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Spirituality and Performance in Organizations: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this article is to review spirituality at work literature and to explore how spirituality improves employees' performances and organizational effectiveness. The article reviews about 140 articles on workplace spirituality to review their findings on how spirituality supports organizational performance. Three different perspectives are introduced on how spirituality benefits employees and supports organizational performance based on the extant literature: (a) Spirituality enhances employee well-being and quality of life; (b) Spirituality provides employees a sense of purpose and meaning at work; (c) Spirituality provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community. The article introduces potential benefits and caveats of bringing spirituality into the workplace; providing recommendations and suggestions for practitioners to incorporate spirituality positively in organizations.

KEY WORDS: spirituality at work, performance, organizations, human resources, well-being, benefits, caveats, review

A new paradigm in organizations: spirituality movement

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A number of scholars mention a paradigm shift in organizational sciences, management theory, and practice in the last two decades (Capra, 1996; Giacalone and Dafna, 2000; Harman and Hormann, 1990; Ray et al., 1993; Wheatley, 1992). It seems this paradigm shift is complex, which includes multiple dimensions such as moving from a predictable outlook to chaos (Gleick, 1987), from command and control or fear-based approaches to trust and empowerment (Conger and Kanungo, 1988), from simplicity to complexity (Lewin, 1992), from transactional leadership to transformational leadership (House and Shamir, 1993), and from closed systems to complex adaptive systems (Dooley, 1997). These changes in management include a shift from an economic focus to a balance of profits, quality of life, spirituality, and social responsibility concerns (DeFoore and Renesch, 1995; Walsh et al., 2003), a shift from self-centeredness to interconnectedness (Capra, 1993), a shift from self-interest to service and stewardship (Block, 1993; Neck and Milliman, 1994), and a change from materialistic to a spiritual orientation (DeFoore and Renesch, 1995; Fox, 1994; Neal, 1997). In line with this paradigm shift, we have witnessed that organizations and managers have been discovering and experimenting with new ways and methods to help employees balance work and family, such as flexible work arrangements (Gottlieb et al., 1998) and telecommuting (Kugelmass, 1995). In relation to these practices, organizations in North America have been increasing their focus on strategies of empowerment (Byman, 1991; Conger and Kanungo, 1988) to enable and increase employee involvement and participation (Cotton, 1993; Hyman and Mason, 1995). These innovations and new ways of working aim to be mind-enriching, heart-fulfilling, and

spirit-growing for employees, and still be financially rewarding at the same time.

This new paradigm that is emerging in organizations has also been called as "the spirituality movement." Ashmos and Duchon (2000) have described the spirituality movement as "a major transformation" (p. 134) where organizations make room for the spiritual dimension, which has to do with meaning, purpose, and a sense of community. This new spiritual dimension embodies employees' search for simplicity, meaning, self-expression, and interconnectedness to something higher (Marques et al., 2007). This article will contribute to the spirituality at work literature by inquiring its benefits for employees and its relationship with organizational performance. In order to start doing this, it would be useful to review the growing interest in spirituality at work literature and the definitions of spirituality.

Over the last decade, scholars report a steady increase of interest in spirituality at work issues among management researchers and practitioners in North America (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Cavanagh, 1999; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003b; Tischler, 1999). Howard (2002) argues the "explosion of interest in spirituality as a new dimension of management … probably the most significant trend in management since the 1950s" (p. 230). Wagner-Marsh and Conley (1999) suggested that there has been "an organizational fourth wave," referring to an aftermath of Toffler's (1980) technological third wave and they called this "the spiritually based firm" (p. 292).

The growing, interest in workplace spirituality is also evident in bookstores, virtual bookstores and the recent spirituality books on the issue. A search on spirituality and business on Google Book yields around 2990 results, while the same search on http://www.Amazon.com gives more than 3140 book titles; not all results, though, are directly related to the core issue (October, 2008). Some of these books on spirituality at work or spirituality and leadership have been among the best sellers, such as *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America* (Mitroff and Denton, 1999b), *Liberating the Corporate Soul* (Barrett, 1998), *Spirit at Work* (Conger, 1994), *The Soul of a Business: Managing for Profit and the Common Good* (Chappell, 1993), *Leading with Soul* (Bolman and Deal, 1995), and *The Heart Aroused: Poetry and Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America* (Whyte, 1994).

Finally, the growing interest in spirituality is evident in corporations, corporate meeting rooms, and the business world as well. For example, a growing numbers of organizations, including large corporations such as Intel, Coca-Cola, Boeing, and Sears, are reported to have incorporated spirituality in their workplaces, strategies, or cultures (Burack, 1999; Gogoi, 2005; Konz and Ryan, 1999, Wagner-Marsh, and Conley, 1999). Some spiritual practices include holding Bible, Quran, or Torah study groups; forming voluntary prayer groups; having "higher power lunches"; forming interfaith dialog groups; organizing reflection sessions; offering meditation exercises; and starting servant leadership development programs.

Some corporations incorporate spirituality into their strategies within the framework of corporate social responsibility. For example, Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop, is committed to contributing to Glasgow through social responsibility projects aimed at solving the problems of high unemployment, crime rates and urban decay in the region. She invests a quarter of net profits back to the community to "keep the soul of the company alive." Many companies that are grounded in spiritual values and principles also are committed to social responsibility and community service. Another example is Tom's of Maine, which gives away 10% of pre-tax profits to charities for common good and provides employees four paid hours a month to volunteer for community service. These examples provide anecdotal evidence of how organizations can incorporate spirituality and social responsibility into their mission while still performing well.

