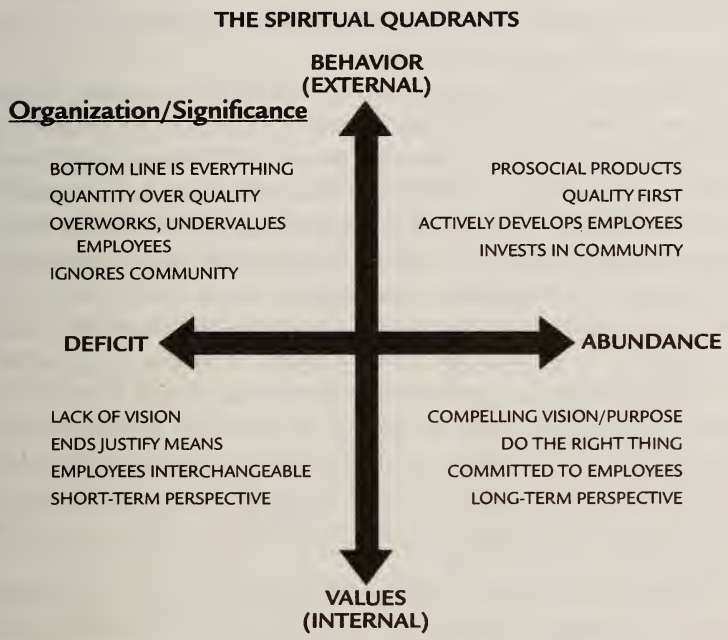
Purpose for Passion



To fuel spiritual energy, an organization must define a set of shared values and a purpose beyond its continuing profitability. That begins with asking the same questions of itself that we pose to individuals: "Who are you?" (What do you stand for?) And "What do you really want?" (What is your purpose?) Most large organizations dutifully take on this task, but often without much enthusiasm or commitment. Not surprising, the results seldom have much impact. Can you

name the values, the vision and the mission of your organization? Do they have any influence on your motivation or behavior?

Consider the example of a large company with characteristically lofty values: integrity, respect, excellence, and communication. Those were the stated values of Enron, the company whose massive accounting fraud led to its bankruptcy and the imprisonment of its top executives. Here was Enron's definition of integrity: "When we say we will do something, we will do it; when we say we cannot or will not do something, then we won't do it." Or respect: "We do not tolerate abusive or disrespectful treatment. Ruthlessness, callousness and arrogance don't belong here." Say what?

Or how about Reynolds American, the tobacco company whose cigarette brands include Camel, Salem, Winston, and Pall Mall? "We do the right thing," its values statement says. "We treat every person with respect, fairness and integrity." The right thing? Is that possible when your business is making and marketing cigarettes? The Reynolds America mission, is to be "the innovative tobacco company totally committed to building value through responsible growth." But what exactly *is* responsible growth for a tobacco company that acknowledges on its Web site that "Cigarette smoking is a leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States" and that "No tobacco product has been shown to be safe and without risks." Wouldn't it be more accurate for Reynolds to say its mission is to "convince people around the world to smoke as many cigarettes as possible, without being put out of business by the government or the courts?"

These may be extreme examples, but there is a deep disconnect between what many companies say they stand for and what they actually do. These disconnects take a toll on employee engagement and on their productivity. A review of more than 150 leadership studies found that integrity is the value employees care most about in their leaders. Honesty is second, and humility is third. The other qualities employees most value include care and appreciation, respect for others, fairness, listening responsively, and reflectiveness. "These leaders," the study concluded, "were more likely to motivate people, inspire trust, promote good relationships and achieve goals including increased productivity, lower rate of turnover and improved employee health."

The best evidence of an organization's values and mission is the

behavior of its leaders. "Many leadership theories emphasize the need for the leader to articulate an inspiring vision," writes Laura Reave, the author of the review of leadership studies. "But what is important is not so much words but rather actions: the level of ethics demonstrated, the respect and compassion shown to others." Employees are seven times more likely to be loyal to leaders they believe have high integrity, for example, than to those they do not.

AN INSPIRING PLACE TO WORK

So what are the lived values and the purpose of *your* organization based on the way it treats people, the products it creates, the services it provides, and the way it deals with customers and clients? Do those values and that purpose make you proud to work there? To whatever extent they don't, what does your organization need to do—or stop doing—to become a more inspiring place in which to work?

If you lead or manage others, here are the sorts of questions you might ask yourself and request others to answer about you:

- Do you actively support people in taking care of themselves physically? Do you model these behaviors yourself?
- Do you truly value, regularly recognize, and express appreciation to those who work for you?
- Do you respect and trust your employees and treat them as adults capable of making their own decisions about how best to get their work done?
- Do you believe passionately in what you're doing, and do you give the people who work for you a compelling reason beyond a paycheck to come to work every day?

