

The following letters are in response to T+D's December article, "Faith at Work."

Missing the Dark Side

I REALIZE that there are organizations that have decided to bring the Christian faith into their daily work environment as the "chosen" religion for their workplace ["Faith at Work," December 2005]. However, the total number of these organizations on a national scale is miniscule compared to the organizations that do not choose to force religious principles upon their employees whether they are willing or not.

(T+D's) decision to publish an article on faith in the workplace is not a bad idea. However, an article that seems to focus only on the bright side of pushing Christ within your business organization makes (the organization) look like a real patsy to the religious right in this country.

You chose to avoid any references to the dark side of pushing Christianity or any other religion in the workplace. You glossed over the discrimination, recrimination, harassment, and just plain bad-vibes that often accompany organizations that adopt any single religion as their central business tenet. You also glossed over the fact that businesses and employees now feel free to push their Christian beliefs in the workplace because of the stance of the current ruling president and the Republican Party. Your article focuses on the beliefs of Christian business consulting zealots that CEOs are just really thinking deep about what their jobs are all about. Please do not insult the intelligence of your readers.

Also, how can you place Martha Stewart in the same category as Enron and WorldCom? Enron and WorldCom defrauded investors and employees of billions of dollars. Most all of the individuals responsible for Enron and WorldCom's financial terror are not in jail. Martha Stewart personally profited about \$35,000 by

selling stock based on confidential information, and she was sent to prison. Grouping these three entities together is a ridiculous comparison.

I expect better of you and your organization. If you choose to print this letter, do not print my email address.

Andrew Cummings

Connect the Articles

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED and appreciated the "Five Steps to Leading Strategically" article written by Richard Hughes and Katherine Beatty from the Center for Creative Leadership. Their five steps work in all kinds of organizations, profit and not-for-profit.

It was interesting to connect one of their clients, CHP, to the other article, "Faith at Work." What would have been more useful, however, would have been to discuss the issues and challenges in helping the non-Catholics in that organization to learn and buy into the values. There must have been challenges there, and I would have liked the authors to deal with that instead of the obvious five steps.

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Not the Full Spectrum

MY DEPARTMENT, Organization Development & Employee Training, is a subscriber to T+D magazine. I was appalled by the choice to focus solely on Christianity as the only "Faith at Work" possibility in your December 2005 article.

Why not include all major world religions: Buddhism, Paganism, Muslim, Hinduism, Sufism, Taoism, and Judaism (to name a few)? Why not include (a discussion of) their foundational principles and have a more inclusive, honest exploration of faith at work?

I'm concerned about supporting

an organization such as yours if you are not willing to honor a full spectrum of diverse faiths.

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Sounded Like a Good Idea

HERE'S ONE OF THOSE IDEAS that may sound good and is really very bad ["Faith at Work," December 2005].

First, churches have a hard enough time keeping business and faith in balance. With at least one church in my own community, the pastor is so focused on getting financial support and being with the right people to grow the church that politics interferes with the message. There's enough hypocrisy from churches and religious groups without business and business people getting into the mix as a company profile.

Second, while Christ was divine (to Christians at least), he wasn't a leader for business. In fact, he made wine from water (which robbed some poor merchant of profit), he closed down the swap meet at the Synagogue, and, despite heavy angel financing and venture capital money (the three wise men), he relied on miracles and donations to feed those he led.

Third, I've found that those who promote their Christianity the most seem to do it to excuse bad behavior and poor quality work, and to chastise someone else's behavior in a self-righteous manner. You can't serve two masters, and marketing for God and Wall Street isn't a fit unless you do it 100 percent, and that would mean following God's will of "go forth and sin no more." Businesses are having enough trouble complying with Sarbanes-Oxley let alone the New Testament.

I think Christ himself would say something along the lines: "That promoting your Christianity as part of your



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business is like loudly dropping your coins in the offering. Be as the women who gives all she has quietly from her heart and do it without announcements and fuss."

Jeffrey Hansler

Author of *Sell Little Red Hen! Sell!*
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Dismayed

AS A NEW MEMBER OF ASTD, I am dismayed at the cover story of my first T+D. The "Faith at Work" article's focus on Christianity in the workplace seems to fly in the face of efforts to promote understanding and acceptance of workers who bring their diverse backgrounds and perspectives to their jobs. The advice in the article seems to be to push your Christian religion to the point that your activity is right on the edge of being illegal. How ironic to tie that idea into moral and ethical values.

I am thankful that I do not work in an organization that encourages prayer meetings or provides a religious-based chaplain for those whose lives are in crisis. When management provides religious activities in the workplace, it will be perceived as awkward at the very least and threatening at the most for those who choose not to participate. There are other ways to convey ethics and morality in the workplace...ways that are acceptable to all.

Also, it is disingenuous to imply that Christianity is the only religion that offers acceptable moral and ethical values. Certainly it is desirable to have a moral code at the center of an organization. But to do so by setting it only within one religious tradition is offensive to other faith traditions with strong moral and ethical codes and to the many non-Christians who work in most organizations and who try to live moral lives.

Myra Gordon

Response

T+D'S EDITOR, and the author of the "Faith at Work" article, Rex Davenport, responds: In the past 20 years, *Time* magazine has put Jesus on its cover a number of times. In no case did the *Time* articles promote Christianity; they reported on current trends or events. We feel we did the same. The number of organizations that are embracing Christian principals as business practices is growing. We felt it was appropriate to report on that trend. It was not a snub to other faiths; they simply were not part of the trend we were examining.

Lastly, while the dollars involved in the Enron and Martha Stewart criminal activities were billions of dollars different, Stewart acted in as reprehensible a manner as the bosses at Enron. She accused a low-level employee at her broker's office of failing to execute an order that she never gave. She continued to repeat this lie to avoid prosecution and conviction. So, in our book, she failed the ethics test in a large way.

Errata

An article in the January issue of T+D by author and communications expert Sherry Sweetnam did not provide contact information. She can be reached at sherry@sweetnamcommunications.com; www.sweetnamcommunications.com.