Although the literature and interest on spirituality at work is growing rapidly; there is confusion around how spirituality influences organizational performance. The objective of this article is to review current literature on spirituality at work and organizational performance and explore how spirituality is related to organizational performance. The article reviews the workplace spirituality literature to synthesize theoretical and empirical findings on how spirituality benefits employees and supports organizational performance. Three different perspectives are introduced on how spirituality supports organizational performance based on the extant literature: (a) Spirituality enhances employee well-being and quality of life; (b) Spirituality provides employees a

sense of purpose and meaning at work; (c) Spirituality provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community. The article introduces potential benefits and caveats of bringing spirituality into the workplace and providing recommendations and suggestions for practitioners to incorporate spirituality positively in organizations.

Definitions of spirituality at work

There are more than 70 definitions of spirituality at work, and still, there is no widely accepted definition of spirituality (Markow and Klenke, 2005). There are indeed many possible ways to define such a complex and diverse term as spirituality at work. For example, spirituality has been defined as our inner consciousness (Guillory, 2000), a specific form of work feeling that energizes action (Dehler and Welsh, 1994), "a process of self-enlightenment" (Barnett et al., 2000, p. 563), "a worldview plus a path" (Cavanagh et al., 2001, p. 6), "access to the sacred force that impels life" (Nash and McLennan, 2001, p. 17), and "the unique inner search for the fullest personal development through participation into transcendent mystery" (Delbecq, 1999, p. 345). In these definitions, spirituality is mostly described as an idiosyncratic, multifaceted, elusive concept: difficult to be captured in a common definition.

Laabs (1995) points out that "defining spirituality in the workplace is like capturing an angel – it's ethereal and beautiful, but perplexing" (p. 63). The term "spirituality" comes from the Latin word "*spiritus*" or "*spiritualis*" that means breathing, breath, air, or wind (Merriam-Webster). *Spiritus* is defined as "an animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms" (Merriam-Webster). This implies spirit is the life force that inhabits us when we are alive and breathing (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). Scott (1994) offers a parallel definition for spirit as "the vital principle or animating force within living beings; that which constitutes one's unseen intangible being; the real sense or significance of something" (p. 64). Spirituality, as defined by Mitroff and Denton (1999a), is "the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others and the entire universe" (p. 83). As noted above, the fuzziness, ambiguity, and the complexity of the construct makes spirituality a difficult research topic to investigate. In this article, spirituality is defined as the journey to find a sustainable, authentic, meaningful, holistic, and profound understanding of the existential self and its relationship/interconnectedness with the sacred and the transcendent. Spirituality is distinguished from institutionalized religion by being characterized as a private, inclusive, non-denominational, universal human feeling; rather than an adherence to the beliefs, rituals, or practices of a specific organized religious institution or tradition. This distinction is important in the spirituality at work literature, as manifested by Mitroff and Denton's (1999b) study where 60% of the respondents had positive views of spirituality while the rest had negative views of religion.

Spirituality and organizational performance

Whether applying, enabling, or incorporating spirituality practices in organizations result in increase in productivity or profitability is a very complex and controversial issue. Dent et al. (2005) review the controversies around the measurement and rigor issues of how spirituality and performance are related. There are two opposite camps or positions regarding the inquiries on the relationship between spirituality and organizational performance. On the one hand, some researchers view spirituality as anti-materialist (Gibbons, 2000; Lips-Wiersma, 2003) and anti-positivist (Fornaciari et al., 2003) by its nature and question positivist research methods on spirituality (see Fornaciari and Lund Dean, 2001; Fornaciari et al., 2003; Gibbons, 2000; Lips-Wiersma, 2003; Mitroff and Denton, 1999b; Palmer, 1994). These researchers argue that the anti-materialist characteristic of spirituality may pose important challenges in the scientific investigation of its links to financial performance (Dent et al., 2005; Fornaciari and Lund Dean, 2001; Fornaciari et al., 2003). Some researchers supporting this position point out to the fact that there may indeed be ethical pitfalls and moral concerns in the research question of whether enabling or incorporating spirituality at work results in better organizational performance or profitability (Dent et al., 2005; Fernando, 2005). Other researchers also mention their concerns about spirituality being used as an administrative tool to manipulate employees (Brown, 2003; Cavanagh and Bandsuch,

2002; Fernando, 2005; Mirvis, 1997). These scholars argue that spirituality should be seen as an end in itself and should not be used as a managerial tool for increasing financial performance in organizations (Cavanagh and Bandsuch, 2002; Fernando, 2005). Some scholars indeed express their reservations and urge caution on the potential abuses or misuses of spirituality at work (Brown, 2003; Cavanagh and Bandsuch, 2002; Jackson, 2000; Mitroff and Denton, 1999b).

On the other hand, some scholars argue that spirituality can be used to improve organizational performance (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Fry, 2005; Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a); and spirituality research should demonstrate spirituality's links with productivity and profitability (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Fry, 2005; Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a, b; Giacalone et al., 2005). These researchers, such as Giacalone et al. (2005), make a call to spirituality at work researchers to empirically and rigorously demonstrate the positive effects of spirituality on performance to prevent the marginalization of spirituality at work research. This position can be summarized as the strategy to empirically demonstrate positive effects and outcomes of spirituality in organizations. The basic aim is to make the area of spirituality at work research more legitimate and mainstream to organizational studies. Indeed, it has been suggested that organizations that encourage spirituality experiences improved their organizational performance and profitability (Biberman and Whitty, 1997; Biberman et al., 1999; Burack, 1999; Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2002; Kriger and Hanson, 1999; Neck and Milliman, 1994; Thompson, 2000). In the last decade, several research projects have been conducted, which reported positive relationships between spirituality at work and organizational productivity and performance (Bierly et al., 2000; Delbecq, 1999; Korac-Kakabadse and Korac-Kakabadse, 1997; Mitroff and Denton, 1999b). Additional research reveals that organizations that have voluntary spirituality programs have had higher profits and success (Dehler and Welsh, 1994; Konz and Ryan, 1999; Mitroff and Denton, 1999b; Turner, 1999).

