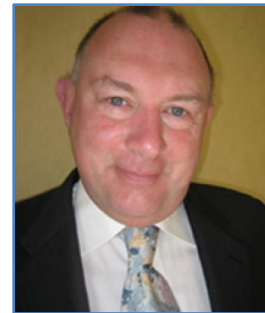


Reading at Work presented

Christians – business needs our faith more than it thinks it does - a personal testimony

with John Kay.



An ex Senior Partner in a major consultancy firm and former Trustee of CAFE (Christian Association of Business Executives).

Currently an independent consultant and TWUK (Transform Work UK) ambassador for Wales.

Preamble

Reading at Work hosted John Kay to talk on this topic on Monday, 24 April 2017, to an engaged audience. John began by sharing his own personal testimony of a Christian upbringing and connection back into a whole life Christian faith 30 years later through his daughter's church. This prompted John to reassess whether his deemed worldly success as a manager was correct.

Human Beings

Attendees at the seminar recognised this distinction and agreed with John's prognosis that it was important to see colleagues, including team members, as human beings with an innate desire to be loved and be in relationship (like our Creator). John shared examples of how he had enacted these principles in his

new management style, with his inner confidence and security through faith in Christ allowing him to have the confidence to be bold. This allowed adaption from general rules to meet the specific requirements of team members and their wider, beyond work, needs (for instance in times of personal or family distress), leading to better results for all parties. John noted how little managers often know about their team members beyond the world of the workplace.

Relationships

John saw relationships between organisation staff as critical and summarised some of the work of the Relationships Foundation on Relational Proximity Framework™ 1. For a good relationship there are five essential characteristics:

- Directness (e.g. in person);
- Continuity (as opposed to changed account managers with no handover or history);
- Parity (equality in the relationship);
- Commonality (shared goal that cannot achieve independently); and
- Multiplexity (everybody has a lot of strands in their life).

The importance and strength of Christian faith to the value placed on relationships as being important can be seen in other ways. Implementing a 'doing the right thing' approach institutionally is hard: a former CEO had commented that it is important to design the system to make it easier to do the right thing than anything else, as once designed, the system has a life of its own.

Christian Values

John proposed that if more Christian values were expressed in the workplace, then business performance should be improved, and initiated with another Christian colleague a novel course around the theme of what the organisation can give to its employees. This idea, germinated in the thesis of loving thy neighbour, had resonance with those attending this seminar. We are required to act first by God, with an example shared by one participant of being asked by their CEO what would make them feel more valued. Their response was the organisation recognising his faith and supporting a CWG (Christian Workplace Group; formed and now growing).

¹ <http://www.relationshipsfoundation.org/about-us/assessing-relationships/relational-analytics-etc/>

Sticky toffee layer

There was also discussion around whether many organisations suffer from a 'sticky toffee layer' between Board level management and frontline divisions that failed to allow the permeation of truth and honesty about what was happening operationally. Those of faith, including Christians, had sufficient strength of character to rise above short term fears and considerations and were often recognised and rewarded becoming very senior leaders of the future. Trade Unionism also has a role to play in allowing escalation of concerns around this layer within organisations.

Changing Environment

Looking more widely, the business environment now means linear thinking about what will happen will not be as effective as it was. Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA) exist and it is important to be comfortable with this dynamic and let things emerge. To do so requires an inner strength, which for John was the living Holy Spirit, allowing him to know he is in good hands. However, proving to business and the media that faith based models are better for business is against the grain, even if as the seminar noted Christians often have a disposition towards mentoring and being peacemakers.

Conclusion

In concluding, John noted that the business world was coming back, again, to the importance of servant leadership over other models – effectively following the teaching of Christ – in which relationships, trust and inner strength were key attributes.

Magnus Smyly

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