

A Study of Spirituality in the Workplace

Ian I. Mitroff ■ Elizabeth A. Denton



Is it appropriate to integrate spirituality into the management of an organization? Does spirituality make a company more profitable?

Ian I. Mitroff is the Harold Quinton Distinguished Professor of Business Policy, Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California. Elizabeth A. Denton is an organizational consultant.

In this empirical study of spirituality in the workplace,¹ we report on our results from interviews with senior executives and from questionnaires sent to HR executives and managers.² In general, the participants differentiated strongly between religion and spirituality. They viewed religion as a highly inappropriate form of expression and topic in the workplace. They saw spirituality, on the other hand, as a highly appropriate subject for discussion. This does not mean that they had no fears, reservations, or ambivalence with regard to the potential abuse of spirituality. Nonetheless, they still felt it was essential.

They defined "spirituality" as "the basic

feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe." If a single word best captures the meaning of spirituality and the vital role that it plays in people's lives, that word is "interconnectedness." Those associated with organizations they perceived as "more spiritual" also saw their organizations as "more profitable." They reported that they were able to bring more of their "complete selves" to work. They could deploy more of their full creativity, emotions, and intelligence; in short, organizations viewed as more spiritual get more from their participants, and vice versa.

People are hungry for ways in which to

practice spirituality in the workplace without offending their coworkers or causing acrimony. They believe strongly that unless organizations learn how to harness the "whole person" and the immense spiritual energy that is at the core of everyone, they will not be able to produce world-class products and services.

In recent years, a large amount of mostly popular literature on spirituality has grown steadily,⁴ a significant portion of which deals with spirituality in the workplace⁴ and the benefits of such workplaces. In spite of or perhaps because of this literature, there have been, until now, no serious empirical studies of what managers and executives believe and feel about spirituality or assessments of its purported benefits. If spirituality is a fundamental, important human experience, why has it not received serious attention and systematic treatment?⁵ Some reasons for this neglect are:

- Spirituality is generally believed to be a phenomenon that is too soft, too nebulous, and too ill-formed for serious academic study. It is difficult to define, thereby rendering it nearly impossible to examine.
- U.S. society has a long-established history of relegating deeply personal beliefs such as religion to clearly confined private places and times of expression.
- Many current treatments of spirituality give it a bad name. If academics are too critical of spirituality and, thereby, are reluctant to study it, then what may be loosely called New Age proponents are not critical enough. Although very little spirituality qualifies for study by traditional academics, almost any feeling or sentiment with regard to spirituality is accepted by New Age advocates, often at its face value, for example, reports of past-life and out-of-body experiences, speaking in foreign tongues, and reincarnation.
- Even the few studies of spirituality in the work-

What We Asked and Why

The format of the questions and their substance and content evolved during the course of our study. The more we learned about the topic, the more we learned how to ask better questions.

The interviews began with a set of questions designed primarily to put the participants at ease. They were also meant to capture such basic data as birthplace, school, job history, number of direct reports, and so on. Next, we asked about the top three things that gave the participants the most meaning and purpose in their jobs. They chose from a list of items, such as associating with an ethical or good organization, doing interesting work, serving others, making money, realizing full potential as a person, and so on. We then asked them about the basic values that guided them in making important decisions in their lives and how often they were forced to compromise those values in making important decisions at work and why.

We developed a portrait of their organizations and rated the participants' perceptions on scales of various dimensions such as happy or sad, ethical or unethical, autocratic or democratic, profitable or unprofitable, caring or uncaring, worldly or spiritual, sane or insane, tolerant of gays and minorities or intolerant, and so on.

Then we asked about how often they, their

parents, and their partners or spouses attended religious services, prayed, and what their religious denominations were, if any. We also asked if they believed in God or a deity.

