

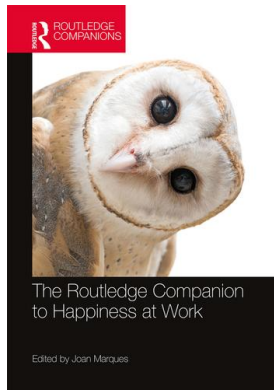
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 20 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to Happiness at Work

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Religion as a Foundation for a Happy Life

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429294426-14>

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Published online on: 23 Oct 2020

How to cite :- Tarshima Bell Hackett, Sylvia W. Burgess, Karen Martin-Jones. 23 Oct 2020, *Religion as a Foundation for a Happy Life from: The Routledge Companion to Happiness at Work* Routledge

Accessed on: 20 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429294426-14>

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RELIGION AS A FOUNDATION FOR A HAPPY LIFE

Tarshima Bell Hackett, Sylvia W. Burgess, and Karen Martin-Jones

Introduction

For years, Christians have used their faith as a source to navigate their daily lives. That includes the workplace. However, in recent years, the ideology of faith has expanded from not only Christians but also those that identify themselves as spiritual or religious. This diversity of faith has expanded to the workforce, causing a discussion regarding the role religion plays at work, and whether it has the power to cross the divided lines of religious dogma to create a centering of happiness and unity in the workplace.

It is nearly impossible to define faith because its meaning varies beyond individuals, and its foundation ranges from a general religious attitude to a personal acceptance of a specific set of beliefs, thus creating the interchangeable usage of religion, spirituality, and faith (Newman, 2004). This intersection of religion, spirituality, and faith can have the power to connect rather than divide when its origins are identified. For example, religion is associated with a set of beliefs, practices, and rituals that revere a god as the center or a center of power and value, whereas spirituality is defined as persons being guided by their spirit—the soul distinguished from the body—rather than a set of doctrines or beliefs. In contrast to the three being used interchangeably, consider the concepts of spirituality and religion as being functions of faith because religion and spirituality are both connections with something bigger than self that gives life meaning and its process a purpose.

The five top religious groups all tie this concept together, Christianity, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and those that identify as unaffiliated, or spiritual but not religious, SBNR (Martin, 2010). The largest religious organization, Christianity, consists of 32% of the worldwide population, with 50% of the Christians being identified as Catholic. The Christianity belief system is based on God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit as its guiding influence. Muslims represent 23% of the worldwide population with a belief system richly based upon principles and the belief that there is no God but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet. Hindus represent approximately 15% of the worldwide population; they believe that each living creature on the planet has a soul, and all these souls are the part of a Supreme Soul called Parmatma. Buddhists represent 7% of the world's total population with a belief that there is an afterlife and not everything ends with death. Those that are unaffiliated or Spiritual but Not Religious (SBNR) account for 16% of the population and include atheists, agnostics, and people who do not identify with any religious affiliation but believe in God or a higher power. Most religions also suggest that with happiness, also comes sufferings, but the spiritual interconnectedness provides a means of deliverance and purpose for the greater good. It is in

fact, the overcoming of such sufferings that enable people with an ability to continue to believe in their religion, which is most likely grounded in their spirituality. Even though these religious groups contrast in the specifics of their beliefs, the connecting factor of identifying with an existence bigger than them to define meaning in life leads to the place called happy living. This chapter will address the integrated perspective of religion as a foundation for happiness to raise awareness and change the dynamics of happiness in the workplace (Marques, 2019, p. 12).

With more than eight out of ten people identifying with a religious group, it is essential that the role of faith not only be defined, but its implementation must be addressed so that its inter-connectedness can create a happy medium that can be employed everywhere, particularly in the workplace. Furthermore, research suggests there is a correlation between job satisfaction and spirituality (Marschke, Preiosi, & Harrington, 2011). Although many religions were researched, for the purpose of this chapter, we will focus primarily on the impact of happiness from a Christian perspective. Applying the principles of faith in the workplace can create an atmosphere of unity and inclusion, with the results increasing production and forming a sense of community in the establishment. The definition of happiness in and of itself has a different meaning to different people. However, research suggests that there is a relationship between religion and happiness. Regardless of one's religion, individuals are obstinately in search of happiness.

