

# What in the World Is Corporate Chaplaincy? & Why Should I Care?

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2009

The current economic crisis is taking its toll on more than just people's pocketbooks. The additional emotional distress is hitting families, and many Americans are taking this stress to work with them each day. Even when the economy is strong, the fast pace, pressures, and distractions of everyday life create the reality that most employees are barely able to hang on. Working seven days a week, fulfilling the responsibilities of home, running tired and overwhelmed most of the time: all contribute to the fact that many people today have run out of margin in their lives and do not have anyone to turn to during the challenging times of life. Difficulties and challenges that employees face outside of the workplace come to work with them and result in low productivity, low morale, and high absenteeism.

## **As a business leader, how would you answer the following questions?**

1. Have any of your employees or members of their immediate families/ households ever:
  - Struggled with a debilitating illness?
  - Struggled with substance abuse?
  - Been burdened with personal problems?
  - Been incarcerated?
  - Been suicidal?
  - Experienced grief?
2. How have you, as a business owner or manager, responded in these difficult situations?
3. How would the situation have been different if a chaplain had been available?

## **Real World Statistics**

- Despite a softening economy and corporate downsizing, 75% of employers named employee retention as their top benefits objective. And 58% of these employers find that developing a benefits program that helps employees balance work and life is the most important way to retain employees.<sup>1</sup>
- Over half (54%) of all unscheduled absences reported in a 2006 survey were the result of family issues, personal needs, and stress.<sup>2</sup>
- 80% of workers feel stress on the job, with nearly half saying that they need help learning to manage stress; 42% say their coworkers need such help.<sup>3</sup>
- More than 52% of human resource professionals reported that they have been approached by employees at their organizations who are having a difficult time focusing on their tasks at hand. In addition, over 70% reported that they have been approached by employees who feel they have trouble achieving work/life balance.<sup>4</sup>
- 87% of workers are seeking or have sought companies that were flexible, supportive and understanding of personal and family needs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Met Life Study of Employee Benefit Trends, November 2001

<sup>2</sup> 2006 CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey, conducted for CCH by Harris Interactive

<sup>3</sup> 2000 annual "Attitudes In The American Workplace VI" Gallup Poll sponsored by the Marlin Company

<sup>4</sup> Northeast Human Resources Association (NEHRA) e-survey of human resource professionals

<sup>5</sup> CareerBuilder Online Survey (2000)

## **An Idea Whose Time Has Come**

Having tested the concept and practice of corporate chaplaincy in four Dane County companies over the last two years, I am convinced that workplace chaplaincy is an idea whose time has come.

- People bring their personal concerns and problems with them to work every day, and the result has a profound impact on morale and productivity.
- Fewer and fewer people are turning to traditional forms of community (whether family, neighbors, or faith communities) for assistance with life's problems.
- Broad-based company wellness programs are becoming commonplace.
- People spend the majority of their time at work.
- Chaplaincy has bottom line benefits for both employers and their employees.

## **What do employees want?**

In a survey conducted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the following responses were reported from management and employees respectively:

Management responded that employees want:

1. Good wages
2. Job security
3. Promotions

Employees responded that they want:

1. Appreciation
2. Feeling "in" on things
3. Help with personal problems

Corporate chaplaincy has been raised up to address these very real employee needs.

## **Major Marketplace Trends**

For just a moment, review the major trends affecting the business environment over the last five decades:

- **1960's: The Civil Rights Movement** resulted in the development of race-friendly policies that encouraged integration and racial equality.
- **1970's: The Modern Feminist Movement** resulted in gender-friendly policies that were designed to make women feel more welcome at all levels of an organization.
- **1980's: Changing Family Systems** resulted in a variety of family-friendly policies that reached out to parents in changing families.
- **1990's: The Enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act** resulted in policies and laws that worked to create disability-friendly work environments, and **the Gay-Rights Movement** resulted in sexual orientation-friendly policies; both worked to reduce discrimination and encourage inclusion.
- **2000's: An Emphasis on Wellness** has resulted in some companies creating environments that encourage a more balanced and holistic work environment.

The above outline is adapted from David Miller, founding Director of the Princeton University Faith & Work Initiative, and points out the unmistakable trend that more and more companies are seeking to create environments where employees are comfortable bringing their whole selves to work.

## **What is Corporate Chaplaincy, and what is a Chaplain Assistance Program (CAP)?**

A Chaplain Assistance Program (CAP) is a personal, voluntary, and confidential benefit available to employees and their households and immediate families; sponsored by the company, chaplains are provided by a chaplaincy provider.

Key features of a chaplain assistance program include:

- Benefits that are voluntary but available to all employees and their households and immediate family members who choose to participate.
- Benefits at no cost to the employee.
- Chaplains who are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- Chaplains who are neutral from company operations.
- An assurance of confidentiality; personal information will not be revealed to management or any other person (except where dictated by law).

## **What do the following companies have in common?**

- Tyson Foods – Fortune 100, publicly traded, 114,000 employees.
- Coca-Cola Bottling Co. – publicly traded, 6,000 employees.
- American LubeFast – private, 500 employees.
- Pellitteri Waste Systems Inc. - private, 50 employees.

Answer – they all have company sponsored Chaplain Assistance Programs.

## **Benefits of Caring for Employees**

Most employers recognize that absenteeism and turnover can create a significant cost to the business or corporation. In addition, an employee who is focused on a personal problem rather than on work is sometimes the cause of expensive errors or accidents. Being proactive in caring for the life, emotional, and spiritual needs of employees can actually save a company money in the long run.

