



## **The New Wave In Business:**

### **The next stage of corporate evolution**

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A new wave is crashing over the business world. It is a complete and radical shift from the way we have thought about business and organizations in the past. Leaders who are tuned into this new wave are going to help their organizations to thrive throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To understand this new wave, we need to take a brief look at management history.

In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, management thought was focused on the idea of the “economic man.” The belief was that workers were motivated by money only. “Man” was viewed as an extension of the machine, and management theories focused on time and motion studies and other efforts at making the physical body of the worker more efficient.

In the 1930’s there was a series of lighting efficiency studies (the Hawthorne Studies) at the Western Electric Plant in Chicago, Illinois. Anomalies developed in the studies that led researchers to discover that workers were not motivated by money alone, but that social needs were also an important part of the work experience.

Beginning in the 1970s, with the advent of Quality Circles and later with the Total Quality Management programs, once again we see an expansion of the view of “Man.” An underlying premise of these quality approaches was that the worker was the expert at his or her job. A new awareness of the intellectual capabilities of workers began to emerge. Workers were not just physical bodies that were extensions of the machines, or emotional beings with social needs. They also had minds that were valuable to tap into.

Each of these schools of management were tapping into different kinds of energy. It takes **physical energy** to get work done in organizations. It takes **emotional energy** to build passion and commitment and to bind people together in effective teams with a sense of loyalty to the organization. It takes **mental energy** to work with the increasing complexity of technology and the explosion of available information. Effective leaders know how to unleash the power of each of these energies.

But the truly extraordinary organizations are the ones that learn to tap into the **spiritual energy** of the workforce and the organization itself. This is the next wave of transformation in the business world.

What do we mean by “spiritual energy”? First of all, it helps to differentiate “spirituality” and “religion.” Religion is a formal, structured, and organized institution that relies on committing to shared beliefs. According to the research conducted by Ian Mitroff and Liz Denton, most people see spirituality as highly individual and intensely personal. It is a basic belief that “there is a supreme power, a being, a force, whatever you call it, that governs the entire universe.” It is inextricably linked with core values

such as “caring, hope, kindness, love, and optimism.” And it includes a commitment to do good, in other words to produce products and services that benefit humankind.

It is natural and evolutionary for individuals, organizations, and society to embrace a stronger sense of the importance of spirituality in your lives and work. There are several basic principles that are central to this newly emerging wave in the workplace that are a radical break from earlier thinking:

- Continuing “business as usual” is not sustainable for the physical world, for the global economy, and for human society.
- The purpose of business is to nurture human and spiritual development. (c.f. Willis Harman)
- Businesses that recognize and tap into the spiritual energies of their employees, customers and stakeholders will have the competitive edge.
- The responsibility of business is to solve the world’s major problems and to build a better world for all. (c.f. Matthew Fox)
- It is essential to care for the environment so that there are resources for future generations.
- The world has gotten incredibly complex, and rational problem solving is no longer effective. Leaders must tap into their own intuition and divine guidance in order to make high quality decisions.

Recent events such as the terrorist attacks, the corporate crime wave, and the crisis in the Catholic church have all contributed to the breakdown of “business as usual” and the hunger for a new wave of thought. A critical mass is forming and the wave is cresting.

The question to ask yourself and your organization is “Are you going to ride this new wave with a sense of aliveness and vision, or are you going to drown in the old ways of doing business that no longer fit the world we are in?” It’s up to you.

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