The Coaching and Training of Corporate Chaplains

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Author Note

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Advancement of science and technology brought about by the Industrial Revolution accelerated the massive growth of the urban population and heralded the thrust for companies to build themselves up into large businesses. This change created an urgent need to develop a great number of professional managers. Corporate leadership, then in its adolescent stage, followed the social movement of the time. Faith was replaced by an unquestioning belief in science and rational thought. Going forward, everything would have to be tested and proven. Consequently, it took some time for religious leaders to accept this rejection and the Church condemned modernity for its godlessness (Kahne & Chaloner, 2005).

This drifting apart had two consequences. First, business and religion would be less likely to occupy the same spheres. Personal religious beliefs would have to be left in the closet outside the company walls. Second, corporate leadership would be guided by rational thought and this would lead to the scientific management theory of Taylor (1911), which showed scientific methods could improve productivity (Kahne & Chaloner, 2005). The trend also opened the door for the famous Hawthorne experiments, which analyzed the effect of psychology on efficiency in the workplace, (Rush, 1996) and later to

quantitative management tools such as Total Quality, Project Management and Reenigneering.(Kahne & Chaloner, 2005).

After more than two centuries of growth, it seems that managers are currently changing tack once again. Academic research, (Hicks, 2003) self-improvement books (Jones, 1996), and journal articles (Darling, Parry, & Moore, 2005), are flourishing around a plethora of ideas, models, and personalities from the past: Sun Tsu, Machiavelli, and Jesus have never been so alive. The idea that deeper self-knowledge and an opportunity to offload negative feelings allow an individual to be more in control of his or her life and helps him or her to achieve a greater progression is a common teaching thread found in many Sacred Texts. These describe the acts of verbalizing pain and difficulty. In their search for external support, companies have tended to call on two categories of specialists of the soul: Management Gurus, and more specifically in the United States, corporate chaplains. It is arguable, however, that the two are in reality only a slightly different expression of the same source (Kahne & Chaloner, 2005).

Dwayne Reece, Vice President of Field Development for Corporate Chaplains of America and author of The Complete Corporate Chaplain's Handbook, estimates that there are 3,000 to 4,000 chaplains working across the country and the trend is

growing due to business owners embracing more open expression of faith. In spite of a soft economy, his organization continued to acquire new clients. While Bible Belt employers were the first to enlist chaplains when the services surfaced in the 1980's and 1990's, chaplain programs have grown the fastest since 2001 and are expanding to other regions (Shellenbarger, 2009).

When asked about his perception of the difference between an Employee Assistance Program and a corporate chaplain, Mr. Reece stated that the EAP is an 800 number and the employee feels a sense of detachment. In contrast, corporate chaplains are regularly visible in the workplace making rounds at appointed hours, building relationships in cube worlds and on shop floors through informal contact. A growing number of companies are hiring chaplains as a way to demonstrate to employees that their leadership does care about their concerns, both in and out of the office. Corporate chaplains address issues such as job-related stress, marital and family problems, financial instability, illness, substance abuse, performance problems, layoffs, and thoughts of suicide.

Managers have reported that employees who would not consider calling an employee assistance program will willingly turn to a chaplain. Executives at Tyson Foods, Inc. which employs 120 chaplains serving a workforce of 117,000 believe the

service reduces turnover (Shellenbarger, 2009). Other companies
contract with chaplain-placement services to alleviate workplace
disruptions by taking these off the backs of managers who do not
have the proper training or desire to intervene in personal
issues.

Marketplace Chaplains, a Dallas-based company that has
provided more than 800 Christian chaplains to organizations in
26 states, reports that there has been an increasing interest in
helping workers cope with emotional problems before reaching the
"boiling-over point"(Thompson, 2000).

How does the process work both from the company and
chaplaincy perspective?

Company Considerations

A Chaplain Assistance Program (CAP) is a personal,
voluntary, and confidential benefit available to employees and
their immediate families who choose to participate. Key
features of a chaplain assistance program include:

- Benefits at no cost to the employee.

- Chaplains who are available twenty-four hours a day,
seven days a week, three-hundred sixty-five days per year.

- Chaplains who are neutral from company operations.

- An assurance of confidentiality. Personal information
will not be revealed to management or any other person, except

where dictated by law or professional code of ethics (Cook, 2010).

