Workplace Spirituality And Business Ideologies – A Study Of Corporate Oxymorons

Richa Sinha¹, Dr. Anamika Pandey²

¹(Assistant Professor) School of Business, Galgotias University Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, 203201, India, richa.sinha@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in

ABSTRACT

Today in the globalized world, when our economy is escalating with intensifying competition and operational changes, the working ambience stimulates the cumulative demand of inculcating Workplace Spirituality and ideologies to ensure positivity and robust environment for both employer and employee. In the modern times the terminology 'Workplace Spirituality, has acquired incredible connotative dimensions. It is emerging as a new business paradigm, one that is being touted as having the potential to cure organizations of the existing maladies. The manuscript will aim at defining an integrated relationship between workplace spirituality and business ideologies. The article will also justify the proposition that 'Spirituality' is not just a corporate flavor, but has its roots in ancient Indian culture, where work and spirituality were never considered alienated from each other. The researcher will finally contend that spirituality in business is not an oxymoron, but that it being a powerful institution has the capacity to bring about a cataclysmic change in society. The paper will throw light on the origin of the word spirituality, foundations provided by Indian scriptures, relevance of the word spirituality in the business context and its potential benefits. The researcher will adopt the methodology of exploratory research where pervasive study of available secondary data will be done to draw satisfactory conclusions and recommendations.

Key-Words Workplace Spirituality, Business Ideology, New Paradigm, Holistic View, Dharma

Introduction

In today's corporate environment, questions related to trust, respect, equality, and candidness are gaining pervasive attention. Organizational ideals, rules, and standards, statutory obligations, financial planning, interpersonal and social behavior in the workplace are all examples of business ethics. Effective leadership builds the basis of an ethical workplace via open debate and careful deliberation, which is woven into the fabric of the company culture and reflected in ethical decision-making. (Gull and Doh, 2004). academicians organizational Both and practitioners consider workplace spirituality as a crucial resource for business in the twenty-first century, and such interconnectedness is seen as a crucial asset for business in the twentieth century. (Gull and Doh, 2004; Mitroff, 2003; Mitroff and Denton,1999; Pruzan and Mikkelsen, 2007) Spirituality at work place creates among people, visions of a subjugated atmosphere. Spirituality is connoted to be at the zenith of any human political, social awareness. In his book Spirituality, Ethics, and Responsibility, Walter Earl Flucker, an expert in the theory and practice of moral behavior, cited. "Spirituality requires leaders to nurture and sustain a sense of self that understands life's interconnectedness, or a feeling of community". (Flucker; 2008). Spirituality to

²(Professor) School of Business, Galgotias University Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, 203201, India, anamika.pandey@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in

be woven in the contemporary social fabric requires utmost care. The origin of the word Spirituality lies in the Latin word 'spiritus', which means 'of the spirit' or 'a breath', 'the breath of life' vapor, air or wind. (Knights and O'Leary, 2006). For some, it means associated with God, for others the association is related to peace & tranquility. It connotes something, which engages the soul, the spirit of people, ie, which involves people in their totality. (McGhee Peter, Grant Patricia; 2008). Some consider spirituality, religion, ethics and humanism, corporate social responsibility – all belonging to a common genre of human pursuits. (Kumari Nilanjana; 2014). The above two having a transcendental dimension. It is considered as nourishment, food for the soul.

According to Sri Sri Ravishanker, 'Spirituality is the heart & business its legs. It fills the void in human lives & society, complementing materialism of business with its calm & solace. Spirituality introduces the element of ethics in business. Lower order needs in Maslow's pyramid should be satiated before talking to them about spiritualism. (Quoted in Agbim Chukwaujioke, ET AL, 2013;154). Authenticity, sincerity, commitment, excellence, collaboration, service, intuition, trustworthiness, respect, justice, and service are some of the key spiritual qualities acknowledged in the business world. There are three ways to look at spirituality: a) systematic understandings of spirituality linked to religious institutions; b) indirect conceptions of "conscience" spirituality or identity individuals or small groups who may or may not be affiliated with an existing religious institution; and c) conceptual or humane notions of spirituality linked to attributes and purported goods. Spirituality is the fundamental core affecting the personal and social lives of ethical and reliable leaders. (Ibid, p-138)

