

A Model for Workplace Spirituality

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Abstract—Workplace spirituality is no longer in concept only; its utility for organizational effectiveness has been established. This has sustained the interest of researchers in the field, but inculcation of spirituality in the workplace is not a cakewalk because of lack of conceptual frameworks for workplace spirituality and keenness to implement it. Workplace spirituality is in the early stages of development hence, it lacks in terms of definition, component identification, adequate measurement tools and control and monitoring techniques. This paper analyses the existing body of literature on workplace spirituality and endeavors to provide a model for the creation of efficient and effective spiritual organizations. This model has three dimensions namely-Practice of virtue centric code of conduct, Transcendence via work and Sustainability Perspective. This model suggests the techniques of inculcation of workplace spirituality and its sustenance.

Keywords: Workplace Spirituality; Organizational Effectiveness; Transcendence via Work; Sustainability..

1. INTRODUCTION

Workplace spirituality is emerging as a potent tool for organizational change management. Modern organizations face lot of challenges in order to have an edge over the competitors. The employees of modern organizations work under tremendous pressure and stress to meet the targets and to satisfy the stakeholders. If the workplace is enjoyable, the productivity of organization increases manifolds, because when employees are happy and enjoying the work they can work even harder. Practice of spiritual values at work can help creating good work culture that in turn can enhance the productivity and effectiveness of the organization. If the employees at workplace have a sense of trust and empathy with the co-workers, sense of responsibility and honesty towards the organization, quest of discovering meaning and purpose in work, commitment to behave ethically, enjoying their work, performing the duty as per their conscience and having faith in the almighty, if they know that they are being treated fairly, their contributions are being recognized they will work to their highest potential, thus- the organization can create an environment of reduced stress and conflicts and enhanced productivity. Organizations are overheated because they do not practice spirituality. Concern of spirituality is exploration of self and self-realization where as concern of workplace spirituality is to create a humane organization,

which is productive and effective. Though the concept of workplace spirituality and its implementation are in the nascent stage of development yet interest in it has increased.

Interest in workplace spirituality has increased steadily over the last decade of the twentieth century and into the new millennium (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003). Employees in organizations with higher levels of spirituality exhibit increased flexibility towards organizational change (Salzmann, 1997). They are better able to manage the change process, are less resistant to new ideas (Wagner, 1996), and experience less stress as a result (Adams et al., 2003). Fry (2003) notes that workplace spirituality aspects cannot be overlooked by future organizations.

Inculcation of spirituality in the organizations is difficult because of diverse background of employees in terms of education, culture, religion, beliefs, value systems, self-interests etc. Many attempts have been made to create a congenial workplace that could guarantee success and productivity but none of them brought a long lasting solution to IR problems. This paper is an attempt to propose a model for creation of spiritual organizations to plug this gap.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Non-exhaustive amount of literature is available related to this topic. Some glimpses are as follows:

Research shows that respect for employees increases their job satisfaction and performance, resulting in less absenteeism, weakening the desire to unionize, and increasing the length of tenure with the organization (Feldman and Arnold, 1983; Tharenou, 1979). The organizations that create trust are more productive than those that don't (Adams et al., 2003; Williams and Jurkiewicz, 1993).

Lloyd (1990) maintains that organizations high in workplace spirituality outperform those without it by 86%. Moorman (1992) found that employees' job satisfaction was related positively to the perceived justice of employers' decision-making and decision-implementation procedures. Individual's values and beliefs must synchronize with the behavior. It has been shown that both organizations and individuals do well when their values are integral and aligned (Dorsey, 1998) The

