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**Developing Practical Spirituality in the Workplace**

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*It seems that all the overripe hierarchies of the world, from corporations to nation states, are in trouble and are calling, however reluctantly, on their people for more creativity, commitment and innovation. If these corporate bodies can demand those creative qualities which by long tradition belong so directly to our being, to our soul, they must naturally make room for their disturbing presence within their buildings and their borders.- David Whyte*

In this paper we will

- + introduce a 5-pointed holistic definition of spirituality
- + outline what one might expect to find in an organisation which practices spirituality at work
- + explain the terms 'emotional intelligence' and 'spiritual intelligence'
- + demonstrate how we have worked to develop emotional and spiritual intelligence in several organisations
- + conclude by introducing the concept of the quadruple bottom line - businesses that are economically viable, environmentally sound, socially responsible, and spiritually intelligent.

**Background**

For 40 years the Findhorn Foundation\* has been seeking to demonstrate the links between the spiritual, social, economic and environmental aspects of life, and to provide a setting within which we can become more conscious about work, relationships and the natural world.

Simultaneously, despite its increased affluence, a crisis of meaning has been developing in the western world. All types of people, from disaffected teenagers to MDs and CEOs, are asking, 'Now what?' or even, 'So what?' as stress levels and competition increase, and failure, and fear of failure, haunts even the most successful. Some of the answers are coming from the East e.g. meditation and spiritual practice; some from the land e.g. organic farming;

and some from within each one of us whenever we bring our creativity, our intuition and our passion to work.

Such questions, and the responses they elicit, start to form a living expression of spirituality at work.

What do we mean by 'spirituality' and how can we recognise its presence in the workplace?

Spirituality is a buzz word these days. Scarcely a week goes by in the UK when one newspaper or another does not carry an article linking spirituality and work. As I write this piece, I am surrounded by an article from the Financial Times, 'Souls restored in the workplace', another one from the Independent, 'Why God is moving into the workplace' and one from Business AM on our own local initiative, 'Green shoots of business emerge at Findhorn'.

But what does it all mean? Is spirituality just the next area that business is seeking to colonise?

Attempting to define spirituality is, in some ways, attempting to name the unnameable and to define the indefinable, to use words to describe that which lives between us and within us. It is therefore an exercise in approximation. Nonetheless, when we use the term spirituality, it is clearly important to have an understanding of what we are referring to. For us, in the Findhorn Foundation Consultancy Service (FFCS)\*\* it has at least five, linked dimensions.

Spirituality at work involves:

(i) Working towards the realisation of the highest potential in each individual

To do this means working from a paradigm of collaboration rather than competition. It involves seeing the potential for good in each person that we relate to, be they client, colleague, manager or competitor, and enabling each of us to be the very best that we can be. It means working from a basis of trust instead of mistrust, and seeking to support and develop one another, rather than undermine and sabotage each other's efforts.

This, like the other four dimensions outlined below, is a lifelong journey. While the words are easy and may even appear trite, we will give some examples later in this article as to the kind of practical steps we have seen being taken in organisations that are serious about grounding 'spirituality' at work.

(ii) Seeking to embody spiritual values (love, acceptance, compassion, forgiveness, integrity, honesty) in all that we do and in all our relationships.

This too is easier said than done. We spring so easily to judgement; hang on to grudges; take secret delight, or at least comfort, in someone else's perceived 'failure'; conspire to hide the truth from our colleagues, our

customers, our competitors and ourselves; and daily fail to act with full integrity. Seeking to embody what we might term 'spiritual values' should not become yet another goal to measure ourselves by, something else to pass or fail at. Rather it is a response to the call to live more in harmony with our true nature, something that we feel good about when we do it, and that leaves us with a clear conscience. This is not something to measure empirically. We know when we are doing it.

(iii) Making space for all that stops us - we might call this working with the shadow, and the 'inner critic' or judge.

Paradoxically, as we reach for the heights of (i) and (ii), we need equally to plumb the depths and dig in the dirt for the tools that will help us. Failing to do so will render all our best intentions merely that - intentions. Ten years ago, the Rio Earth Summit generated vast tracts of paper promises. We will do A, B, and C ... to protect the planet. Cut carbon emissions, protect biodiversity, preserve the rainforest etc. etc. Great thinking and wonderful aspirations but, as we prepare now for Rio +10 in Johannesburg this September it is clear how much of it has proved to be merely aspirational. One of the many reasons is the complete failure to look at the shadow\*\*\* - to examine the blocks that will stop us from achieving all that we set out to achieve. These may be political, personal, biological - it matters not. They must be brought out into the light, and unpacked and examined or they will surely defeat us and our best efforts.

