



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

2.10 “WAKING UP” SPIRITUAL WISDOM

Is it possible that the workplace could offer an even more fertile opportunity to “wake up” spiritual wisdom than going to the proverbial “forest”?

IN ALL MAJOR religions, the path of spiritual wisdom (*jnana yoga*) is the awakening of consciousness to see the inherent Divinity in all beings – which literally means to be aware of the “substance behind the form.” As the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart once wrote:

Whoever has God truly as a companion is with Him in all places... When a person keeps their gaze fixed upon God, all things become God for him or her.

Imagine the difference it could make in the quality of your work, and in the satisfaction you derive from your work, if you were steeped in this unitive consciousness that Divinity resides in all of creation. Swami Ranganathananda speaks to this in his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*:

When we learn to respect the dignity and inherent worth of ourselves and others as sparks of the one Divine Atman (God), we shall capture a high level of self-discipline, human concern, and practical efficiency. We can find joy in even the simplest work because we have put spiritual value into our work.

Is it possible that the workplace could offer an even more fertile opportunity to “wake up” spiritual wisdom than going to the proverbial forest? Swami Vivekananda says:

These conceptions that I have the same God in me as you have in you must come out. They must not remain only in the forest. They must come out to work at the bar and the bench. If a lawyer thinks he is Spirit (Atma), he will be a better lawyer.

A core practice for becoming more spiritually wise through our work is to actively seek to “awaken to the substance behind the form.” At one level, this means to see the Divinity that underlies worldly objects and activities. At a more tangible level, it means looking for the “spirit” behind the goals, procedures, rules and regulations found in every workplace. By “spirit” we mean the pure, spiritual intention that underlies these codes of conduct.

For example, V.V. Ranganathan, a senior partner with a leading professional services firm, told us how he does this with clients who hire contractors who in turn hire labourers. Sometimes these contractors do not account for all the labourers, in order to avoid paying their social security to the government. Ranganathan told us:

I ask my clients who hire such contractors, “Do you want to deal with a contractor who has such little respect for human beings? Look at the goals and values of your company. If you hire someone who is not in line with these values, you should help them understand that they must follow these values if they are going to work for you.” This transports our conversation to a whole new plane altogether, a transcendent plane.

A second practice is to be willing to “sit” in the uncomfortable uncertainty of facing complex work situations. In that silence, we can find the spiritual wisdom to guide our decisions, based on recognising and respecting the Divinity in everyone impacted by the decision.

Ricardo Levy, CEO of Catalytica, Inc., told us how he faced a decision to sell off a major part of the company he had built over 27 years:

There were so many things we had to consider, like the employees we had attracted and what was good for our shareholders. Since I am still so hard-wired to jump in and solve problems, the whole concept of living in the unknown – to let the enormity of the decision be with me, and just rest there – helped me tremendously throughout this period. From that place I could listen to the voice of God and allow my inner spirit to give me the signals of what to do.

Ultimately, only good can come when we use our work as an opportunity to “wake up” this spiritual wisdom within us. As Ricardo told us:

Once I reached this internal compass marker, then the ability to harness the forces around me to get all of this done was ten fold better.

So, ask yourself: *How can I practice seeing the Divinity that underlies all of creation? In what practical ways can I apply that spiritual wisdom in what I think, say, and do at work?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: Book 2 – Work as a Spiritual Practice*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of “spirituality and human values for leadership and work”, visit our website: www.globaldharma.org