In Search of Meaning at Work

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Forward

Stop for a minute. Think back to this morning. Did you leap up enthusiastically, eager to get to the office for another motivating day at work? Or did you shudder when the alarm clock went off, drag yourself out of bed, and grimly prepare yourself for another round of what social anthropologist Studs Terkel has called *'a Monday to Friday sort of dying'*?

Those in the second group aren't alone. This new survey by Roffey Park has found that 70% of managers are looking for a greater sense of meaning in their working lives. Nothing new, you might think. Man's search for meaning has absorbed human beings since civilisation began. What's interesting is that we've started searching for meaning in the workplace. In office blocks and industrial estates up and down the country, from the reception lobby to the executive suite, individuals are sitting at their desks and asking 'what am I doing here?'

And increasingly, they're not happy with the answer. Roffey Park quizzed 735 employees in its annual Management Agenda survey. One of the most authoritative UK surveys of its kind, respondents are typically managers from all industries and ages, ranging from junior managers to board directors.

The survey has been running for eight years. Recently respondents' comments on the questionnaires have revealed a growing disillusionment at work and a desire to be doing something more meaningful. Roffey Park carried out focus groups and a survey to probe the area more deeply, and realised it had scratched the surface of something big. This hardly surprised us at MT. Via the Work/Life balance issue we've been interested in this area for some time and Roffey's findings tally with a lot of our previous research. This story has a long way to go.

Matthew Gwyther
Editor, Management Today

Executive Summary – In search of meaning at work

This report outlines the findings of a research project carried out by Roffey Park Institute during 2003 and incorporates findings from the 2004 *Management Agenda* survey, Roffey Park's annual investigation of employee perceptions of the workplace. This survey was completed by people in 735 organisations in 2004.

The aim of the research was to investigate people's perceptions of 'meaning' especially with regard to the workplace, and explore what constitutes meaningful and meaning-less experiences. These issues are not well-grounded in much of the literature and research and we wanted to find out whether people experiencing a sense of meaning in the workplace would perform any differently from those who did not.

Roffey Park's research into the issue suggests that there is a business case for taking questions of meaning seriously, because it indicates a clear link between employees experiencing meaning and:

- An organisation's ability to manage change successfully

- The ability to retain key people

- Greater employee engagement and high performance.

Conversely, our findings suggest that lack of meaning goes hand in hand with employee cynicism. As various writers have suggested, employee cynicism makes people more, not less resistant to change. With more employees actively looking for more meaning, organisations are likely to see a haemorrhage of key talent unless they at least become aware of the issue and attempt to meet employees half way. Similarly, people tend to work less hard if they experience no sense of meaning. Yet when people are fully engaged, the great companies are able to outstrip the market.

The choice of topic arose from a number of sources, notably a sub-theme emerging from a variety of apparently unrelated responses in the *Management Agenda* since 2000. Initially this sub-theme, termed 'Quest for meaning', was assumed to be part of the *zeitgeist* at the turn of the millennium. However, the theme has persisted and we decided to investigate the question of meaning more specifically in 2003. The project involved analysis of the 2003 and 2004 *Management Agenda* surveys, focus groups and a further survey, the Quest for Meaning at Work (QMW), in addition to a literature study.

It seems that, whilst the search for meaning is perhaps part of the human condition and a perennial issue, the search seems to be accentuated by certain situations and times of life and that there is a strong sense of search for meaning at the current time. The research findings also suggest that many people experience a greater search for meaning in the workplace (70 percent), than in life in general. Various possible explanations for this are suggested:

- People generally spend longer at work than on other parts of their lives

- Change and the 'dog-eat-dog' ethic in many workplaces are making relationships more transactional and mistrustful. Consequently people are feeling less 'connected'

- Reported higher levels of employee cynicism over a range of issues including 'hollow' ethical policies, such as diversity and corporate social responsibility; 'fat cat' pay issues and accountancy scandals which cause people to doubt the purpose of their organisation and the integrity of leaders.

- Community as a whole has undergone a moral/values transformation in recent decades to a more commercial, secular society.

- The plethora of 'alternative' therapies and self-help groups suggest that many people are experiencing the lack of community spirituality – they want to fill a 'God-shaped' hole

- Society in general, and employees in particular, are becoming increasingly distrustful of people in authority, especially leaders.

The report details what people taking part in the research mean by 'meaning'. For many people this is about connecting with others through time, having a sense of personal purpose, a heightened understanding of what is really important, of what it is to be human. Meaningful moments appear to elevate people's focus and desire to give to others and fulfil themselves.

In the workplace, meaning appears to link to a sense of community, to having a higher sense of purpose, especially a customer-focused purpose. It also links to consistency of behaviour and congruence between personal and organisational values. People want to work for ethical organisations and to see their leaders 'walking the talk' on values. People want to feel involved and treated like adults, and able to balance work with other aspects of their lives. They want to have the opportunity to discuss spirituality in the workplace with colleagues. They want challenging jobs through which they can experience personal growth.

In practice, disenchantment with the workplace is evident in this research, especially since many people work long hours and feel under heavy workload pressure. 82 percent of 20-30 year olds in our sample appear to be looking for more meaning in their lives. On the whole, people working in larger organisations appear to experience less meaning than those in small organisations. Many people (39 percent) experience tensions between the spiritual side of their own values and those of their organisation. In our survey, women (44 percent) were more likely to report that they experience these tensions than men (35 percent).

When people experience greater meaning, they appear to be 'in flow', able to give of their best. Conversely, when work and the workplace lack meaning, morale suffers and people start to look for other jobs or consider self-employment. Change also becomes more difficult to manage. Amongst the main destroyers of meaning in the workplace the report details a number of factors, including short-termism, transactional relationships, lack of congruence by leaders, or failure to 'walk the talk' on values.

The report outlines some of the organisational practices relating to meaning. These include the use of chaplains, leadership development with a spiritual focus, corporate social responsibility practice, close alignment between organisational values and practice, work-life balance initiatives and emphasis on teamwork and community. The role of leaders as role-models of values is examined and various practices relating to involving people and motivating employees are reported. One leader's personal perspective on the question of meaning is also included.

The report concludes with an examination of some of the drivers of employee engagement and commitment, suggesting that the question of meaning is central to both. Since many employees report that they believe that they are more committed to their organisation than their organisation is to them, the onus is perhaps on organisations to lead the way towards building a more relational psychological contract with their employees. This should form the basis of a more meaningful experience of work, better retention of staff, improved ability to manage change and an effective customer-focused culture. Some recommendations of how organisations can practically build more meaningful employment relationships with employees are included.

Section 1 – Introduction

In search of meaning at work

"When it comes to attracting, keeping and making teams out of talented people, money alone won't do it. Talented people want to be part of something they can believe in, something that confers meaning on their work and their lives". John Seely Brown (in Dearlove and Coomber, 1999)

Our turbulent world and our greater awareness of it appears to be having the effect of challenging many people at a deeper personal level - leading many individuals to actively look for more meaning in their lives. Evidence for this can be found in Roffey Park's annual *Management Agenda* survey, published in January of each year. This survey charts the changing nature of the workplace from the point of view of employees in organisations from all sectors. In the 2003 survey, 47 per cent of respondents reported that they were looking for more meaning in their lives generally.

Yet even more people appear to be looking for more meaning in the workplace. In the 2004 survey, 70 percent of respondents affirmed that they want their working lives to be more meaningful. Why do highly talented people choose to come to work and give of their best? If the reasons are more than just financial, it is through work and their experience of the workplace that many employees attempt to meet their 'psychological', emotional, social, creative and personal achievement needs. Some would go further, arguing that work fulfils a greater role, connecting people through affiliation and purpose to sources of meaning which might be described as 'spiritual'.

In this report we will explore how employees pursue their quest for meaning through work and look at whether organisations have a responsibility to respond to even deeper individual and community needs. We shall consider if, and how the quest for meaning forms part of the 'psychological contract', the unwritten set of mutual expectations between employers and employees. In other words, is it appropriate for employers to attempt to satisfy employee needs for greater meaning, and if so, how would they go about doing this?

The 'quest for meaning'

Our resolve to explore meaning in the workplace was originally sparked by the sheer volume (many hundreds) of open-ended responses, which seemed to have inter-connecting elements, to a variety of apparently unrelated topics in the *Management Agenda* (2000). Whilst initially these responses appeared difficult to group, they were characterised by a sense of loss, of lack of purpose, trust and commitment, and a general loosening of emotional and other ties relating to the workplace. We initially categorised these comments under the sub-theme 'quest for meaning'.

This theme was also evident in the number of comments relating to the nature and purpose of the organisation, and the questions raised by respondents about whether or not their work was in itself worthwhile. Many respondents suggested that they were looking for jobs that they could relate to, and/or to work for an organisation whose purpose, products/services and modus operandi they could respect. The issues appeared linked to motivation and commitment. Few people for instance reported that they were motivated by providing shareholder value. Amongst the factors which people reported to be motivators, we were surprised by the numbers of people suggesting that their faith, a belief in God, or a desire to do something for the greater good/ 'put things back' were primary motivators.

The theme was also evident in many comments relating to employee perceptions about the impact of organisational change on workplace relations. For example, the impact of restructurings and redundancies in recent years appears to have reduced people's expectations about the extent to

which they can rely on others, especially their employer, to protect their interests. So, for example, there is now widespread recognition that people will need to look out for their own interests, continue to learn and develop throughout their lives and to be responsible for managing their own careers. Whilst many people appeared to welcome the more transactional nature of the employment relationship, for many others, the demise of employee-employer relationships of mutual commitment appeared to be the source of a sense of loss.

In many ways, the comments echoed the view of social anthropologist Studs Terkel:
"Work is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread; for recognition as well as cash; for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life, rather than a Monday to Friday sort of dying".

Why did we research this topic?

We decided to explore these issues more specifically in 2001. We were curious to know whether these comments reflected the *zeitgeist* at the turn of the new millennium, or a deeper, longer-term phenomenon. We also wondered, if there was evidence of a shift in employee needs for meaning in the workplace, how should, or could, organisations and their leaders respond?

In 2001 we distributed the *Management Agenda* both before and after September 11. This allowed us to add a few specific questions relating to the impact of this event. While it was clear that there appeared to be some possibly short-term organisational responses, such as embargoes on travel and the halting of construction of city centre offices, it was also apparent that the characteristics of the 'search for meaning' responses were not markedly different after September 11 from those before it, nor were they markedly different from the previous year.

Topicality

We were also aware that there appears to be more generally a growing interest in issues relating to 'meaning' and 'spirituality' in the workplace, though both terms have an ungrounded, metaphysical ring. Even the UK Government has recognised the importance of spirituality to people at work in the Employment Equality (religion or belief) Regulations 2003. These regulations apply to public and private sector organisations and cover all aspects of the employment relationship, including recruitment, working conditions and training. There is no definition of religion or belief in the regulations and they are open to a very wide interpretation of spiritual belief. Research carried out by Schneider-Ross consultancy (*People Management, December, 2003*) showed that spiritual beliefs were found to be key to the way some people identify themselves – "it's more important to some than ethnicity or nationality – and they rightly expect companies to accommodate their spiritual beliefs".

The growing interest in spiritual matters in the workplace is also reflected in the increasing numbers of courses on religion, spirituality and contemplation being offered by business schools since the mid-1990s. There are at least two journals on spirituality – '*Spirit at* Work' edited by Judith Neal, professor of Management, New Haven University, and '*Business Spirit*'. The Wall Street Journal (1998) ran an article about business and professional people seeking out a regular spiritual director. In 1996 there were more than 30 conferences in the UK that had spirituality in business on the agenda and the business schools at Warwick, Bath and Surrey universities include it as an elective in their MBA programmes, while at the University of Durham a project is being undertaken on the spiritual values at work. Various universities and business schools are offering short courses on spiritual intelligence for managers interested in their own development and leadership style who are looking for new ways to take their business forward.

Great place to work and business success?

We were interested in finding out if employees equate being able to experience a deeper sense of meaning at work with their perceptions of their organisation being a good place to work. We recognise that employees may feel badly treated by their employer and still remain committed, but

we suspect that people are more willing to 'go the extra mile' if they feel that commitment is reciprocal. Roffey Park's own research programme, notably the annual *Management Agenda* survey, draws on the cross-sectoral experience of people working in over 400 organisations. In a separate project, we are attempting to identify some of the organisational factors which appear to make a positive difference to productivity and aid organisations in achieving sustainable high performance. The Roffey Park High Performance Organisation model suggests a causal link between perceptions of employee well-being, effective leadership and high degrees of employee commitment. High commitment and high performance are thought to be causally linked, but in ways which are difficult to define.

We are aware of other work relating to the link between the ways organisations treat their employees and business success. For instance, Harvard Business School Professors John Kotter and James Heskett found a correlation in 1992 between companies who valued employees and business success. The authors asked industry analysts a series of questions about the culture of 22 companies which the interviewees had to rate from one (definitely not) to seven (absolutely, yes) To the question: "How highly does (a specified organisation) value its employees? The 12 better performing firms averaged a score of 5.8 while the lower 10 scored an average of 4.1.

Perhaps some of the clearest evidence of a causal link between people and performance is evident in the 2003 UK list of '50 Best Companies to Work For'. This list builds on the experience of the list of '100 Best Companies to Work For' in the United States, published through Fortune Magazine. The share performance of the Best Companies to Work For in the US has consistently outperformed the S&P 500 to a significant degree. Great business performance is completely consistent with being a great employer. This same phenomenon is also strongly reflected in the first UK list (Crouch, 2003). We were interested that some of the reported practices of organisations on these lists appeared to reflect a high value on an embracing, customer-focused culture and responsible practice with regard to society and the environment. We wondered if such approaches created a sense of meaning for employees.

Employee health and well-being
Above all, our motivation for pursuing this research springs from Roffey Park's own mission to investigate issues relating to employee health, well-being and effectiveness in the workplace. We believe that treating employees as more than mere cogs in a wheel can produce significant business benefits. We also believe that this requires a more holistic approach to management than is common in British business, involving as it does the ability to attend to emotional and deeper matters in the workplace. We suspect that developing an organisational culture which is conducive to employees' experiencing a deeper sense of meaning is at the heart of high performance.

In this respect we share thinking with various authors who suggest a potential causal relationship between a more holistic approach to management, one that takes account of emotions and people's deeper needs, and improved business performance. Robert Cooper in his article 'Applying Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace' (1997) says "how often have you thought: 'Let's just keep emotions out of this and deal with things rationally". He goes on to say that research shows that emotions, properly managed, can drive trust, loyalty and commitment - and many of the greatest productivity gains, innovations, and accomplishments of individuals, teams and organisations." He quotes a former leader of an executive team at Ford Motor Company, Nick Zeniuk, who said; "Emotional intelligence is the hidden advantage." (p31) Taking care of the soft stuff means the hard stuff will take care of itself.

Claudia Heimer (1999), co-author of *The Dancing Giant*, - refers to the 'encouraging sign of a renaissance of emotion in the workplace'. This, she says, challenges the idea that a management role is purely a rational one. The demands on a manager tend to be to stick to the rational, the linear, the factual, the defined rather than the emotional 'fluffy stuff'. In contrast, research shows that

innovation, increased profitability, good decision-making and effective performance are brought about by managed emotions.

Since Roffey Park has a long history of developing leaders and managers in the art of people management, we decided to investigate the question of 'meaning' further, using our existing research vehicle, the *Management Agenda,* and other methods. We were also interested to discover any leadership and climate dimensions which link with the quest for meaning.

Organisational benefits

But why should organisations be concerned to address these deeper levels of meaning for employees? In practical terms, there are potentially many business benefits to be gained in developing a values-based culture. This is no 'soft' option. One argument is that developing a more meaningful work environment leads to greater organisational cohesion. On the other hand, organisational coherence can have its downsides, as Tourish and Pinnington (2002) point out. They argue that corporate cohesion is usually achieved at the expense of internal dissent, and that such dissent is a vital ingredient of effective decision-making.

Positive effects on performance
On the whole, though, theorists and researchers tend to point to the business benefits of taking such issues seriously. Neck and Milliman (1994) claim that spirituality positively affects organisational performance. Organisations that attempt to promote spiritual development of their members report increases in creativity, satisfaction, team performance and organisational commitment (Leigh, 1997; Mirvis, 1997; Brandt, 1996; McCormick, 1994). Similarly, empowerment is an integral aspect of spirit at work (Jaffe and Scott, 1998; Ray 1992). Other aspects include enthusiasm and commitment (Rosen, 1992), emotional expression (Bracey et al, 1993) and personal relationships (Miller, 1992).

Dean et al.(1998) point out the dangers of rising levels of employee cynicism, typical components of which include:

- *A belief that their organisation lacks integrity*

We have seen how loss of public confidence in formerly respected institutions, and the economic uncertainties of the future, create a difficult backdrop for positive organisational change. For organisations in every sector, being ethical and worthy of trust is becoming a cornerstone in creating social, economic and political sustainability.

- *Negative affective attitudes and emotions towards the organisation*

This is evident in frustration, contempt for managers, hopelessness and disillusionment.

- *A tendency for employees, consistent with their beliefs and emotions, towards disparaging and critical behaviours of their organisation.*

The targets of such cynicism are usually senior managers, the organisation in general and corporate policies and programmes.

Ability to retain key people
This Roffey Park research suggests that such a values-based organisation retains its key people with ease and manages change effectively. Highly employable people seem now to be looking for roles that appeal to their personal values, and money may not be the main consideration in job choice. More people in the UK are making cross-sectoral job moves, especially to the voluntary sector. Work/life balance in particular is becoming a major issue for many employees and is a growing factor in people choosing to leave organisations and look for alternatives, including self-employment. People are increasingly choosing to take career breaks or work flexibly in order to have more of what they consider important. Employers in the knowledge economy are already recognising the need to attract skilled employees of generations X and Y by having a well-articulated set of values which really work in practice.

Ability to manage change easily

These research findings suggest that a values-based organisation manages change effectively. The danger for organisations in ignoring the importance of building a new psychological contract is that not only will they experience difficulty in attracting and retaining people, but, as we have already seen, rising levels of employee cynicism also carry another major risk.   For Pate et al. (2000), 'when organisations are trying to secure important organisational changes, low trust relations and high degrees of cynicism may combine to significantly limit the degree of change that can be achieved.' For these authors, this downward loop helps explain why the organisations which have the greatest incentive to change, particularly following threats of downsizing or closure, often lack the ability to do so.

How did we research this topic?

The research method included a literature review, focus groups, surveys and conversations. We have used the *Management Agenda* survey 2003 and 2004 as the primary source of data-gathering, exploring the topic both through prescribed response and open-ended questions. These surveys are completed by employees, including managers, from over 400 organisations in different sectors of the UK economy and include many international and multi-national/global companies. In 2004, managers in 735 organisations completed the survey.

Given the nature of the topic, we felt that qualitative methods were most likely to lead to deeper insights into people's perceptions and experiences. We therefore set up a research group, comprising Roffey Park tutors and others people, drawn from different jobs and sectors, having a keen interest in the topic. Our aim in this enquiry was to 'ground' the meaning of 'meaning' in the workplace.

We held a series of focus group meetings to define the topic and the focus of our inquiry. These meetings reflected the difficulty of defining the nature of the issues. Initially the group varied in its views about whether the research project should be called 'spirituality in the workplace', 'meaning in the workplace', 'spirit at work' or something else. Our focus group explored participants' own definitions of meaning, together with their experiences of heightened meaning in the workplace and elsewhere. We considered that Appreciative Inquiry methodology was appropriate to exploring such a theme. Participants' stories were analysed by them to discover if there were any common elements.

