

# Spirituality and family business



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Work and family are the two most important aspects of a man's life – work gives meaning to our existence and family shapes our lives.

Family businesses are unique institutions that encompass both these important aspects.

People associated with family businesses play multiple roles as family members, parents, owners, business leaders, managers and members of the community. The overlap can be curtailed but rarely be eliminated.

Teilhard de Chardin has so beautifully stated, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience." How can then one take out this spiritual aspect of our existence from having an effect on the way family and non-family managers decide and behave while playing different roles?

## Spirituality in business

In the business world, competitiveness is associated with profitability. Spirituality, on the other hand, is assumed to occasionally shift the wheels of business into neutral and allow time for a momentary slowing down and reflection period such as during national tragedies and recessionary times. In actuality, corporate cultures that push spirituality to this role dismiss one of the deepest dimensions of the human condition.

Many people find the thought of spirituality in business disturbing and consider it a sensitive and touchy personal issue not to be mixed with business. It has to be left at the company parking lot. For some, it is a weekend affair. They fail to appreciate that the Spirit is not so much a thing, but a system that is of essence to the subject under consideration - "Team Spirit" or "Human Spirit" or "Sportsman Spirit" or "Entrepreneurial Spirit".

## Spirituality

*Spirituality consists of:*

- Understanding the meaning of existence and pursuing the purpose of uniqueness
- Having faith and belief against the odds and overcoming the odds with little feeling of pain and stress
- Discovering the basic nature and dwelling in it - satchitanand
- Deriving the sense of self-worth through personal growth and not through possessions
- Control over the desire for sensuous pleasures and unscrupulous consumption beyond what is necessary for survival – simple living, high thinking
- Complete ownership and responsibility for self – no begging, no bragging, no complaints, no blame
- High self-esteem, respect for others, love for all creatures
- Balance in all situations – no undue bias or preference
- Pursuit of perfection, acceptance of the outcome
- Harmonious existence with enlightened detachment
- A quest – not a destination.

Spirituality attempts to answer bigger issues of life: Who am I? What do I stand for? What is my purpose? How to make my life meaningful? An organization also needs to ask these questions to formalize its vision and values. Family business owners who are spirituality oriented are able to have sustainable all-round growth and harmonious relationship.

## Family business & spirituality

When a family business forms, it brings with it the spirituality (core values and sense of purpose) and the religious beliefs of the founding members. It is impossible to have spiritual and religious beliefs and not let the decision making and actions be affected by them.

Spirituality encompasses all aspects of a family business – family, business as well as ownership.

## The family aspect

Spiritual orientation and practices help in preserving the delicate family fabric and fosters the "family spirit".

- The family that eats together and prays together stays together. Families that pray together spend time together - quality time when the focus shifts from the ego self to a higher self. Studies have found that prayer leads to

