



Spirit in Work

Issue 9 July 2007

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- John Renesch

+ *modern*

Leading + Managing + Ministering

Spirit in Work

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Editorial

I am gratified by the readers' comments I have received concerning the new format of this journal. It seems that my fears that something produced just on my home PC would appear sub-standard were unfounded!

It gives me special pleasure to include as our main article this time John Renesch's piece on *The Conscious Organization*. John was one of people I met and interviewed when I visited the San Francisco Bay Area of California in Autumn 2000 as part of my sabbatical study of the Spirit at Work Movement. I have fond memories of the meal I and my wife shared with John in Sinbad's restaurant on San Francisco's Eastern waterfront. John has for many years been a doyen of the Spirit at Work movement and it is a real privilege to reproduce his article.

I have been a fan of David Tacey since reading his excellent 'The Spirituality Revolution'. My article *Characteristics of the New Spirituality* based on that book aims to capture the flavour of the New Spirituality, of which the SaW movement is a subset.

We round off this issue with a further contribution from Peter Heslam, entitled *The Emerging Wisdom-based Economy* – a challengingly positive perspective on current business philosophy and practice and a welcome antidote to the more cynical representations of modern organizational life that one more commonly gleans from the media.

On submitting material to Spirit in Work

The editor welcomes contributions from our readers, including items for review, news items, notices of events or courses, and articles short or more substantial. Generally the upper limit for length of article is 1,500 words. The editor reserves the right to edit submitted material to fit limited space. Please submit contributions to David Welbourn, by e-mail to welbourn@ntlworld.com or by post to 3 Windgates, Merrow Park, Guildford, Surrey UK GU4 7DJ.

The Conscious Organization Workplace for the Self-Actualized

by John Renesch



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs declares self-actualization is a state sought by all human beings once we have satisfied the more basic needs of survival, sexual gratification and belonging. As we humans continue to evolve toward self-actualization there will be a concurrent need for our organizations to follow suit.

In the late 1980s, British futurist Peter Russell pointed out the coming Age of Consciousness - an era when reaching our full potentiality as human beings is much more of the focus of our collective energies than survival, conflict and consumption. As this becomes more widely recognized and people continue on their individual paths toward self-actualization, the enterprises, institutions and companies where they come together to produce results will be changing dramatically. If they don't, the fate of these organizations is simple: they will die because people who are becoming self-actualized won't want to work in them.

The Conscious Organization is not an end state where every worker has been "certified" self-actualized or enlightened, where each and every element of the company, or division, bureau, agency or institution is spotlessly cleaned of any residual unconsciousness. The Conscious Organization is one which is continually examining itself, committed to becoming as self-aware and responsible as it can at any given time in its life. It has very low tolerance for unconsciousness. It possesses the collective will to be vigilant about unresolved issues that might fester under the surface of awareness or otherwise go unnoticed like they might in most organizations today. Most of our organizations, including our corporations, endure some degree of bureaucracy where the focus is more on the internal pathologies of their workers and less on the needs of their customers. Most organizations have developed a tolerance for certain shadows or dark behaviors that detract from them being as effective as enterprises and vital as workplaces. They've become resigned to this less-than-fully-functional state as the best they can do under the circumstances, a condition that gives rise to mediocrity and low morale.

Conscious Organizations, or anyone involved with them, will more quickly recognize an unwanted quality, procedure, practice or other element of its culture because it has built-in vigilance for that which is not conscious. This vigilance is explicitly part of its culture. Once recognized, a rallying cry goes out and the organization's resources are marshaled toward "cleaning up" that area and making it more conscious. This could be compared to how the human body's immune system responds to any infection or toxic agent.

So what do I mean by "conscious" in this context? Becoming conscious is becoming aware of something then acting responsibly in light of the new awareness. It is not synonymous with awareness alone; it involves both. To paraphrase a Japanese proverb,

awareness without action is a waste of time. Knowing something is wrong or can be improved upon without doing anything about it can also be painful.

Becoming Aware

Becoming aware involves one's state of mind. It invites self-exploration and self-examination. It means waking up to all that is going on around you, not just the matters that have your regular attention but everything in your environment. It means not only being aware of the immediate task but the larger purpose it serves, the effects it has on the organization and the world, i.e., the larger context. It means having some sense of the meaning for what you are doing and how it contributes to the larger universe.

Gaining higher levels of awareness is largely a personal undertaking but corporate professional development programs have added resources for this kind of work in recent years. Many corporate leaders have committed themselves to a path of perpetual development and lifetime learning as a means of sustaining self-examination in pursuit of self-actualization.

