A Spirituality Leadership Competency Model: What Does It Take To Be A Spiritual Leader In Business?

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Abstract

Academic and popular literature offer abundant perspectives regarding what it takes to be a leader in a business environment. But what does spirituality in business leadership look like? In 2010, the undergraduate business text book, Management by Schermerhorn, mentions and briefly defines spirituality in the workplace and its relationship to values based leadership. In my research, I have focused on the definition of spirituality in business and how it operates at work. I observed and interviewed individuals, specifically in top executive management, regarding how they operationalize spirituality in their business leadership practice. How should spirituality at work be defined? What does spirituality in business leadership look like? This paper explores these questions and provides a description of a spirituality leadership competency model.

This paper attempts to provide a spirituality leadership competency model for business students and leaders. The idea of spirituality in the workplace and a spiritual business leader is not a new one but it can be a controversial topic to discuss in the workplace and in a business classroom setting. For some individuals and organizations, the term spirituality is often associated with religion. And as such is considered a taboo topic in a business setting. Additionally, the ongoing fluidity of the meaning of spirituality makes it difficult to find a common vocabulary and context to discuss the integration of spirituality with all our human roles, including workplace leadership. However, this challenge brings with it the opportunity to reflect upon the word “spirituality” and what it means, both in the broad context of humanity, and in specific circumstances such as business life. The writer and business leader, Gregory Pierce, appropriately described trying to define spirituality as trying to nail jello to a tree (1999). Many leadership consultants and researchers have written about the practices and processes of spirituality and leadership using terms such as spirit, whole-person, whole-soul, spiritual and most recently engaging leadership.

When preparing to interview senior level executives and CEOs regarding their definition of spirituality and how it informs their leadership practices and processes, it was useful to frame the discussion using Gilbert Fairholm’s definition of spirituality and spiritual leadership: “possessing the elements and characteristics of spiritual leadership, such as community, competence, continuous improvement, a higher moral standard, servant leadership, stewardship, visioning, and living out deeply held personal values of honoring forces or a presence greater than self” (1997, p. 112). Although each interview participant used different words and stories to define and describe spirituality, similar themes revealed deeply held personal values and the honoring of God or a higher purpose greater than the leader’s self. The leaders also described
the ways in which aspects of their spirituality were reflected in their leadership style, including individual behaviors, values, actions, relationships, connections and choices they made in their executive roles.

The idea that the leader’s primary task is to lead an organization in such a way that everyone’s personal spiritual values are related to work values is a new way of thinking about leadership (Fairholm, 1997, p. 1). Traditional approaches to business and management sciences theory have been based on leaders motivating followers to perform work roles in effective and efficient ways. However, many studies indicate that employees want and demand more meaning, purpose, and fulfillment from their organizational cultures, work leaders, and work processes. Workers want to know that they contribute not only to their own emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being but also to the good of society. This view of work and the workplace signals a radical shift from traditional management techniques and business curriculum that focuses on functional roles and a need to begin to incorporate spirituality into management education curricula. This need for integration of one’s spirituality with one’s work echoes St. Paul’s words defining spirituality: “one way of life, the way of spirituality, is the way of life led, ordered, or influenced by the Spirit of God.”

How do Catholic colleges and universities engage students in the field of business in a discussion of spirituality leadership in the workplace? How do Catholic colleges and universities create a context for discussing spirituality in business as opposed to religion in business? How does one integrate the whole self, values, purpose, and belief in a higher purpose or being into every aspect of one’s life and most especially in work? These are the questions this paper addresses by providing a discussion of the definition of the term “spirituality” followed by a discussion of spirituality defined in business management and the core ideas of spiritual leadership in business as viewed by leadership practitioners and consultants. Then, a brief overview of what top executive business leaders say about spirituality is discussed. In addition, ways in which leaders practice operationalizing spirituality into their business leadership are discussed. Based upon recent leadership research and analysis of leadership interviews about spirituality, seven spirituality leadership competencies – possesses self-knowledge, models behaviors, connects to a higher purpose, believes in the future, commits to successful business, manages balance and counterbalance, and communicates deeply - are proposed in a spirituality leadership competency model. This paper concludes with a discussion regarding how a leadership spirituality competency model can deepen and expand the definition of business leadership in Catholic higher education’s business programs.

