



# **The SAGE Encyclopedia of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2nd edition**

## **Workplace Spirituality and Spiritual Leadership**

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Interest in spirituality and religion in the workplace has emerged over the last few decades, gaining the interest of both scholars and practitioners. Some argue that this is because society is now seeking spiritual solutions to ease tumultuous social and business changes, that profound change in values globally has brought a growing social consciousness and spiritual renaissance, and that growing interest in Eastern philosophies has resurfaced spiritual yearnings overall. Others contend that our relationship to work is increasingly becoming an integral part of our self-concept, greatly affecting the quality of our lives not only in the workplace but also at home. Because employees are spending an increasing amount of time at work, they now actively pursue opportunities for meaningful experiences and a sense of community in the workplace.

Still others have claimed that workplace spirituality provides answers to complicated contemporary problems resulting from major organizational changes (e.g., downsizing, reengineering, and layoffs). The distrust and diminished view of work that have arisen from these organizational changes have made employees see themselves as expendable resources. They believe these changes, which have resulted in the demoralization and spiritual disorientation of the employees, can be counterbalanced by the positive impact of workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership.

### Religion and Workplace Spirituality

Many believe that leaders are facing a spiritual threshold they must cross if they are to be successful in addressing these issues. Those who come from this perspective call for a common leadership approach based on spiritual principles on which employees can find themselves allied. For our purposes, *spirituality* will refer to the quest for self-transcendence and the attendant feeling of interconnectedness with all things in the universe. Spirituality is most often viewed as inherently personal, although it can reside or manifest in groups and organizations. From this perspective, a religion is an institution that has formed and evolved over time around the spiritual experiences of one or more founding individuals that also provides the context for leadership based on the beliefs and practices inherent in that religion.

The Dalai Lama, among others, makes a distinction between spirituality and religion by noting that religion is concerned with faith in the claims of one faith tradition or another and is connected with systems of belief, ritual prayer, and related formalized practices and ideas. Spirituality is concerned with qualities of the human spirit including positive psychological concepts such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, personal responsibility, and a sense of harmony with one's environment. Spirituality is found in the pursuit of a vision of service to others; through humility, as having the capacity to regard oneself as an individual equal in value to other individuals; through charity, or altruistic love; and through veracity, which goes beyond basic truth-telling to engage one's capacity for seeing things exactly as they are, freed from subjective distortions.

The common bridge between spirituality and religion is altruistic love—regard for or devotion to the interests of others. In this respect, the basic spiritual teachings of the world's great religions are remarkably similar. In religion, this is manifested through the Golden Rule, also called the Rule of Reciprocity—do unto others as you would have them do unto you—which is common to all major religions. From this perspective, spirituality is necessary for religion, but religion is not necessary for spirituality. Consequently, workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership can be inclusive or exclusive of religious beliefs and practice.

## Spiritual Leadership

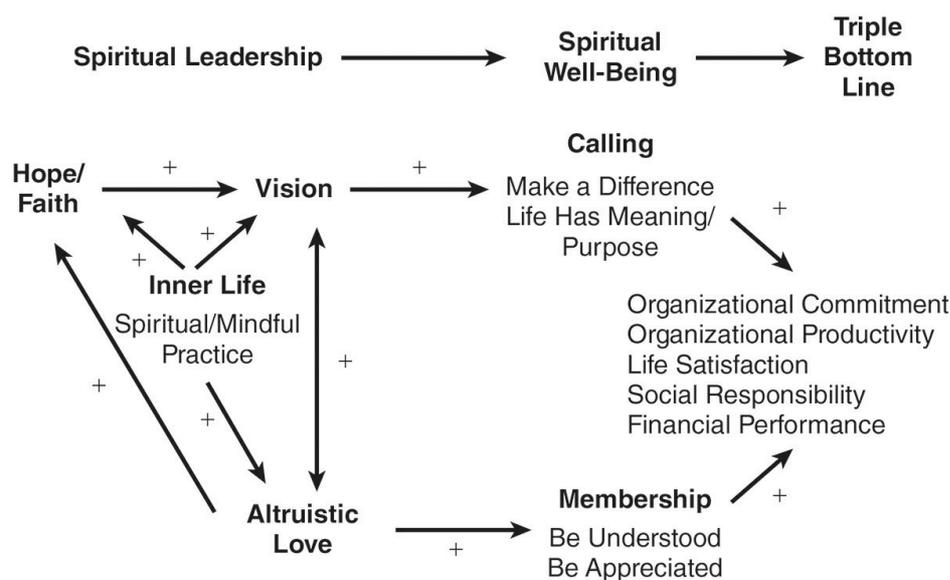
A special issue on spiritual leadership in 2005 in *The Leadership Quarterly* served as a vehicle for advancing the field of spiritual leadership as a focused area of scholarly inquiry. A theme emerged from the special issue suggesting that fundamental to both workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership is an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by calling or transcendence of the self within the context of a community based on the values of altruistic love. Satisfying these spiritual needs in the workplace positively influences human health and psychological well-being and forms the foundation for both workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership. By tapping into these basic needs, spiritual leadership can produce follower trust, intrinsic motivation, and commitment that is necessary to optimize human well-being, social responsibility, and organizational performance—the triple bottom line.

