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BP – Enlightened Engagement

## **ENLIGHTENED ENGAGEMENT: EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AGE OF RELATIONSHIPS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

We are moving out of the Information Age and into the Age of Relationships. The focus on technology, and before that the mechanization of the Industrial Age, is giving way to something reliant more on emotion and qualitative states than on quantitative physical processes. Parts and categorization, deductive analysis and linear thinking, technology and physical systems account for many advances, but have been taken to an extreme. They are defining characteristics of our reigning scientific paradigm, variously called Cartesian, Newtonian, mechanistic, reductionist and materialist. Those over-emphasized characteristics deprived oxygen to their balance or complement: holism and interrelationship, big picture and quantum leap thinking, innate technologies (like intuition and imagery) and non-local systems (interconnections across space and time).

The focus on separation/parts and physical systems permeates our institutions, culture/society and our basic mindset, ultimately leading to disconnectedness, and a degradation of the role of emotion. Employees feel like the proverbial cogs in the cold wheels of the machine, when in fact there is a deeply wired drive for meaning and connectedness. We are leaving the mechanistic information age. With many brilliant advancements to show for it, our focus has been on technology. But technology and physical systems are tools, not an end in themselves. If they don't serve the drive for meaningful interconnectedness, but only 'information collection and transfer,' then separation and disconnection will be the outcome at home, at work, in our local and global contexts.

We are entering the Age of Relationships. It is in relationship, interaction and emotionality that meaning is found, and it turns out quantum physics is the new paradigm of interconnectedness and meaningful information. It is also the science that holds the key to employee engagement.



Key words: employee engagement, meaning, quantum physics, workplace spirituality, age of relationships

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE AGE OF RELATIONSHIPS

We are at a crossroads of two fundamental worldviews, and the nature of meaningful relationship is at the heart of the distinction. Terry Mollner, chairman of Stakeholders Capital, founder of Calvert Social Investment Fund and fellow of the World Business Academy, writes that two fundamental worldviews have always existed:

Material Age (MA) worldview: (two-or-moreness) the assumption that the universe is somewhere between two and an immense number of *separate parts* each of which *competes* for its own self-interest in relation to all other things. (Evolution is the result of the survival of the fittest through competition).

Relationship Age (RA) worldview: (oneness) the assumption the universe is an immense number of *connected parts* each of which *cooperates* with all other parts in the interest of the universe first and only secondly cooperates or competes in the interest of itself or any sub-group of parts. (Evolution is the result of the cooperation of all things for the maturation of the interconnected, one whole.)

...the adult community does not understand the importance of choosing between the two possible fundamental self-identities and the embracing of the RA as part of the maturation process. In fact, quite to the contrary, we have taken pride in championing the MA worldview. I believe this is the main reason for the high levels of loneliness, alienation [disengagement], violence...and self-destructive behavior that exists in our societies. But as a result of the recent discoveries of science, I believe this is all about to change. [1]

Physicists and psychologists for decades have been addressing this. At a Nobel conference in 1981, noted physicist John Wheeler said, "The philosopher of old was right. Meaning is important, even central." In his 1982 book, *The Evolving Self*, developmental psychologist Robert Kegan wrote, "Thus it is not that a person makes meaning, as much as that activity of being a person is the activity of meaning-making."

Research shows that human beings have a drive or will toward meaning in life, including work; a deep call toward something that transcends that material paycheck and the materialist, mechanistic, reductionist assumptions of Newtonian science and classical physics – which describe a mechanical universe devoid of any transcendent meaning or interconnectedness.



