

# ***Designing Professional Development for the Knowledge Era***

## **Wisdom Leadership: Exploring its Relation to Spirituality**

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Centre for Vocational Education and Training  
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# Wisdom Leadership: Exploring its Relation to Spirituality

## The Need for Wisdom Leadership

Willis Harman – eminent futurist at the Stanford Research Institute and regent of the University of California – once pointed out the level of opportunity and the responsibility that business leaders (at all levels) face in these stressful days of global communication, global economics, and global competition:<sup>1</sup>

*Leaders in world business are the first true planetary citizens. They have worldwide capability and responsibility; their domains transcend national boundaries. Their decisions affect not just economies, but societies; and not just direct concerns of business, but world problems of poverty, environment, and security. World business will be a key factor in the ultimate resolution of the macro-problem. It crosses national boundaries with much more ease than do political institutions and the business corporation is a far more flexible and adaptive organization than the bureaucratic structures of government. Up to now, there has been no guiding ethic... (but) such a new ethos for business may be in the process of forming.*

What is this guiding ethic, this new ethos? One name for it is wisdom leadership – where wisdom is more than the sum of our knowledge, intelligence, experience, and innovative thinking. True wisdom is the “deep understanding, keen discernment, and sound judgment”<sup>2</sup> that draws from a level of self-insight, personal and organizational values, and cultural broad-mindedness. It will require this level of wisdom to proactively address the pressing issues that so characterize our world in the 21st century...

*The globalization of national economies.* No nation and no company is an island unto itself, unaffected by economic problems or successes elsewhere. Our communication technology links people virtually everywhere on the planet. However, our awareness of being a global family is just beginning to catch up with these developments. Our human family includes both people on the other side of our desk and people on the other side of the world – a collective consciousness that has a profound impact on all phases of our life and work. Our challenge is to develop innovative practices of economic collaboration for mutual benefit: “us vs. them” doesn’t work within global village economics.

*The evolution to knowledge-based enterprises.* Knowledge is a new type of resource, more like a flame than an object. With objects, like an apple, if we take some away, eventually nothing is left. With a flame, we can light a thousand candles so they all have flames, including the original. In the same way, knowledge is expandable, diffusive, transportable, and shareable – particularly with the explosive growth of the global Internet. We still often operate with a vocabulary and with management systems based on producing objects, not flames, but we must embrace knowledge as the key asset for generation of wealth.

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<sup>1</sup> From *Global Mind Change: The New Age Revolution in the Way We Think*, Willis Harman, 1990, Werner, New York

<sup>2</sup> This definition of “wisdom” is from the Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, 1998.

*The pace of technological evolution.* Electronics is but one field in which rapid technological advances make products obsolete within a year or two. We live in a world impacted by developments in disease-resistant crops; gene splicing; fuel cells; advanced ceramics, alloys, and composites; “smart” membranes; computer-aided design and manufacturing; artificial intelligence; optical computing; universal Internet access; and so on. Our challenge is to be more than just reactive or even responsive, but to be proactive in *choosing* and valuing what we give birth to technologically.

*The rigors of global and local competition.* Corporate globalization and the explosion of technology have changed profoundly the nature of competition. Speed rules in an era of hyper-competition, in which competitors are finding more and more ways to collaborate, even inventing new industries together. Rather than competing for a piece of the pie, they’re busy expanding the pie itself.

*The state of “continuous discontinuity”.* Since the 1960s we have been in a period in which seemingly sudden discontinuities with past trends continue to emerge. Each shift alters the field of business opportunities, government policy, and social lifestyle. Our challenge is to develop flexible, innovative plans and responses across a variety of possible future scenarios.

*The stresses of 21<sup>st</sup> century lifestyles.* In 1900, only 4 percent of the American population was over sixty-five, and the top four causes of death were the acute, infectious diseases (diphtheria, cholera, smallpox, and typhoid). In 1990, 15 percent of the population was over sixty-five and the top four causes of death were vascular (heart attack, etc.), cancer, diabetes, and cirrhosis of the liver. And according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 75 percent of the incidence of these diseases is brought about by our lifestyles. This self-destructive approach to life can be found throughout the world, not just in the USA. It is intricately linked with our work cultures, our technologies, our attitudes toward stress, and our values.