The implementation of a Chaplain Assistance Program (CAP):

- Reduces costly consequences of poor problem solving (e.g. suicide, substance abuse, workplace violence, and/or sabotage, etc.).
- Increases early awareness of and intervention in situations of physical or emotional overload and onset of related physical and emotional dysfunction.
- Provides a source of support and resources in times of personal crises.
- Improves attitudes, cooperation, and performance.
- Increases loyalty and trustworthiness.
- Increases dedication to company goals, priorities and objectives.
- Reduces staff conflicts.
- Decreases anxiety and tensions.
- Contributes to the safety of the workplace environment.
- Serves the company values.
- Increases commitment to the job and reduces absenteeism.
- Helps employees become more productive.

The leaders of major companies across the country have seen first-hand the benefits of offering a chaplaincy program. Here's what they have to say about their experiences:

"While measuring the tangible, monetary benefits of chaplaincy programs can prove difficult, both [John Tyson, Chairman and CEO of Tyson Foods and Robert Pettus, Jr., Vice Chairman of Coca-Cola Bottling

Co. Consolidated] agreed that the programs were huge successes. After a nine month study, Coca-Cola Bottling concluded that their newly introduced chaplaincy program contributed to improvements in morale, productivity, safety, and quality." <sup>6</sup>

"Pettus has studied the costs and benefits of a workplace chaplaincy program and concluded that they more than pay for themselves in terms of lower turnover, higher morale, and healthier staff. By way of example, Pettus shared that some union employees—who happened to be a group of single mothers—approached him and said that, if tough economic conditions meant the workplace chaplaincy program might have to get cut, they were willing to give up other benefits instead so as to keep that one. In thirty years of work in human relations, he had never heard such an offer." <sup>7</sup>

"Embry [Tim Embry, CEO of American LubeFast, a Georgia-based chain of 70 oil change and auto maintenance shops in the South that employs about 500 persons] reported that since he implemented the chaplaincy program... his employee turnover rate and product shrinkage (losses due to theft) declined dramatically. He described the chaplaincy program as 'an employee assistance plan on steroids' and recommended that other business leaders involve their companies. Said Embry, 'Do it. You will be rewarded.'" <sup>8</sup>

### **Corporate Chaplaincy Makes Sense**

The tangible benefits of corporate chaplaincy are numerous: from improved attitudes, cooperation, and performance to increased loyalty and commitment to the job. Decreases in anxiety and stress coupled with greater company loyalty all result in a lower turnover rate and higher productivity; both of which have a direct positive impact on the company's bottom line.

Corporate chaplaincy makes sense. Take appropriate care of your employees, and they will take care of business. Hundreds of companies are discovering the human resource and bottom line benefits of having a chaplain on the premises and available by phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, in case of an emergency, crisis, or other need. Through a Chaplain Assistance Program, employers can demonstrate that they care about those they lead.

*"Some companies are adding a new position to the staff: a corporate chaplain. It's not about religion. It's about increasing productivity."*

ABC News

Offering a CAP as an optional employee benefit provides the needed competitive edge when it comes to hiring top talent. Additionally, companies offering CAPs report much higher usage rates than traditional Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), simply because of the relational nature of corporate chaplaincy. As the Tim Embry, the CEO of American LubeFast, said, *"Starting our chaplaincy program was the best thing I have ever done in business."*

Chaplains reach out and bring care where it is needed most and where it can make a meaningful difference.

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<sup>6</sup> 2005 Yale Center for Faith & Culture, National Conference on Workplace Chaplaincy, Archived at: <http://www.yale.edu/faith/esw/newco5.html>

<sup>7</sup> Miller, David W. (2007). *The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

<sup>8</sup> Spohn, G. (2005). Hot Issues, Best Practices in Workplace Chaplaincy Explored, from Yale Divinity School, [http://www.yale.edu/divinity/notes/050831/notes\\_050831\\_workplace.shtml](http://www.yale.edu/divinity/notes/050831/notes_050831_workplace.shtml)

## **If You Are Still Unsure about the Benefits of Corporate Chaplaincy...**

Please feel free to contact any of the following business leaders who have helped pioneer workplace chaplaincy in the Capital Region:

- Robert Dehnert, Human Resource Manager, Pellitteri Waste Systems, 608-257-6232 Ext. 22
- Robert Hintz, Owner & General Manager, The Engelhart Center, 608-274-2366
- Lynn Rawhouser, Owner & Office Manager, A&J Specialty Services, 608-846-9525
- Troy Berg, Owner & President, Dane Manufacturing, 608-849-5921

Each one would be happy to talk with you about the human resource and bottom line benefits they have experienced as a result of sponsoring a Chaplain Assistance Program.

### **Additional Related Topics @ CapChaps.Org**

The mission of Capital Chaplains LLC is to provide help and hope to company owners, managers, employees, and their families/ households by serving through a Chaplain Assistance Program (CAP).

Visit the Capital Chaplains website (CapChaps.Org) for additional information.

To find out more about the benefits of a company sponsored Chaplain Assistance Program through Capital Chaplains LLC, please contact: Steve Cook, Steve@CapChaps.Org, 608-217-7261.

*chap-lain (chăp'lin) n. One who cares for others.*



*A Capital Idea for the Capital Region!*

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