

Research Paper

CORPORATE CHAPLAINCY

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INTRODUCTION

Having been employed by several major corporations for the past 32 years, I was interested in pursuing the role of chaplains in the corporate environment. In my view, most (if not all) of the spiritual qualities that the religious traditions hold in high esteem are the very same qualities expounded by business leadership consultants. The way we engage our employees via the development of a culture that exhibits creativity, empowerment, trust and respect are paramount in driving a successful business. This is what true leadership is about and there have been many books written that describe the journey from “good to great” utilizing effective servant leadership skills. So, the idea of having corporate chaplains in the workplace is not surprising to me. A good chaplain will bring those qualities to the entire workforce and there are several companies that have already embarked on providing this service need. They are being recognized as providing significant value to the organization and with that their service is expanding.

HISTORY OF CORPORATE CHAPLAINCY

Although corporate chaplaincy seems to be a new phenomenon, its presence actually dates back “to the time of America’s founding, when no military operation was carried out unless a minister was available to counsel and motivate the colonial fighting men.” (Nimon,2010) Community services such as hospitals, fire and police departments, and prisons have employed industrial chaplains to deal with trauma that is common to their organizations. In the past few

years, there has been an increasing trend for traditional Employee Assistance Programs (EAPS) to be replaced or enhanced by Chaplaincy Assistance Programs (CAPs).

According to *The Economist* (August 25, 2007, p64) there are 4000 corporate chaplains in the U.S. alone with most of them being employees of chaplaincy service companies such as ***Marketplace Chaplains USA, Corporate Chaplains of America***, and ***Capital Chaplains, LLC***.

Public and private companies such as *Tyson Foods, Coca-Cola Bottling Co, American Lube Fast, and Pellitteri Waste Systems Inc.* employ chaplaincy service in order to fill a need that human resource departments and traditional EAPs find hard to serve.

WHAT IS CORPORATE CHAPLAINCY?

Corporate chaplaincy is a personal, confidential, and voluntary benefit available to employees and members of their households. It is sponsored by the company and all discussions are held in strict confidence except when required by law. Chaplains are neutral from the company operations and are available on the premise on a regular basis and by phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year in case of an emergency, crisis, or some other need.

According to the *National Institute of Business and Industrial Chaplains (NIBIC)*, chaplains are “not denominational promotion schemes, preaching platforms, labor or management tools, or competitors for community services or agencies.” (Nimon,2010) During my phone interview with Mr. John Knaack, Division Director for *Marketplace Chaplains USA*, he stated that in some cases they are given permission to evangelize by the owner of the company. In most cases, however, it is not about pursuing religion into the workforce but personal care for people regardless of beliefs and/or background.

PROCESS AND STRUCTURE FOR CORPORATE CHAPLAINCY

In Mr. Knaack’s response to my questions regarding the process for selection and deployment of chaplains he shared the following information:

- Some chaplains that are hired are pastors but it is not a requirement.
- There are many part-time positions –Marketplace Chaplains employs 50% of its chaplains full-time with the remaining standing by to serve on an on-call basis.

- There are 5-6 chaplains in the Harford area working anywhere from one half hour to 20 hours per week.
- The overall need for chaplaincy service is trending upwards.
- Their program is targeted on the military chaplaincy model – their CEO and founder is a former military chaplain.
- Many denominations (77) are represented - all are Christian based and mostly evangelical in nature.
- All chaplains are active in a church ministry and are commissioned and sponsored by their congregation to engage in corporate chaplaincy.

ROLES OF CORPORATE CHAPLAINS

Corporate chaplains are involved in a variety of critical roles for the organization. Although there is some overlap with traditional EAP providers, according to the survey and report by the *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, the following areas that received the most attention were as follows:

- 70% of chaplains indicated that they were involved in normal events during their visits.
- 75% were counseled for bereavement.
- 71.3% were involved in discussions pertaining to relationships at work.
- 69% discussed matters of faith.
- 65% had discussion regarding retirement.
- 63.2% provided counsel on marital issues.