A Definition of Spirituality

If we are to include a spirituality competency model in Catholic higher education business programs, we must agree on a definition. The term spirituality has experienced changes in its connotation several times throughout history. These changes reflected the political, social, philosophical, and religious aspects of specific periods in time, and in the development of humanity. There has been fluidity regarding whether spirituality is an integral component of our understanding of what it means to be human and it has also been compartmentalized to refer only to experiences that were non-material or non-corporeal. The Latin for spirituality, spiritualitas is an abstract noun like the words beauty or honesty and was derived from the noun spiritus and the adjective spiritualis (Farina, 1983, p. 130). In Latin translations of letters written by followers of the Catholic Pauline tradition, these words were used to describe the opposition of two ways of life. One way, the way of spirituality, was the way of life in which the person was led, ordered, or influenced by the Spirit of God. The other way of life was described as “all that is opposed to
the Spirit of God” (Sheldrake, 1991, p. 43). In this early usage of the term spirituality, a spiritual person was not someone who turned away from material reality but rather someone in whom the Spirit of God dwelled…and acted as to advance in spirituality (Sheldrake, 1991 p.43). This contextual definition and general Pauline definition was found throughout the ninth to thirteenth century (Sheldrake, 1991, p. 43).

Under the influence of a new philosophical trend in theology in the twelfth century, the intellectual roots of distain for anything corporeal began to emerge and as such the term spirituality began to take on the meaning of opposition to material reality. In the thirteenth century, both meanings stood side by side. For example, a computerized concordance of Thomas Aquinas’s writings, Busa found that Aquinas used the Pauline sense of the word spirituality over 5,000 times, and that sense of the word that is opposed to corporeal related matter more than 70 times (Busa as cited in Principe, 1983, p. 131).

An additional sense of the word spirituality also came into being at this time; the sense that spirituality referred to the clerical estate. This was the most frequent usage of the word from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The clergy were referred to as the “lords spiritual” as opposed to the “lords temporal” who exercised civil jurisdiction (Sheldrake, 1991, p.m. 43). By the fourteenth century, the team spirituality which once referred to a way of life that integrated the material realm with the realm of a higher power has evolved to a compartmentalized, dualistic usage that separated the material realm from the spiritual realm as well as being used to describe religious clergy within society.

At this time, the Latin gave way to English and French translations of the word spiritualitas and continued to be used in the context of the religious realm or for ecclesiastical persons or properties. In the seventeenth century, the French began to use the term to express a personal, affective relationship with God. And, we see the rise of other words to express a similar meaning. These words included “devotion” used by the Anglican Church, “perfection” used by the Methodist Church, and “piety” used by the Evangelicals. Other groups of individuals, practicing mysticism as a form of communication with God, used the word spirituality to describe their way of life. In this context, spirituality took on a negative connotation referring to those groups that were outside the mainline churches (Sheldrake, 1991, pp. 43 – 44).

The early twentieth century saw publications of books such as the Manual of Spirituality and The Christian Spirituality. In 1932 the Dictionary of Spirituality began publication. And in 1943 the Catholic Institute of Paris established a chair in the History of Spirituality. Studies of the spirituality of individuals such as John Calvin and Ignatius of Loyola and non-Christian religions such as Islam, Hindu, and Buddhist began to appear. There were studies of the spirituality of matter; the spirituality of the human voice was examined. Cross and Crown, now known as Spirituality Today, began publication in 1949. In 1964, the French dictionary provided a definition that linked spirituality with the soul, describing spirituality as a set of principles that regulated a person’s spiritual life (Principe, 1983, pp. 128 – 129). In the English language, the religious sense of the word continued into the early nineteenth century. Later, the term began to be used to differentiate between so-called Western materialism and what was viewed as the superiority of Indian religions such as Hinduism (Principe, 1983, p. 133). And, in English usage, the word continued to be defined as an attachment to things of the spirit as opposed to material and worldly interests.