On a personal level, Robert Bly has a good image for this : the little, invisible, black bag we carry on our shoulders through life. As we move through life, it is as if each hurt and disappointment, each wound and experience of suffering, is put into a little black bag we carry with us. As we grow older, the bag gets heavier and heavier. As it is invisible we are often unaware that we are carrying it. But it impedes our progress, limits our effectiveness and slows us down. If we fail to look at it, the hurts and disappointments inside it fester away, brewing a more and more potent and poisonous mixture. But if we stop from time to time, set the bag down, open it up and look at what is in it, we simultaneously start to release its power over us.

An organisation that seeks to bring spirituality into its workplace will also make space for this. In terms of SWOT analysis, this can be seen as the focus on 'Weaknesses' and 'Threats' alongside 'Strengths' and 'Opportunities'. But we need to deepen this practice and look too at our personal and relational shadows, at our inner critics and the voices in our own heads and hearts that tell us we are not good enough, that we can't do it, and that collude with our sense of inadequacy.

(iv) Acting in ways that acknowledge, embrace and enhance the presence of something beyond the physical here and now , beyond that which we can perceive with our senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing.

In an organisation where this dimension of spirituality is thriving and

apparent, we might expect to see a willingness to live in the realm of chaos and uncertainty in place of the known, familiar and expected; an honouring of the intuitive and of 'hunches' in place of rule-governed behaviour where everything needs to be justified in terms of pre-set criteria. We might see managers who say 'I don't know' instead of fearing for their jobs if they appear 'ignorant' or unable to solve a problem. We might read and hear words and metaphors that look to nature as a teacher, and that pay attention to natural and seasonal rhythms by, for example, planning more internal work on purpose, mission and vision in the winter months where the days are short and the focus has traditionally been on introspection; and more outward, goal-oriented activity in the spring and summer. We might, above all, feel the presence of mystery and surprise, and relish the joy of spontaneity and the wonder of paradox.

#### (v) Understanding the holographic principle

The holographic principle is an invitation to see the world as deeply interconnected and to understand reality as comprising nests of holograms. When an issue arises in my work I can choose to look at it as if through a microscope - what exactly is going on with this issue? And that can be helpful. I can, however, also choose to look at it from a 'macroscopic' perspective . How is this problem a reflection of bigger problems in the company? How might these in turn be connected to wider issues in society and in the world? Seeing my life and my work as taking place within a multi-layered hologram, where the seeds and blueprint at one level are present in the next and also in the previous, gives me far greater perspective. It means that I can expect that as I solve 'my' issue it will have an impact on the rest of the company, and in some small way even on the world. In an organisation which embraces a willingness to see and think holographically (which might also be termed 'systemically' or with reference to 'the field' within which I operate) we might expect to see an emphasis on resolving conflicts and dealing with issues rather than letting them fester; an awareness of trends in the organisation and how they might reflect world issues; and less scapegoating and more awareness of the roles (both official and unofficial) that we currently occupy and how to move beyond them.

#### What is Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Spiritual Intelligence (SQ)?

Linked to this five-pointed definition of spirituality at work are the twin concepts of EQ and SQ.

Daniel Goleman coined the phrase Emotional Intelligence when he noticed how some people seemed to get on and become successful and popular without being particularly academic or intellectually bright or intelligent. He saw that another form of intelligence was at work - EQ. This is the intelligence that understands body language, senses moods, develops empathy, and cultivates self-awareness , persistence and motivation. In essence it is:

The ability to recognise the situation I am in; to read what you are feeling; be sensitive to that; and to adapt and behave accordingly.

Goleman cites Aristotle:

Anyone can become angry - that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way - that is not easy.

Not long after Goleman's framing of this, Danah Zohar formulated another idea - Spiritual Intelligence (SQ). She saw that, beyond IQ and EQ, there lies an intelligence that sometimes chooses not to adapt and behave inappropriately, and that stands against the mainstream. There is an intelligence that seeks to find meaning and value in our work and lives, that looks for, and creates, vision and purpose. An intelligence that is transformative and creative. This she terms Spiritual Intelligence.

OK - so how do you actually do it?

What follows are four examples of spirituality at work - brief case studies that demonstrate the development of EQ and SQ in the workplace.

Example One - Daring not to know

A couple of years ago, we were invited to work with an international campaigning organisation, for two-days in a small chateau outside Paris. Our brief was to facilitate a process that would lead to the generation of new ideas for a campaign that had been running for several years.