After broaching these somewhat sensitive issues, we explored the main topics:

- What meaning religion had for them and how important it was in their lives (this particular question allowed us to secure each respondent's implicit definition of religion).
- What meaning spirituality had and how important it was (so that we were able to secure their definition of spirituality).
- The differences between religion and spirituality.
- Whether spirituality was relevant in the workplace, an appropriate topic for discussion in the workplace, or best discussed outside of work.
- Comparisons with the more neutral topic of general philosophical values.

We also asked whether interviewees were aware of any methods that organizations could use to foster fruitful discussions of spirituality without causing people to feel violated or leading to uncontrolled discussions. We then inquired how often they felt joy or bliss in the workplace and when. Had they ever had an epiphany or a strong spiritual experience at work? Had they ever cried or felt depressed by the nature of their job or their organization?

An important part of the interview was concerned with how much, and which parts, of themselves people could bring to work; for instance, complete self, complete soul, total intelligence, total creativity, or sense of humor. Next we asked if they ever prayed at work and for what. Winding down, we tried to determine what their organizations had done that they were most proud of or most ashamed of. We queried them about organizations that they considered role models for fostering spirituality in the workplace and took a brief inventory of the employee programs in their organizations such as alcohol treatment, counseling, and so on. Finally, we asked whether interviewees agreed that long-term organizational success demanded that organizations learn how to foster spirituality in the workplace.

Many of these questions have not been asked before in this type of format. For instance, to our knowledge, no one has directly inquired of managers and executives whether they experience joy and to what extent in their workplaces. Topics of depression, crying, and full emotional expression have certainly not been explored extensively.* Also, to our knowledge, previous studies have not examined how much and which parts of themselves people feel comfortable expressing at work. None of these issues have been covered systematically across a variety of organizations.

*See S. Fineman, ed., *Emotion and Organizations* (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1993).

Beyond a certain threshold, pay ceases to be the most important thing, and higher needs prevail.

place by respected academics are written more from the heart than from a stance of critical inquiry.⁶ They extol the virtues of spirituality without the backing of evidence. (This does *not* mean that we object to writing from the heart; too much academic writing is arid and, hence, unable to affect people deeply. What we do object to is the lack of accompanying evidence.)

The preceding arguments merely indicate why such an important topic has been neglected. We believe that one of the best ways to counter each argument is to explain our study of spirituality in the workplace and present our results. For the past two years, we have conducted more than 100 in-depth interviews with senior managers and executives to discuss what gives them meaning and purpose in their work, in particular, and their lives, in general (*see the sidebar for the interview format*). The discussion of meaning and purpose served as a natural bridge to the more general topic of spirituality. To verify the applicability of our results, we surveyed a large sample of managers and executives by mail (*for more details on the participants in the study, see the sidebar*).⁷

It is impossible to discuss all our findings here, for example, the differences between responses of men and women as well as minorities. (The differences neither are critical nor do they detract from the main

findings.) In order to generalize our overall findings, we primarily discuss the qualitative results from the interviews. It is also impossible to discuss systematically all the quantitative results and differences between the various groups.

What Gives People Meaning in Their Work?

When asked what gave them the most meaning and purpose in their jobs, interviewees chose the following answers (ranked from first to seventh):

1. The ability to realize my full potential as a person.
2. Being associated with a *good* organization or an *ethical* organization. (Since most people saw “good” and “ethical” as the same, it didn’t seem to matter to them whether they picked a good organization or an ethical organization as their second choice).
3. Interesting work.
4. Making money.
5. Having good colleagues; serving humankind.
6. Service to future generations.
7. Service to my immediate community.

In previous studies as well, when people were asked directly, they did not list money as the most important thing about their jobs.⁸ Of course, this result depended on whether the person was employed and how well-paid he or she was. Nonetheless, beyond a certain threshold, pay ceases to be the most important, and higher needs prevail. The desire for “self-actualization,” as Abraham Maslow called it, becomes paramount.⁹

When we compared the results from the beginning of

The Sample

Mailed questionnaires. The largest of the five groups in our study consisted of 131 individuals who filled out mailed questionnaires. We studied this group after conducting the in-depth qualitative interviews and, hence, had field-tested the questions. We mailed 2,000 initial questionnaires to senior human resource (HR) executives, primarily on the U.S. West Coast, chosen because of their presumed sensitivity to the broader and deeper needs of employees. The small rate of return of approximately 6.6 percent may have been due to the length and sensitivity of the questionnaire. Thus, we don’t know at this point if the

responses are typical of HR executives in general, although they do match the responses of the HR executives we interviewed in person.