As educators of current and future business leaders, we must be prepared to clarify this fluidity in the meaning of spirituality. If spirituality is to be a component of business and
management sciences theory as well as curriculum, we must be willing to define spirituality so that it can be an area of discipline and study. Farina (1989) saw the issues of defining spirituality as opportunities:

The final opportunity created by the use of this term arises from the linkage between spirituality and praxis. Whatever it may mean, spirituality is used to connote the way humans live out their faith, or at least their moral commitments. Both the attitudes engendered by their relationship to those ultimate values and the actions that flow from them are the stuff of spirituality. (p. 30)

With this in mind, attention is shifted to distinguishing between spirituality and religion.

**Distinguishing Between Spirituality and Religion**

Research studies concerned with spirituality and transformational leadership have found that the topic of “religion” is taboo in the workplace, and some attempts at studying spirituality in the workplace have been confused with attempts to study “religion” (Jacobsen, 1994; Zwart, 2000; Hahn D’Errico, 1998; Marko, 2002) which resulted in a reluctance to enter into a discussion of spirituality. A review the literature of contemporary scholars such as Fowler, Hayes, Wilbur, and Taylor also points to similar confusion. These scholars often used words and expressions such as faith, spirit, the Great Chain of Being, and religion, interchangeably with the word spirituality.

Fowler, in his study identifying the six stages of faith development, defined faith as the values that humans center love and loyalties around. “Faith is a search for an overarching, integrating, and grounding trust in a center of value and power sufficiently worthy to give our life unity and meaning” (Fowler, 1995, p. 5). One looked to something to love that loves in return; something to value that gave value; something to honor and respect that has the power to sustain one’s being. “Faith is not a separate, compartmentalized dimension of life. It is an orientation of the total person, giving purpose and goal to one’s hopes and strivings, thoughts and actions” (Fowler, 1995, p. 14). Defined in this manner, faith widens one’s belief far beyond the specific domain of religion. According to Fowler, religion was a cumulative tradition that was constituted by texts of scripture or law, including myths, narratives, prophecies, accounts of revelations, and so forth (p. 9).

Moreover, Fowler found that faith was at once deeper and more personal than religion. Faith was a person or group’s way of responding to the transcendent value and power as perceived and grasped through the forms of the cumulative tradition. Faith involved an alignment of the will, a resting of the heart, in accordance with a vision of transcendent value and power, one’s ultimate concern. According to Fowler (1995), faith was an active mode of being and committing, a way of moving into and giving shape to one’s experiences of life. Faith was always relational; there was always another in faith (p. 16). One did not commit oneself because one ought to. One invested and devoted oneself because the other to which one committed has intrinsic excellence or worth and because commitment promised to confer value on oneself. In each of the roles one played, in each significant relationship one had with others, in each institution of which one participated, humans are linked to others in shared trusts and loyalties to centers of value and power. In each of these contexts one served common goals, held shared meanings, remembered shared stories, and celebrated and renewed common hopes. One’s identity and faith must somehow bring these diverse roles, contexts, and meanings into an integrated workable unity. In so doing, faith provided a way of seeing everyday life.
Although Fowler did not explicitly relate faith to spirituality, there seems to be a relationship between Fowler’s description of faith and the definition of spirituality. Like the early definition of spirituality, faith was not compartmentalized, instead it was an orientation of the total person.

Hayes proposed that a clear distinction must be made between spirituality and religion so that a clear and rigorous debate may occur within the sphere of psychology. His review of the literature sought a clear definition between religion and spirituality and found: The term religion was often used generically and interchangeably to refer to spirituality and religion. The use of the term religion brought negative overtones; and therefore, it was critical for scholarly dialogue to be able to differentiate between spirituality and religion. Hayes’ review of the literature revealed several scholars who did make a distinction between religion and spirituality. The definition of religion included dimensions such as ritual, myth, and doctrine, social and experiential. Other scholars defined spirituality as a sense of right relationship with the self, the world, and the sacred. These scholars pointed out that a person may be spiritual but not religious or religious but not spiritual (Hayes, 2001, pp. 112 – 113).

