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# LEARN THE SECRETS OF THE NEW ECONOMY, ENSURE YOUR PLACE AT THE TOP

*Willingness to change is a strength, even if it means plunging part of the company into total confusion for a while.*

—Jack Welch

*In the midst of movement and chaos, keep stillness inside of you.*

—Deepak Chopra

Fear of another Great Depression has clouded our thinking ever since the recession that followed the attacks of September 2001. It is a fear we have all felt deeply—including me. After decades of working on the inside of corporate America, I started to have a hollow feeling about these companies of all sizes. I wondered what I had been working for all of these years, as I searched for real meaning in my work.

The world is a different place than it was only a few years ago. While our technology doubles in efficiency and complexity every single year, every single day people are inundated by the primal fear of terrorism, the potential failure of capitalism, and even our own

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government. Millions of concerned citizens receive regular e-mail about conspiracy theories concerning our national leaders and business figures—instead of good information with a hopeful premise. People watch the stock tickers daily, living and dying by the smallest movements in those little digital numbers at the bottom right of the television screen, instead of believing in the long-term longevity and prosperity of our markets. Many of us sit in wait for the day that our grandparents always warned us about. Everyone is anxious about the economy.

And yet, in many ways, the recession of 2008 to 2009 represented the greatest time of clarity that the world has seen in many decades. For centuries, we have been looking for the cutting edge in investment, hiring, business planning, and even sales floor leadership—in all the wrong places. We are now realizing with increasing clarity that the many ways we have been doing business over these past few generations has been fundamentally flawed. The clarity I am talking about is coming in the form of a major shift in how the world does business, and is pushing us into a new age in business, one of discovering the spiritual power that exists all around us in the workplace—whether we realize it or not. And it all starts when we open our eyes to see it.

I began to open my eyes after September 11, 2001, in the middle of the dot-com bust. You could just see the onset of greed snaking its way into the real estate and financial markets—under everyone's noses, but it was there. I also saw how, as a successful corporate executive, I myself was fitting snugly into the paradigm that allowed such practices to take place. These old ways did not seem to work all that well: major recessions that no one could predict were still coming; my corporate peers were receiving accusations of corruption and their ways of doing business were not even all that profitable; and every day, news about the business world was creating ripples of protests and demonstrations. I knew there had to be another way—and was I ever right.

Throughout this book, I go into significant detail about just what this shift is, what it means to see God in the workplace, and the exciting prospects that a new world of spirituality in business holds for

you. But there are many simple things that you can probably see right now that should whet the soul of even the most skeptical person. The most successful companies in the world today are employing business tactics that just 20 years ago would have turned off even the most open-minded investors.

Without a single influential leader—without a Henry Ford or an Eli Whitney pushing his or her own personal new idea—a major wave of change has risen naturally from the tides of everyday business. Microsoft, Toyota, hedge funds, even the governments of China and India—the most successful economic drivers in the world today—now disregard the things about business that were once thought to be the key to success: protection of intellectual property, an “us versus them” mentality, bureaucratic R&D, and so forth. Instead, they are taking actions that would have been considered *crazy* a decade ago. A more thorough example of this can be found below in Tapscott and Williams’s treatment of Goldcorp; but other open-source efforts between companies include the Human Genome Project and the release of the beta versions of software to thousands of users in advance of a program’s official release by Google, Microsoft, and others.

One strong example is ExxonMobil, a company that once guarded its potential oil reserves like a state secret, yet who now partners with companies all over the world in order to access remote oil reserves (and other resources once thought impossible to access) more effectively. ExxonMobil is partnering with firms like Qatar Petroleum, the Angolan National Oil Company, Japan’s Sakhalin Oil, and India’s state-owned oil company ONGC Videsh Ltd. These associations force ExxonMobil to trust its proprietary technology and resource exploration techniques to others, in exchange for only what these local corporations can do for them. And all of this is happening naturally, as those among us who understand the rise of the new age are proving themselves to be the most efficient and powerful businesspeople out there.

It is a corporation’s job to convince its shareholders that it uses all possible means to increase the value of their stock; however, most companies today only work at half throttle. Contemporary business

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culture has entirely overlooked the important spiritual assets it has within its grasp, causing the entire economy to suffer, especially considering that this critical asset lies *just beneath the surface* of the people who work within the halls of its building. But these spiritual assets have not been tapped, because they cannot be accessed with a snap of the fingers. These assets take time and patience to develop. It's not a matter of tweaking the balance sheet. Rather, these qualities lie at the heart of that feeling that people have long held as their most private and cherished personal attribute; the one thing with us from birth until death; and that which binds even the most disparate of personalities: our spirituality.

One example of an industry that has found great success utilizing more open and spiritual practices is the natural resource industry, in particular the mining, exploration, and resource extraction companies. Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams describe the story of mining company Goldcorp in their book *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. Up until 1999, natural resource companies' traditional ways of doing business was to keep all maps, statistics, and exploration results of their respective properties secretly to themselves.

