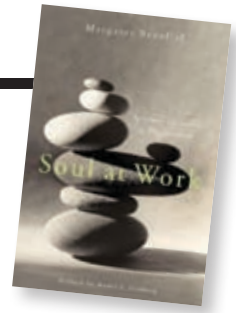


BOOK REVIEW

Soul at Work: Spiritual Leadership in Organizations

By Margaret Benefiel

Seabury Books | New York, 2005 | \$20.00 Paperback



YOU PROBABLY WILL NOT FIND *Soul at Work* in many management sections of your local bookstore. Too bad! It would definitely raise the level of discourse and prove a benefit to the browser. Not only does it propose that spirituality has a rightful place at work, it offers revealing examples of organizations and leaders who have already put the idea into practice. *Soul* advances the “principled” agenda that personal integration and integrity increase productivity and prosperity for every person in the workplace. It begins stating that the responsibility to develop a work culture with life-honoring/spiritual principles that inform, guide and support productive and value-creating practices are the work of the business leader. Examples drawn from a variety of enterprises and faith traditions show how such commitments benefit everyone on all levels of the enterprise. The ultimate beneficiary of “Souls at Work” is the customer, patient or guest who deals with trustworthy, caring, reflective and “prayerful,” people who learn in their enterprise how to treat others fairly and well.

Part One describes organizations using these principles. Interviewed leaders tell of successes in appreciating and valuing how an active spirituality and spiritual discernment achieve excellence and prosperity in their endeavors. I enjoyed the story of Genny Nelson, who started Portland’s Sisters of the Road Café, which hires homeless people, moving them into positions of increasing service responsibility. In an ever-intensifying sequence of positive changes, everyone involved benefits in the business. Such success stories are repeated in interviews with other leaders, includ-

ing U2, Health East, Greystone Foundation and Southwest Airlines, all soul-conscious enterprises.

Part Two applies the principles and highlights the interdependence of “Individual Spiritual Transformation” and “Organizational Transformation,” – the “ying and yang” of a value-creating business. Dr. Benefiel correctly indicates that effective organizations begin with effective leaders who mature spiritually as they demonstrate spiritual discernment and foster sound decision-making and principled organizational practices. Such behaviors ultimately transform workers, businesses and customers in their interactions.

My one reservation is the suggestion that somehow an organization put “soul awareness” ahead of “profitability.” In fact, without both as equal priorities, can an enterprise expect to achieve the fullness of personal and organizational transformation that the author describes? I suggest a Part Three, examining leaders who guide organizations to success *and* spiritual sensitivity, perhaps examining the Chick-fil-A enterprise and other successful and committed organizations. *Soul at Work* is a good start in a much needed dialogue to fully engage the human person – body, mind and spirit – at work. It is an uplifting book with good ideas for leaders who have decided to create a difference in their work environment and to consciously invite God into peoples’ work lives. ♡

Review by Dr. Thomas E. Little, Executive Director of Bon Secours Spiritual Center