

Spirituality, work and interdependency

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[Robert Greenleaf's "Servant Leadership"](#) was one of the first business books I read (back in the '70s). Many refer to him as a "revolutionary." I do. What attracted me to him was how deeply his work, i.e., his theory and practice, bordered on what I knew at the time to be "spirituality" (i.e., not religion, not theology). What attracted me to his was (and is) the fact that Mr. Greenleaf was talking about the workplace. Imagine!

Interconnectivity

One of the foundations of his theory and approach was the notion of interconnectivity - that we are all interconnected, and it's this interconnectedness that augurs for acknowledgement and conduct that furthers the creation of living organizations.

I vs. We

Supporting others in the workplace community to grow as persons, to become wiser, healthier, freer, more accepting and tolerant, and more autonomous may come only we shift consciousness and belief systems. Many work environments are largely defined by selfishness, greed, ego and competition, where we largely define folks by have and have not (on many levels-mentally, emotional, physically, creatively). I think we have both the challenge and opportunity to ask some fundamental questions about our sometimes negative and limiting belief structures and be reflective about what we can do to effectively transform both individual and collective consciousness so that our behaviors produce results that are mutually supportive - on every level. Is this an illicit effort as Mr. Greenleaf might refer to it? Maybe yes; maybe no. I think it depends how we approach the exploration. I think it's anything but illicit if such an exploration comes from a place of love and compassion.

Daily behavior

One place to start is by asking some fundamental, personal workplace questions: Do I gossip about others? Do I commonly experience conflict with people who have a different value system than mine? Do I incite reactionary behaviors from others? Do I waste materials and resources? Do I constantly behave in a way to prove I am superior to others (command, control, and power stuff)? Do I use profanity, rudeness, or insensitivity as a regular part of my interactive or communication style? Do I use the put-down as a common behavior trait? Am I tolerant and open to other cultures ideologically different from mine? Am I honest and above board in my financial dealings with others? Etc., etc.

Dysfunction

I think it's important to understand that, consciously or unconsciously, like it or not, each individual is important to the functioning of the group or the organization in some way, shape or form. When an individual is out of balance, that out-of-balance dynamic impacts the

organization (not unlike an unhealthy cancerous cell in our physical body). And, when greater numbers of people are out of balance, well, I think we all have some semblance of knowing where that can lead - issues related to performance, production, morale, absenteeism, presenteeism and the like - an undermining of the overall health and well-being of the organization. Dysfunction.

"Business as usual"

Unfortunately, this dysfunction does not always appear as a "red flag." There are lots of folks who experience dysfunction - their own and/or others' - as "business as usual." For some, functioning poorly is a simple reality of the workplace. For me, dysfunction is a sign that all is not well. Dysfunction is a tug on the collective sleeve that asks, How can I contribute to the restructuring of the workplace (or, my part of the workplace) to preserve the positive humanity and ensure quality of life for everyone?"

Answering this question means providing an environment where reflection, self-discovery, interpersonal growth, wellness and well-being, and continuous learning, for example, are as much a part of the workplace as are the coffee, cubicles and computers.

No one is an island

There are those who believe that each of us is an island, a "free agent," whose sole purpose is to maintain our individuality, our place in the sun, our "space." And, perhaps there's some truth to this. But, my take is that when we choose to navigate life from a place where we choose to feel separate and independent from one another, we end up looking for excuses (certainly not "reasons") to support our choices, our wanting, or needing to operate counter to the notion of interconnectedness, and community.

Spirituality has its place in the workplace. Try as we might, I don't think there's room for compartmentalization - checking our authentic self, our true self, our "spiritual" self, and care, compassion and love for others at the door when we walk into the workplace.

New paradigms

Interconnectedness and community are as important in the workplace as they are anywhere else on the planet, perhaps even more so, given the state of fear, anxiety, stress, ambiguity, inhumanity, addiction, depression and chaos that characterize many of our workplaces. Perhaps a renewed focus on how we conduct ourselves at work may even enhance the quality, the energy, the climate and the culture of our workplaces. And for many, this will entail changing belief structures. Is this illicit? I don't think so. Tough, hard, challenging, and threatening to the ego? Yes, very.

Perhaps with a conscious renewed focus on the workplace as one of community and interconnectedness, understanding, empathy and compassion for the human experience - yours and mine - may transform many of our dysfunctional workplaces into centers where humanity rules the day.

Finally, I think there's a conscious or unconscious tendency for so many to discount the whole of people's humanity because "they are at work," where folks support a system and mind-set where people are asked to be less than human and function in a disconnected, robotic way because they are "at work." This is dehumanizing and compartmentalizing, and will never lead to the wholeness and well-being of either the individual or the organization.

Some questions for self-reflection:

- Are any of the following topics found in your management training manuals: loving people, being compassionate, spirituality, tolerance, selfless giving, forgiving, self-nurturing, contributing to the community, giving meaning to people's lives and purpose?
- Do fear, scarcity, suspicion and survival overtly or covertly drive many of the relationships and interactions in your workplace?
- Do you experience any of these soul qualities in yourself or others as you move through your workday: passion, understanding, honesty, integrity, sincerity, kindness, compassion, empathy, humility, dignity, respect, love? If so, when, with whom?
- Do leaders or managers ever ask the following questions (do you): Who are we? Why do we exist? What is our defining character? What is our vision? How do we express our vision in products or service? Who is our customer? How do we market and sell our products and services most effectively? How do we exceed our customers' expectations? What supports our most productive system of operation? How do we care for our people? How do we integrate humanistic principles and practices with sound business functioning? How do we treat others with respect, dignity and love? How can we preserve the dignity, health and well-being of all employees? How can we demonstrate we believe everything that exists is interdependent and interconnected nature, animals and humans? How do we adapt to new workplace demands? How do we manifest institutional moral responsibility? How can we shift from competition to cooperation? How can our values reflect responsibility for society and the environment?

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I'm grateful for the opportunity to share this reading with you and I hope you find it insightful and useful.

Perhaps you'll share this with others, post it on a bulletin board, and use it to generate rich and rewarding discussion.

What is the one thing that is keeping you from feeling successful, happy, confident, in control or at peace as you live your life - at work, at home, at play or in relationship? Maybe you know what that thing is maybe you don't. You just have a feeling that something has to change, whether or not you embrace that change. And how would that change support you to show up as a "better you?"

I'm available to guide you to create relationships that reflect honesty, integrity, authenticity, trust, and respect whether at work or outside of work. I support you to focus on the interpersonal skills that enable you to relate to others with a high level of personal and professional satisfaction -

unhampered by personal inconsistencies, beliefs, "stories," and behaviors that create barriers to a harmonious, pleasant, conscious, compatible, healthy and productive relationship.

I coach by phone, Skype and in person. For more information, 770-804-9125,

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