In addition, we further pursued the themes emerging from focus groups through a specific short web-based questionnaire, called the 'Quest for Meaning in the Workplace' or QMW, which was completed by 210 respondents. This survey explored more specifically what evidence there was for a quest for meaning among employees; how, if at all, organisations were attempting to address issues of meaning at work; and what are the important elements of meaning at work to the respondents.

Section 2 – The Literature

Much of the available recent literature on the subject of meaning appears to come from the USA. Weick (1977) noted that people in organisations invest their settings with meaning and then come to understand them. For Carl Jung and Victor Frankl, the search for meaning is perennial. Konz and Ryan (1999) suggest that individuals are searching for meaning in their work; a meaning that transcends mere economic gain. For many authors (Schein, Kotter, Bennis and others), a key task of leaders is to help create and shape meaning for people in the workplace by the things they pay attention to, and by their behaviour and symbolic acts.

Much of the literature on meaning relates to 'spirituality', in the sense suggested by Maslow in his description of organisational environments where the highest levels of motivation are likely to be evident. The notion of spirituality has been employed to explain and understand a deeper, more defining sense of meaning, as well as numerous other organisational phenomena, including organisational change, value systems, managing, leadership, executive development and empowerment. Emotion in general, and spirituality more specifically, represent core concepts within the organisational transformation framework.

Spirituality in particular is a problematic word in the literature, meaning different things to different people. In the spirituality literature, three core themes emerge:

* Many people feel a lack of meaning in their work and this is prompting a quest to discover a higher sense of purpose in life
* The "spirituality" word is often regarded with suspicion, especially in the context of the workplace
* There are successful firms with spiritual values at the heart of their business models.

Why the growing interest in spirituality?

According to Cavanagh (1999), there are 3 major new causes for the new interest in spirituality. These are:

* The mid-life crises of the idealistic baby boomers
* Downsizing and additional work hours
* Landmark events such as the year 2000, birthdays etc.

The last decade has seen widespread socio-economic and political change on a global scale. As ideologically opposed power balances shifted after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the role of capitalism has been put under the spotlight. Environmental issues have been a source of major international debate, largely sparked by a series of environmental disasters during the 1990s, such as the after-effects of Chernobyl, the chemical pollution at Bhopal and oil spillages off the coasts of Canada and Europe for which corporations refused to accept responsibility. Similarly, the proposed sinking of the Piper Alpha oil platform by Shell, which was opposed by Greenpeace on the grounds that it could cause environmental damage, became a cause celebre in stimulating debate about corporate social responsibility. The refusal of the US government to sign the Kyoto Accord seemed yet another sign of the rights of corporations and particular nations being placed ahead of the collective good.

Ethics too have become the focus of attention as a series of scandals have rocked the financial world. In a few cases, business leaders of major corporations have been found to have done deals with terrorist groups and despotic governments in return for business advantage, or like Robert Maxwell, used pension funds inappropriately and deprived former employees of their rightful income.

Accountancy practices have been brought into disrepute in the Enron, Worldcom and other scandals, and the role of executives as ethical leaders has come to the fore.

Tischler (1999) uses Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) to explain the growing interest in spirituality as a theory of social consciousness and motivation. Maslow's theory suggests that there are five basic levels of need in this hierarchy: physical or survival needs, security needs, social needs, achievement needs and self-actualisation needs. Tischler argues that over the past 200 years there has been an evolution from an agrarian society of little change for the majority of people through an industrial society that through a machine orientation created:

- Comparatively enormous wealth for most people in developed countries
- A mass society with attendant changes in social structure and social consciousness and
- An unimaginably faster and increasing pace of change.

We are now in a post-industrial society that focuses on individual achievement and self-actualisation growth for as many people as possible in a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable and responsible manner. As knowledge has become an increasingly important competitive factor, companies have to increasingly offer their educated employees many new kinds of opportunities and benefits. As workers decreasingly look to outer situations, people and their structures to motivate their behaviour and impact their feeling and thinking, they look increasingly inward for direction, esteem and the creation of their own happiness.

The meaning of 'spirituality'

The literature seems to suggest that spirituality means different things to different people. This may be because, as Wilber (2001) suggests, we are less familiar with, and tend to ignore in Western studies, the subjective and inter-subjective elements; the interior –individual 'I' in which consciousness, emotion, sensations, perceptions, ideas and spirituality are to be found, and the interior 'we', where cultural identities are found. For Dehler and Welsh (1994), spirituality as a concept is difficult to grasp because the focus often diverges from defining it to discussion about it; in essence dancing eloquently around any precise meaning. Spirituality represents a specific form of work feeling that energises action.

According to Konz and Ryan (1999), spirituality is defined as the particular way the human person in all its richness, the relationship of the human person to the transcendent, the relationship between human persons, and the way to achieve personal growth are envisioned. According to Millman and Ferguson (1999) spirituality usually involves deeply held values and deals with *'who am I?' 'what is my purpose in life?' ' what is it that I offer?'* questions.

For Conger (1994), people are suffering from a perceived loss of meaning and embarking on a spiritual journey to discover their true selves, searching for a higher purpose to their lives. Spiritual experiences, however they may be defined, take place at a much deeper level than do our 'normal' experiences. An active spiritual life can help individuals find meaning and purpose in their lives and live out deeply held personal values. Ian Mitroff, Professor of Management at the University of Southern California, defines spirituality as "the desire to find ultimate purpose in life, and to live accordingly". He estimates that 60 percent of people in the USA are positive about spirituality but negative towards organised religion; 30 percent positive towards both and 10 percent negative towards both (in Cavanagh, 1999).

Webster (2002) suggests that the important components of spirituality which have emerged from the health and well-being agenda are:

- Interconnectedness and relationship
- Self-transcendence
- Meaning and purpose in life

- Personal fulfilment
- Belief and faith in self and others
- Tools for coping with insecurity, vulnerability and the vicissitudes of life.

Neal et al (1999) suggest that typical 'causal factors' of spiritual transformation are a spiritual crisis such as life-threatening illness, losing one's job etc. Once a spiritual transformation is triggered in an individual, he or she tries to integrate that transformation into their life. In terms of their work life, the integration of spiritual transformations appears to unfold in three stages:

1. Dark night of the soul, where previous life anchors no longer have any meaning
2. Spiritual searching, a search for new core spiritual principles
3. Spiritual integration, learning to apply those principles in key aspects of one's life, including work.

For Cavanagh (1999), spirituality involves acknowledging God, the importance of prayer, other people and a sustainable world. He suggests that spirituality enables a business person to gain a more integrated perspective on their firm, family, neighbours, community and self. He argues that it is difficult to develop depth in spirituality without a religious foundation.

For Miller (1997), the source of much spirituality comes from the 'great founders of the world's religions: Jesus, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Mohammed, Krishna…. Their core values are always there: inner peace, truth, right-conduct, non-violence and, above all, love'.

In Mitroff and Denton's study (1999) of line and HR executives in corporate America, interviewees defined the key elements of spirituality as:

- Not formal, structured or organised
- Non-denominational; above and beyond denominations
- Broadly inclusive; embracing everyone
- Universal and timeless
- The ultimate source and provider of meaning and purpose in life
- The awe we feel in the presence of the transcendent
- The sacredness of everything; the ordinariness of everyday life
- The deep feeling of the interconnectedness of everything
- Inner peace and calm
- The inexhaustible source of faith and will power
- The ultimate end in itself.

In this study, interviewees distinguished religion from spirituality very clearly – producing a four-cell model of what they felt positive or negative about.

Eggebrecht (2003) too distinguishes religion from spirituality as follows: "Religion, on the other hand is likely to have a code of conduct and system of thought with a set of beliefs underpinning it. It is frequently expressed through rituals and ceremonies, with institutions, organisations or communities as manifestations. The dictionary vocabulary associated with the word *religious* is enlightening in that, in my opinion, it appears to describe the antithesis of my personal interpretation of spirituality. Words such as god-fearing, righteous, exact, fastidious, rigid, and sectarian appear listed.

We are essentially spiritual beings asking fundamental questions - for instance, 'why was I born?' and what is the meaning of my life?'. Some anthropologists and neurobiologists say the need for meaning led to language and the growth of the human brain, bringing us out of the trees. We are driven to find value in all we do and we aspire from our here and now to something more'."

In an article entitled 'Spirituality at work – soft or strategic?' Carroll (1999) outlines eight principles encompassed in spirituality:

1. Spirituality is about the integrated self - *how we and others see us*
2. Spirituality works from inside out - its not something you dress up in – *what is the criteria for success*
3. Spirituality at work is working from a position of love and integrity – *choosing how we react*
4. Spirituality is not the same as religion – *a state beyond the senses, rather than a set of beliefs*
5. Spirituality is a natural progression – *wisdom is a way of being*
6. Spirituality is expressed in relationship
7. Spirituality at work is not about finding purpose and meaning in our job but finding it in ourselves
8. Working spiritually means there is always a greater good involved and a direct link between work 'in here' and the work 'out there'.

Alison Webster, author of *Wellbeing* (2002), writes of the nature of contemporary spirituality as follows:

'To be with other people', 'to connect with our history', 'as a mark of respect': these were some of the reasons given by some of the thousands who queued for hours to file past the coffin of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother as she lay in state in Westminster Hall, in London in April 2002. The most common comment from journalists covering the story however was how inarticulate the people were. They reported that nobody was **really** able to express why they were doing what they were doing. The predominant feeling seemed to be an inchoate sense of imperative: 'I don't know why, but I just felt I had to be here'.

Apparently within hours of the tragic train crash at Ladbroke Grove in October 1999, passers-by had begun to place flowers on the road bridge which passed over the railway line nearest to the crash. As time went by, bouquets accumulated, including from relatives and friends of those who had died. Sometimes families of those killed on our roads turn the fatality sites into roadside shrines, tying flowers and soft toys to lamp-posts and road signs. When there are major disasters, such activity causes much angst to those local authority planning departments who are charged with deciding what to do with the mementoes (if that is what they are); how to 'dispose of them' in an appropriate manner. To know that, you've got to understand what's at stake – what is their significance. And no-one is really quite sure. On anniversaries of such tragedies, symbols appear again. Remember how we were encouraged on the anniversary of the Dunblane shootings to light a candle and place it in our window?

If the sacred really has left us, how do we explain these phenomena? Why this imperative to mark symbolically the site of tragedy? If we really are a 'secular' society, why the demand for services of remembrance and memorial? The sacred echoes noisily- a force in the present expressed, for the most part, in the language of the past. It is an influence struggling to be re-articulated, but without having yet found a new mother-tongue.

I would argue that, in extreme circumstances, when meaninglessness and futility threaten to overwhelm order and rationality, human beings need forms of linguistic and symbolic expression which speak of mystery, meaning and transcendence in ways which connect with, but go beyond, everyday speech. I would argue that in our contemporary context, the word 'spirituality' functions as a catch-all signifier of this largely unarticulated need. Health and sickness, birth and death are, of course, life-experiences which call forth both the need and the possibility of such forms of expression. But it might be deemed that work…could be deemed a rich site for the development of this new language of 'spirituality'.'

Spirituality and community

Miller (1998) suggests that people are searching for a way to connect their work lives with their spiritual lives, to work together in community, to be unified in a vision and purpose that goes far beyond making money. Waddock (1999) too sees community as a necessary element of spirituality. People need to belong to communities where they can make meaningful contributions building a better world. Organisational prosperity and survival depend on building structures and relationships that permit people to make meaningful contributions and fulfil a fundamentally spiritual need for community. We need collaboration as much as competition to survive as the interconnectedness of the world grows more apparent. Developing community is an exercise of spirituality. It is part of what Wilber (2001) calls the 'left-hand' side, the internal expressive side of life, as opposed to the external, empirically measurable and observable aspects of the world. Community implies care, joint meanings, mutuality and commonality of purpose, of history, norms and values.

Waddock argues that work organisations are replacing other types of communities in many Americans' lives. Many people live in suburbs, not knowing their neighbours, working 50-60 hours a week in what is too frequently meaningless work; where 'face' time is as important as real contribution, and where pressure to do more substitutes for teamwork. Layoffs, downsizings, re-engineering and restructurings of all sorts combine in the devaluing of local communities, not to mention community among employees. Too frequently jobs are structured to provide the most control for management and the least for those who actually perform the work. In addition, there are numerous virtual organisations where people interact less frequently than in traditional organisations.

These shifts arguably occur at some cost to community. Waddock also suggests that people need and want to belong to communities where they can make meaningful contributions that build a better world. Many people discover that, from a certain point, money is not going to make their lives better. Turned off by work that is, at its roots, meaningless and in some cases even unethical, many people opt out of their organisations psychically, turning their productive energy and attention to family, civic matters or self-development. Community, where it can be found or created, can be a countervailing force to stress, isolation and anomie that characterises organisations that have cut out too much of what was community in their efforts to become competitive.

It may well be an imperative that our institutions, market-based, public and civil, recognise and deal with this need for community and spirit if they hope to be successful in the future and tap the best of human energies. Arguably, community, caring, being with others who care, working toward or being in something bigger than us, becomes as important as having more of the goods that are pervasive in developed societies globally. "By itself, shareholder wealth provides an incomplete sense of identity and uniqueness and does not motivate long-term creativity the same way community does" (Anderson, 1997).

Workplace spirituality

Various theorists (Kahnweiler and Otte, 1997;McGee, 1998) suggest that no agreed definition of spirituality in business exists. As Jennifer Laabs (1995) asserts, it is much easier to explain what spirituality in business is not, rather than what it is. In their 1999 study, Mitroff and Denton produced a typology of organisations: religious-based, evolutionary, recovering, socially responsible and values-based. They argue that spirituality needs to be an integral element of management; that no organisation can survive long without spirituality and soul. Other theorists such as Neck and Milliman (1994) claim that spirituality positively affects organisational performance. Organisations that attempt to promote spiritual development of their members report increases in creativity, satisfaction, team performance and organisational commitment (Leigh, 1997; Mirvis, 1997; Brandt, 1996; McCormick, 1994).

Conversely, if spirituality and the broader search for meaning form part of what employees consider part of their psychological contract with the employer, broken promises or incongruent behaviour may be damaging to organisational performance. Other Roffey Park research (Garrow, 2003) suggests that when the psychological contract between employers and employees is breached or violated, employees experience stress and may lose commitment to the organisation.

For Miller (1998) people are searching for a way to connect their work lives with their spiritual lives, to work together as a community, to be unified in a vision and purpose that goes far beyond making money. Similarly, Konz and Ryan (1999) suggest that individuals are searching for meaning in their work, a meaning that transcends mere economic gain.

Webster (2002) argues that work can be part of the problem that people look to spirituality to overcome. Work can be insecure and oppressive; it can seem purposeless and meaningless or, worse, it can make us feel part of unjust oppressive systems. Work can isolate us and leave us disconnected from our fellow human-beings, or it can make us feel very connected to our colleagues, but disconnected from others (e.g. our families and friends). Freeman and Gilbert (1988) speculate about how much more meaningful work and organisational life would be if people were able, in fact, to bring their whole selves to work; to engage in personal 'projects' in which they truly believed and that provided a source of shared purpose and identity.

Central interrelated aspects of workplace spirituality appear to be:
- The organisation acting as a community. Waddock argues that empowered and autonomous individuals need to be held together by some sort of 'glue' if they are to be productive for the organisation or a community.
- Having a cause or important purpose (Brown, 1992; Channon, 1992; Gozdz, 1993; Kelly, 1993; Ray, 1992). Living with passion in organisations requires bigger meanings and purposes, aimed at something beyond the 'goods' contained in dollars and products, and something of the common good that is engendered in relationships of care and community, commonality, among all stakeholders in an enterprise. Vision and values can create meaningful work within these autonomous units and serve as a source of 'glue'. Tom Chappell, CEO of Tom's of Maine agrees. He wrote in *The Soul of a Business* (1993) that 'common values, a shared purpose, can turn a company where daily work takes on a deeper meaning and satisfaction'.

- Sandelands emphatically distinguishes between feelings *of* work (work effect, emotion and job feeling) and feelings *about* work (feelings about work are reflected in such concepts as job attitude and job satisfaction). Just as the wind itself cannot be seen, so spirit has been defined as an 'animating force, an energy that inspires one towards certain ends or purposes that go beyond self. Employees perform most energetically, creatively and enthusiastically when they believe they are contributing to a purpose that it bigger than themselves'.

- A dramatic shift in both the fundamental hierarchical and power relationships toward a more collaborative model. It is a symbiosis, mutuality, or, in organisational terms, collaboration and interdependence on which success is built (Capra, 1995; Maturana and Varela, 1988).

This perspective contradicts the dominant values of business - aggressive competition.

For Webster (2002), the 'spirituality' agenda is about an agenda of frustration with the predominant values of a 'money culture'. She wonders if the current interest in work/life balance is a manifestation of this rejection of a money culture in favour of living life more imaginatively – or, at least, with more integration. Webster argues that 'spirit at work' is about two things: a spirituality of *resistance* versus a spirituality of *enhancement.* Spirituality enables us to embrace alternative visions and values in our lives: to resist those values and practices which we consider negative. But

spirituality also enables us to embrace new practices and values which enhance our life and give us a greater sense of wellbeing.

Meaning provided by work itself

Meaning can be derived from work itself. Adrian Furnham (2003) suggests that work provides a source of creativity and mastery- the feeling that one has achieved something worthwhile and useful. Work provides a source of identity- it gives people a sense of their status in society and value. For instance, people often introduce themselves socially by describing what they do: 'I'm an artist', 'I work for so and so' etc. These identities are constantly being recreated, with larger structures giving employees 'time off' from having to create an identity. Work gives a sense of purpose- it makes people feel needed and stops alienation. Webster suggests that through work we can feel part of something bigger than ourselves. Work can also often express a belief and faith in something external to ourselves.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) suggests that it is entirely possible to live daily life in what he calls 'flow'. He describes 'Joe', an assembly line worker who created a meaningful work environment by learning everything about all the machines and becoming a tremendous resource for his co-workers. In a sense, giving to others enabled 'Joe' to be most at peace with himself and most willing to give of his best. The challenge for managers is to produce the conditions in which people are doing, and believe they are doing 'good work', for which they willingly release their discretionary effort and achieve satisfaction from a job well done.

Many writers argue that an inclusive approach is more likely to lead to a healthy and productive workplace culture. According to Richard Greenhalgh, Chairman of Unilever,
"Everyone is different. Unique. Achieving diversity is about bringing together a rich mix of people, with differing perspectives and from different backgrounds, and creating an environment in which their differences are valued. A vibrant, open and creative culture. A culture in which ideas flourish, where people thrive, grow and have fun. A culture where energy is unleashed. A winning culture for the 21st century".

The critical question is how can we transform our organisations so that more – all- of them permit this kind of individual self-expression, yet retain the context of the larger enterprise's meaning, purpose and goal achievement?

Indicators of workplace spirituality

King and Nichol (1999) argue that an organisation whose work environment fosters an individual's spiritual development will realise heightened individual and organizational performance. For an organisation to have a spirituality, that spirituality must be enunciated in easily understood terms, spelling out the behaviours and beliefs that are congruent with the organisation's spirituality (Konz and Ryan, 1999).

One way of testing how well an organisation has maintained its spirituality would be to examine its mission statement. If it uses terms that are not understood by the members of the organisation, then the organisation is having difficulty in maintaining its spirituality. The authors point out that the examination of the mission statements of 28 Jesuit universities in the USA demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining an organisational spirituality. Similarly, values are indicators of workplace spirituality, but, according to Collins and Porras (1994), for values to truly have impact, they must reflect the inner needs, beliefs and aspirations of employees.