Midway through the afternoon of the first day, and following various games and exercises to loosen up the right brain\*\*\*\* we had generated several flip chart pages of ideas. As facilitators, we surveyed them and ventured the opinion that these ideas were not really all that new actually and were the type of thing they would have come up with after several hours of thinking anywhere and with anyone. We said we felt like tearing them all up and starting again. A hush descended on the room. Then, one woman, younger and probably with less of her own identity invested in the organisation, stood up, walked to the flip chart and, slowly at first then more and more energetically till finally she was shouting and jumping up and down, tore up all the work of the day so far. Then she sat down. We sat in silence with the 12 participants. Nobody spoke. Nobody moved. We sat like that for 20 minutes. Then, someone spoke. She spoke about the need to campaign from a place of love not fear, a place of compassion, not anger. Others agreed. The door was open. The next day, they generated 13 completely new, radically different ideas.

Key learning: Progress stemmed from daring to sit in the place of not knowing, of not having answers, of sitting with chaos and confusion and

despair without trying to fix it.

### Example Two -The Holographic principle at work

We had been working with part of a large multinational for over a year. It seemed to us that there was a difficulty in the relationship between the key manager and initiator of the project and the woman to whom he had ostensibly delegated management of the project. There was an unclarity in the relationship that was dogging the whole project. Accountability was poor, commitment levels low throughout, and when we met with all 20 project staff there was often a tension present which was felt by all but acknowledged by none.

It was not easy to find a way into this, and not wise to bring it up in front of the whole group where it would continue to be denied. Through working hard at building trust and at our own relationship with the team in general, and these two individuals in particular, we finally had a chance to talk with the two of them. After some gentle probing, the two agreed that there was an issue between them. They had had a brief sexual relationship some time ago which had ended uneasily. There was still attraction present but given their new management/subordinate relationship they felt it was impossible to talk about it and so it sat between them unexpressed, unacknowledged, uncompleted and in the way of the project's progress. We contracted a one - hour evening session with them at the end of which they contracted to meet and talk further about it within the next month. This in turn led to a much easier working relationship between the two of them, and, holographically, the energy within the project started to flow again.

Key learning: By adopting a holographic approach to the situation, and seeing that if one key relationship was blocked, the whole project would be similarly blocked and affected, our intervention could be targeted at the most effective point. Seeing the issue as both personal and systemic (i.e. it existed between these two individuals AND this may say something about gender issues or blocked energy within the project, AND attraction in the workplace and between people with different rank within the organisation is a common, societal issue) helps to make it safer to deal with.

### Example Three - Going deep into relationship (EQ) territory and working with the wisdom of the body

The first time we worked with one organisation, we were asked to deliver a three-day training in Developing Personal Power and Effectiveness. On the last day, in the morning, we felt moved to work on the dynamics in the group and suggested a 'sculpt' - a non-verbal process whereby one individual volunteers to work and stands in the centre of the room. They arrange in turn each of the others in the team as they, the volunteer, experiences them, arranging posture, distance, body language etc. etc. When all are set in

place, the facilitator asks the person to survey the room and share how it feels. S/he might also ask the other participants how they feel to be placed in this way in relation to the volunteer. The next phase involves the volunteer moving each of the others into the place and posture they would ideally like, and finally there is an opportunity for everyone to talk about that too.

When we offered this, the team leader boldly volunteered to work and arranged everyone as he experienced them. Some difficult relationships became very clear. We focussed in on one of them - a challenging relationship he, a white male, was having with a black female staff member. Slowing the process right down, and taking, literally, very small steps towards one another, noticing when it felt authentic and good and when it was not possible, they were enabled to look deeply at their relationship - at what they wanted, what stopped it happening and what steps they might take to move things forward. It was a deeply healing and moving moment for all of the team, and for us. The next day, the team leader sent us an e-mail saying that this had been a life-changing experience for him. For the first time in his life he felt he went to work and found friends instead of colleagues.

Key learning: The body carries a lot of wisdom. Working non-verbally, and slowing the process down so we can hear its wisdom can enable us to access information which would otherwise be unavailable. When such work is done in the presence of team members, the transparency involved can create a radical reframing of relationships.

#### Example Four - Working with creativity

One assignment saw us charged with building a sense of common purpose amongst 120 extremely diverse staff in South Yorkshire - staff who were about to run a huge, ambitious new Visitor Attraction built around the theme of sustainability. We had two weeks to do the work.

On Day One, we decided to take a risk and start with a dance - a wedding dance from the Shetlands. Now, for some of the 120 this was great news and they loved it. Others were shocked, disoriented and perturbed. They were cooks and cleaners, security staff and maintenance, and had come for staff training, they cried, not dancing! We stuck with it, and the next day ... we led another dance. We also played games. Then, little by little they started to offer some warm-ups of their own. One man led us, all 120 of us, in two minutes of iyogic breathing through alternate nostrils. Another, one of the night security guards, read out to us, with trembling voice and shaking hands, a poem he had written the day before. By the end of two weeks, they were crying out again - his time for more dancing!

