



INTERNATIONAL  
SOCIETY FOR  
PERFORMANCE  
IMPROVEMENT

## DFW CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Issue 13 – April 3 2006

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### 44<sup>th</sup> Annual International Performance Improvement Conference Researching the Radical Validating Unconventional Technologies

The theme for the International Society for Performance Improvement's (ISPI) 44th Annual International Performance Improvement Conference is **Researching the Radical: Validating Unconventional Technologies**. NSPI, ISPI's predecessor, started as a radical group that challenged the status quo and offered innovative strategies related to the art of teaching and the science of learning. In 2006, we want to recapture those exciting times with a conference that reflects a return to radicalism. Even when we were wildly radical, we valued our basic belief in data, measurement, and the scientific method. We challenged our assumptions and discarded the claims of snake oil vendors. The conference theme also reflects this belief in empirically validating all radical new approaches.

#### Adam's Mark Hotel Dallas, Texas

Conference: April 8–11  
Workshops: April 7–8  
HPT Institutes: April 6-8

[www.ispi.org/ac2006](http://www.ispi.org/ac2006)

See you at the Conference!

### Workplace Spirituality

By Kim Nimon and Jeff Allen

An important trend in the US workplace is a focus on employee spirituality. Consistent with the theories behind human performance technology (HPT), corporations are encouraging the development of this trend because they believe a humanistic work environment creates a win-win situation for both employees and the organization. For the purpose of this paper, workplace spirituality is the "recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community".

Spirituality in the workplace may manifest itself in several ways, but at two different levels: employee performance and organizational productivity. At the first level, "workers who feel connected and meaningful in their workplace will perform better, show up more often, and

contribute more devotedly toward a better atmosphere in the workplace". At the second level, workplace spirituality can positively affect the goal of every business – which is to make profit.

### Organizational Productivity

Thompson reports the results of a study conducted by a Harvard Business School that examined 10 companies whose cultures were spiritually strong and 10 companies whose cultures in comparison were weak. Over an 11-year period, the researchers found a strong correlation between the strength of spirituality in corporate culture and its profitability. In some cases, the more-spirited companies outperformed the others by 400 to 500 percent in terms of net earnings, return-on-investment, and shareholder value. A Vanderbilt University Business School study resulted in similar findings, using the annual Fortune listing of "The 100 Best Companies to Work For". Based on the findings of a recent Gallup survey, Raelin concluded that spirited workplaces were 50 percent more likely to have lower turnover, 56 percent more likely to have higher-than-average customer loyalty, 38 percent more likely to have above-average productivity, and 27 percent more likely to report higher profitability than companies that did not nurture their employee's talent, demonstrate compassion, or commit to their employees' growth. A study of business performance conducted by the Wilson Learning Company also found that 39 percent of the variability in corporate performance is attributable to a company's ability to offer a greater sense of meaning and purpose to its workforce.

### Interventions

Workplace spirituality involves the effort to find one's ultimate purpose in life, to develop a strong connection to coworkers and other people associated with work, and to have consistency (or alignment) between one's core beliefs and the values of their organization. As such, developing workplace spirituality is the responsibility of each and every organizational member. However, organizational leaders can take steps to cultivate an environment where employees can breathe spirituality into their work.

### Organization Level

At the organizational level, leaders need to develop an ennobling mission for their organizations. This kind of mission is distinct in that it involves creating something enduring and larger than itself. An ennobling mission must exist for a purpose beyond just making money and stand the test of time by the virtue of its ability to renew itself from within. Leaders must then invite their employees to be part of that ennobling mission allowing every person in the organization, regardless of status, to claim the charter of the organization as their own. This magnitude of employee empowerment that allows members to create the kind of community and world in which they want to live requires a new form of organizational structure. It requires an organizational structure that provides for "living systems" so people see the wholeness of their work and relationship to the external environment.

In support of the self-organization, leaders must openly communicate by "sharing information that otherwise would remain hidden", including uncertainties about the external environment and problems in the organization, and by soliciting input from those they lead. They must communicate in an open manner that is characteristic of a positive conflict management style, seeing the "go(o)d in everyone", and a "democratic communication style".

### Group Level

At the group level, leaders can cultivate a caring community by placing less emphasis on how much employees individually produce and more on how much help they give each other, creating a situation where the "significance of work is more the joy of doing rather than the goods and services produced". They must recognize employees that accept fellow members, take responsibility for relationships, are accountable for deliverables, and forgo personal ambition in favor of the common good.

#### Individual Level

At the individual level, leaders can cultivate the spirit of their workforces by selecting employees with high person-job fit and creating an environment for personal growth. According to the theory of person-job, when the fit between the desires of an individual and the attributes of a job is high, "people will be content and productive in work situations suited to the individual's ability and personality dispositions". Leaders can discover their employees' interests, abilities, and disposition through an assessment of their motivational gifts. This information helps leaders "build on their strengths, not focus on their weaknesses", and "identify jobs that match the employees' abilities and interests where employees could be most comfortable and effective".

Leaders can create an environment for personal growth by encouraging employees to approach their "work as a calling" and to develop personal vision statements to guide them on their journeys. They must counsel employees to courageously accept the call on their lives even if it is uncomfortable and to consider their "inner work" not as a private matter but as a public opportunity to come together to transform society and affect a positive change in society. They must develop employees' capacity to fulfill their call by "creating challenging jobs that focus on learning" and providing "formal training, on-the-job-training, mentoring, new responsibilities, task force assignments and special projects".

#### Conclusions

Workplace spirituality is an important trend in human performance technology. It uniquely provides for organizational performance by acknowledging the importance of the inner life of the employee. By embracing the spirit of their employees, organizations will not only increase their organizational effectiveness, but, they will also leave a legacy for future employees to create the kind of community and world in which they want to work and live.

For references, please contact Jeff Allen at [jallen@coe.unt.edu](mailto:jallen@coe.unt.edu).

#### Event Calendar

LSC/STC – "Advanced Editing Techniques" by Elisa Miller  
April 6th, 2006  
6:15pm at the Crowne Plaza North Dallas/Addison Hotel  
14315 Midway Road, Addison, Texas

[ISPI DFW](#) – 44<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference  
April 8-11, 2006

The regular DFW monthly meeting will not be held this month due to the focus on attendance at the International Conference.

Dallas ASTD – "Meet the Pros" Round Table Topic Discussions  
April 18, 2006

6:00pm at the Wyndham Dallas North Hotel  
4801 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, TX  
(NW corner of LBJ and Tollway)  
Hotel Telephone: 972.661.3600

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