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In the book *The New Science and Cosmology* where scientists dialogue about the universe with the Dalai Lama, Tu Weiming, professor of Chinese history and philosophy at Harvard, says: “First of all and at a minimum, the reductionist view of the human person has to go. A human being is not simply a rational animal. A human being is not simply a tool user. A human being is not simply a linguistic being. A human being is poetic and aesthetic, is capable of sensitive responses to an ever-expanding network of relationship within the human world and beyond, even with the distant stars. Human beings are social beings, with an emphasis on relationship and connectedness. Human beings are co-creators.” [2]

Meaningful work and meaningful partnerships (personal and professional) are more important than the physical actions we take, like diet and exercise. Salutogenesis is the study of the role of meaning in health, and Felicitas Heyne reports: “That’s why someone - although living on green tea, salad and lean turkey meat - *loathing the* daily trek into the office because work is experienced as meaningless is going to hurt their health a lot more than the children’s book author who works fulfilled through the night for three months and while writing nibbles lots of jelly babies and chips.” [3]

Meaning and connectedness...you feel like you make a difference in the world - to a person or a creature, to a family, team or community. You *matter*; you transcend “self” and connect with a larger framework. You experience being an interconnected part of a whole that makes sense to you. You belong, and have something to offer and you are valued in the relationship(s).

Meaning includes both the mental/rational/cognitive and the emotional/experiential aspects of being significant. The search for meaning is a search for understanding how everything “fits together” purposefully in a larger context. Coherence is a term often used in relation to meaning, and refers to having a logically integrated and consistent analytical framework. [4]

Coherence is about more than just rational cognitive logic, which represents the parts-orientation, the purely “ration”-al paradigm. Rational logic is necessary but not sufficient. Coherence also involves an intuitive emotional logic – which wraps all the pieces and dimensions together in a way that “feels” right and holds water. Coherence is “the whole is more than the sum of its parts.” It involves a ‘bigger picture’ and we have an innate drive or will for our lives to align and relate to it in a meaningful and our unique way.

Solomon Makola explores coherence and purpose, finding much overlap with concentration camp survivor and author Viktor Frankl, MD’s definition of meaning. “Antonovsky (1987) maintained that there are four spheres that cannot be excluded if the person is to maintain a strong sense of coherence, SOC, namely, his/her own feelings, immediate interpersonal relations,



the major sphere of activity (work, really) and existential issues of death, inevitable failures, shortcomings, conflict and isolation. Antonovsky's (1987) four spheres, and especially the last three, are closely related to what Frankl (1967) terms, the three ways in which meaning and purpose can be found, namely; meaning can be found in what you do (work), what you experience (interpersonal relations), and the attitude one adopts towards unavoidable suffering (pain, guilt and death" [5]

Also referencing Frankl's definition of meaning, JJ DeKlerk explores how it ties in to the spiritual journey we take with our work:

According to Frankl, meaning provides self-worth and purpose. Frankl's theory is termed *the will to meaning*. It differs from the Freudian pleasure motive and Adlerian power motive (drive for superiority with will), but he replaced "drive" for "will," a pull replaces a push. Frankl's definition of meaning entails "significance of being." That is, finding meaning relates to finding or having a reason for "being" and a feeling, experience or perception that this "being-ness" is of significance... a sense of having/fulfilling a higher purpose that results in a significance that is more than just surviving, but having made, or being able to make, a difference in the world.

Studies have shown that meaning has a central role in a person's successful functioning (Harlow, Newcomb & Bentler, 1986; O'Connor & Chamberlain, 1996; Perason and Sheffield, 1974; Phillips, 1980; Reker, 1977; Yarnell, 1972; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). If this is true, then one could speculate that meaning can also have an effect in the workplace. Because work is generally a central part of human existence, much of the spiritual odyssey occurs within the context of the workplace (King & Nicol, 1999). Individuals are searching for meaning in their work, a meaning that transcends mere economic gain. Meaning gives the job deeper meaning by placing it in the context of a life (Keeva, 1999). Therefore, the work situations also belong to the realm of 'meaning' and spirituality. Kozy & Ryan (1999) argue that in general, people are searching for a way to connect their working lives with their spiritual lives. If personal transformation is to take place, one could expect that some of the transformation is likely to take place at work. [6]

In her paper, *Spirituality in the Workplace and the implications it has on employees and organizations*, Charlene Litzsey provides a definition of spirituality as an essential part of one's whole-person well-being. She provides concepts at the core of spirituality (based on research conducted by Martsol) including:



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- Meaning– significance of life, making sense of situation; deriving purpose.
- Transcendence – experience, awareness, and appreciation of a “transcendent dimension” to life beyond self
- Connecting – increased awareness of a connection with self, others, God/spirit (other names and concepts), and nature
- Becoming – unfolding of life that demands reflection and experience; includes a sense of who one is and how one knows. [7]

Our frontal lobe grants us capacity to introspect, and to choose and assign meaning in a “higher” or “deeper” sense than for simply ranking, or rational assessment purposes for “winning the race”- whatever race you might be running. Our right hemisphere is where perception and processes of big picture, whole-interconnectedness and creativity are largely seated - all very tied to emotions and desire for collaboration; our left is analytical, linear and parts/rational oriented, tied more to intellect/cognition and competition. Intuition and reason. Both have a role; we need a better balance and integration.

Though there can be some compensation from other areas following brain injury, there is no doubt about hemispheric specialization. Modern education has ignored the processes and functions of the right hemisphere. We are wired to seek to make sense of our lives in the most whole and emotionally fulfilling way, and we need more than just a deductive, analytic or empirical logic to do so. The earliest recorded histories describe the impulse that seeks to perceive something more than what meets the eye. Today’s quantum scientific research speaks of what transcends the purely physical laws of conventional classical physics, and echoes ancient insight.

The ancient Greeks, who gave us mathematics and medicine, did not have a word for spirit separate from matter; they had one word for both: “physis.” They said our five physical senses deceive us, that the material world is an illusion. East Indians spoke of the physical world as “maya,” the illusion, and in fact it turns out our eyes can see only one-millionth of the light spectrum. When we could finally look inside an atom we discovered it was really 99.9% space. To make sense of our three material dimensions, we need to understand there may well be others. Our health and productivity could depend on it.

For some time now and increasingly so, quantum and theoretical physics point to the likelihood that many more dimensions exist beyond our physical three dimensions (and beyond the sliver we see of the light spectrum). Those dimensions metaphorically and literally provide the key to the levels - “more than a paycheck” and “economic gain” – that we are wired and required to seek in order to be fully human and optimize our individual capacities.



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NOVA posted an article on further dimensions: “For most of us, or perhaps all of us, it's impossible to imagine a world consisting of more than three spatial dimensions. Are we correct when we intuit that such a world couldn't exist? Or is it that our brains are simply incapable of imagining additional dimensions—dimensions that may turn out to be as real as other things we can't detect? String theorists are betting that extra dimensions do indeed exist; in fact, the equations that describe superstring theory require a universe with no fewer than 10 dimensions.” [8]

Thinking in different dimensions beyond the purely material, about the nature of self and purpose and meaning, one enters terrain called non-material, spiritual or non-rational. We need to stretch our thinking and use our imagination. Albert Einstein famously said: “Imagination is more important than knowledge,” and Nobel Prize winning physician, philosopher and author, Albert Schweitzer, MD, said that “it is not through knowledge based on fact, but through experience and truth in thought that we come to an understanding of the world – what is rational is continued into what is non-rational.”

Quantum physics and the study of subatomic reality have revealed processes and principles that fundamentally challenge the assumptions of conventional reductionist materialist science – which say the universe runs like a predictable machine and is ultimately meaning-less. The quantum study of photons/ light reveals a universe that abides by very different operating assumptions that expand upon the purely physical and rational set we've been using from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Again I quote Einstein, “The intuitive mind is a sacred gift & the rational mind is the faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.”

It makes no rational logical sense that a photon can be both a wave and a particle simultaneously, but it's true. Photons can move forward or backward in time, can be both wave and particle at the same time. In the new quantum paradigm, concepts like paradox – something contradictory and logically impossible but in fact true – represent a higher (or deeper) order of logic which seems absurd to the conventional mindset.

Also broadcast from the 80's, in his book, *In Search of Schrodinger's Cat*, physicist John Gribbin wrote, “Look here for the true story of quantum mechanics, a truth far stranger than any fiction. ‘What is reality?’ The answers may surprise you, you may not believe them. But you will find out how contemporary science views the world” [9]. It's time for some new ideas, some enlightened perspectives and, as we learn more, light itself – which Einstein said he'd spend his whole life studying if he could do it over again – helps show the way.

