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Nurturing the soul of the company at EILEEN FISHER, Inc.

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ABSTRACT

The vast majority of case studies in the management literature looks at the failings of leadership and at what is wrong with various elements of organizational design and practice. This article takes a different perspective, the perspective that there is great value in studying and learning from organizations that are values-centered, principle driven, and consciously embracing workplace spirituality. EILEEN FISHER, Inc., a women's fashion company, has been admired for many years for its specific spiritual practices as well as its attendant human resources and social responsibility practices. The article reviews the founding and early history of the organization with a focus on the development and maintenance of organizational soul through the establishment of values, practices, and policies. Then, the authors summarize the results of interviews about organizational soul with 16 employees from representative levels and departments and offer suggestions for how other organizations might emulate some of the best of the practices of EILEEN FISHER, Inc.

KEYWORDS

Circle structure; EILEEN FISHER, Inc; organizational soul; social consciousness; workplace spirituality

Introduction

If you tell someone that you are interested in the field of workplace spirituality, a frequent response is “Workplace spirituality? Isn't that an oxymoron?” The common perception is that corporations are anything but spiritual. They are seen as greedy, inhumane, and sometimes even sociopathic (Pech and Slade 2007). A Gallup poll (Gallup 2018) reported that only 6% of Americans trust corporations “a great deal,” with an additional 12% trusting them “quite a lot,” leaving an overwhelming 82% of Americans who have low levels of confidence in big business. Most news media have no interest in publishing corporate stories about vision, high integrity, or programs that nurture the human spirit. As a result, the public – including business students – may get a jaded view of corporations. In academia, many business cases present a deficit model describing where leadership went wrong – whether it was poor decision-making, bad ethics, or some other form of mismanagement.

This article takes the perspective that there is great value in studying and learning from for-profit organizations that are values-centered, principle driven, and consciously embracing workplace spirituality. As an example, EILEEN FISHER, Inc., (EF) a women's fashion company, has been admired for many years for its specific spiritual

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practices as well as its attendant human resources and social responsibility practices (Neal 2013; Betters-Reed, Gray, and Fuller 2013; Sampson, Betters-Reed, and Misiaszek 2015, 2016).

One of the ways in which EF is a pioneer in the field of workplace spirituality is the company's focus on caring for the soul of the organization. Freer (2017) in his dissertation on organizational spiritual maturity argues that since organizations are living entities and all living entities have soul, then organizations must have a soul. Similarly, Neal (2013) notes that enlightened organizations encourage employees to bring their whole selves to work, including soul. Pollard (1996), CEO of Service Master, authored *The Soul of the Firm* and many other scholars and practitioners have since written about organizational soul. However, there has been no exploration on the topic of organizational soul during times of transition and transformation.

Soul is related to a sense of mission and purpose as well as a connection to something greater than ourselves (Freer 2017), what we might call the Transcendent Mystery (Delbecq 1999; Harris et al. 2019). Benefiel defines soul as the "lived manifestation of spirituality in an individual, a family or an organization" (2005, 10). She goes on to say that organizational soul is the "way this manifestation exhibits itself in the world of everyday economic work and how purposes and practices combine to create a workplace that embraces fully engaged human spirits" (2005, 10).

The article reviews the founding and early history of the EF with a focus on the development and maintenance of organizational soul through the establishment of values, practices, and policies. More recently, there have been significant changes in the organization's environment, so some of EF's innovative approaches to organizational soul employed during the current time of transition and transformation are described. Next, the results of interviews about organizational soul with 16 employees from representative levels and departments are summarized. In conclusion, suggestions for how other organizations might emulate some of the best practices of EILEEN FISHER, Inc. are offered.

A brief history of soul at EILEEN FISHER, Inc

Eileen Fisher's core design concept for women's fashion is deeply embedded in her personal mission – to empower women and improve their lives. Early in her career working as a graphic designer, Fisher had frequently traveled to Japan. There she experienced a culture quite different from the United States: a culture that values private thoughts and contemplation, respect for silence and open space, the beauty of nature, and values the team over the individual. Fisher became enthralled with the simple and enduring design of Japanese clothing. This inspiration – coupled with dissatisfaction with limitations of the business suit and uncomfortable features modeled after men's attire – prompted a desire to create clothes for women that would last and transcend fashion. This would fill a void in the current market for classic and graceful women's attire. Fisher firmly believed that if women felt good while wearing EF clothing that they would in turn feel good about themselves (Betters-Reed, Gray, and Fuller 2013).