Similarly, the psychologist K. Wilbur’s work addressed the challenges of integrating “science and religion” (Wilbur, 1998, p. 3). Wilbur (1998) stated that defining “religion” is difficult and he utilized a term “the great chain of being” and defined it as:

> Reality is a rich tapestry of interwoven levels, reaching from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit. Each senior level ‘envelopes’ or ‘enfolds’ its junior dimensions – a series of nests within nests within nests of Being – so that every thing and event in the world is interwoven with every other, and all are ultimately enveloped and enfolded by Spirit, by God, by Goddess, by Tao, by Brahman, by the Absolute itself. (pp. 6 – 7)

W. C. Roof, professor of Religion and Society at the University of California, conducted a study, which offered the following differentiation, “The two realms have become disjointed, according to the majority of our respondents. To be religious conveys an institutional connotation…. To be spiritual, in contrast, is more personal and empowering, and has to do with the deepest motivations of life” (Roof, 1994, pp. 76 – 77). Likewise, psychologist Eugene Taylor (1999) described the difference between spirituality and religion mainly as an opening in a deeper level of experience and perception (p. 7).

Although many scholars differentiated between the terms spirituality and religion, it was also clear that operationally many individuals do not differentiate between religion and spirituality; therefore, the definition of spirituality continues to be fluid. However, this fluidity provided an opportunity to continue to think about developing the term and what it means in business management. With this framework in mind, attention turned to definitions of spirituality in business management.

**Spirituality Defined in Business Management.**

A number of research studies have been directed at defining spirituality and its relationship with transformational leadership in secular settings. In 1994, respondents in Dr. Stephen Jacobsen’s study provided many diverse meanings for spirituality including: a relationship with a transcendent power; a guide for personal values and meaning making; a way of understanding the world; an inner awareness; and a means of personal integration. Hahn D’Errico’s 1998 study found that study participants, organizational development consultants, defined spirituality “in terms of universal principles such as unity, interconnectedness, love, compassion, energy and intuition”. In another study examining transcendence in the organization, Lund Dean (2002) defined spirituality in terms of “employee experiences at work
that surpass everyday meaning by facilitating some fulfilling relationship with a higher power or transcendent being” (Lund Dean, 2002).

Vail (1996) describes spirituality as a decision to open one’ self to a transcendent source of meaning. Learning then becomes a way of being; a life-long journey and search for meaning and purpose. Genuine spirituality was the willingness to enter into a dialogue about meaning with oneself and others, to stay with it for a period of time and to remember that no one has found the compelling once and for all answer regarding meaning and purpose (Vaill, 1996, pp. 179 – 180). The scholar and educator, Parker Palmer (1993) in his essay Leading from Within described spirituality as the leader’s power to create the conditions under which other individuals or groups must live and move and have their being. A leader is a person who must take special responsibility for what is going on inside him or her self, inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more harm than good (p. 7). Fairholm (1998) stated that spirituality in the corporation referred to the inner values of the leader and the followers – the mature principles, qualities, and influences that people implicitly exhibited in behavior and interactions with others. Thus, the integration of the many components of one’s work and personal life into a comprehensive system for managing the workplace defined the holistic or spiritual (whole person) leadership approach.

Former Fulbright scholar and professor, D. Marcic (1997) defined spirituality in terms of one’s relationship to the world:

Spirituality is one’s means of connecting with that other world, and it is fostered by certain beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. One sees indications of humanity’s spiritual development in relationships with the material world – for instance, in how people treat other people and the environment, as well as in attitudes toward work. (p. 2)

Moreover, spirituality has been linked to transformational leadership. In 1978, James MacGregor Burns conducted what is now known as the foundational work in defining transformational leadership:

The transforming leader also recognizes and exploits an existing need of a potential follower. But beyond that the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents. (p. 4)

Transformational leadership implies a changing of the individual as well as the group. It is self-actualizing and enables leaders and followers to reach higher levels of accomplishment and motivation. It releases human potential for the collective pursuit of common goals (Fairholm, G., 1994). This kind of self-actualization, this selflessness and commitment is what Fowler (1981) called a dedication to a “universal community.” He regarded Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Mother Theresa as examples of self-actualized leaders (pp. 201 – 202). Self-actualized leaders have a capacity to learn from others and their environment. Burns (1978) suggested that because “leaders themselves are continually going through self-actualization processes, they are able to rise with their followers … to respond to their transformed needs and thus to help followers move into self-actualization processes” (p. 117).