Religion and Happiness

Religion has long had a dominant presence in the world. Religion provides humans with a transcendental belief in something greater or more powerful than oneself; a panacea to human needs, desires, and problems. Harkness (1936) defines it as:

...the way in which people meet the varying conditions which confront them, master their experiences, transcend all that happens, seek to explain and evaluate all that befalls them, find sanctions and confirmations for their customs and modes of conduct and thus make progress and advancement.

Thus leading to the relationship between religion and the search for happiness.

When one thinks about happiness, so many questions come to mind. These questions may very well be invoked as a result of the world we live in today. We live in a world that is socially interconnected by technology. This pervasiveness of technology has changed the way in which people view themselves and interact. Korostelina (2007) opined that identification is developed by culture and social reality. Moreover, social identity is always formed through complex interrelations with other people and reflects their perceptions and behaviors; thus, creating different images of what happiness looks like. It is a false sense of reality that one can portray, which ultimately impacts and influences one's definition of happiness. The question then becomes, what is true happiness, and what makes one happy? Some may even suggest that happiness is relative. Whether consciously or subconsciously, online social images influence our happiness and its interpretation thereof.

Interestingly however, there seems to be little to no difference between happiness and one's levels of economic status (Schumaker, 1998). This could be attributed to the fact that happiness in and of itself is a temporal emotion that is influenced by the wants and desires of the moment or season of life. Green (2014) calls these false paths to happiness. An ever-present image of happiness is oftentimes linked to wealth or materialistic worth. Kumpikaite-Valiuniene advances the notion of "Immanent", which is one's egotistical need to be satisfied by worldly possessions, such as status, income, success, and more (2014). However, if, in fact, wealth is a panacea to happiness, then the media would not be filled with numerous accounts of wealthy individuals committing suicide or the sad endings associated with lottery winners who believed that money would make them happy.

Thus, the question then becomes is there a difference between joy and happiness? I would argue that they are, in fact, vastly different, and that religion plays an integral role in the differentiation.

Joy versus Happiness

The Christian believes it is in fact the joy of the Lord which is their strength. It takes that kind of joy to be light even in a toxic workplace. Joy is an inner peace that is not associated with materialistic possessions. John Piper writes, “Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul, produced by the Holy Spirit, as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world (Piper, 2015)”. This kind of joy is evidenced in the workplace and in the world through what many Christians refer to as the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23). The Holy Spirit functions as an internal compass or “spirit man” that directs and guides the human thoughts and actions of man.

It is in fact our spirituality and fruits that allow us to endure and succeed even in a toxic workplace. We are intentional that regardless of our situation, we must hold fast to the precepts and promises of our religious doctrines, which cause us to triumph in the face of adversity. There is, as some may say, “a light” that radiates from the individual, impacts their personality, and shifts the workplace atmosphere. Being light in the workplace even when it is uncomfortable and unhappy is for Christians a test of their faith. This “faith walk” requires the activation of the Holy Spirit working within the individual, keeping and causing them to triumph during their circumstances. Simply put, this is an inside job that emanates to the outside to change circumstances.

Spirituality and religion, although different, are the foundational constructs to one’s faith or belief system. The Christian often references this faith journey with biblical scripture that suggests that faith is the substance of what they are believing God for, and trusting in his divine purpose or calling for one’s life even though they do not see it. It is believing beyond what the visual eye can see. This could also be referred to as “blind faith”, believing without seeing. It is trusting the internal Holy Spirit at work within the individual. Fowler describes this as the relationship between faith and imagination, or the “ultimate environment”. Newman suggests that “faith forms a comprehensive unit of what we see in our ordered world and deposits value and power in it with regard to self, others, and the world” (p.104). This concept can be a powerful source in the workplace. Newman (2004), describes faith as relational, implying a trust of one another. From this definition, faith in the workplace creates a trust between employees and a sense of security and support for one another that extends far beyond the organizational hierarchy structure.

Workplace spirituality, as Kumpikaite-Valiuniene (2014) suggested, is transcendent in that it motivates and transcends a person to go beyond themselves to support the interest of the workplace. Therefore, it lends itself to the concept of one’s spiritual capital. Spiritual Capital is defined as “the intrinsic values of an individual that are aligned with trust, culture, and deep commitment to relationship building to better serve society as well as to satisfy the internal human need to serve” (Burgess & Martin-Jones, 2019, p. 293).