Interviews. Denton interviewed one group of all fourteen senior executives in a U.S. East Coast manufacturing company known for its positive, explicit stance on spirituality in the workplace and another group of eighteen persons who worked in newly formed business alliances or associations that promoted spirituality in the workplace. Thus, the members of this group were active promoters and supporters of greater spiritual development and expression in the workplace.

Mitroff talked to a group of thirteen senior managers and executives in a West Coast utility, an organization with traditional economic goals. This group proved invaluable as a point of comparison with organizations that had nontraditional or spiritual viewpoints. He also interviewed twenty-three people from various organizations. In addition, both authors also conducted partial, informal interviews with twenty or so other persons at various conferences. While the data from these interviews were partial and incomplete and hence could not be included in our formal statistical analysis, they provided important background information.

an interview with later portions, we found that when asked how much and which parts of themselves they were able to express at work, the interviewees noted that they were able to express their “total intelligence” and “complete creativity” significantly more than their “total feelings,” “complete soul,” or “full humor.”

Interviewees clearly indicated that they were more able to show their intelligence than their emotions or feelings at work.

They clearly indicated that they were more able to show their intelligence than their emotions or feelings at work. This finding is not surprising since it aligns with the prevalent design and expectation in current workplaces. What is unfortunate, however, but still not surprising, is what people report as a separation between their brains and feelings or emotions, which contrasts sharply with what gives them the most meaning in their jobs — the opportunity to realize full potential as a person. Unless “full potential” is narrowly defined, which it isn’t in the total context of the interviews, this means that most people will never realize their full potential at work.

While they were not explicitly conscious of conflicts in their responses from different parts of the interview, most people sensed them. If only vaguely, they realized they have to separate and compartmentalize significant parts of themselves. Some people don’t want to express all of themselves at work or anywhere else for that matter. Many want to keep a certain significant part private, which they share with no one. However, it is clear from the total context of the interviews that a decisive majority wished to be able to express and develop their complete self at work.

In listing the basic values that governed their lives, most people responded with a common set of virtues such as integrity, honesty, building and maintaining good relationships, keeping one’s word, trustworthiness, being there for one’s family and for others, and so on. A few listed even more metaphysical or spiritual values such as being in harmony and in touch with the universe. The overwhelming majority of participants also indicated that they very rarely, if ever, had to compromise their basic values in making important decisions at work. Unfortunately, this did not always square with the facts. In response to later questions

in the interviews, sharp conflicts often surfaced. For example, the chairman of a large, important organization in his industry bemoaned the fact that if he criticized the greed so rampant in corporate America, he would offend some of his biggest clients. This sharply contrasted with his earlier remarks in which he claimed that, as the chairman and founder of his organization, he was exempt from compromising his deepest values. When asked whether there was a contradiction in his responses, he was silent.

Since compartmentalization, contradictions, and splits were so prominent, it is important to note areas in which the respondents saw little or no contradiction. Generally, the interviewees saw their organizations as caring, ethical, *and* profitable and perceived no contradictions. This is especially significant since a majority of the interviewees were from for-profit organizations. Those from nonprofits agreed equally with those from for-profits in seeing no contradiction in being profitable *and* ethical. Unfortunately, we have no data other than the perceptions of those interviewed or surveyed on the link between high profitability and high standards of ethical behavior. Most of them saw no contradiction between the two. A future study might investigate a possible systematic linkage between actual profitability and beliefs.¹⁰

Approximately 30 percent of the participants had positive views of religion and spirituality. A small percentage, roughly 2 percent, had positive views of religion and negative views of spirituality. About 60 percent, or the majority, had positive views of spirituality and negative views of religion; 8 percent had negative views of both religion and spirituality.