Kouzes and Posner (1993), who have conducted research with more than 1500 people from around the world and have collected over 400 case studies regarding leadership, described leadership as a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow. Moreover Kouzes and Posner (1993) found that the qualities of
honesty, inspiration, and competence were the three most enduring traits that followers sought in a leader:

In sorting out how people felt when working with leaders they admired, we analyzed the themes that were expressed in over four hundred case examples of admired leaders. Every case was about a leader who uplifted the spirit. Every story was one of enhanced self-worth. Every example was about how admired leaders strengthened the people around them and made others feel more important. The conclusion is inescapable: when people work with leaders they admire and respect, they feel better about themselves. Credible leaders raise self-esteem. Leaders who make a difference to others cause people to feel that they too can make a difference. They set people’s spirits free and enable them to become more that they might have thought possible. (p. 31)

Burns also pointed out that leaders elevate the human spirit. “Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related become fused raising the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both the leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both” (J. M. Burns as cited in Kouzes and Posner, 1993, p. 187).

In Jacobsen’s (1994) empirical study which explored the connections between spirituality and transformational leadership in business found the following five conclusions: 1. The word “spirituality” was meaningful to this group of transformational leaders, 2. Spirituality was important to this group of transformational leaders, 3. There was a strong inference that spirituality and transformational leadership related to aspects of human experience, 4. These transformational leaders viewed the realms of spirituality and the secular world as integral to each other, 5. All leadership is spiritual leadership (pp. 94 – 96).

Fairholm (1998) suggested there are different conceptions of leadership depending upon an individual’s perspective, cultural frame, or stage of development. One of those leadership models was what Fairholm named “spiritual (whole person) leadership” finding that there was a “significant connection between a leader’s (or worker’s) ability to have a transformational effect on the organization and his or her disposition towards spirituality” (1998, p. xxiii).

Mitroff and Denton (1999) explored spirituality, religion, and values in the workplace resulting in the following findings. First, the respondents did not have widely varying definitions of spirituality. Second, people did not want to compartmentalize or fragment their lives. Third, respondents generally differentiated between religion and spirituality. Fourth, people sought models of practicing spirituality in the workplace without offending their coworkers or causing acrimony. Fifth, lacking positive role models of how to practice spirituality in the workplace, many people, not all were terribly afraid to use the words spirituality and soul. Sixth, one of the most significant findings that emerged from the research was the existence of a relatively small number of models for practicing spirituality in the workplace. Seventh, there was an especially strong tendency in Western culture to identify spirituality exclusively as an individual phenomenon. Eighth, the interviewees did not see spirituality as a “soft phenomenon.” And ninth, ambivalence and fear were two of the most important components of spirituality. Mitroff and Denton (1999) described ambivalence and fear as the unsettled feelings that are associated with the idea that spirituality in the workplace is managed and thus could be misused. And until “all of us learn to manage our fear and ambivalence, we will be prone to wall off spirituality from our everyday lives” (p. 168).

In summary, although there has been continuous publication regarding spirituality and business leadership practices, there has been little direct empirical research regarding the
perspectives of CEOs and senior level executives regarding the definition of spirituality and how it informs their leadership practices.

**Business Leaders Perspectives of Spirituality**

In the course of my research, I examined the relationship between spirituality and leadership at work. Individual leaders were asked to describe how they define spirituality. As outlined earlier in this paper, agreeing upon a definition of spirituality is a difficult task. For this reason, each leader was provided with Fairholm’s definition of spirituality taken from his book: *Capturing the Heart of Leadership: Spirituality and Community in the New American Workplace*. Respondents were also informed that this research was not focused on their religion or religious beliefs. In this way, respondents were willing to participate in the research study. Table 1 represents the primary themes evident in how respondents define spirituality.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions of Spirituality</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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| Values                     | Principles that guide behavior  
                          | Core values such as integrity, respect, impact  
                          | High moral values and deeply held personal values that guide actions and behaviors |
| Higher Power               | Belief in a Higher Power that provides purpose greater than one self |
|                           | Belief in a Higher Power that is greater than one’s self |
| Connection                 | Connection to others through spirituality  
                          | Relationships with others and how these relationships are actualized |
| Essence of Our Being       | Essential characteristic of who we are as humans  
                          | Condition of complete simplicity and authenticity without ego  
                          | Self-knowledge and comfort with self |

Each of the leaders described spirituality as the basic substance of one’s humanity, values, belief in a higher power, and connection with others.