*The global prosperity gap.* In 1960, countries located north of the equator were about 20 times richer than those south of the equator. Thirty years later, countries in the Northern Hemisphere were 50 times richer despite vast amounts of economic aid, trade, loans, and catch-up industrialization in countries in the Southern Hemisphere. This trend has continued, year after year, into this century. Today, the wealthiest 20 percent of the world’s population now earns approximately 85 percent of total world income, while the poorest 20 percent earns just over one percent. This growing disparity cannot and should not be sustained. It threatens both economic and social stability and the basic tenets of morality that support that stability.

It will take true wisdom to create a new future for ourselves and for our children’s children. Business leadership plays a key role in transforming society and our quality of life, and the creative challenge for corporations is to develop business models of value-exchange that resonate with goodness, not just goods.

Buckminster Fuller once noted in the 1980s that over 50 percent of the world’s population live at a higher standard of material living than 99 percent of the population lived in 1900. Yet for every technological advance, we seem to produce an adverse impact, socially or

environmentally. As we face the challenges of the new millennium, a key question is, “Who’s in charge here?”

What may appear to be purely business or technology decisions are really *human* choices that require our highest wisdom. These decisions mirror our consciousness and values. The partnership of business and human values requires a high level of wisdom in our leadership. Business without wisdom produces a barren world and lifestyle – a barrenness that is insufficient to handle the complexities and challenges we face in the coming decades. This means tapping into a level of wisdom characterized by integrity and caring, and making business decisions in light of that higher wisdom and values.

### **Wisdom Leadership and Spirituality – A Dynamic Controversy**

Many people around the world are highly sceptical and suspicious of using the word “spiritual” in relation to wisdom leadership and business life. They feel that it comes too close to the concept of “religion” – and all the conflicts that can arise from religious differences. Some feel that spirituality is too personal, and can be compromised if it is brought into candid conversations at work. Others feel that business – as well as education, government, and other kinds of organizations – should be kept secular and thus kept non-religious and non-spiritual.

In light of such sentiments, it might seem “wise” to avoid the perspective of spirituality in any discussion of wisdom leadership, and simply focus on other sources that leaders can draw from for the “deep understanding, keen discernment, and sound judgment” that characterizes true wisdom. But can we really do so and still be thorough and unbiased in our quest to discover the nature of wisdom leadership – especially in light of a broad movement around the world that says that spirituality can be the source of the highest wisdom for managing any enterprise?

A crystallizing point in this debate about the value and role of spirituality in “wisdom leadership” occurred over a decade ago between a management guru and a CEO in the USA, and that is where our exploration begins...

The morning of April 6, 1993 was not “just another day at the office” for William George, CEO of Medtronic Inc., the world’s largest producer of medical electronics. He opened the business section of his local newspaper and was startled to see the headline, “Spiritual Talk has No Place in Secular Corporation.” The article, written by management guru Tom Peters<sup>3</sup>, included:

*I’ve long argued that effective individual and organizational performance is largely a by-product of an ethical, committed, spirited, joyous leader... But when the talk turns to the spiritual side of leadership, I mostly want to run. In tapping the needed imagination and curiosity, let’s leave the Bible, Koran, and facile talk of spiritual leaders at home.*

William George responded by having the newspaper publish an “open letter to Tom Peters,” in which he said (in part):

*Dear Tom, You’ve got it all wrong! Your column shows a lack of understanding about what really motivates employees, and people in general.*

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<sup>3</sup> Author of *In Search of Excellence*, *Thriving on Chaos*, and many other business best-selling books

*My business experience suggests that the vast majority of employees of corporations are motivated... by making meaningful contribution to others through their work. Appealing to these deeper motivations is indeed the spiritual side of leadership that Max de Pree (Chairman of Hermann Miller, Inc.) and Bob Greenleaf (author of "Servant Leadership") have both practiced and written about so meaningfully, yet which you say makes you "want to run."*

George went on to express how he and his company set priorities that tap into those deeper, spiritual-based motivations, so that "leading by values" replaced "managing by objectives." He then articulated those values in priority order:

*They are, first of all, restoring people to full health; next, serving customers with products and services of unsurpassed quality; recognising the personal worth of employees; making a fair profit and return for shareholders; and maintaining good citizenship as a company.*

What was his wisdom about successfully managing this set of priorities over the long term? He said in his letter to Peters:

*You may be surprised to see that "maximized shareholder value" is not our first objective, as it is for many companies. Medtronic is not in the business of "maximizing shareholder value"; rather, our purpose is to "maximize patient value." The "real bottom line" for Medtronic is the patients who were restored to full life and health last year by Medtronic products ...*

*At Medtronic we believe that if we first serve our customers well, provide products and services of unsurpassed quality, and empower our employees to fulfil themselves and the company's mission, we will indeed provide an outstanding return for our shareholders. And the results of the past 30 years, or the past 8 years, seem to validate that approach: \$1,000 invested in 1960 in Medtronic stock would be worth \$1.65 million today, or \$1,000 invested in 1985 would be worth \$9,000 today.<sup>4</sup>*

George then concluded:

*At Medtronic, we don't mix religion and business, but we certainly don't shy away from the spiritual side of our work and the deeper meaning of our mission to save lives.*

Peters responded to George's open letter in his own newsletter, "Tom Peters on Achieving Excellence":

*John, let me be clear. I find the idea of "spirituality in the workplace" appalling... I find it amusing – instructive – that the two columns of mine (out of 490 in the past nine-plus years) that have drawn the most flak are the one on spirituality and one that derided, in the 1992 presidential campaign, Ross Perot as a potential tyrant-in-waiting.*

Peters included a "corporate values statement" with 10 values for his consulting company (drafted just for his article), and then added:

*Does that show abiding respect for the individual? Our customers? Our suppliers? Our community? I hope so. I think so. Is it spiritual? I think not. I hope not. [his emphasis]*

Two years later, in a Foreword to the book "The New Bottom Line",<sup>5</sup> William George elaborated on his own thoughts:<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For both periods of time, this is approximately double (2x) the compounded, annual growth rate of the average stocks of American companies during these time periods.

<sup>5</sup> *The New Bottom Line*, John Renesch and Bill DeFoore, 1996, New Leaders Press, San Francisco.

*Discussions of ethics and values lead directly to the source of those values, spirituality. Too often, writers confuse spirituality and religion, and therefore demur in fear of imposing a certain set of religious beliefs.*

*We are all spiritual beings, composed of minds, bodies, and a spiritual side, whether we acknowledge this portion of ourselves or not. To ask employees only to utilize their minds and bodies, while not acknowledging the power of the spirit which resides in every person, not only diminishes their individual gifts and contributions, but it limits their ability to contribute fully to their work and their organizations.*

*To unleash the whole capability of the individual – mind, body, and spirit – gives enormous power to the organization. This has nothing to do with religion. People of many faiths, or no faith at all for that matter, can join together in a common cause of service to others through their work. To confuse spirituality with religion only diminishes the capacity of the organization to tap into the spiritual reservoir which resides in each of us.*

### The Forward Momentum

Over the next 10 years, the debate about spirituality and leadership alternately simmered and boiled, while the momentum for spiritual-based leadership pressed ahead. From 1990-2000, over 360 books were published in English on “spirit and spirituality at work”. Between 1999 and 2002 there were more than 35 major conferences focused on this theme – attended by business leaders, consultants, and academics in countries as diverse as Canada, USA, Mexico, Guatemala, U.K., Holland, Switzerland, Hungary, Slovenia, India, and Australia.

In 1995, one of Asia’s top ranking business schools, the Indian Institute of Management in Calcutta, India, inaugurated its “Management Center for Human Values” to bring practical, spiritual reality to business. And in 2001, a special interest group was formed on “Management, Spirituality, and Religion” at the Academy of Management, the primary professional organization for business school professors in North America.