Every system has its flaws. The poor are plundered by capitalism, while individual ingenuity and entrepreneurial energy are stifled by socialism. Spirituality serves as a link between capitalism and socialism. 'Spirituality encourages capitalists to serve and socialists to innovate'. (Quoted in Shravan. K, ET AL, 2014; 54). Summing up the above definitions of the

word spirituality in general, we can understand it as a state of mind that is peaceful, pure, blissful, soulful, abundantly serene, an ineffable experience, a higher purpose in life, just like a newborn baby sleeping in the comfort zone of his mother, utterly innocent, naïve and satiated. (Quoted in Jackson, K; 1999; 64)

Applying the above definitions in an organization means using its resources to explore the inner self of its employees, their desires, passions, visions and purpose and helping them to develop their full potential. It is concerned with harnessing corporate wholeness & not holiness. Integrating spirituality into the workplace means that it is ok for employees to bring their whole selves, with all their talents & complex emotions. Seemingly obvious but surprisingly applied less often in business corridors. (Belwalkar, S, ET AL, 2016; 258). As exemplified workplace spirituality can be defined as a structure of organizational goals illustrated in the cultural context that promote employees' encounter of spiritual enlightenment through the production process, fostering their stronger connections to one another in a way that provides emotional responses of truthfulness and sheer delight. (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003)

Spirituality is distinct from job satisfaction & workers participation, though certain qualities & values lie open communication, integrity, honesty & respect are common to all of them. Spirituality takes the line of thinking one step ahead of them. It brings lucidity & stability in individual & organizational life. (Houghton, J., ET AL, 2016; 204). It assigns meaning to relationships at work & to work itself. It creates an organizational structure where leaders 'walk the talk' where profit is just a by-product. Workplace spirituality may exhibit itself in a variety of ways, most notably at two distinct levels: individual and organizational. To increase productivity, the company stresses spirituality at the fundamental level. Most organizations recognize that workers bring their cultural origins and faiths to work, as well as individual moral core beliefs that are associated to them. (Illes, K, ET AL. 2015; 71). They take the opportunity to link job standards and spirituality. At the second level, the employees involved are spiritual, and they may have been interested in the acceptability

of their profession for their spiritual practice even before taking employment. (Garcia-Zamor, 2003).

Spirituality Different from Religion.

Though many might disagree, the two concepts differ Religion is exclusive & binding, having an outer form, comprising of varying rites, rituals, beliefs, myths & doctrines. Spirituality is universal, inclusive & all embracing. Every religion also has an inner core or essence, which consist of the universal teachings of morality & charity, of a disciplined & pure mind full of love, compassion, goodwill & tolerance. (Quoted in Pfeffer, J, 2003; 115). It is only this common denominator, which links spirituality with religion & which needs to be emphasized. To quote Sri Ravi Shanker, religion is the peel, while spirituality is the inner fruit. So, as such, spirituality at workplace has no religious connotations, in the layman's sense & an organization which encourages workplace spirituality, should not be perceived as one, imposing religion but as, concerned about the welfare & soulful development of its people, it's society & the nation as a whole. (Ibid: 119). It should be looked upon as a business, assimilating the sensibilities, values & psychological strengths of its people & in the process building up its spiritual capital. (Quoted in Mohamed, A, ET AL. 2004; 104).

Spirituality Pervasive in Organizations

Spirituality has always been an inherent part of organizations for the simple reason that it comprises of human beings but in the past this aspect was ignored for varied reasons. Growth & development in the management arena has spurred an interest in the relation spirituality has to work, and now many organizations are deliberately reflecting on integrating both domains. (Piryaei, S.ET Al, 2013; 94). The phenomenon of connecting spirituality to work is now part of the popular culture. According to many management authors & thinkers, we are experiencing a paradigm shift as the remnants of the industrial era practices have started collapsing and a minor shove will transform the modern workplace. (Pawar, B. S; 2009; 378).

Spirituality at work place is emerging as a growing area of research in acclaimed academic literature & general readings. Popular business magazines, newspapers & news channels have also explored similar themes in their issues. According to book publishers, the category called 'Books & Spirituality at Work' is the fastest growing segment in the business book industry today. MDP's offered by eminent academic institutions engage young minds into a path of spiritualism, self- development& self -discovery & in the process help them develop life skills & negotiate the world better. The students study Vedanta, Sufism & readings from different religious texts. It's agreed that there's bound to be dilemma in the minds of budding managers and all these teachings may mean very little till they are faced with big real life problems in the workplace & it is only then that they would really be able to comprehend things & negotiate better. (Rego, A, ET AL, 2008; 58). These courses have very well been taken by the business world.

