

Company, Church, and Community Spiritual Values in the Rhetoric of Business Writing

Let me tell you about Kevin, one of my accounting and business management students. Although I focus on Kevin, he represents many of our students at Brigham Young University-Idaho. Kevin is currently living in Harlem this semester while he is completing an accounting internship on Wall Street with the prestigious firm PricewaterhouseCoopers. Kevin is from American Falls, a small rural farming community of 4,000 people located in southern Idaho. He is having a wonderful internship experience, and that doesn't surprise us.

Kevin is receiving a strong, well-rounded academic preparation with a major in accounting and a minor in business management. He's particularly interested in strategies for minimizing individual and business taxes and interested in organizational behavior and the intrinsic motivation of employees. He's doing well in his studies.

During the summers, Kevin is a regional operations manager, installation technician, and hub coordinator in North Carolina for a national alarm marketing company. During a four-month period, he was directly responsible for producing \$2.24 million in revenues and for achieving the number one customer upgrading office nationwide. His experiences with these two internships in North Carolina and on Wall Street satisfy our university's experiential learning graduation requirement.

Kevin's information that I've shared with you comes directly from the resume he has submitted in my class as part of his job materials portfolio. Like many of his classmates, Kevin is justifiably impressive on paper. But the experiences that really demonstrate Kevin's character and his qualities are purposely omitted from these significant documents. Kevin does not reveal that the core of his beliefs and character stem from his devout religious convictions.

Kevin does not address his two years as a volunteer representative or missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in San Jose, California, two years of meeting people; of serving in the community; of developing an enduring work ethic; self-discipline; confidence; or leadership, communication, and presentation skills. Kevin also fails to mention that he continues to make sacred commitments to serve other people, to donate ten percent of his earnings to his church, to contribute monthly to humanitarian relief, to hold positions of leadership in his local congregation, to be responsible for the welfare of several other families in his community, and to grow spiritually through daily reading of scriptures and personal prayer. These spiritual qualities are what really make the twenty-four-year-old Kevin impressive.

Kevin, like many of us, has learned outwardly to separate his personal faith from his daily business or school activities. The title of Harvard Business School senior lecturer Laura Nash's book accurately describes this separation: *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*. Can faith and business work together? How do individuals incorporate spiritual qualities into their professional lives and discourse?

To answer questions about faith and business working together, we need to address the following issues: what is spirituality, how do spiritual qualities influence individuals, how do individuals' personal beliefs influence professional lives, and how do principles of leadership rhetoric integrate personal beliefs with business discourse.

What is Spirituality?

We first need to define *spirituality*. Schmidt-Wik, Heaton, and Steingard suggest that definitions of spirituality fall into three categories: those that define it as a personal inner experience, those that focus on values, and those that focus on outer behaviors (Mohamed). MacDonald conducted an analysis of twenty psychological measures of spirituality and concluded that spirituality includes beliefs, attitudes and perceptions; transcendental experiences; sense of meaning for existence; belief in the paranormal; and religious behavior and practice (Hohamed).

It is important to make a strong distinction between *spirituality* and *religiosity*. William James makes the distinction by describing “personal religion” and “institutional religion.” James suggests that spirituality deals with “an individual’s personal connection to a higher power” while religion in the common sense is “draped in institutional trappings” such as rituals and services. According to most psychologists and management scholars, “spirituality is personal, inclusive, and positive while religiosity is external, exclusive, and negative” (Harlos). In fact, surveys indicate that Americans differentiate strongly between religion and spirituality and that 60% of the respondents had positive views of spirituality but negative views of religion (Mitroff and Denton).

Religiosity often conveys feelings of zealotry, proselytizing, intolerance, and even bigotry. Additionally, religiosity is complex as evidenced in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits religious discrimination by employers. Under Title VII employers may not treat employees or job applicants more or less favorably because of their religious beliefs and may not force employees to participate in a religious activity (Rothacker).

James Morgan exemplifies the complexity of religiosity in the workplace with the following scenario:

Linda, the new division manager, sponsors a luncheon to recognize the division’s members for successfully meeting objectives for the month. Meats, cheeses, breads, fruit, and cake are chosen for the event. The celebratory mood of the event quickly dissipates as various employees within the twenty-member Internet sales division react to the setting. Paul, an evangelical Christian, first asks those assembled if he can offer grace to the group before they begin to eat. Sam, a devout Jew, informs Linda that he cannot partake because the mixing of meat and cheese is not kosher. Abu, a Muslim, shakes his head in disgust and leaves the gathering after informing Linda that the luncheon conflicts with his daily prayer

time. Melinda, a strict Vegan, refuses to eat and tells her co-workers that it is immoral to kill or exploit animals. (Morgan).

How Does Spirituality Influence Individuals?

The general understanding, then, is that religion doesn't fit into the workplace, but spirituality can (McGuire) because spirituality influences individuals. Research is showing that individuals with a strong spiritual factor in their personal lives assist them with day-to-day business activities. The authors of "Towards a Theory of Spirituality in the Workplace" (Mohamed) discuss spirituality as a dimension of personality and propose the following: The stronger the spiritual factor of personality, the more tolerant the person is of work failure and less susceptible to stress, more likely to participate with others in the decision making process, more trusting and accepting of human diversity, exhibiting more altruistic and citizenship behavior, and demonstrating higher levels of commitment to the organization.