A high state of awareness includes the absence of denial of any kind. It means "having your lights on" at all times and remaining fully awake while you are at work. This awareness allows you to notice things that do not best serve the overall functionality and effectiveness of the organization. These things can include collusions of various kinds where someone is allowed to get by with some behavior that diminishes from the organization's purpose or goes against its best interests in any way. Condoning these behaviors is similar to how codependents enable their families in remaining dysfunctional. These tolerated behaviors could include cheating, dishonesty of any kind, gossip, whining and complaining about something but doing nothing to change it, tolerating incompetence and tardiness, discrimination or a myriad of other behaviors.

These collusions can also include attitudes that divide people, such as racism, sexism, rankism or any other ism's that separate people and diffuse the output of human endeavor. They can also include attitudes within the corporate culture that place the internal needs and wants of management and employees ahead of the customers' needs which fosters deeper bureaucracy and lower efficacy.

Avoidance or denial of anything "dark" or "bad" eliminates any chance of becoming aware – individually or organizationally. Tendencies for this collective avoidance is prevalent in many of today's corporations.

Getting Into Action

Once awareness about any dysfunction is present it's time to *do* something - to begin correcting. It's time to responsibly act.

What does "responsibly act" mean? It means engaging in a process of discovery and responding as if you've seen something for the very first time. Response is a root of "responsibility" or the ability to respond. Reacting prematurely, like rushing to action as

soon as the “bad” behavior is discovered, is often not really responsible. Responsibility includes thought, choice, comparison to one’s values, and gaining consensus among the parties. Being “able to respond” with full awareness is not accomplished by merely reacting to an undesired condition.

Examples of less-responsible reactions might include the immediate firing of a salesperson when it is learned that he or she misinformed a potential customer, learning a “lie” had been told, or hiring a diversity consultant as soon as some prejudice is discovered, or issuing a righteously indignant memo to all staff that the “bad” behavior “will not be tolerated.”

These reactions may be coming from a place of protecting an image – either an individual’s or the organization’s. Take time to ask: Where does this unwanted behavior have its roots? What about the organization’s culture yielded this result?

How about using the situation to learn and grow, not only for the people involved, but for the organization? In other words, what about the corporate culture, the larger context, gave rise to the unwanted situation?

New Measures of Performance

Consciousness does not only play a part in becoming aware of "problems;" it can also create new awareness about matters previously off the routine "radar screen." Making things better often involves looking at entirely new topics, things that can improve the organizational culture, reputation, product performance and customer service, not just "fix" the problems.

For instance, a Conscious Organization might re-examine why it exists, why it offers its product or service, what its core values and priorities are. This can be difficult work since we all tend to become emotionally attached to things when they are close to our hearts or minds or wallets.

An organization which holds honesty (both factual and emotional honesty) and integrity high on its list of core ideals might want to look beyond the mere “misinformation” given by the salesperson in the earlier example and search for where and how this happened. They might question whether or not it was an isolated incident or a symptom of a larger more insidious “virus” in the core body of the company.

Once the process of becoming more conscious has begun and intentional action has been implemented, the organization’s values and core ideologies need to be re-examined in light of this new consciousness. These core ideals might change constantly as the organization continues to become more and more conscious. Since people and organizations can only strive for total consciousness, the process of becoming more and more conscious is integrated into the "way of life" for the organization; this is part of what a Conscious Organization is - a group of people who are constantly examining their own individual and their collective consciousness.

I know from personal experience that a commitment to becoming conscious on a personal level is a lifelong adventure. It means constant vigilance, impeccable discernment, and an ongoing willingness to continuously examine one's life, one's values, and one's relationship to oneself, others, and the world. It allows for falling short of these ideals from time to time; this is part of being human after all. Honest attempts to keep these shortfalls to a minimum, however, makes a sound underpinning for a Conscious Organizational culture.

Since an organization is a collection of individuals who have come together for some common purpose, a natural conclusion would be that an organizational commitment to being conscious requires the same continuous exploration and re-examination that is needed for personal consciousness. A core ideal of a company wishing to be a Conscious Organization needs to include this commitment to continuous self-examination throughout its life.

Since the Conscious Organization is the opposite of a dysfunctional one, its commitment to explore any "shadows" that come to light is totally contrary to the less-healthy company which often serves as a refuge for co-dependent behaviors, underperformers and marginally competent people. As many mental health professionals will tell you, a primary co-dependent behavior is keeping secrets and avoiding whistle-blowing on any matters that the "conspiracy" wants to hide.

