



## Oh, My God: A skeptics view of a spiritual workplace

By Laura Reid, originally published in PeopleTalk Magazine Summer 2005

*Many CEOs and company owners still view spirituality in the workplace with skepticism and disdain. As an HR consultant, this author has encountered considerable executive resistance to values-based thinking; the following tongue-in-cheek dialogue summarizes some of the attitudes she has faced.*

To me, good workplace conduct doesn't mean spirituality. I try to be inoffensive to peoples' religions and faiths. I don't see hoe it's any business of mine in the first place. In my generation, we said the Lord's Prayer in the morning and then got on with it. It's ironic that my grandkids can't say prayers in school yet I am supposed to set up temples in my office so that employees can pray instead of work. Are we separating church and state or aren't we?

Meanwhile, someone's age, marital status, and sexual preferences are none of my business, yet I am supposed to find out everyone's religion and be sensitive to them? Give me an atheist any day who is happy to have a job. It's bad enough that I have to figure out all this politically correct crap, but now I have to worry whether or not my aura is causing undue stress to someone's spirituality. I mean, geez! For Go-gosh sakes, how the he-heck is anyone supposed to run a business nowadays, not to mention write a memo?

These newer generations want integrated, holistic group hugs and spirituality at their workplace, but most organizations and businesses are still run by people like me who want to keep that separate. The way I see it, it's your business on your time, and my business on mine.

Not long ago, the workplace was full of bustling people working hard. Every now and then, we'd have a summer barbeque or a seasonal party and all wind down together. Not anymore; political correctness has made a mockery of that. I can't organize a Christmas party – it has to be a "winter celebration." Frankly, winter itself is too cold and dark to celebrate.

When we did a supposedly neutral Easter theme last year that focused on rabbits and eggs, some religious types complained that we diminished Easter's meaning by celebrating the pagan fertility festival (who knew?). Meanwhile, others complained that we were breeding further contempt for their religious community and still others complained that we didn't have enough non-alcoholic beverages available at the event to honour their religious beliefs. They ruined it for everyone else. What's worse, I have to e sensitive to holy days, fasting times, prayer times (and they want a friggin' prayer room now), lunch times, break times, and quitting times, but nobody seems to care about working time. People who don't celebrate Christmas still seem to manage to take the day off and then they want their own holiday off too. What happened to the good old days when people were happy to have a job and some to work and didn't care about all this crap?

I'm trying to run a business, which lives and dies by the bottom line. I don't put a kiosk for my business in their church or synagogue or temple or mosque, so why do they insist on bringing their business into my building? I can't smoke in the office, but it's OK if some flake wants to burn incense at their work station. I don't think so.

