

Spirituality: ***The Emerging Context for Business Leadership***

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ABSTRACT

Over the last 100 years, four distinct contexts of business leadership have emerged around the globe: *rationalist*, *humanistic*, *wholistic*, and *spiritual-based*. Each context is now in varying stages of maturity and has its own influences from science and from either psychology or spirituality. Each measures leadership success by its own view of the purpose of business and leadership. And each operates by its own understanding of how to lead and manage people.



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Four “North Stars”: *Leading and Navigating Business in the 21st Century*

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 100 years, four distinct contexts of business leadership have emerged around the globe: *rationalist*, *humanistic*, *wholistic*, and *spiritual-based*. Each context represents a fundamental change in how we view the *nature* of business leadership. As we embrace and fulfill these contexts of business leadership, we believe it will naturally fuel a fundamental change in *the nature of business itself*, such that business and its leadership can take its rightful place in solving what seem to be the unsolvable problems in the world today.



One way of understanding the core process of business is to view it as “the conversion of matter, energy, and knowledge into useful products and services for customers through the power of mind and spirit” – where spirit connotes courage, enthusiasm, meaningfulness, and transcendence. Therefore, business has a special affinity to three fields of study: *science* (matter and energy), *psychology* (knowledge and mind), and *spirituality* (spirit). We have chosen to focus on the influence these three disciplines have had, from among all those that can create a context for business leadership.

The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary¹ defines context as: *the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs: an environment; coherence*. Based on this definition, we purposely chose to use the word “context” to describe the four fundamental views of the nature of business leadership. Within each context we will describe the interrelated conditions that allow it to exist – the “mega-view” of “the way things are” – and that form the basis from which leadership is defined and practiced.

Each of the four contexts of business leadership still exists. The *rationalist* is now in its decline, the *humanistic* is now in its prime, the *wholistic* is now in its development, and the *spiritual-based* is now emerging. Within a company, different leaders might operate from any one of these four contexts, and any single leader might operate from a blend of contexts, especially if he or she is “in transition” in their view of leadership. Thus, they all currently co-exist, sometimes not very peacefully, in today’s business world.

In this article, we begin with the historical and current perspectives of the first three contexts as they have occurred in the West. We then articulate what this emerging, *spiritual-based* context looks like at this time, including early examples of executives who are leading from a *spiritual-based* context – from Motorola, Medtronic, Hard Rock Café, Tom’s of Maine, and Kaiser Permanente Hospital. Finally, we share a glimpse of what the future of spiritual-based business leadership might look like.

HISTORICAL AND CURRENT PERSPECTIVES

The Rationalist Context for Business Leadership

Influences from Science and Psychology

After Sir Isaac Newton² uncovered the “laws of gravity and motion,” showing that cause-and-effect forces could describe natural phenomenon, people began to view the universe as a great, mechanical “clock.” Over the next centuries, scientific investigation took on the task of defining the deterministic, “clockwork” nature of everything, including life itself. The hope of finding new ways to control nature, and people’s behavior, helped to fuel the search for new “scientific laws” in fields such as physics, chemistry, biology, economics, and eventually psychology.



When Charles Darwin³ pronounced his views on evolution, people took it as one more sign of a deterministic, cause-and-effect explanation of life. Darwinian “survival of the fittest” became wedded to the theories of Robert Malthus⁴: that people had to compete for a diminishing supply of resources. From “The Wealth of Nations,” by the 18th century professor of Moral Philosophy, Adam Smith⁵, people extracted a philosophy that “seeking to gratify self-interests, within the ‘market forces’ of capitalism, would *somehow* balance out for the good of everyone.”⁶

Starting in the early 1900’s, the role of science was to create new inventions and learn how to mass-produce them. Thomas Edison⁷, as the inventor-par-excellence, and Henry Ford⁸, with his mass-production assembly line, were two of the biggest “heroes” of the day. It was only a matter of time before scientific understanding would also be applied to managing “the parts” (people) of the corporate machine for greatest efficiency and profitability.

By 1910, the new fields of psychology and psychiatry were emerging with their own version of “determinism” as it applied to understanding human nature. Sigmund Freud⁹ developed a relatively mechanistic view of the inner-psyche. The forces of “id” and “super-ego” battled for control, with the “ego” as the referee. Later, B.F. Skinner¹⁰ developed “behaviorist” psychology saying that all behavior was based on a mechanistic interplay of stimulus-response-reinforcement.

The Purpose of Business and Leadership

So how did all this play out in actual business? From this view, business is “survival of the fittest,” and competition is a win-lose game. The goal of business and its leadership is wealth creation – specifically, profit-maximization – on behalf of business owners.

Running the whole show is the “father figure” owner (or executive on behalf of the shareholders). Across ages and cultures, the patriarch of a family was the man who was revered as having the experience, as well as the power, to guide the good fortunes of the family and pass along the wisdom and experience of “those who have gone before us.” Just as this patriarchal figure could bring warmth or coolness to the family relationships, patriarchal owner(s) could manage their companies with personal warmth or impersonal coolness.

In this context, business is often compared to “warfare,” where business leaders use the analogy that an efficient and highly competitive business is one that is a “military machine” that can “crush the competition.” It’s also no surprise that business leaders adopt the military model of command-and-control, with patriarchal, “top-down” power to ensure that the ultimate control of a business is in the hands of the owners.