However, Goldcorp ran into a problem that could not be solved by anyone within the company. It was running out of places to mine gold; and even though test drilling suggested that there was as much as 30 times more gold in its territories than it had been mining, the company was having trouble finding it. It could take decades to locate all the gold, so Goldcorp knew there had to be a better way of finding new ore. CEO Rob McEwan asked the head geologist to publicly release all of Goldcorp's geological data on its "Red Lake" property—as far back as 1948—and put it online. Despite pressure from inside the company to stop before things went too far, McEwan issued the "Goldcorp Challenge," offering prize money to anybody out there in cyberspace who could provide the company a better way of locating and accessing its gold reserves.<sup>1</sup>

The submissions, which came from everybody from physicists to computer analysts, flooded in. According to Tapscott and Williams, "The contestants had identified 110 targets on the Red

Lake property, 50 percent of which had not been previously identified by the company. Over 80 percent of the new targets yielded substantial quantities of gold ... it helped catapult [McEwan's] underperforming \$100 million company into a \$9 billion juggernaut."<sup>2</sup> Although the authors focus on this story for its use of open-source information, I am interested in the candid approach that McEwan used to transform his company into an international star. He used several qualities—trust, honesty, and flexibility—in relationships that had previously been secretive and uncommunicative. By doing so, McEwan paved the way for other ideas. That the company owned the property was enough to guarantee profits; by sharing information in this way, McEwan discovered previously untapped potential in his company's relationship with the world.

Similar evidence of the rising awareness of spiritual assets in the business world can be found in the culinary industry. After Nobu Matsuhisa opened his first restaurant in Beverly Hills, the restaurant quickly went from obscurity to the toast of the town. Yet Matsuhisa had no plans to expand "Nobu." The restaurant attracted a who's who of Hollywood talent, including one loyal customer named Robert De Niro, who two years after Nobu first opened, asked Matsuhisa if he would partner with him to open a Nobu in New York City. The actor even flew Matsuhisa out to Manhattan for a week, but Matsuhisa was suspicious of taking on a partner. He had worked for others for his entire life, dreaming of the day he would put his own name on a sushi restaurant without being beholden to anybody. And by all accounts, Nobu was doing quite well already—Matsuhisa did not *need* help.

De Niro asked again four years later, having frequented Nobu faithfully the entire time without any bad feelings toward Matsuhisa. Although De Niro never mentioned the rejection, he still believed after four years that Nobu should start to expand to other cities—starting with New York. The story goes that because De Niro had waited patiently that entire time, Matsuhisa felt differently when he heard De Niro's second offer. When asked what had changed his mind—whether it was six long years of staying in one place, or something else—Matsuhisa said instead, "I trust him because he was waiting four years."<sup>3</sup>

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It was De Niro's openness to Matsuhisa's needs and his respect for Nobu's autonomy that allowed this partnership to unfold. After the restaurant opened in New York, Nobu went on to become a chain of 25 well-reviewed, high-profile, world-renowned restaurants—without sacrificing an inch of quality. Nobu is now one of haute cuisine's best-known names. Nobu's road to success started with a different kind of deal making, one that was patient, had no built-in pressure, and required each party to be fully open to the other so that trust could grow between them. Goldcorp and Nobu are just two of many stories that demonstrate the power of spiritual practices when it comes to contemporary business.

In what sense are these examples of spirituality or God at work? The more skeptical reader will scoff; and it is true that my definition of spirituality is broader than most people's definition. Let me start to define it by asking you some questions. When a loved one dies, or you encounter one of those tragedies that we all endure at least once in our lives, where do you turn? Most likely you turn to your spirituality. Consider the lives of the greatest men who ever lived, from Aristotle to Einstein to Thomas Jefferson, and ask yourselves what they *themselves* attributed to their success. The answer inevitably comes back in the same form: their spirituality.

One finds that during the happiest moments of our lives, the word "spiritual" is perhaps the only one word that truly captures those moments when we relate them to others. It is at the core of what elevates us as human beings. To say, then, that spirituality has no role in business, our economy, our companies, our jobs—the key elements of the human experience—despite the central role it plays in all other aspects of our lives, is ridiculous. The question is not whether spirituality plays a role in our business and professional life, but rather *what* role it plays.

The most basic evidence for the spiritual realities in the workplace comes from the idea of consumer confidence, a fairly simple concept of economics. This concept refers to the confidence that a consumer has in the security of his or her job, the stability of his or her cash flow, and the accessibility of the products he or she wishes to buy. Consumer confidence levels have long been known

to correlate with the economy's boom and bust cycle. When confidence is high, people spend money, and the economy soars. But when confidence is low, people become frightened; they spend less, save more, and the economy tumbles. Businesses make less money, which means that jobs are less stable, which leads to a vicious circle of uncertainty that drives consumer confidence lower and lower—a partial cause of any recession.

