

Workplace Spirituality



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Introduction



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What is workplace spirituality?

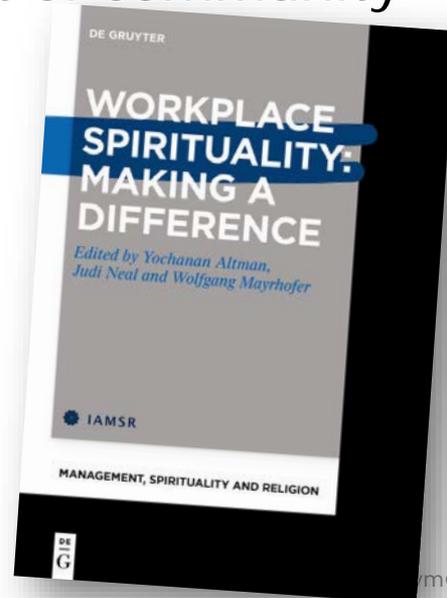


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- “[T]he recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community” (Ashmosh and Duchon, 2003: 13)
- Three pillars
 - inner life
 - meaningful work
 - community



A brief history of workplace spirituality



Laying the groundwork



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Abraham H. Maslow

- father of humanistic psychology, tremendous influence on positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship
- Towards a Psychology of Being (1962); Religions, Values and Peak-Experiences (1970)

Robert Greenleaf

- Director of Management Research at AT&T
- instigator of the Servant Leadership movement dating back to the 1970
- His concept of servant leadership was inspired by Herman Hesse's book Journey to the East (1956) that reminded Greenleaf of the role of prophecy in Christianity
- Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership.



Establishing workplace spirituality in academia



- Ian Mitroff et al.
 - 1994 article in Academy of Management Executive
 - recommending that corporations create a “World Service/Spiritual Center” to help them face global challenges in a turbulent world
 - both Mitroff and AME highly respected
- business media beginning to pay attention in the mid-1990s, e.g. Business Week’s “Companies hit the road less travelled: Can spirituality enlighten the bottom line?”
- Primary focus of publications during the nineties
 - descriptions of organizational practices
 - attempts to define workplace spirituality
 - theory development
- A major criticism of scholarly work during this period: lack of empirical research, particularly quantitative research

Advancing workplace spirituality in academia



- providing the basis for quantitative research by scale development
 - Spirituality Assessment Scale (Beazley, 1997)
 - Spirituality at Work Survey (SAWS, Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004)
- symposium on workplace spirituality organized by Lee Robbins in 1997, sponsored by the MED (management, education, and development) Division of the Academy of Management.
- interest group status in the Academy in 2000, and the first sessions of the MSR group were conducted in 2001
- founding of
 - Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion (JMSR) in 2004
 - International Association of Management, Spirituality and Religion (IAMSRL) in 2010 (inaugural and 10th anniversary conference at WU Vienna)



The past decade



Major developments



MATURING OF THE
FIELD OF WORKPLACE
SPIRITUALITY: E.G.
FULL DIVISION STATUS
IN THE AOM



LEVELS OF
ANALYSIS: FROM
'MICRO' TO
'MACRO'



RELIGIOUS
DISCRIMINATION
LAWSUITS: FEAR
OF BEING
VIEWED AS
BIASED



EVOLUTION OF
LANGUAGE: FEAR OF
THE S-WORD AND
WORKAROUNDS, E.G.,
MINDFULNESS



SCHOLAR-
PRACTITIONER
LINKS



IMPACT: MAKING
A DIFFERENCE

Future trends



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Major aspects



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DEVELOPING
GLOBAL
CONSCIOUSNESS



CONFRONTING
DARK
SPIRITUALITIES



DEALING WITH
NEW
TECHNOLOGIES

Developing global consciousness



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Vaclav Havel (address to U.S. Congress, 22 Feb 1990): *"Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and the catastrophe toward which this world is headed – be it ecological, social, demographic, or a general breakdown of civilization will be unavoidable."*

Global consciousness
as

- individual stage of development
- aspect of leadership development
- collective phenomenon

Workplace spirituality
can offer, e.g.,

- increasing work on individual, group, and organizational level ('more of the same')
- Level change
- Past focus on phenomena at individual, group, and organizational level
- now beginning to explore interconnections at the global level, arguably from a systems dynamic perspective



Dark spiritualities



Characteristics

deep seated prejudices
and widely accepted
negative stereotypes
implicitly shared by
many

woven into societies'
cultural fabric since a
long time

acted upon in our day-
to-day behavior, often
subconsciously and
sometimes without
malicious intent



Examples

Antisemitism
Racial stereotypes



Workplace spirituality can offer, e.g.,

research to gain
deeper insight into
dimensions of the
phenomenon and
effects

reminders that while
people are different,
they are also of equal
value

Dealing with new technologies



Technology-related phenomena affecting the future of workplace spirituality



Decoupling of space and performance



Real-time self- and other-monitoring



Optimizing oneself and others



Emergent development #1: Increasing emphasis on the body



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- Body/the corporeal as constitutive element of workplace spirituality
- Space/time decoupling with regard to work as new phenomenon
- Constant monitoring
- Issues arising
 - totalitarian approach to leading others, disguised by benevolent care
 - de-bodying, i.e., reduction of three-dimensional, five/six-senses being to non-material rectangular zoom-window beings
- Workplace spirituality can offer, e.g.,
 - mindfulness etc.
 - various forms of (digital) fasting and detox



Emergent development #2: Supporting the here-and-now beyond functionalization



- Increasing economic and societal pressure to
 - optimize outcome
 - justify use of resources
- Negative effects of such a regime
 - being a cog-in-the-wheel only
 - feelings of exploitation
- Workplace spirituality can offer, e.g.,
 - re-emphasis of wo/man as holistic being
 - becoming (again more) aware of transcendence and, linked with this, purpose
 - joy and beauty as values in itself beyond contributions to outcome



Emergent development #3: Establish, defend and enlarge sacred spaces



- 'The sacred' as part of most spiritual traditions
- Setting the sacred aside from the ordinary of our daily lives
- New technologies pervading all aspects of our lives
- Workplace spirituality's offers: e.g.,
 - Silent rooms
 - prayer breaks
 - meditation zones
 - inner and outer pilgrimages



Wrap-up



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- Important part of private and professional life
- Potential contributions to dealing with major global issues
- *„Ich kann freilich nicht sagen, ob es besser werden wird wenn es anders wird; aber so viel kann ich sagen, es muß anders werden, wenn es gut werden soll. (Of course, I can't say whether it will get better if it gets different; but I can say this much: it has to get different if it is to be good.)“* Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, Sudelbücher, K, 1793-96



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