While greed¹¹ is not inherent in this context, if greed is combined with wealth creation, self-interest quickly becomes selfish interest, and even employees, consumers, and nature can become the losers. (Thus were born anti-trust, fair-labor, consumer protection, and environmental protection laws.)

Leading and Managing People

In this leadership context, the common employee is usually seen as an interchangeable part in the big machine. Tasks/jobs are well defined, typically by “job designers,” who usually embrace the efficiency ideas of Frederick Taylor¹²:

The principle object of management should be to secure the maximum prosperity for the owners coupled with the maximum prosperity for the employee. Maximum prosperity for the employee means not only higher wages than are usually received by men in their class, but of more importance still, it also means the development of each man to his state of maximum efficiency. Maximum prosperity can exist only as a result of maximum productivity.

To generate this maximum productivity, Taylor inaugurated “scientific management” in which not only jobs, but also tasks within jobs, are specified in detail. Employees are primarily extrinsically motivated, and good ones are those who just do what they are assigned. And if one person can’t do the job, the “Personnel” department brings in a replacement.

Each person is expected to perform within clearly defined parameters; managers want employees to do only what they are told. Directing them is a matter of “command and convince” leadership; they are rarely consulted for their ideas. Motivation is by “carrot and stick;” i.e., rewards and punishments. By the mid-century, Skinner’s “behavior reinforcement” – with its mechanical stimulus-response practices – was widely accepted and implemented.

Career paths up the corporate ladder are equally well defined. Win/lose competition is often the name of the game for employees vying for the best jobs. Top leaders encourage internal competition, believing it will bring out the best of everyone – or single out the “parts” that need replacing. When performance appraisals are done at all, it is the boss who does the assessment and delivers the results.

The impersonal coolness of the “mechanistic” aspect of this context can be warmed by the “paternal” aspect. For example, IBM’s Thomas Watson Jr.¹³ said:

I believe the real difference between success and failure in a corporation is how well the organization brings out the great energies and talents of its people.

Still, bringing out the energies and talents of people are mainly in the interest of serving the overall goals for efficiency and productivity. For many insiders, “IBM” once stood for “I’ve Been Moved.” In this context, people are valued mainly by how useful they are in helping the company achieve its goals; and refusing a move could slow down your career growth.

Wisdom and Limitations

This *rationalist* context for business leadership arose at the turn of the century, dominated leadership thinking well into the 1960’s, and still continues to dominate in some circles today. We acknowledge the wisdom of this context as:

1. Honoring the experience and wisdom of “those who have paved the way before us.”
2. Using resources efficiently.

In contrast, we can acknowledge two limitations:

1. Discounting the inherent capability and motivation of man to do good and be good.
2. Believing that life (including people and nature) could and should be used and controlled for achieving one's own (self-centered) goals.

The Humanistic Context for Business Leadership

Influences from Science and Psychology

In the early 1900's, Albert Einstein¹⁴ shook the world of physics with his theory of relativity. Our understanding of the world through our day-to-day senses, so well described by Newton's physical laws, didn't describe what happened at speeds close to that of light. Time, space, and mass were all *relative* and *situational* – it all depended on where you were observing the events from. It didn't make logical sense to the mind, but it was verifiable in the science labs.



The great quantum physicist Werner Heisenberg¹⁵ once said that it takes up to 50 years before the physicist's view of the nature of the universe makes its way into the mass consciousness of society. By the 1950's and 60's, "relativity" was a core theme of this *humanistic* context. The writings of the existentialists – Frederick Nietzsche¹⁶, Albert Camus¹⁷, Jean Paul Sartre¹⁸ – became popular. They saw man as being "thrown into this world" with the "freedom" to make their own personal meaning out of it all – i.e., there was no inherent meaning, and we had to create a meaning that fit our own situation in life. Truth and values were all "relative."

Abraham Maslow¹⁹ developed his view of man's hierarchy of needs: that man was by nature seeking to express his full potential – to self-actualize – after taking care of more basic needs. Thus, the humanistic notion of "finding and filling needs" was born.

The Purpose of Business and Leadership

Belief in “that's just the way it is” began to dissolve, and people began to question assumptions about religion, politics, societal values, and – yes – business. From this humanistic view, the purpose of business and leadership is still wealth creation, but with a win-win mentality in which “enlightened self-interest” supplants “self-interest.” That is, everyone who assists in creating the wealth (shareholders, management, and employees) should directly benefit from it. To instill stronger motivation for performance, a larger group of managers and employees are offered the opportunity to become shareholders through various employee bonus and stock option plans. And the code of business is more like “profits with dignity” rather than “profits – period.”

It took the genius of people like Edward Deming²⁰ to bring the humanistic view into practical business, first in Japan and later in the USA and Europe. Deming showed, through Total Quality Management (TQM), that poor quality costs, and high quality can save. He recognized the value of ideas from everyone in a hierarchy, not just from specialists or management. He saw that fear was the biggest obstacle to productivity – rather than a prime motivator to get the work done.

By the late 1980's, one indication that this humanistic context had matured was when Fortune Magazine began to annually publish the “100 Best Companies to Work For” based on the work of Robert Levering and Milton Moskowitz²¹. Their assessments are based on five “humanistic” criteria: credibility/ trustworthiness, respect, fairness, meaning of work, and sense of family/community.

Leading and Managing People

Douglas MacGregor²² called the rationalist understanding of human nature, that people needed to be directed and controlled, “Theory X.” He formulated his “Theory Y” as its opposite: people were basically good; they wanted to do a good job; they could be trusted to do what was right.