Empowerment is an integral aspect of spirit at work (Jaffe and Scott, 1998; Ray 1992). Other aspects include enthusiasm and commitment (Rosen, 1992), emotional expression (Bracey et al, 1993) and personal relationships (Miller, 1992). Konz and Ryan (1999) suggest that individuals are expecting organisations designed to promote their search for meaning and transcendence. For Csikszentmihalyi (1990), people tend to reach 'flow' or optimal experience in situations where there are clear goals, total immersion in the activity, transcendence of ego boundaries and merging with

the environment, high levels of motivation, self-confidence, competence, enjoyment and other intrinsic rewards.

According to Cavanagh(1999), general features of spirituality within business are:

- Belief in God, usually pantheism – a God existing in all things, non-transcendent and not a personal God.
- Emphasis on quiet, prayer and contemplation
- Centrality of people and listening to others
- Commitment to better relations among people
- Optimism about the perfectibility of human nature and business culture
- Commitment to a sustainable environment
- Person-centred individualism – an individual's relationship to God is essential; little conviction of the role of organisations or the importance of the common good.

Miller, (1998) points out that having a spiritual guide has become increasingly popular. While these guides may be termed 'personal coach', the issues with which 'coachees' commonly grapple are often linked with major personal transformation of a spiritual order. An article in *Sales and Marketing Management* (1998) suggests that the intense drive for success of sales professionals is being replaced by a growing interest in their spiritual growth. 'If you look at the things which make a salesperson successful – listening, overcoming obstacles, partnering with customers – they are the main tenets of a spiritual mind-set. The key to understanding power is knowing your own value system. Even those who believe in it struggle to define it. They tend to double-talk themselves and constantly dance around the issue of meaning: "It's nice to do business ethically and partner with customers, but worshipping a higher being and getting in touch with your own soul? Forget it. It may help some people, but that type of talk doesn't go over too well in the workplace". Spiritual people tend to agree with this. Their solution? They try to impart their spiritual philosophies on their co-workers without terming them as such. "But I do bring it into the office, just in language they'll understand. I present it as sales skills: listening, partnering, values. They don't like to hear things like 'God is my boss.'"

Spirituality and organisational transformation

The notion of spirituality has been employed to explain and understand organisational change, as well as numerous other organisational phenomena, including value systems, managing, leadership, executive development and empowerment. Emotion in general, and spirituality more specifically, represent core concepts within the organisational transformation framework. Internalisation of the vision as an emotional response suggests that the organisation's mission has intrinsic value to individuals i.e. meaning in-and-of itself. Alignment occurs when the vision is used by management to infuse work with spirituality and meaning. Purpose can excite and mobilise the members of the organisation to work in greater alignment with each other.

Neal et al. (1999) discuss organisational transformation with three practitioner theorists – Peter Senge, Bill Torbert and Ellen Wingard. Spirit was not at the core of any of their change theory, and none of their case studies was related to spirituality per se. Yet, in all cases, the transformations they helped to generate were sparked not through rational efforts at all: the actual 'cause' of transformation, according to the data, was expressed by these practitioners in terms of "grace" (Ellen Wingard), "magic" (Peter Senge) and a "miracle" (Bill Torbert).

Private versus workplace spirituality?

Cavanagh (1999) suggests that business people often compartmentalise their lives, leaving spiritual matters for strictly private time. On the other hand, Leigh (1997) suggests that spirituality grounds people in their work and allows them to connect with the transcendent in all they do. Some observers question whether creating a spiritual environment for employees is truly compatible with

a profit-making objective. According to Cavanagh (1999), some people fear that spirituality in the workplace will lead to coercion and favouritism, especially when the CEO espouses a particular religious tradition. Others believe that it can positively impact on organisational performance (Neck and Millman, 1994). O.H. Ohmann in his classic 'Skyhooks' in Harvard Business Review (1995) makes a strong case for spirituality.

Mitroff and Denton (1999) carried out a major study with senior managers and HR executives in corporate America. Their book, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: A Hard Look at Spirituality, Religion and Values in the Workplace,* 1999, (Jossey-Bass) gives a full account of their study. Interviewees clearly indicated that they were more able to show their intelligence than their emotions or feelings at work. They realised that they have to separate or compartmentalise significant parts of themselves. A decisive majority wish to be able to express and develop their complete self at work. Most people ardently wished that they could express their spirituality in the workplace. The basic values that governed their lives were integrity, honesty, building and maintaining good relationships, keeping one's word, trustworthiness, being there for one's family and for others, and so on. Almost all interviewees believed in a higher power or God.

Generally interviewees saw no contradiction between being ethical and profitable. They were relatively unaware of models that could be used to foster spirituality appropriately in the workplace. Indeed, they were seeking models that would allow them to implement spirituality programs.

For Butts (1999) one useful way of integrating spirituality in the workplace is through sacred / ultimate / whole –system values which enable the human spirit to grow and flourish. These time-honoured, life-affirming and unifying values, which can also enhance profit and productivity, include truth and trust (which liberate the soul), freedom and justice (which liberate creative and co-creative genius), creativity (innovation), collective harmony and intelligence (wholeness, synergy), deeper meaning and higher purpose.

The role of business leaders in creating meaning

For many authors (Conger, Schein, Kotter) a key function of leaders is to create meaning. Similarly, Bennis and Nannus observed:

 "Great leaders often inspire their followers to high levels of achievement by showing them their work contributes to worthwhile ends. It is an emotional appeal to some of the most fundamental human needs – the need to be important, to make a difference, to feel useful, to be part of a successful and worthwhile enterprise"(1985)

However, other authors suggest that in practice this function is ignored in preference to bottom-line considerations. Indeed, (Millman and Ferguson, 1999) argue that many CEOs will not justify a practice unless it favourably impacts the bottom line. They suggest that research is needed if we are to create a paradigm shift in CEOs so that they incorporate spiritual principles into their organisations. Parker Palmer (1994) finds a basic unconscious fault with many leaders. He calls it 'functional atheism' – the belief that ultimate responsibility for everything rests with me – if anything useful is going to happen, I cannot expect God's help.

For Dehler and Welsh (1994), leaders raise the consciousness of subordinates about the importance and value of organisational endeavours. The leader's values are the standards against which all organisational activities are measured (Conger, 1994; Whyte, 1994; Chappell, 1993). Conversely, many authors point out that failure by leaders to 'walk the talk' on organisational values is a major impediment to organisational effectiveness, since it is likely to give rise to employee cynicism, which in turn is thought to make people more resistant to change.

The spirituality of the organisation's leaders maintains the spirituality of the organisation through its influence on the socialisation of new employees. Anita Roddick, co-founder and former CEO of The Body Shop, describes her personal growth in her book *Business as Unusual*. For Roddick, the spiritual dimension of life underpins everything. She cites (2000) Matthew Fox who claims in his book *The Reinvention of Work* that reinvention begins when a values system is attached to work and that spirituality is an active energising principle running through every aspect of daily life.

The link between spirituality and business is evident in people from many faiths. Farooq Kathwarai, CEO of Ethan Allen Interiors, says that the Koran influences business decisions. Ranwal Rekhi, CEO of Cyber Media, says that Sikhism affects his management style. Forbes (1998) quotes executives on how their religion and spirituality affects them and their business. Max DePree, ex-chairman and CEO of Herman Miller spelled out his religiously based philosophy of management in 1989. James Autry, ex-CEO of Meredith Communications does the same in 1991.

Delbecq (1999) and House interviewed executives as part of a leadership study of CEOs dealing with rapid change environments in the 1980s. They found that many leaders with a Christian perspective saw their role in the form of a 'calling' to service, not simply a job or career. Since all creation is deemed good, being involved in co-creation through industrial enterprise can be an act of love. These leaders saw their own role and the function of the business enterprise as a form of service, in this case the design and provision of goods and services which meet important societal needs. They saw a complete integration of their spirituality with their work rather than a 'private life of the spirit' and a 'public life of work'.

For Delbecq's interviewees, leadership in the private sector is a role worthy of the highest form of servant leader. They suggest that leaders need courage to stay on course and survive with dignity the special challenges of executive leadership which daunt the brightest and the best. These leaders describe how they continually strive to lead through a vision which is bold and courageous, yet remain flexible in order to accommodate continual change. This calls for a detachment from what is comfortable and familiar. It requires excruciating public presence, with constant need to interface with diverse stakeholders. Through personal reflection and meditation they manage to balance the dangers of over-extension and burnout. They also consider the major cause of leadership failure is hubris.

Hotchkiss (1996) suggests that four main beliefs tend to dominate our cultural paradigm and therefore our experience of reality. These beliefs are:
- I am a body
- I am guilty
- I am separate
- I am incomplete.

These dominant beliefs lead us to conclude that we are unsafe in the world and that we must control everything to get what we want (or to avoid unwanted outcomes). Such beliefs, it might be argued underpin the conventional management style of command and control. An alternative to the command and control paradigm is suggested by Hench (1998) who describes a new view of management as 'A continuous learning process for creating meaning and value through service with and for others'. In contrast to the model of plan, lead, organise and control, he has identified a different model of experiment, serve, self-organise and learn. Hench argues that societal transformation will occur when a critical mass of individuals decide to let go of the control imperative and trust the design and control inherent in life itself.

For Dehler and Welsh (1994), emotions are essential to the new management style. The new management paradigm says that managing people is managing feelings. Work is an emotional experience, yet for the most part, this point has been neglected by management theory. Social

scientist Daniel Goleman (1995, 1998) has developed the idea of emotional intelligence (EQ) that requires managers and workers to develop a higher level of self-discipline, interpersonal and ethical skills, knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, self-motivation, recognizing emotion in others, and handling relationships.

Leaders are being called upon to facilitate the spiritual development of their followers (Dehler and Welsh, 1994). According to Leigh (1997), managers are now seen as guides who help create meaning and purpose for their subordinates. No transformation is easy, especially one as significant as the role shift from manager to spiritual guide. Being a spiritual guide is not part of any manager's training. The difficulty faced by managers is the diversity of spiritual traditions and experiences individuals bring to the workplace (McCormick, 1994).

Zohar suggests that leaders should focus on building business which benefits others ('spiritual business'), that is 'other'-centred, rather than 'self'-centred. She points out that leaders and organisations have the option to be in harmony with other people, rather than in strict competition- what she calls 'competing altruism'. A key challenge of leaders is closing the gap between espoused, surface values and real values.
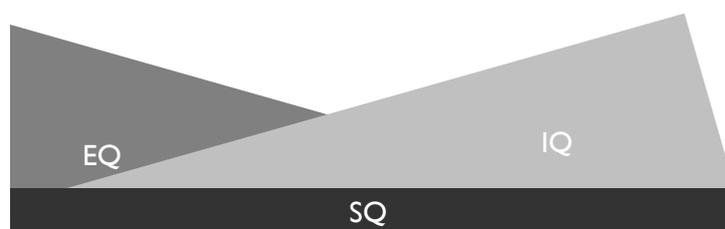
Spiritual intelligence - *The soul's intelligence or the voice echoing off the walls*
Along with IQ and EQ, SQ (Spiritual Intelligence) has been identified as the third key area of human intelligence with a direct impact on human performance. The third Q, SQ or spiritual intelligence has its origins from the collective evidence of psychology, neurology, anthropology and cognitive science. Some argue that the quest for meaning through our evolution is the thing that has brought us down from the trees. Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, authors of a new publication *Spiritual Intelligence -The Ultimate Intelligence,* argue that SQ is uniquely human and the most fundamental of IQ, EQ and SQ. They see computers as having IQ and animals possessing EQ and in a situation each can respond, but neither ask *why*.

"SQ is used to develop our longing and capacity for meaning, vision and value" it is here we dream and use our SQ to wrestle with great questions of good and evil.

Children exhibit SQ often visibly observed through their continual enquiries and asking 'why' in seeking meanings of their own and others' actions, trying to put feelings and actions in context.

IQ and EQ are associated, and in order to think effectively we need to feel; SQ is where we solve the problems of meaning and value we place on our actions and lives. They support one another and each has its own area of strength and can function separately. There is an argument that Gardner's multiple intelligences are variations of IQ, EQ and SQ linked to one of the three basic neural systems in the brain.

Spiritual Intelligence is not about being religious, although for some the formal expression may be religion. It is the internal, innate ability of the human brain and psyche.

SQ gives us a moral sense – to temper rigid rules with understanding and compassion and to see where these two have limits. It helps us recognise existing values and discover new ones making religion possible though not dependent upon it. Being religious does not guarantee a high SQ. Fifty years ago Gordon Allport showed that many people have religious experiences outside the parameters of religious institutions.

EQ (Goleman) allows me to judge what situation I am in and to behave appropriately whereas SQ allows me to ask if I want to be in the situation at all. Western psychology rests on two processes - the primary (EQ) and secondary (IQ), - the latter seen by Freud as the more superior. SQ operates out of the brain's centre and introduces a third, which unifies and integrates the two processes and acts as a dialogue between reason and emotion, mind and body providing a support for growth and meaning-giving centre.
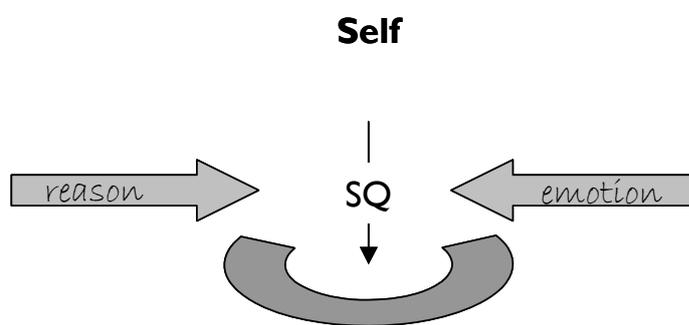
Self

Our SQ gives us the security to question and to look at the familiar in an unfamiliar way, *including* ourselves. That security needs to be intrinsic as managers are expected to be ever more flexible and innovative which can in itself appear a paradox. Zohar and Marshall suggest paths to greater spiritual intelligence:

- You must become aware of where you are now – self-awareness and reflection day to day
- Feel you want to change if you or some area of your life could be better
- A deeper level of reflection on your motivations and getting to know yourself
- Discover your obstacles and what is holding you back and how these can be removed
- What paths you need to follow to move forward
- Commit yourself to a path and look for meaning
- Remain aware there are other paths and honour those who walk them

'Spiritual intelligence is the saint's intelligence. It is the intelligence with which we heal ourselves and with which we make ourselves whole'. Many of us today long for what the poet T.S. Eliot called 'a further union, a deeper communion'.

Spiritual intelligence is our 'compass' or guide, at the edge in the chaos theory, in the border between order and chaos or what we are about and being lost. We tend to throw ourselves into immediate pleasure and satisfaction and limit our horizons to the merely human, cutting ourselves off from wider meaning and broader perspective. Being human has laid in reason (our IQ) in logic, and science with origins in Aristotle's philosophy where thinkers defined man as a rational animal.

The East and West perspective on humanism has differed - with the former being based on a deep sense of interconnectedness of life and responsibility for the whole world, an awareness of self,

meanings and values which could be described as spiritually intelligent. We have forgotten many of our meaning skills.

When insight and energy flows freely through the channel from inner to outer we become centred and whole, our SQ works to unite all the levels of being. Recollection, the vehicle of SQ means to re-collect, to pick up, and gather the fragmented pieces of ourselves. Recollection is SQ in action and SQ is never absent - only our sight of it and, therefore, our ability to use it, may be blocked.

Zohar and Marshall believe a person with high Spiritual Intelligence is likely to be a servant- leader, bringing higher vision and value to others with the ability to inspire, to understand that the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts. They are not afraid to ask questions and not afraid to say 'I don't know' and look for achievement through many facets, not solely in the bottom line. He/she is:

- Flexible - open to suggestion, surprise and change, and able to cope with ambiguity;
- Self-aware - both reflective and self-confronting;
- Led by his or her own vision, values and sense of purpose;
- Able to learn from adversity and turn bad experience into wisdom
- Holistic - whole purpose, whole system;
- Welcoming of diversity;
- Independent and willing to take a stand on issues;
- Questioning - especially 'why' questions;
- Able to reframe situations - new perspectives, creative alternatives;
- Spontaneous-alive to the moment and not afraid to respond or initiate.

Spiritual learning

A Roffey Park research report, *Innovation at the Top,* by Jean Lammiman and Michael Syrett, suggests that senior managers still see effective decision-making as an Aristotelian process based on rationality whereas front line innovation in organisations draws more on intuition, paradox and lateral thinking. In an article on Mergers in People Management (2000) it was noted that the composition of the merger team relied too heavily on the left brain assessments of the finance and legal experts rather than drawing on the more qualitative but insightful perspectives of those nearest innovation.

For Hawkins (1991), the spiritual dimension cannot be grasped by thinking with the head, but by thinking and understanding with the heart. For him, spirituality does not come from effortful self-development. Spiritual learning is different from, but connected, to skill learning and strategic learning.

Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972), includes a paper called 'The logical Categories of Learning and Communication' that draws on Russell and Whitehead's principle of logical types to distinguish zero learning, learning level 1, learning level 2 and learning level 3 – which Hawkins claims is the spiritual dimension. Bateson defines level 3 as " change in the process of Learning 2 e.g. a corrective change in the system of sets of alternatives from which choice is made" and "is likely to be rare even in human beings". It involves a transcendence of the ego-world, where experience is oriented to, and made sense of through some rational self". Bateson points out that it is not possible to fully understand a level of learning within that level. To understand the processes of Learning 1 you have to reflect within level 2. It is only by facing death that we can step out of the confines of Level 2 learning.

Hawkins proposes a treble-loop Learning Model. Level 1 is about Operations and Efficiency; Level 2 is about Strategy and Effectiveness; Level 3 is about Service and Evolutionary Need. He is not sure

whether a model of treble-loop learning can be drawn in 2 dimensions. The space within which we can learn how to be paradigm shifters only comes when we transcend dualistic thinking. The cultural equivalent of Learning 3 is 'heart sets' – awareness is not by understanding with the head but is by knowing of the heart.

Torbert's developmental stages of leadership 7 ('the magician') and 8 ('the ironist') can reside in treble-loop learning. There is a necessity for this level of learning to be available to some key members of an organisation, who can "act like the salt in the soup", to draw out the awareness of the deeper purpose which contains and informs the strategic thinking and operational realities.

Most management training focuses on skills and competences to improve an individual's competitive edge working on the logical and analytical mind, the IQ. More recently this has broadened to place greater emphasis on personal development and increased emotional intelligence. This has now taken one step further into what has been described as the ultimate intelligence - SQ or spiritual intelligence. It asks the 'why' questions and gives context for the other intelligences to sit. Our SQ encourages a more holistic way of operating rather than using or making prominent one particular skill. 'We use SQ to be creative. We call upon it when we need to be flexible, visionary or creatively spontaneous'. (Zohar and Marshall, p.13)

Summary

Whilst the nature of meaning and the role of organisations in creating meaning remains open to debate, there appears to be consensus about the business benefits of adopting some of the key elements of 'spirituality' in the workplace, namely:

- Building communities
- Developing a higher level purpose
- Leaders who can motivate others through their ability to deploy emotional and spiritual intelligence
- A more holistic role for managers
- The role and purpose of work, organisation and business in the context of the wider community.

In the next section we will explore the findings relating to how people define 'meaning'.