There are exceptions where disclosure would be required such as awareness of employee theft or the knowledge that an employee intends to harm himself. In the case of theft, their role is to walk the employee through the process by laying out the consequences for the behavior and providing a practice session of going to management to report the action (Wells, 2010).

There are legal ramifications to consider. (Fry & Cohen, 2009) indicated that it is important to avoid the negative consequences of a hostile work environment that may result when employers emphasize a particular religion in the workplace. When considering the legal implications of mixing business and religion, it is important to realize that US Courts normally try to balance employers' rights to express their values through their business and the right of employees not to be discriminated against (Spragins, 2006). Pursuant to the First Amendment, employers have rights to be free from government interference in the exercise of their religion in operating their business, while employees have rights to be free from a religiously hostile work environment (EEOC v. Preferred Management Corporation, 2002).

Court reports indicate that EEOC v. Preferred Management Corporation involved the clash of these two sets of religious rights, perhaps to an unprecedented degree. Additionally, this case was the only one found in the LexisNexis Academic Legal Research Case Law database that involved a claim of employee religious harassment against a company that engaged in workplace chaplain activities (Nimmon, 2009).

Although this appears to be an isolated case of religious harassment that involves workplace chaplain activities in a single organization under somewhat extreme circumstances, two best practices seem apparent:

1.   Supervisors and managers should avoid expression regarding religious activities performed or facilitated by workplace chaplains that might be perceived by subordinates as coercive.

2.   Employers should have an anti-harassment policy that covers religion. The EEOC website indicates that such a policy should:

- Clearly explain what is prohibited

- Describe procedures for bringing harassment to management's attention.

- Contain an assurance that complaints will be protected from retaliation.

- Include multiple avenues for complaint (Nimmon, 2009).

Chaplaincy Considerations

Chaplains have their own concerns with legal
considerations. In 1992 homicide was defined as the third
leading cause of death in the workplace by the National
Institute for Occupational safety and Health. The Bureau of
Labor Statistics found that homicide accounts for 17 percent of
all occupational fatalities, making it the second cause of job-
related deaths (Eyres, 1996). During an interview with Luke
Witte, Regional Director of the Carolinas for Marketplace
Chaplains, I inquired about how his organization would respond
if an employee in a client company "snapped" and how the
chaplain would be protected if the client thought he or she
should have known. Mr. Witte explained that one of their
ongoing training topics is proper documentation of conversations
to include any outside resources recommended and encouragement
given by the chaplain as a protection in this event.

Mr. Reece of Corporate Chaplains expanded on this topic by
stating that chaplains follow the same code of ethics as
licensed counselors and clergy, and there is a liability
protection associated with this because their chaplains are
ordained. He describes the role of a corporate chaplain as a

general interventionist and a connector to resources. Should
the employee have a need for more specialized help such as a
substance abuse problem, the chaplain would direct them to their
EAP or refer them out to an expert in the field. Chaplains have
to be familiar with the company benefit plans to know how to
refer the employee when the issue arises. His general rule of
thumb is if the employee has more than two conversations about a
problem outside the scope of the chaplain, a referral should be
made to address the issue sooner rather than later.

How are candidates selected and evaluated for fitness to
work in corporate chaplaincy? There have been a variety of
recruiting techniques employed, from the expected avenues to the
creative. Mr. Witte described a situation where his
organization signed a contract with a new client in South
Carolina. Because Marketplace had no other clients in the area,
he took a trip to the city where the client facility was located
and started visiting funeral homes. He probed funeral directors
for names of ministers who spent the most time with families
through the bereavement process, displaying extra care and
comfort. After gathering a list of names, he started making
contact and some quality hires emerged from this method. Other
recruiting sources include personal referrals from other
chaplains, seminaries, churches, and he has perused
churchstaffing.com.

He explained that he is always recruiting and he believes that effective leaders are always engaging in analysis. He considers questions of providing service around the clock, if his chaplain assignments are still productive, and whether the demographics of his client companies are changing. One of the requirements of his position is to recruit for demographics. He has to be certain that the chaplain he places in the client facility is compatible with the employee base. For example, if the workforce is largely Spanish-speaking, he needs a chaplain fluent in the language. He does not address issues with female employees; this is mandated by Marketplace and has been his own personal policy for years.

There are 2,500 chaplains working for Marketplace, and he has 65 reports with four area leaders reporting directly to him. He explained that the interviewing process is intensive. They are asked to view an online word from the CEO and background checks are conducted along with a credit history. The candidate is asked for his or her testimony.

