict, and that silence is a form of prayer appropriate for inter-religious settings. In this meeting we had many religious traditions present: Muslim, Christian, Jewish and even atheists. This “spiritual” intervention had rescued the meeting.

Third Story – Prayer and suffering in the life of a leader

The path that unfolds as I teach the spirituality seminar at the university flows out of my own deep beliefs regarding the spiritual path of leadership integrated with a Christian perspective. The seminar commences by examining the presence of God in all things. So we reflect and meditate on the way in which God acts in the contemporary organisation. We consider its role in providing products and services that are needed by human kind; how human gifts and talents are energised within the organisation, the presence or absence of a supportive community within its culture, the experience of justice or injustice, the charisma of wealth creation, and the manner in which society is supported through both taxes and philanthropy that is a fruit of wealth creation. We also look at potential or real darkness in organisations, without giving power to the darkness.

We then turn to the notion of leadership as a calling. We reflect on each person’s unique gifts, and affirm who they are in their “essential Be-ing”, and what they feel calling in “DO-ing” through the expression of their leadership. Participants begin to listen gently without being overly scrutinising and compulsive to the presence of God in the day-to-day-ness of their organisational leadership. Even if they have a sense that they may be moving to another organisational setting in the future, they discover that their spiritual journey is in the “now” of their present work setting.

The only way I have found to deepen the consciousness of self and organisation within the context of leadership is through meditative/contemplative practice. If you grow in awareness without simultaneously being able to surrender into the Divine, the experience is too overwhelming.

Then, as participants wrestle with this new awareness, which creates a certain amount of anxiety, we begin to examine prayer within the context of the leader’s life. Participants begin to understand prayer as openness and listening, as opposed to writing scripts for the transcendent.

We later look at the great temptations of organisational leadership: hubris (exaggerated pride) and greed. We study the spiritual disciplines and virtues that offset these darkneses.

Eventually, we have to come to the mystery of suffering. A transformational organisational leader sets out on a path that will take her/him into suffering. Participants must understand that leadership is not a place where suffering is escaped, but rather a place where redemptive suffering on behalf of the organisation is actualised.

Entry into these topics needs to unfold over a sufficient period of time to allow for prayer and meditation regarding each topic. Participants all say that the internalisation of learning requires all of the two weeks between each module. The spiritual journey unfolds in the fullness of God’s time.

Finally, I believe that a calling as a leader can succeed only if you pray deeply for the people you work on behalf of. Success isn’t simply a function of brilliance, structure, or process. It depends on the work of the Spirit, so I believe you really have to pray deeply.

At Santa Clara we have formed a meditation community (The Community of Joseph) and we meet for 3 hours every week for intense prayer on behalf of organisational leaders. Members of the community are primarily executives, who are often engaged in very complex discernment. The Community of Joseph exists to provide a place of intense prayer for leaders. (www.communityofjoseph.com).

I believe we need contemplative communities that pray for organisational leaders. We hold prisoners in prayer, physicians in prayer, statesmen in prayer, etc., but few are praying for business leaders. Yet business is a dominant societal institution in developed countries where the majority of the population spends their waking hours. So I believe we need places of very deep prayer on behalf of organisational leaders who influence these important organisations.

Fourth Story – Recognising the integrity of leaders

In a seminar I taught at the Santa Clara University, in the Leavey School of Business, entitled “The Management of High Technology” for MBA students, I used to invite prominent business leaders from Silicon Valley’s technology complex to come and talk about their most difficult problems. The difficulty might be a lawsuit, a product launch problem, the complexities of integration of businesses following a merger or acquisition, or ramping up for large-scale manufacturing. The particular challenges varied greatly. The purpose was to share the generic nature of strategic struggles where both means and ends are unclear as the leader embraces the problem.

Throughout the years, MBA students offered two major observations or leanings from their experience. The first lesson was how difficult such challenges were in a fast moving, contemporary, and complex organisation. No matter how tough they thought leading an organisation through such difficulties might be, their prior imaginings didn’t begin to capture the reality of the complexity these leaders were facing. These problems involved long lines of causation, required linking loosely coupled stakeholders in difficult alliances, and involved sustaining others through long periods of effort.

The second lesson was the enormous moral integrity of these men and women leading these corporations. The students came to see that what allowed these leaders to succeed was the fact that they were operating from a deep inner compass. These were leaders who were not opportunistic or exploitive. The focus of these leaders was serving society well through all the difficulties of evolving an efficient and effective organisation to provide their product or service in fast moving, competitive settings.

Still, these working professional MBAs would always spend more time in their reports discussing their impression of the courage, integrity and ethics of the leader than they would spend on the analysis of the exemplified business strategy. Note that these leaders were not invited to talk about ethics, or integrity. The focus was on business strategy. However their ethical and moral courage just flowed transparently through their discussion of whatever business problems they described.

In this seminar, on one occasion we had a leader make a presentation who was not particularly ethical. Rather, he was quite brutal and opportunistic. After he departed I asked the students for their impression of this particular presentation. It was summarised best by the statement of one young woman who said, “The Board of Directors will let him finish this particular task and then they will see that he is history.” She was right. He was removed as CEO shortly after speaking to our seminar.

The point is simply this: the majority of successful organisational leaders I have encountered in Silicon Valley are individuals of high moral and ethical functioning. The broken and twisted are usually found out and removed before rising to top leadership posts. Contrary to the impression one might form from media coverage of business scandals, we found the majority of leaders to be individuals of great inner depth and goodness. It was their personal integration that allowed them to rise to positions of leadership.

Later a few of these same executives who had spoken in the “Management of High Technology” seminar joined the first “Spirituality of Organisational Leadership” seminar. I remember one of the MBAs who was also a participant saying: “I am glad that I listened to these leaders first speak as very skilled business strategists. I would have been very intimidated going ‘back stage’ with them to explore the intimacy of our spiritual lives as the first step. I also now understand the spiritual depth required of senior leaders who perform well.”

Robert J. House at the Wharton Business School, University of Pennsylvania, reports that integrity is one of the defining variables that distinguish a leader. This variable holds true across nationalities and different cultures whether Chinese, Scandinavian, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, and so on. My MBA students understand the need for integrity very quickly. They can be with a leader speaking about a strategic challenge for just a few minutes and they quickly discern whether they are dealing with an integrated person (a person of high integrity) or by contrast with a narcissistic manipulator.

Still the question of how one arrives at such self-integration – the life development story and the spiritual journey of becoming the integrated leader – remains for many MBAs a mystery. So this provides one of the important motivations for our dialog in the spirituality seminar. We look at biography to discover the life development stories of great leaders.

I believe we need “lives of saints” to inspire us. Thus we need to study the lives of noble and good business leaders to inspire the next generation of business leaders. One of the gifts I can offer is an intimate acquaintance with many highly integrated business leaders in Silicon Valley. So relative to any topic, I am able to provide exemplification regarding lessons that I have learned through friendship with these leaders over the years. The lives of these leaders affirm that the “vocation” (calling) to business leadership can be a noble calling and a spiritual path.

Fifth Story – Stepping forward with spirituality in business

There are two things I never thought I would see in my lifetime: one was the fall of the Russian empire; and the other was hearing the word “God” spoken of in the Academy of Management. So you can imagine, not everyone applauded my decision to direct my teaching and scholarship toward spirituality. There were certainly colleagues in the Academy of Management who thought I had gone over the edge. Some of these colleagues who are secular humanists hold that spirituality does not belong in the Academy. They feel spirituality isn’t pertinent to the “science of management”.

No matter, as mentioned earlier, I arrived at the position that I was willing to be God’s fool. Certainly in the beginning, I had no idea what the outcome would be. I did not know how the “Spirituality of Organisational Leadership” seminar would be received by MBAs. I did not know what that the path of scholarly publication might be. Remember, this was in the late 90’s. At that time journals devoted to this intersection of management and spirituality had not yet commenced, and traditional journals only occasionally entertained the subject. The Management, Spirituality and Religion Interest Group within the Academy of Management that is now so robust did not exist. The large number of graduate students writing theses and dissertations on this subject

matter had not yet emerged. So I was “going public” before the general movement legitimating this new field of study emerged. Yet I must admit that everything was actually easier, because of an act of internal surrender. Once I decided that I couldn’t be humiliated whatever the outcome of my new arena of teaching and scholarship might be, then moving onto the new path was much easier.

I think God makes good use of each of us. The fact that I – a former Dean of the Fellows of the Academy of Management, former chair of three divisions of the Academy, a former member of the Board of Directors of the Academy, a former president of both the Mid-West and Western Divisions of the Academy of Management, a former Executive Director of the Organisation Behavior Teaching Society, a senior scholar with a reputation for rigorous conceptualisation – was entering this new field did provide courage to others. Later when we circulated a petition to the Academy to form an interest group to focus on spirituality, in one afternoon we had the requisite 200 signatures. (At this time the MSR Interest Group has become a very strong entity with quality emergent scholarship. All of these good outcomes have unfolded very quickly).

There is a wonderful French word that describes a blossom that suddenly opens: it symbolises for me the concept of “readiness”. Although I was not aware that it would be the case when I began this programme of teaching and scholarship, there was clearly great readiness on the part of both practicing professionals and academics to commence addressing matters of spirituality.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

I think a business exists to provide an innovative and compelling answer to a societal need in the form of a needed service or product. The successful “solution” encompassed by the product or service must be innovative in the sense that it continually seeks a solution at the edge of unfolding technology, and/or is efficient in a solution that encompasses high quality at a low price avoiding waste. So to me this is the discipline of business. This is what we ask of the business organisation, and this is how we should judge business organisations.

When this purpose is approached through a spiritual lens, it will be shaped differently in many ways. The needs you start becoming attentive to shift. You become willing to let go of many trivial and opportunistic concerns, and instead increasingly put energy into important challenges. The transformational system you create to receive inputs and transform outputs will also shift, allowing greater attention to stewardship, justice and inclusiveness of the concerns of all stakeholders. The character of the organisation’s culture will shift. The relational culture of the organisation will be more attentive to the gifts of all, and compassionate regarding each person’s needs. Your own willingness as a business leader to endure the mystery of suffering will shift. For example, your tolerance regarding the discipline of having to meet Wall Street’s expectations about profitability will shift. You will see all the elements of business challenges as part of a calling to service.

Because of this deeper perspective regarding the nature of business, a sense of patience and a greater willingness to endure hardship unfolds. All of the struggles of business leadership as a form of societal service take on a very different coloration when they are seen from a spiritual perspective. Servant leadership now becomes a reality.

Defining and Measuring Success ñ for Career and for Organisation

Regarding career success, I mentioned earlier that my perspective has changed. In my earlier years, I focused on craftsmanship, careful conceptual and analytical construction and so on. I certainly continue to value high professional/craft standards, but I no longer continue to believe that a career is “created” by self-effort. Yes, it is necessary to be as prepared as one can be, but then it is important to completely open to the unexpected. In truth, no matter how well prepared I am, I am not prepared – because life unfolds according to the mystery of the universe, of which I am a small player.

I now believe that it is important to be present to the unfolding “now” and to anchor your career to the compassionate path. In a similar manner, the unfolding of an organisation’s mission will encompass similar surprises and mysteries. Whatever our preparation, this will often take us outside the “comfort zone” of expertise, requiring the leader and the members of the organisation to be more open to the voices of others and to the transcendent voice that bears a thousand names.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

Football is a sport involving physical contact. If you abhor physical contact it is not a sport you should engage in. Business is a discipline that requires efficiency and effectiveness, resulting in a measure of profitability. If you abhor financial accountability, then business is not an appropriate calling. Having said this, financial and productivity concerns are disciplines, but not the core

purpose. For me the core purpose of business is service to human kind by providing compelling products or services that meet important and real needs.

Developing an Organisational Culture

The essence of organisational culture is in “relationships”. Relationships between all stakeholders encompassed by the organisation in its “open system” context must be truly “human”. In my Judeo-Christian tradition, the essential message regarding relationship is to “love others as myself”. In this spiritual tradition love needs to be the test of all aspects of organisational culture.

There is of course, as in all things spiritual, a paradox. Business requires competence, motivation and discipline. At the level of “actions” the culture (inclusive of reward systems) must take into account performance. Yet, we all realise that an organisation that simply focuses on performance is “cold” and “alienating”. So mystically, performance must be transformed into a form of loving service. We then can create a culture that sees disciplined effort as love, even “tough love”, requiring high performance without rejecting “unconditional” love.

A powerful example was given to me by a student who worked for a company that made electronic microchips. At first she said she did not think of her company’s business as “spiritual”. Then through the meditation experience of the spirituality seminar, she began to realise that her company’s product was in pollution control devices, medical devices, educational devices, etc; that the product served important human needs. She also came to see the organisation as an important steward of resources, of environmental protection in its manufacturing process, as an important creator of wealth for both employees and society, etc. Only when she possessed this “mystics” eye could she begin to reframe the cultural imperatives for her company.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

I think about problems such as “What are we going to do with the waste generated by computers and electronic products?” I am concerned with the problem: “What are we going to do about over-fishing the coastal sea shelf off the coast of California?” I think the government can put up warning signs, and can enact solutions in the present tense. However, I don’t think the creative answers for future generations will emerge through the government. Rather, long term solutions for all of these problems will emerge out of the creative energy that the private sector, acting at its best, unleashes. I believe that future businesses will emerge that are devoted to solving many of the paths of destruction that have been associated with our prior behaviour.

A familiar example is the salmon industry. One solution was thought to be salmon farming – avoiding harvesting wild salmon until they cease to exist as a species. Yet salmon farming has had it’s own set of challenges. It seems each time business solves one problem there emerges another set of challenges. Yet the innovative energy of the private sector exists to continue to explore creative ways to address each new issue.

As we collaborate with Spirit by deepening the spirituality associated with organisational enterprise, I believe business leaders will continue to explore entrepreneurial solutions to address present and future challenges. After all, products and services that provide solutions to important human problems is the reason that spiritually centred leaders find noble purpose in serving this sector of society. So I believe the private sector, when it operates with integrity, is a sector encompassing great hope in seeking creative solutions to important problems.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives and Stakeholders

What comes to mind are two boards on which I sit. Both are organisations that possess clarity regarding their purpose.

The first is a large health care system that resulted from the merger of several smaller organisations. The members of the board and the executive team conceive of their organisation as a “healing ministry” with particular emphasis on health services for the poor. Because of the clarity of organisational purpose, its culture is such that decisions constantly return to concern for the poor as an overriding value. Difficult decisions are undertaken to construct a portfolio of hospitals and clinics positioned within major market areas in service to the urban and rural poor. This also requires that sufficient market power is present in an individual setting so that the effort is financially sustainable. Very trying decisions have been undertaken to close some hospitals, to merge others, and to reinvest in others; yet the decisions are always calibrated against the organisational mission. This has required self-sacrificing discernment on the part of the leaders.

What makes decision making different in this setting is that these leaders are willing to place the needs of the poor ahead of personal ambition, convenience or financial gain. It is a different experience to participate on this board.

The second organisation is a technology company that has evolved a product that will provide an important benefit to human kind. This smaller organisation and its leaders are aware that they do not possess the brand, market distribution, or financial power to fully utilise their discovery. So we are engaged in discernment regarding the merger of the organisation with a larger organisation. As a result, the present management team will obsolete itself. In both of these organisations, the greater spiritual purpose of the organisation is resulting in decisions that can be characterised by a greater degree of selflessness.

Of course, leadership is always challenged to “obsolete itself”. A mission well performed often means the organisation will require a new skill set.

I find my role is frequently to support the courage required on the part of executives engaged in such decisions. I try to help them remain in touch with a belief that when a particular mission is accomplished, their skills will be well used in the future, however differently their gifts may be expressed.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

A timely spiritual challenge for me is the need to face the reality of my age. I was shocked when I saw myself on videotape not too long ago. I have had a certain image of myself. Yet there I was on a television screen as a much older individual than this self- image. My illusions of youth were belied by the reality of what I saw on that screen.

So I am in the process of discerning what I should contribute to at this life stage, in a much shorter period of remaining time than my immortality illusion has lead me to acknowledge. I am aware that I have already lived longer than any male in my family has; longevity is not part of my genetic history. So I need to rethink my professional role. I have been continuing a pattern of teaching, leadership, and professional activism just as I did at the age of 30. This is not a proper balance at the age of 65.

The next stage of my spiritual journey has to be inclusive of greater simplification and focus. I do not yet have clarity regarding these changes.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

I have come to appreciate the protocol of Ignatian spiritual discernment. In brief, it:

- Commits to a life that embraces meditative and contemplative practice every day
- Rests comfortably in a problem nexus while patiently seeking to discover the true underlying issues
- Seeks information inclusive of the voices of all those impacted upon by a decision
- Returns continually to prayer attentive to affective and intuitive insights
- Takes decisions with a degree of tentativeness
- And examines not only the factual outcomes, but also the “fruits of spirit” (e.g. peace, courage, hopefulness)

This is not to say I do this well. But it is the decision sequence I aspire to incorporate as an appropriate path for strategic choices, both personal and organisational¹³.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

Spiritual maturity helps us to realise our role is mostly to raise questions and to share the wisdom of spiritual masters (in my case inclusive of the wisdom of spiritually mature business leaders I have had contact with). The spiritual direction tradition in the Christian tradition always places Jesus in the role of primary teacher, and relies on the gentle nudging of the Holy Spirit working within the life of others. So guidance is not prescriptive in our tradition, and relies heavily on sharing the wisdom of our scriptures and spiritual writers.

I have 20 - 30 students in my spirituality seminar each quarter. As they share their journals and meditation reflections I am immediately aware each individual is travelling a spiritual journey particular to their individuality, and their career stage. They hear the same lecture, they read the same books, they experience a common dialog; but when you read their journals you see that each participant travels a distinct path and so hears and sees differently. Thus the notion that I can “prescribe” for another is not possible.

Rather my role is to be an encouraging companion, helping others to listen to the gentle inner voice of the Spirit. Understand I believe that my lectures, and facilitation of both dialog and meditation matters. However, what I do is a drop of dew in the spiritual ocean for it is really the Holy Spirit who is the spiritual guide.

¹³ Bridging The Gap Conference Proceedings may be downloaded from the Santa Clara University Web site: <http://business.scu.edu/ISOL/proceedings.htm>. Andre L. Delbecq, Santa Clara University, Elizabeth Liebert, SNJM, San Francisco Theological Seminary, John Mostyn, CSC, Christian Brothers Iona Institute, Gordan Walter, University of British Columbia “Discernment and Strategic Decision Making ‘Reflections for a Spirituality of Organizational Leadership’”, in Delbecq, Andre L. Editor, Bridging the Gap Between Spirituality and Religion: Proceedings from the Santa Clara Conference, March 9-11, 2001, pp. 10 – 42.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an interview with:

CAROL FRANKLIN
Switzerland



Interview conducted 3 November 2004

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation:	Swiss Re	World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
Location:	Switzerland	Stallikon, Switzerland
Industry:	Insurance	Non-Profit – Environmental Protection and Conservation
Position:	Head of Human Resources	CEO
Years in Position:	3 (20 total with company)	3
Gender:	Female	
Age:	53	

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation:	“Vorausdenken”
Current Location:	Stallikon
Current Industry:	Switzerland
Current Position:	Consulting (Cultural)
	Partner

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 20

University Degrees: Lizentiat (Masters Degree) in English language and literature, journalism and German literature, University of Zürich, 1975, Switzerland; Ph.D., 1979; Executive Management Course, Yale University, 1992, USA

How to refer to Carol Franklin:

“Former Head of Human Resources for Swiss Re Insurance in Switzerland”
 “Former CEO of the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in Switzerland”

CAREER

Career History

I was born in Bradford, England; my father was English, and my mother Swiss. We lived in England till I was 9, then the family moved to Zürich in Switzerland. I studied English language and literature at the University of Zürich and then wrote a thesis on women in the novels of three contemporary British novelists. I'm married to a Swiss.