positive effect of humanism in organizational life can be attested to by a number of factors: increased self-esteem (Hewitt, 1998; Barnum et al., 1998), hopefulness (Curry et al., 1997; Snyder et al., 1999), and work satisfaction (Schwartz, 2000). Trust can lead to better organizational performance through accelerate decision making, better communication between managers, better focus on customer issues and greater innovation (Kriger and Hanson 1999). Organizations With high levels of trust also exhibit reduced political behaviors, more cooperative and supportive peer interactions, and greater employee commitment (Anderson, 2000). Employees are more productive when shown affection by the organization than when they are not (Adams et al. 2003). Goal-directed employees, when encouraged by the organizational culture, are more conscientious, help each other, experience less unhealthy conflict, and overcome obstacles more efficiently than other cultures (Adams et al.2003) Moreover, researchers have indicated linkages of workplace spirituality with ethics. Fry (2005) posits that “spiritual leadership theory provides the ethical content in terms of the values which emphasize the issues of standards and criteria of behavior that lead to positive health and ethical and spiritual well-being. Chieh-Wen Sheng (2012) designed measurement tools for workplace spirituality, through a cause-and-effect relation model, that concerns factors of workplace spirituality as the criterion for future researches.

Workplace spirituality aspects (meaning in work, community at work and positive organizational purpose) are positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment and employees’ individual spirituality can moderate the number of these associations. (Saleh Piryaee, Razi Zare 2013)

3. CURRENT PRACTICES:

The corporate houses like Tata, Godrej, Birlas and Infosys have, proved the fact, over time, that good governance, ethical behaviour, and justice with the stakeholders can make a company great. Mr.Narayanmurthy of Infosys has become is an icon of spiritual leadership for corporate. The social responsibility initiatives taken up by these companies have proved that spirituality combined with business brings good results.Dr.Reddy’s Laboratories has created a code of business ethics for its employees. All the employees of the company are required to learn it. The company conducts examination of employees based on this learning and gives them certificate.

Many companies are spending a considerable amount in organizing conferences and workshops on workplace spirituality. Companies are also motivating employees for Pranayam, Meditation, Yoga, and Self-dialogue for better stress management.

Apple Computers in California and Prentice Hall Publishing House have separate quiet rooms for meditation where employees can sit calmly and meditate everyday. Microsoft has its online spiritual service for its employees.

4. A PROPOSED MODEL FOR CREATION OF SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATIONS:

Organizations spend a fortune in trying to create comfortable, peaceful and congenial working environment. When purity of motives is combined with strategic decision making the organization can become more powerful and inspired. Acquiring of skill is much easier than inculcation of values, therefore, the organizations must take due care while recruitment and selection. People who are not only skill strong but also value strong should be preferred. Plenty of psychological and disguised tests are there, which can help select value strong person. The Public Service Commissions of India and some big corporates have already initiated this practice of identifying value strong individuals through some disguised methods. Testing the skill related competence is an old practice through battery of practical tests. After selecting value strong and skill strong individuals we need a model for introducing spirituality at workplace. There might be many models and approaches for creating spiritual organization, but the model proposed here is comprehensive, simple to explain, easy to implement and also cost effective. The diagrammatic representation of the model is given below.

A MODEL FOR WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY



4.1 Practice of Virtue-centric Code of Conduct:

Creation of the virtue centric code of conduct is first step towards making of spiritual organization. Almost all organizations have their professional code of conduct for their employees. This code of conduct varies from organization to

organization depending on the type and culture of the organization. But despite of the cultural and organizational differences, the codes of conduct should be virtue centric. This is essential for long-term sustainability. If any organizations code of conduct is not moral, the forces of society will bring such organizations to peril.

Following can be a few of virtues needed for inculcation of workplace spirituality-

Respect-

It has been very well said that ‘Honour is Mutual’. All human beings want to be treated respectfully. A mutually respectful relationship between the employer and employees and among the various hierarchies of employees should be created.

Trust-

Mutual respect enhances mutual trust. Fairness and transparency must be practiced at all hierarchical levels. Fair and transparent decision-making increases the level of trust of employees towards the employer. Purity of intentions must be practiced at employer and employee level. This will win the trust of customers also. Once mutual trust is developed there will be no need of formally assessing the performance of employees. The resources thus saved, can be used in research and innovation.