Many people consider spirituality as a means of increasing integrity, motivation, and job satisfaction. Cavanagh and Bandsuch help determine when spirituality is appropriate for the workplace: "A spirituality that enables a person to develop good moral habits (or virtue) is appropriate for the workplace. If a spirituality leads to the cooperation and motivation derived from good moral habits and virtue in a person, then that spirituality can be judged as appropriate. When a spirituality enables a person to develop good moral habits, this provides a benchmark or a positive test for the appropriateness of that spirituality."

Mitroff and Denton claim in *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America* that "people are hungry for models of practicing spirituality in the workplace without offending their coworkers or causing acrimony. They are searching for nonreligious, nondenominational ways of fostering spirituality. They believe strongly that "unless organizations learn to harness the whole person, they will not be able to produce world-class products and services" (xvi).

How Do Individuals' Beliefs Influence Professional Lives?

So how do individuals hungry for spirituality in the workplace incorporate their faith into their daily work? Mintroff and Denton claim there are a number of models incorporating faith and work; however, let's look closely at the model influenced by the spiritual concept of servant leadership. Robert K. Greenleaf coined the phrase "servant leadership" in the 1970s. Greenleaf spent most of his organizational life in the field of management research, development, and education at AT&T. Just before his retirement as director of management research there, he held a joint appointment as visiting lecturer of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management and at the Harvard Business School. Greenleaf did not start publishing his leadership philosophies until after he was 65. He firmly believed and demonstrated through his own leadership that the most effective leaders are those who serve others in meeting their own and others' diverse needs. Greenleaf explains the idea of "servant" is deep in our Judeo-

Christian heritage by illustrating that the concordances to the Standard Revised Version of the Bible lists over 1300 references to *servant* including serve and service (22).

Greenleaf explains that the idea of servant as leader came out of reading Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East*. In the story, a group of men are on a mythical journey to be taught by the wise leader of the Order. The central character in the story is Leo who accompanies the party as the servant doing the menial work, guiding them, but also encouraging them with his spirit and songs. "He is a person of extraordinary presence." They cannot make it without the servant Leo. The narrator of the story has been wandering lost for years, but finds Leo who takes him to the Order that sponsors the mythical journey. It is there that the narrator and the group discover that Leo whom they know as the servant is in fact the head of the Order, its guiding spirit, a great and noble leader." (1).

Larry Spears summarizes some characteristics or spiritual qualities of a servant-leader: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (5-8).

James Autrey is an example of a corporate executive who has applied the principles of servant-leadership and spirituality into his career. Autrey is former president of Meredith Corporation, a \$500 million operation with more than nine hundred employees, and he directed the operation of fourteen magazines including *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Ladies' Home Journal*. (His wife Sally Pederson is currently lieutenant governor of Iowa.) The leadership and spiritual quality that has had the most profound influence on his career has been love. He describes attending a management meeting in 1968 when a top corporate manager spoke on self-renewal. The manager emphatically stated, "The most important thing is love." This is the first time that Autrey had ever heard the word *love* used in the context of corporate life. The manager "spoke of love—love of what we do together, love of ourselves, love of our customers." The manager said they could not renew themselves without love (48). Autrey remarks that this love was the beginning of his transformation into servant-leadership in which he learned and applied six fundamental spiritual principles into his career: he learned to be empathetic, authentic, vulnerable, present, accepting, and useful (53). These spiritual qualities have had an impact on all aspects of his relationships with the board, his employees, their customers, and himself.

How Does Leadership Rhetoric Blend Faith with Business?

So what do principles of servant-leadership and spirituality have to do with us as teachers of business writing? Richard L. Graves, former chair of CCCCs, addresses spirituality which he calls grace in his essay "Grace, in Pedagogy." He writes, "Grace is a living reality, a force capable of touching all aspects of human life. To be sure, grace is an invisible reality; some people can't see it, and those who do can't prove its presence. Nevertheless, it's there. . . . Grace does not live in some hothouse environment but in the ordinary experiences of daily life. Grace happens in everyday routines and habits, in buying and selling, in the sweat of the workplace, in conversations and transactions, in

the small joys and disappointments of life. . . .Grace is always there, everywhere; we don't see it, but it changes our lives when we experience it" (15-16). Graves then suggests some qualities of grace that can apply to the classroom and to writing. Grace or spirituality is transforming, healing, transcending the ego, opening the possible, pointing toward what is right, enhancing creativity, and surprising (17-20).