Therefore, there have been a lot of controversies and confusion regarding the role and legitimacy of "spirituality at work" and its relationship with organizational performance (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a). Despite growing recognition of spirituality at work as a significant area of inquiry, research conducted in the intersection of spirituality and organizational performance has not been consolidated and systematically reviewed. This review aims to contribute to the spirituality at work field by integrating three different perspectives on how spirituality enables or leads to organizational performance (Figure 1):

(a) *Human resources perspective*: Spirituality enhances employee well-being and quality of life;
(b) *Philosophical perspective*: Spirituality provides employees a sense of purpose and meaning at work;
(c) *Interpersonal perspective*: Spirituality provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community.

Therefore, the article introduces an integrative view of how spirituality at work benefits organizations through these three perspectives. In particular, the article notes and attempts to explain the general lack of cumulative work and the lack of synthesis of work across these three perspectives. I contend that the interplay between these three perspectives can

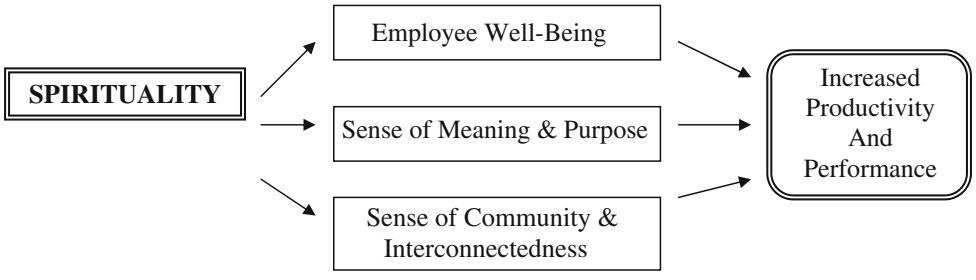


Figure 1. Three perspectives of spirituality and performance.

provide us a more comprehensive understanding of how spirituality leads to effectiveness and better performance in organizations.

Perspective 1: employee well-being

First, I approach the issue from a Human Resources perspective, the perspective of employee well-being. This includes individual level positive effects of spirituality, including subjective well-being, morale, and commitment. This perspective purports that incorporating spirituality at work (a) increases employees' well-being by increasing their morale, commitment, and productivity; and (b) decreases employees' stress, burnout, and workaholism in the workplace.

Proposition 1: Spirituality enhances the general well-being of employees:

(a) by increasing their morale, commitment and productivity
(b) by reducing stress, burnout and workaholism

This perspective is particularly salient in today's workplaces where employees spend most of their time in their lives. Work sites have become the central pieces in our lives and the source of values in society (Fairholm, 1996, p. 11). Workplaces are the places where people spend most of their lives, develop friendships, create value, and make their most meaningful contributions to society (Fairholm, 1996). The organizations where people spend most of their time become their most important community, their *gemeinschaft*. Thus, work has meanings beyond the ''nine-to-five'' working hours; it is even becoming the cradle of meaning in modern knowledge society. For some people, work and colleagues at work have even taken the place of family or social groups. Conger (1994) observes workplace has become the fountainhead of community for many people. However, together with the increasing importance and centrality of work in people's lives, associated problems also have increased such as stress, burnout, and workaholism.

Several scholars including Rifkin (2004) and Gini (1998) argue that workaholism has become a serious and growing problem for many Americans. The average worker in the U.S. started to work 163 extra hours annually in 1987 compared to that in 1969 (Schor, 1991). Recent research conducted by Galinsky et al. (2005) found 44% of the U.S. workforce experienced overwork in the last month in their workplaces. Hard work and long hours can become unhealthy and dissatisfying for employees as they confuse meaning and their inner worth with external rewards, promotion, striving for mastery, and affluenza (pp. 10–20, Burke, 2006). Stress caused by workaholism and long hours at work can result in loss of spirituality, chronic illnesses, pain, chronic fatigue, fear, and guilt (Killinger, 2006). Cartwright and Cooper (1997) report that increasing stress in the workplace leads to higher absenteeism, lower productivity, and increased health compensation claims in the U.S. The collective cost of stress for U.S. corporations have been estimated to be around $150 billion due to absenteeism, loss of productivity, health insurance, and medical expenses (Karasek and Theorell, 1990).

In addition to increasing workaholism, several additional factors are reported, which increase uncertainty and stress at work in American workplaces. There have been many changes in work environments over the past decades that created a climate of uncertainty, chaos, and fear among employees (Cacioppe, 2000; Harman, 1992; Kennedy, 2001). Ethical scandals, corporate crimes, downsizing, layoffs, mergers and acquisitions, September 11, global terror, market crashes, financial crises, and global competition characterize a business environment full of turmoil and uncertainty (Biberman and Whitty, 1997; Cacioppe, 2000; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a; Neal, 2000). There is evidence in the literature that downsizing and layoffs have decreased the morale and commitment of employees (Brandt, 1996; Duxbury and Higgins, 2002; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a). Neal (1999) argues that there is a ''legitimized schizophrenia'' in today's workplaces, referring to the uneasy feeling of putting on masks, hypocrisy, artificiality, and playing to be successful. According to Neal (1999), legitimized schizophrenia leads to an artificial separation between work and life, which results in lower productivity, and higher stress and burnout.