Training and development of employees was a common activity across all chaplains surveyed. There were also numerous activities in the clerical area which included visits to employees and families of employees in hospitals, homes, jails, and funeral homes as well as the writing of letters of concern, sympathy, and appreciation. Chaplains also conducted funerals, presided over weddings, etc., (Nimon, 2010)

THE CASE FOR CORPORATE CHAPLAINCY

Companies continue to be under significant economic stress and this has an effect on all employees. For many workers, a standard work week consists of six or seven days at 10 -12 hours of work each day. Difficulties that arise outside of work due to these challenges often come into their workplace resulting in low productivity, low morale and high absenteeism. Achieving work/life balance is a major challenge for the majority of the workforce in America today. Steve Cook, the owner and founder of *Capital Chaplains LLC* states that the time has

come for workplace chaplaincy. He states that fewer and fewer people are turning to traditional forms of community (including faith communities) for assistance with life's problems. (Cook, 2010) As a result, they are bringing their personal concerns and problems with them to work every day and this has a profound impact on morale and productivity. (Cook, 2010). Kurt Smith, a VP of Disruptive Products & Technology for **Covidien** (a \$12 billion global healthcare products leader) takes the benefits and scope of chaplaincy even further into the value stream with his statement that corporate chaplaincy "needs to direct its effect on 1) the development of the organization and 2) on the development of its people". (Smith, 2010) He frames corporate chaplaincy as a coaching process and states that it is rooted in the insight that the underlying driver to profits, growth, and industry leadership is the embodiment of compassion at the individual and organizational levels. (Smith, 2010)

Research indicates that there are numerous benefits for a company related to the employee and employer when utilizing CAPs. Many of these benefits listed below are currently in place through traditional EAP providers but it can be argued that corporate chaplaincy programs can take each of these benefits to a higher impact level. These findings are collected from **Capital Chaplains LLC** data with the results being fairly consistent across all studies and reports reviewed. (Cook, Hanson, 2012)

- **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS:**

- 87% of employees said they would work harder for a company willing to help them with their personal problems.
- Employees experience a necessary sense of support and resources in times of personal crisis.
- Decreases anxiety and tensions.
- Reduces costly consequences of poor problem solving (i.e. suicide, substance abuse, etc.).

- **EMPLOYER BENEFITS:**

- There are three areas of measurable impact: (Cook, Hanson, 2012)

- **Reducing the problem of “Presenteeism”** which is defined as “ leaving heart and mind at home.”
 - The lack of focus caused by this problem, according to the survey, accounts for 80% of the total costs associated with lost productivity. Chaplains can provide a forum to discuss issues and provide help so that they are able to regain focus more quickly.
- **Limiting Absenteeism**
 - 75% of employers named employee retention as their top benefits objective (Cook, 2010).
 - This accounts for the remaining 20% of costs associated with lost productivity.
 - 54% of all unscheduled absences reported in a 2006 survey were the result of family issues, personal needs and stress. (Cook, 2010)
 - Depressive disorders were estimated to cost employers \$43B per year.
- **Reduction in employee turnover**
 - Estimated costs with employee turnover can be 50% to 150% of an employee’s salary.
 - Allied Holdings (a trucking company who employs CAPs) attributes low employee turnover to less than 10% a year compared to 100% industry average.

John Knaack stated that recent studies have shown that for every dollar invested in CAPs, there is ten to sixteen dollars realized in return. In addition there are other areas that can bring financial benefits and welfare for employees and employers:

- **Reduced health and disability claims**
 - EAP programs according to the International Foundation of Employee benefits plan survey result in reduced health plan costs of 66% and reduced disability costs of 49%
- **Other Benefits (for EAPs and CAPs)**
 - Reduced Conflict
 - Improved service
 - Decreased risk of litigation
 - Increased management effectiveness
 - Decrease risk of violence in workplace
 - Saved marriages and lives

TRADITIONAL EAPs VERSUS CORPORATE CHAPLAINCY SERVICES (CCPAESR)

The Journal of Management , Spirituality & Religion research article addresses the similarities and differences of problems discussed with corporate chaplains and traditional employee assistance providers. It has been recognized that consultants are now echoing executives' claims that corporate chaplains are meeting a need that traditional EAPs cannot meet. In the past, CAPs were not viewed as a replacement to the EAPs but as an enhancement. This view, however, has recently changed as some companies have made the CAP the alternative to the EAP.