During my studies I taught a lot at University and at schools in order to earn money. During my time at the university, I had a wide range of experiences, from serving at a bar to being a secretary for Uri Geller (famous for bending forks, etc. – I just happened to be around when he was looking for a secretary). I was also a receptionist for a hypno-therapist and was in the PR-business for Paramount Pictures.

When I was 28, I joined Swiss Re, the largest or the second largest re-insurance company world wide, depending upon how you measure size. I started off in the aviation department as a normal trainee and worked for 16 years in this department, working my way through the ranks, moving around basically from one part of the world to the other. The last three years of the 16 years, I was head of the department, responsible for all the aviation re-insurance for Swiss Re worldwide. It's a small job within Swiss Re, but a big job for the aviation market, because you are the market maker and you have the biggest capacity.

I was asked whether I wanted to take over the Human Resources department, and I did that for three years. I was responsible for both the operational human resources at Swiss Re Zürich, which employs 3,000 people, and on a strategic level for Swiss Re global, which employs 8,000 people. Before I went into Human Resources I said that didn't want to remain in a staff position for a long period of time. So after three years as head of the HR department I went back into the re-insurance business and did that for a year. Finally I decided that it was time to move on. I no longer wanted to work for this large company, although it is still one of the best companies to work for.

Being a Swiss citizen I did military service at the same time as having my job. Until 1995, I was a Commanding Officer of a Transport Company, and until 2003 a judge at the martial court.

In the beginning of 1999 I told everybody I was looking for a job, and I was offered the job of CEO of World -Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in Switzerland. This was a relatively difficult and very high-profile job. All the newspapers reported that I had taken the job; I was on the main news of the national TV. It was a very political job, though I didn't realise at the time how political it was. WWF has 250,000 members in Switzerland and about 150,000 sponsors, so you have 400,000 who pay and help WWF Switzerland, which for a country with 7 million people is quite a lot. It's a very powerful organisation; it has more sponsors, partners, and members than all the political parties put together. I worked there for three years.

For more than two years after my leaving WWF, I was manager of "In the Spirit of Davos". This was a foundation funded by the Confederation of Switzerland, the canton of the Grisons, and the region of Davos to promote an open and constructive dialogue between politics, business, and civil society on topics of globalisation.

Current Responsibilities

I have become independent. Together with my husband, I have a small company called "Vorausdenken", meaning, "Thinking ahead", which works on promoting ethics and sustainability in business. I'm on the board of three companies, which aspire to work on a sustainable basis.

I am also on boards of foundations. One is the LaSalle Institute in Bad Schönbrunn, of which I am the president. The Institute is part of the LaSalle House, which used to be an institution for further education, run by the Jesuits, a Catholic order of priests. The institute is inter-cultural and inter-religious and also has a lot of Zen (Buddhist) activities; I myself am not a member of any church. One of the Jesuits there, Niklaus Brantschen who managed the LaSalle House for 20-25 years, is a Zen master and a Jesuit priest. Another Jesuit is a specialist on Jewish culture.

In November 2004, I joined the Executive Board of the Swiss National Museum. There is one main museum in the middle of Zurich and 7 smaller museums. I have taken the position of COO for 18 months in this National Museum, which is going through a change of structure. They wanted someone for such a time-limited contract in order to find out whether they need an entrepreneur or an accountant. The accountants can't deal with the insecurities, and the entrepreneurs can't deal with the bureaucracy at the moment. They asked me to this because of the experience I had with WWF. There will probably be antagonism between the large central museum and the smaller ones, similar to what I experienced at WWF between the central office and the many local units. I want to help them with the change management – they have gone through so many change processes. I think I can coach them quite well, and they need bridges - and my speciality is building bridges.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

For me, spirituality and ethical behaviour are very similar. Spirituality may be defined as “caring for the earth in the widest sense.”

I was brought up a Protestant Christian, but I am not active in the church. My spiritual view of life includes being personally responsible for the earth, including people. It's like the “Hippocratic oath” taken by doctors. It deals with not doing harm, making sure that when you leave the earth it is not in a worse condition than when you got here, enabling future generations to live in similar if not better conditions. As an ecologist, I don't think there are any hard-core ecologists who are not spiritual, but that is not enough. Caring for the earth means not only caring for the environment, it also means caring for people. It's a sense of responsibility. I am more pragmatic - more “hands on” spiritual or ethical - than transcendental.

I think it is typically European not to use big words or to talk about God, although people from a lot of different cultures do that. That's why I find it so difficult to work with Americans; they use words that we as Europeans would never use, and they think that our critical way of looking at things is very destructive.

I believe that we will reincarnate after death, and that we are responsible for what we do - and that we probably will have to live with the results of our actions at some other time; a kind of karma-concept.

Spiritual Theme

Caring for and being responsible for the earth and its inhabitants. Be responsible. Be the change you want to see in the world. Help move the world forward.

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

I think spirituality is broader than religion. All religions must be spiritual, but not all spirituality must be religious.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

My purpose is to be responsible for what I do, and to do whatever I do the best that I can. Possibly you have two types of spiritually inclined people: there are the ones that go their own route in trying to transcend their own person; and there are people like me who focus on their responsibility, on how they impact others and the world.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

I have been to the courses at the LaSalle Institute. The slogan of the institute is, “Zen, leadership, ethics”. I have participated in Zen-courses, but I found that that is not for me. I meditate on a regular basis.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

I grew up with a strong sense of justice, fairness, and responsibility. My father had a great influence upon me. After the 2nd World War, around 1947-48, my father went to Italy and found that arms were being smuggled, so he reported this and subsequently had to flee from Italy. His sense of fairness and justice had a very strong impact on me.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Not working for money only

In 1996 everything was changing at Swiss Re. As the head of the Human Resources Department, I introduced training on a worldwide basis for developing our employees' potentials. I had to introduce many changes in the way things were run. I introduced a new remuneration system, which included a bonus. At the time, I thought this was a good idea.

However, after about two years I realised that we were giving the wrong people the wrong bonuses, and that the way it was being done was not really fair. I went more or less into opposition, as I felt it was going in the wrong direction. We said we would compensate teamwork, but we compensated individual performance – as if there is any such thing within such a large company. We were rewarding people to work against the interests of the company.

If you measure performance on the basis of figures in such a business as re-insurance, which is a long term business based on trust and confidence in your business partners and your employees, and you give them a bonus on an individual annual basis, it's going in the wrong direction. People used to feel – and Swiss Re was known for this – that “we like to work for the company, because we're part of the family,” “we're part of a good company,” “we help people who have lost their house,” or whatever. But now it was going in the direction of purely making money. One department would say “this is ours, not yours;” they didn't work together any more. The company was going in the wrong direction.

I started off believing that bonuses were good, but then I came to the conclusion that bonuses in general lead to corruption, because they assume that people only work for money and not for intrinsic values or because of intrinsic motivations. If you assume that people do that, then they become like that, and then they will only work for money, and you lose the best part of the people. That's why I said, I can't agree with this any more, and I have to leave.

Some of my colleagues thought that leaving was over the target, but if they had been there for a long time, they agreed. My superiors, mostly new people who came in from banks and not from insurance companies, were very much in favour of this bonus system. Greed was getting to them. And that is why I left.

Second Story – Changing people's behaviour

Within the ten years before I joined WWF, 9 CEOs had left, and the year before I joined they did not even have a CEO. When I joined they had especially been looking for somebody from business, but the employees were not so happy with this, because they thought it was a different culture; and so it was. This gave me a relatively difficult start, because a lot of the employees were totally against me and opposed to me simply because I came from the world of business.

We went into a new strategy, the conception of which I was able to participate in from the beginning, which was very lucky for me. That strategy worked quite well. The strategy was to change peoples' behaviour – to show them that you have to change your own behaviour if you want to change the world. It was kind of Gandhian, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” If you want to change the world, you have to find the longest lever, and that is business, because if you get business on your side, it is easier to change peoples' behaviour. That meant that on the one hand we wanted to work with business, we wanted to “green” business. On the other hand

we wanted to change the consumers' behaviour - which meant that we were showing them the ways and means to change their behaviour. By doing that, they could influence politics and they could influence business, because obviously business does what the consumers want it to do. That was very successful. We had partnerships; we introduced the first and only real "green" electricity at the time and worked well with lots of corporations. We had an excellent image, and were constantly present in the media, always on a very positive note.

In Switzerland, as in many countries, if you look at the credibility ranking, the NGOs have the top credibility, and at the bottom you have the politicians. As an NGO, our biggest capital was credibility, and that was something we really had to look after. It all worked relatively well for about two to two and a half years, but then again, as with my predecessors, we ran into a structural problem. Most of the NGOs in Switzerland are somewhere between 20 and 40 years old, and they moved away from being in opposition to everybody else, and from being a grass-roots honorary based membership or contributor-organisation to a professional organisation.

There was a gap between the professional way that 180 people worked in the national administration, and the way the chapters in each of the 26 cantons (Swiss 'states') were run with more or less grass-roots-people, who had great local interests. The difficulty was trying to goad them into accepting the strategy, recognising that what they did was very important, but had to be the same as what we were doing on a national level and what we were doing on an international level.

So we had the international, the national, and the local level, but in these 26 chapters they had always been able to do whatever they wanted and had not been really integrated into the overall strategy. They didn't think it was great fun, because they felt we were curtailing their rights. So there was a gap between the locals and the professionals. The locals said, "We are not being paid for this, we are working on an honorary basis, so we can do whatever we want to." We said no, and my suggestion at the time was to pay them something, like the firemen who work on a voluntary basis. Then we could draw up contracts with them and say, this is what we agree to do; you agree to do this, and we agree to do that, and if you don't do that, then we don't want you any more. They didn't like that very much, obviously.

These chapters elected over half of the members of the board. So people from the chapters went to the board and said "We don't like what the professional part is doing, because WWF is the local part" and some of the Board members, having been elected by the chapters, agreed.

Another thing is that the board had no idea how such an organisation with 180 employees and 45 million Swiss Francs of income (roughly US\$35 million at the time of the interview), in my opinion, needed to be managed and led. If you change the strategy, at some moment in time you will have to talk to the people and see if they want to be in this organisation - to see whether the organisation is right for them. If you or they come to the conclusion that the organisation is not right for them, then you have to do your best to keep things on a friendly basis so that maybe you can still work with that person, somehow, in the future. If the organisation changes its focus, then you possibly also have to make changes in the organisation and change the way the people work. But the board didn't understand this strategy. Also, they didn't keep their word. They decided things in board meetings and did the opposite two days later.

So what happened? They fired me! But because the employees had by accepted this strategy and supported it, and because the media was very positive about the changes, the employees as well as the media stood up and said, "You can't do this, you can't fire her." So WWF was again all over the media and the organisation lost an awful lot of members. Practically all of Switzerland and all the employees stood up and said, "No, this person is better than the board, you have to

fire the board and not her,” which they didn’t do of course; the board won. But that’s why for me, being fired was not such a bad experience. That was three years of WWF.

I knew exactly what I was doing. Eight months before I was fired I went home and said to my husband, “If I carry on like I am working now, they are going to fire me. Can we live with this?” And my husband said, “You can’t live differently.” This for me was an ethical question. The board was going against the organisation, and I found that I was not there to work for myself; I was there to work for a cause. With all these employees who were of the same opinion, I was willing to jeopardise my job because of the cause. That is why all the employees and all the media went for this. They all said, “This is what ethics in business is about.”

Being fired was for me one of the most important points of my life. For me it was simply a matter of principle - if you believe in something, if you believe in something good for the cause, you stick to it.

Third Story - Transparency as to salaries

While I was CEO at WWF, we changed the remuneration system. We decided that it was going to be totally transparent. A group, mainly consisting of employees, rated the positions and that was put on the Intranet. Then the individual employees were rated accordingly, and those ratings along with their salaries, was put on the Intranet. Also we made the decision that the highest salary could not be more than five times the lowest salary. This new system went well; out of 180 people only 4 people said that they were not in agreement. One said that he thought that his colleague at the next desk was not earning enough. One said that we had rated the positions incorrectly, and two said that they thought that they were actually earning enough, but when they saw how much their neighbours earned they thought they should earn more. We looked at these four, and we agreed to make corrections as to two of them.

We had to explain things; I think that is the attraction of this system. It’s not that everybody is treated the same or everybody receive the same salary, it is that you have to think very carefully about the differences, which forces you to think and to be able to explain the differences. And there should be differences; I am all for differences, not everybody in the same position does the same job or does the job as well as others. But you have to be open and transparent about why one earns more than the other. It’s taking people seriously; it’s taking care of people.

Fourth story – Increasing the opportunities

In Swiss Re (which later on changed this policy) as well as in WWF, we made it our policy to employ handicapped people. For example, in WWF we had an apprentice who was very hard of hearing.

When I was head of Human Resources at Swiss Re, we increased the number of apprentice positions from 6 to 45 in three years. It’s important to be able to educate and train young people.

What I also did in Swiss Re was increase the opportunities for women. That was easy. When I took over HR we had 15 women in middle management, and when I left 3 years later, we had 45. On the senior management level we had 2 when I took over, and when I left we had 12. This was all part of my established policies based on my spiritual orientation of caring for people. And I think it is good for the business, too. If you do business on an ethical basis, you’ll make more profit and get better employees.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

The purpose of business is to make the world a better place for our children. I do NOT think that the business of business is business. You can say that the purpose is to make a profit, but it must be an ethical profit, profiting the employees and the communities they are in, making products that are worthwhile and that do not harm the world. Only sustainable businesses that care for people, the planet and profit will survive.

I declined a lot of jobs before accepting the position of COO at the museum. A multinational pharmaceutical company asked me to work for them, but I said, no thank you. They produce a lot of things that I don't think are good. A grand casino asked me to be on their board, and I said no, it is not going to be in my portfolio. I will only work for a company that has good products that make the world a better place. The idea is that the product itself has to be worthwhile; it has to be in alignment with my spiritual view of life, which is caring for and being responsible for the earth and its inhabitants.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

Feedback from clients, employees and the press are important for the organisation. 360 degrees evaluation, you might say. If your NGO gets positive reviews in the press, if more members join your organisation, if more people give money to your organisation, that's success. It's relatively easy to measure in an NGO such as WWF. When people said, "I trust this NGO a lot more now than I did three years ago," - that is when I took over, - I considered this to be success. Although they were very sceptical when I arrived three years earlier, if I had not been a success as a leader, the employees wouldn't have backed me when the board wanted to fire me. Nor would the press have reacted in such a way. Our membership grew by 10 pct, which is a lot because we had a very big membership. When I left, it dropped again. We also grew the income from 30 million to 45 million Swiss Francs (US\$23 million to US\$35 million) within the three years I led the WWF.

When I left because of the major conflict between the grassroots' enthusiasm and the professional leadership, the board was split, and many people had to leave the board as well. WWF was essentially non-existent for two years, which was very, very bad for the organisation. This made me wonder, of course, if I had acted correctly, but the organisation probably needed the crash to be able to rise out of the ashes.

Developing an Organisational Culture

Thinking of my forthcoming work at the National Museum, it is my hope, that everybody within the organisation will share a vision of where the museum will be in five years time, that we will all go in that direction, and that everybody will go along more or less at the same pace.

The idea is to develop the vision using a process that engages the employees, where we agree on the milestones. My job as COO of this organisation is to make sure that people then do what they say they will do. On the one hand it's organisational, but it's also spiritual in the sense that you are responsible for your own behaviour. If you say yes, then you do it.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

I usually have very good relationships with the people who work for me, and, depending upon my respect for them, I have very good relations with my superiors as well. In Swiss Re there weren't any women around, so it was difficult to find out whether the difficulties that I had at times with my colleagues were because they were all men, and I was the only woman, or because of my trying to do business in a different way. But we remained friends. Most of the friends that I have now are from Swiss Re or WWF.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

One of the focuses of my life is change. Not everybody likes change as much as I do. I have to learn to initiate and to implement change more slowly and accept what cannot be changed. At times I have great difficulty in doing that. I have experienced that when I say, "We can change it", many people say, "No, we can't change that, it's not worth it." But if I think they are wrong, I stand up for my view that we should change it.

I have just accepted this job at the Museum where I want to learn to integrate this orientation towards change into my leadership behaviour. The museum is part of the national administration, and the national parliament has to make the final decisions. That takes time. I have to do the lobbying. One of the reasons that I accepted this job was that it could be the ideal example for me to learn to do this, how to manage change in a bureaucratic organisation.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

I'm very pragmatic. From my time in WWF, I have learned to ask questions. If I'm not sure what to decide, I imagine a journalist, as was often the case, coming up to me at 4 PM, saying, "We'd like you to present this on the main TV news programme tonight." If I think "Great, I can present it to over a million people," I will do it. However, if I start looking for excuses like "I have a cold" or "we are not quite there yet", then something is wrong and I don't do it. It's very much a matter of intuition. Even though you have done your homework and know all the pros and cons, in the end it's a gut feeling.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

My advice is to be the same person at work as you are in your family-life. You have to be able to live with the values that you have as an individual in your work-life, because otherwise things won't work; at least for me. You have to have your thoughts, words and deeds work together. I think it is well worth saying, that it is fine to accept a job that is not well-paid; if you are in the right place, and you are comfortable with the values, then the career will happen by itself. My advice is: 1) Get the fun job. 2) Don't split your values. 3) If you don't like what you are doing, get out of it; you won't be good at it.

At Swiss Re we had a 'Daughter's day' where the daughters went to see where and how their fathers work. One of the daughters came back home and told her mother, "Daddy is so different at work than when he's at home." I think that is a very bad sign. That's why I have always tried to involve and inform the families of the employees about their place of work. This applies of course to my own family as well. I have two stepchildren. At Swiss Re, when I had a lot to do at work, I

took some of the work home, and my stepdaughter who was ten years old at the time, worked on the calculator in order to find out what the premium should be for an airline. My stepson came to work at Swiss Re, and my stepdaughter came to work at WWF during their holidays.

Most people want their leaders to be spiritual and ethical; they want to know what their leaders think about ethical issues. It's a question of courage. A lot of leaders do not have the courage. You should lead by example, and then you can explain why you have done what you did. If the employees, the clients, and the customers see that by doing something in an ethical or spiritual way gives you better results, then you can explain why and how you have done it. Then you can talk about ethics or spirituality, because then they will see that it is more successful, also from a business point of view. The courage of doing things that people haven't thought about is something that will get you further. Do first and tell afterwards.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full interview
transcript with:

**RAJAN
GOVINDAN**
USA



Interview conducted 26 April 2002

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation: Bankers Trust
Location: New York, USA
Industry: Banking/Investing
Position: Senior Managing Director
Years in Position: 18
Gender: Male
Age: 56

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Bear Stearns Asset Management
Current Location: New York, USA
Current Industry: Banking/Asset Management
Current Position: Chief Operating Officer

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 35

Previous Positions/Organisations: Management Consulting, Deloitte & Touche, USA; Chief Administrative Officer, Lord Abbott & Co., USA; Director, OCLC Strategy Consultants, USA

University Degrees: MS-Operations Research, New York University, New York USA, BE, BITS, Rajasthan, India

How to refer to Rajan Govindan:

“Former Senior Managing Director with Bankers Trust in the USA”

“Chief Operating Officer of Bear Stearns Asset Management in the USA”

CAREER

Career History

I've worked now for about 32 years and was an engineer by education. My first job was in the systems technology field, where I worked for a company called EDS (Electronic Data Systems) in Dallas, Texas, USA. From EDS, I went to work for what was known at the time as Touche Ross & Co. in their management consulting group. They are now known as Deloitte & Touche. This was from 1974 to 1981.

