

Leadership Role in Instilling Workplace Spirituality in Organizations

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Abstract

Leaders are the role model of an organization and its members align to the vision of their leaders. Hence leaders have to be extra cautious in articulating their vision, exhibiting behaviors and ultimately leading their followers. A leader, engaged in self-interest can merely think of social benefits; their investment in knowledge and skill would be to meet economic goals only. Leader must, therefore, go beyond matters of economic importance and must engage in self-interest transcendence at workplace. Some workplaces could be less productive only because people cannot find a way to breathe their spirituality into work. But when spiritual people join workplaces that fit their expectations they will not only support their colleagues but will seek quality and instill creativity. Since leaders play a vital role in facilitating spiritual culture in workplaces, this conceptual paper is an attempt to understand patterns of behaviors exhibited aligning to the core spiritual values such as benevolence, generativity, humanism, integrity, justice, mutuality, receptivity, respect, responsibility, trust exhibited by a leader in three different roles as a selector, inductor and developer in an organization. I propose a model for the behaviors justifying each spiritual value in three different roles.

Keywords : *Workplace Spirituality, Leadership Role in WS, Core Spiritual Values.*

Introduction

'What' is workplace spirituality (WS) and 'Why' spirituality is needed in workplaces?

Spirituality evolves from the word *Spirit*, which originates from the Latin word *Spiritus* meaning *breath*. *Spirit* is defined as 'the vital principle or animating force traditionally believed to be within living beings' (Anderson, 2000). Approximately two decades ago, spirituality in the workplaces have been introduced in American corporations or largely western context (Duchon & Plowman, 2005).but in eastern philosophy, spiritual values at workplace have been emphasized since time immemorial. Philosophies of Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, encourages spiritual practices such as meditation and emphasizes values on compassion and purposeful life, loyalty

to one's group, finding spiritual center in any activity, renunciation of the fruit and many more (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).It becomes imperative to state that WS is not an attempt to make organization religious centric. My discussion is non religious and is devoid from making people accept belief or practice any religious ceremonies with in organization.Religion is a narrower subset of spirituality and both should not be treated equally.

In the *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance* (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003), there are number of contributing authors who offers varied definition of WS , but components of *inner life, meaningful work and community* are mostly drawn from the definition developed by Ashmos & Duchon, in their paper '*Spirituality at work: A*

conceptualization and measure' (Duchon & Plowman, 2005). The notion of inner life simply begins acknowledging the fact that workers have both inner and outer life and nourishing the inner life actually polishes the outer. The nourishment of inner self is important because employees bring their entire self i.e. body, mind and spirit to work. Nourishment of inner self leads to greater engagement and employee loyalty in workplace. The expression spirituality at work also requires employees to be involved in work that gives them greater meaning in their lives and a sense of purpose. Meaningful work actually nourishes their inner self (Milliman et al., 2003). Sense of community enhances when employees are connected with each other in the team and they work together to achieve common organizational goals (Milliman et al., 2003).

Although spirituality is an individual phenomenon, but spirituality in the workplace is generally discussed in terms of organizational attributes such as corporate values (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). At an organization level, it refers to the activities of an organization designed to further individual spirituality and organize self around spiritual goals. Though there are several definitions of WS but in this paper I will consider the definition of Giacalone & Jurkiewicz. The reason being this paper discusses on the framework of values which will be the base of further discussion on leadership behavior aligning those values. Giacalone & Jurkiewicz (2003) defines WS as “a framework of organizational values, evidenced in a culture that promotes employee experience of transcendence through the work process facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feeling of connectedness and joy.” Thus this definition tells us that WS is a composition of organization values which forms the core of organization culture, where these values lead to self-transcendence, interconnectedness which ultimately leads to

greater meaning in life and promotes absolute happiness.

To summarize, spirituality at work is imperative due to reasons being:

- It nourishes inner self and brings sense of purpose
- Interconnectedness with oneself and others
- Leads to self-interests transcendence, thus going beyond achieving economic goal

Role of leadership in instilling workplace spirituality

WS is placed on a larger organization behavior (OB) context when leadership is linked with it. (Pawar, 2009) In the context of leadership style, Pawar refers to transformational leadership. It is due to the fact that under transformational leaders people experience self-interest transcendence to its fullest potential. Transformational leadership, which was introduced by Bass in OB (Bass, 1985), contains various aspects of WS values for e.g. self-interest transcendence is contained in many ways in transformational leadership (Pawar, 2009) which means, transformational leaders can help us to realize WS values in an organization by getting us to transcend from our own self-interest for the greater good of the team, organization and largely for the society. Also transformational leaders raises awareness about issues of consequences, inspires loyalty to the organization, has a sense of mission and overall purpose (Pawar, 2009). In later section on *values*, we will see these behaviors are aligned with WS value framework. The intent of this paper is not to examine or identify which leadership style is best for instilling WS values in organization, however from the literature, there have been several references given to this specific form of leadership style associated with WS.