All of these developments were fuelled by media coverage, such as the 1999 cover story in *Business Week* magazine, USA, which included:

*A recently completed research project by McKinsey & Co. Australia shows that when companies engage in programmes that use spiritual techniques for their employees, productivity improves and turnover is greatly reduced. The first empirical study of the issue, “A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America,” published in October by Jossey-Bass, found that employees who work for organizations they consider to be spiritual are less fearful, less likely to compromise their values, and more able to throw themselves into their jobs. Fully 60% of those polled for the book say they believe in the beneficial effects of spirituality in the workplace, so long as there's no bully-pulpit promotion of traditional religion.*

In addition to these developments, there was a surge of international non-profit organizations formed to support this awakening – often created by business people. Under the inspiration of Judi Neal, her Association for Spirit at work banded together with the World Business Academy, the European Bahá’í Business Forum, and the Spirit in Business Institute to

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<sup>6</sup> William George also authored the business best-seller, *The Authentic Leader: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*, 2004, Josey-Bass, USA.



sponsor the “International Spirit at Work Award” that honours “pioneers in a growing trend of highly successful organizations that explicitly nurture spirituality among employees.”<sup>7</sup>

At their third annual award ceremony – on October 1, 2004 in Zurich Switzerland – 1 of the 10 honourees was the Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) Banking Group of Melbourne, Australia. As ANZ states on their website, the honour was for “sustained commitment to cultural transformation and our efforts in creating a workplace where people can find purpose, meaning and values.” Between 2002 and 2005, 30 other organizations from a wide variety of industries and nationalities also received this award.

But... What was a major bank like ANZ doing in the company of “spiritual pioneers”? Here is what CEO John McFarlane had to say:

*At one time in Australia banks were hated. We felt that if we could create a bank with a human face, that would be very different. We came up with the word BREAKOUT – to have the courage to be different.*

*Many people will invest their whole lives in this company. We have to create the kind of company that is worthy of that investment. In doing that, two things come to mind. First, it is wrong of us to say that we want that investment exclusively for us in the company, and to ignore the other areas of life, including family and spirituality – the maturity of an individual in a spiritual, psychological, evolutionary sense. Second, people ask me about work/life balance. And I say it’s the wrong question. Get a life, and fit work in there somewhere. Work should be a meaningful part of your life.*

John McFarlane’s commitment to having their employees grow “in a spiritual, psychological, evolutionary sense” is an important concern of the bank’s leadership. As a result, they have designed a culture transformation initiative to do just that. How do other banks around the world view their “radical” breakout programme?

*The top banks in the world get together once a year and I’ve been asked to talk about culture change in banking to this group. That wouldn’t have happened if people hadn’t seen the change...*

*With respect to our people there is no question that people are happier and more engaged bringing their whole selves to work. There is more volunteering in the community. They have more freedom at work to create their own environment. People are being much more creative using individual passions and bringing them to bear. People are really engaged, and staff satisfaction is so high... instead of getting 1,000 applicants we get 11,000 applicants for our graduate jobs now.*

*The performance ethic inside the business is incredible. We are one of the top 5 banks in the world for efficiency. We improved our margins by 20% over 6 yrs – no other bank in the world has done that.*

So, while the debates and scepticism about spirituality and leadership persist even today, spirituality has continued to emerge, slowly but surely, as a source of wisdom for business leadership.

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<sup>7</sup> For more information about these four organizations, and the International Spirit at Work Award, visit the website for the Association for Spirit at Work ([www.spiritatwork.org](http://www.spiritatwork.org))



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## Four contexts for wisdom leadership

One way to understand “wisdom leadership” in business is to examine the various *world views* about life and leadership that inform and influence a leader’s wisdom. Even more, each worldview becomes a reference point from which leaders draw their wisdom in conducting their day-to-day activities of relationship building, decision making, and serving and thriving in organizational life.

Over the last 100 years, four distinct contexts (world views, paradigms) for business leadership have emerged, each representing a fundamental shift in how people view the *nature* of business leadership. Each, therefore, can shape the perspectives and reactions of leaders, and can provide an ever evolving source of wisdom for guiding an organization.