In 1981, I joined Bankers Trust and spent 18 years with them. At Bankers Trust I did all kinds of things. I helped them to set up an internal management consulting for my first four years there, and then I was asked to run their domestic trust service department. I ran that for about 2 years and then was asked to take on a bigger role with the 401K department that managed corporate retirement accounts; I ran that for almost 5 years. It was quite natural at that time to be given bigger jobs and more responsibility. At the time I started with the 401K department, it was losing a million dollars a year. Within 3 and one half years it was making US\$100 million and became the number one provider in the USA.

I was then asked to run a marketing function for all of the retirement services. Then, for just one year, I was asked to run the technology function; and then I came to run the domestic private banking department. At that time the technology at Bankers Trust was all decentralised and there was a lot of management turmoil. When they decided they wanted to bring all of the technology together, I was asked to run that for about a year and a half. It was fun; however, I do prefer to run the business side. Then Deutsche Bank bought Bankers Trust, and a lot of us left at that time.

I thought I wanted to try working for a small company because I had always worked for a huge company. So I went to work for a small company named Lord Abbott with only 400 people, as opposed to 20,000 people at Bankers Trust. I was the Chief Administrative Officer, so I had technology, operations, finance, everything reporting to me. I was there for four years. I found that working for a small, family company was okay, but since I was not part of its founding members, it was hard for me. I didn't know this when I went there. There was also another distinct difference with this company. It was managed much more on the latest gossip among the employees rather than on procedures, as I was used to, and I was uncomfortable with that way of operating.

After leaving Lord Abbott, I went to work for an independent consulting firm as a founder with several men I knew from the past to do some strategic management consulting. This was a wonderful opportunity for me to try something new and different. It took us four years to build credibility and begin earning a steady income. We were able to recruit a team and finally began to see the fruits of many years of investment. At that time I was hoping to get myself organised to where I could do consulting a few days a week and put some balance into my life.

Current Responsibilities (updated as of January 2006)

Out of the blue, late one night I got a call from the CEO of Bear Stearns Asset Management asking me to consider coming to work for them. I was reluctant to change, but I went to talk to the CEO and also talked to many senior people there.

Before making a decision, I went to India to spend some time with my spiritual teacher in his ashram and was hoping, either directly or indirectly, to get a hint of what I should do. Several

spiritual thoughts came to my mind while there, “Don’t retire, but re-tyre”, “Work is worship”, and “Laziness is not godliness.” Also, being in the ashram in India, I felt strongly that nothing happens unless willed by God. I was not sure why I should change, but the financial offer was good.

I concluded from that visit that I had not completed my “karmic¹⁴” obligations of working in a corporate environment and that is why I needed to go back into the competitive stressful environment. But since then, after taking the Chief Operating Officer position of Bear Stearns¹⁵, I have realised that the only reason I am in this job is because God wanted me to be here, and now I am interestingly not worried or stressed out. I work hard and do my best, but now for the first time in my life, I am not worried about the result. I will drift along knowing that I will get to wherever I am destined to be.

¹⁴ My understanding of “karmic debt” is that each one of us gets exactly what we desire based on what we have done in this life or previous lives. God orchestrates this perfect cause and effect phenomenon through nature and natural processes. All natural processes have been designed precisely by God.

¹⁵ Bear Stearns Asset Management has 12,000 employees worldwide, a total capital of US\$57.6 billion and total assets of US\$292.6 billion.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

To me, spirituality in the workplace means two things: one is you have to be “correct and righteous.” I hesitate to use the word righteous because it has many connotations, but you have to be very correct in how you conduct yourself at work. I think this is one of the most important things and it can apply to everyone. The second is more personal to me, and that is that God has given me the work to do and I must leave the results up to God. It has taken me 35 years to really understand this, and today I understand this even more. Work is an activity that has been given to me to do by God and I must do it well.

Spirituality to me is also that people should behave as human beings; this is actually what I mean when I say “correct and righteous, or correct behaviour.” To me this means that you must be honest, fair and objective. My personal goal is to become more human, not to be an animal as my spiritual teacher, Sathya Sai Baba, says. To me a human being means to act with right conduct, to act with moral character in everything that I do.

I think there is a spiritual maturation process. I know that God is in me, but I still struggle to say, “I am God.” I do not feel that I am good enough to say that at this point. I would like to believe that God and I are the same, but I know I’m not there. It’s just my inadequacies that cause me to not be able to say, “I am God.” I do know that God is within me, and He makes me talk, see, hear, etc. I wish I could say that “I am God,” but I still have too much baggage at this point. I still get angry and have desires and this prevents me from being able to say, “I am God.”

Spiritual Theme

To me this would be “happiness and contentment” and “to act with right conduct.”

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

To me spirituality is very different from religion. Religion is about rituals, whereas spirituality is more about understanding what you are doing and how you are living with right conduct.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

When I look at my life, I would say that I must pay off my karmic debts. I think we all have two kinds of karma, both a spiritual and a physical debit/credit book that we carry. This isn’t necessarily scientific; it’s just my own personal definition. But I believe that we are born to pay off this karmic debt.

To me, paying off this karma means that you live your life the best you can and keep doing what it takes to make you a better human being. Some people you look at are very spiritually evolved and they are living properly, but then they get cancer. So why would someone who is spiritually evolved get cancer? And then there are those who are not spiritual at all who live a perfectly healthy life. So I think we are progressing on a spiritual path, and a parallel physical path, where we are consciously trying to become a better person. There are some people who don’t even know anything about spirituality, but this is the same even for them. I think you can live well without knowing about God. This would just be a more physical path.

A core value for me is what I call happiness. To me, happiness includes love, truth, peace and non-violence. For example, yesterday I bought 5 individual train tickets and stuck them in my pocket. When I went to use one of the tickets, there was only one in my pocket. I looked for the other tickets everywhere and couldn't find them. Instead of getting upset, I felt at peace. I said to God, "If you want me to lose these tickets, then that's okay. Maybe someone who needs them will find them." Later that evening I was cleaning out my pockets and the tickets were all there. I thoroughly believe that if I had gotten upset, I would have never found the other tickets. I turned it over to God and this is how it turned out. This is what I am working for. Whatever God wants, I am willing to accept. I am willing to be content.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

Many years ago, I was speaking with my spiritual teacher, whom I call Swami, and he told my wife, "At night he tosses and turns, very agitated." I said, "Well Swami, then maybe I should stop doing this work." I was wanting someone to tell me not to work so much; I would leave the house at 5:20 in the morning and get home at 8:00 at night. He said, "No, no, work is worship. So you should work, but get balance in your life." At that time I didn't know what "getting balance in my life" really meant. As I am coming to understand balance more, I realise Swami meant equipoise – do your best and leave the result to God and not worry!

When I pray in the morning and at night, I do not ask for things for myself or my family. Instead, I ask to be able to think of love towards all. I try to think about the times that I have not spoken with love or when I got upset, so that I can learn from them. If I know I have something tough I am going to face that day, I pray that I will not lose control. Then in the evening, I look at what happened and see if I lost control or not and most importantly thank God for a wonderful day and a great life.

All of my spiritual exercises are about how I spent my day. I don't have the ability or desire to do all of the things that other more spiritually evolved people do. My path is to focus on acting from love each day, each moment, and not reacting. I start the day by praying that I can live the day this way and then at the end of the day I look to see how well I did. If I did not act properly then I apologise to God for that.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

My parents have always gone to the temple and were very religious. The temple is where we went to do our religious rituals. I believed there was a God, but I had no clue as to what God was. So being with my spiritual teacher for the last 26 years has helped me to internalise what this is. I don't feel that I actually need to go to a temple now; I find no satisfaction from that. I know that God lives inside and I think about Swami. Being here in the USA for 36 years, it has taken all of this time to continuously focus on "How do I become a better human being?"

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Exploring the issues of when to let employees go

I feel as if only in the last 7 years or so have I internalised the spiritual principles that I've learned. Before that time, it was more superficial, although it was always important for me to be honest with a customer and to admit a mistake if I made one. If I did not act this way, it would really bother me. And I tried to get everyone around me to be the same way. I made it a rule with anyone who worked for me, that if we made a mistake we must call the customers and tell them.

The challenge in all of this for me was what to do with a person who made the same mistakes over and over again. You have to realise that at Bankers Trust, our retirement account customers were huge corporations like IBM and General Motors, so if we made the same mistake even twice, we were running the risk that they would fire us. Also, we would from time to time have to write off millions of dollars due to these mistakes and that would affect every person's salary and bonus pool. So there were major consequences if we did not do our job correctly.

For years, I simply let people go the first time they made a mistake. Today it would be very painful for me to fire a person, whereas in years past, I didn't feel the same way. I was looking out for the customer and that is what justified my actions. Today, looking back, I feel much differently and would try to help them not make the mistake again. If they did make a mistake a second time, then I would try to help them find another place in the company where they would be better suited.

Now I am aware of the suffering that these decisions have caused others and their families. Previously, I felt it was their problem, not mine. Today, I feel their pain and it bothers me, that is why my outlook on these situations has changed.

At Bankers Trust, ultimately I was responsible for the managers who had to let people go. Unfortunately, I was not strong enough spiritually to help them see this from a spiritual perspective. However, I did tell them to be fair and help the person distinguish between right and wrong. I also tried to give a person as much severance compensation as I could when they were let go.

There are some exceptions, but for the most part, I know that people make mistakes because they are not competent, not because they don't care. I think that levels of intelligence are God-given faculties and not everyone is equal. Maybe we hired the wrong people, maybe they had been allowed to stay too long, or maybe they were promoted more than they should have been.

This is very similar to what is happening in the school systems today. Students are being allowed to pass on to the next grade, without really learning what they needed to learn. This happens with employees; sometimes we keep giving them higher promotions when they really don't fit. I think it is so important to evaluate people properly according to what they are capable of doing and then promoting them accordingly. I feel that this will keep them from getting hurt later in their career. And this will keep the company from getting hurt as well. To me this is what I am talking about when I talk about acting with a righteous attitude.

Throughout my career at Bankers Trust, we had a tremendous focus on results. People were fine, but they were secondary. After I left, I would have thoughts back to all of the people that I had fired; it was a very tough game there. I felt overwhelmed by the fact that in some way I would

have to pay for all of that. So when I joined Lord & Abbott, I decided that I was not going to work in this way anymore; I wanted to see how I could make things different.

This was difficult at first, because they wanted me to let people go who were not performing well from the very start. However, in the four years I was there, we didn't fire a single person. Some people improved because they were willing to change, and some people did not improve. I think everyone is capable spiritually, but I don't believe that everyone is equally capable to work in the commercial world. Some people think quicker, some are better at sales, some are good at technology, everyone is different. Some people fit in organisations and some people don't, this is just how God has made us. I think that when you work for a corporation you do need to have certain attributes.

Even knowing all of this, I was determined not to fire anyone. So I tried very hard to coach the people and help them to improve. It wasn't easy because so many of them did not want to change. I had a lot of pressure to fire the people who were not productive, but I was not willing to do that. Now I sit back and wonder if that was right or wrong. I did it because I thought, rightly or wrongly, that is what a spiritual person should do. I felt that I needed to figure out how to improve the people, rather than just fire them. My guess is that 80% of the people were willing to change and embrace new things and 20% were not.

I cannot say for sure that they would not have been happier if they had been let go. Maybe they could have found something better for them. I wished I had tried this experiment ten years earlier in my life and could have learned what I have learned now. I do feel that people do not want to be "extra baggage" for the company, so when the people are not able to change in the direction that the organisation is going, it may be good to let them go.

I think that it was good for the organisation that a large percentage of the people did change. They had a valuable history with the company that was very useful. So getting rid of them and starting again with new employees would not have been a smart thing to do. I think that the ability to want to change people for the better is what all management should want to do. I don't think that people intentionally do not want to work well; I think they were shaped by the previous management. So now it was important that we help them understand how to change.

Second Story – Being honest and ethical

I think that in all of my work, I have had to make ethical choices all the time. In the banking business, the rule is that if the bank made a mistake, then the bank had to pay for it. However, sometimes when an error was made, it was in the bank's favour. For example, maybe you were supposed to sell 500 shares of stock and you sold 5,000 shares instead. If the market was moving down, then the sell of 5,000 shares could mean that the customer made money. Most of the time the customer wasn't even aware that something like this had happened. So how we handled something like this was always an ethical dilemma.

My feeling, however, is that once you go down the path to try to cover up your mistake, even if it was in the customers' favour, you cannot gain the true respect of your customer. You may be able to rationalise all of this in your own mind, but in reality you cannot ever expect to have the customer's respect and trust. So to me, you must set clear rules and they must be followed. The moment you are wishy-washy you set a trend.

I have also always told the people who worked for me to be honest when they filled out their expense report. I told them, "Don't try to add a \$5.00 tip just because you can get away with it." To me even these little things will always haunt you. I always taught the people to be clean in

everything they did. This way you don't have to look over your shoulder and worry about what might happen to you.

In the last one and a half years I worked for Bankers Trust, I was working with someone where we made presentations to the board on projections we felt we could meet. But then when we got into the actual work, he instead wanted to manipulate the financial numbers in order to show that we achieved the projected results, rather than working toward actually obtaining the results themselves. He would continually approve projects, but then put pressure on us to eliminate costs. One way he wanted to deal with this was to capitalise the costs, so they wouldn't show up as current expenses. I felt this was not correct and so I had to end the relationship.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

I think the purpose of business is to make money through proper values. There is so much corruption today in business and all of it represents an absence of values and an absence of character. So spirituality is clearly needed in business today. However, I still feel a bit confused about who should enforce these types of values and develop this character. If government attempts to do this, it will become very inefficient.

I think it is the business leaders' purpose to ensure that the employees do things well for the company, so I think it is their job to develop these values and character in people. You need to lead them so that they behave properly toward their customers and co-workers and so that the company is a wholesome place. I think when a company environment is wholesome it will be quite productive. I think we do need profit-making enterprises, but they should make their money by applying proper values.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

I don't really have an answer as to how I would measure success from my spiritual point of view. I wish I could say that I have found the answer, but I haven't. I have for so long measured others and my careers with the usual financial and material success.

The reason I say that I don't know is because I think a good businessperson who has created a business must serve his or her customers, shareholders and everyone involved. That would be my measure. Now you can avoid making the tough decisions that require you to be successful in business and say that I have avoided all of the stress and conflict. If you were not stressed, yet you also did not fulfil your role as a businessperson, I do not feel this would be considered successful.

If I were to measure success in life I would say that it would be based on "am I happy?" This is how I want to judge my own life at this point as well. Going forward I would say that today was a good day if I did not feel conflict within myself.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

I think that when it comes to determining how well a job you have done, you must ask yourself, "Did I do the best I could?" The only person who really knows whether I did a good job or not is me. I don't think the productivity measures really tell you this. For me the question would be, "Did I do everything as best as I could?"

For me, I must do the very best that I can in my work, even if the intensity causes my blood pressure to go up, and leave the results to God. If at the end of the day I did something that I regretted, then good – tomorrow I can improve. I think this is all a personal measure and only I can know the quality of my efforts.

After having said all of that, I still have to say that productivity and financial goals are very important for me as a leader. If I am entrusted with running a business or a unit, and the objective of the unit is to produce a product with a certain profit margin and create a market share, I must do that. These are all productivity measures and they are an important part of society that we

have to deal with. Personally though, I do not judge whether I feel good or bad based on these measures. I judge whether I feel good or bad based on whether I did the best I could or not.

Also, we must not get obsessed with these external measures and start to do things that would be illegal or immoral. I have to admit it is very difficult in business when you do not meet the financial goals because there is a lot of pressure from those you report to. If there are bonuses involved, everyone is affected, and their salaries will be affected. Yes, I can say that I know I did my best and I am happy, but then the people who work for me may not be happy and that happens too. This is the hard part of our work in the current organisational structures we have today.

Yes, companies were created to make profits, so you must do your duty as a manager to make a profit for the company, but you don't have to cheat the customers or the employees or the competitors. But I don't think the corporation's job is to be a public welfare agency either. If all companies became a welfare agency there would be no industry. Everything has a role and purpose, so you should make profits, but there's no need to cheat.

I also think that everyone should benefit from a company's profit and should get a fair share, not just the shareholders. So the employees must get a fair share of the profits and everyone must benefit.

Also, at Bankers Trust I found it very easy to make the operations more efficient. It was quite natural for me to see things that weren't working well and to improve them. However, today I'm not sure I would take the same approach because now I have much more of a concern about the people than I did back then.

I believe you have to look out for the welfare of the company, it must run efficiently and it must be profitable. I think that each cog in the wheel has to be strong otherwise the gear will break. So you must initiate change that will improve the people and then if there are those who are not willing to change, you may have to replace them. If we have all done our best job to help them change, then that is all you can do. In light of this, I do not think that companies should be successful at the cost of people, but a company with incompetent people will eventually fail and cost many more jobs.

Developing an Organisational Culture

Every where I have worked, I would set the standard that 60% of our success would be based on the financial results and 40% would be based on the effort. From this we tried to reward everyone based on both results and effort. The ideal of course was when a person put in the proper effort and got the result. However, this doesn't always happen. Sometimes you have to encourage people to go into bad markets in order to expand and when this happened I felt that we must reward those efforts as well. If there is a pattern of no results, then you do have to look more closely at the quality of effort.

When I was running the corporate retirement 401K business at Bankers Trust, we went through a big process to set objectives and identified the ideal attributes that the people should aspire to at each level. We tried to encourage everyone to work toward these ideals. At that time, most of the employees had come straight out of high school or had only a few years of college. So I did what I could to upgrade the people. Plus, I started to bring in MBA graduates. Some people left naturally and we only let people go who made repeated mistakes and did not seem able to improve themselves.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

I think that businesses cannot contain themselves only to their business, but they have to help take care of the welfare of their neighbours – the communities around them. Businesses have talented people that can be used to teach; they've got money that can be given. If people start to think that way, then I believe they can really help those who have less. I think if companies started helping other human beings, even a little bit, it would help so much.

I'm not saying that a company has to move its operations to an impoverished part of the city, but this type of behaviour can be encouraged in the company and it could make such a difference. If young people see their bosses do it, then they will do it. If the leaders have an interest in things like this, then the young people will develop an interest in it as well. I think that the whole company will also benefit by doing this.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

Relating to and working with other executives is a special challenge, as one tries to take a dharmic (righteous) approach. Most executives are trained to be competitive, so there is a fair amount of tension. As long as one believes that one has to get ahead of the others to gain management appreciation and rewards, it can be tense.

As I have matured, I have started to realise that it is not management that decides my destiny, but rather God. If one does not believe in the principle of karmic consequence, sometimes you can be disillusioned with your faith in the power of God, especially when you see those who are selfish and conniving get rewarded. But unfortunately, it is only when you get older that you see that everybody gets their just rewards, and the ones with principles and integrity are usually the happiest and most content, if not the richest.