*Consumer confidence is a spiritual matter because it is based on trust. When consumer confidence dips, it means that we are losing confidence in the economy, and if our collective purchasing habits are what comprise the economy, then we have really lost confidence in each other. We have stopped trusting that others will buy, so we feel like we should stop buying things, too, and while trust by itself is not the same as spirituality, it is an essential component. When we have more faith in one another, the economy improves; but when we have less faith in one another, the economy tanks.*

Locally, cities that spend more time nurturing a Spiritual Environment—artistic, community-oriented, and open-minded—are the most innovative in the world. Dr. Richard Florida developed something called the Creativity Index, and though creativity is only a sliver of what I am talking about, this tool does provide one marker for the level of spirituality in a certain region. Florida's index takes into account what percentage creative workers like artists, researchers, and the like are of the total workforce; the number of patents filed annually per capita; the prevalence of high-tech industries. It is an index that is determined by the "area's openness to different kinds of people and ideas."<sup>4</sup> Openness, industrial advancement, creativity, and a focus on new ideas are all components of a Spiritual Environment.

After Florida determined the Creative Index for the United States' 49 regions—with more than 1 million people in total population (as of 2000)—he compared these rankings against only the high-tech and innovation rankings as they stood, independent of the index. He found that of the top 10 cities in his Creative Index, every city—except for Hartford (which ranked 13 out of 49 in terms of innovation) and Houston (which ranked 16 out of 49 in both categories)—ranked in the top 10 for either innovation or

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the prevalence of high-tech industries. These statistics point to a direct correlation between spiritual practices and innovation. On the other end of the spectrum, regions with a culture of closed, protected research and a service- (rather than creative-) oriented economy—like Las Vegas, Memphis, and New Orleans—all ranked near the bottom of the overall index, innovation ranking, and the high-tech ranking.<sup>5</sup>

On a corporate level, Paul Seabright wrote in his book *The Company of Strangers: A Natural History of Economic Life* that “What made Du Pont, General Motors, Standard Oil, Sears Roebuck, and US Steel different from other less successful firms was not that they had different technological opportunities, but rather that they had the organizational and managerial capacity to exploit those opportunities to the fullest. They supplemented the invisible hand of the market with the visible hand of management.”<sup>6</sup> Organizations function best when all their parts have been “greased”—happy workers, satisfied managers, and an ecstatic clientele. Though many people do not realize it, this is a spiritually evolved organization.

*The untapped spiritual assets I discuss define the next era of global business, yet they can only be attained by the individual. You are the only person who can realize them—nobody can do it for you. That puts the power to make the world a better, more profitable, and more stable place in your hands. The kind of power normally reserved only for those at the “top” is now shifting evenly to everyone throughout the system.*

### The Very First Transaction

To utilize these assets, you must start by understanding how spirituality fits into contemporary business methodology and nomenclature. This is a brief journey to the very brink of our human ancestry, where the concept of God first developed. Isaac Asimov once wrote that the discovery of religious thinking was preceded only by the discoveries of stone tools, fire, and walking on two feet, as humankind first began to reshape its own world. Anthropologists describe this era as one of tribes of men and women, huddling around human graves decorated by delicate food and flowers after the death of their kin. There was

a sense among the mourners that life was bigger than death. These ancient ancestors of ours felt something powerful, and, I argue, more meaningful than even the democracy and modern economic theory that now organizes our world. This was humanity's first Spiritual Transaction: one with what lies beyond us. Their first transaction was with the dead.

*In my view, the basis of all spirituality is the Spiritual Transaction:<sup>7</sup> an interchange between each of us and all those things beyond ourselves. Every prayer is a transaction between you and that which you feel has some sway over your life. Every Saturday or Sunday spent at service is a spiritual transaction in which you exchange your time in return for spiritual satisfaction, growth, and community. Tools and fire were things people used to satisfy our physical survival, but spiritual thinking was the first thing they used to satisfy the parts of them they felt but could not see.*

*The Spiritual Transaction is a framework that shows you the true nature of the relationship between spirituality and business. It reflects the physical laws of the universe, but it also leads to higher profits and a competitive advantage. The Spiritual Transaction represents the harsh realities of the economy as well as all the glorious success that is available to each of us.*

The first Spiritual Transaction that I experienced was at Rosemount Engineering—now a division of Emerson Electric—at the beginning of my entry into the computer industry when I was 19 years old. I had been hired to operate a new computer that I knew nothing about. But as I stumbled through it, trying to figure things out, I was befriended by an aeronautical engineer who sensed some talent in me. He not only taught me how to do the job, he gave me the freedom and encouragement to learn how to program the computer myself. These were the days when a computer was worth millions of dollars and was the size of a room, so any failure on my part would have been a "little" more expensive than if I had been working with a computer in today's world.

This Spiritual Transaction—a human spirit-to-human spirit connection—launched my career in the nascent information technology industry, a career that later included leadership positions with Honeywell, GE, and other major companies. It taught me a new and selfless way of thinking in a novel industry, and for that I

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have always been grateful. Spiritual Transactions can be as simple as looking someone in the eye when he or she is talking and really paying attention to his or her needs; giving a helping hand before it is asked; or making sure something you appreciated does not go unnoticed.

Transactions are the basis of all business. You interact with others, exchange services and money, and build profit margins wherever you can. However, it is harder to see the spiritual origin of these transactions. The old adage that business is business and not personal, represents the culture people have developed to cut out the emotional aspects of business—in the mistaken belief that a good business should work like a functional machine.