Most of those interviewed did not have or experience strong emotions at work. A feeling of joy was the strongest emotion. Crying, feeling depressed, or having an epiphany were almost nonexistent. The interviewees experienced joy in overwhelmingly common, somewhat innocuous ways, for instance, in accomplishing an important work task. Far less prevalent was joy when, for instance, a coworker or a subordinate accomplished something significant at work or experienced the birth of a child.

Almost all the interviewees believed in a higher power or God. However, there was a strong, sharp split in the responses when participants discussed whether they felt the presence of a higher power or God at work. The majority of the responses clustered at the

extreme ends of the spectrum. Equal numbers had frequently and strongly experienced the presence of a higher power in the workplace or had infrequently or not experienced God at all. These same general findings held for praying at work versus praying elsewhere. (It is beyond our scope here, but these extremes can be used to construct different intensities of religious or spiritual belief.) Even though people reported that they rarely prayed or meditated at work, when they did, it was mainly to prepare themselves for difficult situations and for general guidance in making tough decisions. Sometimes they prayed for coworkers who were going through difficult times. Or they prayed “to get me through the day” and “to give thanks for something good that happened.”

Although most people felt somewhat strongly that spirituality was relevant as a topic in the workplace, when asked about the appropriateness or the inappropriateness of spirituality, they were neutral. This reflected their ambivalence due to the fact that they were relatively unaware of models that could be used to foster spirituality appropriately in the workplace. Indeed, they were seeking models or guides that would allow them to implement spirituality programs. They leaned moderately toward the position that spirituality should be dealt with outside work. As for general philosophical values, respondents felt strongly that they were relevant, an appropriate topic for discussion at work, and should be dealt with at work.

Most people wished ardently that they could express their spirituality in the workplace. At the same time, most were extremely hesitant to do so.

We also found that most people wished ardently that they could express their spirituality in the workplace. At the same time, most were extremely hesitant to do so because they had strong fears and doubts that they could do so without offending their peers. As a result, they felt a deep, persistent ambivalence toward spirituality. Their fears were probably due to the fact that they were unaware of any systematic ways in which they could discuss spirituality and didn't know of positive role models to use as guides for fostering spirituality in the workplace. The few examples mentioned were familiar — The Body Shop and Ben &

Jerry's. In some cases, respondents mentioned organizations that would be unfamiliar to most people.

Total Context

Many of the interviewees told stories that cut across the entire array of questions and thus tied them together. For instance:

- Charles is the CEO of a midsize, highly successful furniture manufacturing business on the East Coast. In his early fifties, in good physical shape, and happily married with three “great kids,” he has an enormous zest for living. He is proud of his entrepreneurial skills, which not only are responsible for the initial creation of his business, but have kept it fresh, exciting, and highly competitive over the years. Nonetheless, in the interview, it didn't take long for him to reveal what he considered a deep wound in his soul:

“A few years ago, I had an epiphany. I realized — or better yet, I could no longer deny — that the chemicals I was using to manufacture and treat the furniture I was making were highly toxic. They were extremely dangerous to the environment. To my dismay, I realized that I had become an unwitting agent of evil. Needless to say, this does not fit at all with my self-concept.

“While I had long ago abandoned the religion in which I was raised, my spirituality, on the other hand, has steadily grown over the years. Organized religion never had much appeal or meaning for me. It's more concerned with maintaining itself. It cares more about the organizational aspects of religion and with ritual and dogma than with serving people irrespective of their beliefs. Spirituality, on the other hand, is intensely personal. Not only do you *not* have to be religious in order to be spiritual, but it probably helps if you are *not* religious, especially if you want your spirituality to grow and be a basic part of your life.