Relationship with Major Stakeholders

I sometimes feel that there is an inherent conflict between spirituality and being an investor – most investors want maximum return on their investments as quickly as possible while spirituality aims at the greater good for all. But without investors there are no opportunities for anyone!

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

Ultimately, I believe that one has to be righteous and not worry about the results. This is what I am trying to figure out. How do you know who a successful manager is if you don't measure results? This is where I get caught into a loop and have not yet figured it out.

Right now I am making the move into management consulting. So rather than leading a large group of people where I have set the agenda, I will now be working with a company where they set the agenda. If I have the opportunity to help a company become more efficient, I would really like to help them understand how to care about their employees and all of the stakeholders, rather than just focusing on getting rid of 30% of their employees.

Right now, we are talking with several companies who have huge call centres and it would be a tremendous cost benefit if they could move them to India. However, I feel they must also consider what will happen to their employees. If they lay off hundreds of people in one city, it will likely be difficult for them to find jobs. I am trying to help them consider the people involved and look for other solutions such as alternative employment. So we are hoping to help them see a different way even though they are under tremendous pressure to reduce costs. It bothers me to see these people laid off in the USA even though I know the increase in jobs in India would also be good. So it is a struggle for me and right now I don't know what the answer is.

I would like to bring with me as a consultant the awareness of the importance to act righteously, with right conduct. I hope I can help these executives think about it. This is a serious thing and I think about it a lot.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

Decision making that can be made using black and white analytical facts, mostly having to do with economic impact, is what our minds do best. But the best visionary leaders have been those who can integrate their analytical mind with their heart where the spirit resides – the spirit that always seeks the greater good for society and not personal gain; the spirit that is our moral compass and never lets us stray too far. It is the spiritual heart that enables us to make decisions that we will never be sorry about; it is the compassion heart that makes our priorities right.

In the hard impersonal business world, it is very easy to become hardened by our analytical mind – the challenge is to remain softened by our heart so that we can lead our lives as God would want us to.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

I would remind them that we've all become experts in rationalisation and we have become so good at suppressing our inner world. To become a better person, the first thing one has to do is start listening to the inner voice inside and stop rationalising. When you stop rationalising, slowly but surely the inner voice starts to speak up. We've all squashed this inner voice.

Every time you do something ask yourself, "Is this right? Is it the correct behaviour?" You don't have to tell everyone what you are doing; just keep your own diary. In doing this you will start to see many things. When you stop rationalising, your inner voice will tell you right away when you have done something that was not correct. Instantly you will feel it.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an
interview with:

**NIELS DUE
JENSEN**
Denmark



Interview conducted 2 December 2003

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation: Grundfos Management A/S
Location: Bjerringbro, Denmark
Industry: Pump manufacturing
Position: Group Chairman
Years in Position: 25
Gender: Male
Age: 60

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Same
Current Location:
Current Industry:
Current Position:

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 30

University Degrees: Engineering, Aarhus Teknikum, Denmark

How to refer to Niels Due Jensen:

“Group Chairman for Grundfos Management A/S in Denmark”

CAREER

Career History

I was born in this little town of Bjerringbro as one of four children. My parents grew up close to here. Originally my father, Poul Due Jensen, came out of a farmer's family, but he wanted to break away from that way of life, so he became an apprentice in a machine shop, called Svendsen's machine shop in Bjerringbro. After completing his training, he took some more education, enabling him to make drawings and to go deeper into technical ideas and design work. He attended a school of engineering here in Denmark, and based his career on machine work, designing machines for this little machine shop. When I was born in 1943, my father was already a foreman. He was a very entrepreneurial person, very innovative, and after the end of World War II, he started his own little machine shop in Bjerringbro and called it Grundfos.

So I grew up with such a small machine shop, and of course got acquainted with and fell in love with machine work and the design of machinery. In this very active environment, I quickly got in touch with many of my father's workers, and very early in my childhood I decided to go for a career myself in engineering and machining. I became an apprentice at Grundfos in 1960 and completed my training four years later. Then I worked as a young toolmaker for a couple of years, and later I got the privilege of working in the military defence for two years, repairing weapons and becoming a Sargent.

Following this, I studied to become a mechanical engineer, just like my father. Not because he had done so, but because I really liked it. I came back from the engineering school, Aarhus Teknikum, to Grundfos in 1971, and as a part of my job development, I also worked for two years in another company, Danfoss, in the south of Denmark. Back at Grundfos in 1974, I worked here until my father suddenly passed away in 1977. At that time I got the enormous challenge of taking over the chairmanship of the Grundfos Group, which already consisted of ten-fifteen companies with the main company here in Bjerringbro. There were approximately 2,000 employees, spread all over the world, about half of them working in Denmark.

I was 34 years old and had a rather interesting, but also rather demanding job of trying to, so to say, take my father's company on and make sure that it continued to develop. Now, about 25 years later, I can lean back and say, I succeeded, not alone, but together with many, many good employees. It was my luck that my father's way of preparing his company for the next generation was to always have a serious and very competent management, which was also allowed to take charge and operate on a daily basis. This existing operating management allowed me to mature in the job as a chairman, and a few years later, in 1980, I went more into the daily management as group president as well as chairman of the major companies.

Since then we have developed the company with a more professional board of directors, more professional group management, and over the past 20-25 years, we have been able to develop Grundfos so that it has become the second biggest, and probably the most successful pump company in the world. The biggest one is ITT, which has for the last ten-fifteen years built a pump- and water engineering division, based on acquisitions; whereas the main idea behind Grundfos always has been to grow the company organically. Acquisitions have only been a secondary strategy in order to supplement our product lines.

Originally it was simply a coincidence that Grundfos came into the business of water pumps, my father so to say grabbed the possibility, not considering whether it was a good product, serving

humanity or not. We have kept to pumps and pump systems because we feel that it is basically a healthy industry with a stable, good market. It is not an industry where you suddenly see major changes in demand or overnight changes in technology so that you may lose your business. The world's pump market is so large, that we have not seen any reason to go into other businesses. We only have at most 15% of the world pump market today, so there is more to go for.

As to the size of the company, this year we will reach an annual sale of approximately 11.5 billion Danish Crowns. With the current exchange rate of 2003, that is around US\$2 billion.

Grundfos now employs more than 11,000 employees world wide, and has about 50 companies, including 15 production companies, in major regions of the world, not least in Asia.

Grundfos has definitely reached a respectable position within the pump industry.

Current Responsibilities

Over these about 25 years I have been heading the daily management of our group as well and I took on the role of chairman of the major companies on the way. But during the latest years before my retirement last year, I was only Chairman of The Poul Due Jensen Foundation, the main shareholder in Grundfos, as well as the Grundfos Holding in Switzerland, the rest of the chairmanships I left to my colleagues.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

For me the simplest way of defining spirituality is that it gives me a deeper meaning of life, and therefore also regulates the way I behave on a regular daily basis in my private life as well as in my job-life.

My spiritual view of life is based on being a Lutheran Christian, and I try my best to live up to the basic rules from the New Testament in the Bible. However, it is not something that I am conscious about every day. It is kind of in the back of my mind all the time, and therefore I instinctively base my decisions on these ground rules from the New Testament, although, of course, like any other person, I am a number of times failing on the way; that's for sure. I should note that I don't try to separate the way I think and decide and act in my private life as compared to my business life. It all goes together.

Spiritual Theme

Empathy, compassion, and love for my neighbour.

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

I think that spirituality is the same as religion.

Since there is quite a bit of discussion going on in Denmark and other European countries as to religion at the workplace, I should add on that I feel that the question of religion is something which you want to keep to yourself. You do not walk around showing off that you are a Christian or a Muslim.

I do not mind at all that other people have a religion different from mine, as long as they keep it private and practice their religion in private, away from the workplace. With this, I primarily think of Muslims of which an increasing number is settling in Denmark and also come to work at Grundfos. We have nothing at all against the Muslims being highly religious, but of course we do mind it, if their behaviour differs considerably from the behaviour we expect from ordinary Danish workers. With this I am thinking of the demand to pray at fixed hours five times a day and the use of religious symbols. At Grundfos we do not engage in any discussion about women wearing scarves, unless it is causing danger for the work security for the person wearing it. That is, you cannot wear a scarf, if you work at a machine turning around in front of you, risking that the scarf will get caught.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

My major spiritual principle and value is first of all honesty. Honesty and openness and also trying to "love thy neighbour", which I try to practice also in my business life.

Consciously Growing Spirituality

I frequently go to church, not every Sunday but once or twice a month. I like to sit in the church, to follow the ceremony, and thereby have time to think a little bit, to reflect upon my life and also sometimes upon business questions. I do not always follow the preacher's sermon closely, I sit

there thinking by myself, that gives room for considering things, which I like; it gives time for reflection.

Prayer is also part of my daily life. My childhood Christianity is still with me.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

I grew up in a Lutheran-Christian family. My grandfather was what we call Indre Missionsk, which means that he was a fundamentalist Lutheran Christian. However, my parents did not belong to that Protestant sect, we may call it. I also married a woman who has the same basic opinions about living a respectable Christian life as I have always had. This background has influenced my whole life and therefore also the way I behave. As I see it, you can not really separate what you do in your private life and what you do in your job, it all “hangs together”; you use the same feelings and the same background for taking your decisions.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Social responsibility

My principle of trying to 'love your neighbour' has guided me in the direction of also developing what we call 'social responsibility' at Grundfos. It wasn't something I started; it was in fact my father who already in the late 1960's began our tradition of practising social responsibility. Because of my spiritual background I have always had this activity within Grundfos high on my agenda. Over the years it has developed in such a way, that today we have a considerable number of employees who would probably not be able to be with us without a certain support and attention from our company. Out of about 4,500 employees in our Danish factories and companies, close to 3,000 being hourly paid, we have about 150 who are employed under, what we call 'special conditions'.

Having employees with a mental or physical handicap working for Grundfos has become a natural part of the company's life and behaviour. We in the management have made it clear that this is our responsibility; this is our policy, and these are conditions you have to accept as an employee, if you want to work for Grundfos. People have accepted that over the years and they are more and more proud of Grundfos having this tradition. They are also increasingly accepting that it is a natural and right thing for a company like Grundfos to acknowledge and act in accord with our responsibility towards the general society.

So today we do not hear any protests against employing these workers; it is simply accepted as a natural part of our responsibility. They work part time or full time, they might have eight hours of work, but in a very easy job, and they are helped to be able to perform as well as they can.

If I had not had my Christian background, including the desire to do something for such unfortunate people, we would not have had this tradition at Grundfos. You may call it the need to love your neighbour, and this means your neighbour in this local society, but first of all your employees in the company. It is my strong belief, that my example has been of importance to many business leaders in Denmark, and therefore I believe that I have inspired them to go in the same direction.

I have been able to spread this message out to many other Danish companies over the years, not only as an example through the way I have behaved, but also through the way I have spoken about social responsibility. We have a Danish National Network of Business Leaders working with Corporate Social Responsibility. This network was founded in 1997 by the then Minister for Social Affairs. I became a member of the board; later I became the chairman.

Through this network we have been able to spread into other companies the tradition of engaging themselves in social responsibility on a daily basis; first of all towards their own employees, but secondly, if they have the energy to do it, to helping in the local society. We now have about Danish 700 companies as members of this network through six regional networks. It has spread, and I think that Denmark is one of the nations in Europe that is at the very forefront in exercising social responsibility on a daily basis, first of all focused on the employees.

About a year ago we introduced a new policy for what we call Corporate Social Responsibility within Grundfos. We have laid down some major framework and policies as to how we could like to see the foreign Grundfos companies be active in living up to a social responsibility. We do not demand that they do exactly as we do in Denmark, as the cultural environments differ from

country to country, and therefore the way you execute this corporate social responsibility on a daily basis is very different. We allow and encourage our local companies to lead the activities, which they feel are most helpful to them in being socially responsible towards their employees and their local community.

Second Story – Honesty and openness

Another story has something to do with my priority to honesty, and having an open and honest conduct towards our employees. About three years ago we had at Grundfos a situation where we had far too many “wild strikes”. People stopped working for a day or two or three, just to demonstrate what they would like to see, or even just to protest towards the way things were run. What I did then was to write an open letter to all employees, telling them in a really straightforward way, that Grundfos was not able to continue with this behaviour from some groups of employees, because it would simply ruin our company.

To begin with this openness and honesty with our people was taken very badly by quite a few, but as time has gone by, people realise that I was right in telling the truth about what our company needed from them. Today I believe that my openness and honesty to our employees at that time really has changed the agenda for our whole company, when it comes to working more in harmony and in dialogue with each other on a daily basis instead of confronting each other with problems.

My philosophy is clearly that it is important to inform in due time about the things which you as a top manager are aware of, as to what might happen in the company, and first of all to tell about unpleasant things before the more pleasant things. Be open in your dialogue, and be very honest. Discuss with your employees also those matters, which might not make them happy. In this way you will be able to create a dialogue and understanding, also for those unpopular decisions which now and then necessarily must be taken.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

What is success for me in my private life is first of all to have a good life in harmony with my family, and having children who behave well. Of course it also means something for me, that I make my daily income in order to support my family, but money has never been a target in itself, it is simply a means for being able to do things and for achieving various goals in life.

If we turn to business, in Grundfos it has always been a part of our policies, and particularly a major principle of The Poul Due Jensen Foundation (the majority shareholder), that profit is not a target in itself. Money and a good profitability are necessary for us to maintain a successful growing company, which is a good place for people to work in.

It is clearly with high pride that we in Grundfos are manufacturing pumps and pump systems, because these products really are helping society to grow, helping millions of people all over the world to fulfil certain very basic needs. We are in a business which does not do damage to others, does not contribute to creating wars, but which is really helpful for human beings all over the world. It may be for people in Africa with simple needs for clean water, or it may be for people in highly developed societies where they need a lot of pumps in order for everything to be functioning.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

Purely achieving high financial goals and productivity goals is not a definite target for Grundfos, but of course we need certain financial results in order to continue a successful business and in order to grow our business. It is more important for us to focus on the growth and development of our business instead of just optimising financial results. This comes out of the bylaws of the primary owner, The Poul Due Jensen Foundation, that we should not focus only on achieving high profits and financial goals. The members of the board clearly agree with these basic principles of the Foundation; if they did not, they would never have been invited to come onto the board.

Developing an Organisational Culture

We work with what we call values-based leadership. We try to develop an organisation of people who take responsibility not only for their job, but also for the company. Over time we have tried and continue to try to implement some core values.

We have eight basic values, which we try to promote and exercise on a daily basis, not only in top management, but the whole way through the company, hopefully this means by each employee. Of course it takes a long time to get this perspective in the backbone of every employee, and for new employees it takes several years to understand the real meaning of these basic values. They are described as:

Sustainability: We will act in a way that minimises our negative effect on the natural environment and our work environment.

Focusing on people: We respect human rights and operate in an ethical manner wherever we operate – and treat our employees as we treat our families and friends.

Global thinking: Not only will we operate internationally but we will respect local values, cultures and societal conditions, while living up to international norms.

Open and honest conduct: We will be a trustworthy and reliable company with a high level of transparency with respect to our stakeholders, with our employees having top priority, and where dialogue is in focus.

Leadership: We will be a world leader in the production of pumps, with a high degree of self-reliance, respected for the quality, design, longevity and value of our products.

Partnership: Our customers shall consider us to be their stable and long-term partner, not just a supplier.

Responsibility: We will be respected for our responsible behaviour with respect to our employees, customers, suppliers, the local societies where we operate, and the environment.

Independence: We will continue to develop Grundfos by primarily investing our own means and maintaining our independence, in accord with the wishes of the founder; high profits are a means for the concerns continued development, not a goal in its own right.

Within the last four or five years, we have tried systematically to work on the introduction of these basic values throughout the organisation, but it takes time. Hopefully we will end up with an organisation which is not managed from the top through a lot of instructions and orders, but rather managed in a way, so that every employee feels related to these values and exercise these values in the actual situations they meet in their jobs. We hope this will make the people more motivated, more engaged and to pull much more in the same direction.

The way we work with these values is first of all to try to demonstrate through our own behaviour that we live up to them. Management has to take its own medicine, so to speak. Living up to the values is an exercise on a daily basis.

We have put all the eight basic values together with our mission and vision in a small pamphlet, which has now been published in 24 languages. Each new employee gets this booklet, but this is only the beginning. In each company and in each department we will discuss these values with the employees: "What do the values mean to you in your daily situation?" One value may result in one kind of decision for a top manager and quite another decision for someone working on the production line. It is important, that the man or woman working in production knows exactly how he or she should exercise and practice these values in their job. That is why we have a very long and careful dialogue with employees over the years in group-meetings and on an individual basis. It all comes back to dialogue.

We have experienced a few situations where there have been attempts at bribing and corruption, but it is part of our fundamental policies neither to accept bribes nor to do business that in any way involves corruption. I am not aware of any major opportunities that we have lost because of saying no to demands as to corruption.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, nation and Society as a Whole

The basic rules of my life, like openness, honesty, and a feeling of high responsibility as well as, 'love your neighbour' are good for any organisation to practice. If these principles are honestly practised, they will always lead to an organisation that demonstrates high responsibility, and which is therefore in many ways successful in the way it does its business.

I think that Grundfos and our world wide organisation is an example for many other companies to follow – with respect to how we, all of us at all levels, behave in a way which hopefully can be highly respected by the general society. Thereby we hope that the company is helping to create better harmony between the general society and business, and hopefully more wealth is also created for individuals across the world. It is a major goal for Grundfos that our organisation is in harmony with itself, so that people can be proud of working in the company. Having a job at Grundfos is of major importance in their lives. I feel that we can really make a difference for our thousands of workers across the world.

If such basic rules, as we practice in Grundfos, are practised in more and more companies around the world, it will clearly shorten the distance between businesses and the general society. It will also contribute to the development of a better trend, whereby business and society work together in order to create wealth and better living conditions for all people on this earth.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

I don't think of myself as a real spiritually-based leader. It's just that this Christian tradition and these basic values are part of my life. Therefore it is naturally influencing my decisions, but it is not something that I am conscious about on a daily basis. I'm doing what comes naturally to me.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based leader

Of course, over the years we all regret things we have decided or said too quickly, at least I have experienced this, having a very strong temperament. That is not a good habit for a manager, but it's something you are born with, and it is really hard to change this. There have been times in my life when I regret I was too upset about something or too quick to react, but that is part of life. I think my colleagues know me for that also. My father was even more full of passion and temperament than I am.

On the other hand, if you as a manager never get excited, never get up and stand on the chair, I think it's also bad.

Inner Process that Guide Decision-Making

I do ask myself questions as to our values when I make decisions. When we in top management have to take major decisions, we should always start at looking at our basic values in relation to the specific problem. Maybe I would also think of my father and mother; what kind of decision would they have taken in this situation? I might even go back to some parts of the Bible and ask myself: "What kind of decision ought you take, if you should stay true and honest to the basic beliefs in your life." In many situations I have not been in doubt as to what kind of decisions to take, and most of the time I have made decisions allowing me to look at myself in the mirror the next morning, although it might have been a difficult or an unpopular decision.

There are also many situations in your business life when you are not the one to take the decision, you can only wait for a reaction from other people; you cannot decide the outcome of the situation. You may just pray to God and say, 'We hope you find the best solution here.'

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

If I should advise potential leaders, I would advise them to manage in a highly responsible way, always be honest in the way you do business.