*In fact, spirituality is not something that needs to be put into business; it is the origin of business itself. Whether you consider the sacrifices of material goods to the gods of old, or simply laying a bouquet of flowers on the grave of a family member or friend, you are giving things to something invisible in exchange for an emotional feeling—a feeling of peace, closure, or hope. In business, you give material goods or services in exchange for other goods and services; however, the essence of those transactions is still in the feelings that they bring.*

Nobu Matsuhisa struck his deal with De Niro because he felt comfortable. The Japanese economy is built on this kind of trust in many cases—deals between distributors last for decades, whereas many other companies are easily convinced to switch service providers if they are offered better terms. One of the reasons this can be faulty is that working with the current provider to improve delivery and cost measures is often more efficient and creates sturdier corporate infrastructure. If clients are constantly switching service providers, this incentivizes those providers to increase invisible costs in order to guarantee that each client becomes the best source of income possible in the short term. It also increases a provider's costs, which are passed on to its clients.

People move on stocks largely because of the swell of movement in the marketplace—mania—instead of the actual balance sheets behind the shares they are buying. Advertising and brand promotion hinges on forming an emotional bond between the product and the client. Employees work harder when they are feeling good, and slack

off when they are feeling stressed out, anxious, or unhappy. A good deal makes you more comfortable, but even good risks are often not taken because of that "feeling" in the pit of your stomach. While the result of a transaction is often material, the transaction itself is purely *immaterial*; it is an agreement between two people. In order to improve the material results of your transaction, you must improve the transaction itself.

Understanding the Spiritual Transactions can be as easy as noticing that you feel badly when you are a part of a bad deal, and that you feel great when you strike a good deal. When a co-worker stabs you in the back during a project, you become upset; but when you work well with others and things get done, you are pleased and satisfied. Even skeptics know that emotional reactions affect your motivation and capacity to work. But the reality is that every material transaction has a deeper meaning than the monetary one. The problem is simply that people today have become numbed to this aspect of transactions after years of focusing solely on material gain in business.

The view that business and the economy can best be understood as impersonal machines is quickly being disproved by our modern economic order. Some people call it the "2.0 economy," claiming that it is information technology that is creating the new ground on which business should be run. I argue that these advancements are not the new infrastructure of business, but instead is a vehicle that is taking us back to an even more primitive and efficient way of doing business: unearthing the amazing potential of the spiritual core of our transactions. To see spiritual forces in action, just look around your workplace.

What defines those who really get ahead in life? A quick answer might be that these people are good networkers, as Malcolm Gladwell stated in his book *The Tipping Point*. But what is networking, other than forming relationships? And all good relationships fundamentally have a spiritually sound foundation. Another answer might be: these people are cool under pressure. But where does this calmness come from, other than a balanced personality, which at its core must also be spiritually sound.

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Spirituality exists in business in a prereligious form, one of basic reciprocity and appreciation that has been lost only because it has been forgotten. When you look at an employee who saved the day, or just received that new promotion, you can often be tempted to say, "He makes it look so easy!" That is because tapping into the part of us that allows us to make spiritual transactions is the opposite of complicated; it is, indeed, easy. You just have to know how.

Here are two examples of the difference between handling business situations in a spiritual way and a nonspiritual way. First up: hiring new employees. A nonspiritual hiring might look like this...

*The interviewer overplays the strength of the organization, and underplays the problems that the interviewee is expected to resolve. Compensation is pushed to the minimum. The employer shows little in the personal and family life of the candidate. Abilities and prior job successes are of primary interest, and the soft skills of interpersonal communications, work ethics, and teamwork are least important. There may be few other interviewers, none of whom particularly invite questions by the candidate. The interviewee is only interested in getting a job and getting it at maximum pay. He or she is essentially an expendable commodity in the eyes of the interviewer, and the job seeker is looking at a job, not a career. Both parties operate out of expedient self-interest. The likelihood of turnover and business difficulties is high, and the prospect of a long-term, successful relationship is low.*

However, if the interviewer and the candidate concentrate on creating a Spiritual Transaction, the outcome might look like this...

*Both the interviewer (particularly the hiring manager) and candidate pay much attention to the bonding agents of mutual respect, openness, and trust. They discuss their respective backgrounds and lives, in addition to the organization, its culture, and an honest appraisal of how the business is doing. Management and peers are the interviewers. An appropriate compensation package is provided, along with strong indoctrination, orientation, and training upon hiring. Managers and peers show genuine interest in the personal life of the candidate. The organization goes to great lengths to create a welcoming atmosphere and provide emotional support to the new hire. There is definite interest in a successful long-term relationship. It is likely that the business is already doing well, and that the interviewee will add to that success.*

A second example of the simple application of the Spiritual Transaction model to everyday business comes from the sales call. A non-Spiritual sales call might look like this...