The four contexts are:

- 1 Paternal-mechanistic.** From this view, business is “survival of the fittest,” and competition is a win-lose game. The goal of business and its leadership is wealth-creation (specifically, profit-maximization) on behalf of business owners. Business leaders adopt the military model of command-and-control to serve the overall goals for efficiency and productivity. The common employee is usually seen as an interchangeable part in the big machine, expected to perform within clearly defined parameters.

The *paternal-mechanistic* context for business leadership dominated leadership thinking well into the 1960’s, and still continues to dominate in some circles today. This context offers the wisdom of:

- Honouring the experience and wisdom of “those who have paved the way before us.”
- Using resources efficiently.

However, it has two limitations:

- 1 Discounting the inherent capability and motivation of people to do good and be good.
- 2 Believing that life (including people and nature) can and should be used and controlled for achieving one’s own (self-centred) goals.

- 2 Humanistic.** From this view, the purpose of business and leadership is still wealth-creation, but with a win-win mentality in which “enlightened self-interest” supplants “selfish-interest.” The leader’s job is to help employees become self-actualized “intra-preneurs” who invest both their emotions and their minds, for their own sake and the organization’s. People are considered a resource to be managed sensitively. “Win-win” problem-solving is prominent in this context.

The *humanistic* context of business leadership first gained momentum in the 1960’s and became the norm of many major corporations by the 1980’s. Inherent in this context is the wisdom to complete the limitations of the paternal-mechanistic context:

- Recognizing the essential goodness and work ethic of people.
- Providing opportunities for individuals to actualize their potential, which includes self-actualisation as well as work abilities and aspirations.

However, it too has two limitations:

- 1 Focusing on needs, where motivation occurs when something is perceived as missing.
  - 2 Focusing on individualism, where the "win-win" solutions are to promote individual interests, and do not necessarily include the interest of the organization as a whole, and other stakeholders such as society and nature.
- 3 Holistic.** From this view, the goal of business and leadership evolves beyond "wealth-creation for *shareholders*" to "wealth-creation for the optimal benefit of all *stakeholders*" – including shareholders, employees, customers, competitors, community, nature, society, and future generations. Leadership "control" lies more in having a common purpose and value-system rather than the "command-convince" or even "participative empowerment" leadership styles. This view recognizes that people are, in fact, the principal assets of wealth-creation, especially in the knowledge-intensive, learning organizations.

The *holistic* context for business leadership gained momentum in the mid-1970's, 80's and 90's. It has yet to emerge as the norm for major corporations, but it is increasing in strength through initiatives such as "corporate social responsibility." The wisdom contained in this context has the potential to complete the limitations of the humanistic worldview:

- Recognizing the interconnectivity of people, nature, and business enterprises.
- Emphasizing the holistic nature of values and principles from which to operate harmoniously and creatively.

But again, it has two limitations:

- 1 Basing motivation primarily on self-oriented achievement, even while it might benefit the larger whole.
  - 2 Focusing personal and business goals only on having a better "in-this-world" life, rather than taking into consideration the spiritual life that is both "in this world and transcends it."
- 4 Spiritual-based.** By the early 1990's, business leadership was primarily a mixture of these three contexts: paternal-mechanistic (its influence in decline); humanistic (in its prime); and holistic (on the rise). Yet another view of the nature of business leadership began to emerge, one based on spirituality.

The spiritual-based context sees people as spiritual in nature, with a particular spiritual purpose in life, along with "gifts" to help fulfil that purpose. Leadership in this context

focuses on assisting people to fulfil their life purpose while integrating that with the organization's "life purpose". The emerging *spiritual-based* context for business leadership provides its own particular wisdom:

- Focusing first on a relationship with a transcendental Source of consciousness
- Basing motivation primarily on selfless service – intending first and foremost to give and benefit the larger whole, with the skill and conscious attention to do this in a sustainable manner

This kind of wisdom is what S. K. Chakraborty – founder of the Management Centre for Human Values at the Indian Institute of Management in Calcutta, India – often heard in the late 1990's when he interviewed chairmen from some of the largest corporations in India, such as the State Bank of India and Hindustan Lever. In his subsequent book, "Wisdom Leadership: Dialogues and Reflections,"<sup>8</sup> he articulated some common sources of wisdom he found among these leaders:

*Some kind of spiritual anchorage has emerged as a common denominator through nearly all the leadership profiles presented here. ... Most of them have drawn inspiration from serving a national cause, through business or any other field of activity, beyond seeking individual glory.*

Today each of the four contexts of business leadership all currently co-exist, sometimes not very peacefully, in today's business world. Within a company, different leaders might operate from any one of these four contexts, and any single leader might operate from a blend of contexts.