Inclusion and Happiness

Corporations have had a history of discrimination within the workforce, impacting a large and diverse group of individuals, minorities, disabled people, LGBTQ people, and more. However, legislation, in addition to access, is causing individuals to question the status quo in the workforce; thus, creating an environment that is forced to create a fair, diverse, and equitable workforce. This form of discrimination, regardless of how unjustifiable, creates a feeling of exclusion for the individuals affected. Therefore, the need to create a culture of inclusion is integral to the sustainability and mental effect of individuals within the workplace.

Inclusion, the act of including within a group or structure access to opportunities and resources that would otherwise have been excluded or marginalized, has become the course of the current workforce because of the history of discriminatory acts. To create a happy workforce, several ingredients are required. The first is to create an organization that values diversity and embodies inclusion. Since individuals within organizations observe and learn what behaviors are acceptable within the framework of establishments, creating opportunities for interactions and encouraging people to connect within the confines of the workplace fosters inclusion (Hai & Sherif, 2011). Leaders of the workforce cannot force employees into friendships; however, providing demographically diverse dynamics communicates acceptance and uniformity that can result in positive organizational performance and achievement (Hyung-Jin & John, 2013).

Acceptance is far more than respect. It is moving further than tolerating a person's differences, but embracing and celebrating the astronomically dimensions of everyone (Crisp & Turner, 2011). This concept is accepted individually when it is fostered collectively. Employers can guide behaviors by showing what is acceptable in an organization's context. For example, employers create an inclusive atmosphere by hiring persons of all dynamics. Creating this array of individuals generates an illustration of what is acceptable and what workforces desire the picture of their organizations to resemble. This is when inclusion is embraced, and discriminatory acts can decrease. Job satisfaction increases productivity, and employment relations is a demonstration of this inclusion. Moreover, leadership plays an integral role in this process.

Leadership Developing a Culture and Climate of Happiness

Leadership in this twenty-first century requires a different kind of face. Uhl-Bien and Marion postulate that "we're in a knowledge economy, in the midst of a new economic age, in which twenty-first century organizations are facing complex competitive landscapes" (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2007). Multiple entities play a role in this "knowledge economy", in which leaders must learn to manage the ever evolving workplace. Stakeholders are weary from the recent financial decision-making crisis that continues to plague our nation and our economy.

Changes are occurring at such an alarming and constant rate that organizations require leaders to possess the ability to make effective, intentional, and inclusive decisions. Stakeholders are calling for inclusive leaders. Trust in the leader's ability to make inclusive and authentic decisions has become essential to the overall success of an organization. These changes require a significant adaptation on the part of the leadership in organizations to the new emerging realities of the marketplace, while also continuing to evolve and remain productive. Much of the old or traditional leadership styles may need to be revisited to include a diverse and multifaceted workforce. The need for effective authentic inclusive leadership is pertinent to the sustainability of organizations in this ever-changing society. Avolio & Gardner (2005) "argue that existing frameworks are not sufficient for developing leaders of the future" (pg. 315), therefore, authentic leaders are becoming a requirement in this 21st century (Cooper, Scandura & Schriesheim, 2005). Furthermore, spirituality in the workplace leads to organizational commitment. Authentic leaders understand and embrace the underlying notion that spirituality is connected to organizational success. Thus, the need for leadership to encourage a culture and climate that embraces and nurtures a diverse and spiritual workforce is vital.

The culture of an organization is directed by its leadership (Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008). Ramsden (1998) suggested that leadership is powerful in that it can transform the "commonplace and average into the remarkable and excellent organization, thereby influencing organizational cultural change" (p. 12). The need for spirituality in the workplace has become an important factor in the revitalization of the average organization into one of excellence. At a more concrete level, creating a culture and climate that embraces all people and their differences is one that is essential for the workplace. This can be accomplished through engagement. Engagement encompasses several

components, such as relationship building, through collaboration and communication. When individuals are engaged, there is a sense of belonging associated with the act. It is, in fact, what makes the organization thrive and flourish. A leader who can not only embrace but nurture and celebrate the differences that all people bring to the table, adding value and excellence.