*The salesperson is more interested in getting an order at all costs than he is in providing a great service to the prospect, let alone trying to bond with them. He applies strong pressure to get the appointment, and makes several assumptions about the prospect's needs. The salesperson openly belittles the competition, deflects the prospect's questions, and provides only incomplete and inaccurate information. The salesperson has done little or no research about the prospect's business or organization. He or she is not willing, or in many cases not capable, of building a long-term relationship with the prospect and his or her organization. The process is hit-and-run, and the chance of an order is low. Both the salesperson and the prospect leave the meeting disappointed. Politics in both the selling and the buying in the organizations are extreme.*

However, a Spiritual sales call might look like this...

*From the outset, the salesperson desires to find out what the prospect needs and what issues he wants to resolve. The salesperson takes great time and care to learn as much as he can about the prospect's business and organization. The entire process is low pressure and always open, honest, and trust-building. Both the salesperson and the prospect want a strong, long-term relationship that is profitable to both parties. All information provided is the truth, and any weaknesses are openly discussed. Both the salesperson and the buyer use a trusted team to assist the process, which then becomes a two-team effort to secure the best short- and long-term solution possible. A mutually profitable and enduring connection is made.*

You might be thinking, "This doesn't sound very spiritual; it just sounds like good business." It is actually both! The basic principles here are simple, but the difference between a Spiritual Transaction and a non-Spiritual Transaction is huge.

There are many high-profile examples of where a switch to a Spiritual Transaction could have saved both parties of the transaction a lot of inefficiency, pain, and money. An extreme example is Merck's handling of prescription painkiller VIOXX. A series of hidden product weaknesses and disconnected consumer-producer relationships resulted in an alleged 27,785 deaths and 100,000 lawsuits, according to the FDA.<sup>8</sup> Merck spent almost \$5 billion settling lawsuits. And this is simply a magnified case of what goes on in

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the corporate world every day. Though the scale is smaller in most cases, you can witness the effect of non-Spiritual Transactions on your customer base as well as your own experiences as a consumer.

Let us return to Isaac Asimov's take on the origin of the Spiritual Transaction. While he used the word "religious" in his scientific history,<sup>9</sup> instead of spirituality, to denote the rise of what I have identified as our first transactions, I believe that what he described in our ancient ancestors was not truly religion. Religion is a system that was developed to organize society before the arrival of democracy and free market commerce. These religions—first on the steppes of Asia and then ancient Mesopotamia—were spawned by the belief that there was something else outside of us that people could not fully understand. It was a philosophic pondering that occurred long before even the Greeks. It was not yet religion: this was pure spirituality.

Spirituality and religious thinking are similar. They both represent the transactions people make with their idea of God and, for many, with the dead. They also indicate what a person has decided about how he or she sees the immaterial or invisible nature of the world. For a spiritual person, this invisible nature might be a kind of universal intelligence. For the scientific person, it might be the unknown and unfelt laws of the universe at work.

In this book, I assume the mutual exclusivity of neither. Spiritual Transactions represent what makes sense to you in the face of a confusing world; your connections with that which you feel but cannot see. Spirituality is something with which you come to terms within yourself, while religion is something you come to outside of yourself. Spirituality is what you might call the temple inside of you; whereas religion is the temple you visit on holidays and weekends.

Just as you cannot know a "God" or yet understand all the laws of the universe, you cannot truly know what is going on inside the minds of those around you. Even with perfect communication, there are things to which you have no access. You cannot read your colleagues' minds; however, there is a basis to most of which you

think and feel, and that is your belief system. You operate under a certain set of values, and regardless of what they are, they serve as your underlying spirituality. Most things that you do can be reduced to—or illuminated by—your spiritual foundation. At the core of this spirituality are simply concepts—you want to feel accomplished, you like it when others like you, you are looking for positive feedback from the world, and so forth. These are the elements of your personality that motivate your interactions with others. Therefore, your spiritual core is the place that each transaction originates.

Most transactions today, however, involve two spiritual cores that are not paying attention to one another, and therefore clash. Spiritual Transactions remove this clashing from the equation and allow transactions to occur fluidly. Spiritual Transactions are not some newfangled way of doing business, but rather interactions in their purest and most efficient form.

There are specific places where Spiritual Transactions are clearly more effective ways of doing business: deal brokering, employee interaction, management of people, sales, marketing, and many more. Deal brokering, for instance, is easier for everyone involved if people can find a way to communicate the *real* needs that the deal represents, and not just what is written down on paper. Employee interaction is more straightforward when people do not have to concern themselves with superficial and petty issues that obscure the essence of what everyone there is trying to accomplish. Management is made easier when employees feel that their needs are being met as much as the company's, which makes employees work harder and earn the company more money. Sales are completed more easily when salespeople connect their products with the natural desires of their customers. Each of these ideas revolves around accessing and utilizing the spiritual assets of the individual and the company at large, as is shown throughout this book.

Religious Science founder Ernest Holmes once wrote of this kind of interaction in his 1923 book, *Science of Mind*. He described the process of finding the most profitable kind of human transactions in saying that "the only inquiries we need to make are: Do the things

that we want lend themselves to a constructive program? Do they express a more abundant life, rob no one, create no delusion, but instead, do they express a greater degree of livingness? ... If it is money, automobiles, houses, lands, stocks, bonds, dresses, shirts or shoestrings, cabbages or kings ... there can be nothing ... to deny us the right to the greatest possible expression of life. So we need not hesitate to use [this] for personal motives, for we have a perfect right to do so" (Holmes, 151).

