INTEGRATING SPIRITUALITY AND WORK

In Response to a Survey, Mission Leaders Suggest a Variety of Methods and Tactics

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Mission leaders in Catholic health care organizations readily agree that spirituality should not simply be one item among many on a list of activities, nor should it be separated from the work of everyday life. That said, there remains the challenge of finding meaningful and successful ways of incorporating spirituality into the life of the organization.

Speaking to participants at the 2004 System Mission Leadership Forum, held in Tucson, AZ, Fr. Gerard T. Broccolo, STD, said, "The interplay between our real world and our real context—institutional and organizational, as well as national and social—makes spirituality a complex topic."

Defining spirituality is difficult, said Fr. Broccolo, who is vice president for spirituality, Catholic Health Initiatives, Denver. On an individual level, he suggested, spirituality "is how a person finds meaning and purpose in his or her life in a way that is reflected in his or her behaviors." Organizational spirituality, on the other hand, can be defined as "the distinctive identity—based on our values—that shapes how we deliver care and how we do business."

Fr. Broccolo said that two different objectives are present when mission leaders consider ways of fostering individual and organizational spirituality. Promoting individual spirituality entails those activities and initiatives that provide "benefit to the individual staff member that may or may not be a benefit for the organization. . . . Nevertheless, in the real world, [individual and organizational spirituality] are far more intimately connected and cannot be realistically totally separated," he said.

Whatever the objective, Fr. Broccolo said, spirituality efforts are made successful when, among other things, leaders have:

- Clarity of goals
- Intentionality when acting
- Respect for local institutions and cultures
- A plan for measuring success
- Time for discernment and reflection

MISSION LEADERS RESPOND

In 2003, in an effort to identify some ways mission leaders have found success in fostering spirituality in their organizations, CHA conducted a spirituality integration survey. Mission leaders from throughout the ministry were invited to respond to four basic questions.

The survey has revealed some important information about how spirituality is fostered in Catholic health care organizations. First of all, everyone seems to be doing something different. Though this may be a bit of an exaggeration, there does appear to be a wide variety of spirituality integration practices among survey respondents. There also appear to be differences in how mission leaders understand institutional spirituality. The four questions were:

1. How have you integrated institutional spirituality into everyday operations while honoring the diversity of personal expressions of spirituality among employees and patients? Many mission leaders said they hold specific gatherings, such as weekly Bible reflection sessions during Lent, annual "Blessing of the Hands" services, and interfaith services throughout the year, all of which help to bring a sense of spirituality into the workplace. Some mission leaders reported that activities or discussions of a spiritual nature are often incorporated into the agendas of other gatherings.

Along with holding meetings and marking special occasions, many mission leaders said they attempt to incorporate spirituality into the workplace by distributing various materials, such as

copies of prayer resources, articles that promote spirituality, and the organization's core values and religious identity.

Many added that they employ aesthetic values and a sense of sacred space in fostering spirituality in their organization. Most agreed that the presence of an active pastoral care team played an important role.

2. What have you done that has worked with specific groups—specific ethnic or religious groups, for example, or specific groups of employees such as physicians, nurses, technology personnel, and admissions staff? This question, which asked for examples of successful practices for incorporating spirituality with specific groups, elicited a variety of responses, including some of the same responses given to No. 1. Mission leaders mentioned, for example, holding gatherings of a specifically spiritual nature, incorporating spiritual activities into other meetings and celebrations, and distributing printed materials.

Other mission leaders suggested:
• Organizing a cultural and religious diversity initiative that educates employees about the different faith traditions and emphasizes practices that are helpful to caregivers
• Holding a two-hour session that addresses practical aspects of Catholic identity, sponsorship, mission, values, vision, and heritage
• Creating a faculty two-year certification program that prepares participants with foundation techniques
• Establishing "spirituality classes for caregivers" that include lessons on spiritual practices for caregivers and the use of a spiritual assessment tool, reinforced perhaps with input from faith leaders of different traditions, thereby encouraging a greater awareness of religious and cultural diversity in caregiving

3. How have you determined success in these efforts? Success, or the lack of it, is decidedly difficult to measure. Most mission leaders said that surveys and evaluations play a part in determining how effective spirituality integration efforts have been. As for how large a part they play, one respondent may have spoken for many others in saying simply, "Not sure."

As for the surveys and evaluations used, the following list is indicative of their variety:
• A Press Ganey survey monitors progress in key patient units with questions about sensitivity to emotional spiritual needs*
• A biennial questionnaire tailored for physicians asks about spirituality
• An employee survey asks respondents to rate the level to which "our organization and staff are sensitive to the spiritual needs of those we serve"
• Evaluations of ministry formation classes, retreats, and spirituality classes

A few respondents indicated that they measure success by recognizing the increased number of people signing up for programs. Others judge their efforts as successful when they see staff members "finally getting it." Several mission leaders, aware of how difficult it is to measure the success of integrating spirituality, indicated that they rely on random, anecdotal feedback.

4. What successful outcomes have you observed? The fourth question, closely related to No. 3, was intended to give respondents an opportunity to mention some of the ways they have witnessed success in integrating institutional spirituality. A few mission leaders said they have observed successful outcomes through positive responses on surveys and evaluations, as well as through increases in the number of people signing up for programs.

Respondents from other organizations mentioned particular outcomes. These included:
• Work climate survey results that showed positive/favorable attitudes among employees
• Employees who, after participating in a ministry formation program, felt "called" to have further training in their own spiritual life in order to be able to teach in the program.
• Associate opinion survey results that had improved steadily
• Reduced turnover rates
• Improved Gallup results on meaning/mission questions asked concerning various workplace events
• Clear articulation by staff members of examples of the way core organizational values are exhibited in work behaviors
• A higher rating, by physicians, of the spiritual programming question than that of any other question on the survey

For a look at the results of the spirituality integration survey, as well as a comprehensive annotated bibliography of sources for spirituality in the workplace, visit www.chausa.org/MISSSVCS/MISSSVCS. ASP.

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*Press Ganey Associates, South Bend, IN, specializes in developing surveys for health care organizations.