As job satisfaction and research continues to advance, the concept of spirituality in the workplace will require a shift in the focus of organizational commitment. For example, within organizations, it is pertinent for leaders to understand the importance and benefits of religion and spirituality, especially when they desire to lead and make decisions that support and encourage a culture and climate built upon spirituality.

Benefits of Workplace Religion

The benefits of happiness are endless. They lead to a healthier life, reduced stress, inner peace, and an overall well-being. Scholars note significant benefits associated with spirituality in the workplace. More specifically, it has shown to positively impact satisfaction at work, organizational commitment, and job involvement (Mahipalan & S, 2018). There has been an increased attention directed toward spirituality and religion in the workplace because many seek and look to its solace in their personal lives; thus, its stance parallels that of the workplace. When disturbances occur in the workplace, the role of religion is significant to create healthy employees, ethical fortitude, and a respectful, peaceful, and harmonious environment.

The practice of formal religion and spirituality has always been a factor in the way individuals view their health, and recent years have included the practice of a healthy lifestyle. Since the mid-1990s, research on religion and spirituality has expanded astronomically (Koenig, 2012). These research findings indicate personal interests in religion and spirituality in mental health, physical health, and behavioral lifestyles. Mental health encompasses coping with adversity, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, social problems, and a plethora of positive emotions to include happiness, hope, optimism, and a sense of self-purpose and self-esteem. These mental health characteristics can all be stabilized through the sense of belonging and identifying self within spirituality and religion. When understanding that these guidings of mental health are directed by an individual's personal faith, recognizing their existence in the workplace creates an environment of inclusivity. This inclusivity is based upon the reality that these mental health experiences exist amongst employees in the workplace; therefore, establishing parameters and guidelines around their existence creates a sense of community within the workplace. Some of the ways the workforce is acknowledging mental health conditions within the workplace is by providing resources for therapy, counseling, and accessible literature. The spiritual and religious benefits of acknowledging these mental capacities in the workplace far more exceed the time and financial obligations that are required.

Spirituality and religion are known to be the first and true coping mechanisms for stress and mental health because of their ability to create positive reinforcements, optimistic worldviews, and the belief that all of life's circumstances have a purpose, that life is not controlled by circumstances, but all matters are distinctively working for the good. The practice of religion and the belief of spirituality provides people with a peace that life is bigger than circumstances. Those with a spiritual and religious identification believe that thoughts can be controlled, and life's narratives can be changed by their faith.

A healthy lifestyle is intricate to religious practices. There are a few studies that show a correlation between religious practices and healthy behavioral habits, all to include cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs. Collectively, persons that have higher levels of religious involvement have lower rates of abuse and addiction, and if they do struggle with any of these behaviors, they are more likely to find longer lasting success with rehabilitation. This concept of discipline is guided by the fact that most religions are guided by rules, regulations, and doctrines on how to live life and how to treat others.

This is paralleled with spiritual practices that guide healthy living and discipline. Moreover, those of practicing faith live an average of seven years longer than those that do not have a foundation of faith or spiritual discipline. Thus, creating longevity of life because of the discipline to not engage in practices that shorten life, and create and develop illnesses.

Most people with religious discipline and spiritual practices are characterized by their compassion and love for others, and their possession of human virtues like honesty, forgiveness, gratefulness, patience, and dependability. These essential parts of integrity equip persons of faith with the ability to create social dynamics that enhance and maintain social relationships. These dynamics can create working environments that support and meet the needs of all parties in the workforce, ultimately creating a sense of community and networking that increases a positive work environment.

The benefit of religion and spirituality at work is the ability of employees to live healthy lifestyles because of the discipline they have adopted through their practicing faith, their ability to create social environments that embraces community and positivity, and lastly, people of faith seek to live by an honor code of integrity that employs ethics in the workplace and a desire to complete tasks in the spirit of excellence.

