

Spirituality, Religion and Managing Organizations

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*we are not born human,
we **become** human (Erasmus)*

- THE BIG QUESTIONS:

What is work?

What is the task of organization?

What is the task of leadership?

In lieu of a definition... ***Anna Karenina***

The greatest book of all times (J.Peder Zane 2007)

Anna

- wants to live (but dies)
- consumes
- loses faith

taker

Levin

contemplates death
(and lives)
generates
gains faith

giver

Anna Karenina (Tolstoy, 1873-7)

Translation: Constance Garrett (1901)

To reap and bind and cart off the rye and oats; to mow the meadows, turn over the fallows, thresh the seed and sow the winter corn - all this seems so simple and ordinary; but to succeed in getting through it all everyone in the village, from the old man to the young child, must toil incessantly for three or four weeks ... living on kvass, onions, and black bread, threshing and carrying the sheaves at night, and not giving more than two or three hours in the twenty-four to sleep. (Part 8, Ch. 11: 760)

The work done was exceptionally much for 42 men. They had cut the whole of the big meadow, which had, in the years of serf labour, taken 30 scythes two days to mow. (Part 3, Ch. 5: 252)

Anna Karenina cont.

Another swath, and yet another swath followed...Levin lost all sense of time, and could not have told whether it were late or early now. A change began to come over his work, which gave him immense satisfaction. In the midst of his toil there were moments during which he forgot what he was doing, and it all came easy to him, and at those same moments his swath was almost as smooth and well cut as Tit's. But as soon as he recollected what he was doing, and began trying to do better, he was at once conscious of all the difficulty of his task, and the swath was badly mown...and more and more often now came those moments of unconsciousness, when it was possible not to think of what one was doing. The scythe cut of itself. These were happy moments. (Part 3, Ch. 4-5, 252 - 6)

Anna Karenina cont.

All this day Levin...kept on thinking of one thing...and in everything he sought a relation to his questioning: 'What am I, then? And where am I? And why am I here?'... 'Why is all this being done?' he thought. 'Why am I standing here, making them work?

And I and millions of men, men who lived ages ago and men living now - peasants, the poor in spirit and the sages... - we are all agreed about this one thing: what we must live for and what is good... and that knowledge cannot be explained by reason - it is outside it, and has no causes, and can have no effects.

If goodness has causes, it is not goodness; if it has effects - a reward - it is not goodness either. So goodness is outside the chain of cause and effect. And yet I know it, and we all know it. What could be a greater miracle than that? (Part 8, Ch. 11-12, 761-4)

Tolstoy's

Features of a **living** successful organization

- community (togetherness/ relatedness) is the context;
- success is thrived for, but not as an end by itself, not for its own sake;
- achieved by hard work;
- goodness (love) is the motivator and end goal;
- One can make **sense** of this, but not reason.

‘Banana Time’ Donald F. Roy (1959)

How a dead organization feels & looks:

- “repetition of very simple operations over an extra-long workday, six days a week”
- in isolation from other employees in the factory “not even the sounds of work activity going on elsewhere...carried to this isolated work place”. Sporadic, infrequent contact with others, very little with management.
- “standing all day in one spot beside three old codgers in a dingy room looking out through barred windows at the bare walls of a brick warehouse, leg movements largely restricted to the shifting of body weight from one foot to the other, hand and arm movements confined, for the most part, to a simple repetitive sequence.”

‘Banana Time’ cont.

- **Questions: How to “fill the empty hours of meaningless work routine”?**
How to “keep from ‘going nuts’”?
- Answer: Group-designed intervals that interrupt the work flow. “There was coffee time, peach time, banana time, fish time, coke time, and, of course, lunch time. Other interruptions, which formed part of the series but were not verbally recognized as times, were window time, pickup time, and the staggered quitting times of Sammy and Ike.”

‘Banana Time’ cont.

“Banana time, followed peach time by approx. an hour. Sammy provided the refreshments, namely, one banana...Ike would gulp it down by himself after surreptitiously extracting it from Sammy’s lunch box...Each morning, after making the snatch, Ike would call out, “Banana time!” and proceed to down his prize while Sammy made futile protests and denunciations. George would join in with mild remonstrances, sometimes scolding Sammy for making so much fuss. The banana was one which Sammy brought for his own consumption at lunch time; he never did get to eat his banana, but kept bringing one for his lunch.”

Roy, D. F. (1959) “Banana Time” Job Satisfaction and Informal Interaction *Human Organization* 18: 158-168

Case study I: LEISUREPLANET a post-mortem

MAIN FEATURES:

- Dot.com company that existed for 8 years (1992-00)
- Dream of Pierre Kleinhans from Cape Town, a devotee of the Dutch Reform Church, to create “the world’s leading leisure travel e-commerce company”
- Managed to raise 70,000,000 US\$ from the likes of CNN, Yahoo!, Lycos and employ 200+ staff in three countries.
- Realizable assets at the time of bankruptcy:
0.5M US\$

Verkinderen, F. & Altman, Y. (2002) Leisureplanet.com – organization and HRM in the New Economy *Human Resource Planning* 25 (4), 19-29

LEISUREPLANET organizational culture

In the day-to-day this belief [in the CEO's dream] manifested itself as trust in individuals to go and make things happen. This was not a case of 'empowering' people; rather, there were huge vacuums, unplanned and unorganized, that were there to be filled. Almost everyone, at all levels, was entitled to do what they felt had to be done. There was hardly any control on the effort and resources spent, on the direction taken (as long as it seemed to move in the same general direction) and on the desired outputs. Consequently, a lot of people did what they wanted and what they liked, which made them happy and hard working employees, though not necessarily productive ones.

Case study: LEISUREPLANET Cont

- **Challenge** how to work towards a goal that cannot be concretized because it doesn't yet exist.
- **Answer** establish an organization propelled by a charismatic leader;
recruit members of the same faith (and other believers) from 25 countries;
young (median age – 28), with little or no experience;
uproot a large number of them;
create a 'fun' environment, make them feel special;
pay them a good salary + perks + stock options ---
- **And what do you get?**

Case Study II: Centre for Excellence in Leadership

MAIN FEATURES:

- 2002-2008
- Started as government funded partnership which quickly developed into a feud. Threatened with closure. CEO replaced.
- Turnaround by Lynne Sedgmore, 'practical mystic and multi-faith spiritual'
- Mission: become the market leader
- Performance overachieved by a factor of 5

CEL organizational culture

- Described as: responsive, quick, client focused, risk taking, refreshing, positive, passionate, enthusiastic, challenging, **different**.
- No blame culture. Mistakes tolerated.
- Distributed leadership; 'high-delegation, high-trust'
- 'One big team' but also 'silo mentality'

PRINCIPLES OF A SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATION

- COMMUNITY
 - friendship
- TRANSPERSONAL/ TRANSCEDENCE
- BELIEF
- LEADERSHIP
 - Servant leadership

PROCESSES IN A SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATION

- HELIOGRAPHIC EFFECT
- LOVE & COMPASSION
- EMBRACING DIVERSITY
- PLAY (RE-CREATION)

And what about profits?

Profitability is a by-product...

based on **belief** that it is realizable...

accepting the possibility of failure...

embracing the essential

unpredictability, uncertainty &

uncontrollability of life...

as a leap of faith.