

Spirituality growing in the workplace

Organizations are in the midst of a sea change driven primarily by demographic shifts. Their leaders now have to deal with the 76 million children of Baby Boomers, born between 1978 and 2000, who have started to enter workplaces across the country. Four generations are being asked to coexist at once: traditionalists (born before 1945), Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1977), and millennials (known as gen-Y, echo boomers and Net Gen).

The work ethic of the Baby Boomer generation is said to differ greatly from that of the dot-com generation. The key differences are life view and values. Leaders will be challenged to build an environment where four distinct sets of values and styles can work in harmony.

In a recent Fortune magazine article on the 100 best companies to work for based on employee surveys, it was reported that finding a sense of purpose in one's work was a common element. According to Patricia Aburdene, author of "Megatrends 2010," spirituality in the workplace is becoming a megatrend. Likewise, Ann Coombs, author of

"The Living Workplace: Soul, Spirit and Success in the 21st Century," believes that as this century unfolds, workers will demand that their hunger for spirituality be satisfied and will insist on a new approach to workplace relationships. She also feels that few corporations are prepared to make the radical shifts that will be demanded of them.

One way for leaders to stay current on trends and important issues is to seek a community of people reading, discussing and sharing these issues. The Association for Spirit at Work is a non-profit association of individuals and organizations that are interested in the study and practice of spirituality in the workplace.

Through personal memberships and member organizations, ASAW is creating a critical mass that can help shift from a worldview that focuses primarily on materialism to one that incorporates social justice, spiritual values, concern for the environment and a valuing of human development in workplaces.

The association offers networking, publications, research, courses and consulting to individuals and organizations. But the main membership benefit is the

chance to participate in semimonthly teleconferences with authors and senior leaders in the field of spirit at work. Members and non-members (who pay a \$10 fee per teleconference) can listen to leaders talk about how to help employees bring their whole selves to work, and how to create a working environment that encourages personal authenticity while providing challenging work, interesting assignments and good salaries.

Judi Neal, founder and executive director of ASAW, has invited me to partner with her in conducting these teleconferences. My plan is to interview people such as Jeff Swartz, CEO of The Timberland Co., who believes his vision of helping others is creating a more productive, efficient, loyal and committed employee base. I also am honored to be interviewing Jim Autry, retired president of Meredith Corp.'s magazine group and one of the pioneers in the spirit at work movement, on April 18 from 8-9 pm.

I invite you to participate in the teleconferences. Check out the Web site: www.spiritatwork.org □

Jann Freed holds The Mark and Kay De Cook Endowed Chair in Leadership and Character Development at Central College in Pella.



**Jann
Freed**

www.businessrecord.com