Section 3 – Findings – The meaning of 'meaning'

In this section we draw mainly, though not exclusively, on focus group discussions. The initial focus of discussion in focus groups was what people meant by the word 'meaning' and 'meaningful'. To explore this topic, we invited participants to recall moments in their lives where they had experienced elevated meaning.

■ **The "spirituality" word is an obstacle for many people**

In common with much of the literature, we found that the word 'spirituality' is an obstacle for many people, even if they have a broader interest in a deeper form of self-awareness or development. When we began our research, our working title was 'spirituality in the workplace'. This title provoked a variety of reactions. On the one hand, we were approached by various faith-based groups who were keen to take part in the project, while other potential participants without religious affiliations found the term 'spirituality' off-putting precisely because it had faith-based connotations for them. Since we were interested in the broader significance of the term 'meaning', rather than spirituality alone, our working title became 'meaning at work'.

People were invited to take part in focus groups at Roffey Park to explore the question of meaning at work. However, an accidental hang-over from the ongoing debate about the project's title resulted in the meeting rooms being labelled 'spirituality in the workplace'. The research group's ambivalence about the title of the project was reflected in the views of the people attending the focus groups, many of whom suggested that if we had called the project by the latter title, they would have been unlikely to turn up. For many of them, the word 'spirituality' had faith-based associations which they did not feel were appropriate in the workplace. For others, spirituality was a deeply personal matter and therefore inappropriate to discuss in the context of the workplace. As one person put it: "Is there no part of life which managers can't get their hands on?"

For many focus group participants, the word 'spirituality' linked with the workplace could be seen as manipulative, or as yet another cult-like 'prescribed way'. Conversely, words that linked with spirituality, such as 'passion' were considered OK to use in certain contexts, such as the Railways. The wider issues linked with spirituality, such as community, ethics, corporate social responsibility, authenticity, congruence, respect, provider's mission, integrity, honesty, were considered legitimate to surface in the workplace.

Moments of elevated meaning included events which heighten awareness of something fundamental.

It would appear from the stories told by focus group participants that 'meaning' is essential to health and well-being. Some of the elements of the stories were about a becoming more centred, finding out what's important to me, making new, more meaningful choices, gaining a different perspective on life in general.

Prompted by major dramas
Awareness of meaning tends to be prompted by the major dramas of life. One participant learned that she had a medical condition for which medical science currently has no known cure. She said of her reaction after being told the news: *"the moment stays with me and has impacted/changed the course of how I've lived since. It is the 'embracing of life' rather than postponing it. I promised myself that I would live every day to the full – to step out of the safety of my then world, explore and live those dreams that had been on hold- waiting for tomorrow"*. She had been true to this intention, setting herself up as an independent consultant and starting to write her first book.

Many focus group participants suggested that sudden key life events, such as near-death experiences, recovering from illness, divorce or the death of a loved one, can trigger the search for more meaning. In the case of one participant, attending a self-development programme had raised his self-awareness and desire to develop further. His pursuit of his own 'inner journey' through development put his relationship with his partner under strain, leading subsequently to the break-up of the relationship. Two focus group participants described how, having been seriously ill, they now had different priorities and had deeper, more important motivations.

Experience of heightened meaning
For almost all the focus group participants, the experience of heightened meaning took place at defining moments – which had stimulated major emotions and a sense of awe. In most cases they involved other people and an experience which enabled the individual to glimpse life's journey, looking deeper than the blinkers of our contemporary materialistic society lifestyles would normally permit.

Participants told stories which held strong emotional depth for them, such as finding one's life partner, helping someone, holding one's baby for the first time, being authentic in difficult circumstances, etc. One participant remembered her grandmother who had been her primary carer as a child. She recalled her last conversation with her grandmother before the latter's death, in which her grandmother had given her some loving messages to help her through her life. The participant could recall the place where the conversation had taken place in fine detail, right down to the perfume of the flowers in the garden. This experience had given the participant a sense of being part of something of a more universal order. Death was not death *per se*, but provided a sense of continuity. The participant told us that if she ever felt low, just recalling this experience helped her to cope.

Another participant had a son who had lost three years of schooling due to serious illness. This had taught the participant what it is to be a parent, at a deeper level, compared with the person's habit of 'breezing along'. Similarly, another participant recalled meeting an old friend whom he had not seen for a very long time. He found this experience a sort of recognition/validation that exists beyond the present moment – being with someone who can testify to his existence and to the journey travelled. This sense of continuity in and beyond life was a common thread to several stories.

For several participants, the experience of childbirth had enabled them to touch something transcendental. As one person put it: *"It's a feeling of 'I am'. A feeling of being part of someone or something else that's unreachable by any other conscious effort - uniqueness yet universality (since time immemorial) – basic yet powerful. You see things from a completely different place – it was nothing to do with what I had done – something had shifted. Gosh! - it could have been 2000 years ago – a bigger sense of connection, a shared meaning and sense of community"*.

The underlying themes arising from these and the other reports suggest that 'meaning' links with feelings of:

- belonging and connection
- harmony and balance
- everything being in order
- having the freedom to be genuine and fully oneself
- giving selflessly
- release and being at ease with oneself.

It is in these states that people appear to feel most able and eager to give of their best – to be 'in flow'.

- **The spiritual quest is one strand of a wider phenomenon of people looking for more meaning in their lives**

It would seem that, while most focus group participants were looking for more meaning in their lives, 'meaning' did not automatically equate exclusively to 'spirituality', especially since the terms were difficult to distinguish through debate. In the *Management Agenda* too, 66 per cent of respondents maintain that their personal values have a spiritual aspect to them. 70 per cent are interested in learning to live the spiritual side of their values.

For many focus group participants, the quest for more meaning was fundamentally the pursuit of individual fulfilment throughout life's journey. It was about self-transcendence and the search for purpose in life. It did not inevitably entail a belief in God, but a belief in the harmony of the universe.

Making your mark

Some participants felt that the quest for meaning was really the need to make one's mark on the world. Questions which focus group participants raised were of the type: 'what contribution am I making? Why am I doing what I'm doing? What difference does it make?' So, for instance, people may take part in dangerous sports or set themselves major challenges at different stages of their lives in order to heighten the intensity of their experience of life. Achieving something exceptional, and proving something to themselves and others can make their lives more meaningful. Given the length of time most people spend 'at work', having a role which offers the chance to achieve something significant, to make a difference, would appear to be 'meaning-full' for many people. Having the right context in which to carry out this work also appear to be linked with 'meaning'.

Participants felt that the quest for meaning was linked to age and brought into sharp focus through the various transitions at different stages of life. The concept of the 'seven ages of man', with the different phases of life producing not only physical change but characteristically involving different activities, feelings and experiences, was used to explore this perspective on the search for meaning.

In infancy and childhood, children develop a sense of who they are, though their life options may be limited by many factors, including their social context and their own abilities. Beyond early childhood and schooling comes the quest to develop an adult identity, partly defined in the west through work, gender identity, financial and social status. As young adults grapple with decisions about relationships and parenthood they are also usually making other lifestyle choices, exercising financial freedoms or working within financial constraints. These early phases of life suggest an active and busy pursuit of self-definition and claiming one's place in the world.

Focus group participants commented that many young people are leaving organisations early, having not made sense of why they are there. There was a view that young people have high expectations of work and of their careers and are not willing to make the compromises for career progression which their predecessors may have been prepared to make. What is not clear is whether this is explainable as the typical radical stance of the young, or whether they are really less interested and engaged in the workplace than previous generations.

Period of transition

In the middle years, many of the earlier uncertainties give way to a more settled period which gradually becomes defined by more challenging issues which need to be adjusted to at identity level. Typical challenges include becoming reconciled to career options growing more limited, with earlier decisions having largely determined later lifestyle choices. Children leave home, creating both a sense of loss for some parents and (usually) greater financial freedom and choice for themselves. In the middle years, people typically start to experience the loss of their parents and other loved ones. For many people the prospect of freedom to pursue personal choice through a comfortable retirement is an attractive prospect while for others whose identities are closely tied to the work they do, the prospect of ceasing work is terrifying. In either case, the choice about how time will be spent becomes more conscious as retirement age beckons.

Against these typical life transitions, current workplace uncertainties, with closure of final salary pension schemes to new entrants, volatility in endowments and other financial 'cushions' mean that many people feel under duress to carry on working, under different terms from what they had expected.

Period of adjustment

In later life, people typically develop a growing awareness of their own mortality. Some people appear to develop their religious faith as they grow older. For some people the desire to make a difference during their lives, is demonstrated by 'putting something back' and/or by creating a lasting contribution through humanitarian, artistic and other endeavours.

- **The search for meaning has been strengthened both by disenchantment at work and by wider economic and political instability**

Perennial issue

In discussing the nature of 'meaning', focus group participants debated whether the quest for meaning was an ongoing thing, part of human nature, or whether the 2003 *Management Agenda* survey findings, which suggested high numbers of people looking for more meaning at work was a 'blip', given particular impetus by turbulence on the world scene. Views varied, with most people agreeing that the search for meaning is part of the human condition.

However, the search for meaning has been accentuated for some focus group participants by aspects of modern life in the West. A discussion theme arose relating to more 'local' issues and the sense of loss some people felt at the perceived impoverishment of popular culture, with the 'dumbing down' of television output in the UK, with 'reality TV' and popular programmes such as 'The Weakest Link' demonstrating a different set of moral values from those of earlier decades in post-Victorian Britain. In particular, participants disliked the glorification of celebrity, the apparent cruelty and banality of tasks to be completed by show contestants, the rewarding of 'underhand', tactical behaviour, regardless of the 'right' solution and the bullying approach of presenters. Participants felt that such graphic demonstrations of 'dog-eat-dog' behaviour were reflective of some workplace practice, especially the political nature of the workplace and the tendency not to trust other people.

For focus group members, lack of trust in the workplace echoed a more general loss of trust in society, with politicians, the media and other institutions being under the spotlight of public suspicion. Participants remarked on the general scepticism towards authority. A study by the Downing Street Strategy Unit suggests that, whereas in the early 1980s, 44 percent of the population believed that other people 'could generally be trusted', that figure has now dropped to 29 percent and is thought to be still falling (Elliott and Quaintance, 2003).

Similarly, ethical standards among business leaders were a cause for dismay. The Enron, Worldcom and other accountancy scandals, the Maxwell pension scandal of years before, 'Fat Cat' pay issues of today made people feel that business leaders were not to be trusted and could be relied on to 'feather their own nests,' regardless of whether their actions caused problems for their business and its employees.

In addition participants felt that contemporary UK society has come to echo Margaret Thatcher's famous remark that "There is no such thing as society", with the growth of a 'me first' values embodied in an ethic of individual entitlement without individual responsibility, encouraged by companies providing 'ambulance-chasing' claims pursuit services. Some participants felt that changing family structures, with the prevalence of single parent households, greater reliance on professional childcare arrangements, the expectation that 'eldercare' will be paid for, or else be provided by the state, rather than provided by the family, reflect broader social change, placing the focus on individuals rather than family and community.

People commented on the increasing fragmentation of modern society and the impact on their sense of being 'connected' to others. Some participants felt that the prevalence of litter, graffiti and vandalism in public places; the loss of lively village and town centres due to the impact of out-of-town supermarkets were symptomatic of a breakdown in social cohesion. These and many other observations, including fear of crime, reflect a breakdown in the sense of 'safe' community, except behind the brick walls of upmarket housing estates. On the other hand, many participants felt that football has become a sort of worldwide religion, uniting people of different cultures and having a cult-like following among men and women alike, regardless of nationality. People often now appear to enhance their own identity by mentioning their affiliation to particular football teams as they introduce themselves socially.

Commercial values dominate. Indeed, in many areas, as supermarkets extend their reach to include services such as post offices and chemist shops, the superstores appear to have become latterday community centres, whose primary objective is to encourage customers to buy. Participants also made reference to the increasing secularisation of UK society as a whole, as reflected in the decline of organised religion, leaving people with few outlets for organised faith-based spirituality. One participant suggested that religion has not in fact disappeared- it has just translated into 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' In contrast, it was felt that some faith-based communities within multi-cultural Britain retain some of the cohesiveness which may once have more generally characterised British local communities in the past.

These and other comments suggested that the search for meaning becomes more apparent in the context of the perceived erosion of traditional community and moral values. They echo reflections by Andrew Solomon who talks of the climbing rates of depression which are a consequence of post-modern fragmentation and the breakdown of systems of belief. He argues that while there are psychological medicines which are used to treat depression, there is no system that lets us deal with the erosion of the 'spiritual ozone layer'. It is in this layer that matters relating to the importance of human relations, of personal identity and of the meaning and purpose of life reside.

The impact of environmental instability

In line with the literature, we found that the search for meaning, though a perennial issue, has been brought into high relief by wider economic and political instability. Current political and economic instability is leading 37 percent of managers in 2004 to report in the *Management Agenda* that they are looking for more meaning in their lives, though the impact of instability seems to be lessening, with 47 percent of respondents reporting that they are looking for meaning in life as a result of political and economic instability in 2003.

In the focus groups, people discussed what were perceived to be wider shifts taking place on the world scene. For instance, September 11, 2001 and the War in Iraq suggest that the former power balances are now becoming reoriented. This time, power blocks based on politically opposed ideologies appear to be giving way to power blocks based on fundamentalist religious ideologies. For several focus group participants, especially those with children, the emerging global scene contained many fearful aspects which cannot be controlled, even by powerful governments. This gave them concerns with respect to the future. Some expressed concern about global political instability would lead people would to become mistrustful of their neighbours, to reject asylum seekers, to perpetuate an 'every person for him/herself' ethic.

The turbulence of money markets during 2002-3 and the fall in share values in the early years of the millennium have led to financial hardship in many industrialised nations as pension funds and loans have been adversely affected. For many focus group participants this was a potential source of concern, with several people expecting to have to revise their life plan and ultimate retirement age. Many people commented on their own loss of trust in formerly respected institutions. They also commented on the economic uncertainties of the future and the possible impact on their own job security.

Disenchantment with the workplace

The quest for meaning has also been strengthened by disenchantment at work, as is evident in many of the *Management Agenda* findings. People are working long hours, with 83 percent of respondents consistently working longer than their contracted week. 57 percent maintain that their workload has increased over the last year. Boundaries between work and non-work are blurred (anyone with a mobile phone becomes contactable at all times). As a result, people who might have become involved in their local community, by running a scout group for example, now don't. Work becomes the focus around which the rest of life revolves.

The growing need to take control of one's life is reflected in the fact that 89 percent of respondents suggest that work-life balance is of increasing importance to them, with only 3 percent suggesting that balance is unimportant to them. Similarly, 73 percent have made sacrifices for their careers in the past, while 46 percent would not be willing to do so in the future. On the other hand, fewer respondents (71 percent) consider that their organisation takes the issue of work-life balance seriously and 29 percent claim that their organisation is dismissive of the issue. This mismatch has the potential to backfire on organisations seeking to achieve greater flexibility.

Conflict within their organisations has increased in recent years (45 percent), with the main factors being people having different goals and agendas (59 percent), power/status (51 percent) and different ways of doing things (51 percent) as a result of change. There is a slight increase in cases of harassment (23 percent compared to 18 percent in 2003), with the main perpetrators being senior management.

Within the workplace, relationships at work have become more transactional, characterised by mutual suspicion and lack of trust. Respondents are least trusting of senior managers (only 24 percent trust to a great extent), while subordinates (59 percent) and peers (49 percent) are the most trusted groups. High stress levels are reported, with 74 percent of respondents experiencing stress as a direct result of work (2003: 70 percent). Respondents from the Public sector appear most likely to suffer from stress (77 percent), while respondents from the Charity sector are least likely to report suffering from stress (36 percent).

In the QMW survey, the short-term focus of many organisations also appears to result in the pursuit of deeper meaning being swept to one side, with little time for reflection and affiliation. Typical comments include:
- Disquiet and the overriding temporal issues and relentless pursuit of (short term) goals, each at the expense of the 'inner person'
- The HR department are trying to create meaning at work but due to changes in our corporate division this is not being implemented.

The effect of this short-termism, according to one respondent is "Greater resistance to change than I have experienced/witnessed during 33 years, coupled with a desire to 'touch' the present and its meaning to self and organisational unit".

In the focus groups, people described a number of examples where they have experienced a loss of meaning in the workplace. It was felt that an individual's sense of identity can become subsumed by their work role, since organisations generally do not allow for a fuller expression of personal identity. When external forces, such as government targets and inspections, interfere with your own view of your role, this can cause loss of meaning for the job-holder.

For example, one person's partner was a very experienced primary school teacher. A variety of 'bureaucratic' requirements which are supposed to be in the best interests of the child – from quality assurance measures to prohibitions on physical contact, such as cuddling a distressed child – can cause a clash of values and priorities which undermine a sense of meaning and job satisfaction.

While the measures appear to prove that things are improving, in practice the added bureaucratic burden takes workers away from what they believe they should be doing.

In another example, one participant described how, when he was visiting a relative in hospital, an elderly person in the same ward had died. The curtains were drawn while staff prepared to move the body of the dead person. Despite the curtains, the participant was able to see one nurse gently put her hand on the hand of the dead person, as if to communicate and reassure them. While such behaviour would not form part of any government target, it meant a lot to the participant to see that this nurse clearly considered it important to treat the dead person with respect and dignity, whether or not she was measured on this behaviour.

People report feeling increasingly 'disconnected' at work. The pressure to be busy, to perform and produce results prevents people from feeling that they can take time to reflect and make some personal choices. People are sensing a void, wanting some 'space' where they can 'be' rather than 'do' all the time. These comments echo remarks by Alison Webster (2003) who describes how lives are becoming textured by technology. She argues that the increasingly fluid boundary between people and machines- with mobile phones, texting, voicemail, internet chat-rooms etc- there is an illusion of community.

These comments echo Webster (2002), who points out the paradox of the fuller range of contacts made possible by the internet and e-mail, yet the heightened sense of loneliness (when the computer is turned off). The context of constant busyness makes the silence seem strange. Making time to reflect, and (re)discovering the capacity to reflect has to be organised and aided officially – through sanctioned 'Awaydays'. We rely on communication systems that filter our thoughts, and e-mail takes away the texture of voice tone. Webster questions what is happening to relationships- whether they are becoming many-layered or whether the negatives are coming more into focus.

Corporate purpose

In focus groups people discussed connection and disconnection with regard to corporate purpose. There was general consensus that people felt more connected if their work served an identifiable group of stakeholders and made a positive difference. One focus group participant had left his corporate role to become self-employed, when he became disenchanted with the idea of providing shareholder value. He argued that organisations will have to do more to connect with people, especially young people in their twenties who tend to have a clearly defined value set, if they are to attract and retain them. Participants mentioned high turnover among young people in their organisations because many had not been able to make sense of why they were there. They speculated about whether turnover occurs because young people, who tend to be idealistic and radical in their views, tend to leave when they feel their views are not acknowledged. Managers in particular, it was felt, do not have a clear understanding of the transitions people experience in life, especially mid-life.

Another participant who had worked for British Rail and now worked for a franchise holder since privatisation, suggested that employees were largely disconnected from shareholder motivations and their affiliations tended to be with their colleagues and trades unions. Similarly, focus group participants who worked for the NHS described their disenchantment with the contrast between the noble aims of healthcare and the greater business orientation of the NHS. They saw this as an erosion of values, undermining the nature of the enterprise. They also considered that the greater degree of managerialism, with targets and weightings, had eroded the basis of trust, with people feeling 'I'm not trusted any more'. Similar views were expressed by a participant working for a major charity, who saw conflicts of values between the charitable aims and the commercial side of the work leading to ongoing clashes in the workplace.