"Leaders who emphasize spiritual values," Reave concludes, "are often able to awaken a latent motivation in others that has been found to increase both their satisfaction and productivity at work. These leaders do not so much transform individuals as awaken existing motivation."

The most universally despised of all qualities among leaders is

egocentricity—selfishness and self-absorption. People are more inspired by a compelling purpose, the research shows, than by a leader's personal charisma. In two-thirds of the companies that Jim Collins studied in *Good to Great,* for example, he found that the presence of a leader with a "gargantuan" ego eventually contributed to "the demise or continued mediocrity of the company." The best leaders, Collins concluded, "subjugate their own needs to the greater ambition of something larger and more lasting than themselves."

Two widely recognized schools of leadership draw explicitly on spiritual energy as a critical element. "Transformational leadership" is a term coined by the historian James MacGregor Burns in 1970 to describe great political leaders. The core principle is value-driven attentiveness to the needs of followers: supporting, coaching and mentoring them; celebrating their contributions; pushing them to take risks, learn, and grow; and inspiring in them a strong sense of purpose around meaningful goals. Transformational leaders set high standards and encourage those they lead to be less concerned with their personal agendas and more concerned with looking out for one another and for the organization as a whole. Transformational leaders also tend to be focused on "why"—the purpose of their actions. By contrast, conventional "transactional" leaders are more narrowly concerned with "how"—the tactics and steps required to reach any given goal.

Robert Greenleaf coined the term "servant leadership" in 1970, six years after his retirement from AT&T, where he spent forty years in charge of management development. Servant leadership starts, he has written, "with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. . . . Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served,* become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?"

Alan Mulally is an example of a rare CEO who sees his job as a calling. "In my mind, my life's work is to serve," he explains. "I have one

life, an integrated life that includes my work, my personal life, my spiritual life, and my family life. I manage all those pieces into my schedule, and I don't separate them out. I make sure everything I do serves one of those, and I commit my time and energy to those pieces in an integrated way. I build in exercise and tennis and hanging out with my wife. When my kids were growing up, I might go to a business meeting and then to a soccer game or a school recital. It's all part of the whole.

"The more each of us know what we're really contributing to, the more motivated and excited and inspired we are. The higher the order, the more energy it generates. So if you ask me if I'm here to make a living, or to be the best CEO in the history of mankind, or to make safe and efficient transportation that enables people to have a better life, I'd say it's the latter. I have one life, and I want to commit myself to something important. I want to go for the highest calling I can, and I do everything I can to help everyone I work with do the same thing."

DOING THE RIGHT THING

By coincidence, we've worked extensively at two very different divisions of Sony: Sony Pictures Entertainment, which is based in Los Angeles and makes movies and television, and Sony Europe, which is based in Surrey and markets and sells the company's consumer electronics across Europe. In their own ways, both companies set out to redefine and reenergize themselves by reconsidering their values and purpose, beginning with the way they invested in their employees.

For Michael Lynton and Amy Pascal, the co-chairmen of Sony Pictures, the changes they've overseen grew out of an explicit desire to better meet employee needs. The company was already successful, but Pascal, in particular, was determined to change the culture for the better. We began our work with the senior leadership team, focusing on them first as individuals. When leaders see an impact in their own lives, they're far more motivated to extend their experiences into the organization. Many Sony leaders made initial changes at the physical level, but over time they also created rituals around living their deepest values more fully in their everyday behaviors.

Pascal, for example, recognized that she instinctively avoids conflict and decided it was important to build a ritual that would help her to be more direct. She began by asking herself a simple question—"What is the right thing to do here?"—when she found herself in a situation that felt uncomfortable. She defined "the right thing" as doing what would serve Sony Pictures best in the long term, even if it made her personally uncomfortable in the short term. Often, that meant saying no to someone she liked or respected and didn't want to offend. Over time, the senior team created a variation on this theme for themselves, in the form of the "Code" ritual we described in chapter 13. "Saying the word 'Code' forces the other person to tell you what they're really feeling or what they really need when it's easier not to say anything," Pascal explains. "Ultimately, it's just one more reminder to people about being real."

