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A Conscious Change in the Workplace

Craig Neal

A dramatic shift in priorities is beginning to occur among companies that are becoming aware of the dichotomy between personal values and professional life. With so many individuals seeking change, and some opting out of the "rat race," companies and organizations are struggling with two critical and interrelated management issues: how to retain their "best" people and improve productivity.

In the emerging environment, the best people are those who are "healthy," meaning balanced in body, mind, and spirit. These new leaders tend to have a broad point of view, combining hard-edged skills with a softer, more humane approach. They have examined and are in touch with who they are physically, emotionally, and intellectually. They embody the best of our culture. In short, we are seeing the emergence of renaissance leaders for the 21st century.

Yet, in this period of low unemployment, economic prosperity, and scarcity of available talent in the job market,

companies and their leaders fear getting eaten from the inside out. They worry that their good people will go off on their own, become entrepreneurs, and develop startups. Furthermore, the new crop of Generation Xers is coming in with a free-agent mentality, unencumbered by the loyalties of a bygone era.

This is no fad

We are actually in the midst of an important paradigm shift as the last vestiges of defunct industrial era practices prepare to fall. We are experiencing the beginning of a transformation in the workplace. This is not the latest fad but a genuine recognition that the workplace has an important role to play in our need for wholeness and integration.

People and organizations are so poised for change that only a slight but crucial shift in confidence and courage is needed to transform the workplace to a new reality. This shift can occur when people, on the one hand, realize they no longer have to play games in the workplace and when business, on

the other, decides it can be successful and operate on sustainable principles, without human or natural exploitation.

Research has indicated this shift is indeed taking place. Social scientist and futurist Duane Elgin, supported by the Fetzer Institute and a distinguished list of other research and educational organizations, has documented and summarized fundamental changes in attitudes and values in a review of thousands of public-opinion surveys. About 10 percent of adults—some 20 million people—are seeking new ways of living, consistent with these new ways of thinking about their lives and roles.

This shift in thinking is occurring because the industrial era paradigm to which we have been subscribing is no longer working. With its emphasis on conspicuous consumption, identity related to social position or material possessions, cut-throat competition, and individual autonomy, the industrial era model is causing more problems than it is solving.

This workplace transformation is resulting in the convergence of two major social movements in the United States: one operating in the culture at large and one in business.

The first powerful movement influencing the workplace is America's spiritual renaissance. Interest in religion is on the rise across the board. According to a 1997 survey by Princeton Religious Research Center, almost two thirds of Americans say that religion has a growing influence in their lives.

Overall, there has been a 30-year trend toward personal spirituality, with individuals turning inward for

The resurgence is here to stay

In 1996, the High Tor Alliance, a research and consulting firm in New York state, conducted an in-depth study documenting the practice of spiritual and contemplative disciplines in companies and organizations. The research found these practices much more widespread than expected—with 81 percent of the respondents (180 responses in a sample of 1,000) saying they engage in spiritual or contemplative practices at work as individuals and half reporting activities sponsored at the organizational level. Nearly four out of five of the respondents saw work as a path to personal spiritual development, and almost nine of every ten respondents chose to work in organizations whose values were congruent with their personal values. Respondents also reported that individual practices such as conscious speaking and listening, seeking feedback, and organizational practices such as discussion of vision and values, group process, and sharing of life stories, while sometimes difficult, yielded important benefits for individuals, as well as organizations. Among the beneficial impacts of these spiritual and contemplative practices are more effective, service-oriented leaders and workers, individual learning, improved communication, enhanced collegiality and sense of community, a values-based work culture, and greater commitment to organizational mission.

guidance, listening for intuitive wisdom—through the practice of meditation, for example—and accepting individual responsibility for serving the collective good. These individuals belong to a rapidly growing population segment researchers call “Cultural Creatives,” influenced by the transcendental or New Age movements, humanistic psychology or transpersonal psychology movements, ecology, and women's movements. These people comprise nearly one fourth of American adults, or 44 million people, according to studies done by public opinion researcher Paul H. Ray for the Institute of Noetic Sciences and the Fetzer Institute.

These people represent a diverse, major, and yet still largely latent force in the workplace. They can't—and increasingly won't—drop these beneficial values at the door as they enter the workplace. They will work to transform organizations, as they have transformed themselves.

The conscious business movement

The second important development influencing the workplace is the corporate social responsibility movement, which, over the past two decades, has encouraged corporations to play a role in improving their communities. Teamed with America's spiritual renaissance, both of these developments have spawned an emerging, revolutionary movement—“conscious business,” if you will.

Conscious business builds on but goes beyond corporate social responsibility, encompassing values-centered, spirit-infused ideas to improve the business environment and inspiring business efforts to take on more responsibility for nurturing the human soul.

Across North America within the past 12 months, there have been over a dozen major conferences in the realm of

spirituality in business and the workplace, which have led to countless study groups, national organizations (such as the Conscious Business Alliance, the International Spirit at Work Alliance, and the High Tor Alliance) salons, regional gatherings, websites, and so on.