In the 1970's, “organization development” emerged as a specialty. “Visionary leadership,” “team building,” and “empowerment” were valued capabilities. How to motivate people in this humanistic context became “relative” to their needs. How to lead people became “situational,” depending on the circumstances. We began to see “situational ethics” and “situational leadership.”

Within this humanistic context, people are considered a resource to be managed sensitively. Thus the Personnel department evolved to be called “Human Resources.” “Win-win” problem

solving is prominent in this context, with a focus on balancing the individual wants and needs of one person or company with another's.

Sports metaphors still abound, but with less emphasis on the “team as machine” and more on “working together as a team.” Leadership is more consultative, even participative, with an emphasis on empowerment. Motivation focuses more on filling people's Maslow-type needs than on rewards and punishments. Even marketing lives by the slogan, “Find a need and fill it.”

The leader's job is to help employees become self-actualized “intra-preneurs” who invest both their emotions and their minds, for their own sake and the organization's. The job of leaders is to provide the right environment for the individual growth and performance of workers. As William Hewlett²³, co-founder of Hewlett Packard, said in “The HP Way”:

Men and women want to do a good, a creative job, and if they are provided with the proper environment they will do so.

The employees' concern is how to fulfill their human potential through the workplace. Leaders see people as having unique talents (as well as needs), and build jobs around that talent as much as fit talent into pre-defined jobs. With empowerment, power is shared, but within limits: authority is given to make incremental changes, but not often significant ones. It's the norm to involve the employee in assessing their annual performance appraisals before the manager does the final write-up.

This attention to individual growth fosters a lessening of parent-child bonds between employer and employee. Employee loyalty decreases as they identify more with their profession than their company. And company loyalty also decreases: with re-engineering and downsizing, any idea of “lifetime employment” goes out the window.

Wisdom and Limitations

This *humanistic* context of business leadership first gained momentum in the 1950's and 60's, and became the norm of many major corporations by the 1980's. We acknowledge the wisdom of this context as:

1. Recognizing the essential goodness and work ethic of people.
2. Providing opportunities for individuals to fulfill their potential, which includes self-actualization as well as work abilities and aspirations.

We can further acknowledge two limitations:

1. Focusing on *needs*, where motivation occurs when something is perceived as missing.
2. Focusing on *individualism*, where the “win-win” solutions are between individual interests, and do not necessarily include the interest of the larger whole and the interest of society and environment.

The Wholistic Context for Business Leadership

Influences from Science and Psychology

An ever-deeper understanding of the physical nature of the universe, along with a reinterpretation of evolution, helped lay the foundation for the *wholistic* context. From the 1930's forward, physics evolved beyond Einstein's relativity to the world of quantum physics, particularly through the work of Niels Bohr²⁴ and Werner Heisenberg¹⁵. *Probability* replaced *certainty* in our understanding of matter and energy. And at the micro-level of the atom, the distinction between “object” and “observer” disappeared; the two were a “system,” a single field of inseparable interaction.



Through Ilya Prigogine²⁵ and others, the study of “systems theory” and “complexity science” began to model the seemingly innate wisdom of the self-organizing nature of life. We began to see that uncertainty and complexity are an essential part of the inter-connectedness of all activity, including business.

Simultaneously, people began to re-interpret the popular understanding of “Darwinian evolution” (“survival of the fittest”). They noted that Darwin himself said, “It’s not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change.” As pointed out by two Chilean biologists, Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana²⁶, life responds not to the “survival of the fittest” but to the great experimentation of all those “fit enough to survive.”

In this wholistic view, business and nature are so inter-dependent that the economy as a whole is seen, in business terms, as a “wholly owned subsidiary of the natural environment.” If the environment goes bankrupt (resources depleted), the economy will go bankrupt with it.²⁷ This begins to bring a new perspective to “win-win” by integrating individual needs with the good of the whole.

Carl Jung’s²⁸ notion of the “collective unconscious” reflected our inter-connectedness. Later, Stephen Covey²⁹ elevated the discussion of “situational values” to that of “universal principles.” In these “wholistic” psychologies, people are motivated by something beyond “individual needs” and “individual self-actualization.” They are “moved” to do good work on behalf of a dual-focus: self-focused achievement and the well being of the larger whole (which are inter-dependent). That’s what makes our “human ecosystem” function and stay in balance.

The Purpose of Business and Leadership

Peter Block³⁰ was the first to seriously critique the limitations of the humanistic context for business leadership – which he felt was still using and controlling people and nature to achieve their own self-centered goals. He employed the term “stewardship” to replace “management.” Management is the act of “handling” things, while stewardship is the art of taking care of what’s been entrusted for safekeeping: in this case, the interests of customers, employees, suppliers, society, future generations, and nature itself.

In this wholistic context, business and leadership have a key role in transforming society and our quality of life. As Willis Harman³¹ pointed out:

Leaders in world business are the first true planetary citizens. They have worldwide capability and responsibility. Their decisions affect not just economies, but societies... and the world problems of poverty, environment, and security. World business will be a key actor

in the ultimate resolution of the macro-problem. The business corporation is far more flexible and adaptive than the bureaucratic structures of government.

The goal of business and leadership evolved beyond “wealth creation for *shareholders*” to “wealth creation for the optimal benefit of all *stakeholders*” – including shareholders, employees, customers, community, nature, society, and future generations. “Corporate social responsibility,” “conscious consumers,” and “socially responsible investing” have become new trends, being driven by consumers voicing their preference for dealing with companies that act as ethical stewards for the good of the larger whole.