When these initial requirements are met satisfactorily, the applicant proceeds to the next phase of the interview process. Candidates navigate through a pre-mentoring exercise intended to make sure they understand the job description and all of its requirements. He is asked to shadow with another chaplain at a client facility similar to the place where he is being

considered to serve. The purpose is to watch how the candidate engages in that setting. During this pre-mentoring phase, the candidate is still a candidate. There is a possiblity that the Marketplace organization could decide that the individual is not a fit for corporate chaplaincy, or the reverse situation could occur.

Two years ago Mr. Witte decided to re-write the training progam. He felt the training materials would better serve the chaplains in a new format and his central question was "What does an A+ Chaplain look like?" He focused on how the chaplains served and what this means for the client. His role demands that he is constantly and consistently aware of what is transpiring in the client organization as well as internally within Marketplace. He meets with his team once a week for prayer and accountability. During these meetings no business is discussed; the purpose is team building.

When he turned his focus to the training program, he wanted to hit all of the points: How do you as a chaplain walk through the organization, how do you read body language, how do you touch and go? One point of emphasis is that the chaplain should always touch a leader, such as a line supervisor or manager in the company. One of the main ideas he emphasizes in training is that the chaplaincy business is very different. He explains it as a time-driven, snippet ministry. He tells chaplains to

remember the three minute bell, and they have two minutes remaining when they engage with employees. He applied this principle when he wrote the A+ Chaplain program to engage chaplains.

Originally, the training format was a twelve hour video. He felt this package this was too long for the chaplains to remain attentive, so he decided to condense this down to a six hour online training which would allow for a more interactive experience. In addition to this training for chaplains new to Marketplace, there is a training topic presented at each weekly staff meeting. This is uninterrupted time to focus on general issues in chaplaincy as well as those specific to the southeast region. Case studies from other chaplains are sometimes presented, problem-solving exercises,as well as initiatives generated from the top down.

More often, the training is initiated by chaplains training chaplains as peer coaches. Rickett states "The genius of peer training as an instructional method is that it mirrors the way people actually learn in the workplace. Whenever possible, they would rather use managers and fellow workers as sources of information and help. Another big advantage is that there is no superflous teaching. People learn what they need when they need it" (Rickett, 1993). According to Finnerty, "peer coaching is relatively new. Traditionally, vertically structured

organizations have looked to the formal, boss-subordiante relationship as the focus for growth and development. Peer relationships where neither colleague holds position power over the other is a new arena for formal coaching strategies." (Finnerty, 1996).

Examples of training topics include how to properly calculate mileage, cultural differences, such as use of greetings like "Hey, Hon" in the south (chaplains are asked to avoid these greetings due to how they could be interpreted), and guidelines for serving extended family members of employees. Sixty to seventy percent of time is spent on one-on-one training in mentoring relationships. Training is always ongoing in the field of corporate chaplaincy. In addition to the regional training discussed, the CEO of Marketplace recently gave a webinar for all chaplains, and corporate headquarters regularly hosts conferences for the leadership team. Content is delivered back to chaplains in the region. They are also required to attend training sessions from their clients when asked. Biltmore Estate stipulates that their chaplains have to attend their BET (Biltmore Estate Training) (Witte, 2010).

B.F. Skinner states "We are all simply a product of the stimuli we get from the outside world. Specify the environment completely enough and you can exactly predict individual actions" (Skinner, 1972). Because chaplains encounter an

extensive amount of difficult situations in their daily work, they become exhausted mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Marketplace has "chaplains for the chaplains" as a counterbalance to the daily stressors they encounter. Marketplace has a de-centralized leadership culture in order to promote responsibility and strength of the chaplains teams. Each team has a coach who has already been trained to nurture chaplains. In addition to the regular sessions they attend, their role is to plan the meetings and all of the training delivery. Their deliverable is to make chaplains teachable and sharpen their listening skills on the front end, while helping them manage the stress imposed by the nature of the work. Marketplace coaches employ a wide variety of tools including webinars, regional conferences, Go To Meeting, and classroom delivery using case studies and role plays.

