

A VIEW FROM THE GROUND:

The Great Commandment Company Journey in the Philippines

[An Advent Season Reflection on the Philippine Market Place]

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I don't have exact figures. This is not an extensive research on the "state of work" in the Philippines. Points below, however, are not at all an ignorant man's unfounded conclusions based on uncritical and gullible perceptions.

I used to be the Market Development Manager of an American multinational company SC Johnson and Sons, then the Regional Business Director of the British multinational company Danka, then the National Sales and Marketing Manager of the Australian office CDT Asia, before finally becoming my own janitor, utility man, messenger, maintenance engineer, marketing and sales, customer relations person, and president, *all at the same time*, of my own company.

Below are my observations on *how work goes* in my country, as validated by people I interface and breathe the same *business air* with. These are some of the disturbing trends and occurrences taking place on many fronts:

1. Laborers' rights to minimum wages are thwarted excessively and continuously through the use of employment agencies or the justification that workers get free board and/or lodging.
2. Hopes of laborers for change in unjust working conditions are dampened by the formation of unions that are over sympathetic to management.
3. Laborers' full productivity and owners' rights to same are disregarded by professional managers' mental sloth and lack of passion.
4. Laborers' and professional managers' rights to progressive and morally upright lives are blocked by owners' and policy makers' failure to follow the institution's vision and to be role models.
5. Laborers lose out in the end because of abusive labor leaders.
6. Employers' legitimate point of view are not listened to and labeled summarily as unjust.
7. Owners' rights to full disclosure and a fair return on their investments are consistently de-prioritized.
8. The environment is abused by starving marginalized groups or by never-satisfied capitalists.
9. Host communities are bled by institutions, yet abandoned for better locales, at early signs of decreasing profitability or inadequate budgets.
10. Host communities find themselves empty-handed when guest institutions leave, having failed to put up self-sustaining small industries.
11. Big suppliers are paid on time, while small suppliers are de-prioritized.

12. Products that are unsafe or not necessary are falsely advertised, “glamorized, ” and allowed to proliferate in the market.
13. Competition is so keen that competitors resort to below-the-belt tactics and unethical practices.
14. People in authority, both public and private, take advantage of their power to push whomever they can victimize to the limits.
15. Institutional problems are blown out of proportion because of politics and the sensationalistic media.
16. Professional managers and board members fight tooth and nail to usurp power and then preserve it, making decisions that damage the reputation and the lives of the institution, of families, friends, and even the general public.
17. Partnership agreements between and amongst local and foreign institutions that are one-sided abound.
18. Government regulations that are not well thought out or holistic encourage unethical practices.
19. Aids or grants that are not contextualized and holistic do not result in interventions that create sustainable or meaningful changes.
20. Graduates lack preparedness to take on even the first tier of work employment.
21. The poor gets poorer, the middle class disappears, and the rich gets richer.

The slides on “What Makes a Business Christian” have been very helpful. Since my above points are taken as a *view from the ground*, I wish to *bring down to the ground* the thoughts I derived from Dr. Steven’s abovementioned slides. Below is what I feel as practically workable areas that a Great Commandment company leader needs to do a serious hard work on. These are the company’s:

1. *Relationship with Employees*

- Defining in practically measurable terms and “leading for” the Great Commandment in the area of: wage and compensation policy, hiring/recruitment policy. Retention and separation policies, (incl. fringe benefits), work environment, human and relationship development, participatory decision making.

2. *Relationship with Customers*

- Defining in practically measurable terms and “leading for” the Great Commandment in the area of: product/service patronage, product/service quality, product/service safety, product/service innovations, ethics in sales/market/business development, after sales service, advertising and promotions, and respect for culture.

3. *Relationship with Suppliers*

- Defining in practically measurable terms and “leading for” the Great Commandment in the area of: ethics in contracts, ethics in implementing contracts, and morality in long-term contracts.

4. *Relationship with Competitors*

- Defining in practically measurable terms and “leading for” the Great Commandment in the area of: espousal of fair competition. Antitrust, policies, programs, and practices. Avoiding the practice of economic conspiracy (i.e. cartels)
5. *Relationship with Owners*
 - Defining in practically measurable terms and “leading for” the Great Commandment in the area of: fair return on investment, security of investment, responsible use of financial and other resources. Transparency. Respect for specific legitimate objectives of owners. Protocol for owners.
 6. *Relationship with Board of Directors*
 - Defining in practically measurable terms and “leading for” the Great Commandment in the area of: Support for fulfillment of duties of the board. Nurture/Inculturation of ethics and governance. Institutionalizing collegiality and respect for independence. Securing long-term sustainability, development, progress. Preserving balance of power. Support for effectiveness of board committees. Respect for board protocol
 7. *Relationship with Managers*
 - Defining in practically measurable terms and “leading for” the Great Commandment in the area of: sense of mission of managers, ethics of managers, support for managers.
 8. *Relationship with Government*
 - Defining in practically measurable terms and “leading for” the Great Commandment in the area of: Compliance to state laws, policies and regulations. Active participation in government advocacy. Sense of patriotism
 9. *Relationship with Environment*
 - Defining in practically measurable terms and “leading for” the Great Commandment in the area of: Environmental protection/conservation through “clean” production and sustainable consumption. Shared vision-mission on environmental protection/conservation.
 10. *Relationship with Community, Society, and Country*
 - Defining in practically measurable terms and “leading for” the Great Commandment in the area of: social necessities as sacred obligations. Congruence of institutions operations with community needs/aspirations. Regard for social consequences of company’s/institution’s activities. Programs for indigenous technology and social development. Considerations for human and social costs of mechanization and technology. Employees’ involvement in community service.

When the work is done (God knows when!), the New Jerusalem of the business world may look something like this:

- Presence of a highly motivated, effective workforce;
- Benefiting from repeat business from satisfied customers and faithful suppliers;
- Enjoying the respect of competitors and active involvement in mutually beneficial joint projects;
- Relishing affirmations from and the active support of happy owners and investors;

- Proud of its ethical board and managers who serve as true role models;
- Building reciprocal and synergistic relationship with the host community;
- Initiating and engaging in projects which protect and nurture the environment;
- Engaging in proactive, patriotic action plans;
- Ultimately, witness to a God-centered workplace!

Then the whole business world prays “Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus” without even knowing these words.