Lynton, who is more introverted and less instinctively social than Pascal, built a ritual around being more intentionally appreciative of others. He made it a practice, for example, to regularly write notes and call people in the company as a way of recognizing their accomplishments. Other executives built rituals that not only helped them to be more efficient but also to better embody their values. Gary Martin, who heads studio operations, made it a ritual to turn off his e-mail entirely at certain points during the day and to take time in the afternoon to walk around and talk to his people about something other than business. David Bishop, who runs Home Entertainment, built a ritual around multitasking. "I'd often be on the phone with someone and reading my e-mails at the same time," he explains. "I realized that I wasn't truly listening to people, which is important to me, and I also wasn't really giving the right attention to what I was reading. Now I do one or the other but not both. I'm a better leader, and I'm more efficient in my job."

Keith LeGoy, the head of distribution for Sony Pictures Television International, focused his ritual on triggers—both as a practical tool but also as a way to treat people with more generosity of spirit. "The first step is awareness," he explains. "The quadrants helped give a name to triggers and why they happen. It sort of normalized them as something that everybody experiences. Now when I feel triggered, the first thing I do is stop, take ten seconds, and breathe deeply. That helps me to avoid getting emotionally pulled in. Then I can begin to

think and reengage my more rational side. I'll ask myself, 'How can I collaboratively approach this person in order to accomplish what I want?' I don't negate them. I try to hold their value and understand their point of view even if I don't agree with it. When you demonstrate to people that you truly value their perspective, they're disarmed and appreciative. It also gives me a more balanced view, so it's a win-win."

Pascal and Lynton shared their vision with all employees at a town hall meeting in the fall of 2008. It was grounded in a commitment to very specific values. "We've done well as a company," Lynton began, "but Amy and I have been wrestling lately with this question: What comes next? Where do we go from here? We decided that we needed to change the fundamental culture of Sony Pictures. And that's not about putting words on paper, it's about creating a feeling in your gut. Our culture has to make people excited and energetic about coming to work each day. Amy and I believe that creating a culture which can help us deal with chaos, work more closely together, and be more excited about our work depends on creating a community that's based on trust and transparency."

The core value they highlighted was an extension of Pascal's own commitment to "doing the right thing." "There are lots of behaviors that get in the way of winning by making people feel devalued," Pascal told the gathered employees. "When people feel devalued, they become unfocused, and when you're not focused, you can't win." She offered some examples: "You're trying to talk to somebody, and they're checking their BlackBerry. You walk into someone's office to have a conversation, and they make three phone calls while you're standing there. You're on your way to a meeting, only to find it's been canceled again or is starting twenty minutes later. These behaviors generate bad feelings. We want to provide you with as many resources and tools as possible to help everyone break these habits. It isn't just about being number one. That alone can't sustain us over time. It's about focusing on 'doing the right thing.'

"Everybody knows what it means to do the right thing. It means serving the greatest good even when it doesn't seem to be in your immediate self-interest. It means you don't make choices out of fear of failure or just because they seem expedient. You don't make choices that are quicker or easier or because it's what everyone else is doing.

I'm convinced that if we institute a culture of doing the right thing, we will be number one . . . and much more."

The second aspect of the vision had to do with the kind of culture they wanted to create for employees. "We're already known as talent-friendly," Pascal went on. "These talent relationships are not going to be any less important, but our relationships with each other are simply going to be more important. We want to be an *employee*-friendly studio. That's what is going to make our company not only successful but also great. And the way we are going to make Sony Pictures the best place to work for all of you is by investing in you. We want you to feel excited when you come to work in the morning but still energized when you go home at night. We want to create a culture where you feel valued and there is a spirit of reciprocity and mutual respect."

Three years after we launched our work with the senior executives, nearly every one of the 6,000 employees at Sony Pictures had gone through some version of our training, including those in Europe and Asia. Lynton and Pascal stuck with their commitment despite the difficult economy. More than 90 percent of those we've trained say it has helped them bring more energy to work every day. Eighty-eight percent say that the experience has made them more focused and productive. Eighty-four percent say they feel better able to manage demands and more engaged in their jobs.

At the organizational level, Sony Pictures has created a series of support structures for employees. It has built an intranet site devoted to the work we did and issues a regular newsletter describing people's experiences and insights. The company now subsidizes a healthy meal and a salad bar at a newly built employee cafeteria. It has also stocked vending machines with healthier foods and hired a dietician who is available for consultations with employees. The company has built a new, fully equipped gym on the lot that offers exercise classes, as well as yoga, nutrition, and wellness classes. It has created a large grassy commons area where people can relax and hang out. Sony also offers its employees paid time off each month to volunteer their services to nonprofit organizations.

"This has been about believing that the culture of the company is as important as the product," Pascal explains. "We're not fully there yet, but we now have a common language and shared principles, and

this experience has been enormously bonding. The culture we're creating is the adhesive. It's what holds the company together and makes you nimble and flexible enough that you're able to respond to whatever is happening in the marketplace."