Conversely, a participant who works with groups of nurses in a part of London found that this work led to more meaning and commitment than working for an anonymous NHS. A participant from the

BBC also reported how the shift back towards the BBC's original core purpose had caused people to believe in what they were doing. This person felt that Greg Dyke, as leader, had restored employees' sense of meaning. (It was interesting to note the after-effects of the Hutton Inquiry were immediately evident in staff responses to Greg Dyke's departure and the apparent threat to the BBC's independent status).

There was general consensus that people are experiencing a spiritual vacuum and are interested in 'wider experience' linked with the following:

- Communicating / ethics /corporate social responsibility / values / mission.
- What was important included:
- Congruence / respect / integrity / authenticity / honesty.
- The common points in people's experience were tied to questions such as:
- Why am I doing what I am doing?
- What difference does it make?

Summary

Meaning in the workplace appears to have strong links to values and connectivity, trust and identity. These findings suggest that, despite the challenges of economic and political instability in the broader environment, it is mainly in the workplace that many employees experience erosion of meaning. People appear to want their work to have a higher purpose. They appear to believe that work can be more meaningful if some of the barriers to meaning are addressed.

Section 4 – Findings – Meaning in the workplace

In an area as complex and personal as the search for meaning, developing a universal cause- and-effect explanation of why people experience a lack of meaning in the workplace may not only be difficult but perhaps also inappropriate. However, it is possible to draw together some of the phenomena which appear to be linked in some way to the notion of meaning in the workplace. In this section we draw principally on the findings from the 2004 *Management Agenda* survey to explore correlations between respondents' search for meaning and other phenomena.

The search for a greater sense of meaning and purpose in working life is a recurring theme in this survey and in 2004, 70 percent of all respondents reported that they were looking for meaning at work. 75 percent of these respondents said that their values have a spiritual dimension to them.

Ken Wilber's 4 dimensions of phenomena

In analysing our survey data, we found some interesting correlates of the 'search for meaning' and organisational, cultural, behavioural and experiential responses. We used Ken Wilber's framework *4 dimensions of phenomena* to organise the data and develop a multi-dimensional perspective as follows:

Search for meaning – the outer collective (organisational correlates)

In the Roffey Park 2003 *Management Agenda* study we found that people who suggested that they were looking for more meaning tended to work for large organisations which had flattened their management layers and gone global. People end up having large spans of control, many responsibilities and pressures. This was echoed again in 2004, with employees of larger organisations in general experiencing less meaning than those in small organisations (up to 50 employees). Those wanting more meaning were typically looking for a more flexible working pattern (82 percent).

In the 2004 survey, 88 percent of respondents report that there is a growing demand for more flexible working patterns and 68 percent would like themselves to have a more flexible working pattern. 62 percent claim that there is support for flexible working from the top of the organisation and 35 percent suggest that their organisation is going beyond mere compliance to the requirements of the Employment Act and extending the right to ask for flexible working beyond parents of young children.

Inner collective (cultural correlates)

Similarly, many people experience lack of meaning if their organisational climate is competitive and demanding. People have neither the time nor the encouragement to be creative and they report having low morale. In the survey data, there was a clear correlation between top managers not being seen to act as leaders and employees experiencing lack of meaning. These people typically wanted a:

- *More ethical organisation*
- *Better match between own values and those of the organisation*
- *Self-employed situation.*

So strong is the connection between values and a sense of meaning that organisations need to understand how the 'walk' can be more closely aligned with the 'talk' if they wish to retain key people. Even if employees choose to stay in an organisation whose values in practice are different from those espoused, they are more likely to develop a more transactional approach towards the organisation, and perhaps 'trade down' with regard to time and effort expended on behalf of the organisation.

Search for meaning- outer individual

People who were looking for more meaning in the workplace tended to report low levels of involvement in organisational decision-making. They felt their views were not heard. They also experienced lack of work-life balance and these people were generally considering leaving their jobs. Typically (47 percent) they were looking for roles with the same or less responsibility, and many (25 percent) were considering a self-employed situation. Similar findings were evident in the 2004 survey, with people working is small organisations (up to 50 employees) faring best and having the highest levels of commitment and sense of meaning.

The search for meaning correlated with work demands being too high or too low. 31 percent of the sample felt that their organisation places unreasonable demands upon them, which mainly take the form of demanding increased quantity of output (79 percent) and increased quality of output (36 percent). Indeed the root causes of the reported increased stress levels in 2004 (74 percent versus 70 percent in 2003) appear to be increased workload (61 percent), a general lack of time (61 percent) and a lack of organisational support (41 percent).

Other contributory factors included a lack of control over their workload (33 percent) and by the length of their working day (30 percent). Respondents also refer to having to work and stay motivated through periods of uncertainty and with little support, excessive travel and unspoken expectations adding to the pressure. In the Quest for Meaning at Work (QMW) survey too, the potentially negative effect of routine work was evident in comments such as: "There are winds of change but much of the work continues to be routine and repetitive so probably not very meaningful for some."

Search for meaning – the inner journey

65 percent of respondents looking for more meaning reported experiencing tensions between the spiritual side of their values and their work. We found that people looking for more meaning were actively interested in learning to live the spiritual side of their values. They were also likely to:
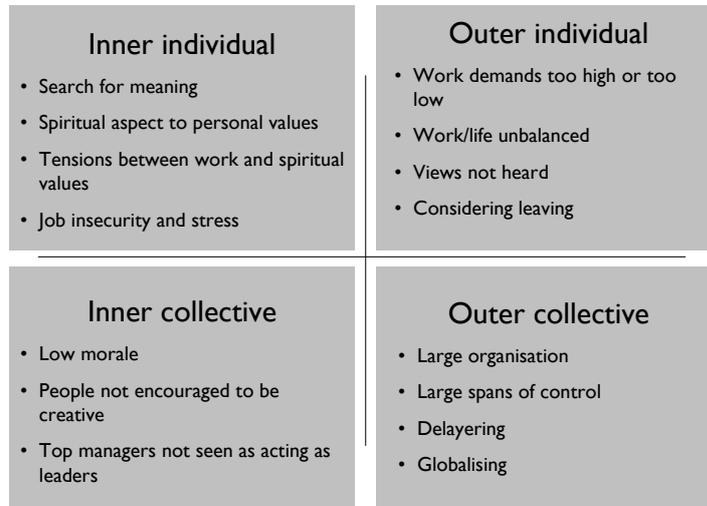
* *Value the opportunity of discussing spirituality in the workplace with colleagues*

* *Be interested in learning meditation and mindfulness practices.*

Such employees take their own development - in the broadest sense – seriously. While job skills related development can help people to develop their competence, development which provides people with the chance for greater self-insight is more likely to have meaning for these employees.

Respondents who reported that they were looking for more meaning in life tended to be more worried about the future and experience job insecurity than people who were not looking for more meaning (36 percent rather than 25 percent). They also tended to report experiencing stress as a result of work (79 percent) more frequently than those who were not looking for meaning (63 percent), especially if they felt they had to conform and play politics just to survive.

58 percent of respondents, compared with 66 percent in 2003 maintain that their personal values have a spiritual aspect to them. Interestingly, there appears to be a significant relationship between age and whether individuals are looking for more meaning in their lives. It is the younger people in our sample (82 percent of 20-30 year old respondents) who are most likely to report that they want to have a greater sense of meaning at work. The next groups to report this are people aged between 41 and 50 (76 percent) and those over 60 (70 percent) and 31- 40 year olds (59 percent). Those aged between 51 and 60 appear least likely to report a search for meaning at work (33 percent).

Search for meaning – a multi-dimensional perspective

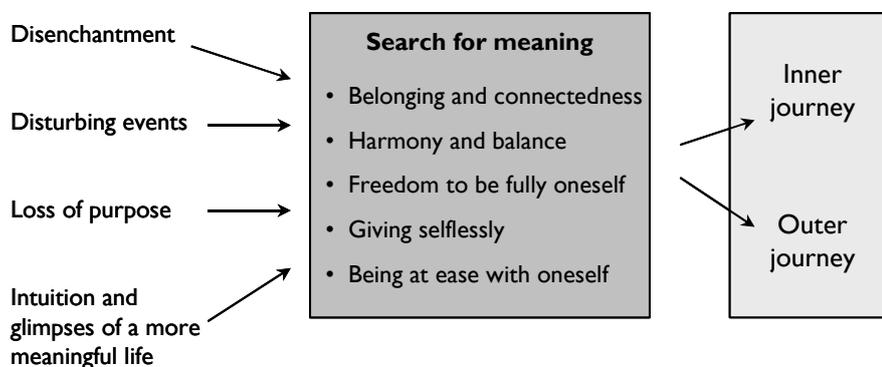|	
Inner individual • Search for meaning • Spiritual aspect to personal values • Tensions between work and spiritual values • Job insecurity and stress	**Outer individual** • Work demands too high or too low • Work/life unbalanced • Views not heard • Considering leaving
Inner collective • Low morale • People not encouraged to be creative • Top managers not seen as acting as leaders	**Outer collective** • Large organisation • Large spans of control • Delayering • Globalising

These correlations suggest that organisations which consider employees as their key source of competitive advantage need to understand and address some of the deeper needs of employees in order to retain people and keep them motivated.

Correlates of the "Spirited Organisation"

The research data suggested that a positive sense of meaning for individuals was reflected in higher morale at the collective level. We wanted to know whether this higher level of morale created any distinct advantages for the organisation. We found that people reporting higher levels of morale at work also tended to report that their organisation:

- *Retains its key people with ease*
- *Manages changes effectively*
- *Supports discussion of spirituality in the workplace.*

Spirit at Work - the emerging model

Disenchantment

Disturbing events

Loss of purpose

Intuition and glimpses of a more meaningful life

Search for meaning

- Belonging and connectedness
- Harmony and balance
- Freedom to be fully oneself
- Giving selflessly
- Being at ease with oneself

Inner journey

Outer journey

Summary

The question of meaning may be central to the potential for organisational success, if the business model in use depends on ongoing employee commitment and high performance. Since organisations need to be able to change on an ongoing basis (in Roffey Park's High performance input model this is known as organisational change-ability), they need to be able to change fluently, without destroying the psychological contract (or employment relationship) between organisation and employee. It would seem that the organisations most able to do that are those where employees experience a high sense of meaning at work. Such organisations are likely to invest in employees and be prepared to engage in more holistic relations with employees, supporting and enabling self-development.

These correlations represent part of the business case for treating the question of meaning in the workplace seriously. They draw attention to some of the areas where action may be required in order to build a more meaningful work situation. They may also serve as useful indicators or measures of improvement for those wishing to develop a more meaningful work context. While not indicating cause-and-effect, they nevertheless raise questions worthy of further research, such as why employees in smaller organisations and units appear to be better able to experience meaning than those in larger, more complex organisations, and whether larger organisations have the potential to apply some of the practices of smaller organisations to increase the potential for greater meaning.

Section 5 – How can the workplace become meaningful?

"How can an enterprise build capabilities, forge empowered teams, develop a deep understanding of customers, and-most importantly- create a sense of community and common purpose unless it has a relationship with its employees based on mutual trust and caring?" Robert Waterman, Harvard Business Review, 1995

As discussed earlier, our findings suggest that meaning in the workplace relates to what happens at identity level, affecting 'who am I?' questions and also to a sense of wider connection in time and community. In this section we focus on how employees can experience a greater sense of meaning at work.

In the UK, the importance attached to the link between organisation, culture and business success has grown in recent years, with the government aiming to narrow the productivity gap between the UK and other developed economies. The Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership (CEML) carried out research into leadership with respect to developing high performance workplaces. The CEML findings suggest that organisations that want to achieve longer-term sustainable performance should operate according to the following principles:

- The achievement of diversity in the workforce and at all levels, in all its many forms to match that of their clients and customers and the locations in which they operate, and to make best use of the talents available across these categories.
- Finding economically viable ways of moving to higher levels of environmental responsibility.
- The adoption of good employer practices for all staff.
- The pursuit of high standards of ethical behaviour and social responsibility.

Sustainability is here based on the so-called 'triple bottom line', where taking the needs of different stakeholder groups into account appears to be the key to good business results. Applying these principles should lead to the development of a high performing and innovative organisation which can rightly play its part in the broader community. For many employees, such principles are closely aligned to their own values. Working in an organisation which operates according to these principles is therefore likely to be meaningful to such employees.

Roffey Park's *Management Agenda* 2004 survey offers some encouraging signs that that some organisational leaders are operating in this way. The findings suggest that some organisations are attempting to build a new psychological contract with employees, based on mutual commitment and enrichment. In some businesses, leaders are getting better at managing change, at encouraging innovation and knowledge sharing. For example, they are handling change in ways which involve employees, and helping them regain a sense of control over their own destiny. This is proving the mainspring of change-ability, the flexibility so desired by organisations. Some organisations are working hard at ensuring that employees can have a life outside work – they take the balance issue seriously- even though the successful examples are few and far between. On the other hand….

Employees report that they are not getting the kinds of leadership and management they feel are appropriate

They report:
- Managers failing to 'walk the talk'
- Promoting people who act unethically
- Managers who hold staff back
- Leaders who pursue personal, rather than organisational agendas
- Macho, competitive style
- Fiefdoms

In many cases, there is a wide discrepancy between what employees expect of managers and what they experience. 92 per cent of respondents suggest that being a leader is part of being a good manager yet only 49 per cent of our sample maintain that top managers in their organisations act as leaders, with senior managers in particular are not embracing the leadership aspects of their roles. Far from experiencing a community with a shared purpose, people remark on tensions at board level and a management focus on personal agendas.

In many ways employees perceive a leadership vacuum. Managers at all levels are tending to 'act a level down', over-controlling people's work. Particular criticisms include a lack of ability to listen, discriminatory and prejudiced thinking patterns of senior managers whom respondents would like to see offering more strategic direction, championing good management practice such as performance management and 'meddling' less.

The importance of ethical leadership

Many Management Agenda respondents express the desire for ethical leadership. According to our respondents, leaders need to become the ethical custodians and standard-bearers, setting the strategic direction but imposing less control. As one respondent put it: *"Our senior teams have to inspire and take account of employees' emotions. Logical decision-making and communicating is not enough as it fails to recognise human hopes and fears"*. Greenleaf, along with Burns (1978), describes how leadership is more than skills and situational know-how and is, instead and more fundamentally, a moral contract between leaders and followers to bring out the best in each other for the good of the whole.

"Such leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality…transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both" (Burns, 1978).

Employees want to work for ethical organisations

In our study, the search for purpose and the desire to do something worthwhile is causing many employees to question the work they do and to be sensitized to differences between their organisation's espoused and actual values. As one QMW respondent put it: *"principles are more important than 'talk',"* while another typical comment was *"ethical practice is important to people"*.

Typically, a mismatch of values with actual practice can take place at a number of levels:

- Policy and practice – diversity, flexible working, corporate social responsibility typically are implemented only to a level that is expedient

- Strategy and corporate values – where companies continue to deal with 'rogue states' or pressurise suppliers despite the rhetoric of values

- Brand image – can often be at odds with workplace practice and customer experience

- Personal values do not chime with organisational values

- Role - top managers not acting as leaders

- Behavioural - managers at all levels not practising values

- Procedural – people can still be rewarded with promotion despite not practising values.

In the 2003 Management Agenda 80 per cent of organisations are reported as have a published set of values. According to Collins and Porras (1994), for values to truly have impact, they must reflect the inner needs, beliefs and aspirations of employees.

However, 49 per cent of respondents felt that these values did not reflect the actual values of management and want managers to 'walk the talk'. Similarly, in the 2004 survey, 88 percent of

organisations are reported to have value statements yet 52 percent of respondents are sceptical about them. They report:

- Failure to follow though on policies such as diversity, work-life balance etc

- Concern about practices that appear unfair

- High levels of political activity

- Barriers to progression into senior management – women (39 percent), ethnic minorities (34 percent)

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) statements as 'window dressing.'

As one participant put it, *"Values are seen as the organisation trying to be politically correct"*. In the QMW survey too, there were many echoes of the values gap evident in the *Management Agenda* survey. The following comments are representative of many others:

- As a public sector organisation we espouse values related to improving the quality of life. It may well be that the people who work for us do so because, even if not overtly, share those values. As such, there is not an obvious search for greater meaning at work, indeed there are times when I would hope for greater 'buy-in' to the organisation values. As a specific instance to refer to, there is a partnership with a local clergyman who acts as a notional industrial chaplain who visits once a month to be available to staff on a confidential 'listening' ear on matters secular as well as spiritual. So far he has very, very few customers!

- Performance management driven by political priorities has resulted in cynicism at the loss of integrity

- The County Council has in the last year created an excellent, thought-provoking, list of 'values'. All make good sense. The staff are encouraged to practise those values but in reality they may be easily compromised when other pressures are exerted

- Being under-funded/decreasing support whilst world attention is drawn elsewhere

- Adoption of new values has been enthusiastic by some; cynicism by others who claim to have their own values.

When respondents were asked what would need to change to remove discrepancies between espoused and practised values, the majority (68 percent) maintained that all managers need to model organisational values. Culture change (58 percent) is also considered important, along with making the organisational values realistic in the first place.

For many *Management Agenda* respondents, finding a values 'fit' is sufficiently important that they are considering leaving their current employer to find a better fit elsewhere.

Corporate Social Responsibility

We need collaboration as much as competition to survive as the interconnectedness of the world grows more apparent. The notion that an organisation is responsible to the community it serves is reflected in the plethora of corporate social responsibility initiatives under way. Organisations are going out of their way to ensure that what they do does not harm the environment, disadvantage employees, customers or other stakeholders and that they are properly governed, with appropriate checks and balances in place. Employees think this is completely right. In the Roffey Park study, for instance, 88 per cent of respondents believe that organisations should exercise social and environmental responsibility towards wider society. 41 percent of respondents' organisations have a CSR statement (37 percent in 2003). 77 percent believe that their organisation is socially and environmentally responsible and 83 percent of respondents confirm that this is important to them.

Yet the gap between organisational policies and actual practice remains wide, with many employees suspecting that their organisation regards CSR as a PR activity, nothing more. While 55 per cent of respondents felt that their organisation acted responsibly to some extent, many commented that

such policies were no more than window dressing as defensive, risk management initiatives or to achieve some commercial advantage, or to redress negative images of previous corporate neglect of the environment. In many cases, the policies were scarcely being implemented.

Something I can believe in - a higher sense of purpose

In a busy and business-like work environment it is easy to forget that most work involves humans interacting as individuals within communities. While at various periods of history, people as a whole can be 'bonded' together by a shared crisis or loss, such as the general outpouring of grief at the death of Princess Diana in 1997, in workplaces, such unifying dramas tend not to occur in ways which engage people's hearts and minds and catalyse them to greater efforts or higher endeavours. Many business plans and key performance indicators fail to excite.

Having a cause or important purpose as a source of high performance is evident in much of the literature (Brown, 1992; Channon, 1992; Gozdz, 1993; Kelly, 1993; Ray, 1992). Sandelands suggests that: *'Employees perform most energetically, creatively and enthusiastically when they believe they are contributing to a purpose that is bigger than themselves'.* Purpose can excite and mobilise the members of an organisation to work in greater alignment to each other. But not just any purpose - Anderson (1997) suggests that 'By itself, shareholder wealth provides an incomplete sense of identity and uniqueness, and does not motivate long-term creativity the same way community does'. In commercial organisations, serving clients and customers may be tapping into similar motivations.