I have not met many obstacles in being what you call a spiritual-based leader. I think I have been respected over the years for my standpoints and the way I have been behaving as a manager. I have not had a very bad experience with people or the media.

I think that you should always be sceptical when you suddenly see a possibility to use and take benefit of, what is clearly a hole in the law. You should always be careful not to fall into the trap of taking advantage of it. It is immoral to use a mistake or a hole in the law. With the eight values at Grundfos as guidelines, hopefully we in our company would never do that.

Today a major share of managers in both private and public organisations would not admit if they were managing their organisation from a background of spirituality. I don't think they would admit that spirituality is the basis of their leadership, although many would in fact do so unconsciously. It takes a top management, which is basically influenced by a religion and the principles from that religion in order to, more consciously, lead an organisation in a spiritual direction.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an interview with:
NIRAN JIANG
Australia



Interview conducted 22 December 2004

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation:	Institute of Human Excellence	S. C. Johnson	Coca-Cola
Location:	Balgowlah, Australia	USA	USA
Industry:	Business Training & Consulting	Household Products	Food
Position:	CEO	Marketing Manager	Senior Trends Manager
Years in Position:	1	4	3
Gender:	Female		
Age:	40		

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: **Institute of Human Excellence**
 Current Location: **Balgowlah, Australia**
 Current Industry: **Business Training and Consulting**
 Current Position: **CEO**

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 15

Previous Positions/Organisations: Assistant Professor, Shenzhen University, China; Director, Star Venture, Australia

University Degrees: BA in Genetic Engineering from Nankai University, China; M.Sc. in Organisation Management from Nankai University, China; MBA in Marketing Strategy from University of California at Los Angeles, USA

How to refer to Niran Jiang:

“Formerly Senior Trends Manager for Coca Cola and Marketing Manager for S. C. Johnson in the USA”
“CEO for the Institute of Human Excellence in Australia”

CAREER

Career History

I am a native of Inner Mongolia, an autonomous region of China, where I was born in a small town. I am currently living in Sydney, Australia. I never had a strong affinity with nations, but if I were forced into choosing my identity, I would chose Chinese. I connect with my “tribe”, the like-minded, like-hearted and like-spirited people.

When I started my studies at Nankai University in China, it was an 18 hours train ride from my home. I studied biology and majored in genetic engineering for my bachelor’s degree, and then I studied management science for my graduate degree. On completing that degree in 1987 I went to the south of China, to Shenzhen, which is next to Hong Kong.

I was fairly young, 23, when I began to teach at Shenzhen University as an assistant professor in the International Finance and Trade Department. This university in China’s first special economic zone was the first reformed business school in China after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Because Shenzhen became a booming economic zone, a kind of new reform place, a lot of things were happening, and in business a lot of foreign investments and joint ventures were coming in. I was pretty active then: as the Director of the International Business Centre, I was making things happen. I was practising entrepreneurial leadership at an early age.

Three years later, I got a research fellowship and went to the USA for my research and further postgraduate studies. I spent a year studying cultural anthropology, and then I attended the Business School at UCLA in California. I also toured the USA, travelling and working, in order to experience the culture of the country.

I got a job at the large international company, S. C. Johnson, which is the third largest privately owned company in the world, producing household products such as Ziploc, the insecticide Raid, and household cleaners and refreshers like Glade, Shout and Windex. It’s a company with very strong values, run by the third generation of Johnsons. The family has always been working for “a better tomorrow,” and the company is doing environmental studies across the world, monitoring its activities and environmental impact.

I was sent from the USA to Australia in 1993, where I spent three years doing different marketing jobs. As a Marketing Manager, I then worked with innovation at the headquarters in Wisconsin for another year. In this company, coming from business school you start from the bottom before climbing the ladder, but whenever I was given the opportunity, I took the leadership, expressed in different ways. Sometimes it was around a new project, sometimes leading a cross-functional team, sometimes building a new segment and market. My leadership there centred very much around defining new visions. My strategic focus and my team’s breakthrough incubation of new concepts at S.C. Johnson resulted in the largest acquisition in the company’s history.

In 1997, after leaving S.C. Johnson, I went to work for Coca-Cola in the USA for three years. With my international background typically companies wanted to send me on international assignments right away, but I wanted to experience the American and other western cultures through deep immersion. I also wanted to prove to myself that I could work effectively in a foreign culture on a foreign market, so I worked on USA-Australian stuff as a Senior Trends Manager, where I concentrated on strategic planning. I could see the opportunity for using trend intelligence to drive business and innovation in order to make people feel more connected with what they do. I started

an entrepreneurial unit in the company called “USA Trends”, which later became a new function for strategic planning.

Looking back upon my career so far, I’m a natural born leader. I’m also a very good team player; but whenever there’s a vacancy, an opportunity to lead, I’m naturally taking over. Up until the year 2000, my life had been all about career. After I had my child, my priorities shifted dramatically. So I started my own consulting business, Star Venture. For about four years I worked as a consultant in Australia and the USA. I then entered into a joint venture with an Australian businessman, forming a strategic innovation house for premium service, working with top management teams on a retainer basis.

Current Responsibilities

A year ago, I left the strategic innovation house. With two other partners and five expert associates, I started this new business called Institute of Human Excellence. I see myself as an emerging leader; there is a major leadership call for me. These past years have been a journey, bringing more and more spirituality into my work. That is where I am now.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

For me, spirituality is everything; I don't put it in a separate compartment. As I was created with a soul, for me, life is life-force, the connection with the universe. It's where we come from, what we are carrying, and where we are going. Spirituality for me is what makes everything shine.

I want to contribute what I can in a process of “whole system change” to create a world that works for everyone – not just humans, but for all species, plants, everything that has a soul. And everything has a soul for me. I think this has been an indirect result of growing up in China, where you grew up with a strong sense of collectiveness that's above individuality. As a child you were taught every day about how to consider others, to take care of your family, your society, and eventually to build a world that works for everyone. You were trained with such a mind-set.

Spiritual Theme

My spiritual theme would be interconnectedness, wonderment, and compassion.

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

Religion is a human attempt to compartmentalise spirituality in one dimension of our relationship with the universe and with God. Religion is a part of spirituality, and on a philosophical basis all religions are on the path of enquiring into who we are, where we come from, where we go, and what life is about. I think spirituality is much broader than what is typically represented by religion.

When I grew up in China during the Cultural Revolution, religion was all torn down. The slogan of the Cultural Revolution was, “Tear down the old and build the new”. Idols were destroyed, and all the different churches were closed down because of the communist idea of collectively building an ideal society based on, “You take what you need, and you give what you can.” We were taught that there is no God, only humans on a journey. The time of the Cultural Revolution was a time of great division, also within the families. Nobody spoke about God; instead it was a time full of ideals of building an ideal society that works for everyone.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

I see work as a very important part of life, because you test core boundaries. First of all, my spiritual purpose is about my personal growth, my individual transformation. That transformation affects how you relate to and interacts with your work colleagues day in and day out – from how you greet them, and how you look them into the eyes, to how you make change in the world. I see things in a progression from small to big; both are fine, I am not criticising and judging. Just like when you want to understand the universe there is cosmology, the big, and there is quantum- or particle-physics, the small. Both can allow the mystery of the universe, but my orientation is from the small. The most important thing for me is the interconnectedness of everything, of all of us people, of different ethnic groups, I believe in true equality because of this interconnectedness, not in human beings as a higher race than e.g. animals or plants.

Wonderment is a big part of my spiritual feeling in the sense of a curiosity, a life force. I wonder about the world. Based on the interconnectedness and equality I see, love and compassion naturally comes.

Consciously Growing Spirituality

I believe that the teacher always comes when I am ready for the journey. That teacher for me can be a person, a daily event, my reflections, or my studies. I read: I'm very interested in humanistic psychology, in insights from astrology, astronomy, and quantum physics. I am very interested in different religions, and I go to different churches once in a while to experience them. Sometimes I go to a Christian Baptist church, a Unitarian church, or a temple. I go to meditation retreats, and I practice chi gong which is the physical dimension of meditation, practising the heart power. I also study Buddhism with a group of teachers, but I wouldn't call myself a Buddhist. Meditation for me is throughout the day. It is being mindful; staying connected with what is around me: people and the universe. When I am connected, I am practising spirituality.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

When I was a child during the Cultural Revolution, there were no children's storybooks, we were not allowed to read any kid's stories; instead we had to read Chairman Mao's Little Red Book, and I knew it by heart. Once I got a reward because I was able to recite the whole book without missing a single word. There was no other reading. But I always wondered. I remember vividly that when I was about four or five years old I was wondering about my friends – how do I know that they exist; how do I know that their houses, their parents, their bicycles are real? I don't know where those questions came from, but I see this as a spiritual being wondering, who I am. Even with no education about it, no fantasy stories, it was there.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Speaking the truth and being available

While many people ignore many calls, as a result of my feeling of equality and being connected to others, I have made the rule for myself that no matter what, I will always reply to a call. Out of respect for the person who called, I tell the truth. I might say that “I am not interested; I will not buy what you want to sell me, but I returned your call.” With co-workers, I try to be always there for them. When I am out of place – being busy, shutting my door – I know that I am also out of place with my spirituality.

It was always important to me to be truthful, sincere and kind to all people independent of their position in the company I worked with. It’s a challenge for a lot of people to speak the truth at work. We would especially talk about it when I was at Coca Cola, where it was the unspoken, dominating rule that you agreed with your boss, no matter what. But I strove to always speak the truth.

Second Story – Touching and shifting people’s level of consciousness

I was given the job of building business models and delivering brand, channel and organisation innovation at Coca Cola in the USA, so I developed the first Future Trends function for USA. When you are the number one market leader in the world in the soft drink industry, you have to be alert. My way of creating things there came from my spiritual orientation and ideas about co-creation. I decided to interview the top 30 leaders at Coca Cola both domestically in the USA and internationally, to take into consideration the bigger picture. I spent roughly 45 minutes with each business leader in order to learn and understand the business scenario: What drove and motivated them? But it was also about engaging them by developing what I call a co-creating process. Out of that process I summarised a piece of learning and presented to the senior VP how I saw things.

A lot of difficult issues were coming up, which the management top leaders knew about, but were not willing to face. By making one-to-one interviews and coming from a space of pure respect, I created a very safe environment for a lot of stuff to come out. Also I set very clear boundaries, and I was trusted. Of course, all the interviews were anonymous – core business issues and core relationship issues. I summarised my findings in a non-confrontational document and presented it to the Senior VP. At first he said, “I have ten minutes for you.” The power they have in large American corporations and the way they treat people, it’s worse than in communist China! They treat you like a peanut. But I refuse to feel like a peanut. I treat people below me with dignity, I treat people above me with dignity, and I don’t take a confrontational style. So he said “Ten minutes,” and I said “Fine”, and went straight to the heart of the issue, bringing up the truth in a calm and gentle way, not criticising him. This turned into a two hour meeting.

This is how I see consciousness shifting; it’s not just a piece of work. The business agenda is about the bottom line, for example selling more Coke, but I don’t care about that. I care about the processes that touch people and get them to shift. The Senior VP obviously got confronted with a lot of issues about how people truly felt, and that they were not able to speak the truth. I brought out issues that he could connect to from his level of consciousness and which could motivate him to create change. Therefore, from then on I got a tremendous amount of support in creating initiatives that were very new

and very challenging for the company. Out of the work we were able to accomplish, via Future Trends, there were major costs saving initiatives in a number of departments at Coca Cola. In one project we actually quantified a cost saving of over a million US dollars.

Third Story – Using storytelling in business

Businesses are more motivated to change when they see crises coming, and more open to change when there is chaos around. By doing Future Trends at Coca Cola, part of my job was almost to scare the people by showing them “the real picture”. I showed them how different the consumers were from what they thought, how different the future would be – not based on cost efficiency, but more on idea-power – and how they could approach making decisions. I painted a picture that had them feel very inadequate, and that created openings.

I started an Urban Teen Connection Project, bringing teenagers to the company, doing a lot of story telling, and learning from their stories. Also in business, stories teach in magic ways, and they don't preach. We tried to understand teens, to build a brand with teens and to bring this into the process of initiating new PR and new advertising activities in a most competitive landscape. It was about creating growth in a difficult market for a difficult consumer segment, because urban teenagers were turning to other drinks. I started the process by doing strategic planning differently from what they had been doing, and a year later it led to and created good business results. It was a chain effect. I role modelled and gave everyone the credit along the way as a result of the interconnectedness I felt. I had people collaborate rather than compete for credit so they could get a promotion. It was a little cultural change in the company.

Fourth Story – Shifting the thinking of the company

I used the same approach at S.C. Johnson as I did later on at Coca Cola with regard to creating an opening for a large acquisition. The company was experiencing stagnant growth, as most established businesses do. But unfortunately, in general we operate on a growth paradigm where zero growth is not acceptable. I feel resigned to accept that paradigm. In that paradigm, you scare business by showing that they go down hill if they don't innovate, which is true. We invited the Boston Consulting Group, BCG, to do a major study of where growth could come from. Based on that study we were ready to look for radical changes for the business.

What stimulates wonderment is when you truly connect the inner life forces. Three of us, who connected really well, said, “Let's take this project.” We went into hiding and identified the target for a new acquisition. It was Ziploc – a small plastic storage bag. Everybody said “no”, as it was not in our traditional category of household cleaning products; we didn't have the manufacturing capability, and we didn't have any knowledge about making bags. Looking at acquisition criteria, everything said “no, no, no!” But intuitively this was really right for the three of us, and we were amazed at the power of the brand, as a USA brand magazine had listed Ziploc as number 17 on a list of 100 top brands together with names like Disney and Harley Davidson. We knew all the “no's”, but we felt a lot of wonderment about this, almost a passion; it was not just about valuation, but about future potentials.

After doing the traditional marketing research, we kept on brainstorming ideas, though not in a way according to the manual of S.C. Johnson. This was pure idea-flow because of the passion and the life force, the wonderment and the mystery of why we were so attracted to this brand. We talked it over in a restaurant where we were joking, having fun, a lot of

humour, and all the ideas became very visual and graphic. We opened up to tremendous creativity and were able to catch all those ideas later on. We put everything beautifully on the board for the CEO and said, "This is your future business". After ten minutes he said, "I got it, we're buying it!" The whole senior management committees' jaws dropped. They said, "But what about manufacturing, we don't know how to..." "We'll learn," the CEO said. The company paid US\$ 1.1 billion in 1996-7, and that became their largest acquisition. Today that business has provided the largest growth of the company. I got headhunted away, but I still got the credit for what had happened and I was told that it was amazing how I had been able to shift the thinking of the company.

My spirituality brought to this exciting project a true respect for and feeling of equality on the soul level with everybody in the small team; nobody was afraid of opening up. We were passionate. We had a strong curiosity, which I see as spirituality, as a life force. We got connected to a universal power, and we all felt a great commitment. This is why we succeeded.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

The Chinese thinking paradigm is the opposite of the American. When we write an address on an envelope, we write the country first, then the city, the street third, then the apartment number and finally your name. This is very illustrative of our thinking orientation. The same goes for our way of thinking about business. Business is a significant part of life. On an individual level it is a very important individual transformation tool and a vehicle for personal growth. On a collective level business is gathering so much power that it is almost running everything. On this level business can be doing a lot of good or a lot of damage to the earth. As to our own business, the Institute of Human Excellence, we are building it on a whole new business model based on collaboration and transparency. Business should be a home, a vehicle for individuals to operate at the maximum of their potentials. In terms of our mission we see ourselves as the change agents for business leadership and organisation culture.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

A key performance indicator of success for my business is financial health for all the people who contribute and deliver work. Our vision is to provide a home for people to come to, to be a collective power acting as a change agent in organisations. We will take on more associates, but we want to stay with the emergence process, so we can maintain a high quality for the business.

Success is financial success for everyone in the sense of sufficiency, in the sense of everyone involved enjoying financial freedom and abundance. We will keep on challenging each other, as the criterion is simple sufficiency and not being greedy for wealth. We need to provide and support ourselves, not just the business partners and associates, but also the contractors, suppliers, etc., and at the same time we will share that wealth back with the wide society. We know we are supported with abundance and choice.

I think finance is a very strong spiritual vehicle, because it touches our own personal interests. I believe in financial sufficiency for everyone that our business touches. I am not going to cut cost from what I give others in order to make more profit, because they need to make a decent living and equitably share the financial abundance we created. Also I am not going to give in to greed from others; it's that fine balance of the two, of financial sufficiency and greed. In our business we look at each other as partners. We know that we will always be provided for in the way that the universe always has provided for us as successful businesspeople, but we also need to watch out for scarcity and greed. I don't see us as totally clean from that; it creeps in from time to time in different "costumes". We have to stay aware and to rise above such our own desires and attachments.

My personal growth and my business career are more aligned now than ever. I have experienced mis-alignment here and there during my career, but I have made a strong commitment to align the two, as we are one within and without.

Developing an Organisational Culture

Right now in our Institute of Human Excellence we are working from the outside in, directly facing the issue of "Being the change in the corporate space". With our combined corporate experience,

we are able to use the language that is connected with the senior people from a business paradigm. One thing that is really challenging us is to see a paradigm of trust and collaboration and get away from the paradigm of competition and fear. We exam ourselves very hard on our business strategy in every little thing we do – how we make our business proposals, how we meet with people, how we decide to take people onboard or not as a lot of people want to join us. This is a continuing journey.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, nation and Society as a Whole

If I focus on building the high energy centre, the first impact circle in terms of societal impact is the corporation sphere. We're not naive in the sense of being able to radically transform that space. It's a very hard journey, but we feel we are creating an impact. Also, we are actively involved as individuals in Australia in creating the "Be the change"-movement. That is about shifting the awareness of individuals and generating collective responsibility for change, about playing an active part in creating a better world through a whole system change approach. We are sponsoring the movement financially and helping to build the awareness required for such change to happen.

After we are well established in Australia I see part of our business going into the Asia-Pacific. That will be the geographical focus on where we contribute to the world.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

I see other executives as potentially very powerful change agents. Actively engaged and powerful business leaders have these potentials because of their leadership capabilities and the resources they hold in their hands. From a spiritual perspective I see them as a major force to be engaged in changing the world in response to the urgency we are facing.

Relationship with Major Stakeholders

I see major stakeholders as peers and colleagues as potentially on the same journey as we are, and I am actively engaged in fostering this collective power to create change.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based leader

My current growth task is to continually honour my truth. The vision of this business of training and consulting is “Be the change in the corporate space”, to really help organisations in their transformation process, to create a more meaningful, purpose and values driven and happier environment, and to contribute to society. On the average, there’s a very miserable environment in the business world. I have experienced this first hand. In many business meetings, I would feel that most of us were dead inside and spoke as corporate robots. I saw the dimming of life force. You would think that most people were present, but they were not; inside the spark had gone. You were there for the “golden handcuffs” to support your mortgage and expensive vehicles. That negative energy is very significant. After a few years even I got infected. The system was very powerful and too big for me to make meaningful shift alone. Even though I was not from America, working in a foreign culture, it infected me from time to time.

