Role of business leaders in the integrality of the working individual[1]

Introduction

In a world where the benefit to the common good has been overshadowed by the need to spur demand to increase profitability, one begins to wonder if business has turned a blind eye and if the workforce has grown so detached that who they are at work is different from who they are outside the workplace. Fragmentation (Alford and Naughton 2001) and compartmentalization (McIntyre as cited in Martin 2011, Rozuel 2011) at varying degrees and across different arenas have become possible traps for every worker.

Fragmentation arises from a divided life or a split personality – that is, embracing a distinct set of values at work and another set in non-work or private milieu. This happens when a worker subordinates one's moral judgment to support an organization's goals. Constantly changing masks creates a disjoint within the person (Alford and Naughton 2001 p. 7) and at the extreme may sometimes cause one to lose ones' soul as the person switches off his conscience in some spheres of his life (Naughton, 2006a). There is then a disconnection from one's inner self.

Meanwhile, compartmentalization refers to the manner by which individuals have managed to live in distinct spheres, separating their work from their spiritual and leisure lives, with the former often taking precedence (Naughton 2006b). It is a coping mechanism that effectively allows one to assume a "professional" persona and thus distance oneself from actions that otherwise one will have to accept blame for (Rozuel, 2011).

While business institutions recognize the robustness of human capital in the pursuit of sustainable wealth expansion, authentic human development requires a clear distinction between ends and means, whereby the progress of people and their right to live "worthwhile lives" is to be defended as "a goal in itself" (Anand & Sen, 2000, p. 2038). Work has to be a venue for each employee to gain "self-worth and dignity" and where one is able to achieve "fulfillment as a human being" (Zigarelli, 1993).

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It is therefore important for business to give prime importance to personal growth, defined by Rozuel (2011) as the "working towards a state of a whole self," which provides a "safe anchor" for the unfolding of "individuality" and the development of moral strength and consistency (Rozuel, 2011, p. 688).

Miller and Ewest (2010) came up with "The Integration Box," an important framework through which the increasing desire of people to live a "holistic" or "integrated life," which involves "integrating mind, body, and spirit in all spheres of life, including work" (p. 53), could be achieved. The achievement of integral human development demands that the organization is able to address the full range of needs of its people – material, intellectual, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual – in a "systematic, organized character" (Lerner, 2002, p. 16).

While only few organizations may assume "full responsibility" for the growth of its employees (Scott, 2003, p. 23), business no longer has autonomy and isolation from moral concerns (Grassl & Habisch, 2011) in a period when the role of classical economic principles as basis for corporate sustainability has reached a point of doubt (Nirenberg, 2009). Having seen the high costs of ethical fiascos, businesses have recognized more the role of right values and consistent ethical behavior (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008), which both reside in the individual.

Human Resource Intervention

The process through which the integrality of the human person could be pursued is through human resource interventions. This comes from the view that it is important to "look for purpose within the process itself" (Follet, 1995, p. 55) and that "the heart of the truth about integration is the connection between the relating of two activities, their interactive influence, and the values thereby created" (Follet, 1995, p. 35).

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) offers two strong pillars for human development: "the inviolable dignity of the human person and the transcendent value of moral norms" (Stormes, 2010, p. 9). Composed of guiding principles on "how business can and must take its place within society", CST puts "the good of all people and of the whole person" as it main goal (Sandelands, 2008, p. 96).

The most recent CST document is the encyclical entitled "Caritas in Veritate," written by Pope Benedict XVI on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of "Populorum Progressio," a treatise on the need for a true and universal solidarity by Pope Paul VI, one of his predecessors.

"Caritas in Veritate" emphasized the role of charity in truth, love which has been "received and given" and has to be shared and communicated, in the attainment of an integral human development (Benedict XVI, 2009).

In his article, "Pope Benedict XVI's "Caritas in Veritate": A Challenge to Business Ethics," Stormes (2010) explained how love illumined by truth can serve to direct economics, business, and ethics to come together for the pursuit of the authentic development of every person and of all humanity.