### The practical wisdom of spiritual-based leaders

André Delbecq, former Dean of the Santa Clara University Business School near San Francisco, USA, has observed that from the spiritual-based context, the nature of business itself is transformed. Professor Delbecq is the founder and director of the "Institute for Spirituality of Organization Leadership" and continues to conduct their course on spiritual leadership in business attended by Silicon Valley CEOs as well as MBA students. His thoughts include:<sup>9</sup>

*I think a business exists to provide an innovative and compelling answer to a societal need in the form of a needed service or product. This is the discipline of business. When this purpose is approached through a spiritual lens, it will be shaped differently in many ways. The needs that you start becoming attentive to shift. You become willing to let go of many trivial and opportunistic concerns, and instead increasingly put energy into important challenges.*

*The transformational system you create to receive inputs and transform outputs will also shift, allowing greater attention to stewardship, justice and inclusiveness of the concerns of all stakeholders. The character of the organisation's culture will also shift. The relational culture of the organisation will be more attentive to the gifts of all, and compassionate regarding each person's needs.*

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<sup>8</sup> *Wisdom Leadership: Dialogues and Reflections*, S. K. Chakraborty, 1999, Wheeler Publishing, New Delhi

<sup>9</sup> The quotes appearing in this article from Andre Delbecq, Niranjana Jiang, Ramon Olle, Nilufer Merchant, Ricardo Levy, and Janiece Webb are based on interviews conducted by the Global Dharma Center for its "Spiritual-Based Leadership Research Programme." For more information, see [www.globaldharma.org/sbl-home.htm](http://www.globaldharma.org/sbl-home.htm)

*Because of this deeper perspective regarding the nature of business, a sense of patience and a greater willingness to endure hardship unfolds. All of the struggles of business leadership as a form of societal service take on a very different coloration when they are seen from a spiritual perspective. Servant leadership now becomes a reality.*

In keeping with Delbecq's point of view, one of the most striking features of the spiritual-based context for wisdom leadership is that the primary purpose of business, and of wisdom leadership, becomes *spiritual fulfilment* and *service to society*. Wealth creation is no longer the *goal* of a business; rather, it becomes a *means* for enabling and sustaining a broader purpose. This kind of wisdom goes beyond the "either-or" debate between traditional business success and spiritual leadership, as Tom Chappel, co-founder of "Tom's of Maine" (a pioneer and innovator in the "natural" health and hygiene products industry) shared in his 1996 best-seller, *The Soul of a Business*<sup>10</sup>:

*Christian mystics and saints have written about finding the via media – the middle way. The Hebrew prophets often spoke of finding the "good way." I've found the middle way for Tom's of Maine, where we use our head and heart in planning business strategies.*

*We make room for spirit in the world of commerce. Profit is only a means to the end of fulfilling the company's beliefs (and) its higher aims: to do good for our customers, to treat our employees well, to contribute to our community, to protect our environment, and in general to tread lightly on the human spirit. If you nurture the soul of your business, not only can you compete with the biggest players in the game, you will add meaning to your work and make a real contribution to society.*

Drawing wisdom from a spiritual context also makes a difference in the level of responsibility that a leader takes towards all stakeholders. Niran Jiang is a former executive with S.C. Johnson and Coca Cola in the USA; and today she heads the Institute of Human Excellence in Balgowlah, Australia. Her broad view of responsibility for all was developed while she spent her childhood in Inner Mongolia during the Chinese Cultural Revolution:

*Spirituality is everything; I don't put it in a separate compartment. For me, life is life-force, the connection with the universe. I want to contribute what I can in a process of "whole system change" to create a world that works for everyone – not just humans, but for all species, plants, everything that has a soul. And everything has a soul for me. I think this has been an indirect result of growing up in China, where you grew up with a strong sense of collectiveness that's above individuality.*