Photons come from beyond our space time and in a gravitational collapse (or interaction with properties of mass and volume) light can create protons and electrons out of nothing but photons.



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An individual photon carries information and a preferred orientation, and its influence affects what is happening across time and space. At the most fundamental level, interconnectedness, interrelationship and preferred directions describe a universe that is all about meaningful interaction.

Gribbin explains, “Photons carry electrical force...but no one knows where these interaction carrying particles come from...They come from nowhere, something for nothing...no-mass creates mass...all in accordance with the uncertainty principle, and confirms that nuclear forces, as well as electrical can be thought of in terms of interactions.” [10] When we probe the depths of matter we discover patterns of interrelationship, and exchange of information and “intelligence.”

Physicist Paul Davies writes: “Information is one of the defining properties of biological organisms...where does it come from? Communication theory - or information theory as it is known today - says that noise destroys information, and that the reverse process, the creation of information by noise, would seem to us to be a miracle. A message emerging on its own from radio static would be as surprising as the tide making clear footprints on the beach.“ [11]

The 2nd law of thermodynamics insists that information can no more spring into being spontaneously, than meaningful (“semantic”) information could spontaneously emerge from raw data (“syntactic”) or noise. According to Max Planck, the chief architect of quantum mechanics, “photons behave like intelligent human beings”, and according to communication theory, meaning is primary.

“As with energy and matter, mind and matter may be equivalent even though they appear completely different. And just as energy and matter are related through a third entity, the speed of light, mind and matter also may be related through a third entity, *meaning*.” Larry Dossey, MD, NY Times best-selling author, founding editor of EXPLORE: Journal of Science and Healing, and the first physician asked to deliver the Mahatma Gandhi Annual Address in New Delhi. Quantum physics has revealed a universe where meaningful exchange of information and a profound creativity can produce matter from nothing but light...where unpredictable quantum leaps happen and logically impossible things are true...and where meaning matters.

In a chapter of the book, *New Traditions in Business*, former professor of Engineering-Economic Systems at Stanford, regent of University of California and co-founder of The World Business Academy, Willis Harman calls this shift a replacement for the dying orthodoxy of scientific materialism:

The practical importance of this shift in basic premises may not be immediately apparent. Modern industrial society, like every other society in history, rests on a set of largely tacit, basic assumptions about who we are, what kind of a universe we are in, and what is ultimately important to us. The scientific materialism that



so confidently held forth its answers to these questions a couple generations ago is now a dying orthodoxy. Its basic premises are being replaced by a new set that includes faith in reason guided by intuition. In other words a "respiritualization" of society is taking place that is more experiential and less fundamentalist than structured religion.

Throughout the industrialized world there are widespread indications of a shift in worldview. In brief, this is characterized by two features. One is an emphasis on interconnectedness and wholeness - a growing awareness that, although we may compete, we are nonetheless each part of a unity, so that no one "wins" unless we all do. The other is a shifting attitude toward our inner, subjective experience - affirming inner wisdom, authority and resources - challenging the dominant scientific materialism. [12]

There have been definite signs of this shift and Einstein's call for rational thought to be guided by intuition is echoed in this "respiritualization". It is far more pragmatic than religious, and business people are pragmatic – they are looking for solutions to low job satisfaction and employee engagement. According to Aon Hewitt's 2012 Trends in Global Engagement 42% of employees are somewhat or completely disengaged. Gaebler.com's Employee Engagement Statistics reports that engaged employees are 20% more productive than typical employees, while companies with the largest numbers of dissatisfied workers have greater absenteeism and lower productivity, and turnover 51% higher than their peers. Also, "even during periods of high unemployment, job security alone isn't as important as engagement efforts that provide meaningful work experiences."

Workplace "spirituality" is about meaningful interactions and relationships, where one feels that they are a valued part of something that makes sense in a whole context of their lives – even if not in a job they would choose if they had the choice. Workplace spirituality is a new business operating assumption.