**Business Leaders Describe Integrating Spirituality into Leadership Practice**

Spirituality informed the leadership practices of CEOs and senior executives in the way in which they related to individuals and stakeholders within the organization and as well as through the values the leaders articulated and practiced. These respondents believed the leader’s character was one of the single-most important components in leadership. Table 2 represents the primary themes in how respondents describe what spirituality at work means to them.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Spirituality at Work Means to These Leaders</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Practices</td>
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<td>Modeling Values and Behaviors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shows the way</td>
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<td>Talks about the values</td>
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<td>Demonstrates alignment between words and actions</td>
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<td>Behaviors that include honesty, fairness, ethics,</td>
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<td>respect for free will, consistency, service,</td>
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<tr>
<td>listening</td>
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<td>Consciousness</td>
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<td>Making conscious decisions and choices</td>
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<td>Free will regarding decisions and choices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balance and Counterbalance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compassionate to everyone who is trying to do the</td>
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<td>organization</td>
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Holistic view of employees
Information regarding decisions is shared
Balance values with business competencies; values must be integrated into strategy

**Mission, Vision, and Values Statements**
Spirituality informs the operating relationships with stakeholders and business partners
Values are discussed with employees, stakeholders, and business partners

**Connection and Communication**
Connection to a higher purpose
Create a work environment filled with love, vision, and core values
Motivating individuals to do the impossible

The leaders described how spirituality affected their operating models. Many of the leaders cited the way in which they develop their mission and value statements, how they operated in their relationships with others, and how they made investments in their employees and the community. These leaders believed that the way in which they actualized their spirituality resulted in the organization’s positive business results.

**Spirituality Leadership Competency Model**

Based on this leadership research, interviews, and my experiences as a business executive, the following Spirituality Leadership Competency Model has been developed. These competencies and behaviors describe leaders who believe in leaving a sustainable legacy, are concerned with their followers’ inner and outer selves, inspire followers, and have a positive impact on their community and global economic stability.

**Inner Self**
The leader:
Brings his or her whole self to work – he or she is authentic
Takes time for dialogue and reflection
Makes a commitment to self and organization
Seeks continuous improvement and self-actualization
Understands what makes him or her creative and effective

**Connection**
The leader:
Believes there is a connection to a greater meaning and purpose beyond oneself
Sees the organization contributing to the greater good
Demonstrates love, respect, and community
Creates mutual and reciprocal goals and values
Supports individuals and the organization

**Role Modeling**
The leader:
Lives his or her values in corporate life

**Interactive Trust**
The leader:
Practices active listening
Creates an environment in which deep listening and dialogue can occur
Builds and shares common goals
Acts and behaves consistently and fairly
Makes a positive impact on the business
Handles emotions within themselves and others

**Letting Go**
The leader:
Believes in the future
Is able to quickly move from emotion to action
Foresight
The leader:
Takes action without all the data
Makes deliberate choices and takes actions that take advantage of opportunities
Takes the lead ahead of the problem
Conceptualizes that not all challenges can be overcome or opportunities grasped

Successful Business Impact
The leader:
Makes money and profit for individuals, the organization, and the community
Contributes to the common good by providing service
Is accountable, taking responsibility for his or her commitments

In the last decade, there has been much research regarding spirituality leadership. As we continue to learn from our experiences, and from our interactions with each other and the global economy, our knowledge of business leadership will renew and grow, adding many more dimensions to this model.