Novo Nordisk³² is the world’s largest supplier of insulin and industrial enzymes. It’s Chairman, Mads Ovlisen, has led its commitment to measuring its success by the “Triple Bottom Line” of environmental, social, and economic performance. How committed is he? In the company’s “Putting Values Into Action: Environmental and Social Report 1999,” he stated:

I ask you to consider this statement: ‘Social and environmental performance is as important as financial performance.’ Do you agree or not? When we asked the same question to our employees in 1999, 74% agreed with this statement. This is gratifying for me because it shows that social and environmental thinking is now well established throughout our organization.

Leading and Managing People

From this wholistic, systems perspective, the organization is now clearly not a machine; everything is inter-related, as in a complex ecosystem. As Meg Wheatley³³ points out, not only is a business enterprise inter-dependent with its community, it is itself a microcosm of community, to be governed more as a society than as a machine.

In this context, the “people” aspect of the organization evolved beyond “Personnel” and even “Human Resources” to that of “Talent Development” and “Human Capital”: the recognition that people are, in fact, the principle assets of wealth creation, especially in the knowledge-intensive, learning organizations that Peter Senge³⁴ describes. Since those assets go home every evening, they need to be treated in a new, “stewardship” way. Like managing a complex ecosystem, “control” lies more in having a common purpose and value-system rather than the “command-convince” or even “participative empowerment” leadership styles.

Job descriptions have started to become obsolete as employees primarily engage in self-organizing project teams. While senior executives still have authority, power is also a function of “local” governance in teams. The acceptance of ideas is based on the quality of the idea, not on position or authority. Power becomes more a matter of serving than controlling.

A “new contract” between employer and employee has emerged: each person is treated as an “individual company” (You, Inc.) responsible for his or her own career. Career growth is less in terms of positions and promotions, and more in terms of variety, personal development, and scope of assignments. The entire range of people working with, and impacted by, a person gives input to “360-degree” performance appraisals.

Wisdom and Limitations

This *wholistic* context for business leadership was first voiced in the late 1960's and gained momentum in the 1980's and 90's. It has yet to fully mature as the norm of major corporations, but there are signs of its increasing strength, such as the momentum of “corporate social responsibility.” We acknowledge the wisdom of this context as:

1. Recognizing the interconnectivity of people, nature, and business enterprises.
2. Emphasizing the wholistic nature of values and principles from which to operate harmoniously and creatively.

We also acknowledge two limitations:

1. Basing motivation primarily on self-focused achievement, even as it might benefit the larger whole.
2. Focusing personal and business goals only on having a better “in-this-world” life, rather than taking into consideration the spiritual life that is both immanent and transcendent.

By 2000, business leadership was primarily a mixture of these three contexts: *rationalist* (its influence in decline); *humanistic* (in its prime); and *wholistic* (on the rise). Yet another view of the nature of business leadership has begun to emerge, one that offers us an opportunity to return to the true roots of our human nature.

This context is the emerging *spiritual-based* context for business leadership.

THE EMERGING *SPIRITUAL-BASED* CONTEXT FOR BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

In order to understand “spiritual-based,” we begin with the word “spirit,” which comes from the Latin “spiritus” meaning “breath.” Spirit³⁵ is *the animating principle, the supernatural essence (beyond material nature), which “breathes” life into creation.*

People throughout the world describe spirituality in varied ways, and may or may not base it on participation in an organized religion. Some of those descriptions include:

- a) Tapping into a deeper meaning in life that transcends our physical existence
- b) Having a relationship with the Source of creation (i.e. God, Higher Power, Allah, Jehovah, Brahman, etc.)
- c) Experiencing oneness with Divinity
- d) Being “fully conscious” of the Source of life and living from that awareness
- e) Living in harmony with the essential nature and inter-connectedness of all creation
- f) Living all aspects of life according to a set of religious principles

At this time, we would best describe spiritual-based business leaders as those who have a consciously held spiritual view of life and may be expressing it in their leadership in one of the following ways:

1. They are taking their first steps to bring their spiritual view of life into their leadership
2. They are integrating their spiritual view of life with their leadership more fully
3. They are consciously leading from their spiritual view of life

Depending on their personality, a leader’s spiritual view of life may be a private matter or it may be expressed openly. They may also have varying degrees of being able to articulate their spiritual context.

The spiritual-based context is just beginning to emerge. How might a business executive talk today about a spiritual context and their leadership?



Janiece Webb³⁶, former Senior Vice President, Motorola Corporation, defines her own personal spiritual context this way:

I believe in God strongly. I follow more Buddhist principles than anything else. I connect with the magic in life... This is all so much bigger than what we can physically see. You must earn the right to lead every day, and spirituality is necessary to do that. (spirituality)...gives you immense courage; yet you also embrace your own humanness and imperfections.

Here is how Bill George³⁷, Chairman of Medtronic, the world's largest producer of medical electronics defines a spiritual context on behalf of an entire business:

We are all spiritual beings. To unleash the whole capability of the individual – mind, body, and spirit – gives enormous power to the organization. This has nothing to do with religion. People of many faiths, or no faith at all for that matter, can join together in a common cause of service to others through their work.

Janiece Webb and Bill George are portraying a profound shift in business leadership. How has this occurred?