Spiritual leadership theory is intentionally focused at the spiritual level so that it can be applied in both religious and nonreligious organizations, although both are based on a vision of service to others through love or other-centeredness. Spiritual leadership is viewed as necessary for satisfying the fundamental needs of both leaders and followers for spiritual well-being through calling and membership; to create vision and value congruence across the individual, the empowered team, and organization levels; and, ultimately, to foster higher levels of employee well-being, organizational commitment, financial performance, and social responsibility. A general model of spiritual leadership is given in Figure 1.

Essential to spiritual leadership is each of the following:

1. Creating a vision wherein leaders and followers experience a sense of calling so that their lives have purpose and meaning and make a difference
2. Establishing an organizational culture based on the values of altruistic love whereby leaders and followers have a sense of membership and belonging and feel understood and appreciated

**Figure 1 Model of Spiritual Leadership**



Source: International Institute for Spiritual Leadership.

While there are innumerable theological and scholarly definitions of love, we focus here on a definition based on the Golden Rule. Altruistic love in spiritual leadership, according to the International Institute for Spiritual Leadership, is defined as “a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation of both self and others.”

The source of spiritual leadership is an inner life or mindful practice. Inner life speaks to the feeling individuals have about the fundamental meaning of who they are, what they are doing, and the contributions they are making. Inner life in spiritual leadership is a quest for a source of strength that fuels hope or faith in a transcendent vision to love and serve others. It includes personal practices such as meditation, prayer, religious practices, yoga, journaling, walking in nature, and so on. It also includes organizational contexts (e.g., rooms for inner silence and reflection) to help individuals be more self-aware and conscious from moment to moment and draw strength from their beliefs, be they in a nondual being, a higher power, God (theistic or pantheistic), philosophical teachings, or an orderly humanistic social system (e.g., family, tribe, or nation-state).

Results of spiritual leadership and related research to date reveal that it predicts a number of important individual and organizational outcomes across various countries and cultures. These include being positively related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, altruism, conscientiousness, self-career management, sales growth, job involvement, identification, retention, organizational citizenship behavior, attachment, loyalty, and work unit productivity and negatively related to interrole conflict, frustration, earning manipulation, and instrumental commitment.

### **The Spiritual Leadership Balanced Scorecard Business Model and the Triple Bottom Line**

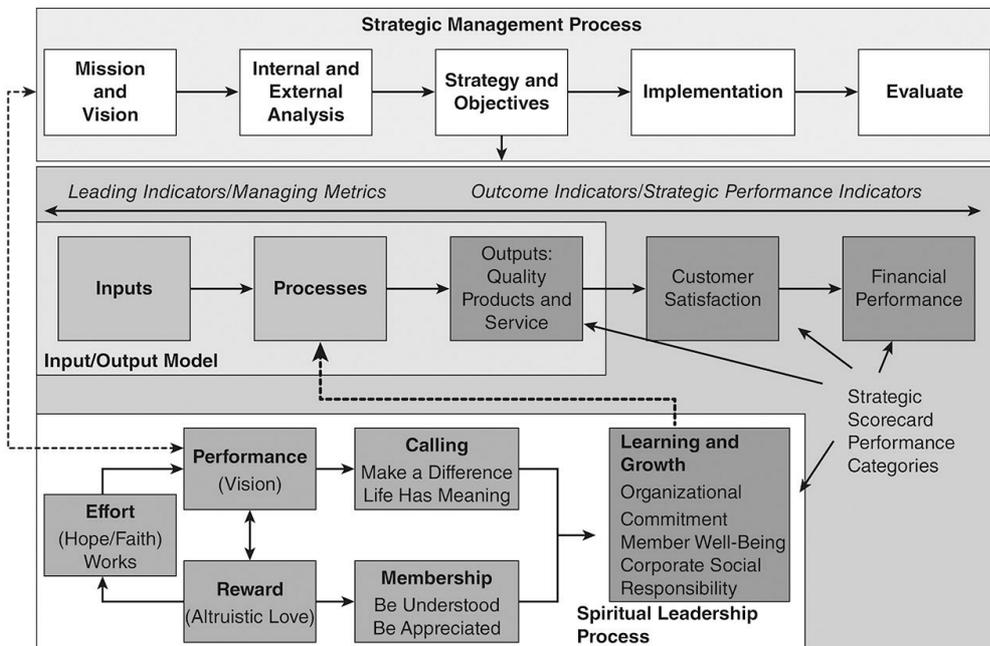
Organizations are increasingly being held responsible for the impact their activities have on employees, suppliers, customers, and the communities and societies where they operate. They must account not only to shareholders and investors but also to politicians, the media, employees, community groups, government agencies, environmentalists, and human rights organizations. In response, many companies are seeking new business models that accentuate employee well-being, social responsibility, and sustainability, without sacrificing profitability, revenue growth, and other areas of financial and performance excellence—the triple bottom line. A positive triple bottom line reflects an increase in the organization’s value, including its human and societal capital as well as its profitability and economic growth. It can serve as a balanced scorecard that captures in numbers and words the degree to which any organization is or is not creating value for its shareholders, for its employees, and for society.

