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**The Meaning of Spirituality in a Business Context**

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*Abstract*

Spirituality is connectivity. Understanding and living the BEING ALL ONE in a business context starts with accepting every single stakeholder in his or her spiritual identity. This adds a new aspect to globalization: a shift in consciousness towards integrating people, finances and mother earth. This truly natural concept helps us to understand that the resource is US - not an input separated from us. This holistic thinking takes action by supporting creativity on all levels. It defines authentic leadership as a process of inspiring others and being inspired by them. The purpose of living is life itself – not an objective or vision be it internal or external.

*Keywords*

Spirituality in business, Spirit, Authenticity, Authentic leadership, Work satisfaction, Cultural Creative, Consciousness

For many years spirituality has not been a word used in a business context at all. Managers and entrepreneurs have been hesitating to use words such as “spirit” or “spirituality”. Today things change and a new thinking emerges: “spirituality is life”! Meeting our loved ones for breakfast, the people that there are on our way to work, a bird in the air, the sunlight, clouds ... It is this that is spirituality: being aware of life – everywhere and anytime.

Everything is connected with everything. We are all one with nature and the universe. More and more humans have the courage to live to this and use the positive energy that this connectivity provides. This is where authenticity starts. Being authentic as a business leader leads us to use words such as love, compassion, truthfulness and grace and thus overcome barriers between people. Leaders are there to take a stand. And many leaders have done this in recent years and introduced terms such as “Creative Economy”, “Spirit in Business”, “Spirit at Workplace”, “Creative Work”, “My Work is Myself”, “Creative Age”, “Creative Capital”, “Soul Management”, “Soul Marketing” and others. All this is already or will soon be part of work life.

Lance Secretan\*, a pioneer of spirituality in the world of business, states in his book “Inspire – what great leaders do”: “The greatest idea in the study of community building and human relationship that will shape the future is the awareness that leaders must tune in to the wisdom and spirit of their followers.” Leaders need to have answers to their co-workers questions on “What do I work for? What is this all good for? Whom or what is it that my work serves in a holistic sense?” Today’s employees are expecting that the company, that is their managers, deal with issues such as “purpose of living”, “self realization” and alike.

And this is not a social playground. In a US study on work satisfaction Dr. Rolf Berth found out that companies with highly satisfied employees grow three times faster than companies with only average rates on satisfaction. There are other studies in other countries that

underline this. But there is still a huge gap: The “Gallup Engagement Index 2006” states that 19% of Germany’s workforce has no emotional attachment to their job and 68% are not doing more than the minimum needed not to get fired.

People don’t feel involved. But involving people starts with helping them to understand that we are involved in everything. A truly global understanding of doing business includes not only concern for stakeholders such as employees, clients and suppliers but also thoughts of HOW products are manufactured, how they are sold and what they are used for, where the resources come from and how mother earth is affected. We need to install this thinking as a standard in business life.

The company that makes this a core issue and thus integrates employees in this process of change in consciousness will earn rich fruit. Only the company that fosters creativity and inspires people by going with them through this conscious and spiritual process will attract the best talent in the future. Fair treatment and good pay for work has become a matter of course. Creativity, networking, good relationships – there is a whole set of “new” needs that employees want to have the company respond to and it’s all about wholesome satisfaction at the work place.

But this all starts with the head of the organization. This is a life long process for the entrepreneur or CEO. It is not a management tool. It is a path of awareness that needs patience and grandness to go. There is no shortcut. Support is provided by executive coaches and other consultants. And there are philosophical bureaus and other institutions that indicate a growing demand for personal development. This is the answer to burnouts and bore outs. More and more managers are taking their time to reflect on fundamental questions. There is a change going on and tomorrow’s most successful managers will be those who join the avant-garde that foster holistic, spiritual and creative ways of work. The definition of “success” will change: making profit with no respect to man and nature will soon be a clapped-out model. But this requires courage to open up for new ideas and radical new thinking. It requires curiosity and no judging. It may include taking risks in applying new models of management. And there are managers who dare:

Anton Gunzinger, internationally awarded Swiss IT entrepreneur, and Thich Tien Son, the abbot of the Frankfurt Pagode met at the 2004 World Spirit Forum in Arosa, Switzerland. The WSF World Spirit Forum is an Annual Congress to bring leaders from all sorts of knowledge fields together. They decided to change their chairs for one week. So the abbot became a CEO for one week while the entrepreneur was heading an abbey for the same time.

Both took the risk to live in a completely different world for a week. It was an act of opening up as a person and taking risk as a leader. Awareness, inspiration and empathy helped them to manage this new role. There is a documentary movie on this extraordinary experience that both are sharing in workshops. This example shows how spiritual practice in a monastery requires entrepreneurial thinking and behaviour and on the other hand how business gains quality by adding spirituality.

Even without such dramatic measures the workplace today is changing constantly and drastically. The end of the age of full employment – on a personal and on a nationwide basis – combined with the fact that one profession does no more fill a lifetime - has raised a lot of fears. A creative and inspiring workplace can help to overcome these fears and thus living personal spirituality in a free mode. But this new thinking starts with everyone. What helps a lot is to share experience on the way.

Many women find it easier than many men do, to open up for purpose, joy and consciousness at work and connect with each other through honest communication. This is why women will probably (and I would like to say hopefully) have a growing impact on work and society in the future.

There is a change in values going on on a global level. A US study comes to the conclusion that a new social group is in full development: people that are looking for new ways of living beyond tradition and lifestyle. \*\*Paul H. Ray calls them “the cultural creative” and estimates there amount by a quarter of the US population. These people are valuing relationships, support ecological standards of living, take actively part in what happens in the world and are interested in realizing their personal potential.

Many people are on the search for the purpose of living. Why am I here, what do I stand for, what is my destiny – people are ready to invest a lot to find answers. And this is the chance for a spiritual orientated employer: If a company helps its employees to develop to their full potential it may transform people’s search into inspiring performance. By investing in self responsible, creative jobs and tasks that make sense, employees will unfold their strength to the best of all. There is a huge potential to be discovered and used.

\*Lance Secretan

**Inspire! What Great Leaders Do**, Wiley (April 26, 2004)

Lance Secretan (Alton, Ontario, Canada) is one of the world's foremost thinkers on self-improvement and leadership. He is an author, award-winning columnist, philosopher, corporate coach, and a renowned public speaker and business consultant. He served as chairman of the Advisory Board of the 1997 Special Olympics World Winter Games and is also a former ambassador to the United Nations Environment Program.

\*\*Paul H. Ray

**The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People Are Changing the World**, by Paul H. Ray, Sherry Ruth Anderson

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<http://www.culturalcreatives.org/home.ht...>

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