### **Our Fear of a Religion of Commerce**

In the early twentieth century, people were afraid that commerce was about to supplant Christianity and become a new religion for a new century. At the time, many began to worry that "Business is our God."<sup>10</sup> People really believed that because money was so important to them—and because businessmen were beginning to overtake the clergy in terms of social status—that business was about to make religion obsolete. Many people referred to the push toward the worship of money as a "cult of prosperity."<sup>11</sup> Modern capitalism's extreme success—as it began its journey to becoming a superpower—was seen as a great threat to all religion, for religion had long been the infrastructure of society—the role that business serves today. Much of what we believe about business and religion's relationship was born during the 1920s and 1930s: the idea that money and God are competing forces for our worshipful attention.

However, the connection between religious thinking and commerce is as old as the modern world itself. Most religions have a long history of encouraging their followers to give money (sometimes even money they did not have) to the church in an expectation of social acceptance, religious feeling, and even special treatment. Today, many people use credit cards and other forms of debt to still reach beyond their means in order to create that same sense of belonging and prestige. But instead of funding church projects and expansions, people buy material goods like cars, houses, electronics, and fashionable clothing. They contribute to the power of Coca-Cola and Walmart in their quest to cover the world with their

logos and fill a place in people's hearts, rather than contributing to the ambitions of proselytizers who cross new lands in an effort to convert new peoples. They find satisfaction and a feeling of accomplishment in how people look at them in their new cars, rather than in the lauded admiration of the local priest for their hefty tithes. The world's obsession with image is far older than the corporate environment in which we now find ourselves.

Some might argue that modern culture is a materialization of the antique fear that commerce would supplant religion. It has even been stated that people today do indeed worship at work instead of at church. After all, even back then, church was usually more about shifting around in your seat and whispering to friends as the minister spoke on and on, instead of listening to what he actually had to say. At least at work we get swivel chairs.

But the truth is that this age of materialism has actually led to the resurgence of spirituality, and a new set of businesspeople who are naturally gravitating toward a different form of business—whether they know it or not. Alongside the new Gap store is a Yoga studio. Beside the latest trashy novel on our shelves, there is inevitably a book that has inspired us. Oprah follows midafternoon soap operas, and celebrities have henna tattoos on their hands instead of a cigarette between their fingers. With visions of future technology and lifestyles inevitably come visions of the Apocalypse and talk of a "Second Coming." It is sometimes difficult to see this, though, as people have historically associated a rise in spirituality with a resurgence of the church, and United States and European congregations have seen a steep decline in regular attendance over the past 50 years. New generations have cast off the tendrils of weekly services in favor of exploring purer religious thinking and spirituality on their own terms.

What most of us come to understand about the immateriality of the world is something closer to mysticism than a religious understanding. This takes us back to a time before the Temple of Zeus in Athens or the Temples of Karnak in Egypt; back beyond the hypnotic trance dances of India and Siddhartha, to a primal sense that there is something within us that not only lacks understanding,

but is also underused. Whereas in prior centuries people have been taught quite strictly about what to make of these feelings and curiosities, changing social norms have allowed individuals the freedom to explore the more personal meanings of what goes on inside of each of us.

Business-as-religion never took hold of the United States and the other major world states in the way conspiracy theorists once feared it would; but those brief years are just one example of how spirituality and business have attempted, and failed at, amalgamation. Spirituality and business have a natural attraction. Like opposite sides of a magnet, they are eternally drawn to one another through their similar roots. They are flipsides of the most basic of all human concepts: the transaction. Yet the velocity with which one hurdles itself toward the other often makes a true understanding of their complementary nature nearly impossible. The speed of our epiphanies and the speed of commerce have, until now, disallowed a long exploration of their relationship.

Your world right now is incomplete if you do not take at least some time to understand the relationship between spirituality and business. It is impossible to work at full capacity, with efficiency and contentment, toward your lifelong goals and any overall plan if you do not understand this relationship. Your spirituality is possibly the most important part of your arsenal when trying to get ahead in life. It is a part of your toolbox whose shine has been buried away and exposed to the tarnish of misuse.

It is like trying to write with only your writing hand, and the other tied behind your back. In fact, try this now—to get a better sense of what is being discussed here. Try writing a few sentences with your dominant hand and put the other behind your back—instead of right next to the writing hand. Your writing slows down; you find it difficult to stabilize, and suddenly you realize how much you need your other hand. It provides unseen support that makes writing such an easy and smooth process. Your spirituality is like that other hand, that invisible support that makes things easier. Although you *can* physically write a paragraph with only one hand, it is far more difficult. Similarly, you can get through life without

the invisible centering and support of an understanding of your spiritual assets; why would you want to put yourself through such an unnecessary trial?