One such model that is based on workplace spirituality is the Spiritual Leadership Balanced Scorecard Business Model, which views spiritual leadership as essential for maximizing the triple bottom line (see Figure 2). The model’s strategic areas of focus are derived from the organization’s vision, purpose, mission, and values in conjunction with an internal and external stakeholder analysis. The actual scorecard reports strategic performance indicators in those areas of focus that have been derived from the firm’s strategic plan and for which quantifiable performance objectives have been established.

These objectives form the basis for the leading and lagging indicators that are selected for the Balanced Scorecard Performance Categories. Leading indicators and metrics are used to measure the performance of ongoing company operations. These measures comprise the

learning and growth, quality, customer and stakeholder satisfaction, and financial Balanced Scorecard Performance Categories. For example, the quality of a firm’s products and services affects outputs that are leading indicators of customer satisfaction, which, in turn, is a leading indicator of financial performance. However, quality is also a lagging indicator of the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization’s key production processes.

**Figure 2 Spiritual Leadership Balanced Scorecard Business Model**



Source: International Institute for Spiritual Leadership.

Most agree that employee learning and growth is the central Balanced Scorecard Performance Category because it is a leading indicator that drives the other performance categories. As shown by the dotted line from the learning and growth category to processes, employees who have high levels of organizational commitment, have a sense of well-being, and are socially responsible will strive to increase productivity and continuously improve organizational processes to produce quality products and services that satisfy customers and other key stakeholders who, ultimately, determine the organization’s financial performance. In turn, the learning and growth outcomes of organizational commitment, employee well-being, and social responsibility are lagging indicators that are outcomes driven by the spiritual leadership model.

**Summary**

Taken together, spiritual leadership and the Spiritual Leadership Balanced Scorecard Business Model provide both leadership and organizational processes for implementing spirituality in the workplace and maximizing the triple bottom line. At heart, both processes center on hope and faith in a vision of loving and serving others, which is the central tenet of the world’s spiritual and religious traditions. The spiritual leadership model depicted in Figure 1 is initiated through an inner life or mindful practice that facilitates the cocreation of the vision and cultural values that form the foundation for relating to and meeting or exceeding the expectations of key stakeholders. Spiritual leaders also challenge employees to persevere, be

tenacious, “do what it takes,” and pursue excellence in achieving challenging goals through hope and faith in the vision and themselves. Through hope and faith, vision, and altruistic love, employees begin to develop, refine, and practice their own spiritual leadership that embodies a vision for their own lives and gives them a sense of calling, meaning, and purpose. By incorporating the values and attitudes of altruistic love in social interaction with others, workers also experience a sense of membership and belonging, and feel understood and appreciated.

Calling and membership in the spiritual leadership model then become the source for the learning and growth category outcomes. Developments in strategic scorecards, performance measurement, and quality point out the pivotal role that employee well-being, commitment, and productivity play in predicting all other key balanced scorecard categories. The Spiritual Leadership Balanced Scorecard Business Model depicted in Figure 2 provides a process for ultimately impacting customer satisfaction and financial performance by fostering the development of the motivation and leadership required to drive human well-being, sustainability, and excellent operational performance to maximize the triple bottom line.

*Louis W. Fry*

See also [Changing Demographics: Implications for Organizations](#); [Organizational Identification](#); [Mindfulness at Work](#), [Servant Leadership](#)

### Further Readings

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