Discussion
There are inherent tensions and paradoxes between integrating a leadership spirituality competency model with the conceptualization that business leadership’s only responsibility is stockholder valuation. The current cultural context of business in the United States is a culture that focuses primarily on the bottom line. Business results are reported on a quarterly basis, causing shorter business planning horizons. In recent years, many business organizations have collapsed due to unethical leadership decisions and actions, resulting in bankruptcy and the loss of income to stockholders, employees and society. In order to produce profits, leaders have cut costs by moving organizational capabilities to other countries or by laying off employees, resulting in high unemployment percentages. In this context, many employees are expressing a disconnection from meaning, vision, and purpose in the workplace. Paradoxically, in the most productive and wealthiest country in the world, some individuals do not feel personally productive; therefore, they may not feel complete.

There are imbalances in the way business leadership is approached. Culturally and historically, business has been managed using economic and scientific paradigms that focus on command and control, supply and demand, and price theory. These approaches to business leadership create a business world filled with competition, winners, and losers. Perhaps it is time to open the lens of business leadership to include more than the paradigms of power that are based on command and control, or results that are based solely on the bottom line, or productivity that is based on an imbalance of personal productivity. Perhaps one way to interpret this seemingly paradoxical world of tensions and predicaments is through the lens of what the leaders in this research study say about spirituality and business leadership. This call to explore spirituality and business leadership can deepen and expand how Catholic business programs define leadership and management. Business and religious studies faculty may wish to consider the following:

1. Differentiating between spirituality and religion should be a topic of dialogue in religious study and business curriculum. The literature has shown there is confusion, among many individuals, distinguishing between religion and spirituality. Many times the terms are
used interchangeably. Moreover, many business faculty as well as business students take the
position that the discussion of religious beliefs are sensitive topics and as such are reticent to
openly discuss religion or spirituality. Many believe that religion has no place in a business
environment. The respondents in my research were willing to discuss spirituality and values
which were based upon their religion but did not want to discuss their religious beliefs.
These leaders stated that one of the issues related to integrating spirituality into the
workplace was the confusion related to distinguishing between religion and spirituality.
Several thought that openly demonstrating one’s spiritual beliefs was difficult because the
behavior involved total commitment of an authentic self and as a result opened the leader and
individuals to being vulnerable. Catholic higher education can provide the context and
setting for differentiating between spirituality and religion thus allowing individuals to enter
into dialogue regarding spirituality and leadership.

2. *Spirituality informs leadership practice.* The literature has shown that many
business leaders integrate their spirituality and belief in God into their leadership practices.
In my research, leaders articulated definitive responses when asked to describe their
spirituality and how it affects their roles as leaders. Spirituality informs their leadership
practices by providing meaning and purpose to their leadership role. They perceive and
describe themselves as living out deeply held personal values of honoring forces or a
presence greater than self. These leaders choose to be spiritual leaders in business. They
take the initiative to implement and operationalize spirituality leadership competencies that
are most meaningful to them, their organizations, and society. Providing students with the
opportunity to reflect upon and discuss their experiences as well as business cases of a
spirituality leadership competency model prepares students to be leaders who define their
roles beyond the sole purpose of achieving stockholder value at all costs.

3. *There are many ways to incorporate spirituality into leadership practices.*
Catholic higher education builds core values such as ethics, service, and stewardship.
Business and religious studies curriculum can provide opportunities for students to reflect
upon their core values and how they wish to demonstrate these values in their leadership.
Topics that can be explored are social entrepreneurship, social justice, community building,
and stewardship.

**Conclusion**

Spirituality and a spirituality leadership competency model are valid ways to perceive
successful leadership. They provide methods and practices that a leader who chooses to practice
spiritual leadership can adopt operationally within an organization. There are many individuals
working in organizations who are wondering why organizations are not working well. Many are
questioning their work and their organizations. They question the value of their work. They
question the constant change and uncertainty about the well being of the organization and its
capabilities. They question why success seems to come at the sacrifice of giving up personal
meaning and objectives. They question why so many organizations focus on command and
control as a means of controlling individuals and productivity. Organizations are experiencing
mergers and acquisitions, accounting scandals, and employee layoffs while struggling to forecast
their economic futures. If, as other leadership thinkers and leaders have stated, the corporation is
the representative social institution of the United States, then as business management begins to
include spirituality and spirituality leadership in its discussion and training, the field will
continue to evolve to what it means to be competent leaders of organizations that are at the
center of society.
References