All this speaks volume about significant acknowledgement of spirituality at the workplace in the secular corporate arena. What was earlier treated, as unconventional, irrational & taboo to be even mentioned or discussed is now becoming ubiquitous & acquiring recognition acceptability. Internationally, the setting up of a Special Interest Group on Management, Spirituality & Religion under the auspices of Academy of Management (AOM), the most prestigious academic organization in the field of management has further elevated the status of spirituality in the work place as a legitimate field of study & research. All the above only validate the issue of self-discovery, self-development & self-transformation inside organizations.

Objectives of Study

- 1. Examining how spirituality, ethics, and business are becoming increasingly intertwined.
- 2. To investigate the growing importance of business ethics and spirituality in the workplace.

Research Methodology

The study analysis of secondary data sources like journals, periodicals, articles, and media reports,

as well as a literature review and other academic publications and online sites. After analyzing the requirements of the objectives of the study the descriptive research was used for the analysis. The study made considerable use of secondary data that was readily accessible. The methodology involved a survey of secondary data with regard to workplace spirituality and its impact on the various stakeholders. Literary texts were also taken from ancient scriptures to build upon the philosophical & theoretical framework.

Review of Literature

McGhee Peter, Grant Patricia (2008), concluded that Spirituality may be the cornerstone for ethical corporate action. There is a lack of awareness that we all can profoundly relate if spirituality is lacking. Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) established that having empathy for others, feeling an aware inner conscience in the quest of productive employment, and that facilitates spirituality. Employees work task effectively in a spiritual environment, where they can really experience empathy and enlightenment while being cognizant. The researcher concludes that in the workplace, professional leaders and managers rely more on creativity and spirituality. Khasawneh (2011) performed research on Jordanian Public University employees to determine the amount of spirituality in the workplace. According to the findings, employees were not only encouraged to bring their souls to work, but they were also given the freedom so as to bring productivity and complete job satisfaction. Previously, Mitroff and Denton (1999) undertook empirical research on the relevance of incorporating spirituality into organizational structure. In overall. the participants made a clear distinction between religion and spirituality; whereas spirituality was seen as a highly important topic for conversation, religion was seen as a grossly inappropriate medium of expression or discourse in the workplace. Moore and Casper (2006) created spirituality assessments based on previously validated organizational behavior evaluations. Sheep (2006), on the other hand, identified two ethical challenges in the workplace spirituality context: the utilitarian issue and the "hidden challenge. Agbim Chukwauijoke anguish"

Kenneth, Avatse Aondoaseer Fidelis, and Oriarewo Orziemgbe Godday (2013) explored the correlation between a religious person's behavioral traits, spiritual beliefs, spiritual moral standards, ethical conduct, and effective business. and discovered that a spiritual person's behaviour attributes are significantly and positively related to spiritual values. And they discovered that spiritual standards are linked to spiritual virtues, whereas spiritual virtues are linked to ethical behaviour. They illustrate the connection between personal spirituality and ethical job behaviour. Conferring to Kumari Nilanjana (2014), spirituality has recently become the heart of business. Spirituality enables individuals to go beyond their own ego in order to bring about changes and make a positive difference overall. Virtue is also beneficial in acknowledging and mitigating the troubles that certain impersonal spirituality may cause. Long and Driscoll (2015) emphasized the historical significance of workplace spirituality writings and constructed a model to explain how this workplace spirituality rhetoric arose. To portray numerous layers of conceptual links, the authors used figurative analysis to create workplace spirituality discourse. Pirkola, Rantakokko, and Suhonen (2016) defined spirituality at work as a phenomena and notion in healthcare, as well as the perspectives from which it has been researched in nursing. Krishnakumar and Neck's (2002) "what, why, and how" paradigm and "spiritual liberation" paradigm were extended and updated by Houghton (2016). Specifically, the research looked at how the research on workplace spirituality has grown and developed over the last 15 years. According to the conclusions of the literature analysis, there is no universally accepted meaning of the phrase "workplace spirituality." There appears to be a challenge in measuring such an ill-defined, multi-faceted, and highly personal construct, since the researchers have yet to agree on a core set of spiritual expression and orientation aspects. In the investigation of this topic, the lack of a broadly agreed definition allows for ambiguity and confusion. According to the findings of literature review, there is no universally accepted meaning of the phrase "workplace spirituality." There appears to be a challenge in measuring such an ill-defined, multi-faceted, and highly personal

construct, since the researchers have yet to agree on a core set of spiritual expression and orientation aspects. In the investigation of this topic, the lack of a broadly agreed definition allows for ambiguity and confusion which leads to investigation and analysis in this field.