We are not taught in business school to use the spiritual part of ourselves, and there are no orientation courses for new employees that stress this asset's importance. You cannot rely on your employer or any existing system of educating new businesspeople to provide you with such an education. Meanwhile, your reverend or your priest—should you have one—is trained in spiritual ideas, but not in the rigors of the business world. In order to learn more about your most important assets, you need help from a source that you do not often go to—yourself. Accessing your spiritual side is much like trying to find someone to marry; there is nothing in the traditional path of your education that will teach you anything about dating. There is not a school you can go to, nor a structural path to follow, that will bring you to that perfect state of bliss where you finally realize that you are in love—possibly for good. There are no courses that teach you about the role spirituality can play in getting you to that next level in business either. In fact, most of the important things you can learn in life can never be read in a textbook.

One business model created in the 1980s called the Ghoshal/Bartlett model came close to something that could be used. Professor Sumantra Ghoshal of the London Business School saw a particular need to pay attention to nature and the natural laws of the universe when developing new theories of management. Around this time, many gurus and professors in India were noticing strong similarities between their age-old philosophy and Hinduism, and new branches of popular physics like quantum mechanics. Ghoshal talked about the role people played in the "control mix" rather than "hierarchy."<sup>12</sup> His theories, and those of his contemporaries, made them among the hottest business gurus by the 2000s, though Ghoshal would sadly die before witnessing the true rise of his ideas. His belief that business should be a force for good in the world was a controversial one right up until his death. Ghoshal was one of the first academics to really feel the shift toward a new age in business: an era of business *grounded within our spirituality*.

Some books focus on all facets of spirituality, but they gloss over the professional part of your life. Yet in this day and age of uncertainty—when your job is not as secure as you thought it was or your job is not quite what you hoped it would be—your spirituality might just be the most important piece of you. Not because it can get you through the rough days, but because it can create the better days for you and ensure that the worst of times stay far away from your doorstep. The great news is that you are born with spirituality and you can *always* learn more about it. In fact, every experience you have in life—including the business-related ones—is a spiritual experience that reveals the true nature of yourself unto you.

Whether present at birth or realized soon afterward, our spirituality is not just the oldest thing we have ever known as a civilization: it is also the thing we have known longer than anything as individuals. Our imaginary friends as children, our curiosity about the world, our belief in things much more impressive than what we see in our immediate surroundings—these are all part of our earliest Spiritual Environment. It is stunning when we consider that the most important aspects of being an employee in this era of the information age are things that we have had right from the start, whether we have nurtured them, even before we learned to read and write.

Spirituality's role in business is not something that makes itself readily apparent. I myself did not fully sense its presence until the late 1990s, even though it was already inside of me. As I became more aware of it, the phenomena of the Spiritual Transaction increasingly showed up in my work, though I did not yet know what it was called. How amazing to discover this untapped, infinite resource—and how fantastic the results in my businesses: a more satisfied and harmonious organization, greater profitability, and significant contributions to local and global humanity! Yet the importance of spirituality in business is not already a widely known phenomenon of grave importance, and the world economy has, for all intents and purposes, become a miracle of human innovation in spite of this.

Think, though, of the example of a librarian during the early 1990s who was given the long and arduous task of transferring

all of the data from Dewey decimal card catalogs into the school's new computer. If, say, the computers of the time had proven themselves worthless and people all went back to the card system—what would have been the use of transferring the data into the computer system? Can you really be so sure about the value of spirituality in business?

Spirituality has already proven its mettle as the next big shift in business culture in many ways that I cover moving forward. The world's most exciting companies and individuals have stumbled upon it, or have made it a core aspect of planning their futures. It is important to realize that the time of wondering about the value of spirituality is over. Many grade schools still refused to transfer their library catalogs many years after computer systems proved to be a Godsend; we must ensure that the mature business world does not follow in a similar vein. The world cannot allow itself to be discouraged from yet another great advance simply because of a little inconvenience.

As a businessperson, I feel that everyone should get this kind of lazy doubt out of the way right here at the beginning of this conversation. I can tell you from experience that there is significant evidence that spirituality in business is more than important; it is vital, and has proven itself as such through the lives of many people like myself as well. Over the course of the following chapters, you will see just how critical spirituality is.

One argument the skeptic might have of spirituality's role is in the plain fact that business is often very ugly. Serious deals and business plans are not always pretty. People get hurt. Business is essentially the competition for resources and finances, which means that somebody has to get left behind. The world is a selfish place, but what is this selfishness that our motivations and intentions rest upon?

If you cannot make yourself happy, then how do you expect to make others happy? If you do not have the funds to drive your own business, then how do you expect to contribute something to society? Capitalism works on the premise that your own selfish intentions will eventually lead to overall prosperity. Yet most of your

contemporary transactions are missing a key element: their origin in spirituality. The spiritual assets that are used to make transactions more complete and efficient have been left out of the equation. Transactions can and do still exist without their spiritual components, but they create imbalance. Not everybody gets everything they want, which creates friction. Less efficient transactions use more energy, money, and time than they have to, which means that there is less of everything to go around. It is this principle that creates the excess within the business world at the expense of everybody else.

