

Work Daze: Buddha in the boardroom

by *Bob_Goldman*

Good news! Today's column is not being written by the same mental midget who usually pontificates on office life from this soapbox. Instead, you have the extreme good fortune to be reading the opinions of someone whose views have won recognition from the famous Fondazione di Vittorio.

Feel free to faint in my esteemed presence.

For me the real honor is not that the award comes with a trifling bit of cash - \$500,000 to be exact. What thrills me is the recognition, at long last, for my work in developing a nation of workplace slackers, slugs and shysters. Since I had never heard of the Fondazione, I must admit that even I was surprised when I received the award announcement in a personal e-mail from Mr. Vikki Malcom, the "foundation officer." According to Malcom, collecting my prize simply required me to send some inconsequential data concerning my bank accounts, PIN numbers, and credit card information to claimspayoutdept@yahoo.it.

Why the foundation needs this personal information is a mystery, but I'm sure I can trust them. After all, they do insist that while the majority of the money is to be spent for "personal business development," at least "15 percent of the awarded funds should be used to "develop a part of your environment."

For my part, I can think of no better improvement in my part of the environment than to use those green greenbacks to purchase copies of Nancy Spears new book, "Buddha: 9 to 5 - The Eightfold Path to Enlightening Your Workplace and Improving Your Bottom Line."

News of the Buddha book also came my way via e-mail, and while it didn't come with \$500,000, it did help identify the bald fellow in saffron robes and sandals who has been spotting scurrying in and out of the CEO's office. (Turns out he was the CEO's aroma therapist, but you never know.)

According to Ms. Spears, the message of the Buddha "can save corporate America from its chaos and corruption and initiate healthy change in the workplace." Once a company embraces Buddha business basics, she insists, it will "wake up," and, in achieving enlightenment, "foster a creative, non-threatening environment for its employees to do good work with passion."

Waking up is certainly a good goal for corporate management, but I question its utility for the working classes. If it wasn't for our after-breakfast, mid-morning, and pre-lunch naps, I can't imagine how we'd ever get through the morning.

As the author sees it, Buddha is not only an inspiration to managers, he was, himself, a CEO. I don't think Buddha ever had to face an angry stockholder, or prostrate himself before a compensation committee, but Spears' Buddha CEO did, at his core, "understand that at our core, each of us is basically good."

This would seem to put Buddha CEO at odds with your firm's management, which believes at its core that each of you is basically good for nothing.

But maybe your supervisors are more Buddhist than they appear. Spears quotes a spiritual master as exclaiming, "You have this precious human body in order to serve other living beings." If that means that you were pre-destined to start your work day by bringing your manager a double mocha double quick, so be it.

Unfortunately, the entire Buddha management style depends on "working from your inherent intelligence." This may be a bridge too far-fetched for your current supervisors. Inherent intelligence is obviously a substance that is in short supply on Mahogany Row, though there is an ample supply of greed and a major surplus of inherent dumb.

I also have to question the inherent intelligence of Ms. Spears whose official Web site promises to delineate the "eight principals of path," but only comes up with 7. (Note to Nancy: The numbers between 1 and 8 do not include two 3's. Lucky Buddha was CEO and not in the accounting department, or the religion would have gone broke centuries ago.)

And speaking of numbers, I just Googled the Fondazione di Vittorio and, to my shock and surprise, must report that it's a real organization being used by Internet scamsters. Apparently, I am not getting the half mill, and all the balances of all my bank accounts have been transferred to Nigeria.

True to "Buddha: 9 to 5," I'm trying to remember that the con artists are basically good. It's not easy. I'm no religious expert, but if you ask me, this kind of disappointment would even make Buddha lose his cool.

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