Contemporary evidence supports the statement that many employees in today's workplaces feel

unappreciated, unconnected, lost, and insecure in their jobs (Meyer 1997; Sparrow and Cooper, 2003). Several researchers found that employees began to feel distanced, vulnerable, and cynical as a result of downsizing, restructuring, reengineering, delayering, layoffs, and other current changes in organizations (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1995; Biberman and Whitty, 1997; Meyer 1997; Sparrow and Cooper, 2003). Barrett (2004) cites a recent survey of more than 800 mid-career executives, which reports that unhappiness and dissatisfaction with work is at a 40-year high. Some researchers report a steady decline of employee respect, trust, and confidence in management (Burack, 1999; Shaw, 1997). Mitroff and Denton (1999b) argue that today's organizations suffer from a deep spiritual emptiness, and many of problems in organizations result from this spiritual impoverishment. A growing number of managers and employees are reported to resort to meditation, reflection, and spiritual practices, wellness programs, as well as fitness and sports exercises at work as a method of coping with stress and uncertainty at work (Cartwright and Cooper 1997; Dehler and Welsh, 1994).

Research suggests that the development and expression of the spirit at work may indeed solve these problems of stress and burnout, as well as have beneficial consequences for the well-being of employees. Reave (2005) mentions the review of Emmons (1999, p. 876) that summarizes seven studies that have reported "a significant correlation between spirituality and mental health indices of life satisfaction, happiness, self esteem, hope and optimism, and meaning in life" (p. 667). There is growing evidence in spirituality research that workplace spirituality programs result in positive individual level outcomes for employees such as increased joy, serenity, job satisfaction, and commitment (Burack, 1999; Fry, 2003, 2005; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a; Kouzes and Posner, 1995; Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Paloutzian et al., 2003; Reave, 2005). There is also evidence that these programs improve organizational productivity and reduce absenteeism and turnover (Fry, 2003, 2005; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a). Milliman et al. (2003) found a positive correlation between workplace spirituality and employee attitudes such as commitment to the organization, intrinsic work satisfaction, and job involvement. Neck and Milliman (1994) claim spirituality values have positive effects on both personal well-being and job performance.

More employers today are encouraging spirituality in the workplace as a way to enhance employee morale, commitment, and productivity. Research suggests fostering spirituality and allowing free expression of spirituality at work enable employees to feel complete and authentic at work (Burack, 1999), which leads to a high degree of personal fulfillment and morale; this, in turn, results in increased organizational performance (Turner, 1999). Bento (1994) reviewed research proposing that spiritually empowered employees are found to be more honest, courageous, and compassionate individuals, and they can represent these characteristics on their job. Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) suggested that the encouragement of spirituality in the workplace can lead to benefits in the areas of creativity, honesty, personal fulfillment, and commitment, which will ultimately lead to increased organizational performance. Some forms of encouragement of spirituality in the workplace include organizing optional morning prayers or yoga sessions; designing multi-faith prayer spaces; starting corporate chaplaincies, or introducing spiritual wellness and balance programs for employees (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Mitroff and Denton, 1999b). Further research revealed that trust is crucial in forming a sound basis for commitment (Kriger and Hanson, 1999) and spirituality increases commitment by establishing a climate of trust in the workplace (Burack, 1999).

This body of study provides preliminary support for the argument that incorporating spiritual practices at work can indeed increases employees' morale, commitment, and productivity; while decreasing their stress and burnout at work.

Perspective 2: sense of meaning and purpose

Second, I approach the issue from philosophical and existentialist perspective; which is connected to the concepts such as the search for meaning and purpose in what employees are doing at the workplace. Providing a deeper sense of meaning and purpose for employees is important, as this enables employees to perform better and to be more productive and creative at work. This perspective contends that

incorporating spirituality at work provides employees and managers a deeper sense of meaning and purpose at work.

Proposition 2: Spirituality provides employees and managers a deeper sense of meaning and purpose at work.

This perspective is based on the argument that today's workplaces have increasingly been emotionally and spiritually barren, devoid of deeper meaning and spirit. Organizations of the industrial age have been centered on creating material wealth, putting economic goals and profitability before the social and public ones (Walsh et al., 2003). As profit maximization has become the main strategic objective and success is measured in financial measures such as sales, cash flow, and market share, the social, interpersonal, and spiritual functions and goals of organizational life have taken a back seat in today's corporations (Gull and Doh, 2004; Hertz, 2002; Post et al., 2002; Walsh et al., 2003). In most of today's corporations, the central focus persists to be on observable, external, controllable, empirical, and materialistic outcomes or variables (Gull and Doh, 2004); which has led to the creation of "a world without depth" (Gull and Doh, 2004, p. 129) and the isolation of the soulful aspects of work life (Bolman and Deal, 1995). In line with this argument, Gozdz (1995) contends that organizations that value positivism, reductionism, and empiricism may fall into the trap of denying the existence of spirit. The assumption that material wealth and success will automatically lead to individual and collective well being is starting to be questioned as people desire more meaning and quality of life at work (Cash and Gray, 2000; Gull and Doh, 2004; Laabs, 1995; Pratt and Ashforth, 2003; Wrzesniewski, 2003). Moreover, ethical scandals and corporate crimes coupled with environmental degradation over half a century necessitate radical improvement in social, environmental, and ethical performance of companies (Frederick, 2006; Waddock, 2006).