Love- Love at workplace is about care and concern for others and the domain we live in. There should be awareness about others, their problems and empathetic approach towards them.

Humane Aspects- Employees should work with a sense of mercy, tenderness, thoughtfulness, kindness, warm-heartedness and unselfish way.

Dependability- The employees should be self-driven, independent, confident and committed towards the achievement of goals; they should able to handle the problems and difficulties.

Integrity- Individual’s values must be in line with the organizational values. Conflict between the individual’s personal and organizational goals may lead to alienation of the individual at workplace.

Equity- Objectivity in the behavior and decision-making must be practiced. Employees should be treated equitably. Impartial evaluation of employees, fairness in giving rewards and recognition enhances faith in the organization.

4.2 Transcendence via work:

Attitudes of employees should be shaped in a way that they look for meaning and purpose in their work, think beyond the self and feel connected to the society. Thus, there will be a sense of enlightenment in work, the work would produce overwhelming feeling of joy and excitement and a positive energy. Employees should be inspired to do gistful and worthwhile work that leads to attainment of higher purposes.

4.3 Sustainability Perspective:

Sustainability can be assured by continuous self-audit and correction in the spiritual behavior and attitude at workplace, if any. As spiritual behavior at workplace is an inside-out approach, it calls for internal transformation of the individual. Meditation, Yoga and Pranayam are the techniques through which mind can be trained and inner calmness can be achieved.

Sustaining spiritual practices is indeed a difficult task. People may start with enthusiasm but give up later on therefore sustaining the practices is also very important. Traditionally tried methods for this are –

Focused spiritual leadership- Focused spiritual leadership plays a key role in establishing ethical and virtue centric system and facilitation of workplace spirituality.

Self -Monitoring – Employees should exhibit expressive controls on their activities for self-monitoring. Various self-monitoring tools can be devised to help employees evaluate and correct themselves.

Reading- Reading inspirational scripture on a regular basis helps in the intellectual growth of the individuals that in turn facilitate sustainability.

Mentoring- Any senior person in the organization should serve as mentor for the reinforcement of spiritual behavior and train the employees. External consultancy and mentoring may also be useful.

Inspiring employees- Employees can be inspired to sustain the spiritual practices by real experience sharing of achievements through practice of spirituality. Employees can also be rewarded for their spiritual behavior.

Physical/Spiritual Exercises- In a healthy body resides a healthy mind. Organization must make it mandatory for all, to do Yoga, Pranayam, and Meditation. These activities must be given space in the fixed organizational schedule everyday. The benefits of adopting these practices have been already proved scientifically.

Sacred Gathering (Satsang) –Company of Guru, company of likeminded people who would reinforce each other’s resolve helps in sustenance of spirituality. Lethargy, at times, prevails on individuals and they give up spiritual practices. In this situation, despite of known benefits of practicing spirituality, its persistence becomes difficult. To overcome the forces of lethargy, regular satsang is necessary.

5. CONCLUSION:

The field of workplace spirituality lacks a comprehensive model for inculcation of spirituality in organizations; consequently, its implementation is restricted.

A spiritual workplace provides an environment to the employee, which is conducive to unleash their hidden

potential, by providing them opportunities and means of internal transformation, ensuring ethical and moral behavior, increased job satisfaction levels and productivity. It creates a trend of respect, trust, responsibility, authenticity and commitment among the employees which results in to a lively and liked workplace that further solves the problems of employee detainment. Workplace spirituality can be inculcated through the proposed model. This model may prove out to be a promising model to address unserved needs of the field.

6. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

The components constituting the proposed model are based on existing literature. As the nature of existing literature is non-exhaustive, there may be different views for constituting components of this model. Further, the empirical study of the topic is yet to complete. Adding more details of existing literature and its empirical extension can be the areas for future researches. The presented model is just a beginning, which can be explored and expanded in future.

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