Theoretical Foundations of Workplace Spirituality

Some might consider an interest in workplace spirituality as some new age management fodder, a fad or the current corporate flavor. But in reality, theoretical foundations of organizational spiritual element are very deep rooted. An overview of ancient Indian philosophy regarding work will prove that spirituality was never, ever considered delineated from work. Rather, men were expected to practice their secular values, in their daily active lives. (Crossman, J., 2010; 605). But, even for those who argue, Debra and William Miller's response would perhaps suffice. They discourage making any implication about spirituality being a fad or even a new tool for being more successful in business. For them, spirituality is diachronic. It is a natural reflection of a spiritual awakening that is already happening everywhere, a part of human evolution.

The Bhagavad Gita and Spirituality At Work

Karmanye Va dhika Raste , Ma Faleshu Kada Chanah

Ma Karmaphal Hetu Bhurma Te, Sangostava Karmani (Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Verse: 47)

The translated meaning of the verse is that, 'You must work, but without unduly worrying about the results; Don't you be motivated by personal rewards in work, but never ever remain idle'. Bhagavad Gita is a text contained in Bhisma Parwa (Chapter 25-42) of the Mahabharata is considered to be one of the earliest and greatest epics discussing spirituality. These famous teachings of the Bhagavad Gita is a seminal exposition of the idea of Spirituality at the work place. The Gita teaches renunciation in action and not renunciation of action. (Quoted in Hee, 2007;78). The above four principles, leading to active involvement and integrating spiritual values in work, are the quintessential teachings of

the Indian spiritual tradition. (Benabou, R, ET AL, 2010; 11). No doubt, the Gita is today treated as a management book, to be studied and adopted by organizations. The Bhagavad Gita has been a treasury of enduring resolutions to various organizational difficulties over the decades, among the many scripture books accessible to elucidate Indian philosophy. (De Klerk, 2005; 66)

Vedanta and Work Place Spirituality

Vedanta presents human life as a long march to truth and fulfillment, a march towards the highest and best hidden within all of us. It encourages mankind to 'Arise Awake and Enlighten Yourself'. (Ibid; 67). This enlightenment and realization of the self is every man's birth right, which he does not have to beg or borrow. And this has to be done while fulfilling one's worldly duties. That is true human evolution, says Vedanta. It conceives that human individual is physically limited but spiritually unlimited. It is good to be so limited. We do not belong to the species of the gigantic body size in evolution. Nature chose this limited measurement of height, weight and size and shape for the unique product - "Human" after many experiments from tiny insects to huge dinosaurs. But within this tiny system, nature hid many mysteries & treasures. Yes, treasure is the word because apart from the intellectual powers which have made man usher in this amazing space age, there is the infinite self - hidden within him. (Khasawneh, 2011; 689). The Vedanta says that there is a science of human possibilities within each one of us. Thus, when we say 'we cannot' do or achieve something, then we are only being ignorant of our own enormity. That is the time, we behave as an atheist, one who does not believe in himself. (Jain, A. K, 2012; 156).

The Chandogya Upanishads conveys the most profound truth about Man, lying at the deepest level of his being – Tat Tvam Asi – 'That thou art' which means and tells man that 'You are not this tiny organic system, this little body with its 150 or 200 pounds of weight, there is a profound divine dimension within you, beyond your physical, neurological and psychic dimensions. This is a truth and not an opinion. (Ibid; 161). It