One way to cure a dysfunctional system – be it a family or an organization – is an intervention by people who will no longer buy into the "conspiracy of silence" or who have felt enough pain and can't stand it anymore. Such interventions are usually aimed at a person or a number of people within the group. They often resemble a sort of tough-love "ambush" since the targets for the intervention would probably avoid it if they were aware of what was planned.

People in a Conscious Organization culture are open to learning about any unwanted patterns and breaking through any barriers they may have. Similar to when a person committed to path of self-actualization invites friends to provide constructive feedback that will allow him or her to grow, the culture includes this permission, both explicitly and implicitly. Having a trusting and healthy relationship with co-workers and the organization's mission is of paramount importance, far more important than an individual's need to maintain their image, the illusion of control, or remain in denial about something that violates their core values.

In stark contrast to ambush-like interventions which may happen in extremely dysfunctional organizations, people in Conscious Organizations welcome someone revealing any behavior, policies or practices which do not serve the group's greater consciousness and functionality.

The Conscious Organization is one where the lights are always ready to shine wherever darkness is found. It is a fit for people who are striving to be more conscious themselves and are seeking work environments which support and stimulate their individual growth

as conscious beings. Everybody in the Conscious Organization knows the discovery process and the enlightenment that accompanies it is valuable and takes responsibility for calling attention to it.

The result is an organization that invites and welcomes competence, interdependence, openness, honesty, team play, ethical behavior, self-examination, functionality, and peak performance. People attracted to work in such an organization will be those who are interested in or already committed to self-actualization. Imagine the power and effectiveness a workforce like this can offer the world!

John Renesch is a San Francisco businessman-turned-futurist. He has published a dozen books including his latest, [Getting to the Better Future: A Matter of Conscious Choosing](#). He is a founding board member of The Center for Spirit at Work and helped launch the International Spirit at Work Awards in 2002. He is also an international keynote speaker. He's received much praise as a business/social seer: Warren Bennis, best-selling author of leadership books, calls John "a wise elder who shines with wisdom;" Stanford School of Business Professor Emeritus Michael Ray calls him "a beacon lighting the way to a new paradigm;" The Futurist magazine calls him a "business visionary." For more information about Renesch's work and the services offers visit www.Renesch.com . To contact him by email: John@Renesch.com ; or call 415-437-6974.

Characteristics of the New Spirituality

Compiled by David Welbourn

(from David Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution*)

A few years ago I read David Tacey's book, *The Spirituality Revolution*, which explores current popular spirituality mainly from the perspective of those in Higher Education. As I studied Tacey's findings I was struck how similar in type was the spirituality being espoused by young people in universities to that found in the world of business. I reached this conclusion after going through David Tacey's book and noting all the statements he made – or recorded from his students – about contemporary spirituality (or 'new spirituality' as it is widely called). For convenience I subsequently classified Tacey's statements under various generic headings. I think it will be of interest to readers of this journal for me simply to pass on this information in the form described. So here goes:

The New Spirituality is...

... spontaneous, democratic, from below, a quest for human authenticity and wholeness

- is a spontaneous movement in society
- is a democratic revolution from below, a "people's" revolution
- is a personal quest for meaning

- is not organised by any institution
- is run by people's own inner conscience, from insights gained in self-reflection, reading and meditation, talks with friends or spiritual counsellors
- is intensely personal without being private
- emphasises personal response
- entails people seeing themselves as having gradually to piece together the puzzle of their lives vis-a-vis sacred reality
- represents a new style of consciousness
- is a quest for human authenticity, body-mind integration and psychological health

... arises outside religious structures, is often differentiated from religion, or regarded as more universal than any particular religion

- is not based on membership
- arises outside traditional religious structures
- is by-passing the churches who seem unable to dialogue with it
- is about individuals taking authority into their own hands, refusing to be told what to think and believe
- is a search for universal spiritual wisdom of a mystical kind that by-passes the rivalries of dogmatic belief
- is existential rather than creedal
- is often defined in terms of its distinctiveness from religion
- believes the sacred is greater and more mysterious than any one revelation or religious manifestation
- stands in contrast with religion, in that it is based on experience rather than on scripture, tradition, history, liturgy and worship
- is psychological, creation-based and grounded in the imagination
- brings together people who, in the areas of ethics, religion and philosophy, are more concerned to explore what brings them together than what leads to division and discord
- is non-dogmatic
- is a search for universal spiritual wisdom that by-passes the rivalries of dogmatic belief
- typically makes the following criticisms of religion, seeing it as:
 - Patriarchal and excluding the feminine
 - Based on a pre-modern cosmology
 - Believing in an external, interventionist God
 - Supernaturalistic and transcendentalist
 - Too human-centred, ignoring nature
 - Too perfectionist
 - Dualistic and anti the body and sexuality
 - Too suspicious of nature, and too ready to dismiss embracing nature as paganism
 - Hierarchical and elitist
 - Belonging to a former age
 - Authoritarian