Finding Balance Through Spirituality at Work

Several variables impact one's happiness at work. However, one foundational premise remains: when religion is the foundation, every other area of life will align. Religion provides a balance that is necessary for individuals to be effective and happy at work. When religion is freely allowed as the foundation in the workplace, the following practices are encouraged: a) quiet time to meditate, pray, and reflect are a priority; b) the job is seen as a calling and not merely a means to an end; and c) interpersonal relationships are developed and valued regardless of differences. According to a study that examined the relationship between workplace spirituality, happiness, and well-being, the results confirmed positive linkages between spirituality and well-being. This suggests that happiness is a state of well-being that is influenced by one's spirituality (Mahipalan & S, 2018). Happiness at work must be intentional. It must start at the beginning of the day with prayer, reflection, and mediating on the individual purpose and calling. So, what factors contribute to happiness at work? According to recent studies, "Positive psychology suggests that our innate qualities are qualities that are within us and though unacknowledged, are capable of promoting wellness and fulfilment, eventually resulting in a positive and productive society" (Mahipalan & S, 2018, p. 107).

Employees have a strong desire to incorporate their spirituality into the workplace without offending other co-workers that do not share in their spiritual concepts. Embracing spirituality in the workplace is compared to embracing employees as whole beings versus compartmentalizing their identity. This embracement carries the weight of a holistic person that has the ability to incorporate all their gifts, talents, and creativity into the workplace. Incorporating spirituality into the workplace has the capacity to significantly affect an organization. This effect has the capacity to benefit the employer, the employees, and the progression of the organization (Fry, 2003).

How does finding balance through spirituality in the workplace look? First, it begins with understanding that even though each person may not agree on religious organizations and dynamics nor spiritual practices, all may agree upon morals, ethics in the workplace, honesty, integrity, and quality of work. This can then be shouldered with creating a socially conscious workplace that incorporates community engagements and services or creating a better world by being mindful of the environment, and how its care impacts society. Second, it can include creating a caring environment that cares for employees and treat employees responsibly. Lastly, it is creating a culture that welcomes prayer or meditation. Each of these practices can be fully evolved into the culture of the workplace, or it can be sprinkled sporadically to the comfort level of the individuals employed. The beauty of creating the balance of spirituality in the workplace is companies understand that it is

no longer the day and time where profits alone make companies successful, but it is embracing individuals holistically to create environments that are conducive to not only workplace growth but also individual and community growth.

Incorporating religion into the workplace has been affirmed as a tool to enhance an employee's well-being at work, as well as having a positive impact on an employee's outcome, to include job satisfaction, commitment, and performance (Garg, 2017). Organizational stress and performance outcomes have been a target of spirituality in the workplace because those that embrace their faith are seemingly more hopeful and identify a meaning or purpose with their work and performance. Thus, those that embrace a level of spirituality can influence others to nurture positivity and work performance and productivity. As a result, this provides a culture that embraces spirituality and promotes success in the workplace.

Finding a balance between spirituality and the workplace nurtures employee commitment, job satisfaction, work-life balance, and overall employee well-being. Workplace well-being can be described as the mental and emotional state an individual may feel about the job and the work they do, which is linked to a positive emotion (Baccarani, Mascherpa & Minozzo, 2013). Establishing the relationship between workplace spirituality and quality performance and employee satisfaction sets the stage for a flourishing and profitable business. Spirituality in the workplace is necessary for the growth and development of balanced employees. This can be established through the constraints of serving the community locally or globally through community engagements, operating an environmentally conscious workplace, or welcoming an environment that embraces and smiles on prayer and meditation to guide the business through times of stress and despair. This initiative of embracing workplace spirituality must be solidified through employers' organizational visions, missions, policies, and practices (Garg, 2017). Setting the precedence of spirituality in the workplace helps employees to see the sincerity of the goal and become witnesses of the influence. All this is established with the same goal of increasing workplace productivity while nurturing the growth of individuals, especially since most people spend many of their waking hours at work (Cohen, 2017).

Conclusion

For the world in which we live, work is inescapable, and most individuals spend a large percentage of their day in the workplace. Hence, personal faith, religious beliefs, and spiritual practices in the workplace have migrated to the forefront of research. Employers want to understand how they can effectively merge spirituality into the workplace without offending or excluding their workers; they want to implement the moral fiber of religiosity and spiritual ethics to create a thriving and progressive workforce environment. Since work is inescapable, and individuals spend a large percentage of their day at work, it should be a place of happiness. The concept of religion as a foundation for happiness can be compared to a house without a sound foundation. The foundation of a house is considered the most important part of the structure. If the foundation is off, every other aspect of the house is unstable, which impacts its ability to withstand storms, winds, or anything that is stronger or more powerful than what it was built upon. This analogy can be likened to a person without a strong, sound religious foundation. They will not be able to endure the trials and tests they face, nor will they see value and purpose in their life. In this lies the importance of organizations supporting spirituality in the workplace.