is the product of vaastu tantra inana and not of purusa tantra jnana i.e. knowledge based on vastu, existing fact and not knowledge based on changing human moods and predictions'. (Hicks, D.A, 2003; 61). This is the strength giving nature of Vedanta. It gives a clarion call to all human beings to do soul searching and tap their energies. This Vedantic truth is particularly relevant in the diverse fields of human resource management, whether within the limited circle of a family or in the wider circle of industry &society. From an organizational standpoint, knowledge of Vedanta comes in immensely useful because efficient handling of human interactions brings out the best in people whereas careless handling brings out the worst. If management is familiar with these Vedantic principles, it will treat its employees as such, rather than as mere factors of production. (Chakraborty, 1987). Management will realize that each employee has immense hidden potential, which only needs to be nurtured which will ultimately benefit and organization. Management of companies are also but, made of human beings only, Vedantic principles give them the strength, the faith in themselves and only when one has faith in himself, can he have faith in others and only then can a person bring out the best in others. Those who do not have faith in themselves can never trust others. (Chatterjee, 2013). They are the 'cynics' in society who can never be successful in any field of human management and such people can be defined as the ones who know the 'price' of everything but 'value' of nothing. Such people do not have the human touch, so essential for any successful management. And it is not only management of an organization helping to develop and nurture its employees, Vedanta exhorts each person to arise. This spiritual awakening helps each human being to recognize his inner self and become motivated. (Moore, T. W, 2006; 111).

Spirituality In Business – A New and Welcome Paradigm

Organizations are reflections of their social & historical times. They are representative institutions of this era, encapsulating its spirit. The world around us at present is in the midst of a vast & unprecedented turmoil. To cope with

such turbulence, modern business needs a new cathartic vision of people, planet & profit, not realized before. (Jayaram, V, 2016). One importing thing to understand is the fact that business is a human endeavour, not merely an economic engine. An engine can be technically managed but human organizations require continuous care to bloom.

Maximizing human potential should be the intention of every business enterprise, simultaneously creating "value" for the society in unison with the laws of nature. This value could contribute in the form of wealth, social justice or knowledge (Rastogi, Ashish, ET. AL, 2014).

Imbibing mantras of social & environmental responsibility, creativity, quality, innovation etc, spirituality in business is therefore taking it towards a greater balance, health & global sustainability, opening new humanistic vistas far removed from a Taylorian approach (Sharma, S, 1999; 104).

Business And Spirituality: Can the twain meet?

One of the most powerful institutions on Earth is Business. This institution has the capability to shape up a creative & responsible role in the metamorphosis of society. The global business community, where a spiritual renaissance is already nurturing, can easily catalyze and revolutionize the status of earth & the planet as a whole. (Ibid, 221). 'Expanding consciousness' is becoming a common phrase for many business leaders thus helping create 'engaging organizations. These are manifested in the form of:

- Diversity among employees
- Servant Leadership & Stewardship
- Devising joyful workplaces
- Working with empathy
- Consciousness towards global ecology

Business can be pivotal and can pave path in cocreating a world where the worldwide business faction can serve society as a whole in long lasting ways. Those impacts will be more

sustainable & life-affirming (Chatteriee, 2013). However, Debashish, linkage spirituality with business creates a perplexing query. At the outset, the two seem world apart. And then, why particularly business? All the merits of spirituality can also apply to other pillars of society also ie arts, culture, education, science & technology etc. The answer perceived is that modern business is probably better equipped than other social organs, in terms of resources, be it capital, knowledge, information, manpower, to gallop forward in the development of mankind. It has the capability, acumen & not to mention the coercive power, to influence, inspire, manipulate & formulate decisions & parameters affecting humanity. (Flucker.W E, 2008; 7). But the core hypothesis that gives birth to this perception is that the future of human beings lies neither in a physical world negating spirituality nor in a soul negating materialism. The future of mankind lies in an amalgamation of soul & matter i.e. spiritualization of the worldly man. To actualize it, spirituality aka intrinsic awareness must align with business aka outer worldly awareness. If Business can grant its material thought process for the spiritual vision, then it can amalgamate into a huge force for the destiny of mankind. (Crossman, J, ET.AL, 2010; 605). This is the essence of evolutionary edge foreseen in business. And this new paradigm based on spirituality does not take the aim of wealth creation lightly and give it a secondary & insignificant place. Instead, it agrees that creation of wealth is the most basic & essential function ie dharma for a business entity (Garcia-Zamor, ET, AL, 2003; 361) & so one not doing so, is seriously neglecting its fundamental duty (Hicks. D.A, ET. AL, 2003; 69). However, in the spiritual dimension of management, human development will take precedence over material aims.