“Spirituality is the fundamental feeling that you are part of and connected to everything, the entire physical universe and all humanity. It is also the belief that there is a higher power or God — whatever it is and whatever we call it — which governs everything. Spirituality is not only *believing* that everyone has a soul, but *knowing* this and being in constant communication with one's soul.

“The epiphany I had was: How could I proclaim myself to be spiritual, to believe that everything is funda-

mentally connected to everything else, that we are put here on earth basically to increase goodness and not just make money, and yet continue to make things that were basically harmful to the world? *Ever since that realization, I feel as if I am carrying a spear in the middle of my chest.* It's a constant reminder of the pain I felt when I realized what I was doing. *I struggle every day to pull that spear from my chest.*"

While not always as articulate as Charles, most of the people we interviewed had experienced some form of "wounding of the soul" as a result of working in organizations. This was the case whether the organization was a for-profit or a nonprofit. Contrary to conventional wisdom, working in a nonprofit does not automatically make a person more spiritually inclined. Many nonprofits have specific political goals and are even more concerned with obtaining hard results in the secular world than many for-profit companies. Whether an organization is more or less spiritual depends on the specific organization, not its profit status. One factor, however, became clear from the general interviews. A person must experience a severe crisis in order to embark on the search for spirituality.

Consider another example that presents other lessons:

- John is the CEO of a major social service organization. While officially a nonprofit, John is responsible for raising and managing millions of dollars annually so his organization can serve its needy clientele. Like many of the CEOs we interviewed, he is a complex blend of realism and idealism. He is tough and tender, worldly and spiritual. His very presence exudes confidence. He is on a first-name basis with the power elite of his city. He moves easily and confidently between the highest and the lowest social strata. In sum, he experiences little tension or contradiction in what might seem to be irreconcilable opposites. While John has extreme disdain for New Age terminology with its "gushy, sloppy language and thinking" and its paraphernalia, such as crystals and beads, he is not afraid to talk openly about his spirituality and the vital role that it plays in his life and work:

"I pray every day for guidance in making tough decisions, especially at work. I also pray to renew myself. I find that whenever I allow myself to be in contact with my spirituality for an extended period of time, then something good always happens. The grants and the money that I've been frantically worrying about

suddenly materialize. Whenever I have let myself be in touch with my spirit, I've been able to ignore the advice of my closest advisers to the benefit of my organization. It always works out better than I expected."

Like the majority of the CEOs and top executives interviewed, John is extremely skeptical of organized religion:

"I have little place for organized religion in my life or work. I view it as dogmatic, closed-minded, and generally intolerant of other points of view. It divides more than it unites. It is more exclusive than it is inclusive. Religion is more concerned with perpetuating itself than helping humankind. Spirituality, on the other hand, is personal and individual. You don't have to be religious in order to be spiritual.

"For me, the essence of spirituality is connectedness with everyone and everything in the universe, to the whole of humankind and the physical universe itself. It is feeling the awe and the mystery of being. It is also knowing that there is a supreme being or higher power that guides everything. I believe strongly that religion should *not* be discussed in the workplace. On the other hand, I believe not only that spirituality can be discussed in such a manner without dividing people, but that its discussion is absolutely key if we are to create and maintain ethical, truly caring organizations.

"All organizations, for-profits as well as not-for-profits, need to learn how to harness the immense spiritual energies of their members if they are to become ethical *and* profitable over the long haul. Any organization can make money in the short run by exploiting and mistreating its employees, but if it wishes to be profitable over the long haul, then it needs to learn how to become spiritual."

Definition of Spirituality

One important finding is that interviewees were able to define spirituality *without* being given an initial definition and, more importantly, that most people had the *same* definition. The following composite contains some of the typical responses to a question about the meaning of spirituality:

- In contrast to religion that is organized and communal, spirituality is highly individual and intensely personal. You don't have to be religious in order to be spiritual. Some of the most spiritual people I

know are not religious, at least not in the conventional sense. They don't currently attend religious services, although they may have previously.