- Too based on an external rather than an inner authority
- Identified with the establishment
- Too supportive of the status quo
- Too identified with fall-and-redemption theology with its emphasis on sin and evil, and on being redeemed from an evil world

When religion is seen positively, NS regards religions as:

- sub-sets of spirituality
- alternative spiritual paths that one can choose to deepen one's personal spirituality

When religion is embraced:

- no obligation is felt to remain loyal to a particular religion; the prime loyalty is to one's own inner striving or personal quest and this may entail movement across traditions – as each is “tried for size”
- alternatively, people choose to adopt elements from several traditions

... is primal, mystical, anti-dualistic, inward, experiential, ecological

- is about connecting to a deep, primal source
- is experiential and experimental
- attempts to access a mystical source from which all spiritual belief systems are held to emerge
- is about transformation from within
- involves a sense of being in contact with cosmic forces
- is concerned with connectedness and relatedness
- is intensely inward, involving exploration of the inner or true self in which divinity is held to reside
- is about encountering a source of mystery and transformation
- sees God, or the divine, as intimate and immanent, not as an extrinsic or outside super-reality but as a mystery at the core of ordinary reality
- is panentheistic [i.e. sees God in everything and everything in God]
- entails seeing the universe as an extension of oneself, as a field animated with life along the lines of the Gaia hypothesis, resulting in deep ecological concern
- is an approach to a more primal ground of experience, outside the purview and control of religion
- is about a living, personal relationship with the sacred
- is more imaginative and creative than cerebral and intellectual
- breaks down conventional dualities such as internal/external, heavenly/earthly, spirit/matter
- embraces creation, regarding the world as being graced with the presence of God
- has a view of interiority which is not about navel gazing but about deep resonance with all aspects of reality
- is widely regarded as a journey beyond the personal into the transpersonal and numinous

... is a reaction against secularism, materialism and ‘old science’

- is a result of secular society realising it has been running on empty
- is based on a rejection of the machine view of people and nature

- is a counter-cultural revolution, a romantic rebellion against materialism and economic rationalism
- is holistic, in the sense understood in new science, the arts and philosophy

Other characteristics

- is part of the post-modern landscape
- does not stop with personal transformation and personal empowerment but flows into political and social transformation
- is a platform for unity and peace
- is arising in secular contexts
- affects young people throughout the world, being seen by them as the key to a much-needed renewal of individuals, society and the planet
- represents an advance in human evolution, a forward movement of civilisation, paradoxically achieved by reconnecting with the past
- while post-modern in style, its actual content can seem pre-modern (but often its archaism is metaphorical rather than literal)
- generally seen as more encompassing than the New Age

David Tacey, while showing himself highly sympathetic towards the NS, as portrayed above, nevertheless sees in it a number of weaknesses. His critical comments are as follows:

- NS is attended by many distortions and aberrations, which always happens after a period when spirit has been repressed [as it has been for the last 200 years]
- There is sometimes regression to a pre-modern past, and when this happens NS seems crude, infantile or just plain silly
- It is in danger of becoming another word for narcissism, fanaticism or self-aggrandisement – i.e. it often reflects the individualism characteristic of the present age
- Being without distinct form, it can be incoherent
- Because it is free-floating and the result of a formless spiritual hunger, it can be exploited and manipulated by those who see in it an opportunity to make money or win prestige
- It often uses poor symbols, but these are often the only ones available to youth who are unaware of new developments in theology and religion
- It one-sidedly celebrates the good and ignores evil and sin, often overlooking the element or spiritual struggle or failing to appreciate what separates us from the divine

David Tacey's general appreciation and occasional criticisms of NS represent views which I broadly share. To anybody wanting to understand the nature of NS, including its manifestation within workplaces, I commend *The Spirituality Revolution* as a good place to start.