That kind of broader perspective also includes spans of time, as Ramón Ollé, President of Epson Europe, elaborates:

*I understand spirituality as the inner part of a human... the most inner part of ourselves. Spirituality is really the inner force – not only in the exceptional moments, the super tasks, but also in our daily life.*

*There are certain measures in a corporation that cannot be evaluated in a month, in half a year, or even in a year. Our responsibility as leaders is not about ensuring that the company survives for even the next few years. Our responsibility is to ensure that the company will survive and thrive for the next 120 years. We cannot just pay attention to the short term. When you begin to think this way, you are really entering into the spirit of family, into the spirit of a multi-cultural environment, and into the spirit of humanity as a whole.*

<sup>10</sup> *The Soul of a Business: Managing for Profit and the Common Good*, Tom Chappel, 1996, Bantam, New York

Finally, Nilofer Merchant, founder of Rubicon Consultants and a former market researcher at Apple Computers, gave us this advice about the courage and faith it takes to developing oneself as a spiritual-based wisdom leader:

*It takes some major changes internally to choose to measure your leadership different than the way the world now measures things. Right now the things that can be outwardly seen and stated on a piece of paper are valued, such as money, title, position, and power. Sometimes you may not even have the words to describe how you are going to measure your spiritual-based leadership; it may be something you actually have to discover over time. It will require a whole new skill development.*

*The upside to all of this is that this will cultivate a true sense of confidence and clarity knowing that you are living in alignment with your values, that you are living true to yourself. You won't have an inner dull, aching pain anymore. You will have purity and bliss, and a sense of being connected to all things.*

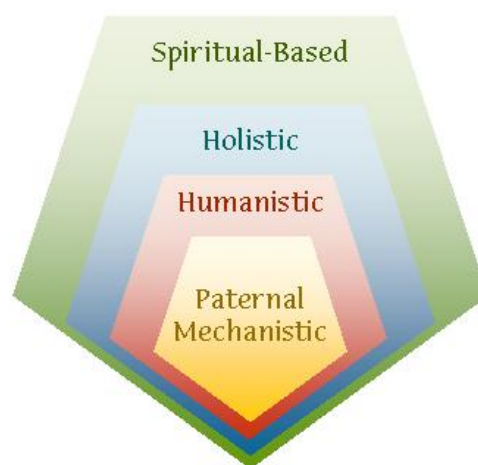
*In the past I had never defined myself as a big risk taker. However, as I have walked the path of becoming a spiritual-based person, I can see the courage that it has taken. To me the greatest definition of courage is to be willing, without any prior knowledge or experience, to take the risk to transform into someone that you have no idea how to become.*

### **Today's need for wisdom leadership based in spirituality**

The wisdom inherent in the spiritual-based context is based upon a shift from focusing on our relationship with *creation* to our relationship with the *transcendent Source* of creation – that Source or consciousness which is the unchanging basis of this phenomenal, temporal world that undergoes continuous change. From this basis of wisdom, business leaders promote the spiritual fulfilment of everyone touched by the business: employees, customers, competitors, suppliers, shareholders, and society. Likewise, business leaders develop *selflessness* in their service to society beyond their own self-interest, seeing the Source in all whom they serve.

The potential of the *spiritual-based* context is to bring forth the wisdom found in the other contexts. That is, it can:

- 1 Fulfil the potential of the *paternal-mechanistic* context by:
  - Honouring the experience and wisdom of "those who have paved the way before us."
  - Using resources efficiently
- 2 Fulfil the potential of the humanistic context by:
  - Recognizing the essential goodness and work ethic of people.
  - Providing opportunities for individuals to actualize their potential, which includes self-actualisation as well as work abilities and aspirations.
- 3 Fulfil the potential of the holistic context by:
  - Recognizing the interconnectivity of people, nature, and business enterprises.
  - Emphasizing the universal nature of principles from which to operate harmoniously and creatively.