PERHAPS WE CAN CHANGE MORE THAN WE THINK

At Sony Europe, the process evolved in a very different way. We began our work there in the wake of several years during which the consumer electronics division had struggled with rising competition from South Korea and China. Ultimately, the company was forced to close several factories and initiate significant layoffs, putting more demand on those who remained and driving down morale. In 2005, the division got a new president, Fujio Nishida, who had worked previously for Sony in Japan, Canada, Australia, and the United States. It was Roy White, the head of human resources under Nishida, who brought us in with a mandate to help reenergize employees who were feeling discouraged and burned out. White himself was feeling the same way.

"For two years," White explains, "I was barely holding on—struggling with budgets, reducing head count, managing the unions, and doing all the things in HR I don't like doing. Things that drained my spirit." White recognized that people were working longer and harder than ever and that it wasn't sustainable. He was committed to reenergizing the workforce, but he was also passionate about creating a truly great place to work—one in which people came to their jobs with a sense of purpose and pride.

Much as Lynton and Pascal did at Sony Pictures Entertainment, Nishida agreed to pilot our work with his team of executives in this case from all around Europe. "We were definitely taking a risk that these very senior, hardened executives would see this as a complete waste of time," White explains. "As it turned out, the feedback was incredible. The first response we got was 'It's such a relief that I'm not the only one who feels overwhelmed.' The second thing was that our leaders began to make significant changes in their lives. The third thing was that they began to see bigger possibilities for the company. We clearly tapped into something deep."

Our work began with taking four groups of senior executives—seventy in all—through a four-day version of our curriculum. At that point, Nishida and White made the decision to roll it out to 2,000 leaders and managers across the organization. Several leaders chose to make the work available to employees at every level. In some cases, they led the sessions themselves after training with us. "The work we did gave us permission to discuss basic needs such as eating, sleep, and exercise and make the link with business performance," explains Nishida. "It also helped many senior managers make really significant changes in their lives without the organization having changed first. That got many of us thinking, 'Perhaps we can change more than we thought we could.' It helped us build the confidence and the trust to take on the most fundamental assumption in our business—that if the parent company didn't change, then neither could we. We began to see each other in a new light, outside the limitations of the existing culture, so the true talents of our people could shine. We found a new voice and sense of purpose."

Steve Dowdle, the managing director of Sony UK, took the lead in implementing changes that ultimately spread throughout Europe. "This has not been a tinkering exercise," he said. "It's a radical transformation from product-centric to customer-centered and from being told what we're supposed to do to defining for ourselves who we are. We began by giving people the tools to build their own capacity, but then we needed to build the capacity of the organization as well. The work we did on ourselves—especially the spiritual work—helped us focus on the need to create a stronger purpose for the business. I had to take our new business model to Japan five times to get approval. I'm tenacious, but without knowing why you really want something to change, the forces of corporate pragmatism set in and you settle for less. The clarity of our new purpose—to serve the customer better than anyone else—helped us move from being a product-focused arm of Japan to a much more dynamic, locally focused business. That's been incredibly energizing and inspiring."

Roy Dickens was the executive charged with bringing the new customer-focused strategy to life in the United Kingdom. "What I came to understand," he says, "is that I love change. Not for its own

sake but because it brings out the best in me as a leader—creating, motivating, and inspiring a team with the passion to change the status quo. When you lead a team through change, you create a sense of family and community, which is good for everyone. As we implemented the new strategy, it quickly became apparent that my job would be one of the first to go. What amazed me was that I didn't fall into survival mode, even when I realized I was designing myself out of a job. I let go of the fear, and it was liberating. The reason that was possible is that I was doing something I believed in." As it turned out, Dickens was rewarded for his efforts with a new job as head of Sony's retail operations.

"I've seen the value at every level of the work we did," says Matthew Lang, Sony South Africa's managing director. "For me, the physical benefits have been huge, because I know now that I won't burn out. At the emotional level, I've learned a set of tools about how to manage myself and others that will serve me for the rest of my life. At the mental level, it was liberating, coming from a background as an engineer, to pay more attention to my gut instincts and to realize that I could actually learn to be creative. Maybe most important of all is the spirit level. I feel like I now have a map for my life, and I know I'm not alone in that. The best people in our organization have a renewed sense of purpose, which gives us more energy to face the challenges ahead. Without the culture shift, which has been profound, I think we would have lost many of our best people. We're a much better company to work for because so much more trust is being placed in people."