Laborem Exercens, written by Pope John Paul II, expounded on the value of "human work," more especially in bringing back the human person "within the Creator's original ordering". Through his work, man is able to share in the activity of his Creator and thereby perfects himself through the "discovery of the resources and values contained in the whole of creation" (John Paul II, 1981).

In essence, Laborem Exercens brings to the attention of the individual the ultimate reason for his work and therefore, provides a clear guide on the direction that human resource interventions ought to take in order to promote the perfection of the person – that is, towards union with his Creator, upon whom his total integrality depends. In practical terms, this could come in the form of utilization of "solitude as a space to authentically orient oneself" (Akrivou, Bourantas, Mo, & Papalois, 2011, p. 119) and the provision of opportunities for leisure, reflection, and values formation as a way to rediscover the Creator.

The Role of Leadership

The working environment in an organization while shaped by many factors is inevitably influenced by its leader. It is for this reason that the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace directed a reflection publication so that business leaders may ruminate on their influencing power over individuals who work with them in achieving corporate goals. In essence, business leaders were called upon to consider how decisions they make impact on the common good (Harrington, Childs, & Briel, 2000).

Taking off from the definition of leadership as "the process of influencing people toward achieving an objective," it follows that leadership should focus primarily on people – that is, on motivating, energizing, directing, and aligning them (Kotter, 1990). To sustain commitment and motivation, leaders should help their people embrace the purposefulness of their work (Kainz, 2008).

Under the concept of authentic leadership, business leaders have to know how to recognize that "the business of business is the human person" (Sandelands, 2008, p. 93) and not simply profit making. Dealing with employees as mere factors of production and as instruments to achieve corporate objectives come from a poor idea and valuation of the human person by leaders (Sandelands, 2008), equating his worth to what he can produce (Cusick, 2006).

Leaders should try to live, develop, and promote values or principles that are of greater worth than self-interest. This type of leadership enables and influences others to gain strong individual character, primarily through the incarnation of rooted values in deep internalization (Dayaram, 2010; Drew, 2010; Litzinger & Schaefer, 1982). Empowerment of both leaders and employees in values is what will give wisdom to consider the bigger picture of business as not solely for profits (Naughton & Specht, 2011, p. 1).

The effectiveness of a leader greatly depends on his proficiency in the different areas of leadership (Atienza, 2011). Proficient leadership sustains trust and credibility, the factors that ease access to followership and cooperation (Robbins, 2008).

Acting as the "guardian of organizational purpose" (Montgomery, 2008, p. 59), the leader generates, refines, and acts on the vision, and provides the main links between strategic planning and operational decision-making (Gluck, 1981). This also means that it is the function of the leader to keep the integral parts of a business in right balance while pushing the organization in delivering its products and services (Montgomery, 2008).

Practical Implications

Current business leaders are increasingly becoming more aware that acts toward the common good starts from within. While many have manifested their commitment to social responsibility initiatives, there is the need to ensure that one's own workforce is treated justly and humanely. In so doing, one begins to look at workers as whole individuals rather than factors of production.

Leaders of the future must be oriented so that they are guided by principles that respect the dignity of the human being. Education plays a key role in shaping the core of young adults who are likely to lead organizations. Business schools in particular have the moral responsibility to live and thus reinforce values that serve to integrate rather than disintegrate. For instance, by coupling technical skill development with ethical decision making, products of the institution will be able to

instinctively make decisions that consider the well-being of the common good.

Conclusions

While there are many challenges that a worker encounters inside and outside the workplace, it is possible to remain integral and not to disintegrate amidst so much pressures, provided organization is there to support such integrality as espoused by the business leader. At the core of the common good concept is a distinction between two kinds of goods, instrumental and inherent goods (Alford and Naughton 2002, p. 35). Within this common good model, both managers and workers have to "create conditions within the firm that foster a holistic notion of human development" (p. 41) involving nourishment for the spirit as well as a source of income for supplying our physical needs (p. 37).

In the end, the happiness, purposefulness, and fulfillment of every worker are the bottom line issues being addressed in this study. These are also the clear indicators that the integrality of the human person is achieved.

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