Charlene Litzsey writes more on the growing trend and the implications it has on employees and organizations:

Interest in workplace spirituality has increased steadily over the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the new millennium (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2004) Spirituality, as defined by Mitroff and Denton (1999), is the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others and the entire universe...A framework of organization values evidenced in the cultures that promote employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of





being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2004).

As Harrington, Preziosi and Gooden (2001) wrote: ‘Spirituality at work is not about religious beliefs. Rather it is about people who perceive themselves as spirited beings, whose spirit need energizing at work. It is about experiencing real purpose and meaning in their work beyond paychecks and task performance. Spirituality is really about people sharing and experiencing some common attachment, attraction, and togetherness with each other within their work unit and the organization as a whole’.

As Galen and west (1995) noted, ‘...a growing number of companies are setting off on spiritual journeys. It’s not about bringing religion into the office or requiring that employees chant mantras. Rather the spirituality movement in the corporation is an attempt to create a sense of meaning and purpose at work and a connection between the company and its people.’ Today companies like Ford, AT&T, Lotus and Taco Bell have been incorporating spirituality in the workplace. Today a spiritual revival is sweeping across corporate America as executives of all stripes are mixing mysticism into their management... (Colin 1999). [13]

In an article about what it takes for business to succeed in our new collaborative, interconnected reality, Lori Falk sees the new paradigm writing on the wall and an expanding role for the corporate mystic:

Succeeding in business has often been viewed as a competitive, numbers-driven game that relies on hard facts, financial analysis and exploitation of markets. That’s the old paradigm folks, and it simply isn’t working any more. We are rapidly moving away from this type of “fear-based” competitive environment, and in turn creating a corporate playground that thrives on caring and collaboration.

Gay Hendricks, Ph.D. and Kate Ludeman, Ph.D., studied hundreds of entrepreneurs and business owners from companies such as Motorola, Dell, and the like, for their groundbreaking book, *The Corporate Mystic*. Their findings led them to make the following prediction ... “Successful corporate leaders of the twenty-first century will be spiritual leaders. They will be comfortable with their own spirituality, and they will know how to nurture spiritual development in others.”

Stephen Covey summed it up best when he said, “Spirituality cannot be something a person toys with, a little compartment of their lives. It has to be at the core, in a way that



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affects every other part of their lives.” And that includes business. Today’s most successful leaders are in business for their hearts and souls as well as their wallets. They are in business to support the hearts and souls of the people with whom they work. [14]

The growing awareness of the crucial role of meaning and spirituality in a healthy life and work environment coincides with the growing awareness of the deep interconnectedness and meaning at work in the universe. It also coincides with the findings of neuroscience that our neocortex grants us the capacity to choose/assign meaning and, along with higher rational faculties, to connect with our intuitive senses and the bigger picture. And with the emerging field of “positive psychology” which demonstrates that we are designed to flourish when meaning, purpose are in our lives [15]. Without it we deconstruct.

Einstein warned, "Technological progress is like an axe in the hands of a pathological criminal." And we are now discovering that alienation is on the rise, facebook is linked to depression [16], 75% of us are dissatisfied with our friendships and 63% don't feel confident in those relationships. We don't have many real friends [17].

The Information Age - with its emphasis on technology, and data collection and transfer, separate from emotionally meaningful relationships - is giving way to the tremendous drive and will that humans have to seek, experience and co-create deeper meaning through relationships – including at work. Employee engagement comes when their light is turned on, when people are supported to understand and experience themselves as significant and making a valued contribution in alignment with something transcending “self” and material considerations.