The emerging wisdom-based economy

by Peter Heslam



Society is undergoing a silent revolution. It is not led by governments, though it has political ramifications; nor is it led by religious or academic institutions, though it has spiritual and intellectual dimensions. Leadership is coming from a far less likely quarter – business.

It's a revolution I witness almost daily. Two of the processes in which I have recently been involved are examples. The first is the consultations that led to the newly published report 'Tomorrow's Global Company', which concludes on the evidence of case studies that

companies of all sizes can offer solutions to some of the world's most serious problems - poverty, climate change, human-rights abuses and corruption.

The second is the assessments leading to the recent Awards for Excellence, organised by Business in the Community, a consortium of 750 companies. Members of this group, which includes high-street names such as Barclays, Boots, John Lewis and Marks & Spencer, commit themselves to making a positive social impact; but the awards go only to those companies that excel in achievement, not just aspiration.

Such initiatives bring to light story after story of companies serving the vulnerable in rich societies, the poor in low-income countries and the environment everywhere. This is not about corporate social responsibility or philanthropy but about core business. It's about doing well by doing good, rather than doing good from doing well.

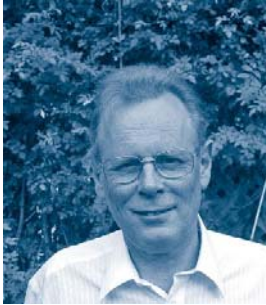
Most of this is not new. All the companies named above were founded on a similar vision. Indeed, the brothers-in-law who ran M&S decided in the 1920s that the purpose of their company was 'social revolution'. It would subvert the British class system by making goods of superior quality affordable to the lower classes. It would focus on clothing, where class distinctions were most visible.

Something *is* new, however, about the current revolution. As manufacturing has moved east, Western countries have had to find ways to turn knowledge into wealth. But as markets become flooded with similar products and services, a brand's vision and values are becoming its unique selling-point. The upshot is that a wisdom-based economy is gradually supplementing a knowledge-based one.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the way our impact on the environment has emerged, since the publication of *Silent Spring* a generation ago, to become a key moral issue embraced by business as a strategic opportunity. It gives hope that the silent revolution can avert a silent spring.

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The Editorial Team



Editor *Rev David Welbourn* who from 1969 until his retirement in April 2006 was an industrial chaplain, latterly with the Surrey and North-East Hants Industrial Mission. He is convener and coordinator of the Spirit in the Workplace Network which meets quarterly at Douai Abbey, near Reading. David has written numerous articles on 'faith and work', was editor of the *ICF Quarterly* and a member of the editorial team of its successor *Faith in Business*. He is author of three published books and his most recent is 'The Spirit at Work Phenomenon' (Azure 2004), which he co-authored with Sue Howard. He is a member of MODEM's leadership committee.

Editorial Support Group

Yochanan Altman who is Professor of International HRM and Comparative Management at London Metropolitan University. Yochanan is a Chartered Psychologist and holds a doctorate in business anthropology. He has been editing the *Journal of Managerial Psychology* for the past ten years and is an editorial board member of four other journals. His interest in the role of spirituality in management is long standing. JMP was the first academic journal to devote a special issue to the subject, in 1994, and a second special issue was published in 2002. He is also editor of the new academic *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*. This title reflects the name of the latest interest group stream of the US Academy of Management Conferences. See www.jmsr.com

The Ven Malcolm Grundy who is Director of Foundation for Church Leadership and former Archdeacon of Craven in the Diocese of Bradford. He has been senior chaplain of the Sheffield Industrial Mission, Director of Education and Community for the Diocese of London and Team Rector of Huntingdon.

Before coming to his post as Archdeacon he was Director of AVEC, a training and consultancy agency. He was founding Editor of Ministry and is a Non-Executive Director of G.J.Palmer, owners of the Church Times. In addition to contributing to MODEM's first three books, he is the author of a range of books on social and educational themes. He is a member of MODEM and a former chairman.

Alan Harpham who is a management consultant specialising in the programme and project management and its link to the management of change. Alan has a portfolio of business interests and is chairman of the APM Group – an accreditation body in partnership with the Treasury for PM qualifications, director of P5, the power of projects – a management consultancy, and executive coach for Subject Matters – a Conference and Exhibition organiser. He is chairman of Workplace Ministry Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, and a former chairman of MODEM, St Albans' Ministerial Training Scheme and St Albans and Oxford Ministry Course

MODEM is a national and ecumenical Christian network which seeks to initiate authentic dialogue between exponents of leadership, organisation, spirituality and ministry in order to aid the development of better disciples, communities, society and world.

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