In Roy White's view the key to the transformation was tapping the energy of a purpose that came from within employees themselves. "We eventually created a tipping point," he explains, "a critical mass of people prepared to be brave enough to work on what they cared about and what they believed was right. I think that's what really came out of this work. It's always there in people, isn't it? It's just giving them the permission to allow that side of themselves to grow."

In December 2008, Fujio Nishida recorded a holiday video message for all Sony employees across Europe. He sent it out in the midst of a recession that had battered Sony's electronics division, but he chose not to dwell on the immediate problems. "What is the

future of this company?" he exhorted employees to ask themselves. "Is it something I can be proud of? That I would be happy that my children or grandchildren joined? Purpose and creativity are essential. Just focusing on business and financial objectives, you never think of that. But we can change Sony's destiny from here and that's a big idea. I want all nine thousand people thinking about that."

IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

An organization truly is a living organism—a human community that can realize its highest potential only when each individual is fully valued and feels fully vested in a shared purpose. The better people's needs are met, the better they feel and the better the organism functions as a whole. An organization that invests in its people across all dimensions of their lives and rallies them around an inspiring purpose is actually investing in itself. As individuals grow and increase their capacity, the organism as a whole gets stronger.

Think about this in your own experience. When you deeply believe in something and feel passionate about it, is there any doubt you bring far more energy to it? You have more reason to take care of yourself physically. You're more motivated to build better relationships and exercise control over your emotions. You have more motivation to resist distractions that keep you from focusing on what really matters most. It's all connected.

The best leaders are those with the most spacious, embracing vision of their roles. The wider, deeper, and longer range our awareness is, the bigger our world becomes. "I was never an overly reflective or philosophical person," Eugene O'Kelly, the former CEO of the accounting firm KPMG, wrote in the last months of his life, before he succumbed to brain cancer at the age of fifty-three. "Before my illness, I had considered commitment king among virtues. After I was diagnosed, I came to consider consciousness king among virtues. I began to feel that everyone's first responsibility was to be as conscious as possible all the time. . . . Looking at how some of the people around me had managed their lives, I lamented that they had not been blessed with this jolt to life. They had no real motivation or clear

timeline to stop what they were so busy at, to step back, to ask what exactly they were doing with their life. Many of them had money; many of them had more money than they needed. Why was it so scary to ask themselves one simple question: Why am I doing what I'm doing?"

Regularly asking yourself what you stand for and how you want to behave as a result—resisting the default into denial and self-deception—is the key to growing, learning, and evolving. Whether as individuals or as leaders, that requires a willingness to embrace ourselves in all our contradictions, complexities, and imperfections. It's contingent on having the strength to resist choosing sides too quickly in the fruitless pursuit of certainty.

It requires acknowledging the power of our self-serving survival instincts but also having the courage to make conscious choices to behave at our best, especially when we're tempted to default to our worst.

It means recognizing that as addicted as we can become to the speed and intensity of our lives, we're more creative and productive when we move intentionally between effort and renewal, action and reflection.

It requires balancing care for others with care for ourselves, the former because it gives life more meaning, the latter so we can realize our highest potential.

Above all, awareness requires recognizing that we're ultimately interdependent. Together we can enrich and renew the world we share rather than hasten its demise. That's true for each of us as individuals. It's even truer for those of us who are leaders and have the power to influence those we lead. And it is truest of all for organizations. It's in the workplace that we gather together every day and have the greatest collective opportunity to serve the highest good.

This is not just about a new way of working, it's also about a different way of life. What it will take is an evolutionary shift in the center of gravity in our lives from "me" to "us." That's an enormous leap, and time is running short. "We have to wake up," writes Ian McCallum, "to the privilege of what it means to be human."

In a world of rising population and dwindling resources, the

choice we face is stark. We can continue to be the continuing creatures of our undoing and the dinosaurs of the future, or we can serve as the "keepers of the zoo" and the true guardians of the extraordinary world we've been given.

The world is changing. Are you?

CHAPTER TWENTY ACTION STEPS

- What specific action can you take at work to serve a purpose beyond your immediate self-interest? Even if you can't change the organization you work for, can you behave every day in ways that are more in alignment with your own values and purpose? If you're a leader, can you articulate a purpose that is inspiring and compelling to those you lead?
- The most ineffective leaders are egocentric, selfish, and self-absorbed. How can you step beyond your own needs to better serve the needs of those you lead? If you're an individual contributor, how can you do so with your colleagues?
- The next time you find yourself in a difficult or challenging situation, ask yourself this question: "What is the right thing to do here?" Most of us know deep down the difference between doing the right thing and the wrong thing. Under pressure, we sometimes take the expedient route and then rationalize the choice we've made. Hold yourself to a higher standard.