The conscious business movement connects personal transformation with organizational transformation and aligns the best interests of companies with the spirits of employees. And most important, it addresses a set of critical, interlocking needs in our society.

No small change

In our modern society, we've been condoning what one might call "legitimized schizophrenia." Everyone in business has felt it—that uneasy feeling of playing the

game—to do what one seems to have to do to be successful. Some people forget who they were before the charade. Burnout, stress, and low productivity are among the results. Therapists offices are overflowing with people who are physically and emotionally exhausted from trying to be something they are not.

People are tired of living compartmentalized, disconnected lives. They want to bring the personal, professional, social, and spiritual sides of themselves into one whole human being.

Despite outward signs of success, businesses and institutions today are experiencing considerable internal turmoil as well. Many companies have made a practice of instituting constant change in an effort to keep up with the turbulence in their industries. A survey, which appeared in the

February 1994 *CMA—The Management Accounting Magazine*, found that more than four out of five U.S. firms were in the midst of "major change," yet a Gallup/Proudfoot study in the same year found that more than half of the executives they surveyed had doubts about their firms' ability to address such changes.

Yet there is hope for change. We just have to redesign our traditional workplace mindset. In our new, service-oriented economy—in which an institution's major assets are human knowledge, information, and creativity—corporations are being held to a higher level of accountability. There are now new ways to measure return to shareholders. The bottom line is becoming more than numbers.

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ACME Inc.'s Health Insurance Options

Introduction
ACME offers a choice of three (Three) health insurance policies in terms of plan options, cost and the level of benefit to its employees.

- Aflac Plan
- Health Maintenance Organization (HMO)
- Catastrophic Plan

Definitions
The following definitions are provided to assist you in understanding the Plan Options. Please refer to your company's handbook of policies.

Uninsured refers to an individual who is not covered or insured by a PPO health insurance network.

Summary of plan options
The table below outlines the plan options for each plan, as well as the impact of the plan selection on the amount of coverage.

Plan	Care Provider Options	Coverage
Plan A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of providers • Out-of-network providers • Catastrophic Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Plan with 100% coverage • Catastrophic Plan with 100% coverage
Plan B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of providers • Catastrophic Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Plan with 100% coverage • Catastrophic Plan with 100% coverage
Plan C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catastrophic Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catastrophic Plan with 100% coverage



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see that businesses will have to be conducted differently in the 21st century if they are to survive. They're recognizing that only sustainable organizations, those that do not have the seeds of destruction within them, can thrive in the long run. These organizations are looking out for their human assets and their long-term impact on society and culture, as well as their hard assets and financial returns.

Business is thus beginning to recognize that for its own survival it must create workplaces that are hospitable and healing.

Smokestack companies that have downsized, for example, are grasping the opportunity to reinvent themselves as modern service and knowledge-based organizations. And newer enterprises genuinely seek to get it right the first time around. These newcomers include Natural Step, based in San Francisco, California, which promotes ecologically sound business and has gained adherents by demonstrating the positive economic impacts of such practices.

Business is the delivery system

The workplace is emerging as the delivery system not only for the integration of values people want to incorporate into their lives but for the sustainability organizations need to create for their customers and stakeholders.

Since the industrial revolution, we have created a very well-oiled, elegant combination of organizational systems and technology—which at its essence is now able to instantaneously deliver vast quantities of information, intelligence, and wisdom to every corner of the earth.

What is put into that pipeline—that conduit—is critical. We all know how it works: garbage in, garbage out. If we keep putting outdated, exploitive, extractive methodologies into that delivery system, we are going to keep getting more levels of destruction. If, however, we start implementing wise, humane methodologies, chances are things will start improving for the human condition. And, regardless of where we are in the system, we can help shift the information that flows through it.

Organizations are beginning to take their values and missions quite seriously. Creating mission statements with high-minded values—as espoused by the leadership—and attempting to sell these flowery statements to the lower echelons as a demonstration of goodwill backfires more often than not. Managers are finally beginning to realize that leaders must walk the talk.

To be vertically integrated in all aspects is going to be a major strength of the new workplace, where walking your talk is not just because you are mandated or legislated to do so, but because it is sound business. Living values create sustainable environments where people want to stay and invest their energies and passions.

At the cutting edge

The conscious business movement is a genuine next step in the evolution of business as a leading institution in our society. Some of our major institutions—religion, social agencies, and government—have been the guardians of our human values.

Now, commercial interests must

come together to form a similar protective relationship.

We are closer to a shift from the status quo than many of us realize. The infrastructure for a genuine revolution in our businesses and institutions is in place.

Many people have already learned that one can hold on to one's core values and fulfill one's social commitment while being successful in material terms.

Companies can do well by doing good. And the genuine business opportunities they discover in their pursuit of conscious business are a significant new form of leadership in our society.

One by one, people are waking up to the fact that fear need no longer be the driving force in our personal and institutional decision-making, and that powerful institutions can collaborate with employees and the community as change agents.

With all of these elements in place, only small shifts are needed to ignite a genuine workplace revolution. We are fully ready and able to transform our dreams of integrated human beings and healthy organizations into current realities.



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