The future of religion as a foundation for happiness in the workplace is one that must not only be accepted but embraced as a cultural workplace norm. A culture and climate of inclusivity will be key to the implementation and sustainably. Creating an environment where the individual feels a sense of belonging their voice matters, and is heard, will create leadership within. As a result, more leaders will emerge. As leadership and support for religion emerges within the individual groups, it will

permeate through the organization. Moreover, since leadership and spirituality are relational, these relationships will motivate people to embrace the new norm (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2007). This confluence of individuals around a common purpose has the potential to create an organizational culture in which inclusive spirituality and happiness become common.

This is a delicate task with the diversities of faith. However, to ensure that the concepts of the top five religious groups are connected, the basis of applying spirituality into the workplace is centering the concept around the idea that all religions and spirituality are connected through the understanding that there is something bigger than self, and that something gives life meaning and its process a purpose. Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and those that identify as spiritual all link this concept. These religious groups all contrast in their specific beliefs; however, the foundation of their principles, to provide a life of happiness and contentment, can all integrate to raise awareness and bring happiness into the workplace.

Many people are in pursuit of happiness, and faith is an essential and integral role in this pursuit. Because many people identify with religious groups and define spirituality as essential to their daily life, understanding how this concept can overlap into the workplace is pivotal in identifying and answering how religion is the foundation of a happy life, and how this happy life can infiltrate the workplace. Religion is the basis of happiness because of the pure concept that all things have a purpose, life is working in my favor, and nothing that is happening is occurring because of happenstance. This positive reinforcement on the vicissitudes of daily life is why happiness is associated with religion. Contrastingly, economic status, wealth, or materialistic worth has little bearing on happiness, but an environment of belonging, inner-peace, and inclusivity creates a sense of community that generates productivity.

This produces the concept of joy versus happiness. Since the Christian believes that joy is the foundational principle of inner peace, and this inner peace is only given through their joy of knowing and having a personal relationship with the Lord, working in a toxic work environment is the ideal time to shine their light, the light that radiates from within. This light should have the ability to change the energy and atmosphere in the workplace. Furthermore, they are intentional in being positive in what seems to be hopeless and despairing situations. This intentional pursuit of positivity should allow their presence to be desired in the workplace, and their optimism needs to influence the workplace for ongoing productivity.

Because of the ever-present optimism in the lives of those that have a profession of faith, the desire for corporations to become inclusive in their work-force should be second-nature. Inclusion is offering everyone a fair hand and the opportunity to advance. Even though leaders cannot force individuals to get along or interact, they can create opportunities to establish an environment that resembles the whole society for the promotion of growth and productivity in the workplace. Leadership has taken on this role and has the responsibility to develop a culture and climate of happiness that encompasses everyone. Therefore, they need to be authentic, and this must be displayed in their everyday activities, even in an ever-changing and technology driven society. Leadership understands that for an organization to thrive vertically and horizontally, they must encourage a workforce culture and climate that embraces and nurtures a diverse and spiritual workforce.

Leaders embracing this culture of religious principles, spirituality, and inclusivity will see that there is a plethora of benefits when religion is at the foundation of the workplace. These practices create a balance of a happy workplace. People with religious bases embrace the concepts of not only the necessity of interpersonal relationships and purpose being at the root of every decision but also the concepts of integrity, honesty, and ethics. This balance of spirituality in the workplace can be shouldered by creating socially conscious workplaces, community driven workplaces, or workplaces that value prayer and meditation. With this balance, everyone can share the role in which spirituality plays in their life.

Job satisfaction, commitment, and performance have all been linked to incorporating spirituality into the workplace. For this reason, incorporating spirituality and religion into the workplace has been identified as a positive tool to enhance employees' well-being, as well as to create an environment of inclusiveness, and an atmosphere conducive to growth and development.

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