The Convergence of Science and Spirituality

The previous three contexts for business leadership were influenced by the powerful mind-sets of science and psychology. During the centuries of mechanistic, deterministic science, belief in and reliance on religion declined; the age-old basis for “defining a meaningful life” began to dissolve. It was only natural for the field of psychology to emerge in the 20th century as a substitute for religion in teaching people what it meant to be human in this cosmos.

As science uncovered new understandings of evolution, physics, and systems-theory, a new seed of spirituality slowly began to sprout. It is this seed of spirituality that has converged with science to birth this spiritual-based context, particularly through the work of scientists such as Teilhard de Chardin³⁸ and consciousness-based physicists such as David Bohm³⁹. Add the insights of Fritjof Capra⁴⁰ and others about systems sciences and ancient spiritual texts, and you can begin to see a rich tapestry unfold.

The scientific and spiritual converged in the insights and writings of the Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin⁴¹, an eminent geologist and paleontologist who was part of the expedition

team that discovered the skull of the “Peking Man” – an important verification of the evolutionary roots of mankind. As a scientist he saw that consciousness was inherent in all matter and creation, describing his experience as, “The Divine radiating from the depths of blazing Matter.”⁴² He dedicated his life to the synthesis of science and spirituality, saying:

The questions I’m concerned with are indeed those that have animated the deep-rooted life of humanity.

Once quantum physics demonstrated that the created universe was a continuous field of energy, a few bold physicists inquired: “What about the self-evident existence of consciousness in certain structures of energy/matter (i.e., human beings)? How does that fit with our view of the nature of the universe?” From the 1950’s to 80’s, physicist David Bohm³⁹ came to the conclusion that energy and consciousness are “implicate” ...*the nature of the cosmos, of matter in general, of life, and of consciousness... (are) considered to be projections of a common ground.* By analogy, just as wetness and liquidity are qualities of water... energy and consciousness are qualities of the “common ground” of creation.

The works of scientists such as Chardin and Bohm present us with the picture that all of creation is sourced from, and a reflection of, a single, “omnipresent” field of energy/consciousness. This same idea is mirrored in various spiritual texts:

It flows through all things, inside and outside, and returns to the origin of all things. (Tao Te Ching 25)

God dwells in everything, God shines in every heart. Wherever I look, there is God; no one else is seen. (The Sikh’s book, Adi Granth)

One in All, All in One. (Zen Buddhism book, On Trust in the Heart)

All things are of God... One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (The Christian Bible, 2 Corinthians 5:8 and Ephesians 4:6)

I pervade the entire universe in my unmanifested form. All creatures find their existence in Me but I am not limited by them. (The Hindu text, Baghavat Gita 8:22, 9:4)

Fritjof Capra⁴⁰ further supports this convergence of science (specifically physics and systems theory) and spirituality:

Although mystical views of consciousness go far beyond the framework of contemporary science, they are by no means inconsistent with the modern systems concepts of mind and matter. ...The systems view of mind seems perfectly consistent with both the scientific and mystical views of consciousness...

An early example of an executive who is demonstrating the strength of this spiritual-based context in business is Tom Chappel⁴³. Tom and his wife co-founded Tom's of Maine in 1971 on the principles of customer-focused, environmentally-conscious health products. Between 1981 and 1986, its distribution expanded from health food stores to include supermarket and drugstore chains and had a 25% growth rate. But with this new face and new identity, its wholistic corporate culture began to weaken. Profit and growth became driving values and dominated business planning. Tom began to lose interest in the business and considered selling it.

He decided to attend the Harvard Divinity School and was exposed to the thinking of Martin Buber⁴⁴, the 20th century Jewish philosopher. Buber says that we can relate to each other in two ways: I-THOU, where we relate for respect, love, and honor for their own sake; and I-IT, where we treat people as objects. The choice is between the dignity of persons versus their utility in our lives.

In 1989, with a new degree of spirituality growing in him, Tom called a special board meeting to create a new strategy and culture based on, "Respecting people for who they are and not for what they can do for us." As Tom later pointed out:

Christian mystics and saints have written about finding the via media – the middle way. The Hebrew prophets often spoke of finding the "good way." I've found the middle way for Tom's of Maine, where we use our head and heart in planning business strategies. We make room for spirit in the world of commerce.

Their new mission – born from his spiritual-based leadership – began to give people permission to actualize the creativity and social responsibility that had been within them all along. Implementing the changes in strategy and culture were not easy (as his book, *Soul of a Business* relates, 1994). As Tom tapped into his own relationship to his spiritual Source to help guide this process, it carried the company through this transition.

Thanks to the Mission, we have become the definers of our destiny. Believing in God doesn't mean that you must leave everything up to Him. As Martin Buber wrote in I and Thou:

"Destiny is not where we wait for God to push us. We take part in creation, meet the Creator, reach out to Him, helpers and companions."

The Purpose of Business and Leadership

In the rationalist, humanistic, and wholistic contexts, if "spirituality" is considered at all, it is usually as one of many aspects of life... along with work, family, leisure time, health, etc. If life were a pie, spirituality would be one slice of the pie. In this fourth context, *spirituality is the pie itself*. Work, family, leisure, and health are all "slices" of spirituality and gain their meaning from a spiritual context – including business.

The spiritual-based context transforms the nature of business itself – so that the primary purpose of business and leadership is *spiritual fulfillment* and *service to society*, where both are derived from and motivated by a Transcendent consciousness. Wealth creation is no longer the *goal*; it becomes a *means* for enabling and sustaining this larger purpose. Business leaders promote the spiritual fulfillment of everyone touched by the business: employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, and society. Likewise, business leaders develop selflessness in their service to society as they are aware of both the Transcendent and imminent spirituality in those whom they serve.