This conceptual paper is divided into four sections

Leader Role-Value Model

Table 1: Leader Role-Value Model

Leadership role as a				
		Selector	Oriantor	Developer
Workplace Spirituality Values (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004)	Benevolence	Leaders should rationalize the talent of the candidate in order to find meaning and purpose at work which in turn will promote happiness and well being in organization.	Should cordially welcome new employees, treat employees as an indispensable asset of the organization.	Leader must generously share knowledge that are not limited to organization but something beyond that motivates, inspires, nurtures employee, giving them sense of satisfaction
	Generativity	To ensure skills and competencies for which a candidate is hired should meet the strategic goals of an organization, not merely immediate ones	Policies, procedures to be explained in detail; questions or clarifications to be addressed with utmost care and concern.	Every skill taught, every knowledge imparted should be viewed from the lens of the strategic attainment of organizational goals which in turn benefits the society.
	Humanism	In an interview process, leader must genuinely respond to concerns, empathetically listen and constantly encourage participants	A leader must well articulate the organizational legacy to show its humble growth and how does it contribute to the greater goodness.	Arrogant, self pride leader may attempt to develop employees at an artificial level but for values to be realized in its true potential, he must provide opportunity for individual growth.
	Integrity	During selection, leader must not try to conceal information about job role /organization, be absolutely honest and transparent	Leader needs to communicate on 'Zero tolerance attitude' towards non adherence to the code of business conduct.	Employee development program must be conducted with sincerity and honesty. In the process, leader must not try to self satisfy his own goal
	Justice	Impartiality in the selection process, refrain from any kind of biases in any form on basis of caste, creed, religion, ethnicity and other forms of discrimination	Policy implication must be impartial; leaders must give fair treatment to all, irrespective of their position or designation.	Must give equal opportunities to employees to go through periodic development processes, must not hold anyone back in order to meet operational commitments. To meet exigencies, back up resources to be identified in advance.
	Mutuality	Candidates must not be assessed only on the basis of skills and knowledge but also how much 'willing' the person is to work with other teams mutually	Leaders from each specific unit should not limit to their departmental goals only. They should help in understanding how these goals align with overall organizational goal.	Training and employee development should expand beyond department level; organizational level initiatives must also be taken.

Workplace Spirituality Values (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004)	Receptivity	Leader must be willing to let participants express fully so that they can be as creative as possible.	No orientation is perfect; leaders should be open to hear individual suggestions and feedback for improvement.	Knowledge sharing and development is a two way process where leaders should be open to learn from their subordinates
	Respect	Despite participant's background or position, leader should regard subordinates for the fact of being interacting with a human.	Leader must treat, respect everyone equally irrespective of employee's socio-cultural background, designation.	Only when a leader treats employee right, can development take place. Leader exerting coercion can see temporary change in which development is a far fetched goal
	Responsibility	A complete ownership of the participant selection should be taken by a leader. His failure to perform or encounter any ethical issues, will question the leader's capability.	Leader needs to take complete ownership that employees are fully integrated to organization's culture, vision, goals and any lapse might lead to ethical considerations.	Being able to focus on developmental process irrespective of mitigating challenges in terms of cost, budget, time or human etc.
	Trust	Leader must be able to maintain confidentiality of the sensitive information of the organization; at the same time protect any personal information shared by the participant.	Leaders must win the confidence of their employees so that they can not only report any ethical concerns but also share their own personal struggles and challenges	Leader must deliver what has been promised. In case, he encounters a slow learner; he must have the patience to pace through the development process.

(Source: Author's own)

Explaining the WS Values

Benevolence is displayed when leaders are affectionate, warm towards their stakeholders and promotes happiness, prosperity among them. Further, Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004) explains *generativity* when someone focuses on the long term objectives and is concerned for the consequences of their action. Value of *humanism* is inculcated when the person has dignity for themselves at the same time values all human beings for their essential worth for the betterment of an organization. Another essential value of the organization which is linked to ethical consideration is *integrity* which is an absolute uncompromising obedience to the code of conduct. Along with integrity is *justice* which is none other than fair treatment of all employees irrespective of their race, socio cultural back ground, designation

etc. Integrity and justice leads to *mutuality* in which all employees, although they are fragmented into various business units are actually interconnected to achieve organizational goals. But the goals cannot be realized, improvised unless employees along with their leaders are open to feedback for which the value of *receptivity* becomes crucial. In order to strive for something together, it becomes absolutely essential to show regards for each other. Through *respect*, one values other individual and honour their dignity. Along with respect, we have other two essential values i.e responsibility and trust. *Responsibility* essentially means taking absolute ownership of their action, strive independently to achieve goal irrespective of obstacles. *Trust* is when employees develop firm belief in the truth of an organization. In the next section, I have discussed each role of leaders in instilling these values:

Role Justification and Expected Behavior for Each Value While Performing the Roles as a Selector, Orienter and Developer

Roles of a leader has been split into three important phases in the context of employee's organizational tenure i.e. *selection, orientation and employee development*. Selection is a process by which leaders in the organization wisely choose from the pool of short listed candidates who are likely to succeed in the role.(Lievens& Chapman, 2010) It is considered to be the most important phase because inappropriate selection leads to undesirable costs to the organization (Lievens & Chapman 2010). After an employee gets selected for a role, the process of organizational integration begins, which is also known as 'employee orientation'. Lieven & Chapman Berkley's human resources manual defines it as part of a long-term investment in a new employee. It is an initial process that provides easy access to basic information, programs and services, gives clarification and allows new employees to take an active role in their organization. On the other hand, employee development is an ongoing activity, unlike selection and orientation which is fixed for a certain time period. It is an expansive form which focuses on employee growth and future performances.

Leader's interventions in all the above mentioned phases are vital. A leader can effectively perform the roles by demonstrating certain workplace spirituality values. The value model, on which the behaviors are built upon are referred from the work of Jurkiewicz, and Giacalone (2004), and this is not an exhaustive list. To appreciate and explore further workplace spirituality values is beyond the scope of this paper. While these values are not an exhaustive list, there is a future scope of exploring more values related to spirituality at workplace.

As a selector

Selection is the core area in human resource management, and leader's intervention makes a huge impact, after all, they are the ones who take final call with regards to selection or rejection (Furusawa & Brewster, 2016). Prospective candidate gets a feel about the organization by interacting with the leader, not that he can decipher everything. They assume values exhibited by a leader are what organizational values are.

During selection process, it becomes very important for a leader to see if he is not hiring someone, over qualified or under qualified for the specific job role. Leader must make sound judgment to ensure he is hiring the right person for the right job role to ensure that his skills must never go underutilized. For example- if the person is over qualified for the job, the leader must be candid enough to say, by this the leader will not only promote happiness, prosperity of the stakeholders but also he cankeep them motivated in the longrun, this attributes to the benevolence value of workplace spirituality. Also in order to promote generativity, leader must ensure skills and competencies for which a candidate is hired, meets the strategic goals of an organization and not merely immediate ones. In order to instill the value of humanism, a leader must genuinely respond to concerns, empathetically listen and constantly encourage participants to be as creative as possible. A leader during his interaction with the participant must never try to mask information about organization/job role, which the participant is entitled to know. He should be absolutely honest and transparent to promote the value of integrity within the organization. In order to realize the workplace spirituality value of justice; a leader must refrain from any kind of biases in any form such as caste, creed, religion, ethnicity and other forms of discrimination while interviewing participant. A leader must also see how much

willing the person is to work with other teams mutually in order to achieve overall organizational goals. In order to exhibit the value of receptivity, leader needs to be flexible to an extent to let the participants express themselves fully and as creatively as possible. Mutual respect is key to any leader to flourish in the workplace. Despite participant's background or position, leader needs to have full regard for them due to the fact being he is interacting with a human. In order to instill the value of responsibility, a leader must take complete ownership of the participant whom he is selecting for a specific role. In case, he fails to perform on job or if he encounters any ethical concerns, the leader must take complete responsibility of his selection. A leader needs to proceed by keeping the end in mind. Final value that has been discussed here is the value of trust which a leader can instill by maintaining confidentiality of the sensitive information of the organization; at the same time protect any personal information shared by the participant.

An Orienter

'An orientation is the process of acquainting a new employee with existing situation or environment for the purpose of setting him or her on the right course to accomplish specific job responsibilities and to contribute to the organization's goals' (N. J. D., 1984) Leaders familiarizes new employee with the organization's mission, goals, its history, values and its policies. The employee's acquisition of the information is considered to be most vital and should not be delayed by any chance. It also becomes impetus to mention here that orientation is different from employee development in the sense that development is intended to provide specific skill and knowledge related to job performance and attaining to organizational goals which will be discussed in the next section. Now let's see how a leader fulfills his role as an orienter through workplace spirituality values.