Poverty, for example, is a side effect of non-Spiritual Transactions. Companies and governments have to work harder—and therefore use up more resources—than necessary to get things done because their transactions are inefficient. These excess resources are drawn out of the pool of total resources—money, time, attention—that are held within the entire economy. Those not involved in business end up getting less out of the world, because they cannot compete for the resources available as effectively as businesses and businesspeople. Proof can be found in the capital-output ratio theory of contemporary economists: a nation's growth and success is directly related to how much money or other resources are required to produce one unit of product, as compared to previous and future years. The more resources that are required to create an economy's products, the less resources (energy, labor, capital, and so forth) there are to spread around.

Poverty comes from, among other things, inefficiency, as does unemployment. Employment numbers are directly related to the growth rate of an economy. Okun's Law states that for every 3 percent dip in GDP growth, you see a 1 percent rise in unemployment; and while there are other theories on the exact correlation between growth and unemployment, the rule reflects a definite truth about the economy. The more efficient your economy and businesses are, the more growth occurs. During a time of recession, the most important thing at stake is consumer confidence. Spiritual Transactions guarantee the most fluid, efficient flow of resources among people, companies, and even across international borders, as are seen

throughout the book. It is no surprise then that those things that are associated with restricting your spiritual self—fear and doubt—are the things that rise with a recession and fall during boom times.

Resources are created by work. Oil comes from the ground because people drill for it and draw it up to the surface. Telephones exist because people monitor the machines that create them, construct telephone lines across the country, and then form companies to bring service to the lines. The more resources there are available to each of us, the more value there is in the world, and, therefore, the more value there is to go around. The only way to increase this value is to increase the efficiency of the work getting done. Non-Spiritual Transactions automatically reduce the efficiency of our work (through enhancing our anxieties, decreasing cooperation, giving us distractions, and discouraging innovation, among other things), which means that less value is created. This makes everybody poorer, no matter how we slice it. That efficiency is related to economic growth and quality of life is not a new concept; however, the discovery that Spiritual Transactions can radically improve the world is the notion that has always sat just beneath the surface of our intellects without ever really pushing through.

Once you see the merit of a widely available asset, you suddenly see the entire system as underperforming without it. And from a shareholder's point of view, *no* amount of underperformance is acceptable. Each and every one of us is a shareholder of the human race. We each have stock in the future of who the human race is. The human race is a society that has been underperforming for centuries. The global economy suffers because of it. Surprisingly so, because our spiritual assets are right there, just beneath the surface.

There are many examples of corporations trying to wring these spiritual assets—or something close to them—from their employees. Whether you are looking at the company-designed midafternoon nap chambers or meditation seminars, old-school corporate retreats or casual Fridays, it is all geared to making workers to feel more comfortable at work. It is aimed at encouraging those assets that lie within our spiritual selves to shine through. Employers, leaders, and managers are trying to elicit something that they believe can

be inspired; yet spirituality is something deep within us that is not related to anything our boss can say, unless we are open to the word—and the words happen to be the right ones.

As for a little background on myself: I am a man of the corporate world. For decades, I served in top managerial and executive positions at some of the United States' best companies and many early start-ups. Across the board I have seen how business works. I can also say that by the year 2000, I was feeling increasingly drained of my normal high energy for work. I was feeling futile and had a sense that I was wasting my time in the traditional, and about to be battered, corporate world. I was equally tired of trying to fill the hole in my soul with material stuff as my "rewards" for success—homes, cars, and international travel—were no longer satisfying. Then, in 2001, I was offered a unique opportunity. I had belonged, for a while at that point, to a transdenominational, interfaith organization called Unity, which embraced spirituality from all over the world—from Buddhism to good old, home-bred, Conservative Christianity. And Unity was looking for a new CEO. This book was literally born out of my combined corporate and spiritual leadership experiences I had as a member of Unity, and as its president and CEO.

In 2001, I became president and CEO of Unity, for which I handled the publishing and other commercial wings of the Unity Movement, as well as noncommercial sectors like the Silent Unity prayer team and spiritual education. Through my six years of experience in this job, I saw how spirituality and business came together into a fluent and helpful organization that served millions of people, most of whom are professionals. When forced to look at spirituality and business as complementary aspects of the same idea, I started on a long journey of realization. It is from this experience and similar ones of those around me that I was able to learn a lot about the integral role of this most underused asset: spirituality at work.

Many people nowadays advocate treating themselves and acting like a corporation in order to get ahead. This is not a good way of seeing things. You are essentially intertwined with everyone around you on a far more personal level than any corporation is with its partners and competitors. In addition, corporations are run inefficiently

and create immense value only by using countless resources to get there. Seeing yourself as a fellow shareholder—with me and everybody else—will greatly affect how proactive you are about what is going on around you, and how well you do for yourself. It is give and get: a transaction, if you will.

### **The Bottom Line**

1. The Spiritual Transaction is a framework that allows the true nature of the relationship between spirituality and business to shine into a new economy at every level: individual, group, organization, corporate, national, and global.
2. The world's market systems and our economy were founded on the nature of the Spiritual Transaction.
3. Spirituality in business is not the same thing as religion in business.