Customer-focused purpose

For Richard Ellsworth (2002), the most effective vision for change is customer-focused. In the 2004 *Management Agenda* respondents were generally positive about their collective sense of purpose and commitment. 36 percent of the sample maintain that the collective sense of purpose within their organisation is high and a further 48 percent report that it is medium. The high commitment tended to be reported by people whose organisation had a customer-focused purpose. People report that their own level of commitment is high, with three-quarters of the sample (75 percent) maintaining that they often stretch themselves at work and 'go the extra mile', compared to just 3 percent that rarely do.

In the QMW survey too, the importance of customer-focused purpose as a source of meaning for employees was evident. In one organisation this was about *"Staff who go beyond their job description to meet the needs of individual students"*. In another it was demonstrated in *"Greater awareness and concern being voiced regarding vulnerable members of our society (our clients)"*. One respondent described how *"Our surveys show that people take pride in doing a good job and believe they are dealing well with customers, despite constraints and difficulties"*.

Research carried out in the travel and tourism industry on behalf of the Best Practice Forum by Surrey University (2003) suggested that the seven most critical areas for a successful business in this growing sector of industry were:

- Setting goals based around a customer focus
- Planning and controlling the operation
- Partnering and networking
- Having a clear internal and external communication
- Setting and achieving consistent standards
- A strategic approach to workplace management
- Performance measurement and benchmarking.

In the *Management Agenda* survey, respondents reporting the closest alignment between organisational purpose and related systems and practices appear to experience more 'meaning' than where these links are less clear.

In his book, *"Leading with Purpose"*, Ellsworth suggests that companies with a customer-focused purpose:

- Found change easier to manage
- Their people experienced work as more meaningful
- Achieved higher shareholder returns over the long-term
- Had stronger cultures
- Had more internal alignment.

It is important to understand the customer's world, including the customer's end-user. Building a customer-focused vision invariably means that one change will lead to another as customers' needs change.

Our research confirms Ellsworth's findings, with a number of interesting correlations in our data. It would appear that organisations with a primarily shareholder focus are relatively more likely to have employees who experience a lack of meaning and who are actively looking for more meaning. Employees are unlikely to feel involved in decision-making and there is more likely to be a transactional psychological contract. There is likely to be more political behaviour, more risk-aversion and low trust. Employees are more likely to report low commitment, both towards and from the organisation to them. They are more likely to be cynical about their leaders and the organisation itself. These organisations are also reported to be least likely to have high levels of creativity. In organisations with a broader stakeholder focus, employees are likely to act passively - both lacking a clear sense of purpose and not actively pursuing a strong sense of purpose.

Conversely, organisations with a strong customer focus are likely to have employees who feel better about what is going on. This customer focus is also likely to encompass high degrees of environmental responsibility, which employees consider a good thing. Typically such organisations have high levels of recognition and employee development, and appropriate forms of reward. Employees are also likely to demonstrate higher levels of trust in their leaders, have higher morale and experience less stress. They are more likely to feel that they are involved in decision-making and idea-sharing. They are also more likely to report that they have a satisfactory work-life balance. Such organisations are more likely to be considered supportive of creativity by employees.

What makes work meaningful?

In the *Management Agenda* research, many people suggested that they were looking for jobs which they could relate to. This generally meant that people were looking for jobs which were inherently worthwhile, and they wanted to work for organisations they could respect. In the QMW survey we explored the factors people considered to be the important elements of meaning for them.

'Good work'

Some people regularly 'go the extra mile' and are motivated to do so. They produce outstanding results. They release so-called 'discretionary effort' which organisations cannot command, however desirable it might be: *"Your employees start every day with an extraordinary amount of energy, but the amount of 'discretionary effort' that people apply to their jobs varies tremendously. One study showed that even in relatively simple jobs the difference in discretionary performance between superior and average performers was 19 per cent"* (Hunter et al. 1975).

Individuals tend to perform well when they are in 'flow', when they are so pleasurably immersed in challenging work that their brains work efficiently and they are energised and stimulated by what they are doing. Flow tends to occur when the work in which people are engaged is tightly linked to the individual's own goals.

This is what Gardner et al (2001) describe as 'good work'. *"Doing good work feels good. Few things in life are as enjoyable as when we concentrate on a difficult task, using all our skills, knowing what has to be done. In flow we feel totally involved, lost in a seemingly effortless performance. Paradoxically, we feel 100 percent alive when we are so committed to the task in hand that we lose track of time, of our interests – even of our own existence. But it also happens surprisingly often at work- as long as the job provides clear goals, immediate feedback, and a level of challenges matching our skills. When these conditions are present, we have a chance to experience work as 'good'- that is, as something that allows full expression of what is best in us, something we experience as rewarding and enjoyable. Time and again, we have observed the rewards of flow bestowed on individuals who have become wholly engaged in activities that exhibit the highest sense of responsibility".*

For Csikszentmihalyi (1990), in his 25 year research on optimal experience (flow), clear goals, total immersion in the activity, transcendence of ego boundaries and merging with the environment were most likely to be related to high levels of motivation, self-confidence, competence, enjoyment and other intrinsic rewards.

Being interconnected with others

In the focus groups, people felt that meaning in the workplace attached to affiliation and the opportunity to be inter-connected with others. Some people questioned whether the trends towards virtual working and self-employment would produce a backlash for individuals working in these ways, due to a sense of isolation and disconnection. Work can also enable a person to transcend him/herself.

However, participants highlighted the danger that work can also leave us connected to our colleagues but also disconnected from other people, affecting our beliefs about ourselves and others. Similarly, in the Quest for Meaning at Work (QMW) survey, valuing others and relationship to others were clearly important to many respondents. For one person, meaning at work was essentially about "the colleagues with whom I work above all else". Typical comments included:

- Relationship to others is significant
- Treating all employees and team colleagues with dignity and respect, building trust. Creating an environment at work where people feel their contribution is noticed and valued. Empowering them to question and challenge in a constructive way to achieve business success, rather than collude with stale procedures which need challenging and improving.
- The colleagues with whom I work above all else
- Care and concern for people.

Several people in management roles saw their responsibilities as being about creating greater connectivity: *"To build an environment that is based on much more than transactional relationships"* and involved care and concern for people. For one manager it involved *"Treating all employees and team colleagues with dignity and respect, building trust".* For another manager it was about *"Creating an environment at work where people feel their contribution is noticed and valued. Empowering them to question and challenge in a constructive way to achieve business success, rather than collude with stale procedures which need challenging and improving".*

Autonomy and respect

For many respondents, having a degree of freedom to make choices and to be respected were key elements of meaning:

- To be able to act with integrity and to be treated and treat others fairly
- Autonomy to make choices
- The most significant aspect to me is the ability to value other people. I expect to see people being treated fairly and on merit and am disappointed if this is not the case.

Balance

Similarly, for many respondents, being able to achieve the right work-life balance was becoming increasingly important:

- A need to feel fulfilled and at one with the world – for me it is about being in balance

- Managing personal commitments

- Mainly in 'human' terms, such as an appreciation by management that staff are more important than targets, paperwork, etc – that staff should have a 'quiet' staff area, that breaks are important and should be taken, that a 37 hour week means just that – all too often missing!

- Flexibility.

Making a difference to others

In the *Management Agenda,* many people reported that they are motivated by a desire to do something for the greater good/ 'put things back'. Working to provide shareholder value had little appeal, whereas making a difference to other people did. For Waddock (1999), providing stakeholder value is replacing shareholder value as the primary business motivator for employees. *'The successful companies will be those able to rethink and adjust their business model to one that aims to contribute to the economic, social and environmental welfare of a wide set of stakeholders'.*

This desire to do things for other people is evident in much of the literature. It is a symbiosis, mutuality, or, in organisational terms, collaboration and interdependence on which success is built (Capra, 1995; Maturana and Varela, 1988). Within organisations, the collaborative, interdependent behaviours are precisely what organisations seek to encourage through knowledge management and team building. This perspective contradicts the dominant values of business - aggressive competition. In a 'dog-eat-dog' world, how easy is collaboration? Countless attempts at strategic partnerships founder on mutual suspicion, unwillingness to share information and protection of individual interests.

Typical comments included:

- Finding meaning for me is about doing my best for my clients and meeting their business and personal needs

- Meaning for me at work comes from helping and supporting (and challenging) others whilst they are learning

Many comments in the QMW survey suggest that doing something worthwhile, that makes a positive difference, has a greater meaning for people. It's about "Knowing that our work makes a difference – to issues such as improving work-life balance, diversity, staff's health and wellbeing, the environment".

Trust

Trust is once again the key catalyst for collaboration. When trust exists, people are able to give more fully of themselves. In this regard, the integrity of others is critical, as indicated in the following responses to the QMW survey question 'What to you are the important elements of finding meaning at work?

- Basic integrity of senior managers

- Trust and integrity

- Humour, providing not at expense of others

However, trust appears to be in short supply. Respondents were asked to what extent they trusted various groups within the organisation. Interestingly, respondents appear to be least trusting of senior managers with only 24 percent trusting them to a great extent. The most trusted group are subordinates (59 percent), followed by peers (49 percent).

Respondents were asked what they perceive to be the biggest issues that effect trust at work. Themes included:

- Unclear vision, leaving employees unable to buy-in to the direction, leading to confusion and mistrust
- Lack of communication and consultation, combined with lack of transparency and openness
- Bullying seems to be quite widespread, with the main perpetrators seen to be senior managers (56 percent) and colleagues (33 percent)
- Unprofessional behaviour, including malicious gossip and other political activity
- Lack of honesty, with double standards and being economical with the truth, especially over future staffing levels
- Broken promises, especially with regard to policies on bullying and blame
- Political behaviour, with hidden agendas and internal competition
- Poor performance management, including inconsistent approaches to pay reviews and favouritism
- Poor leadership, including conflict at the top of organisation.

Alignment of personal/work values

For many employees, having a clear alignment between their own personal and work values was an important element of meaning:

- Bringing my own values into the workplace in the way I approach my work and my colleagues
- Congruence in my belief for personal and organisational integrity and display of high moral and ethical values and what I see around me
- Spiritually being satisfied that I am doing justice to all and ensuring equity in my decisions
- As a Christian, issues of integrity and honesty are very important to me. Although not explicitly Christian, the organisation I work for has espoused these principles (integrity and honesty) and therefore I find that there is no conflict (this was not the case for me at a previous employer).
- As a Christian – adopting what God's values are in the workplace are paramount
- The organisation allows Christians at Work meetings and these are vital for Christians in the workplace
- It is important for me to feel that my work and private views of life are in line
- To have found resonance between my work and my values. I believe, for example in collaboration between people, in the importance of real dialogue and in the power of theatre and performance, all of these can present in any workplace if I have eyes to see and I can encourage and perpetuate these values in my work
- Establish the level of tolerance that is acceptable in the business world that you are prepared to accept, although this may be greater than you would accept in society generally

My work is part of my life's mission

- Seeing the wider picture, looking at what my work is for
- Expression of faith and importance of living the mission of the school
- Aspects of spiritual leadership which may not be evidence in secular schools
- As a Christian, work is part of worshipping God. Therefore one work to the best of one's God given abilities and tries to bring glory to God, work and worship are inextricably linked in the Bible, and working life and Christian life should be equally inseparable
- As a committed Christian everything that I do whether at work or home should be to the Glory of God … I only wish I was better at it!
- That being at work is a fulfilment of individual destiny

- I work in an organisation with a different faith than my own – this at times is challenging but almost always strengthens my faith and therefore the meaning I find at work. I chose to work in the social care field and in the not-for-profit sector – this to me brings meaning, despite my salary/terms and conditions being less favourable than counterparts in the commercial sector – different motivations?

- We spend a lot of hours at work. For me, those hours need to be connected to benefiting individuals in some way. This element is connected to my higher purpose of helping to heal the world

'Spiritual' purpose of role/company

- There needs to be a deep sense of spiritual purpose in my job role

- The value to others (individuals) and to society of the work you do give satisfaction

- That the organisation has a moral conscience (fairness, honesty, openness)

- A recognition of our contribution has a positive effect for organisation growth (value in what individuals bring to work)

- For me to believe in the value of the work that I am doing.

A sampling of other reported factors follows:

- **Practice of faith –** *'The organisation and Exec and key staff with decision issues are prayed for daily'*

- **Working as part of a successful team –** *'It's great to be part of a good team, serving clients to the best of our ability'*

- **Developing own capability –** *'It's important for me that I can grow in the job, or it stops feeling worth the effort'*

- **Space to 'be' –** *'Somewhere, sometime in the day to break out of the 'chaos' and into a quieter more contemplative place (not easy in an arrogant, 21st century, task-oriented environment in London!)'*

- **Advancement of knowledge –** find meaning in the invention of new things, the advancement of knowledge and the achievement of teams and individuals'

- **Satisfaction -** 'Satisfaction in what you are delivering – knowing you've done a good job'

- **Fun –** *'For me to be happy at work – in particular for work to be fun'*

- **Communication –** *'Two-way is the best way'*

Summary

It is clear from these findings that individuals experience many different forms of meaning in the workplace, yet some of the common destroyers of meaning appear to link to gaps between espoused values and their actual practice. The critical question is how can we transform our organisations so that more – if not all – of them permit this kind of individual self-expression, yet retain the context of the larger enterprise's meaning, purpose and goal achievement? In the next section we shall consider what organisations are actually doing to address issues of meaning in the workplace.

Section 6 – How are organisations addressing issues of meaning in the workplace?

The complexity of this topic makes it less likely that any one organisation will have a 'blueprint' for creating a meaningful workplace. Perhaps a more helpful approach will be to examine what organisations are doing that destroys meaning and then seek to modify these destructive elements. For instance:

- How are boundaries created – through job descriptions, hierarchies etc?

- How is internal competition fostered?

- How are people rewarded and for what e.g. for best contribution, inputs rather than performance against targets, outputs etc?

This raises the question about the extent to which an organisation can be designed to make the best of the people and bring out that which is special. While the search for meaning appears to be widespread, as reported by one respondent as follows: *"We are a firm of business coaches – a quest for meaning is widely evident in the work we do with our clients,"* organisational initiatives to build more meaning in the workplace appear relatively thin on the ground. In this section we shall look at what organisations are doing to build a more meaningful organisation to which key employees want to commit.

Becoming a values-based organisation

Our surveys suggest that many employees want to work for organisations where there is a set of values which they can relate to personally, and which are put into practice. In such contexts, employees are more likely to commit to the organisation and want to give of their best. Conversely, when values are merely paid lip service and a leadership vacuum exists, employee cynicism is more likely to rise and commitment to the organisation falls. For managers and leaders this means going beyond the rhetoric of values statements and corporate social responsibility policies; it is about how to 'walk the talk'; how to build a new basis for trust.

Deal and Kennedy's study (2000) of 'winning' organisations suggests that the one thing that sets the top ranking companies apart is their robust cultures. A robust culture in a cohesive enterprise is committed to a deep and abiding purpose. The key management challenge is to articulate core beliefs or a higher cause as a source of glue to hold together separate subcultures together and to keep their disparate efforts focussed on a common purpose. For subcultures to work together, there must be informal rules or guidelines for how these independent entities are supposed to relate to one another or linked to the corporate whole. These rules are derived from a historically anchored set of beliefs about what the corporation stands for.

Deal and Kennedy distinguish between fundamental beliefs and strategies. Strategies lay out steps to achieve competitive advantage. Strategies change as conditions shift in a companies market. Strategies come and go. Fundamental beliefs, in contrast, speak to sustaining, non-negotiable values that shape life inside the workplace. Fundamental beliefs cannot be altered easily without unravelling the cultural fabric – a company's enduring ethos. Fundamental beliefs persist, whereas strategies change. This is echoed in similar studies by Arie de Geus and Collins and Porras.

Collins and Porras explain the lasting success of the 'visionary' companies by their strong and relatively non-changing core purpose. 'Visionary' companies change their strategies and, in some cases, their values, but they stick firmly to their core purpose. They are able to distinguish between 'core' and 'non-core', between what should never change and what should be open to change. The authors illustrate this as follows: 'Johnson and Johnson used the concept to challenge its entire organisation structure and revamp its processes while preserving the core ideals embodied in the

Credo. 3M sold off entire chunks of its company that offered little opportunity for innovation – a dramatic move that surprised the business press – in order to refocus on its enduring purpose of solving problems innovatively'.

While organisations in every sector have explicit sets of values, some are more rigorous than others in ensuring that these are practised. Safeway, the supermarket chain, for instance, holds a 'meeting for everyone' every two weeks to demonstrate the company values, rather than merely discussing them. The company's vision 'To be the first choice retailer' is painted across the store car parks as a message to both customers and staff. Such practices reinforce what the organisation holds dear.

A growing number of organisations, such as the Defence Science Technology Laboratory (DSTL) and its private sector counterpart Qinetiq employ the services of a chaplain who is available for employee counselling. Organisations that were reported to be enriching the sense of meaning for employees include the John Lewis Partnership, which has a long-standing philosophy and practice around employee involvement, putting the 'partnership' into daily effect.

In some organisations, there are strong links between workplace rituals and religious rituals. Guildford College offers staff a college prayer, which serves as reminder of community and values. Such rituals provide a 'different space' in which staff can 'be' rather than 'do' for a time. Honda Cars uses open space technology, bringing large groups of employees together to gain insights into how the organisation connects up and to solve problems together in a constructive way. Staff at all levels also take part in communal physical exercise at the start of the day, which has the effect of connecting people and focusing collectively on the day ahead. Asda places great value on communication and has ritualised 'huddles' which bring staff together for team briefings of different sorts.

Prêt a Manger has a strong philosophy around valuing people. The chief executive of Happy Computers sees work as a place for the 'whole' person. The CEO spends a day a week at school, and builds time into each day, 'thoughtful spots', for reflection. In many organisations, especially those that practise 'hot-desking', people are discouraged from bringing personal items such as photographs, to the office. At ICL Denmark, the reverse was the case, since employees were allowed to bring their own paintings to decorate office walls. The company had its own band and organised office outings, recognising that employees had a home life.

Supporting development of self-insight

Contemporary training is extending to include more holistic perspectives on leadership. For instance, Shell Directors receive lectures from Buddhist monks, aligning priorities beyond simply the work part of working life. Companies such as Unilever and Kellogg send employees off to question their work and spiritual attunement, cultivating intuition as one part of a more perceptive mind state. In their staff development, Cadbury Schweppes include raising awareness on personal aspects, including those of a spiritual and emotional dimension. These companies acknowledge that these are the skills required in order to generate trust and good industrial relations.

Recruitment consultants specialising in the job market in the financial sector say that many of their clients want the qualities associated with EQ and SQ, although they may not use those terms. Some organisations are offering their staff the opportunity to have psychometric feedback from instruments such as Myers Briggs Type Indicator and other instruments such as the Enneagram, which explores deeper levels of motivation and personal identity.

Corporate social responsibility

Despite cynicism expressed by many focus group participants about the practice of CSR policies, David Ballard, Director General of the British Safety Council argues the case for CSR (2003): "*All organisations should support education, skills training, community development and public health initiatives. But corporate responsibility goes beyond mere support and involvement. Fundamentally it is*

integral to the way everyone should do business each and every day. Issues of safety, environmental protection, accountability and ethics are central to every business decision and process. A commitment to corporate responsibility is a basic requirement for attracting and retaining the best people, being the best partner and achieving the best performance. All are essential to long-term success".

Volunteering, as a means of contributing to the local community, is once again starting to be seen by some companies as a means of providing career development for individuals while fulfilling some organisational aims around corporate social responsibility. IBM has a 'Days of Caring' programme; Boots has a 'Skills for Life' programme; BP operates a mutual mentoring scheme; Nokia has a 'Helping Hands' programme; TXU operated an 'Energy for Action' programme, delivered in conjunction with Community Service Volunteers.