Some two years later, the centre faced financial difficulties. Rather than see some of their colleagues made redundant while others retained their jobs, the sense of community was so strong that they all volunteered to take cuts in their hours and pay so that no single person would need to be out of a job.

The HR manager wrote to us saying that, 'I have never worked anywhere else where the team spirit has been so strong ... This, I think, is largely down to the wonderful job you did in the first two weeks of the Academy.' She put it down to us. We put it down to the dancing.

Key Learning: Engaging people in creative work and play can reveal parts of ourselves that we never knew we had. It can deepen the sense of community in the workplace, transform the working environment into a creative, lively, exciting place and enable individuals to bring more of themselves to work. We no longer need to leave the poet, artist, writer, dancer at home when we take ourselves to work. A wet and juicy working environment helps to create a responsive, flexible, creative company.

### Conclusion - the Quadruple Bottom Line

In this paper we have attempted to define what a practical spirituality at work might look like and to demonstrate, through a series of examples, how we might seek to develop the emotional and spiritual intelligence required to activate it.

We have taken our work to organisations world wide, and many are starting to see that, to be at the cutting edge of business their organisation needs to be working to a quadruple bottom line.

John Elkington gave us the Triple Bottom Line - suggesting that businesses will need to be:

- + economically viable
- + environmentally sound
- + socially responsible

We would add a fourth criterion, and suggest that the successful business of the 21st century will need to be

- + spiritually intelligent

as well. It will need to understand its purpose in the world and be able to translate that into meaningful work for its staff. It will seek to operate by spiritual, as well as economic, environmental and social values. It will live more comfortably on the edge of chaos, welcoming paradox and uncertainty, intuition and creativity, collaboration and co-operation.

Above all it will see itself as simply one part of the huge web of interconnectedness that makes up our planet, striving to be in right relationship with all of its parts, and playing its own unique and humble role in the evolution of society.



## Footnotes

### \*The Findhorn Foundation

Near to Findhorn, a traditional fishing village in northern Scotland, located at the point of meeting of the Moray Firth and Findhorn Bay, a quiet experiment has been underway for the past 40 years.

This experiment, started by Peter and Eileen Caddy and their friend, Dorothy Maclean, and aided and abetted by 3 children and the confines of an old caravan, was one of co-creation. Co-creating a life based on co-operation between the human, natural and spiritual realms.

This experiment led initially to the evolution of an unintentional community and now to the creation of an ecovillage - a model for human settlements based on ecological, economic, social, cultural and spiritual sustainability. The community has some £3 million worth of assets, 150 staff, and is supported and surrounded by a wider community of some 400-500. It is visited by over 14,000 guests each year, a significant proportion of whom take part in residential workshops. In 1998, the Foundation's ecovillage project was accorded NGO status with the UN where it contributes to dialogues about sustainability, values and spirituality. Back to main text.

### \*\*The Findhorn Foundation Consultancy Service

Also in 1998, in response to demand for a deepening of the Foundation's outreach education, the Findhorn Foundation Consultancy Service was founded. Its focus is to share our experience, particularly in developing emotional and spiritual intelligence, with businesses, organisations and other communities. Since then, FFCS has worked both with charities like Greenpeace International, smaller NGOs in Latin America, colleges, and major corporations like Shell, BP and PricewaterhouseCoopers. Back to main text.

### \*\*\*Shadow

The shadow can inhibit our progress and sabotage our best efforts when, for whatever reason, we do not acknowledge our fears. The higher the rank the more destructive it can be to not acknowledge fear - the work force is left carrying the unacknowledged fears of their bosses. Fear can take on many forms - fears of making or acknowledging a mistake, looking a fool or being sacked, and, less obviously, being competitive, being secretive, playing safe, gossiping, bullying, contributing to a blame culture, workaholism and excitement. The last two can be particularly insidious they are often seen as virtues, but they may actually be covering up fear. We will be developing this idea in a future paper. Back to main text.

### \*\*\*\*The left and right brains

Our left brain - the seat of reason, logic, planning and linear thinking has been wonderfully developed, but at the expense of the right brain - the place of intuition, creativity, 'hunches', and inspiration. Today's businesses are increasingly seeking to develop the ability to respond more and more swiftly to ever changing circumstances. This needs a more fully developed and available right brain. Back to main text.

### Brief Bibliography

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