These same qualities of grace or spirituality are also qualities of effective leadership and communication which I call leadership rhetoric. Leadership rhetoric's explanation and illustration are evident in the communication triangle. The triangle, of course, consists of the three principal parts: the writer, the audience, and the subject. We also teach our students the connection the communication triangle has with Aristotle's inartistic proofs: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. The writer's *ethos*, then, reveals the intrinsic spiritual qualities of discipleship, the sense of honesty, trust, and compassion. The writer's attention to audience *pathos* focuses on a sense of stewardship towards that audience, empathy, and a desire to serve its needs and to strengthen its weakest members. And the writer's concern for *logos* continues to maintain the integrity of the company and its mission to succeed in all areas. When spiritual values and rhetorical practices are examined within the classical communication triangle, business leaders (our students) are able to see how their own personal and professional needs can work in concert with a desire to meet and satisfy more effectively the multiple needs of their company and community.

An excellent example of leadership rhetoric is evident in a fascinating book *The CEO and the Monk*. The co-authors are Robert Catell, CEO for KeySpan, an energy corporation and Kenny Moore, a former priest who became the corporate ombudsman for KeySpan. The two eventually began to integrate their philosophies into the company—the blending of business and spirituality. The authors alternate chapters, giving their own perceptions of different working situations. The two concluding chapters summarize what each has learned through the other. Catell claims: “There is indeed a spiritual side to business, a soul within the company. I believe there is more to what we do than just business. . . . [Kenny Moore and spirituality have] offered me a wonderful lens through which to view the company and the world around it” (233).

Moore then provides the salient points that he has learned by working in the two dominant institutional structures of the church and the corporate world:

- Most people are doing the best they can.
- Leaders need to keep their heads in the clouds, but their feet firmly planted on the ground.
- Leaders should not focus only on high-potential employees; they should also pay attention to the average ones.
- Leaders can become better communicators by keeping their mouths shut.
- Leaders should increase their tolerance for opinions knowing that “the future never arrives as we expect; it's always a surprise.”
- Leaders should remember to occasionally say a prayer. “Working out in the world is too tough to do it alone. Spend some time asking for assistance. Prayer also helps that much needed business skill: humility.

Success, both personal and corporate, is largely dependent on people and things outside our control. Periodically offering a humble prayer is simply acknowledging that.” (235-236)

Charles C. Manz has also written another interesting book that integrates spiritual values with business: *The Leadership Wisdom of Jesus: Practical Lessons for Today*. In his introduction titled “A Call to Wise and Compassionate Leadership,” Manz asks the following questions, and these questions are all based on principles of spirituality: “When you are called upon to lead, in any capacity, are you effective? Is your leadership ethical and just? Are you able to provide positive influence for others that benefits them as well as the end that is being served? Now, let’s go even deeper. Are you able to lead yourself effectively? Do you serve as an ethical, moral, effective example to others? Do you lead with humility? Do you lead with compassion? Have you mastered the arts of forgiveness and service? Can you be like a child when that is required? Do you understand and put into practice the Golden Rule? Do you know the secret of mustard seed power?” (1).

Now let’s return to my student Kevin. How does he incorporate his spiritual qualities into professional discourse? Kevin has naturally been integrating his values in all that he does. His values define him as an individual, and these values permeate all that he does, both consciously and subconsciously. For instance, suppose Kevin needs to write a customer relations letter in response to a complaint. Kevin will consciously balance company policy, his honest desire to assist the customer, with his own sense of integrity and of right and wrong. His spiritual qualities blend with his business and leadership qualities. He combines his goodness with his professional strengths. That balance or blend is not always easy. For instance, last week Kevin sent a quick email to touch base with me. Notice how this young man unknowingly is exemplifying his strong spiritual strength:

I am working so much out here. I have been pulling over 80 hours a week for the last month, and this week it is looking like I will work somewhere around 95, and that is without working on Sundays. They tried to put some pressure on me at first to work on Sunday. Finally they asked me if there was any way I could make an exception. I told them, "No there isn't, but I will stay and work all night long Thursday and Friday to make up for it if I have to. I just can't work on Sunday." After that they saw how important it was to me not to work on Sunday and haven't ever asked again. Any way I love this job. There is so much to learn, and I enjoy it. (Anglesey)

Therefore, leadership rhetoric reflects who people are and their spiritual qualities. Individuals with strong spiritual values cannot subconsciously separate who they are on Sunday with who they are on Monday. Much of my student Kevin’s success on Monday is because of who he is on Sunday and his spiritual qualities which he carries throughout the rest of the week.

As business writing instructors, especially those of us with strong spiritual convictions, we can indirectly exemplify how spirituality is an essential part of the workplace—more so through who we are and how we treat individuals, especially our students, than through vocalization. Our business writing classrooms can focus on the significance of understanding and integrating genuine *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* in developing and enhancing relationships through written and oral discourse. Through authentic rhetorical situations we can examine, model, and generate ethical and moral discourse in business correspondence, reports, presentations, and collaborations. We can exemplify principles of servant leadership through listening, empathy, awareness, foresight, stewardship, and a firm commitment to the growth of our students and the building of discourse communities based on integrity. Therefore, without explicitly expressing qualities of spirituality in business discourse, we business writing instructors and our business students through leadership rhetoric and deeply-held and practiced convictions can assist in transforming existing practice, healing relationships, transcending personal ego, enhancing creativity, opening new possibilities, and directing ourselves and others toward what is right through practicing principles of spirituality in our professional lives.

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