In the survey 'Quest for Meaning at Work' (QMW) which we carried out following the focus groups, the following company practices were reported:

- Role/link in the community
- Support of charity selected with staff
- Social responsibility
- Sharing know-how with local communities
- Environmental standards
- Wanting to make a difference to the society/community in which we work
- Professional pride and development of community ethos are seen as high priority
- To some extent by focussing on individual's role in the management of Safety, Health and Environment, even here though this tends to be driven by monetary values rather than altruism
- Ensuring some of our work focuses on making a difference to society
- By having polices that focus on issues that are wider than obvious business performance measures.
- Ethical practice - in our conversations and the way we conduct our business
- Professional pride and the development of community ethos are seen as high priority

Asda has a 'Stores in the Community' initiative, aimed at integrating stores more with the local community. Individual stores have the flexibility to choose their own involvement in the initiative, ranging from helping old people decorate their homes to working with the local fire brigade. The City solicitors Allen and Overy is actively involved in community work, with young lawyers involved with local schools, providing mentoring (Cook, 2003).

Other practices reported to build meaning include:

Embracing values and purpose

- The British Olympic Association have embraced a set of values and this is encouraged by our parent body the International Olympic Committee. The values are respected by both the governance and management of the organisation and there is an assumption by all that these are the standards we work to.
- We do not address 'meaning' but we do have a strong sense of purpose and a value set around respect, serving, development equality.
- Our real organisational values help define the type of organisation we want to be e.g. much more customer focused.

Customer focus

- Staff who go beyond their job description to meet the needs of individual students

Faith-based practice

- Muslim prayers and meditation
- As a Roman Catholic School the development of spiritual dimension in lives of students and staff is of high priority
- We are a faith-based organisation but our workforce is very diverse – the fundamental values of our organisation form part of our training and ways in which services are delivered therefore it is constantly being addressed
- By allowing people to say prayers in their work time.

Conversations

- Discussions on spiritual things – the meaning of life, there's more to life, why does God allow…??
- Informal discussions raised in a non-risk taking environment, work-life balance issues beginning to come more to the fore
- Private conversations
- A distinct shift in vocabulary which more and more involves 'God' or some other 'higher force'
- I have noticed over the last 18 months or so an increase in discussions about religion among the groups I run courses for. This is particularly demonstrated by greater confidence on the part of course members in being open about their religious beliefs.

Creating understanding of the broader picture

- Need to understand context of role in wider picture
- A desire to know where they fit and their role in the whole, for work to be understood in its contribution to the business plan
- Demand for information and disappointment if not available
- Developing a broader attitude to informing everyone.

Formal communications

- Weekly e-mail communication
- Audio tapes (3 monthly)
- Company and regional newspapers
- Organisation leading initiatives to get employees to think deeper but with end goal of increasing productivity if purpose and meaning are brought into the business framework.

Connectivity - Greater socialising through work sponsored events (outside work)

Support for staff

- High level of care and concern for staff – supporting them in times of difficulty
- Allowing staff space to pursue their own spiritual/community contributions
- Emergency disaster plans. Good buildings security. Rape alarm for sales representatives.

Through work itself

- Goal planning is up to the individual. Those who attach 'meaning' to their work and to whom 'values' are important, have an opportunity to express this at that time. It is left up to the

individual to discover what they want for themselves and how to integrate that into their current role
- Identification of job roles.

Work-life balance
- Life-work balance initiatives
- Occupational health – eating/fitness/wellness initiatives.

Leadership and personal development
- Leadership forums and development including views/experiential learning on motivation, businesses run on spiritual or moral basis
- Through personal development programmes, both Springboard women's development programme and Navigator men's development programme
- Career development.

Southwest Airlines

One of the best known cases in the literature is that of Southwest Airlines which practises a spiritual values-based model: Organisational Spiritual Values drive Business and Employee Plans and Goals (Millman and Ferguson, 1999). These in turn drive HRM practice to reinforce Plans/Values which drive outcomes such as organisational performance and employee attitudes and spirituality.

SWA employees feel they are part of a cause – their airline offers the lowest airfares, frequent flights, personable service characterised by fun and humour. This cocktail of elements has made SWA a success story among airlines. Even in the aftermath of September 11 and the war in Iraq, when the travel industry generally and airlines in particular have suffered downturns due to people's unwillingness to travel outside their own country, SWA has fared better than its competitors.

SWA has a strong emphasis on community – teamwork, serving others and acting in the best interests of the company are central aspects of this value. SWA employees are also actively involved in community-based service projects. Employees always come first and their families are often invited to participate in company activities and celebrations. SWA employees are also actively involved in community-based service projects. SWA is careful about who it invites to become part of the employed community and places great importance on the selection process. SWA also encourages employees to be individuals – being really themselves, rather than conforming to some corporate 'type'.

Tom's of Maine

This well-known case is one of the few examples of the 'middle way', a company living its values yet being successful financially. Here the 'middle way' is the Buddhist notion – a special type of balance – combining reflection and action, being severe but strong, communicating faith, integrity, honesty and passion to people and its products while sustaining a healthy regard for making money. Its mission evolved over a long gestation period. Tom Chappell relentlessly pursued the challenge of fully identifying their passionately held values and beliefs and then achieving an organisation design, policies and relationships that fully represented these – while becoming financially sound and achieving an enviable bottom line. The essence of the company- its 'soul' was to be found in its core beliefs and values structure. Highlights include:
- Mind and spirit can work together for market share
- One can do well (economically) by doing good

- An enterprise can be socially responsible and environmentally sensitive and still make a (good) profit
- Heart and head have to be united in ways that meet the need of the company and the person
- Corporate identity is found in the quality of relationships in their main constituencies
- People have a capacity for creativity and excellence and it is an organisation's responsibility to unlock these for the benefit of the enterprise and the person
- Products can be conceived and marketed which embody their core value.

One example of corporate actions supporting employee confidence and trust was the recall of some 400,000 units of product at a critical period in their growth – because the product was not as good as it should be. They decided on child-care facilities, a viable retirement plan, placing fruit snacks out in the plant and picnics and other employee get-togethers. Additional company actions included tithing 10 percent of profits for worthy charities and providing for employees to take 5 percent off on company time for worthy community and charitable work projects (Chappell, 1993).

SABMiller, the brewing company has an active CSR programme operating in Africa. In response to the Aids crisis in Africa, SABMiller has been paying for drug therapy for its African employees and up to four family members who are HIV-positive or have Aids. The programme has been running since 2000 for employees who are not members of the company medical aid scheme. Paying for anti-retroviral therapy (ART) is one aspect of the company's effort to deal with the condition, which also includes lifestyle management and counselling. The brewer's policy toward paying for ART varies around the world, depending on the insurance and social security available to members of staff in individual countries (Doke, 2003).

Summary

Building more meaning can involve a variety of practical activities which assume a symbolic significance. By encouraging employees to achieve work-life balance, for instance, organisations are recognising the value of individuals and the fact that they have a life beyond the workplace. Such practices appear to be most meaningful when they are built on an open and performance oriented climate where there is maximum alignment between individual and organisational values. Line managers, HR and employees all have a role to play in creating such a climate and developing meaning-rich practices. Leaders in particular have a key role to play, as will be discussed in the next section.

Section 7 – What can leaders do to build a value-based organisation?

In this section we will look at:

* How to become an organisation to which key employees want to commit.

* What this means in practical terms for management and leadership

Both managers and leaders have to work at building trust and an organisational culture conducive to meaning-making. Bennis and Nanus (1985) suggest that the leader creates the 'social architecture' for an organisation, which 'provides context (or meaning) and commitment to its members and stakeholders'. Roffey Park survey respondents want to see a more open, democratic and ethical style of leadership which treats employees as adults. Under such leadership employees develop a strong shared sense of purpose to which they can readily subscribe. 'Walking the talk' on values is essential if people are to take them seriously.

In high performing organisations, leaders have to be proactive and persistent in implementing corporate social responsibility policies which really make a difference to the 'triple bottom line'. This can take courage, given the short-term focus and pressures from shareholders. Similarly they have to ensure that diversity is actively managed and becomes a reality. They will champion good management practice and 'nail their colours to the mast', taking hard decisions when need be. So they will ensure that people receive 'true' performance appraisals, where management practice is based on fairness rather than expediency. They will insist that there is greater alignment of reward and recognition with constructive behaviour, so that practices consistent with ethical practice are reinforced. They will challenge existing promotion and appointment practices to ensure that they are fair. They will implement corporate social responsibility policies which really make a difference to the 'triple bottom line.'

John Jones (1981) suggests that leaders and managers should focus attention on values and keep them explicit wherever possible. For example, sharing their own values with their subordinates, making value considerations a valid part of the agenda at meetings and avoiding win-lose arguments about values. They can monitor the extent to which people espouse a common set of assumptions, philosophies and purposes. They should also monitor the way people exhibit value-oriented behaviour and assess the 'fit' between organisational values and those of employees. They should also update the organisation's organisational values and set goals that are consistent with them.

According to April (1999), good leaders understand and are attentive to language, and they know the power of words. Schein (1985) suggests that, in breaking down that which is taken for granted, and in gaining acceptance of the new, the use of symbolic devices such as myths and stories are important. Leaders are also attentive to the use of ceremonies and aware of the communication value of these. Kouzes and Posner (1995) argue that: *"in the performing art of leadership, symbols and artefacts are a leader's props. They are necessary tools for making the message memorable and sustainable over time".*

Leaders as role models of values
Leaders need to act as role models of values, demonstrating a visible personal commitment and an orientation towards deed not words. Suggested improvements include managers being more open and honest, implementing diversity policies, reducing political behaviour, being more consultative, decisive and willing to take risks.

However, *Management Agenda* respondents in 2003-4 are clear that they would like leaders to focus on the future, not just monitor the present. They want leaders who encourage and enable risk

management **and** experimentation. High performance organisations need to be able to transform their structures and working practices. There are echoes here of Jim Collins' (2001) study of 'great' companies, (the 11 out of 1435 that achieved breakthrough performance that continued to exceed industry standards). 'Relentless commitment' to excellence, rather than a grand strategic program, was part of their secret of success. Rather than focusing exclusively on short-term success, high performance organisations operate on a 'both/and' basis – building the foundations for longer-term viability while delivering success in the here and now.

Respondents want top leaders who can make wise judgements on what is important, not senior managers who obsess about minor 'hobby horses'. They are looking for leaders to take a more collegiate, corporate approach and to be open, honest and consultative. They expect the leadership group to act as a team, with a shared set of leadership values and skills. They feel that individuals in top management positions should be reviewed, echoing some of the recommendations of the Higgs report into Non-Executive Directors, but applying them to senior management.

The importance of communication as a key part of a leader's role is evident in the many comments made by respondents. They want leaders to be more visible at all levels and greater transparency in the way information is shared. Leaders have to be seen and use face-to-face communication, rather than relying on email, videos and other remote methods. They want leaders to make time to 'walk the talk'. They want real two-way communication, leaders who can provide clearer direction and steer, yet are prepared to listen. At the same time, they want leaders to be able and willing to take hard decisions, not procrastinating until a problem has become chronic.

Respondents typically want managers to utilise their skills in a more rewarding way, provide guidance on priorities and review working methods regularly. They also want senior managers to tackle under-performance of senior colleagues and train managers to 'let go'.

Above all, employees want to see a more open, democratic form of leadership which treats employees as adults. There are a number of comments which suggest that having more female leaders and adopting some of the styles of communication of the best 'virtual' managers would produce better leadership.   Leaders need to see the creation of an organisational climate conducive to high performance as a major part of their responsibility. This involves the building of trust, the suppression of political activity, the creation of challenging and rewarding roles and addressing areas of imbalance on work-life. Their role in bringing about the kinds of culture change called for may be less about 'leading from the front' and more about providing some clarity of direction while harnessing people's ideas and energies around the process of change.

What do employees want/expect from leaders?
The following is a small sample of the many comments in the *Management Agenda* regarding what people want to see from their leader. It is by no means a complete list.

Direction
- To know the direction of the company and help steer it
- To shape and communicate responsibilities
- Decision-making
- Outline strategy
- Culture
- Taking a long range perspective
- Consistent messages

Being able to motivate

- Trust
- Innovation/creativity
- Able to empower
- Fairness
- Inclusiveness
- Interest
- Positive reinforcement
- Appreciation for work done
- Facilitating outcomes for others
- Coaching and motivational skills

Consultation/ involvement

- Clarity of purpose, vision and involving people in selling the vision
- Engagement of people in delivering the vision
- Information
- Open communication
- Clear goals communicated to all in a tangible way
- Ability to handle the political interfaces

Treating people as adults

- Respect for staff
- Respect for differences
- Understanding
- Space to deliver

Development

- Develop capability at all levels
- Support for staff
- Able to delegate effectively

Role modelling

- To work together
- Inspiration
- Consistency
- Openness and honesty
- Integrity
- Humility
- Compassion
- Commitment
- Moral courage
- Courage to tackle difficult issues
- Willingness to take risks

- Improved leadership behaviours – particular areas are: praise and learning culture, taking responsibility, owning the vision, giving and receiving feedback
- Dependability

Leading for sustainable high performance

The following ideas about how leaders can help create meaning and the conditions for high performance are drawn in the main from the *Management Agenda.*

Leaders at the top of organisations need to be able to create a shared sense of purpose and direction which engages people and captures their energy and imagination. For Jim Collins (2002), this involves what he calls the 'hedgehog' concept (because the hedgehog survives by knowing only one big thing). This is where leaders focus the corporate effort on what they feel passionately about, what they can be the best in the world at, and what drives their economic engine. The best visions derive from where these three factors intersect. Collins suggests that organisations aspiring to greatness should preserve the core values, but continually change goals, strategies, culture and operating policies, as circumstances warrant.

Leaders need to communicate a clear imperative and vision for change, set clear objectives and identify the priorities for the year. They need to be able to lead courageously, having a strong value base from which to draw. They need to be more visible at all levels, using two-way communication, especially face-to-face, rather than relying on email. They need to show that they can listen. They need to lead by example and safeguard their credibility by acting in ways consistent with what they recommend for others. They need to overcome resistance and build commitment to the changes to be implemented by involving people meaningfully in the change, giving them a sense of control and managing their available capacity.

They need to be willing and able to influence others and inspire others, showing commitment and enthusiasm. They need to be optimistic and positive, yet be able to empathise with people who may feel differently. "The leader's subtle use of language may also be a factor in determining his effectiveness, both in enhancing his credibility and in managing the influence process" (Pondy, 1978). Jim Collins (2002) talks of the difference between the leaders of 'great' as opposed to 'good' companies, is that what he calls 'Level Five' leaders are incredibly ambitious, not for themselves but for the institution. This ambition manifests itself in a paradoxical blend of personal humility and a professional, almost maniacal will.

Leaders need to have high expectations of colleagues and empower individuals. They need to be able to influence the organisation's climate so that it becomes motivational, purposeful and constructive, as well as enjoyable. They need to establish expectations for individuals, allow delegated decision-making and give people freedom to act. They need to focus on developing the culture – on championing practices which foster innovation, knowledge creation, team working and continuous improvement. They need to consult and involve people at all levels. They need to see employee development as a priority. *Management* Agenda respondents want greater transparency; for managers to be more open, honest and consultative; to provide a clearer direction and steer.

Leaders need to champion change, having a set of beliefs about what makes change successful. Leaders need higher degrees of adaptability than others. They need to be resilient and able to cope with the stresses of their role. They need to demonstrate how to manage change effectively. They need to respond effectively and sensitively to employees' personal concerns, in order to secure lasting commitment. They need to tackle cultural misalignments, which are reflected in the conflicts and inconsistencies in the culture and can create barriers to lasting change. They must develop clear protocols for dealing with conflict, asking tough questions and initiating the 'straight talk' needed to open up dialogue. They need to provide regular feedback to drive accountability, maintain momentum, increase confidence and stimulate learning.

Leaders need to monitor employee attitudes and morale, as well as how the organisation is functioning. In many organisations, conflict between groups and individuals is an everyday occurrence. This is often because people feel strongly about something but have few outlets to exercise influence other than by 'digging their heels in'. Where there is contention, leaders should not see this as a threat but aim to harness the positive of power of conflict. Leaders should focus on problem identification and problem solving in reporting relationships, communication patterns, decision-making procedures, accountability system and the reward system, ironing out inconsistencies and dealing with the root cause of perennial problems. In improving the organisational climate, they should deliberately include people who are feeling disaffected, as well as those who are feeling satisfied with the current climate, so that key issues are surfaced. They should push for visible results.

In the context of these key leadership tasks, 'emotional' and 'spiritual' intelligence and strategic leadership are essential. Leaders need to learn more about themselves and others, and improve how they use their knowledge of themselves and their organisations. As Mindell (1992) points out, it is imperative for successful leaders to work with the natural energy of their followers that arises from changing moods, tensions, emotions, roles and time spirits. The narrow path that the leader must follow is a path that the followers themselves create and can accept, and leaders need to realise that the energy of their followers cannot be completely controlled or predicted.

Developing leaders

Given their key role in building a change-able, high performance culture, leaders should be nurtured at all levels in the organisation. According to John Kotter (1995), the transformational leader ensures that the next generation of top management embodies the new approach. Similarly, the 'visionary' companies described by Collins and Porras are all careful to institutionalise their ideologies in various ways. They tend to select people for their organisation who share similar beliefs and to grow their own and have well-developed succession planning.

Investing in leadership development should be seen as a critical activity. Typical processes include formal or informal training, mentoring, work shadowing, performance reviews, executive coaching, task forces, and the use of 360 degree feedback. Feedback processes are an effective way of helping leaders to 'walk the talk' on values. Increasingly too, executives appear to be turning to one-to-one coaching so that they confidentially explore their own development and think through their organisational strategy. Marriott Hotels recognises the importance of developing its senior managers. All are expected to complete 40 hours training off-site each year. For example, departmental managers are encouraged to attend a three-day service leadership programme which is about how they manage their priorities as managers and in individuals. It is a holistic programme that encourages them to focus on their work, personal and spiritual lives.

Given that the leadership skills required at one stage of an organisation's life cycle may be different from the skills required at another stage, according to Hunt et al (1988), it is essential that leadership skills be reviewed regularly.

Developing leadership teams

Management Agenda respondents expect their leadership groups to act as a team, taking a more collegiate, corporate approach. The UK Chartered Institute of Management's leadership research found that, for long-term success, the company needs to depend on the whole leadership team, not just the CEO, because it has a broader reach into the company.

It is therefore important that executives see their own development as a team as a strategic priority. Researchers found that the best teams, rather than focusing on team-building as an end in itself, focus on business-performance issues first, and only after the event do they reflect on the manner in which they did it, so discovering how they function as a team. It can be helpful to use the services of a credible facilitator who can help executive teams manage their decision-making process.

If a high performance culture is to be achieved, it is essential that the people who do get promoted to top management demonstrate ethical leadership as well as business acumen. Leaders can positively affect the climate of the organisation by actively discouraging political behaviour, by practising inspirational leadership and developing it in others.

One leader's view: Striking a balance between head, heart *and soul*

Penny Eggebrecht

Penny Eggebrecht is the chief executive of a company, based in West Sussex, specialising in residential care for the elderly. An enthusiastic advocate of spirituality in the workplace, she encourages her staff to debate the meaning of their work. "Having a meaningful job can never replace decent wages and working conditions, but, if everything else is in place, it can add value. I take the view that my staff, be they admin or finance, come to work as whole human beings and should never be expected to leave their more emotional, spiritual side at reception. We have an ethos of honesty and openness here that includes encouraging staff to tell me what they think of my performance and that of the company. My philosophy is that I do not have all the answers and I am always willing to learn from others" (Matthews, 2003).