Recently I have accumulated a lot of emotions around seeking my truth in our partnerships, in our accountability. My spiritual leaning is: “Can I share the learning gently without ‘taking care of’ the other person?” By taking care, I am dis-empowering others. I went back to my spiritual fundamentals and made the decision that if I truly respect the other person as an equal and trust the strength of his soul, there is no need for care-taking, because no harm will be done if I speak my truth. I do this with the compassion, with the gentleness and the caring I feel inside, and with the firmness the issue requires, and with the confrontation the issue carries. I speak the truth, I’m not sugar-coating it, not minimising conflict and confrontation to make the other person feel better. I let go of the outcome – knowing that attachment to it might break our partnership, knowing that it might even break the business I have spent a year and a half building. At first a major amount of anger, hurt and frustration was experienced by others and I had to watch not jumping into a rescue-role, not trying to minimise what I had said and pull back the truth. Recently we have acknowledged that we really made a major shift and breakthrough in our relationships.

That’s my current growth – totally to let go of the outcome and to speak my truth from a deep, gentle place. As I am sharing my truth, I am also sharing the oneness from within and without.

Inner Process that Guide Decision-Making

Right now a major learning for me is the integration of the ying and yang, the feminine and the masculine, and a major calling of this integrating the two energies is to reach out with vulnerability and gentleness. It’s very challenging for me.

I enjoy going into my inner space and meditating, but prayer is not an active part of my spiritual practice. I have a certain resistance to prayer because of the cultural connotation that is carried by it – that the person who is praying is lower than the God prayed to. In my spiritual practice it is very important that the relationship is equal. Prayer for me is a co-creation, I do ask for what I need, but also, I do give what is asked, so it is equal. To whom do I pray? The universal mystery. I pray for all that is. I pray to the work-God, to the spirit of the soul, to the four directions, to the going in, to the ancestors, the wise men and women, and the wise teachers in history. So when I start praying it takes a long time.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

I remember a story of Buddha and a disciple. The disciple asked, “What is your advice?” Buddha’s answer in Chinese is four characters. Translated word by word into English it is: “As if I hear it.” The meaning of this is: “Listen inside to the higher Self for truth.” What does my inside say? This has always been a good piece of advice for me.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an interview with:

VICTOR-KRISHNA KANU
Zambia



Interview conducted 17 July 2003

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation:	The Sri Sathya Sai School	The African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (TAISSE)	The Sri Sathya Sai Organisation in Africa
Location:	Ndola, Zambia	Ndola, Zambia	Ndola, Zambia
Industry:	Education	Education	Spiritual Organisation
Position:	Co-Founder and principal	Director	Central Co-ordinator
Years in Position:	10	5	5
Gender:	Male		
Age:	73		

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: **Same**
 Current Location:
 Current Industry:
 Current Position:

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 30

Previous Positions/Organisations: High Commissioner (Ambassador) for Sierra Leone to the UK, Norway and Sweden; president of the EHV (Education in Human Values) Society, UK; president of the Spiritualists Association of Great Britain

University Degrees: BA and MA, Honours, Oxford University, UK

How to refer to Victor-Krishna Kanu:

“Former High Commissioner (Ambassador) for Sierra Leone to the UK, Norway and Sweden” “Director of The African Institute of Sathya Sai Education in Zambia”

CAREER

Career History

I started my career as a schoolteacher and headmaster of a large Roman Catholic Primary school in Lunsá, Sierra Leone, before proceeding to Oxford University in England for further studies. Sierra Leone was then a British colony, and everything there was patent to the British system of education. At the university, I majored in the school of Philosophy, Politics and Economics, obtaining a BA and an MA (Honours).

Thereafter, I joined the Sierra Leone Civil Service as a Senior Administrative Officer and, subsequently, I was appointed Personnel Manager of the Diamond Company – Sierra Leone Selection Trust. It was from that position that the Sierra Government appointed me to the post of High Commissioner to the United Kingdom with further accreditation to Norway and Sweden. After completing my diplomatic functions, I joined the then Inner London Education Authority as head of Business Studies in two of the Authority schools, Spensarpark and Griven.

During this period my wife and I learned about the Indian spiritual teacher, Sathya Sai Baba. My wife Genoveva is from South Africa, she also has a teaching background with a degree from Columbia University in New York. In 1981 in India we attended the first conference on Human Values for overseas delegates from Sai Baba's Organisations. Getting to know the Human Values completely changed our lives, even if at that time we did not understand or appreciate the spiritual connection with the Human Values. We saw them simply as an educational tool - a very, very sound educational tool in character development.

We were so highly impressed by Sai Baba's innovative Human Values approach to education that upon our return to London we formed the Education in Human Values Society (EHVS) of which I became the first president. The society's work included the introduction of EHV in the two schools and the training of teachers from selected schools within the Inner London Education Authority.

We felt a strong need to branch off to Africa, so I subsequently extended the programme by organising the All Africa Conference on EHV in Accra, Ghana, 1986, and EHV workshops at Universities of Lagos and Ibadan, Nigeria, and Ndola, Zambia. My wife and I were still living in London. Actually we had never thought of returning to Africa to settle there. Our plan was to visit, as Africa is our root. We felt that what we knew, we would like to pass on to Africa, but to remain in London. But something dramatic happened early in 1989. Our minds began to change.

We were comfortably placed in London, but we felt that perhaps we should really take this programme to Africa. So we went to Sai Baba and discussed it with him. He placed his hands on our two heads and said: "Go to Zambia, spread my message of love, and build a school. That is true education." Genoveva, like almost all women, was not shy to ask, so she said: "What about funds? Where do we get the money?" Sai Baba said clearly: "Sell your house, and use the funds. If it is not enough, borrow from the bank."

Because of our Christian background we were greatly pleased, not disturbed at all. We know in the Bible there was this rich man who came to Jesus and said: "Lord, I have done everything I could, I have studied the scriptures, what else can I do in order to gain eternal life?" Jesus said to

him: "Sell all that you have, give to the poor, and follow me!" Well, as soon as Jesus said this, the man turned his back and ran away. We didn't want to do that. Our Christian backgrounds enabled us to realise straight away that this was a test. So we placed our house in London on the market in 1989, and with the money from that sale, together with the sale of many of our personal belongings, we built the school in Ndola, Zambia. We set up a model value-based school, which soon became known as the "Miracle School" because of its capacity to transform school dropouts and truants into achievers of academic, moral and spiritual excellence.

Current Responsibilities

I was appointed Central Co-ordinator for Sri Sathya Sai organisation for Africa, which consists of 50 countries. It includes supervision of Sathya Sai centres, groups, schools and institutes in the region.

At a Sathya Sai-conference in South Africa in 1999 a unanimous decision was taken to establish The African Institute for Sathya Sai Education (TAISSE) in Ndola, Zambia, for the training of teachers in Africa on value-based education. I was appointed its Director.

From 2000 to the summer of 2003, 150 teachers have been trained for six months in the regular teachers training in Education in Human Values. They are mostly from Zambia, but some have come from other parts of Africa, like South Africa.

In our organisation, when a unanimous decision like establishing the Institute has been passed, if you are the Director, you yourself have to be responsible and you yourself have to find the means to carry out the decision. You cannot turn to anyone and say, "Where are the resources?" We never put money at the forefront at all. We ask, "What is to be done? Can we do it? Yes!" And very soon, of course, money, resources, began to come in. It has taken us two years to complete the Institute. It's a beautiful building, now it only remains for us to furnish it.

We opened the Institute in January 2000, using a classroom for training teachers, preparing them for the diplomas. TAISSE, The African Institute of Sathya Sai Education, has changed its character tremendously since then, as has the training of teachers.

Another activity I am involved in, which is also related to the Institute deals with values-based education in relation to water resources. The United Nations' organisation, UN-Habitat, invited me to introduce a Value-Based Water Education component in their Water for African Cities Programme, and since 2001 I am their official consultant. My responsibilities include review of the curriculum of the six participating countries in the Water for African Cities-project – Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Senegal and Zambia. I also have to prepare a Value-Based Water Education pedagogic guide, supplementary materials and lesson plans covering subjects in the school curriculum for primary and secondary/high school level.

In addition, I am also responsible for conducting training of trainers, workshops on Value-Based-Water Education for Directors of Education, Curriculum Developers, Inspectors of Schools, Subject Specialists, selected Head teachers and NGOs in each of the participating countries. This has been done successfully.

The training in values-based education in relation to water resources has been going on for quite some time now. The attendees from the six participating countries spend a week at the Institute; they are very senior people in education, who grasp very quickly. We show these high level persons how Human Values can be integrated in water-related topics in the school curriculum from kindergarten to high school level. In fact, almost every topic taught in a school can be shown

to have a water-content. We train these educationalists to do that. Then they in turn train their teachers in their own countries.

We do not know how many teachers all in all have been trained so far in this water-related programme. We are just about to do monitoring at the pilot schools where all the teachers have been trained, and where the pedagogical materials have been prepared and used. In August I will go with a colleague of mine to visit these six cities to see how far they have gone, how many teachers they have trained, how much material has been developed, the quality of the material, etc.

The training for the water project is going on in parallel with the training of the teachers in the African school systems. We help them all understand the philosophy and methodology of Human Values and we let them identify these values in their cultures. It is a very interesting exercise, because we discovered that the values Sai Baba is talking about are in fact part of our specific African cultures. This has made it interesting and acceptable.

When we talk about the five Human Values - truth, love, peace, right conduct, and non-violence - we look at the African culture itself. In other words, we look at the beliefs and practices of the people through time, tradition and the methods by which these beliefs and practices have been transmitted. We look at the family system - it is based on love. The social relations are based on right conduct. When you look at African cosmology, you have God at the apex, you have the deities to one side, you have the ancestors to the other side, you have the community at the base, and you have the individual at the centre. The individual is always conscious of the fact, that his or her conduct is being overseen by God, by the deities, by the ancestors, and by society. It has been very interesting to observe, when the teachers are trained, that no matter where they come from in Africa, they begin to realise that these fundamental values are in everyone; they are part of us.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

I define spirituality as the practice of Human Values. It is distinct from religion, although there is a connection. A person is spiritual if he practices truth, right conduct, love, peace and non-violence.

I see myself as an individual who is connected with the entire Universe. What is important is love, caring for others, and accepting what Sathya Sai Baba, my spiritual teacher says: 'God first, others next, myself last.' Always think of others, not myself.

Spiritual Theme

Divine love is the central theme. Oneness is a parallel. Because if you say you love all, you do that because all are one.

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

The distinction between spirituality and religion is that spirituality does not necessarily require belonging to a specific religious denomination or organisation, or practising a particular form of worship. Spirituality is inherent in religion but transcends all religions, races, cultures, social or political organisations. Spirituality is the all embracing. Religion, on the other hand, claims to be concerned with a special relationship with God. That relationship is dictated by the teachings of the masters and accompanied by doctrines, forms of worship, rituals and codes of conduct sanctioned by the office bearers of that religion.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

My spiritual purpose is to ensure that since I, as well as all other human beings, am a Divine being, the treasure within me unfolds itself. There is something in me, which is not just this body, and this treasure, the values, must come out. I no longer believe that I am a poor wretched sinner, as I was taught in Christianity. I am so happy that Sathya Sai Baba has helped me to see that as well as everybody else, I am Divine.

The spiritual purpose for my work is to ensure that it is based in spirituality and that everything I do and everything I do with others, all our actions, should be wrapped up in spirituality. That is, in the practice of these values.

Consciously Growing Spirituality

It is my humble prayer and intention that my leadership continues to be based on spirituality – the daily practice of Human Values: love, peace, truth, right conduct, and non-violence.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

The starting point was African cosmology. I was brought up in my African tradition and culture to believe that there is a Supreme Being (God) who is responsible for creation, for all that exists, including us humans.

This God is ever present, ever knowing and all-powerful. He was characterised to me as a God of love, compassion, truth, good behaviour and peace. This God has delegated His responsibilities to deities, who superintend over His creation and ensure that man fulfils the moral conditions that are implicit in creation. God, therefore, rewards good people and punishes offenders.

African cosmology dictates that the human being does not die, only his body falls away while his spirit continues to live in other worlds. The spirits of ancestors are always present with man, guiding, advising and guarding him. Ancestral spirits demand the observance of the moral codes of society that are in harmony with the expectations of God. The observance of these moral codes (values) is a pre-condition to the attainment of peace, prosperity, success and stability. I grew up, therefore, to believe in God, deities and ancestor (spirit) worship.

Then came Christianity into which I was initiated when I entered a Christian school that was established by the United Brethren in Christ (UBC) Mission. I was taught about Jesus Christ as being the 'Only begotten Son of God' and that He was truly God (the Trinity). I was taught that only those who believe in Him would enter Heaven/Paradise when they die (a place where milk and honey flow); where there is no suffering and no more need to work, etc. I grew up in this belief right up to my high school and teacher training studies.

I later joined the Roman Catholic Church where I was re-baptised on the grounds that the earlier baptism was invalid; not good. This church preached the teachings of Jesus Christ in exactly the same way as the earlier church. The main difference was that the Roman Catholic Church placed great emphasis and importance on Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ who was worshipped on each Thursday. Both churches condemned African forms of worship – ancestor worship in particular, although the Catholic Church sanctioned the worship of some of their own ancestors whom they gave saintly status.

Finally, I received the divine call from Sathya Sai Baba (1975 to date) and became His devotee. Sai Baba's emphasis is on the universality of God; on His presence in everyone, everywhere, and that He can only be reached through love – the central value of all values, which heightened my consciousness to levels where it had never been before. He has transformed me from a selfish, narrow-minded human being to one who now serves all and loves all.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Creating a “miracle school”

Looking back some years to the time when we were building the Sathya Sai School in Ndola, Zambia, practically with our bare hands, I met difficulties of all kinds, financially and otherwise. My spirituality lifted me and enabled me to persist – and this has born fruit. How did this happen? I made references to the various scriptures. There is a lot of spirituality in the scriptures, and I drew examples from them, which sustained me.

The story of Hanuman is found in Ramayana, one of the great scriptures in Hinduism. Hanuman had absolute faith in his master, Lord Rama. His focus was on Rama, nobody else. His devotion and commitment to duty when facing many challenges were remarkable. He persevered and endured all kinds of hardships. There was not a single moment in his life when he doubted Lord Rama. He therefore had the courage of his conviction to such an extent that he did not denounce his Lord when in captivity. Asked by Ravana, who was Rama’s adversary, “Whose messenger are you?” “I am the messenger of Rama whose wife you have abducted”, he replied.

In Christianity, we find the story of Saint Paul. Saul of Tarsas persecuted the Christians until he was confronted by a vision on his way to Damascus, and he heard a voice saying, “Saul! Saul! Why persecutes thou me?”

“Who art thou?” replied Saul.

“I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutes,” replied the voice from the sky.

From that moment onwards, Saul became a completely transformed man. Now he was Paul the Evangelist. He travelled great distances fearlessly to proclaim the message of Jesus in the face of suspicion, ridicule and threats to his life. He worked hard to spread the new message. He never gave up until he was executed in Rome. He sacrificed his life for the good cause.

Hanuman’s and Saint Paul’s stories inspired me, coupled with my belief in Sathya Sai Baba, who had said; “Go out there and spread my message of love.” I knew that this was not going to be smooth sailing. Really, spirituality drawn from the lives of other devotees like Hanuman and Saint Paul - who practised love, who practised right conduct, perseverance, stick-to-it-iveness, who had the courage of their convictions - helped me a lot to move along.

The local population as well as the local government in Ndola was stunned at our work, they had never seen anything like it. I was with the workers from 7 AM to 5 PM each day; I was always with them, doing things. This was and still is uncommon in Ndola. People like us, who are thought to be “big men” and important people, are not expected to do that kind of menial work. But they really felt that the example set, not just by me, but also by my wife Genoveva and a few others, was such that they could not help but admire and emulate it.

The way the school unfolded was an example. Without knowing the language, as it was not our country, we started this school – and did so by starting both a primary wing and a secondary wing. This was because Sai Baba told us: “Finish the whole school.” So we built the school with 24 classrooms. There was a primary wing for the beginners, and a secondary wing. Filling the primary wing was easy, because in Zambia there are many children out there; families are very big, so you only have to blow a whistle, and 10 will come, 20 will come. But when it comes to the secondary school, it’s different.

To enter a secondary school, there is a national primary school examination, which all children from grade seven, the last class of primary school, must take. Following this, the children with the best grades are selected for the government schools. Those with poor grades are left out. They are failures, rejects, dropouts. Our problem was that the first year, we were not on the government list. We were not even known; only the immediate townships knew that there was such a school coming up close to their sites. So when the grade 7 candidates were given their forms to fill out and they were asked for preferences for schools, they would not put Sathya Sai School on their list.

We went to the minister of education and asked for the basket containing the list of failures, the rejects, and it was from this basket that we chose our students. That was a big challenge. Again we were moved by love. That was a spiritual principle that influenced us, because we believed that these children were capable of achieving higher things. So we took these rejects, brought them to school and showered them with all that Sai Baba had taught us. The whole atmosphere became a spiritual atmosphere where there was love, kindness, sharing, helping, persevering and discipline, with love as the most important “weapon”. And we found that the children responded so wonderfully positively. Their mental powers, which were once blocked, suddenly blossomed, and they were able to grasp academic concepts and do very well in their studies. Genoveva would always tell them, “You are not failures, you can make it!”

Today the Sathya Sai School in Ndola is known as “The Miracle School”. There are 560 students, boys and girls. We started with the boys’ school. When parents asked, “Why only boys?” it suddenly occurred to me, that the problems of the world are mainly caused by men, not women, and that the prisons are full of men, very few women. Therefore, especially in a continent like Africa where wars are fought by men maybe we should start with taming the boys. This was the explanation I used to give to the people, and they liked it very much.

The school is called The Miracle School not just because of the high academic results, but also because of the transformation of the children themselves. The whole atmosphere of that township is now lit up because of the presence of the school and the teachers’ quarters there. And now The African Institute of Sathya Sai Education is functioning there as well. The inhabitants of the township feel important and are proud of our presence. For example, my former substitute as a leader, who came from Malaysia and was of Chinese origin, and his wife, who was a teacher and came from India, lived in the township. It has never happened in Ndola that foreigners lived with the natives. But they did that, and were respected for so doing. So the school and the Institute have become a very important fact in community building, in peoples’ relations to each other. There is no vandalism. People like these institutions.

I led “The Miracle School” for ten years, and now I am leading the Institute. Together with others, I am training the future teachers, both teachers for the school system and the teachers for the UN-Habitat water project.

Second Story – Exercising equanimity

When we started the school we exercised considerable patience and equanimity, and we continue to do so. We hear a lot of things that some people say about us, and about the school; some of the things they say are not true, not pleasant, but we have remained calm. We do not respond. That is a spiritual quality. Sathya Sai Baba teaches us about patience and equanimity: be calm whatever happens. People praise you, they blame you; remain the same. This has amazed the people to an extent that they now have become friendly, because they see that we don’t bother. We are only concerned about doing our job, doing our duties. This is very important.

Why is it that people are happy with the school? It is not only because of the book learning; it's also because of the way the teachers behave in society. The way the teachers live with the local people gives the locals the hope that yes, this is different; their children who had been forgotten, their community, which had been forgotten, can be raised to high standards and be recognised for their achievements.

Third Story – The scorpion and the sage

The way we look after the teachers is special. The teachers' welfare is very, very important. We see them not as tools, but as human beings whose needs we must strive to meet. This includes housing, the solving of domestic problems and time to attend funerals (there are many funerals in Zambia where AIDS is widespread). So they see this caring attitude and take it as an example to be followed.