- Spirituality is the basic belief that there is a supreme power, a being, a force, whatever you call it, that governs the entire universe. There is a purpose for everything and everyone. The universe is not meaningless or devoid of purpose.
- There is a higher power that affects all things. Everything is a part and an expression of this oneness. Everything is interconnected with everything else. Everything affects and is affected by everything else.
- Spirituality is the feeling of this interconnectedness and being in touch with it. Thus, spirituality is giving expression to one's feelings.
- Spirituality is also the feeling that no matter how bad things get, they will always work out somehow. There is a guiding plan that governs all lives. As long as a person has others, such as family, to fall back on, there is nothing to fear.
- There is as much, if not more, goodness in the world as there is evil. We are put here basically to do good. One must strive to produce products and services that serve all of humankind.
- Spirituality is inextricably connected with caring, hope, kindness, love, and optimism. It cannot be proved logically or scientifically that these things exist in the universe as a whole. Spirituality is the basic faith in the existence of these things. Faith is exactly the thing that renders their strict proof unnecessary.

We should stress that while nearly every interviewee agreed with and, hence, included most of the preceding elements, there was no universal agreement on a definition. As the interviewees' responses show, it is possible to be spiritual without believing in or affirming a higher power or God. Nonetheless, most people explicitly included the notion of a higher power or God as an integral part of their definition of spirituality. Belief in a deity was viewed as the "ultimate ground, or guarantor, of meaning and purpose in the universe." In other words, most people did not believe in a "random, mechanistic universe devoid of purpose." Instead, they see the universe as the "intentional result of a higher intelligence." The notion of a higher power was thus seen as an integral manifestation of this purpose.

From the respondents' definitions of spirituality, we gleaned these key elements of spirituality as:

- Not formal, structured, or organized.

- Nondenominational, above and beyond denominations.
- Broadly inclusive, embracing everyone.
- Universal and timeless.
- The ultimate source and provider of meaning and purpose in life.
- The awe we feel in the presence of the transcendent.
- The sacredness of everything, the ordinariness of everyday life.
- The deep feeling of the interconnectedness of everything.
- Inner peace and calm.
- An inexhaustible source of faith and will power.
- The ultimate end in itself.

Once again, it is important to stress that while certainly not everyone in the study either articulated or agreed with every element of this definition, most endorsed the existence of a supreme guiding force and interconnectedness as the fundamental components of spirituality.

Orientations toward Religion and Spirituality

In the study, we found that people have four different orientations toward religion and spirituality (see Figure 1):

A person can have a positive view of religion *and* spirituality. This person sees religion and spirituality as synonymous. While spirituality is on the same footing with religion, spirituality is experienced and developed only through religion.

A person can be positive about religion but negative

Figure 1
Four Orientations toward Religion and Spirituality

		Spirituality	
		Positive	Negative
Religion	Positive	Religion and spirituality are synonymous and inseparable; both are sources of basic beliefs or universal values.	Religion dominates spirituality and is a source of basic beliefs or values.
	Negative	Spirituality dominates religion and is the source of basic beliefs or universal values.	Neither religion nor spirituality are primary; universal values can be defined and attained independently of religion and spirituality.

about spirituality. In this case, his or her entire energies are focused on the religious life, especially as realized through the rituals and the practices of a particular religion. Salvation and being a member of a tightly bound, shared community are this person's major aims.

A person can have a negative view of religion, but a positive view of spirituality. In this case, he or she sees religion as organized, close-minded, and intolerant. Spirituality, on the other hand, is extremely individualized. In addition, it is open-minded, tolerant, and universal. It is accessible to all people, no matter what their particular beliefs. Spirituality is a bonding or uniting force.

Finally, a person can be negative about both religion and spirituality. In this case, he or she believes that everything worthwhile is possible through the enactment of the proper values. In this person's view, religion and spirituality have nothing to do with the modern, secular workplace.