A large number of employees today often feel psychological isolation and alienation at work (Bolman and Deal, 1995; Cavanagh, 1999; Harman, 1992), as well as a vacuum and a lack of meaning in their work lives (Cavanagh, 1999; Dehler and Welsh, 1994; Pratt and Ashforth, 2003). Separating work, life, family, and spirit into compartments may rip authenticity off employees: leaving them feeling unfulfilled, stressed and alienated (Cavanagh, 1999; Fairholm, 1996). Accordingly, the saliency of the search for meaning and the need for inner satisfaction for employees in today's workplaces is foreseeable and well documented in the literature (Cavanagh, 1999; Fairholm, 1996; Jacobson, 1995). Fairholm (1996) cites Renesch (1995) reporting more than forty million people "searching for a more intrinsically valued lifestyle" in the U.S. (p. 11). Similarly, Johnson (2004) reports 61% individuals think their workplaces would benefit from a greater sense of meaning and spirituality. Oldenburg (1997) interpret this trend as a longing in people's souls for deeper meaning, deeper connection, greater simplicity, a connection to something higher. In a time of rising emphasis on business ethics and work life balance, corporations feel compelled to respond to the employee need for meaning at work (Cacioppe, 2000; Cavanagh, 1999; Gull and Doh, 2004; Pratt and Ashforth, 2003).

Indeed, many employees in today's workplaces are reported to question themselves and their work, ask themselves about the essence and meaning of their work, and search for a sense of purpose and meaning at work (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Brandt, 1996; Burack, 1999; Cacioppe, 2000; Fairholm, 1996; Konz and Ryan, 1999; Kouzes and Posner, 2003; Neal, 1997). The following set of existential questions that employees reflect on and ask themselves, introduced by Kouzes and Posner (2003), exemplifies this search of meaning and purpose for employees (pp. 69–70):

- What do I stand for? What do I believe in? Why?
- What is the meaning of the work I am doing? Where does this lead me to?
- Is there a reason for my existence and the organization's?
- What brings me suffering? What makes me weep and wail? Why?
- What am I passionate about? Why? What keeps me awake at night? Why?
- What do I want for my life? Why? What do I really care about? Why? (pp. 69–70)

These questions can go deep in the heart of employees and have implications for employees' careers, lives, needs, aspirations, passions, and spirituality. Responding to the needs of employees for meaning at work is turning into a critical success factor for companies as employees' quest for deeper meaning and fulfillment in their careers is intensified. A number of researchers argue that workplace spirituality has the potential to provide employees a feeling of purpose, a sense of connection, and a sense of meaning at work (Bolman and Deal, 1995; Brandt, 1996; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a). Lips-Wiersma (2002) associated spirituality with finding meaning and purpose in life and living in accordance with this meaning and deeply held beliefs (p. 385). Mitroff and Denton (1999a) found that organizations that have a stronger sense of spirituality enable employees to exercise stronger values and ethical beliefs in their workplace and empower them to show more creativity and flexibility at work. Moreover, Mitroff and Denton (1999a) found workers who can express their spirituality through their work actually find work more satisfying and meaningful and accordingly perform better. This is in line with Gull and Doh (2004) who propose that employees become more engaged and can work more responsibly, ethically, collaboratively, and creatively when they find meaning in their work activities. Supporting employees to incorporate their spirituality and values into their work is also reported to be increasing their personal satisfaction and joy (Dehler and Welsh, 1994; Reave, 2005). Lips-Wiersma (2002) argued that employees fully expressing their spirituality can benefit their organizations through "creativity and intuition," "increased empowerment," "more cohesive vision and purpose"; and "enhanced team and community building" (p. 385). Paloutzian et al. (2003) report that work takes on new meaning and significance when it is seen as a calling, a sacred duty, a service opportunity or a way to serve God, other deities, or a higher purpose. When work is seen as a calling, it becomes more meaningful, and this increases productivity and commitment of employees (Paloutzian et al., 2003; Reave, 2005). All this research supports and shows how productivity and performance increases as a result of deeper meaning at work, as well as how spirituality at work can provide employees a sense of meaning and purpose. The common pattern in all these work seem to be the fact that workers want to be recognized for who they are: as whole persons with spirit, heart, soul, passions, hopes, talents, aspirations, families, private lives, emotions, ups and downs, and diverse perspectives on matters.

Perspective 3: sense of community and interconnectedness

Third, I approach the topic from an interpersonal and community perspective, which is connected to the concepts of belonging, community, and connectedness. This perspective is centered on the interpersonal relationships, collective dimensions, and social dynamics of spirituality. This perspective contends that incorporating spirituality at work provides organizational members a sense of community and connectedness, and thus increases their attachment, loyalty, and belonging to the organization.

Proposition 3: Spirituality provides employees a sense of community and connectedness; increasing their attachment, loyalty and belonging to the organization.