- 4 While offering its own unique wisdom:
  - Focusing first on a relationship with a transcendental Source of consciousness, within which a relationship with creation finds new meaning
  - Basing motivation primarily on selfless service – intending first and foremost to give and benefit the larger whole, with the skill and conscious attention to do this in a sustainable manner

Thus, the four contexts are nested: with the progression outward from paternal-mechanistic to spiritual-based, each completes and expands upon the other:

Ricardo Levy, Chairman of Catalytica, Inc, USA (producers of catalytic inventions for the energy and *pharmaceutical* industries) underscores this opportunity to draw from spirituality in order to bring the wisdom of all four contexts into business leadership:

*There is such a need for a complete rebirth of trust in our business leaders. Leaders in business have an important role and responsibility to help society. This is an important time for us to stop and inquire as to what has happened and what we have learned.*

*The very act of seeking to integrate our outer experiences with our inner voice is a key element of spirituality. In difficult moments, we realize that the skills that our ordinary business training provides are not enough to enable us to make good decisions. We are challenged with the need to reach deeper, the need to draw from our spirituality to find the right course.*

*This ability to reach within ourselves goes beyond our normal mental exercises and capabilities. So it is important to know where your inner feeling comes from. The more you consciously attempt to reach within, the more the quality of your decisions will be enhanced. We have to connect with a much more human universe and be willing to take the time that is needed to make our decisions from this deeply felt inner guidance.*

Where does Levy's own "inner feeling" come from? He once described his spiritual view of life at a 1½ day forum on "Leadership, Values and Spirituality" at Harvard University:

*Spirituality is a deep connection with a force greater than myself; it is a very individual, lived experience that includes both longing and belonging, expressed often and perhaps best through love and compassion.*

Motorola Corporation's Janiece Webb – who started her career as a night shift worker on the manufacturing line, and ended up as a Senior Vice President having run \$3 billion businesses with over 8,000 employees – would certainly agree:

*Spirituality is very important to me as a person. If ever there's a time for spiritual leadership, it's now. You must connect with a person's soul, at the deepest core. It can sometimes be lonely but you also feel happy and grounded inside. You also embrace your own humanness and imperfections and it keeps you humble as a leader and yet still strong.*

Business executives like Ricardo Levy and Janiece Webb are not the only ones speaking out today about spiritual-based leadership. Top commentators on business issues have added their voice more strongly than ever. For example, Marc Gunther, editor of *Fortune* Magazine, authored the 2004 best seller *Faith and Fortune* in which he discusses "what the great religious traditions have to teach today's businesspeople about creating sustainable enterprises." His book relates in detail how...

*An exciting new model of conducting business is taking hold, not only in small, socially responsible companies like Ben & Jerry's but inside such bulwarks of the Fortune 500 as Ford, Citigroup, and*



*DuPont. Bit by bit, almost imperceptibly, this new model is replacing a century-old approach that was rooted in the industrial era and looked at business as a series of discrete, win-lose transactions.*

And *that*, ironically, brings us full circle, back to management guru Tom Peters. Ten years after Peters wrote in his newspaper column, “When talk turns to the spiritual side of leadership, I mostly want to run,” Gunther boldly asked Peters to review his book. Here is what Peters had to say about *Faith and Fortune*:

*I arrived at this book as an avowed, vocal sceptic of the ‘spirituality-in-business movement.’ I departed as a...convert.*

*Even cynics should devour this marvellous book. Marc Gunther makes a compelling case that the right things matter – and pay off. Yet he exudes not a dollop of naiveté.*

That “conversion” of Tom Peters is similar to what is occurring with business leaders throughout the world. An experience with Bob Galvin, chairman of the executive committee on Motorola’s Board of Directors, brings this lesson into sharp focus and confirms that spirituality can indeed be a source of wisdom leadership. Galvin once stated to a group of Motorola Vice Presidents that the primary job of leaders was threefold: inspiring acts of faith (“things are do-able that are not necessarily provable”); spreading hope; and building trust.

One of the VP’s in the audience asked, with some scepticism in his voice, how these values related to the “real world of business.” Galvin replied firmly and forcefully that executives must develop strong character in themselves and others, as well as good technical and financial skills.

Then Galvin concluded with his own proverb for wisdom leadership: “Faith, hope, and trust... Theology is very practical business.”