This new purpose for business and leadership is also a response to two major insights from the 1980's and 90's:

1. Having material wealth doesn't really satisfy the inner yearning to access a deeper meaning and obtain fulfillment in work and life.
2. What we've been doing with the earth's resources and with international relations (still based on "survival of the fittest") has been destructive, unjust, and unsustainable.

How does a purpose of "spiritual fulfillment and service to society," both derived from and motivated by a Transcendent consciousness, sound in actual practice? An early example today would be Medtronic, whose Chairman, Bill George, we had previously quoted. Bill George³⁷, says they "lead by values" rather than "management by objectives." Those values, in *priority* order, are:

1. Restoring people to full health
2. Serving customers with products and services of unsurpassed quality
3. Recognizing the personal worth of employees
4. Making a fair profit and return for shareholders
5. Maintaining good citizenship as a company

These values may seem similar to successful, customer-driven, wholistic companies. But for Bill George, what's underneath these values is the consciousness that...

We are all spiritual beings. To unleash the whole capability of the individual – mind, body, and spirit – gives enormous power to the organization...

Furthermore, regarding this prioritization of corporate goals, Bill George says:

Medtronic is not in the business of 'maximizing shareholder value'; rather, our purpose is to 'maximize patient value.' The 'real bottom line' for Medtronic is the patients who were restored to full life and health last year by Medtronic products... At Medtronic we believe that if we first serve our customers well, provide products and services of unsurpassed quality, and empower our employees to fulfill themselves and the company's mission, we will indeed provide an outstanding return for our shareholders.

Notice that from a spiritual context, wealth creation for Medtronic is no longer the *end goal* for which everything else is the means. Instead, money is the *means* for the ultimate goal of enabling the organization to sustain itself and grow in its ability to serve; wealth creation is simply a “natural result” of excellence in living and working from a spiritual context.

Leading and Managing People

From the early 1980's forward, Peter Vaill⁴⁵ was an early pioneer who addressed the implications of this growing exploration of spirituality and business. Joining him as early contributors to raising this consciousness included: business executives such as Paul Autry⁴⁶ of Meredith Publications and Max DePree⁴⁷ of Hermann-Miller Furniture, academics such as Andre Delbecq⁴⁸, Judi Neal⁴⁹, and Dorothy Marcic⁵⁰; and consultants such as John Renesch⁵¹, Jack Hawley⁵², and Jay Conger⁵³. For all of these, spirituality is simply a part of what it means to be human, inseparable from the human enterprise in business.

From a spiritual point of view, the difference in motivation, jobs, and careers, can perhaps best be understood through the Sanskrit word “dharma,” which means acting in accord with our essential nature and purpose. S.K. Chakraborty⁵⁴ – founder of the Management Centre for Human Values at the Indian Institute of Management in Calcutta, India – writes that our most intrinsic motivation is to fulfill our essential nature and purpose – not to fill an ever-present set of “need-based” desires. By corollary, leading employees means evoking each person's sense of spiritual purpose in life. Jobs and career paths are based on having people follow and fulfill their dharma.

An early example of a business leader who is leading his employees from a spiritual-based context is Isaac Tigrett⁵⁵, founder of the wildly successful Hard Rock Café chain of restaurants, when he wasn't yet 20 years old. Isaac was raised in the Southern USA during the 1960's when his town was rigidly segregated, greatly offending his sense of fairness. When the Civil Rights laws brought down segregation signs, he felt, “All of a sudden, all of us, not just Blacks, are more human.”

Soon after, living in London, he saw that, “The social classes were still completely separated. There was literally no place in London where a baker and a banker could meet to talk. I wanted to break that system.” He decided to open an “absolutely classless” restaurant, which became a smashing success from the very first day. Standing in line were those bakers and bankers, laborers and Labor politicians.

Tigrett's humanistic and wholistic values were elevated to the level of *spiritual* when he traveled to India on a spiritual pilgrimage. While there, he heard the teaching, “Love All, Serve All.” He learned that “love” in that spiritual context meant unconditional, selfless, fearless positive regard; the same unconditional love that Jesus spoke about coming from His Father: “...For He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.” (The Christian Bible, Matthew 5:45)

To Tigrett, “Love all, serve all” embodied the ultimate spiritual goal of life: becoming divine through love, and serving people from that place. It became the spiritual basis from which he began to lead his business.

Being one of the Hard Rock Café family was therapy for people. Even if they came from a violent home-life, here they were loved and they loved back in return. Respect was the key. The same went for customers.

He began putting “Love all, serve all” in the kitchens, on paychecks and menus, on T-shirts and sweatshirts. As the business exploded around the world, he continued his personal and business mission of fostering “classlessness” from this spiritual basis. For example, in Tokyo, he insisted that women, “who are non-entities there,” be treated absolutely equally. As Isaac noted:

All I did was put spirit and business together in that big mixing bowl and add love. I didn't care about anything but people. Just cherish them, look after them, be sensitive to them and their lives.

In Summary

Four distinct contexts of business leadership have emerged in the West in the last 100 years: *rationalist, humanistic, wholistic, and spiritual-based.*

As shown in Figure 1, each context has its own view of the purpose, success measures, metaphor, and leadership style for business.