Providing employees a sense of community and connectedness is critical in today's workplaces and corporations. Current concerns about ethical scandals and violations, such as Enron and Arthur Andersen, have negative effects such as the elimination of trust and sense of community in corporations (Gull and Doh, 2004; Neal, 2000; Schroth and Elliot, 2002). Waddock (2006) argues corporate scandals have resulted from self-centeredness, greed, egoism, and selfish passion instead of caring for others. As a result of the failure of trust in institutions, employees are searching for a sense of community, high quality connections (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003) and compassion at work (Frost et al., 2006). In view of the decline of local communities and social groups that establish a sense of connectedness (Conger, 1994) and the dissolution of traditional support systems such as the church and family (Leigh, 1997), workplaces have replaced them as primary sources of community for many people. It is also known that employees are seeking ways and means to connect to each other and to be united in a common vision that goes beyond materialistic aims

(Miller, 1998). Moreover, in times of uncertainty, employees and managers face significant challenges and traumatic experiences in their lives, such as death, divorce, illnesses, and layoffs (Weiss et al., 2001) which force them to reach out to their communities for support, guidance, and help. This makes the aspects of community and connectedness in spirituality experiences even more important in today's organizations.

The conception of workplaces as human communities with social functions and societal benefits is taking ground and momentum in organizations (Milliman et al., 1999; Walsh et al., 2003). There has been an invitation of researchers to consider organizations as communities that produce significant social values and outcomes for society (Frost et al., 2006; Walsh et al., 2003). This perspective stresses that organizations are not just machines for producing goods but also forms of human community that foster satisfying and meaningful life experiences for individuals, families, and society (Gull and Doh, 2004). This perspective has its roots in Human Relations movement and the humanistic discourses in organizational theory (e.g., Mayo, 1945; McGregor, 1960). In line with this community-oriented perspective, Cash and Gray (2000) observe that American corporations move toward a more value-expressive philosophy and tolerant culture responding to employees' requests for spiritual connection and sense of community. This transition toward the need for spirituality and connection is also evident in changing managerial perceptions and values in today's corporations. For example, according to a study conducted by Ashar and Lane-Maher (2004), mid- and senior level executives did not describe success in materialistic terms (such as money or promotion), but instead, used terms such as being connected, balance, and wholeness to define success.

Feeling part of a community and sharing a common purpose are two dimensions that have been frequently associated with workplace spirituality (Brown, 1992; Gozdz, 1993; Milliman et al., 1999; Ray, 1992). A sense of connection and interconnectedness to something larger than oneself (Brown, 1992) has also been considered an important part of spirit at work (Milliman et al., 1999). A good sense of community and connectedness becomes possible through high quality connections at the workplace (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003). Milliman et al. (1999) conducted a case study of Southwest Airlines demonstrating how incorporation of spiritual values at work and tapping into the deeper levels of employee spirituality and motivation can nurture a genuine sense of community, spirit, and affection in the workplace. In agreement with this finding, Chappell (1993) suggests shared values and a shared sense of purpose can turn a company into a community where daily work takes on a deeper meaning and inner satisfaction.

Spirituality at work provides employees a sense of community and connectedness. The consequences of spiritual experiences at work are discussed in the literature including higher levels of employee attachment, loyalty, and belonging (Duchon and Plowman, 2005; Fairholm, 1996; Milliman et al., 1999). Consequences of spiritual relationships include intimacy, wholeness, authenticity, altruism, and integrity (Burack, 1999; Kendall, 1994; Stiles, 1994). In the spirituality literature, spirituality is often linked to positive outcomes and benefits associated with the ''sense of community,'' such as unifying and building community (Cavanagh et al., 2001), serving the need for connecting to others at work (Khanna and Srinivas, 2000), and being the source of daily expressions of compassion, wisdom, and connectedness (Maxwell, 2003). There is also considerable amount of research linking spirituality to consideration towards others at work (Burack, 1999; Milliman et al., 1999, 2003). The International Center for Spirit at Work considers this the ''horizontal'' component in spirituality: the desire to be of service to other people. This ''horizontal spirituality'' is demonstrated by a service orientation and deep concern for others. Consideration toward others (showing concern) and high quality interpersonal work relationships have been correlated in empirical studies with a high worker job satisfaction, low turnover, group cohesion, group performance, and group efficiency (Bass, 1990; Champoux, 2000).

Examples of research presented above provide initial empirical support for the proposition that spirituality provides employees a sense of community and connectedness, which, in turn, increases employee commitment, belonging, and effectiveness.

This article has been built on the assumption that there is indeed a possibility of transforming ''barren

workplaces'' into ''abundant workplaces'' by incorporating spirituality positively into our workplaces. Therefore, this article has proposed three main perspectives inquiring into how spirituality benefits employees and organizations: (a) Spirituality enhances employee well-being and quality of life; (b) Spirituality provides employees a sense of purpose and meaning at work; (c) Spirituality provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community. Table I outlines these perspectives below. These three perspectives can provide HR practitioners and managers new ways to develop new human resources approaches incorporating spirituality at work. This article also underlines the importance of taking all three perspectives (human resources, philosophical, and interpersonal) into account while designing spirited workplaces of the twenty-first century, which are engaged with passion, alive with meaning, and connected with compassion.

Discussion: caveats and cautions

This article has reviewed the potential benefits of incorporating spirituality into our workplaces. However, there are several limitations and challenges regarding the practices of spirituality at work, which need to be mentioned. This section will discuss and outline four of the most important potential dangers or caveats about bringing a spiritual perspective into workplaces (See Table II). There are four good reasons to be cautious while incorporating spirituality into the workplaces in the business world.