Workplace Spirituality

On the basis of our research, we found five different ways in which organizations can be religious or spiritual (see Figure 2). We are not saying that these five basic designs or models are the only ways in which organizations can be spiritual or ethical. Future studies will undoubtedly establish more models, especially as current forms mature and lead to new ones.

The *religious-based* organization is either positive toward religion and positive toward spirituality or positive toward religion and negative toward spirituality.

(Examples of religious-based organizations abound within Mormon-affiliated and -run businesses.) There are three distinct types of organization that are negative toward religion, but positive toward spirituality. The *evolutionary* organization is one that begins with a strong association or identification with a particular religion and, over time, evolves to a more ecumenical position. (The YMCA and Tom's of Maine are prototypical examples.¹¹) The *recovering* organization adopts the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous as a way to foster spirituality. Typically, this occurs when a majority of key executives in an organization are in recovery for addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling, and so on. In the *socially responsible* organization, the founders or heads are guided by strong spiritual principles or values that they apply directly to their business for the betterment of society. In this case, the organizations' heads are often more concerned with external stakeholders than with their own employees. (An example is Ben & Jerry's.¹²) The *values-based* organization results when the founders or heads are guided by general philosophical principles or values that are not aligned or associated with a particular religion, or even with spirituality. (Kingston Technologies, makers of computer equipment in Orange County, California, is a prime example.)

These five models constitute the major alternatives that we have identified through our interviews. However, all the respondents had only a superficial awareness or knowledge of each. To extract the underlying, salient dimensions of each model, we analyzed previously published literature on spirituality in the workplace.¹³ Even here, the dimensions of the models, including the models themselves, were more implicit than explicit.

Each model is a historically distinct and valid approach that humans have adopted in order to find meaning and purpose in their lives. Each has major strengths and limitations. In addition, each has major benefits and costs. While one or more of these basic models are, in principle, applicable to all organizations, many will probably reject all of them. Nonetheless, we believe that the decision to accept or to reject a particular model should be based on a clear understanding of what it is and what it entails.

Each model began with a critical precipitating event. In most cases, either the founders or heads or the entire organization faced a crisis, in many cases, a long stream of continuing crises. In other words, the

Figure 2
Organizational Models of Spirituality and Religion

		Spirituality	
		Positive	Negative
Religion	Positive	Religious-Based Organization	
	Negative	Evolutionary Organization Recovering Organization Socially Responsible Organization	Values-Based Organization

initial desire to pursue any of the models generally comes from intense difficulties. The path or road to spirituality comes from the desire to confront major crises and to surmount them successfully.

Greed is not merely the unlimited or unrestrained accumulation of money, but can also be the unrestrained pursuit of power.

Each model also has a fundamental, underlying principle of hope. The hope principle expresses the organization's basic optimism or in what it puts its basic trust. For instance, proponents of the various models, for example, Tom Chapell of Tom's of Maine, believe that if they stick to their basic, ethical principles and values, then profits will follow and take care of themselves. In other words, ethical principles not only come first and have top priority but are the ultimate bottom line. Profits thus follow directly from being ethical, not the other way around. Even stronger is the notion that if a person is concerned with profits instead of ethical principles, then profits will suffer. One must be ethical for its own sake and not for profits. Paradoxically, if one is concerned with ethical values alone, then profits will follow.

Each organization turns to different sources or fundamental texts for additional knowledge and wisdom on how to run an ethical business. Each thus goes well beyond the traditional texts used in most business and educational programs. Indeed, each organization assumes that most people have been "miseducated" by the traditional texts of business such as accounting, economics, law, and so on. The notion of a basic text thus broadens considerably. For example, in the religious-based organization, the additional texts are the Bible and various fundamentalist interpretations. In the three models of the spirituality-based organizations, the additional texts are largely derived from the works of the great ethicists and world philosophers. These provide principles other than pure economic ones for running an organization. As a result, no matter what the underlying texts, the models have "languages" that are different from those of typical, traditional businesses. While the various designs use the ordinary terms of profits and losses, they also use such terms as caring, heart, love, and trust, without shame or self-consciousness.

