

The Appriser

[Design Group International™](#) 8/2012

Faith in the workplace: a place remains for virtue

—Mark L. Vincent, PhD, CCNL
CEO/Senior Design Partner

Three schools of thought can be found regarding faith in the workplace:

- Faith should have no place in the enterprise.
- Faith should be the focus of the enterprise.
- Faith can have bearing on the enterprise.

Rather than choose or argue, it is good for a leader to think through why these schools of thought exist.

For instance, business owners who are devout but whose enterprise is strictly a marketplace concern might personally draw on strong ethical principles derived from their faith, but will not place expectations of religious practice on their employees, vendors or customers. And yet, a human service organization that makes use of a specific practice of religion to help people reform cannot abandon nor apologize for their religious commitment.

Here is another example: Consider the many financial service companies founded by religious communities to serve their members, but that now serve a variety of customer groups. Such an organization, while rooted in the practice of a faith, now conducts their business among people who do not adhere to their faith.

It can be difficult to take a more nuanced and thoughtful approach, trying to appreciate the unique recipe of a situation, and acting accordingly. But this is exactly how one develops the skill of managing diversity as an opportunity instead of an insurmountable problem. It also helps one better navigate the many forks in the cultural river where we float.

The best advice I've found for thinking through faith in the marketplace is to ask persons rooted in faith to turn to their respective scriptures and reflect on how they are instructed to conduct their business affairs.

They are not going to find instructions on how to turn their enterprise into a place of worship or centers for evangelism. Instead, they will be instructed to be truthful, just and charitable. They will be reminded to treat employees and customers fairly, to be servants of those they employ, and to be examples of virtue. Virtue—even when directly drawn from religious observance—connects to the mission of the enterprise. Virtue strengthens productivity rather than interfering with it. Virtue adds to long-term enterprise and stability and value. Virtue is far less offensive than a religious tract. It might even open the door to religious conversation in appropriate times and in non-threatening ways. Virtue does not spark lawsuits.

So, rather than asking business owners to drop faith, we might ask people to practice their faith's requirements as they conduct their business. As counter-intuitive as it might sound, the faith that business owners practice, *if they actually practice it*, might be the needed source for greater tolerance of diversity in the workplace, and fairer treatment of people.

[Learn more about Design Group International](#)

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#).
Questions or comments? E-mail us at
info@DesignGroupIntl.com Or call [877.771.3330](tel:877.771.3330) x1



DESIGN GROUP
International™