

Are Profitability and Spirituality Polar Opposites?

Since the fall of Enron and WorldCom, corporate scandals have taken their toll on the conscience of the business world. Today, people want to do business with companies that have strong moral values. The challenge for businesses, however, is creating a caring, values-based atmosphere without it negatively impacting their bottom line. And that's where spirituality in the workplace comes into play.

How can a company engender spirituality while also worrying about the bottom line? Can a company *use* its collective spirituality to boost profits? Margaret Benefiel, PhD, author of *Soul at Work* (Seabury Books), knows the answers to these questions. A professor at Andover Newton Theological School, Dr. Benefiel urges others to follow a new business model and reap enormous rewards that are more than financial. She writes, "Spiritually grounded organizations perform better and better enrich their stakeholders." Here's how successful companies—from the band U2 to Southwest Airlines—combine profitability and spirituality so that these two goals work in synergy:

- **Articulate Values.** They attend to soul by including precise language in their vision and mission statements. For example, Document Management Group's (Dublin, Ireland) vision statement includes a commitment to build a workplace in which "our people can find meaning, significance and success through their work, and where personal and workplace values align to achieve greater outward harmony and inner spiritual life." Clearly showing the harmony between financial concerns and human concerns leads to healthier, happier organizations.
- **Match People with Mission.** They hire for congruence with their mission. Southwest Airlines, for example, hires for attitude and trains for skills. A fun, caring environment for employees and customers heightens employee retention and customer satisfaction. This, in turn, lowers costs and boosts profits.
- **Devote Time, Attention and Personnel to the Task.** They nurture organizational soul by providing the necessary support, such as extensive training and a special hierarchy that helps employees succeed in living out the mission. HealthEast (Twin Cities, Minnesota), for example, dedicates part of its senior manager's time to directing a program that integrates spirituality into patient care. Mercy Medical (Mason City, Iowa) has a full-time Mission Leader, whose sole responsibility is to promote mission and ethics in the organization.
- **Create Specific Structures and Processes.** They use certain structures or practices to further nurture the soul. For example, at the Greyston Foundation in Yonkers, New York, a moment of silence punctuates business meetings, and the senior management team takes quarterly daylong retreats off-site. This strengthens the harmony between financial goals and human concerns.

In her book, Dr. Benefiel proves that integrity organizational effectiveness and profitability are natural partners. She also demonstrates that fostering a spiritual atmosphere in the workplace does more than keep employees and customers happy—it contributes to the life and health of the

business's future. *Soul at Work: Spiritual Leadership in Organizations*, by Margaret Benefiel, Ph.D., ISBN 1-59627-013-6 is published by Seabury Books and is available for \$20 at bookstores and online at www.ExecutiveSoul.com

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