The first major problem is the danger of proselytism. The main potential danger of spiritual expression at the workplace is the risk of proselytizing other people from diverse religions, spiritualities, or views (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002), and this danger is widely recognized and put forth in spirituality literature (Burack, 1999; Cavanagh, 1999;

TABLE I

Three perspectives on benefits of spirituality for employees and organizations

	Human resources perspective	Philosophical perspective	Interpersonal perspective
Focus on developing employees'	Well-being	Purpose and meaning	Community and connectedness
The problem: *Barren Workplaces*	Emotionally barren workplaces	Spiritually barren workplaces	Socially barren workplaces
Main problems/gaps/necessity	Stress, burnout, Workhaholism	Excessive materialism	Self-centeredness, greed & egoism
	Absenteeism	Loss of meaning & depth	Isolation
			Low cohesion & belonging
	Low morale & commitment	Low fulfillment, joy, & creativity	Lack of social support
	''Lethargy''	''Atrophy''	''Entropy''
The solution: *Abundant Workplaces*	Emotionally abundant workplaces	Spiritually abundant workplaces	Socially abundant workplaces
Positive outcomes of incorporating spirituality	Increased morale & commitment	Increased sense of meaning & purpose	Increased sense of connectedness & community
	Increased employee well-being	Increased fulfillment & job satisfaction	Increased attachment, loyalty, & belonging
	Increased employee productivity	Increased hope & creativity	High quality connections
		Increased reflection	
Ideal benefits for employees	Empowered, committed, passionate employees	Highly aware, self-reflective, creative employees	Compassionate, steward, benevolent employees
Spirited workplaces of the 21st century are	Engaged with passion	Alive with meaning	Connected with compassion

TABLE II

Major problems and suggestions for incorporating spirituality in organizations

Four problems	Four suggestions
The danger of proselytism	Accommodation of spiritual requests
The issue of compatibility	Respect for diversity
The risk of spirituality becoming a fad or a management tool to manipulate employees	Openness and freedom of expression
The legitimacy problem the field of spirituality at work faces in theory, research, and practice	Acknowledgment of employees as whole persons

Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Milliman et al., 2003; Mirvis, 1997; Mitroff and Denton, 1999b). The use of spiritual beliefs to exclude others undermines the requirement for respect and inclusiveness at work. Scholars also mention documented cases of companies that proselytize employees using particular religious or spiritual doctrines (Mirvis, 1997). Associated with this risk are the concerns about people feeling dissatisfaction and frustration, not being able to express their own spirituality, not being respected for their diversity, and feeling being coerced (Brown, 2003; Cavanagh, 1999; Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Milliman et al., 2003). Indoctrination will lead to coercion and alienation on part of the employees subjected to this. Moreover, implementing generic common spiritual principles or practices may result in alienated, isolated, or threatened people (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Mirvis, 1997). There is also a danger when a specific community of individuals with similar interests dictates their own agenda in an organization (Cavanagh and Bandsuch, 2002). The existence of destructive groups such as ''Al Kaide'' imposing their agenda based on terror and hate also harm the reputation and legitimacy of the issue of spirituality at work (Cavanagh and Bandsuch, 2002; Mirvis, 1997). Soon, spirituality issues, especially religious issues, can have divisive and harmful influences in the workplace if there is no absolute respect for diversity (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002). There are all kinds of human rights and equity issues here, including dangers of favoritism, intolerance, or discrimination (Cavanagh, 1999; Milliman et al., 2003; Mirvis, 1997).

The second major problem is the issue of compatibility. For some corporate cultures (especially those characterized by a materialistic and positivist philosophy), it may be a challenge to incorporate spirituality issues into the workplace (Cavanagh et al., 2001; Mirvis, 1997). Mirvis (1997) characterizes these corporate cultures as ''antithetical'' to spirituality. Mirvis (1997) also mentions a corporate tendency of separating ''church and state,'' ''faith and reason,'' and ''the spiritual and the secular'' (p. 202); which makes perspectives and feelings about spirituality ''undiscussable'' in many organizations (p. 203; Mirvis, 1997). The argument that there might be legitimate resistance to open expressions of religion and spirituality at work is a valid one in today's corporate environments (Brown, 2003; Mirvis, 1997). Incorporating spirituality into work can disturb some managers who are trying to protect their power and status quo. Moreover, some employees may perceive spiritual conversations ''too personal'' and invasive of their privacy, and may feel under pressure (Cavanagh, 1999; Mirvis, 1997).

The third major problem is the risk of spirituality becoming a fad or a being used as a management tool to manipulate employees. This risk is the most mentioned and articulated one in spirituality literature (Brown, 2003; Cavanagh, 1999; Cavanagh and Bandsuch, 2002; Fernando, 2005; Gibbons, 2000; Milliman et al., 2003; Mitroff and Denton, 1999b), and it is a very justifiable concern as there are already visible signs of this in popular spirituality books, training programs, and corporate practices. The danger here is that spirituality may lose all its essence, beauty, and authenticity if it is misused as a management tool or a marketing device (Fernando, 2005; Gibbons, 2000; Mirvis, 1997). Spirituality at work practices will have short life and validity if they are adopted as management fads or programs used to increase worker productivity (Cavanagh and Bandsuch, 2002; Mirvis, 1997). Without a genuine commitment to the authenticity of spirituality for its own sake, these programs of spirituality may turn

into just ''management fad, with sinister undertones, which, when unmasked, is likely to prove ineffective and ephemeral'' (p. 396; Brown, 2003). Fineman's (2006) recent criticism of positive programs of ''empowerment,'' ''fun,'' ''emotional intelligence'' also applies to spirituality programs, as these programs may ''stigmatize'' or ''alienate'' employees who may not feel comfortable with them (pp. 277–278). This critical discourse explaining how employees are manipulated, controlled, or bought into management interests is important (Brown, 2003; Milliman et al., 2003) because it shows how misuse of spirituality robs managers and employees of deeper meaning, authenticity, and integrity (Brown, 2003; Cavanagh and Bandsuch, 2002).