Figure 1: Characteristics of Business Leadership Related to “Purpose of Business and Leadership”

		Contexts of Business Leadership in the West			
		Rationalist	Humanistic	Wholistic	Spiritual-Based
Characteristics	Purpose of Business	Wealth and power for owners, shareholders	Wealth and power with dignity... for owners, shareholders, and employees	Wealth with accountability to all stakeholders	Spiritual fulfillment and service to society, that is derived from and motivated by a Transcendent consciousness
	Measures of Success	Financial – profit maximization	Financial, Employee Surveys (“100 Best Companies to Work For”)	“Triple Bottom Line”: Financial, Social, Environmental	Purity and unity of thought, word, and deed (reflected in external measures)
	Leadership Metaphors	Military Machine	Sports Team Family	Ecology Community	Watering the spiritual roots
	Leadership Style	Command and convince	Participative empowerment	Stewardship	“Radiating” spiritual nature

As shown in Figure 2, each has its own view of the nature of man, how to motivate, and how to manage people's careers.

**Figure 2: Characteristics of Business Leadership
Related to "Leading and Managing People"**

		Contexts of Business Leadership in the West			
		Rationalist	Humanistic	Wholistic	Spiritual-Based
Characteristics	Nature of Man	Needs to be controlled	Willing to do good, be good	Inter-dependent and self-organizing	Same energy/ consciousness as the Transcendent
	Motivation	Extrinsic: carrot and stick	Needs ("find a need and fill it")	Moved by wholistic principles for good of self and society	Fulfilling one's spiritual purpose and operating from one's spiritual character
	Managing People	Give structure and roles. People are interchangeable parts; jobs based on talent/ skills fitting into organization's needs	Give structure and roles. People are unique; build jobs around talent as much as fit talent to jobs	People are key asset and resource; have them self-define their roles; great flexibility in job definition	People are spiritual in nature; enable them to follow their dharma and express their spiritual purpose

A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE

To catch a glimpse of what this spiritual-based context might look like in the future, and where it might take business leadership, we are faced with two challenges:

1. An inquiry into the nature of spirituality (and its impact on business leadership) requires that we be willing to explore beyond the world of our day-to-day senses and thinking.
2. An attempt to paint a picture of how spiritual-based business leadership will unfold is much like trying to predict the impact of the “Internet” in 1980 when we had just barely invented personal computers.

These two challenges are a part of what makes this new context exciting, bold, and sweeping in its potential impact on business leadership and all of society – and a critically important field of investigation by business researchers.

In the first three contexts, we spent our attention and energy studying creation and learning how to best live within its confines. In this spiritual-based context we expand our awareness to a Transcendent consciousness. We are no longer “at the effect” of a creation we are continually attempting to understand and control; instead we are “co-creators” of the creation we live in.

From our own experience of leading from a spiritual-based context over the last ten years, we would like to share with you what we can imagine the future of business leadership might look like. Please bring the future into the present with us...

Imagine for a moment... A world in which business leaders have a deep sense of their spiritual roots and heritage... Where they feel a profound connection with a Transcendent consciousness, according to their understanding of that... Where they actively express their spirituality in every aspect of their lives, including work... Where they see business as an opportunity to deepen their spiritual journey as they serve others...

As these spiritual-based business leaders mature in their ability to lead from a spiritual basis, they feel whole and fulfilled, with nothing lacking; they have nothing to achieve in order to feel valued, and they do not look to the “results” or “position titles” for their self-worth. They know who they are, as defined by their spiritual context and purpose, and operate from that consciousness.

Spiritual-based leaders are aware of wrong-doing within themselves, in others around them, and in the world. However, they see it as a reflection of ignorance, separateness, and a suffering mind. They do not shy away from facing or addressing it, and do so from a basis of love and compassion. They intrinsically know when and how to act, and take firm action, when necessary, without fear, blame, or make-wrong.

They know that all beings in this world are endowed with the same Transcendent consciousness, and that spirituality is “inclusive” rather than exclusive... that it is possible for all people, and organizations, to have their own unique spiritual-based views of life and still be in harmony with each other (just as all parts of our body work together in harmony). This “inclusive” nature of spirituality assists them in addressing the concern that some people have about spirituality as the context for business leadership.

The Future Purpose of Business and Leadership. As business leaders accept their role as “co-creators” with the Transcendent, the purpose of business and leadership also takes its rightful place. The mission statement of the business emerges from its fundamental statement of “spiritual context.” All aspects of the business – its essence, its products and services, and its results – emanate from a dual focus on spiritual fulfillment and service to society, both derived from and motivated by a Transcendent consciousness.

Leaders identify with and communicate the spiritual context of their business while still fully aware of and operating from their own personal spiritual purpose. They design their organizational charter as an enlightening guide that gives feeling and substance to the essence of their business’ spiritual context.

Wealth is not something that can be gained or lost; it is a sound, healthy, and prosperous state of well-being from which character, health, education, and money are created. When the intentions for creating wealth are derived from and motivated by a Transcendent consciousness, the resources (time, money, talent, and energy) required to fulfill those intentions will be naturally available, although sometimes in ways that were not originally expected.

The relationship that leaders have with the past and future shifts as they now operate in the present moment. They are aware of the implications of their actions in “this lifetime” as well as “beyond this lifetime” and expand their scope of leadership to include both. Rather than “react and learn” from past mistakes and successes, or fantasize and desire for the future, they are

aware that they share in the co-creative nature of the Transcendent and thus keep their focus on what they are consciously choosing to create.