A big inspiration for us has been the story of The Scorpion and the Sage: A sage was seated on the bank of a small river when he noticed a scorpion being carried away by the current. Four times he jumped into the water to save it from drowning. The scorpion stung the sage each time he tried to save it. Observing all this was another man who was seated not far away from the sage. He asked him, "Why do you want to save the scorpion who keeps stinging you. You should have let it drown." "It is the nature of a scorpion to sting. It is my nature to love and help those who sting and hate me," replied the sage.

We have given the young people opportunities to go for further studies. A few years ago we sent 11 of our graduates to Teacher's Training College, and "bonded" them for four years. We said that when you come back, you must teach for four years before you decide to leave, if you want to leave. They all returned, but then three ran away, they broke the bond, and we dismissed two others. But that did not stop us from sending more. We have sent two young women to Teacher's Training College, and this year we have sent two students to work for University degrees. So our continuing to send students for further education, even though some of the recipients do not behave according to their promises, surprises people, they wonder how we can continue to do that.

Normally we would have said, "You are ungrateful; we don't trust you, so we are not going to send anybody anymore for further studies." We could have closed the door, but we did not. Up until now we lost fifty percent, fifty percent remained, and they are very good teachers. We are sending more for teacher's training.

Fourth Story – Practising forgiveness

In the Sathya Sai Organisation, the rules say that you cannot publicly use the name of Sathya Sai Baba without permission. We have a case in Zambia where an Indian girl was employed as a teacher by the government. When that job was finished she started a school and called it Sathya Sai School and later on Sathya Sai Community School. I tried to persuade her to desist from using the name, and for us to come together and discuss the matter. I said, "Let us walk together and talk things over." She refused. This was two to three years ago. The lady wanted to be a member of the Organisation, but we could not grant her permission to be a member without her following the rules of the Organisation.

In the UK there was a similar case. Two teachers who had been with us in Zambia went to the UK and set up a Sathya Sai school that was not affiliated with the Organisation, and there were all kinds of problems.

I have been giving such matters a lot of thought. There is one spiritual principle that has been influencing me of late, and that is *forgiveness*. I recently had a meeting with the Zone Chairman for the Sathya Sai Baba Organisation in Africa; he wanted some people who had applied to become members of the organisation to disclose whatever funds they had collected in the name of the organisation. I knew this would be very difficult and very embarrassing for them. I told him; "Look, these are young people and therefore they are liable to make mistakes. Why don't we say to them, 'If you are going to join the Organisation, join. We will forget the past and forgive whatever mistakes you have made, but from now on all funds will pass through the Central Trust of the country.'"

The Zone Chairman was amazed that I could make such a suggestion. And with regards to the lady in Zambia, I suggested to her that we accept her as a member. But that would mean that she must drop the name Sathya Sai for the school; it should only be called the Chongwe Community School. If she accepts that, we will not go into the formal and legal questions regarding the establishment of the school, the question of deed, the question of the land register, the question of accounts. We would just be helping her in the training of teachers. The Chairman was really very amazed and said it was a splendid idea. I was influenced by the spiritual principle of forgiveness and the idea that people can change.

A great inspiration for me has been Nelson Mandela. As a young lawyer he was a political activist, who fought relentlessly for the freedom of his country and people of South Africa. For that reason he was sent to an isolated prison, Robbin Island, where he served his sentence for 27 years – cut off from his family, friends and relatives. He was released from prison in 1990; not as a bitter man, but as one who preached forgiveness of those that had imprisoned and tormented his people, and reconciliation among those that had so badly hurt and humiliated each other. "South Africa belongs to all of us in equal terms - black, white and brown. One nation, one people. Let us all exist side by side. Let us not extinguish the flame of unity," he said.

The characteristics displayed by the four stories I have referred to - of Hanuman, Saint Paul, The Scorpion and the Sage, and Nelson Mandela - clearly show the qualities of leadership: focus, devotion, commitment, determination, sacrifice, love, etc. All these stories have had a profound influence on Genoveva and me in our attempt to build a school with our personal resources in a country that was new to us. Reflecting on the lessons learnt from these four stories we soldiered on in spite of the enormous difficulties that we faced until the task was completed.

Fifth Story – Values-based water education

I would like here to speak about the values-based water education project. Everybody says, "Water is life." But we don't value water, because it's there; it is so common. We only value air when we are suffocating and water when we are thirsting. What is happening today, especially in Africa, but also in Asia, is that the population is increasing in leaps and bounds, but water resources remain the same or are decreasing due to their misuse and pollution. In many places the machinery that was installed by the colonial powers is still the equipment that supplies water today; that machinery is very old now, and is not efficiently used. People are moving from the rural areas to the cities where there is some supply of electricity, some roads, some businesses, some music and entertainment, some hope of finding a job of some kind. With this movement of people into cities, which become mega-cities, the need for water there increases immensely.

There is a huge problem of reaching these people, of giving them good, drinkable water. This is coupled with the fact that the affluent people misuse water. In Johannesburg, for example, you may find an affluent home using many hundreds of litres of water a day for the toilets, the washing, the showers, the garden in front, the garden behind, the cars. Next door, not far away,

you find the shanti-town where a family would really have to struggle to have 20 litres of water a day. So you have this disparity for all their needs.

Then you have a lot of vandalism, people using illegal connections because they don't have the water, tampering with meters, a lot of corruption, etc. Many countries in Africa share river basins. There have been water wars in the past and there could be water wars again.

Our water education is not just about being literate, knowing the chemical composition of water, knowing the sources of water, the management problems of water, etc. Those are tangibles. Such knowledge is fine, but there are certain intangibles that are equally important. That is the perception that people have of this element of water, their attitudes towards it, that it is sacred, and that therefore it must be used reverentially – with care and respect and without polluting it.

Values-based water education aims at bringing about a transformation of the attitudes, the perceptions of people about water, so that they come to respect it and conserve it, because water is life. Three quarters of the physical makeup of the world is water, our bodies are water, the vegetables we eat are water. Water plays a vital role in the Eco-system.

The United Nations has been very concerned about the problems of water in Africa. The technical and regulative measures, which the water utility companies have been applying, have not been proving very successful. So the UN was looking for other methods to complement the existing ones. That was why an expert group meeting was called in Johannesburg in 2001. I was invited to present a paper on Human Values in Water Education, presenting the Human Values as we know them, and what role they can play, and showing how Human Values in water education can be taught in all school subjects, because every subject has a water component. It's good to give scientific explanations to many things, but it's not enough, you have to ask which values can be learned or weaned from our observations.

For example, look at the roots of a plant or a tree, it's very difficult to find a straight root, they are always twisted, because they are in search of water. In the performance of their duties, they come across obstacles. If they come across a rock they go around it, they don't stop. They don't give up. That's endurance. So the science teacher can at the same time, in the same breath, talk about endurance in life. Obstacles are bound to come. The roots are not selfish, they pass the water on; that's co-operation. The science teacher brings these values out in their lessons without extra time being required.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

My vision is that teachers, workers and students of Sathya Sai School in Ndola practice the values of love, truth, peace, right conduct and non-violence. This is the spiritual basis of the school, the source of its strength and success. I believe that no business can succeed in a meaningful and sustainable way if it is not anchored on these values. A business that is bereft of these values will sooner or later collapse.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

How do I measure the success of our endeavours? My point of reference is the teachings of the great spiritual masters, for example, Krishna (as told in Bhagavad Gita) and Sathya Sai Baba, “Do your duty and do not focus your mind on the outcomes.” They tell us to do our duties to the best of our abilities and not to focus on the rewards, because the output is largely dependent on both tangible and intangible inputs – the performance of duties in particular. Success can in this case be “measured” in terms of the peace and stability of the institution, and in terms of the good social relations that exist between the teachers, the staff and the community. You can’t weigh it, you can’t directly measure it, but you can see it, and you can hear it, you can feel it, and you can read about it in the newspapers. A combination of all these can tell you if you are succeeding or failing.

From a more business orientation, success can be defined in terms of the realisation of the objectives of the business, which naturally include the welfare of those who affect and are affected by the organisation. Similarly, from the perspective of one’s career, success may be defined as the satisfaction that is derived from the application of one’s potential – the positive contribution that one makes towards the overall objectives of the business.

Therefore, in terms of the Sathya Sai Organisation, success may be defined and measured by the degree to which the fundamental objectives of the organisation - the unfolding of divinity that lies within each member – are achieved. That is to say, the degree to which members of the organisation become true reflections of the life and teachings of our spiritual master, Sathya Sai Baba, and also by being shining and beneficial examples to society.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

We get our funding through faith in Sathya Sai Baba. Funding has been coming in piecemeal. We charge a very small grade admission fee, because Sai Baba says we should charge a little to secure commitment - let it not be completely free. The income from these fees is so small that it cannot possibly cover the running costs of the institution, but people have been generous. Sometimes on the last day of the month a check arrives. This brings smiles to our faces, and then we are able to pay our bills. This has been going on for 11-12 years. But last year, through Sai Baba’s grace, a family sent a fixed deposit, a large sum of money. The interest is used to cover roughly 75 percent of all the costs; it came after many years of uncertainty and long patience. But we loved that uncertainty. We knew all along that these were tests. Although money was coming in piecemeal, and we never knew whether we would be able to exist the next month, we never bothered. We had faith.

Developing an Organisational Culture

The culture of our Sathya Sai organisations may be divided into two categories:

1. Non-Negotiable Aspect: Practising the Human Values by all its members, no matter what culture they may belong to.
2. Negotiable Areas: These include matters such as the religion, language, songs, dress, food, customs and traditions of the country where the organisation is based. The organisation must be anchored in the culture of the people. Cultural adaptation must be seen though as promoting the activities of the organisation.

For instance, at Sathya Sai School in Ndola, teachers and students do not wear coats and ties. The British system of education, which was maybe developed a hundred or more years ago, is not used to our more informal dress code. School children in Zambia must dress like London-boys and London-girls; the boys for example must put on a coat and tie, even though they come from huts. You see them coming from the bush, wearing coats and ties. All the songs are in English; everything is in English. We said that at the Sathya Sai School we were not going to do that, no coats; no ties. We were going to dress simply like our people. Well, that was a big challenge.

The teachers didn't like it. There was going to be a rebellion. But we stood very, very firmly and said, "That's it! If you want to develop an educational system with respect for the culture, you can stay, otherwise you don't stay." Today the teachers are very happy; they thank us. They are very simply dressed. Even when the president of the country comes to visit the school there are no coats and no ties. I said to them, "See, you are not judged by the clothes you wear, but by the work you do."

Songs are sung in the vernacular, and greetings in the local language are adopted. Even for the boys to wear white clothes to school, as they do, was a big challenge; but we have the courage of our conviction. The other boys outside used to call them "jail birds," because prisoners in Zambia wear white clothes. We said, "What about doctors, nurses, scientists in labs, etc.?" This was initially a big issue in the school.

Sitting on the floor was another big issue. In Zambia, people don't want to sit on the floor; you must have chairs. We said, "No." We got mats, and everybody must sit on the floor - students and teachers as well as parents. At first, they didn't like it at all, but now they love it. This is consistent with the local traditional cultural expectations. In addition, shoes are taken off when entering the Auditorium for prayers. These practices are a true reflection of traditionalism as perceived locally.

Another big problem was working long hours. The teachers didn't like that at all. In Zambia, since schools are few and children are many, the government has introduced a shift system. Typically the first group of students and teachers comes in the morning and is in school up to 12, at which time they are finished for the day. Then the second group comes in. In contrast our working hours are from 7 AM to 4.30 or 5 PM. Teachers didn't like that. But now they do. And I used to make them work on Saturdays. Teachers had never worked on Saturdays here. Even with all of this, people have now perked up, because now they understand that hard work is important. We believe that work is worship. And we quote the Bible which says, "Out of thy sweat shall thy eat bread." It is in the Book of Proverbs. Unless you sweat, you will not eat bread. So you have got to work.

In recognition of the fact that Christianity is part of the culture of Zambia, virtually 100% of the school population is Christian; the school gives prominence to this religion. There is no attempt at indoctrination. Genoveva and I were brought up in the Christian tradition, and to a large extent we are familiar with the Bible. We often talk about so many things from the Bible. This, the whole

community knows. Although I don't go to church, I'm still a Roman Catholic. In the school we sing Christian songs, we celebrate Christmas, we venerate Jesus Christ and the good works of the Christians, etc. and we are comparing them with what Sathya Sai Baba is doing. So nobody sees us as a threat. Sai Baba says, don't evangelise; don't try to convert anybody. We tell the children and the teachers to go to their churches, so the people are happy.

When we started the school there was only one car, which used to bring one Muslim boy to the school. Now there are 20-30 vehicles including cruisers coming to the school. All the well-to-do people in town want to bring their children to the Sathya Sai School, and there is a long waiting list. In fact, one of the big problems we have is the selection for the next year. People from all over the country would want to send their children if it were a boarding school. They keep ringing and asking, but it is not.

Now others must soon take over; we are ageing. We have prepared local teachers who have been with us for ten years to carry on our work. The school has for the past three years been in the hands of the local people. We are also preparing some of the teachers at the school to upgrade their knowledge, those with BA degrees to go for an MA. That would make them qualified to teach at the Institute in two or three years.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

A business is a by-product, a child of the local community. Therefore, a business is for the people. Its primary role is to give service to the people – service that is bathed in values. The wise, proper and efficient utilisation of resources by the business for the good of all is one fundamental role that the business must play. Human Values are implicit in what so ever a business does, and this must always be borne in mind by all those who are involved in the operations of the business.

My vision for the institutions of the world and for all of humanity is that everybody will allow himself or herself to bring out the treasures that are within them. But my vision does not stop at bringing the values out; it includes practising them, insuring that they are applied in our daily lives.

If we love one another, there will be no wars. If our behaviour is right, there will be peace. We are all of the same stock. Look at the air, we breathe; I fly to New York and come down there, same air. I go to Denmark, same air. There are so many illustrations in the Bible where Jesus tells us to look at what our Heavenly Father does; the rain falls on all, the sun shines on all. It is my vision that humankind will one day see the truths of the wonderful teachings of the great Godmen that have come to us, and begin to practise them. It's all about seeing the oneness in all. We see ourselves as being different, one from the other, although we are not.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Others

Before coming into the influence of Sathya Sai Baba, I saw others as others. I saw myself as being different from them in terms of colour, sex, language, tribe, nationality, etc. Now I realise that the differences that I once saw are superficial, ephemeral and unimportant.

Fundamentally, others and I are one. I belong to one caste – the caste of humanity. This has helped me as a leader to get along with everyone in the world and it has been clearly shown in the way that people of all classes, races, different levels of intelligence and status in life have received me and I have received them.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based leader

The control of the mind, and therefore of the senses, is my next focus. I want to be able to be the master of the mind and of the senses, rather than them leading me. This is the biggest challenge in my spiritual life.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

Human Values are the treasure that is within each individual person. It is this treasure that an individual must excavate (bring out) and utilise in his daily life – in thoughts, words and deeds. This treasure then becomes the beacon of light, the guiding spirit in decision-making processes.

Whatever happens, accept it as a gift, coming from God. Obstacles are there to strengthen us; I always see any obstacle as a blessing.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

The advice I give to spiritually inclined leaders is to move away from the archaic idea that spirituality means knowing the Bible, or the Bhagavad Gita, or the Koran, or going to the temple all the time. Spirituality is not going through the rituals and giving alms when you are in trouble and thinking that this will give you blessings. Spirituality has to do with practising the Human Values. These values make us spiritual beings.

Spiritual-based leaders should practise Human Values in order to become a model of excellence for others. Such leaders become accepted by those that they lead and in due course will have a profound and beneficial influence on all, including the organisations that they lead.



An inquiry into the nature, activities and results of leading from a spiritual basis

Full transcript of an interview with:

LARS KOLIND
Denmark



Interview conducted 5 March 2002

Specific information related to interview:

Organisation: Oticon
Location: Copenhagen, Denmark
Industry: Hearing Impaired Products and Services
Position: CEO
Years in Position: 11
Gender: Male
Age: 54

Current information (as of 2006):

Current Organisation: Grundfos
Current Location: Copenhagen, Denmark
Current Industry: Pumps
Current Position: Chairman

General information:

Total Years in All Leadership Positions: 26

Previous Positions/Organisations: (All position/organisations are in Denmark) Consultant, Operations Analysis Corp, 1973-76, President 1976-81; COO, Risoe National Laboratory, 1981-84; CFO, Radiometer, 1984-88. In addition, a member of a large number of boards of Danish and international companies and public enterprises, as well as of the World Scout Organisation, World Wildlife Foundation and other similar not-for-profit organisations.

University Degrees: BA and MSc. in mathematical economics, University of Aarhus, Denmark

How to refer to Lars Kolind:

“Former CEO of Oticon in Denmark, one of the world’s premier suppliers of products for the hearing impaired”
“Chairman of Grundfos in Denmark”

CAREER

Career History

I am primarily basing this interview on my experiences from my last assignment, which was as CEO of Oticon, the major international producer of hearing aids. In addition, in much of the interview I will refer to my current role as Chairman of Grundfos, the world's second largest producer of pumps. Although I only spend about one day a week at Grundfos, it nevertheless plays a major role in my thinking.

To take my career chronologically, I worked from 1973-81 at the Danish consulting company, OAC, Operations Analysis Corporation A/S. The major part of my work involved doing quantitative work on, for example, production planning problems, where I typically developed a mathematical model as an aid in analysing significant decision problems. The models served as the basis for optimisation analyses, computer simulations and statistical analyses. I worked with management to help them determine what decisions to make and to provide them with the tools that would help them make better decisions in the future.

I provided such consulting services for about fifty different companies – and from 1976-81 I was the President of OAC. Some of the projects were very successful and others were not. I realised that the primary reason that some of the projects were not so successful was that there were human factors that could not be taken into account by the models. It was not that the models were not good; I believe they were good generally speaking, but the inability to make use of all the information in a constructive manner really frustrated me. Looking back, I think we did some wonderful work, even though there were serious limitations in our methods. From a traditional business point of view, however, we were seen to be quite successful; the company grew and we made money.

But I was not really satisfied. So in 1981 when I was asked to take over the chief operating officer position in the Risoe National Laboratory, which is a scientific institution of about 1,000 people that is state owned and run, I accepted the offer. There were four managers, three scientists and myself, to run this large and highly respected research operation, and I loved it. I was working with people who were very intelligent; not only did I further develop my managerial skills and insights, I also learned many things about various aspects of science, from biotechnology to chemistry to physics.

It was wonderful work and we were undergoing a major transformation. Risoe had started as the Danish national nuclear research facility and we were in the process of orienting it away from the nuclear focus and to a broader focus on science in general and energy. I played a major role in that strategic process and I really loved it. What I did not like was the state bureaucracy. We were forced to make a lot of decisions based on rules that I personally found quite irrelevant and that frustrated me. But by and large I was most satisfied.

In 1984 I was approached by Radiometer, a very successful manufacturer of equipment for intensive care units in hospitals. It was an incredibly profitable business and it was family owned. I was called in to be the Chief Financial Officer. I told them I had no qualifications for that, but it was the position they had available and so that is what they hired me to do. However, I quickly got the position as COO. There were 1,200 people, many of whom were highly qualified. Financially we developed extremely well and I remember the last year I was there we made a 28% return on sales.

The minus there was that the owner and Chairman was a relatively difficult person to work with. He tended to know better than his staff what to do and what not to do and this left very little room for anyone else, including me, and made a major mistake when he hired a CEO that did not fit the company. I remained as COO and the CEO was kicked out, and my relationship with the owner improved. I however felt a need for a change. I felt that while I wanted to *create* something, I was only *improving* something that the owner-CEO had created. The limits within which I could work were too narrow, I needed more room to develop and experience my creativity.