Some of the driving differences are as follows. In the EAP model, professionals work with supervisors and managers to anticipate and address employee issues that disrupt the workforce. In many cases, it is more of a *reactive* process and provides help to an issue that is already in place. CAPs, in contrast, focus on developing a "*ministry of presence*" and are on call 24 hours a day. (Nimon,2010) This presence affords them the opportunity to see and react to issues before they become a major crisis. There is also, according to this report's findings, fewer stigmas with sharing a concern with a CAP versus an EAP provider. In addition, since most chaplains are certified by a religious denomination, their ability to respond to both *secular* and *spiritual* needs could be viewed by many as an additional benefit.

Additional similarities and differences in the work performed by the CAPs and EAPs are as follows:

- Major corporate chaplain activities are : employee counseling, administration, clerical, and crisis intervention activities. In the most part, these activities are similar.
- Major similarities with EAP are in the areas of issues related to the job, finance and stress.
- Differences are in the areas of substance abuse and legal issues – these are typically not discussed with the corporate chaplain as frequently as EAPs. The survey found however, that the chaplains were expected to make referrals in these areas.
- A higher percentage of relationship issues were discussed with corporate chaplains as compared to EAP providers. (see chart below) This could be due to the "ministry of presence" discussed previously.
- The study concludes that organizations employing corporate chaplain providers have the potential to take their employee assistance programs to a new level. (Nimon, 2010)

The chart below from the Journal of Management Report (Nimon,2010) shows the differences in the level and type of services provided by the EAP and CAP:

Table 9. Summary of Findings

Variable	CC vs. EAP	Industry type	Firm size	Contract length
Extended clerical activities	N/A	H, S < X	4-19, 20-99 < 100-499, 500+	less than 1.5 yrs < 10+ years
Psychological	CC < EAP	No difference	No difference	No difference
Relationships	EAP < CC	No difference	No difference	No difference
Legal	CC < EAP	No difference	No difference	No difference
Children	EAP < CC	D, X < H, I	No difference	No difference
Substance Abuse	CC < EAP	No difference	No difference	No difference
Job	CC \cong EAP	No difference	4-19 < 100-499, 500+	No difference
Stress	CC = EAP	D < X	20-99 < 4-19	No difference
Finances	CC \cong EAP	D, H < I, X	No difference	No difference
Medical	N/A	D < H	20-99, 500+ < 100-499	No difference
Sessions per Employee	N/A	X < H, I	100-499, 500+ < 4-19, 20-99	No difference

Note: D – Manufacturing, H – Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate, I: Services, and X: Wholesale and Retail Trade.

CHALLENGES FOR CAPs

In my opinion, the major challenge which CAPs will face as they expand their service to corporations is in their ability to effectively respond to the growing religious diversity in the U.S. Although it seems from my research that most CAPs are not in the business of proselytizing, I did get the opinion at least from *Marketplace Chaplains*, that they are a company based upon Christian evangelical values and they are happy to evangelize when the opportunity and permission is given to them. When I asked about how *Marketplace* is responding to the religious pluralism in corporate America, the response was one of recognizing and honoring that diversity within their current business structure. However, having a chaplain who is perceived as only representing the Christian faith could be a major shortcoming for many companies. Although *Marketplace Chaplains* and other CAPs have the resources available to contact chaplains of different faiths upon request, there will be a need for multi-faith chaplains

to be employed by the CAPs in addition to the traditional Christian chaplains now in place. With this approach, major corporations who employ people of all faiths, will view this service as more inclusive and this enhancement should significantly reduce any type of discrimination issues. Since these programs are strictly voluntary, those who are agnostic or atheistic, will have the choice to not participate or to see the chaplain as a secular voice providing counsel and direction.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This study of corporate chaplaincy has been an interesting introduction into an important service being offered into corporate America. It is clear that chaplaincy currently fills a need for some companies in the U.S. and world today. As employees feel valued and listen to , they become motivated and this results in greater productivity and customer service. Whether this is a current corporate trend or whether this continues to evolve and expand remains to be seen but the value that a chaplaincy program can bring to an individual in need, is certainly the right ingredient for success.

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