Mr. Reece addresses another sensitive issue faced when chaplains often become involved in layoffs and firings of employees. Their role with the employee does not have to end after this occurs, but the relatonship between human resources and the employee is completed. One of their clients asked them to assist with a situation where they terminated some employees who had company trucks. Chaplains met with them after the terminataions and gave them rides home because they had to leave their company vehicles on the premises. This is an example of

the type of personalized service a chaplain can offer an organization; the touch and transition are more personal. When chaplains become invoved in performance problems of employees, they are not negotiators. Their position has to remain neutral(Witte, 2010).

While HRD specialists are focused on front-end analysis and ongoing evaluation, chaplains are frequently forced to take a reactive role in crisis management. Ideally, their involvement begins in a formative evaluation phase but it may initiate closer to the summative. In the case of employee terminations, chaplains follow up with questions such as "What part of your behavior contributed to the performance problem?" What can you do differently next time?" (Reece). Obviously these problems require a high level of training to effectively work toward a solution for the displaced employee.

Corporate Chaplains employes a slightly different strategy for working with candidates. Prospective chaplains have to step through all of the expected background checks, but they are asked to complete the Taylor-Johnson Inventory as a tool to determine their fitness for the work. Ideally the candidate does not measure on the extreme end of any introverted or extroverted categories. They are seeking good listeners who have the ability to function in a self-directed environment. In addition, the candidate completes a Spiritual Gifts Inventory,

attends a three-day field training exercise where role plays and case studies are used centered around subjects the chaplain will encounter in his or her daily work: marital and family problems, thoughts of suicide, and substance abuse, to name a few examples. A real-lfe chaplain case is presented and the training coaches are watching for the candidate's ability to think on his or her feet, how they walk the employee through the thinking process, and if they are able to coach them through a right and proper response (Reece).

Should any concerns about the candidate emerge from the field training, the leadership will consider if this is a trainable issue or if the person in question is not wired for the work.

After the field training exercise has been completed satisfactorily, the Corporate Chaplain organization requests an interview with the candidate's spouse. Due to the fact that chaplains are on call twenty-four days a day and are mandated to respond to pages within a short amount of time, the idea behind this meeting is to assess the level of comfort the spouse has with the demands of the job (Reece).

How is a chaplaincy program evaluated? According to Reece, Witte, and Cook most clients do not measure based on financial impact. Soft benefits are difficult to pinpoint. Chaplains are required to submit monthly reports to the leadership team across

chaplaincy organizations detailing number of site visits, contacts, caregiving, funeral home, hospital, and jail visits, as well as support for court appearances. Reece states that if little or no activity is reported, the relationship is not being established between the chaplain and the client company he is serving. Another component included in the report is a breakdown of the issues the chaplain addressed during the month. There are never any names provided per the confidentiality agreement, only raw numbers. Corporate Chaplains has a 30 and 90 day review with their clients, follwed by an annual. Contracts are signed in 90 day increments to earn the trust and privilige of serving the client. Reece has seen consistently as part of the unsolicited feedback he receives from clients that chaplaincy is the only benefit employees actually thank their employers for; other benefits are seen as entitlements.

Marketplace Chaplains conducts performance evaluations twice yearly with clients, and the organization receives yearly feedback from clients on their chaplains. In addition, the chaplains complete a self-assessment with questions such as "How do we view our teams?" and "How is your team responding to the client and one another?" Area team leaders also provide a formal evaluation for their chaplains yearly. Surprises during the evaluation process are rare, because there is such constant contact that the leadership team and the chaplains have a high

level of awareness concerning what is transpiring with their
clients and each other(Witte, 2010).

The relationship between business and religion has never
been an easy one. For years, these two aspects of human
existence have looked upon each other with at best, some
interest, at worst, suspicion(Kahne & Chaloner, 2005). "In the
workplace, we have become polarized between managing the outer
organization- work processes, organizational objectives,
managerial structures- and the inner organization of people-
emotional attitude, mental processes, cooperative spirit"
(Briskin, 1998). The spiritual stakeholder is one who attempts
to bridge this gap by a spiritual connection to the firm. This
is accomplished through relationships that include "love, joy,
exhiliration, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
gentleness, self control and the like" (Stead & Stead, 1996).
Witte points to the "new organizational model" of providing time
off for mission trips and mentoring in schools to name two
examples. Leadership is a social responsibility. It is leading
for something larger than the leader or his or her followers.
If a leader works to transform the values within an organization
with some altruistic goal in mind, then real change can happen,
what(Daly, 1991)called "ultimate ends."

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