The Future of Leading and Managing People. In the first three contexts, there were three ways of getting things done: “command-and-control,” then “empowerment,” and then “self-organization.” In this spiritual-based context leaders focus their attention on encouraging and assisting employees to fulfill their “dharma,” their essential spiritual nature and purpose, based on their consciously held spiritual context. They combine a trust in each person’s ability to be self-regulating, through their spiritual context, along with clearly defined practices to promote learning and growth.

Leaders are not bound by time, money, physical circumstances, or minds that are often full of rigid beliefs and reactive patterns. They become “masters of time, money, matter, and mind” and use them as wise expressions of their spiritual context. “Deadlines” and “due dates” are replaced with “consciously designed visions” that let them know when something is “complete.” The time it takes to fulfill a specific task, project, or mission is considered a “natural result,” rather than a driving force.

In summary, spiritual-based business leaders see the workplace as a prime setting where people can realize their highest spiritual potential. They transform work into a vital, principle aspect of each person’s spiritual growth.

Embodying Spirituality in Thoughts, Words, and Deeds.

As spiritual-based business leaders grow in their spiritual development, they will naturally develop spiritual wisdom and compassion and will “radiate” these qualities through the purity and unity of their thoughts, words, and deeds. Spiritual-based leaders live their spirituality without compromise. Joann Zimmerman⁵⁶, CEO of the Kaiser Permanente South Bay Hospital, in San Jose, California shares what it is like for her to embody spiritual qualities in her leadership:

Spirituality (for me) comes from a position of Love. I truly love my work and the people I work with. This allows me to create intimacies with people and to achieve higher relationships. I express this, and it makes some people uncomfortable. But it IS love! It’s

real! You can also forge mountains that way. One staff person said to me, “When you speak with me, I know I can do more. I know I matter.”

Spirituality is the expectation of the opportunity to live and hope and love and understand that there's a world larger than I can see. Every answer will not be on a spreadsheet. It's easy for our spirituality to be part of the workplace if it's is a sincere part of our context and who we are. I'm on the board of a Silicon Valley manufacturing group composed of all CEO's – they respond to it too!

When leaders embody spiritual qualities such as truth, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence, those whom they lead are naturally drawn to emulate them. They want to draw from the deep well of the leaders' wisdom and put that example into practice in their own lives. The esteem given to Nobel Peace Prize winners such as Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Aung San Suu Kyi (of Burma), and Albert Schweitzer is evidence of this.

Perhaps – the time is coming when business leaders will be held in the same esteem – even with something like a Nobel Prize for Spiritual-Based Business Leadership.

CONCLUSION

Metaphors often capture the essence of a context most powerfully. In the first three contexts of business leadership, the main metaphor for business evolved from “military machine” to “sports team” to “community.” All of them focused on our relationship with creation.

Watering the spiritual roots is one metaphor that brings the spiritual-based context to life... one that focuses on our relationship with both a Transcendent consciousness and creation – the unseen as well as the tangible. It also illustrates the relationship between the spiritual-based context and its three predecessors: the rationalist, humanistic, and wholistic.

Imagine a fruit tree with branches spreading in all directions. Flowers bloom on the branches, and turn into ripe fruits. All of these are nourished from the underground roots of the tree, up through the strength of the trunk.

The branches represent the strength and efficiency of the rationalist context. The flowers are humanistic values such as trust, respect, and fairness. The fruits are wholistic principles such as ethics and social responsibility. The trunk is spiritual character. The roots represent our spiritual nature. And the source of water and nourishment for it all is the Transcendent.

When we focus on “watering these roots” by living our spirituality in thought, word, and deed... we naturally grow a strong trunk of spiritual character and strong branches that efficiently bring nourishment to the bountiful flowers of humanistic values and the luscious fruits of wholistic principles. The result is business leadership that is spiritually uplifting to all, socially responsible to all, humanly respectful to all, and tangible in its results for all.

Even if no one else in a company operates from a spiritual-based context, leaders can still *water the spiritual roots* by identifying their spiritual context, exploring their spirituality “from the inside out,” and radiating spiritual qualities in every aspect of their day-to-day work. With strong spiritual character, they can also bring forth the wisdom found in the other contexts. That is, they can:

1. Fulfill the potential of the *rationalist* context by:
 - Honoring the experience and wisdom of “those who have paved the way before us.”
 - Using resources efficiently
2. Fulfill the potential of the humanistic context by:

- Recognizing the essential goodness and work ethic of people.
 - Providing opportunities for individuals to actualize their potential, which includes self-actualization as well as work abilities and aspirations.
3. Fulfill the potential of the wholistic context by:
- Recognizing the interconnectivity of people, nature, and business enterprises.
 - Emphasizing the universal nature of principles from which to operate harmoniously and creatively.

Theology is “the study of the Transcendent and It’s relation to the world.” As business leaders become more and more conscious of the spiritual nature of all of life, the distinction between theology and the study of business becomes less and less. This is testified to by Bob Galvin⁵⁷, chairman of the executive committee on Motorola’s board of directors, who once described the primary job of leaders as:

Inspiring acts of faith (“things are do-able that are not necessarily provable”), spreading hope, and building trust.

When a VP asked how these values relate to the “real world of business,” Galvin replied that executives must develop strong character in themselves and others, not just good technical or financial skills. Then he concluded:

Faith, hope, and trust... Theology is very practical business.

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