So I was quite happy when Oticon (a hearing aid company) approached me and asked me to take over as CEO. Although I was not unhappy with Radiometer, I was happy with this invitation. Oticon was doing extremely badly and there was really an opportunity to change something. I was given the full power to do whatever I thought was relevant.

I started with the company in 1988. Because we were close to bankruptcy, my first major action involved carrying out a dramatic downsizing; we did the turnaround in 1989. Having done that, I realised what a difficult strategic situation we were in. I reviewed all the options and found that there was really only one option if we were to survive: to develop a uniquely creative, innovative, fast moving organisation. We developed this new organisational concept in early 1990 and implemented it more or less over night in August 1991.

After a half a year of a lot of turbulence, the company really took off. The financial performance was unbelievable. We took the company public in 1995; I and practically all of the employees bought shares. When I first bought my shares in December 1990 the value of the company was 150 million kroner. When I left in May of 1998, the value of the company was 6 billion kroner and now (March 2002) the value is 20 billion, roughly 2½ billion US dollars. I think it has been a surprise to a lot of people, but not to me, that Oticon has also continued to produce incredible growth and financial results *after* I left.

In connection with the new organisational concept, the management changed dramatically. There were two of us who ran this whole process and we were completely, 180 degrees, each other's opposite. Although I had doubts about having two people manage the company, I nevertheless went ahead and chose my opposite, Mr. Niels Jacobsen, to be my deputy manager; if there were to be two of us, then we should be as different as possible. So we ran the business together and Niels took over as CEO when I left in 1998. Niels has done amazingly well and the company is still providing excellent products and record profits.

I might add that throughout most of my career I have maintained a close relation to the academic world. For example, I spent seven years at the University of Copenhagen as a part time associate professor and recently I have been appointed Adjunct Professor at the Aarhus Business School.

Current Responsibilities

After I left Oticon in 1998 I served as chairman of Grundfos, which is the second largest manufacturer of pumps in the world, with yearly sales of roughly 1.3 billion US dollars. This takes about one day a week of my time. I also serve as a non-executive chairman of the Danish high-technology firm, Unimerco, which is the largest tool management company in Europe. A third board that I sit on at present is the holding company Jacobs Holding AG, a large family owned conglomerate in Switzerland whose companies employ roughly 700,000 employees all over the world.

For the time being I spend most of my time being a very active non-executive chairman of PreVenture A/S, which is a venture capital fund which is totally targeted towards the early phase of the start up stage, and is really pre-venture, thus the name.

SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual View of Life

I probably see spirituality in a relatively narrow sense because I was brought up in a home that had a quite strong Lutheran Christian touch. I have been strongly influenced by that upbringing and I am still strongly influenced by it. This early interest in Christianity led me early on to be active in that part of the Danish Boy Scouts that was associated with the Danish national church (roughly 85% of the Danes are members of this church). I might add, that later on I became a leader of the scouting organisation in Denmark and then of the World Scout Foundation. Through my work with scouting I met a lot of interesting people from all walks of life, such as bank managers, engineers and housewives, who were all strongly influenced by the combination of the church, religion and scouting.

I must admit that I find it difficult to reply to the question as to how I interpret spirituality. I fully understand how broad the concept is, but for me, personally, it is strongly associated with Christianity. So my answers will take that as a starting point.

For me spirituality is the acceptance of the existence of a God, whatever that is, and to adhere to my religion. That is how I understand spirituality; however, I am quite open to other peoples' interpretations.

I try to do a lot of things – and I obviously don't succeed in doing all that I try to do – but I try to live and act and lead according to the principles of Christianity, the way I understand them. I have become conscious of the fact that I am much more Lutheran than I thought I was. I am in particular very strongly influenced by the Lutheran tenet that it is your duty to work hard. I am so strongly influenced by that principle, that I hope that in ten years times I can have a little more relaxed attitude towards this feeling of obligation.

Spiritual Theme

I believe that the theme of my spirituality would be: "love God and love your neighbour."

Distinction Between Spirituality and Religion

Spirituality for me is not really very distinct from religion. Spirituality is a slightly broader concept, but I must admit that my answers to this interview – and what I am doing in my work – are not inspired or influenced by a broader concept of spirituality, they are influenced by my religion.

Spiritual Purpose, Principles, and Values

I must admit that to describe what I am doing and what I have been doing, I can simply say that I am trying the best I can to live a Christian/Lutheran life. Which to me means to do something for the poor, to do something for the underprivileged, to try to do to other people what I hope that they would do to me, and all of that. This all came from my parents, basically, and I never really questioned it, which is strange because I tend to be both curious and critical, and have questioned lots of other important things. My spirituality is just there and I don't currently see a reason to question it. It works.

My values come from my spiritual views. In rare cases people ask me why I am so obsessed with the idea of making a difference. I reply that this is fundamentally why we exist and that has something to do with our relation to a higher being. I am cautious in preaching this message in our culture. But if you ask a hundred people that have heard about me what my fundamental beliefs are, I guarantee that more than fifty will know that they came out of Christianity, which I think is very good.

I must admit, there have been periods when I have had my doubts - and I still have a few existential doubts.

Consciously Growing Spiritually

What I actively do to grow spiritually is a very, very good question - because I really don't do much. I don't go to church very often. I read a lot, but not very much about spiritual issues, my interests are more in the direction of historical writings. If you are serving a purpose and you are doing it based on some fundamental values, and those values have to do with care and love, then you have great potential and you can be successful in almost anything.

Prayer is a part of everyday life. I may pray at certain times during the day, such as at a meal or when I feel thankful for the day, and I also pray in difficult situations. There are difficult situations where I think it is a great strength to be able to express yourself via prayer and to feel that you are in dialogue with a higher being. I think this is very important.

There are many situations where, afterwards, I wondered why I made a particular decision and realised it was clearly related to my spirituality. But I must admit that only on rare occasions did I ever think about my spiritual basis while making the decision. I was tuned into the situation at hand, thinking about the issue and how to solve it. But afterwards it was obvious that I was strongly influenced by my spirituality.

Spiritual Influences/Evolution

As I indicated earlier, my spiritual evolution all came from my family, my upbringing. Interestingly enough, although my parents, especially my father, had a strong religious attitude, they never ever forced me to do anything. I knew that they had this religious approach to life, but we didn't talk much about it. In spite of this, it had a very, very strong influence on me. I never felt any pressure from my father in this respect in any way, so it worked. I have tried to do the same with my kids. They know exactly where my wife and I stand, but we haven't put any pressure on them to follow in our footsteps.

I first became aware of my spirituality when I was 18 or 19 years old. I was very, very active in scouting and spent all my free time working as a Scout Master. I attended various courses, and once I attended a specific course that was led by a scout who was the chief engineer of Frederikshavn Municipality in the northern part of Jutland. He was a very clever guy, very intelligent and I really admired him, as I did many others associated with the scout movement. What really struck me was that these people that I admired from a professional point of view were so influenced by spirituality. I realised that this was a real turning point for me. They had and have no idea about this, because I have never talked to them about it.

Spirituality began to influence my work decisions even at this early time; however, I have become more conscious about it as I have matured. When I see what I have done and the decisions I have made in different situations it is clear that spirituality has always been there, I've just become more conscious about it.

STORIES OF SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADERSHIP

First Story – Downsizing in order to survive

If you look back at the Oticon story, there were two phases. One was the downsizing and the other was the building of the new company. In the downsizing phase we were under extreme pressure because the whole company was falling apart. And the pressures were coming from everywhere. I met with the management of our bank once a month and they were looking critically at everything we were doing. We were pressed to an extent that most people simply cannot imagine.

We were forced to reduce staff very dramatically. On one occasion we cut away 10% of the staff overnight. I was really under pressure to determine which principles we should use to make the decisions as to who to lay off. I took the decision, which *no one* understood, that we would not fire anyone over 50. Neither would we fire people who were so essential that we didn't think we could survive without them. But other than that, we would let those people go who we thought would have the best chance of getting another job quickly - even though these were obviously the ones I would have preferred retaining. I just couldn't look into the eyes of all of the people that we would kick into prolonged unemployment in order for the rest of us to make money and prosper. I just couldn't do that.

I must admit that I simply made these decisions and I didn't really think about where they came from, which was from my conscience. Normally someone in my position would let the department heads talk to the people. But I didn't do it that way. I talked to every single person that was to be laid off and told each of them that they were going to be fired and that we would work with them to get a new job the best we could. I was experiencing all their bad feelings as I was confronting myself with the doubts and fears of all of these people. To me it would have been an act of cowardice to let others do this for me. I made the decision. Then I explained it to my managers - and I explained to those being fired why I had chosen to do what we were doing.

The interesting point was that we got through this amazingly well. There was total acceptance, even though no one really understood it. But once it was done, people said "wow" and really respected my decision. I maintained a number of the people who were fired as very good friends because they respected that it was necessary. It turned out that we managed to work with almost all of them to get new jobs. Obviously this had a price for me and for the company as well, and the price was that there were lots of people that I would have rather laid off that we retained.

Later I realised that this was really an expression of my spiritual principles. But I must admit that while doing it I didn't think much about it. Yes, I did follow my conscience and that is certainly the voice of spirituality.

Second Story – Discovering and living our purpose

After the downsizing of Oticon, it took us two years to find out what the essence of the company actually was. We came out of a tradition where our tag line was "Leaders in hearing technology." We were so oriented to hearing technology, that we forgot almost everything else. I could see that this was not right, that we were far more than a technology company. I worked day and night to find out who we really were and what our fundamental purpose should be.

What inspired me was the fact that we were dealing with people who had enormous personal problems due to lack of hearing. I was so conscious that we were making money serving these people who were in such a bad condition, so I asked myself, "What is our role?" This was what led me to see that fundamentally our job was not to align two theoretical curves, which is the way you normally assess whether hearing care has been successful or not. Our job was to add to the quality of life of those we served and to help them to live a decent life. So this is what led us to phrase the essence, the vision of the company to be: "Help people with impaired hearing to live as they wish with the hearing they have."

This all had a tremendous effect on our employees, customers and dealers. We were not only saying all of this; we were living it. We went through the process where we examined every corner of the company. I asked the question a hundred times, "Does this help people with impaired hearing to live better with the hearing they have or does it not?" We were closing departments and initiating projects in order to actually live this.

What struck me was that if you phrase your purpose that way, and if you demonstrate that you mean it, then you earn a tremendous respect from everybody, not just the employees. This included researchers and knowledge partners at universities and clinics. The public clinics loved our vision and were so enthused about it. The private dealers said, "Okay, here's a company that has a purpose, and this is the first company that has really understood what this is all about."

I later realised that this came out of my desire to involve myself in doing something for these people, to improve their situation. It turned out to be a fabulous expression of what we stood for. It was so powerful, even though it was not developed by any marketing people; there were no consultants or advertising agencies involved. It was from working and working on the question of "What can we do? What should we do?" I am sure this was highly inspired by my fundamental beliefs about what's truly important in life.

Third story - The difference between shares and stock options for employees

We work for a common purpose and this is a moral purpose. We need to make money, but the reason we exist, our *raison d'être*, is much more than that; there are things that are more important than making money. We are a team with a common purpose and we do everything we can to live up to that purpose. In that context it is totally natural to introduce shared ownership.

I have always argued that shared ownership means that you share responsibility; you make an investment. So I have worked against stock options, but I have worked strongly for shares that people pay for. To me there is a tremendous difference between the two. We give them a discount in the price, that's okay; but we are now taking joint responsibility to run the company by sharing ownership.

LEADING A BUSINESS FROM A SPIRITUAL BASIS

Purpose of Business

I have a vision, which I dare generalise, that organisations will survive, develop and prosper if they build a very strong culture that ties the staff together – a culture that creates a strong sense of we-ness – not only for financial reasons, but primarily for a common purpose of doing something important. This is a key to being successful. If you are serving a purpose and you are doing it based on some fundamental values, and those values have to do with care and love, then you have great potential and you can be successful in almost anything.

Defining and Measuring Success – for Career and for Organisation

Personal success to me was the feeling that I was doing the right things and we were doing it right. I would not say that money is not important, but for me success is to be able to do right, to have a good feeling of what you are doing, and to run a wonderful team of people who are dedicated.

I must admit that had my work at Oticon not resulted in financial success, I would not have felt that I was successful. So for me the financial figures are important, but I have never seen them as an end, rather as a means. I knew my work was successful and I also wanted to see that it worked financially.

What was also important to me was for the company to increase its reputation among its peers. We were consistently rated very high on quality, management, innovation, financial performance and employee satisfaction every time you compared companies in any respect; that to me was also part of success.

People believe that Oticon has outstanding human resource management and that it is a place where you can become a part of a great team. In fact, we didn't have a specific human resource management department; we integrated this function throughout the organisation because we felt it was too important to leave to some specialist. It was an essential part of the company.

What we did was a role model for others and Oticon is still perceived as one of the most attractive places to work for engineers and other groups of staff. People were desperate to work with us, we were making a major difference with our customers, and we were recognised with our peers. And it all ended up creating financial value like crazy.

Importance and Priority of Financial and Productivity Goals

When I look back on decisions I made as to products and factory production processes at Oticon, I can see that I have a much stronger interest in non-financial issues and I am happy that they turned out to make a lot of financial sense. But it didn't stop there.

The key thought I have is that the motivation for what we do is beyond the bottom line, and I think Grundfos exemplifies this very, very well. Everyone knows we are in business to make money, which goes without saying, but that is only part of the story. Everything we do is so clearly focused on environmental, social and ethical issues. I believe that almost all employees honestly feel that this company is not only in business to make money; we are in business to make a difference. If you look at Grundfos, that is an essential part of their success. This was also true

with Oticon. The staff felt that we were doing something that was more important than making money.

I know what I want to do, but I cannot always express why. That can be a problem when you have the board and all of the financial guys, because it is hard for them to accept things just based on knowing it is the right decision. They are so used to focusing on rational arguments based on short-term economic results.

In business, if you dare speak about values, then most people perceive you as a guy who makes decisions that make no sense from a financial point of view and who is really not a good businessman; you are considered a preacher and not a businessman. I just hate this. I have asked people to cut this out. I show them what I have been doing and all of the money I have made, I can't be wrong always.

Developing an Organisational Culture

The process that we went through at Oticon was:

- First, we focused on downsizing in order to survive
- Second, we focused on our strategic situation and chose our new strategic direction
- Third, we focused on making it happen by building a unique organisation that served our customers

Although the values were there all along during this process, I was not consciously aware of them; I did not use them as a conscious frame of reference for my decision-making. Clearly, looking back at the decisions we made, the values were there, but I didn't think much about them at a conscious level.

Once we had built the organisation, I asked, "What's the next step?" Our next step was to clarify the values. Phrasing the values, discussing the values, achieving consensus and all of that first occurred about five years after I started. I felt that this organisation would be much more sustainable if we were conscious of the values on which it was built. We can change the organisation, but we can't just change the values.

To summarise the cultural values at Oticon in a few key words, I would say...

- First of all it was to "focus on your neighbour," where your neighbour in this respect is primarily your customer. These were the people whose hearing were impaired and were in very difficult situations. So we focused on what we could do for these people.
- Second, we created a culture in which people were responsible, not only for what they did, but also for what we all did together. So this was responsibility for the whole organisation.
- The third thing emerged clearly from the first two and how they were implemented, and that was a clear element of caring for your neighbour - your colleague.
- The last thing was creativity; the culture urged everyone to continuously question what they were doing and to find a better way and new ways to do things.

I don't think these values are industry dependent; I think you can do this in virtually any industry.

Role of Business in Benefiting the Local Community, Nation and Society as a Whole

I personally have no doubt that being in contact with a higher power increases the quality of one's life in the broadest sense. This applies to everyone. I have never felt satisfaction in just making money. I am only happy because I started by making a difference, whether it was for the family, or the environment, or the hearing-impaired or whatever it was, that is what gives me satisfaction.

To expand on this, I think a company in any industry has an incredible strength and competitive power if the staff is united by a common purpose that makes sense in a broader context than just making money.

BEING A SPIRITUAL-BASED LEADER

Relationship with Other Executives

I don't think I was asked to chair the company Grundfos because I was a very good businessman or because I was able to make a lot of money. I was asked to chair Grundfos because they wanted someone who would express values that were based on a concern for both social and environmental issues. Grundfos is an expression of these values. The founder and the current owner of Grundfos is a strong Christian and the company is led 100% from those values.

Continued Growth as a Spiritual-Based Leader

I would never ever accept that I do not have a lot to learn, but I cannot give a good answer to what I am doing to grow as a spiritual leader. I obviously feel that I need to learn a lot more, that goes without saying; but I am not sure that I can identify exactly how that should be done or from what perspective. Perhaps this is because spirituality is less of a conscious activity, it has simply permeated my life. It is just there and I realised it was there early on. I must admit that I'm not really happy saying that I don't have a plan, but it is just there, my spirituality appears simply to be part of me.

Inner Processes that Guide Decision-Making

Obviously I've tried to be rational when making decisions. I've tried to have the numbers right and identify and analyse the alternatives and the consequences and all of that. But when I look back on the major decisions I've actually made, they are very intuitively based and values-oriented.

I know what is right, but I cannot always express why it is right. This pattern is the same every time; after the fact I can see why, but during the process I often have great difficulty explaining why I am so much against this or why I am so inclined to do that. My actual understanding comes afterwards.

With both Oticon and Grundfos I faced a lot of social and environmental issues, as well as major issues about our product focus and what we were trying to do. Again, after the fact, when I look back upon the decisions that I've lobbied for, they've been on behalf of the environmental and social issues – even though if I had been asked at the time what was most important, I probably would have said to make money. As it turns out my focus was and is a very good basis for strategy - and we're making money.

Some of the most important decisions we made were: the direction of our product development; who we were going to serve; and how we were going to serve. I recall, after the fact, that the direction I was arguing for in both Oticon and Grundfos was much more based on my wish to do something for the environment and my desire to act in a responsible manner than on earning money.

Guidance and Advice for Aspiring Spiritual-Based Leaders

I will argue that leaders and managers should realise what their values are and should realise how they do make decisions based on their values. In many cases they are unconscious of it, but I believe they should focus on making their decisions in light of their values.

I think it is a great help to speak up and express your fundamental beliefs and the source of your values. I think there is such a shyness in my country, Denmark, for expressing things like this, but I think it will add to your sense of satisfaction and well-being if you dare to express your values. I think it has a major impact, especially if opinion leaders would dare to do that.

Yes it can be dangerous and you may be open to attacks, especially in a small homogenous country like ours. I have been unable to avoid publicity about my manor house in Jutland, and I've been asked many times, "With your Christian background, how can you accept owning so much?" I say, "Wouldn't it be better that I own it? Look what I am doing with it. My wife and I really take care of it, we have restored it to a high level of quality, maintain it and the grounds, and we share it with others, opening it to the public for concerts, meetings and the like."

The power of example is also important; you must practice what you preach. This is a most essential quality. You must express what you believe, with your deeds, as best you can. Don't forget that I started by saying that I am making mistakes all the time, but to practice what you preach is the key to personal and organisational success. You shouldn't preach all the time, but once you are asked, you should never hide why you are doing what you are doing. Be open about it and invite dialogue.



**To download books, workbooks, articles,
and other resources about leading and
working from a spiritual basis at no cost,
please visit: www.globaldharma.org**