The fourth major problem is the legitimacy problem spirituality at work field faces in theory, research, and practice. As an emerging field, spirituality at work topics are not yet well established in the scientific literature as well as in professional practice (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a, b; Giacalone et al., 2005). There is a great amount of ambiguity and confusion about the concept, definition, meaning, and measurement of spirituality (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a; Hicks, 2003). There are still controversies around methodology, validity, rigor, and measurement of spirituality at work (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a; Kinjierski and Skrypnek, 2004). The growing body of literature on spirituality at work has been criticized for being atheoretical and ungrounded (Fornaciari et al., 2003), as well as lacking rigor (Gibbons, 2000) and enough theory (Dent et al., 2005). Dent et al. (2005) suggest that researchers must be rigorous in defining and differentiating spirituality to prevent a ''conceptual fog'' (Bateson, 1972). Another related criticism to spirituality research is that of ''artificiality'' which results from the lack of integration with established world religions and traditions (Gibbons, 2000). Mitroff and Denton (1999b) also mention issues that result from linguistic complexities within spirituality research, pointing out to the inadequate language and tools of positivist inquiry and narrow-minded rationalism that prevent deep understanding of the issue.

Table II outlines these four problems and lists four suggestions for practitioners for proper implementation of spirituality at work. This article concludes with these suggestions to achieve the successful integration of spirituality into workplaces.

Conclusion

How can organizations best buffer themselves from the potential caveats or concerns when they are incorporating spirituality into work environments? For many employees, religion and spirituality are central to their identities and important aspects of their lives (Hicks, 2003). In order to achieve successful integration of spirituality at work, major concerns and caveats of bringing spirituality at work should be adequately addressed. It is critical to proceed carefully in implementing spirituality programs and incorporating spirituality at work: as imposing spirituality and religion on employees would be counterproductive, alienating, and disastrous for some people. The following suggestions can be used by practitioners to address the caveats and potential dangers of bringing in spirituality into the workplace:

Accommodation of spiritual requests

Although organizations may not have any spiritual orientation, still managers should try to accommodate and encourage spiritual requests from its employees, as suggested by Cash and Gray (2000). Organizations should encourage their employees to feel free to express their own spiritual beliefs (see Krishnakumar and Neck's 2002 ''spiritual freedom model'' for details). Moreover, managers should accommodate their spiritual requests of its employees irrespective of their different spiritual beliefs (Cavanagh, 1999). This means that as long as the spiritual requests of some employees do not limit the freedoms of others, managers should respond to them (Cavanagh, 1999).

Respect for diversity

In the post-September 11 era, the debates over religious conflict and tolerance have become global (Hicks, 2003). Moreover, workplaces of today are more diverse and multicultural than ever before. Therefore, it has become crucial to acknowledge diversity in the workplace and absolutely respect individual differences (Krishnakumar and Neck,

2002). Since spirituality is a highly individual and idiosyncratic experience, it is necessary that spirituality practices be customized based on the principle of respecting and valuing individual's unique inner landscape, values, and perspective (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002). Promoting "one right path" or favoring a specific spiritual or religious framework will not work in these diverse work environments (Hicks, 2003). A culture of respect for diversity of beliefs and faiths should be cultivated in the workplace by enforcing codes of conduct as well as instilling values of tolerance and compassion (Kouzes and Posner, 1995; Milliman et al., 1999, 2003). Hicks (2003) offers a model of "respectful pluralism" for addressing conflicts arising from religious and spiritual differences at work. Hicks (2003) asserts that leaders should strive for creating a respectful and tolerant environment where employees can freely express their own beliefs and thoughts on spirituality.

Openness and freedom of expression

Spirituality practices and policies should put openness and respect for diversity at the center of their focus (Thompson, 2000). Employees should be able speak openly and express their inner feelings, values, and spirituality, regardless of fear, alienation, or exclusion (Milliman et al., 2003; Thompson, 2000). Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) developed an individual level model of spiritual enrichment called "the spiritual freedom model." This model embodies the implementation of "spiritual freedom" that forms common good from diverse origins and spiritual orientations (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002). It is important to mention that the organization does not establish or enforce any particular spiritual principle common to all its employees. Spiritual enrichment of the workplace is supported and ensured by the free and open expression of intuition, creativity, honesty, authenticity, trust, and personal fulfillment in a positive atmosphere (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002).

Acknowledgment of employees as whole persons

It is important to acknowledge and know a person's emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs, values, priorities and preferences. HR and OD professionals stress the importance of engaging whole persons at work (Hall and Mirvis, 1996; Kahn 1992), with all their minds, hearts, spirits, and souls. It is important to acknowledge people as spiritual beings, and take into account of people's spiritual lives and the value and richness of their collective potential (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). As Leigh (1997) states, workplace spirituality starts with the acknowledgment that employees do not bring only their bodies and minds to work, but also their hearts, souls, creativity, talents, and unique spirits.

At a time when organizations are faced with more complexities, competition, and change than at any other time in history, the need for spirituality is a recurring theme in corporations and businesses (Karakas, 2006). In the twenty-first century, organizations need to incorporate a set of humanistic and spiritual values into workplaces to enable human hearts, spirits, and souls to grow and flourish. Employees and managers increasingly need to reflect on the ways of incorporating spirituality, wisdom, reflection, inspiration, creativity, and compassion into work. I humbly hope that this literature review can contribute to a debate on spirituality at work and provide insights on the application and incorporation of spirituality in work settings.

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