We are grateful to be able to include here excerpts from *Simply a personal journey, nothing more, nothing less* by Penny Eggebrecht 2003. In this extract from her MSc learning document, Penny describes her learning and personal development journey via completing an MSc in People and Organisation Development at Roffey Park and by taking part in a workshop at Worth Abbey.

Penny Eggebrecht writes…."

If spirituality can mean *whatever gives you breath* and *animates* someone then I hope you too will sense what appealed to me. The title of my research document, *Striking a balance between head, and heart and soul,* encapsulates a personal value and these drivers are implicit in my approach to work and life generally. In my opinion the continuum of head, heart and soul is not linear but circular and continuously feeds into each in a sustaining way.

When hijacked by one or another the discomfort brings me back from the 'brink' to something more harmonious. For me the sensation can be physical, emotional, cognitive or spiritual and impacts so the quality of my performance is lessened and my connectedness with people and issues has less synthesis. My aspiration is to be in concert within myself in order to be in concert with the world without. The learning will no doubt endure a lifetime.

The reason I had previously attempted to 'develop' myself out of the 'heart' stuff is that in my experience this is normally associated or judged and commented on by others as cutting across objectivity, letting emotion get in the way and not being as effective as one might or just plain being a woman in my case. In other words, emotions are viewed by many as rather a derogatory or negative influence, which could indeed hamper promotion or at the very least act as a barrier to achievement in a senior position.

This tussle between my personal preference and inability to be truly converted to successful leadership devoid of emotion dogged me until arriving at Roffey Park. Here, it seemed there was a place or at least time devoted to debate whether or not a more holistic approach could be considered. Further reading took this argument one stage further into a new aspect in my own experience, although felt somewhere deep in the recesses of my subconscious, that of spiritual intelligence.

… my innate awareness in my own practice of spirituality as a manager, albeit I would have been unable or at least had some difficulty giving it a meaningful label.

 by noting that I would research into spiritual intelligence and highlights the relationship with emotional intelligence.

Changing behaviour rather than just training requires time, with reflection on the impact of that practice. It is one thing to take aboard some topic cognitively but quite another to internalise something deeper and more permanent.

… we stay with what is familiar or within our experience like elephants tethered with a piece of rope to a stake. Baby elephants are tethered when they are unable to pull away and years later in spite of their strength they do not attempt to stray. They believe they can't and do not test the tether with their strength and so it is with people who have developed beliefs or a particular mindset. We do however have the opportunity to check out our beliefs and find out if our Emotional Intelligence is tethered in a self - limiting way. (Adapted from a story in The British Journal of Administrative Management 1999)

Soul searching- *Engaging the human being*

Some people are beginning to say tentatively that, spirituality is the new word in the workplace whilst others freeze and think of religion or dogma, even cult.

I have read that we may in work live *outside-in* rather than *inside-out*. By this I mean the *outside-in* professional is an expert who is doing something to someone else. The *inside-out* professional is someone whose job comes from inside, starting with themselves. The author, Michael Carroll (1999 Elan) citing Stephen Covey in his best selling book, 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,' talks to managers about this:

'If I try to use human influence strategies and tactics of how to get other people to do what I want, to work better, to be more motivated, to like me and each other – while my character is fundamentally flawed, marked duplicity and insincerity – then, in the long run, I cannot be successful. My duplicity will breed distrust and everything I do – even using so called good human relations techniques – will be perceived as manipulative. It simply makes no difference how good the rhetoric or even how good the intentions are: there is little or no trust; there is no foundation for permanent success. (p 21)

Covey is saying the message is not distinct from me: 'You **are** the message'. Inside-out jobs are about working as a way of life with the values of the job being the values of my life, my belief system.

What is this thing called spirituality? - *Confusion with religion*

There are many definitions and common themes threading across the definitions of spirituality such as harmony, balance, connectedness, wholeness, meaning and purpose. Smucker in her article 'Nursing, healing and spirituality' cites Ellison (1983) who states that 'it is our spirit which synthesizes the total personality and provides some sense of energizing direction and order.' It can be experienced as a feeling of love and well-being or peace and security.

Spiritual needs are those resources that 'nourish the life force or spirit within each of us'. These include meaning and purpose, the ability to give and receive love, hope, forgiveness and trust in someone or something of great value.' Smucker (1998 Complementary Therapies in Nursing & Midwifery)

It is not merely the 'portmanteau' into which we tend to stuff what is left when we have removed all the areas we can identify and label and further compartmentalise. Whilst spirituality can be experienced at any time, perhaps our awareness is raised during the highs and lows of life –'the mountain-top experiences or the valleys of despair'. Spirituality as an inner process is often invisible and surfaces or comes to the attention of others through emotional or behavioural clues.

Personal development - *We must become the change we want to see* (Gandhi)

Several Benedictine monasteries give people in business the opportunity to explore these issues by attending weekend seminars on Spirituality at Work. This invitation to participate in the spiritual life of the monastery includes, for those who wish to join, the prayers and services in plain song that punctuate the day.

So is this just the latest management fad or if it works and if, in becoming fashionable, business has the confidence to talk about such things, then surely it's worthwhile. It's an effective way to get the message across about the holistic approach to leading an organisation. For people who have no religious beliefs

there is still an opportunity to examine spiritual values as part of an ethos into the way we treat people at work.

The opportunity to explore spiritual intelligence first hand arose informally and gave me exposure in a way I would not have anticipated when I set myself the objective. My visit to Worth Abbey to spend time with the Benedictine monks was both a contemplative and alluring experience.

… The second day stretched across several aspects commencing with the subject of *attentiveness*, which described the imperative of self-awareness and living in the here and now. The main questions discussed to what extent we actually live in the present moment and whether it is important to do so. Individuals shared examples of how greater awareness could be cultivated and the positive behaviours involved when interacting or managing people by giving them our full attention.

Father Martin spoke about giving oneself time to pause or reflect and the benefits of exposing oneself to harmonious elements within the world such as the beauty of nature or music. Alternatively, he felt factors such as violence could jar the mind and soul. This in turn could affect how we approach others or what we pass on to them in our interactions. Giving someone your *whole* presence is a real gift.

… Abbot Stephen led the group in the *exercise of authority,* as a leader is required to exert from time to time. He talked about the needs of the individual, encouraging the best from each and the needs of the group, as well as the difficulty on occasions in balancing these two for the good of all. He has to deal with a wide span of ages and many personalities as well as changing circumstances. 'He must adapt himself to circumstances, now using severity and now persuasion, displaying the rigour of a master or the loving kindness of a father.' (The Rule chapter 2)

He likened himself to the Chief Executive of an organisation with complex issues to manage … He stressed timing and acting with discretion, neither coming down too hard so as to crush an individual nor too light so as to be unfair to others. He also stated that others had a responsibility too, if they were aware of another's fault or difficulty they should point it out and be supportive in development. 'In administering correction, let him act with prudent moderation, lest being too zealous in removing the rust he break the vessel.' (The Rule chapter 64)

In discussion the questions raised were surrounding any differences in authority and dealing with failure or administering correction in the monastery and the workplace. This highlighted issues around employment legislation whilst recognising that it was likely that the Abbot followed the 'spirit' of any modern and reasonable employer.

Prior Luke stressed *keeping a balance* in all senses, both in the workplace and life generally, similar to the current and much publicised debate about work-life balance. The terrain encompassed managing stress and priorities, having the ability to respond creatively and taking responsibility; being vs. doing; male vs. female; and accepting external reality. He referred to the modern quest for individualism and a materialistic society rather than seeking a balance between the individual and the community; and the creative tension between the horizontal, like that of the monk through the Abbot to God and through the vertical axis across the community.
Life, he said could be a series of distractions with a world of too much stimuli, whilst silence offered an opportunity for growth. By placing value on communication what then was the value in silence, but a balance and focus in line with our values. Monks spend much time in solitude and personal reflection and they eat in silence.

For most people in the group it seemed having some time to reflect and think was important; although some achieved this as part of their lives, others saw it as desirable though not necessarily attainable in today's world. The importance of support and having other interests to maintain focus and balance was conclusive amongst the group. We were asked what the Benedictine life suggested to us about leading a more balanced life. People identified and described the pattern or ritual as fixed points, like anchors providing rhythm.

The final session concentrated on what people would take away from Worth Abbey and how they might apply any learning they had gained during the weekend. I believe it would be true to say that perhaps people needed time to answer these as it was apparent that true reflection had allowed people to be absorbed into perhaps what I can describe as 'another place' and only time and space might truly surface all the richness of this unique experience. We too, were now in our own personal place of calm and rhythm connected or rooted to the universe in a way rarely experienced in today's world.

Lasting thoughts - the experience combined the whole or holistic; mental, physical, emotional and spiritual senses, which make up the human being, with the emphasis on, 'being' rather than 'doing'. As such these all made up a rather sensual experience, with what appeared to me to be a co-existence of apparent opposing forces or at least opposites.

When does rhythm or pattern become interruption; or ritual take on a relaxed air; or silence seem so quiet that it is noisy like a drum beating; or solitude feel as though you are in the company of someone (yourself); or possessing little enables you to be richer than most; or appearing to be not of the world more worldly than it is imaginable? That is what I would inadequately describe as the gift of this experience, which the monks nurture and pass on from generation to generation.

'Truths' handed down, although modified, can still have relevance today, drawing us back to the basics from the brink of needless over-complex theory and practice. We need to learn to look after ourselves in order to look after resources, be they people or materials or profit. A question, such as where we begin and work ends, has to be revisited in order to be effective as human beings and managers.

There is no magic but there are unexpected places to seek out new learning and perhaps the greatest learning is within us if we only had the courage and made the time to search. Relating in a holistic way to work entails all dimensions of our being and that appears to me to be the essence of spiritual intelligence.

This experience is part of me now, and can be part of my internal compass and as I recall being *'becalmed on a gentle ocean'*.

The definitions of spirituality including harmony, balance and connectedness I had listed were themes threading through the retreat and which the group readily debated. The monks guiding us through much of the discussion aligned to the eight principles in spirituality quoted from the publication. (Elan,1999).

The Learning Conclusion

Pulling away from theory so to speak can be a real test, but I have found sharing my learning discoveries with some individuals at work enables me to continue to focus.

My learning has given permission in some way for these subjects to 'come out of the closet' and get beyond the 'fluffy stuff' innuendo. Finally, openness regarding personal development particularly as a senior manager can demonstrate a positive vulnerability and modelling that learning continues whatever your level and experience. … yet I have begun to successfully 'repattern' my behaviour and attitudes when faced with certain situations, which previously would have flawed or overwhelmed me. This has instilled me with more confidence and freedom, in the sense that I am more relaxed in situations that would previously have been approached with trepidation and left me frustrated and drained. It follows that successful outcomes are more likely and my demeanour more appropriate with my confidence remaining in tact.

So, I am learning new behaviours that are beginning to log in my brain as a reference point and these together with the ability to recall the calmness I experienced at Worth takes me 'back' and gives personal space like a compass with 'magnetic north'. This learning is hard to accredit in a world that

favours or wants most things to be quantifiable. I suppose this should concern me more than it does. However I consider this 'life skill' so valuable that it does not need other's sanction.

The words 'if you always do what you have always done you always get what you always got' springs to mind. I feel I am in the process of breaking free of this particular burden.

Learning in practice

As described by Bennis, I can bear witness to the statement that the supposedly soft stuff is harder than the hard stuff.

> *We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, butspiritual beings having a human experience.*
> *(Jean Shinoda Bolen, 2000)*

Reflecting on the impact of the major changes at work…. I may not have realised it during the time I described, … adopting a transformational leadership style, I strongly felt I related to others with all the dimensions I had available to me. I understood no more than others, but I realised that 'having no solution was not the same as having no response'.

This connectedness is often missing or we fear what will happen if we somehow allow our spiritual being to accompany us to work. If, we have the courage to show this consciousness we can appear and feel different, perhaps more liberated. This can support relationships at work rather than models of power and control. The distance can narrow between 'them and us' and the dialogue transforms to take on a more creative inclusive edge.

I concluded my document with the comment that I had hoped the learning would add value to my management style not realising that much of what I had learnt had added value to me, as a person."

Section 8 – Conclusion

To paraphrase, Butts (1999), meaning at work is an idea of revolutionary potential. Applying the idea to work, especially in terms of personal satisfaction, peak performance, and overall business success can also enrich communities, cultures and the Earth itself. At the very heart of the leadership task is the ability to influence others to achieve what the organisation needs to do. If companies are genuinely keen to develop an innovative, customer-focused, values-based culture that will be the foundation for future business success, they will have to build a new relational psychological contract with the people on whose performance success depends.

Lynda Gratton (1999) points out the dangers of not taking seriously the people issues of organisation: *" I believe passionately that the reality in organisations falls well short of the rhetoric that 'people are our greatest asset'. Until we face up to this gap, until we can stare reality in the face and until we can care as much about feelings as about finance, we are doomed to create organisations that break the soul and spirit of those who are members – and that reduce, rather than build, human potential".* It is in the interests of employers to be proactive in forging the elements of their employer brand into something that will inspire employees and encourage them to commit to the organisation. In building for the future, leaders have to give priority to the drivers of employee commitment and engagement.

Engagement

Engagement involves helping create a shared sense of destiny within the workplace. Our findings suggest that employees experience this when they:

- Are informed and involved
- Believe that the organisation has a higher level purpose
- Share the values that underpin this purpose
- Feel that their leaders 'walk the talk' and are worthy of respect
- Believe that their worth is meaningful in and of itself
- Have a means of doing something for others, especially customers
- Feel treated as adults and respected by others, especially leaders
- Feel they can be themselves in the workplace and are right to trust others because politics are kept to the minimum or absent
- Feel part of a community.

The higher sense of purpose needs to touch people at an emotional level and raise people's aspirations to achieve something they perceive to be worthwhile. Serving customers, rather than shareholders calls on an altruistic motive – the willingness to give of one's best and be useful. In the process, shareholders do benefit, but more obliquely than when shareholder motives come first.

People also like to feel connected, part of a community. Appropriate types of symbolism and ritual can help reinforce the sense of belonging, without the need to kit employees out with uniforms! They also want to see their leaders acting congruently with values, whether this is at policy level – such as ensuring that corporate social responsibility, diversity and other ethical policies are implemented - and in management practices and behaviours. They seem to be looking for the 'Level 5' type of leadership described by Jim Collins, where the leader drives the organisation forward with passion but is able to release people's potential- giving credit where it is due and taking the blame when things go wrong.

Commitment

What are the practical drivers of employee commitment? The following factors all demonstrate how much organisations really care about, and value their employees. Firstly *safety and security* (physical and psychological). As a basic requirement, employers should ensure that the workplace is safe and that people are trained and equipped to do the job, whether they work from home or in the workplace. As far as possible, employers should aim to provide a reasonable degree of job security and aim to adopt continuous employment practices. Employees, on the other hand, need to be prepared to learn new skills and develop the flexibility such an organisational commitment to them requires.

Secondly, *rewards* (remuneration and benefits). These should be equitable and reward contribution, not just short-term performance. Goals and incentives should be aligned. People should also be rewarded for engaging with change and for behaving in new ways. Non-financial rewards should be imaginative and tailored to the individual where possible. Benefits should offer a degree of choice. Final salary pension schemes should be maintained or generous alternatives offered, rather than transferring all the risk to the employee. Managers should be trained to recognise good performance when they see it and unblock barriers to 'good work' being done. Building a stress free environment, with manageable workloads and opportunities to develop personal projects alongside company projects can be very motivating. Just giving people a little time and space to reflect can be mutually beneficial.

Thirdly, *affiliation* (the extent to which employees feel part of the team). Wanting to be part of something larger than themselves is part of human psychology. For home-workers this can be noticeably lacking. Bringing teams together from time to time so that they can connect socially and share learning can be of advantage to both employers and employees. Engineering opportunities for people to take part in cross-functional team working and other means of networking can help employees feel part of a whole. Managers should develop projects that help generate team spirit and pride in achievement. Celebrating success and encouraging a climate where work is fun, rather than pure pressure, can cause people to want to belong to a meaningful work community.

Fourthly, *growth* (the opportunities for learning and gaining experience). Most people want to learn and continue to develop. Jobs should have a degree of stretch in them. There should be active support for employee self-development and practical options available to employees, even in tough times. People should be enabled to apply their developed skills in ways that benefit them and their employer. Investing in training and development is a key way of not only demonstrating organisational commitment to the employee but also in growing the organisation's human capital. Opportunities should be found to facilitate people's career growth within the company. People also value the time to reflect and learn from other employees. Building some slack into the organisation so that people have the time to do this and building into the culture the notion that reflection is vital, and not a waste of valuable activity time, will bring benefits to all.

Finally, *work-life balance.* When organisations put hard work into helping employees to strike the right balance, they show that they value the individual as a person, not just as a worker. Such attention, through flexible working arrangements, reviews of workloads and innovative policies, pays off. Committed employees are willing to 'go the extra mile' for their organisation. Making available a wide range of flexible working options and ensuring that employees do not have to sacrifice career in order to also have a life are increasingly important ways of retaining employees. People tend to remain with an employer 'with a heart' who values them to this extent. In such ways the employer brand becomes a reality and sustainable high performance is the result.

So if individuals are to be motivated to high performance they need jobs which are stretching and stimulating, offering opportunities for variety and initiative. They need opportunities to learn the skills they need for their jobs and to be coached and developed in their roles. They need to be clear where their role helps the organisation achieve its strategic goals and be clear about the scope for

experimentation. As they try new things and experiment with innovation, they need to be encouraged and supported rather than blamed if things go wrong.

As new 'good practice' emerges, learning should be standardised so that it can be shared more widely, but not so rigidly enshrined in process that it removes chance for further refinement and ownership by others. As good practice proliferates and people see the benefits of sharing knowledge, they are able to work 'smarter, not harder', thus freeing up time for both work-life balance and new opportunities for the business. In such a context, success breeds success and empowered individuals share the rewards of their efforts with the organisation.

And for the future......

Leaders need to be able to transform their organisations regularly to deliver ongoing competitive advantage, in an environment where change is becoming more challenging, risky and complex. Change is risky since the very process of change can destroy elements of meaning for employees – connectedness, relationships, trust, continuity, clarity of purpose, balance, community. According to Schein (1985), 'culture and leadership…. are two sides of the same coin, and neither can really be understood by itself. In fact, there is a possibility…..that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is create and manage culture, and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture'. Effective change management and gaining commitment are the critical bridge to the delivery of sustained benefit.

When an organisation demonstrates its commitment to individuals, those people show commitment in return. Change programmes therefore should not only focus on customers and business needs but also on employee welfare and satisfaction and what constitutes meaning. As Clive Morton (1998) suggests: 'Those companies that are inclusive in their relationships inside and with their communities stay the course, are more consistently more profitable and more able to make strategic choices for the future.'

People become committed if they are actively involved and engaged through dialogue and conversation. Leaders, aiming to create successful organisations that can cope with the demands of an ever-changing world, need to enable others, and themselves, to find meaning, balance and fulfilment. Part of the responsibility of good leadership is to allow people the space, time and energy to expose their true feelings, beliefs and attitudes – both to themselves and others- which changes and shapes the way they experience each other. By enabling a shared meaning and purpose to emerge, leaders can help people see that they are part of a broader community.

If an organisation becomes a locus of heightened experience in this way, how can sustainable high performance not follow?

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