Beneficence of Spirituality At Workplace

Compared to the traditional management practices, businesses encouraging spirituality can expect to have the following benefits, in the process. (Houghton, J. D, ET. AL, 2016; 196). These benefits will be multi-dimensional & will make happy & satisfied, the three most important stakeholders-

- Customers
- Employees
- Society

The Customers

This segment trusts organizations that are ethical in their conduct, use environmentally friendly methods of running business & waste disposal. (Jain, A. K , ET.AL, 2012; 161). They prefer organizations that have a philanthropic image, help in employment generation & contribute towards well – being of society.

The Employees

These are the key assets of any business, whose happiness & satisfaction goes a long way in contributing towards overall profitability of any enterprise. Organizations that foster spirituality recognize that each employee is unique with individual talents. (Knights, D., ET.AL, 2006; 131). Practicing spirituality or recognizing that employees personal & professional lives are integrated & not separate, encouraging them to bring their whole self at the workplace, touches deep into their hearts & opens up a reservoir of energy, which even they themselves may not be aware of. (Ibid, 135). Spirituality unleashes in them such traits which are so important for profitable sustenance of business: Creativity: eruption spontaneous of emotions; Communication: the vehicle connecting people; Respect: of self and others. Along with Respect comes Acceptance, which includes embracing the diversity of humanity; Vision: Helps broaden perspectives; Partnership: encompasses individual responsibility and trust that other people will perform according commitments for the good of the team. (Kumari Nilanjana, 2014; 108).

Flexibility: learning to see trends and adaptability; Finding Own Self : discovering oneself

All these would resonate in the form of longer employee commitments, organizational loyalty & as a by-product, immeasurable profits.

The Society

Organizations are an integral part of society & vice versa. Ethical and transparent conduct of businesses, results in less of corruption, bribery & other fraudulent practices. This would definitely ameliorate law & order situation & reduce crimes. Members of society would be more tolerant & flexible in their approach which will definitely help eradicate social ills like poverty, illiteracy, casteism or any other sort of discrimination. (McGhee Peter, 2008; Moore, T. W, 2006). There would be increase in community development programs & in times of natural calamities, the victims will not need to wait for government help alone. The gap between 'them & us', will reduce & will become 'we'. (Mitroff. I, 2003; 380).

Results & Discussion

The review shows that workplace spirituality holds great significance for organizations to increase productivity, profitability, reducing turnover and absenteeism. Workplace spirituality goes hand in hand with organizational goals of achieving profits & that the two do not necessarily move in opposite directions. Workplace spirituality cannot be presented or regarded as a universal remedy for all organizational ills or as a panacea for all organizational difficulties. It's a clear trend and phenomena that business and practical people should be aware of. It takes time and effort to create a spiritually dynamic workplace. Instead of merely meeting objectives, employers must modify how tasks are completed to develop spirituality at work. They must adopt a strategy that promotes spiritual activities to take place in the workplace. Furthermore, because each person grows at a different rate, companies must be patient in their pursuit of their goal.

In Retrospect

Workplace spirituality, often known as spiritual intelligence, is a recent trend. It's a relatively new phenomena that's getting momentum all across the globe. To help their workers excel, organizations are promoting spiritual principles. Employees also know that their professions may provide them with significance and fulfilment. Workplace Spirituality presents the new world of the future. Business is a vital organ of society,

reciprocating towards its materialistic & social desires ,trends & practices and cannot be weaned away from it. Modern business has perceived this fundamental phenomenon.. So in a diachronic vision of business, it has to be essentially viewed as significant towards economic, technological, social, political and cultural functions. The conviction of the author is that in the present dynamic situations, a spiritual approach is the right path towards binding our distinctive competencies & nurturing positive trends in such a way that they help achieve our divine potentials The only care that organizations need to take is about not to introduce 'crash courses' of spirituality or incorporate it in an ad-hoc & superficial manner, with the aim of just reducing stress or personality development ie. just using it as an instant food or some sort of quick fix remedy or as an instant motivator for the jet set employee. This may completely dilute the spirit, essence & aim of the entire process. Everybody benefits from fostering workplace spirituality. It's a win-win for everyone. Workers, executives, and the corporation all benefit when workplace ideals evolve toward more collegial and holistic approaches.

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