John W Gardner, former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, saw this coming since the mid-sixties: “We need not be enslaved by the organizational arrangements we have designed to serve us... We are not referring to more change of a familiar sort, but to trend-breaking change of a kind that is unknown in our life experience - a shift of an entire society's mind-set... A society that has reached heights of excellence may already be caught in the rigidities that will bring it down... Anyone who understands our situation at all knows we are in little danger of failing through lack of material strength. If we falter, it will be a failure of heart and spirit.” [18]

This change reflects a shift in our scientific assumptions from a purely mechanistic and materialist view of the world and of human behavior, to one that recognizes the central role of relating, and experiencing (and integrating) emotion. Issues of meaning trump issues of methodology. When it comes to understanding issues of employee engagement, new directions in science are demonstrating how humans, and the universe itself, run more on emotion than logic and run most effectively on emotionally meaningful connections. The qualitative dimensions matter as much or more than the quantitative. To engage employees, companies must help them understand and (paradoxically) embody concepts like paradox, and transcendence.



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Quantum physics is a science of paradox and transcendence...transcending the constraints, limitations and divisions of the conventional, mechanistic and linear paradigm. It introduces non-material considerations and inner resources that are quite profound but have been disparaged and denied...at great cost...not the least of which to our levels of employee engagement.

“Succeeding in business now requires us to employ our intuition, to tap into a collective consciousness of readily available signs and guideposts, and to develop a more collaborative approach to the world at large. “But how do I make that leap?” you ask, “How do I learn how to develop these skills when the other way is all I’ve known?” That’s where coaching comes in. A recent 2011 study conducted by Qa Research, an independent marketing research agency in the UK, found that 80% of the organizations surveyed had used, or are now using, coaching to facilitate the growth and development of their employees. Operating without this type of assistance in today’s corporate culture simply no longer makes sense.” [19]

When surveys consistently show that employee engagement is key to productivity, the Quantum Corporation will provide training and resources to help employees develop themselves in meaningful ways and relate most effectively with others for common corporate and community goals. The Quantum Corporation will also engage in community and/or global partnerships.

I have spent 25 years bringing this kind of meaning-centered coaching into all kinds of environments including Fortune 100 corporations. At a time when we need meaning-infusion, a science-based curriculum, like *Discovery of Self* (which also includes many diverse time-honored cultural teachings), can facilitate an individual and organizational shift to “enlightened engagement”. Typical responses from Fortune 100 executives and managers, to supervisors and entry level employees, indicate the impact that the new paradigm has on workers:

“Thank you for the outstanding *Discovery of Self* program you delivered. This program offers fantastic personal and professional development opportunities for employees at all levels of our organization. The program evaluations and feedback from participants reveal the added value of *Discovery of Self*. Through personal discussions with participants as well as written feedback received, I am convinced we are on the right track with this course... thank you for exceeding our expectations”

“She taught me more about myself in 4 hours than I learned in 34 years.”

“On a scale of 1-10, I rate the course a 12 – off the scale.”

“This course will be used as an everyday guide and an inspiration to others.”



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“I can’t believe how noticeably differently I face my everyday challenges...I’ve never been so deeply impacted by a day-long seminar! This is truly amazing. I feel fortunate to have received your messages and am planning to send my staff.”

“The Discovery of Self program is by far the best and most impactful personal development program I’ve encountered in my 17 years in the field of human resources.”

“This course is outstanding. I’m extremely impressed with the number of relevant examples given with material that might otherwise be too abstract. Other programs focus on technical skills or soft skills. This program has a more holistic approach to improving not only our professional performance but us a whole.”

When they experience meaningfulness at work, the research shows that engagement increases and in turn so does productivity. Jean Martin, executive director of the Corporate Leadership Council, was quoted in 2008, “Our data has proven, year after year, that the emotional side of engagement is actually four times more powerful than the rational side when it comes to driving the business impacts we care about, which are essentially employees who want to stay with the company and employee productivity. One specific finding is that when employees move from being disengaged to being highly engaged, performance productivity improves 20 %.” [20]

## CONCLUSION

Even if the work itself is not what one feels to be an ultimate calling, the opportunity to discover oneself in relation to others, and to be supported in growth as an individual making a valued contribution, contributes to the sense of significance and optimism that have been shown to increase a wide range of human capacities. It’s an art and a new science. And it’s everyone’s business. Employees that feel meaningful connection at work are more engaged and productive.

[Employee development training](#)

[Leadership development training](#)

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