

Aha #20:  
"Vice-President of Consciousness"  
Setting a New Place at the Board Meeting Table  
by

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While I was serving as Editor-in-Chief for *The New Leaders* business newsletter a few years back, Robert Rabbin wrote a column for us called "The Corporate Mystic." Rabbin wrote *Invisible Leadership* in 1998 and has a new book coming out this month entitled *Echoes of Silence*. One of his early columns for *The New Leaders* proposed that companies that were serious about doing business in a more holistic, more conscious way, establish positions within their management structure so that one person would be responsible for the state of the organization's consciousness. The person filling this position would be responsible for scrutinizing the company's practices, policies and plans from the perspective of human awareness and higher-mindedness. They would also be given some power, some clout, so that being part of the executive committee or board of directors would not merely be "window dressing" or tokenism.

Establishing this position, retaining a "vice-president of consciousness," and giving him or her the equivalent power of any other officer or board member would be taking a highly-visible stand for doing business more consciously.

Imagine an executive committee meeting in the boardroom with the CEO, CFO, Vice Presidents of Marketing, Production and Technology, the Directors of IT and Human Resources, the Corporate Treasurer and Secretary joined by the Vice President of Consciousness! Any company that creates this position would be giving as much weight and importance to the consciousness with which they are doing business as most other organizations are giving to matters of administration, management, finance and other conventional specialty areas.

In my opinion, Rabbin's idea might be more acceptable today than it was five or so years ago when we published his column. As more and more people continue to evolve personally and come to their own enlightenment, ideas like this don't seem quite as radical or out-of-the-question as they might have a short time back.

Adding to Rabbin's idea, I suggest that companies retain the services of people who are experienced in the ways of traditional business but who have also developed the ability to distinguish between form and context, superficiality and substance, between unconscious compliance and true innovation that comes from a new awareness. In other words, they would have developed their own consciousness yet could relate to most normal business situations that might confront any executive committee in today's supercharged economic climate.

Blind conformance cannot be acceptable behavior for this new member of the executive team and conscious discernment will be their primary responsibility. Conscious discernment is what separates ordinary organizations which have succumbed to the insidious forces that reside in traditional business practices - exploiting Nature and people toward improving the financial bottom line - from the evolving "conscious organization." If a corporation is to have *any* chance at being conscious, at *least one person* in a leadership position in the company needs to have his or her full attention on organizational consciousness.

Sound reasonable?

Where would a board of directors or a CEO find such a talent? Where would an executive search firm locate someone who could fill this role which has no precedence or history?

I suggest that the candidates for this innovative executive position could be found in the ranks of some very forward thinking consultants, authors and business philosophers (a relatively new field). In addition, I suggest that these persons not be employees, but third party contractors - people who do not otherwise rely on the profitability of the enterprise for their compensation. Hence, they are less likely to be compromised by the system, much like the value an outside consultant brings to a company - possessing an outsider's perspective and thus able to see things that those within the system may not.

This Vice President of Consciousness would review reports, attend meetings of the board or executive committee, and have an equal vote on matters that matter. A comparative position in today's corporate governance environment might be that of the outside (or external) director. He or she would bring a similar perspective to the meeting - from outside the corporate culture or system.

Filling this position would be very inexpensive, relative to the total compensation costs of senior executives these days. A simple retainer would suffice, individually negotiated. Matters of stock options, bonuses and performance incentives would be counter-productive since they would compromise the structural integrity of this position. So payment would only involve a straight fee for services rendered.

I know any number of people who could fill this bill and would add immensely to the credibility of any company that wishes to take this bold step toward establishing itself as a conscious enterprise. So, finding qualified candidates wouldn't be any problem.

So, how about it? Does anyone claiming to be running a conscious enterprise want to put their money where their mouth is? Why not try retaining a qualified individual who can serve the organization as the corporate conscience, mystic, sage and philosopher - one who tracks the company's consciousness in all its facets of activity, policy, practices and strategies. For sure it would be *bold*. For sure it would be *noteworthy*. Probably even *very* media-worthy. And, for sure, it could be asking for trouble if you are committed to maintaining the status quo.

But, then again.....

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