

## **Spiritual leaders**

### **A boss in touch with his inner self may do a better job**

**Mary Pearson, Financial Post**

Published: Wednesday, April 19, 2006

"The bar is being raised for leaders and managers," says Martin Rutte, co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work*. "Today's leader must be authentic, inspire, nurture and lead with high ethical standards, partly in response to the breaches that have occurred."

Mr. Rutte, who is chairman of the board of the Centre for Spirituality and the Workplace at Sobey School of Business, Saint Mary's University in Halifax, contends good leaders have the capacity to access "discretionary energy" ... the energy that employees contribute only if they are truly and passionately inspired by their work and their leader.

Michael Stephen, former chairman of Aetna International, began meditating early in his career and found that this spiritual practice changed his leadership style from a controlling manager to one that empowered his staff. He says he believes his commitment to his own spiritual development made him a more compassionate, insightful chief executive, and attributes his success to integrity in relationships with clients, colleagues and staff.

Mr. Stephen, the author of *Spirituality in Business, the Hidden Success Factor* and a coach to Canadian executives, observes that organizations have expected people to bring their body and mind to the workplace, but there was little room for the soul. That led to poor decisions, which neglected the environment, and focused on short-term gains at the expense of the bigger picture.

Patricia Aburdene, author of *Megatrends 2010, The Rise of Conscious Capitalism* sees the quest for spirituality as the greatest megatrend of our era. Describing spirituality as "surprisingly practical in business," she contends the "game" in business is to influence. Leaders who have developed self-mastery through spiritual practice are better able to influence others and can nurture innovation and creativity within their organizations.

Recent research indicates leaders who have a commitment to their own spirituality create a positive difference in their organization -- higher levels of staff morale, greater energy, and a positive impact on the bottom line.

But does having a spiritual orientation open more career doors? Yes, says a newly appointed chairwoman of a public sector organization who prefers to be unnamed. She applied for the position because she wanted to make a positive difference in her field. She says she projected this intention

throughout the interview process, and the recruiters were impressed by her genuine motivation, her passion for the work and an absence of personal ambition.

Although she does not openly discuss her spirituality, she contends she is able to approach problems and challenges, including the job interview process with a deep sense of purpose and confidence, a state others can sense, and which in turn leads to success.

Anne Fawcett, an executive recruiter and managing partner at Caldwell Partners International, says individuals are placing more value on meaningful purpose in their work, and a greater emphasis on the values and mission of their organization. Chief executives and managers need to lead with integrity and passion, and these concepts are akin to those that connect to spirituality. She says people who work with their spirit are fully engaged and it is obvious to the observer, or in her case, the recruiter.

It is important, stress those who are interested in spirituality as an emerging trend in business, to distinguish between spirituality and religion. These are not necessarily the same. Furthermore, proselytizing about one's own beliefs is not well accepted in the workplace -- in fact it can be offensive. Rather, the emotionally mature leaders who have examined their life's journey and thinks in terms of "the better good" is the kind of individual being discussed.

Professor Andre Delbecq teaches an MBA course on spirituality at work at Santa Clara University in California. He says the values and behaviour of students who complete the course changes.

"They begin to see work differently, seeing the good that can be achieved. In addition, they see the potential of the work community as a contemporary village. Work groups, are the primary source of satisfaction for most people," Prof. Delbecq says. It follows that the work group leader should be someone who can be respected, who is wise, thoughtful, and a good human being. Prof. Delbecq agrees that accessing "discretionary energy," a commodity employees make a choice about, is what makes companies successful in the long run, and that it takes an outstanding set of leadership attributes to inspire employees to expend this energy.

More doors open to leaders who wear their soul, albeit not obviously, and they also have more inner resources in order to deal with the challenging issues and decisions of leadership. The self awareness that is part of a spiritual journey, Prof. Delbecq says, allows the leader to have a heightened awareness of the temptations of power -- which Delbecq describes as hubris, arrogance and greed. Having gone through a period of that in the past decade, organizations, and staff in those organizations, are longing for leaders they can trust.