During orientation, it is very natural for an employee to go through anxiety due to the unknown. He may have questions such as where is my office? Who are the people I will be working with? What exactly am I expected to do? In that situation, leader must demonstrate feelings of warmth welcome, kindness; and be as supportive as he can to generate the value of benevolence. Also, policies, procedures discussed during orientation must be explained in detail; at the same time questions, clarifications, if any, to be answered with utmost care and concern to promote generativity. In order to demonstrate the value of humanism, a leader must well articulate the legacy of the organization to show its humble growth and how does it contribute to the greater goodness. Another important workplace spirituality value which every organizational leader adheres to is the value of integrity. Leader needs to communicate to the employees on 'Zero tolerance attitude' towards non adherence to the code of business conduct and its consequences of non-adherence. A leader must instill the value of justice so that he gives fair treatment to all irrespective of position or designation. Policy implication must be impartial without biases. Employee integration process is the platform when employee gets an opportunity to meet and talk with all the leaders from different business units. During orientation, leaders from each specific unit must not remain stringent to their departmental goals only rather they should help in understanding how departmental goals align with the overall organizational goal. Leaders of all business units, though are diverse in nature, must align to the common organizational vision, mission and goal to realize the value of mutuality. One must understand that no orientation is perfect; leader must be open to hear individual suggestions, feedbacks to generate the value of receptivity. The last three workplace spirituality values are respect, responsibility and trust. During an employee orientation process, a leader besides acknowledging and respecting the individual

differences on the basis of their designation and other socio cultural background must take complete ownership to integrate employees fully to organization's culture, vision, goals. Lastly, leaders must win the confidence of their employees in order to create the 'comfort zone', so that employees can not only report any ethical concerns but also share their professional struggles anytime.

A Developer

Employee development and training is intended to provide specific knowledge and skills related to job performance. An organization gets its competitive advantage through employee development programs (Nadler 1970). The question that this section tries to answer is how a leader, performing the role of a developer instills workplace spirituality values in order to attain the competitive edge? In this role, demonstrating workplace spirituality value becomes necessity for a leader, not that spirituality values are less important in other roles. Reason being this role deals with employee motivation at its core, which is directly or indirectly related to organizational performance (Colquitt et al., 2000). In the longer run, performance of an organization impacts the overall performance of a society. Handful of demotivated employees not only pulls the overall organizational performance but also impacts the socio economic as well as mental health of the society

When it comes to sharing knowledge, a leader must be as generous as possible. He should not limit sharing knowledge on the organizational level, but something beyond which motivates, inspires, nurtures employee, giving them sense of satisfaction in order to realize the value of benevolence. Generativity is when every skill taught, every knowledge imparted should be viewed from the lens of larger good. One must focus towards strategic attainment of organizational goals in order to meet overall

purpose and meaningfulness at work. Often an arrogant, self-pride leader may attempt to develop their employees at superficial level but for the humanistic values to realize, a leader must provide opportunity to individuals to ask relevant questions which are important for their self-growth. Also a leader must develop with sincerity and honesty. In the process, leader must not try to self-satisfy his own goal in order to instill the value of integrity. Often it is seen that employees get demotivated when equal opportunities for development is not given to them. Leaders must note that employees are human beings and for them to grow, intellectual and cognitive stimulation becomes essential. Therefore, leaders must give equal opportunities to all employees to go through their periodic development processes, must not hold them back to meet operational commitments. prior planning for contingent resources should be there to meet operational exigencies. One must note that knowledge sharing and development is a two way process where leaders must be open to learn from their subordinate, receive feedback and vice versa, thus ensuring the leadership value of receptivity. Learning can be realized only when leader treats their employees right. A leader exerting coercion can only see temporary change in which development is a farfetched goal. I say; respect becomes an essential value to begin learning and development. A leader instills the value of responsibility when he is able to focus on developmental process irrespective of mitigating challenges in terms of cost, budget, time and any human resource challenges. Last but not the least is trust. A leader must always deliver what has been promised. Employee must confidently be able to depend on his teachings and implement the same on both his professional and personal life.

Conclusion

De Pree (1989) commented on the role of leadership in organization: "Leader's don't inflict

pain; they bear pain.”These are the words that need to be kept in mind when leaders perform the three different roles as a selector, orienter and a developer. Leaders in the organization that live by the spiritual values, have put their people first which led to high organizational commitment and increase in performance. (Pfeffer, 2001).The values that are discussed here are not an exhaustive list. There is a future scope of study to explore more WS values which aligns to organization. The spiritual values demonstrated will not only make the organization an ethical place but also more inclusive in terms of interconnectedness. Employees of spirit friendly organization seem to align more strongly with their leader's views as leaders in the spirit friendly organizations do something different that enables a spirit-friendly workplace.

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