All the various models have a principle or a mechanism for limiting greed. Greed is not merely the unlimited or unrestrained accumulation of money, but can also be the unrestrained pursuit of power. Thus, each model has an explicit mechanism for saying when enough is enough. Each model also has a principle that specifies the purpose of the organization's profits. For instance, is the company in business to do good or to make money? Is making money a means or an end in itself? In addition, each design model grapples with size: Can an organization be ethical or spiritual if it grows beyond a certain size?

With a few notable exceptions, the quantitative results from the questionnaires generally reveal that, on *every* dimension, the people who see their organizations as being spiritual also see them as better than their less spiritual counterparts. For instance, while all the participants generally perceived their organizations as "warm," the participants in "more spiritually oriented" organizations saw themselves as even warmer.

Conclusion

We could conclude that the only way in which humans can manage spirituality is by clearly and completely separating it from work. When anything is especially difficult to control, the temptation is always strong to relegate it to other realms. As Ken Wilber argues, the separation of elements was a necessary strategy at earlier stages of human evolution.¹⁴ Art, science, and religion had to separate from each other to develop into more mature forms. A characteristic of earlier stages of human development is that critical elements are so merged together that they have no separate identity. Thus, for development, the key elements need to be separate.

No organization can survive for long without spirituality and soul.

However, at our current stage of human development, we face a new challenge. We have gone too far in separating the key elements. We need to integrate spirituality into management. No organization can survive for long without spirituality and soul. We must examine ways of managing spirituality without separating it from the other elements of management.

References

- 1. See I.I. Mitroff and E. Denton, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), in press.
- 2. Ibid.
- 3. See, for instance, J. Hillman, *The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling* (New York: Random House, 1996); T. Moore, *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994); and T. Moore, ed., *The Education of the Heart: Reading and Sources for Care of the Soul, Soul Mates, and The Re-enchantment of Everyday Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996).
- 4. See L. Bolman and T.E. Deal, *Leading with Soul: An Uncommon Journey of Spirit* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995); A. Briskin, *The Stirring of Soul in the Workplace* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996); T. Chappell, *The Soul of a Business: Managing for Profit and the Common Good* (New York: Bantam Books, 1994); B. Cohen and J. Greenfield, *Ben & Jerry's Double-Dip: Lead with Your Values and Make Money, Too* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); J.A. Conger et al., *Spirit at Work: Discovering the Spirituality in Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994); B. DeFoore and J. Ronesch, *Rediscovering the Soul of Business: A Renaissance of Values* (San Francisco: NewLeaders Press, 1995); M. Novak, *Business as a Calling: Work and the Examined Life* (New York: Free Press, 1996); and J.K. Salkin, *Being God's Partner: How to Find the Hidden Link Between Spirituality and Your Work* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994).
- 5. See W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Collier Books, 1961).
- 6. See Conger et al. (1994).
- 7. See Mitroff and Denton (in press).
- 8. P.B. Vail, *Spirited Leading and Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998).
- 9. A.H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: HarperCollins, 1954).
- 10. It is claimed that such systematic links exist between the actual profitability of organizations and their spiritual beliefs; however, it is probably too early to say at this point that such linkages are definitive. See: D. Macic, *Managing with the Wisdom of Love: Uncovering Virtue in People and Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997).
- 11. N. Mjagkij and M. Spratt, *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); and Chappell (1994).
- 12. Cohen and Greenfield (1997), p. 30.
- 13. See, for example: Chappell (1994); and Cohen and Greenfield (1997).
- 14. K. Wilber, *A Brief History of Everything* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996).

Reprint 4047

Copyright © 1999 by the Sloan Management Review Association.
All rights reserved.

Copyright of Sloan Management Review is the property of Sloan Management Review. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

Copyright of MIT Sloan Management Review is the property of Sloan Management Review and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

Copyright of Sloan Management Review is the property of Sloan Management Review and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.