In 1984, with only 350 USD in the bank, no formal business training nor ability to sew, but a clear vision of simplicity, comfort, and elegance of design, Fisher went to her first trade show with her first line of garments, four creative pieces. It was clear that Fisher's

vision was shared by other women for within 5 years EF reached the million-dollar annual sales marker of successful start-ups and the first EF store opened on Madison Avenue in New York City by 1991.

The young organization’s culture reflected the values and spirituality of its founder. The recruiting process placed as much emphasis on culture fit as job fit. Fisher believed that job skills could be developed, but culture fit was inherent. Great attention was placed on an in-depth hiring process of talent who not only shared the company’s values, but who were committed to their own personal growth as a means to contribute to EF’s larger vision and the impact the company would make in the world. In particular, relational skills such as collaboration, the ability to work in teams, listening and genuine care for others were highly sought-after personal characteristics. During these entrepreneurial years, Fisher clearly demonstrated that she not only wanted to make a difference for women through design, but she also wanted to lead in a very different way. (For a more in-depth description of the early history of the company and its move toward sustainability, social consciousness, worker ownership, and feminine and team leadership, see Sampson, Betters-Reed, and Misiaszek 2016; Tsao and Laszlo 2019, 93.)

The “Eileen Fisher Management Philosophy,” reflective of relational and team values was created around 2002 and used throughout the EF system into 2015. In 2015, the company developed a purpose manifesto and set of core values that drove the company’s strategy and transformed the culture. In 2019, a new company mission statement was created, and the core values were modified to adjust to the changing organizational and market landscape. While the mission, practices, and values continued to evolve and respond to market realities, the emphasis on simplicity, creativity, and community was unwavering. Also, consistent was a deeply held commitment to contribute to and lead the way for a more socially and environmentally conscious world (Eileen Fisher Values 2019). Table 1 is our summary of how the corporate values have evolved and changed over the past 20 years.

As a corporate pioneer in workplace spirituality, EF had a strong focus on employee wellness. Beginning in 2000, Fisher invested heavily in wellness programs to ensure that employees had access to self-care practices. She believed wellness was at the core of helping employees develop into their highest selves so they could do their best work. Implicit in these initiatives was a value of looking at the person as a human first versus seeing them as employees who are there to serve the company. Each employee was given a wellness and

Table 1. Evolution of the EF leadership practices and corporate values.

2000–2014 corporate values	2014–2018 corporate values	2018–Present Corporate values
Mission: To inspire simplicity, creativity and delight through connection and great design.	We Grow Clothes, We Grow People, We Grow Business for Good	Beautifully simple clothing designed to move with real life.
Communicate Our Vision	No one thrives alone	We are Authentic
Keep It Simple	People are fundamentally good	We Thrive in Connection
Inspire Creativity	Being real is a strength not a weakness	We Trust Each Other
Team with People	Curiosity is a virtue	We Innovate Through Creativity
Engage People	We are part of a larger whole	We are Committed to the Health of the Whole
Communicate Openly	A good life is defined by purpose	We are United in Purpose
Tell the Truth		
Nurture Growth in Others		
Nurture Growth in Yourself		
Create a Joyful Atmosphere		

education budget to support their personal wellness and spiritual practices. This included gym membership and yoga and Pilates classes. EF also brought in teachers such as Akashic Records readers, medical intuitives, astrologers, and acupuncturists to help employees take advantage of different forms of spiritual wisdom. Parallel with the introduction of these programs was a significant building renovation that created more open workspace, increased communal gathering areas, integrated sustainability where feasible, and designed special spaces such as the yoga room and a location for nursing mothers.

During this same period, EF introduced mindfulness practices. Continuing into the present, almost every meeting begins with a moment of silence and meditation. Tibetan singing bowls are placed in every conference room to bring employees into and out of silence. Another practice that has helped create a sense of spirituality and soul, was the Circle Way (Baldwin and Linnea 2010) where meetings were arranged in circles with no tables. Every person has an equal voice in the conversation. Each meeting also began with a check-in and ends with a check-out. The check-ins provided an opportunity to share where each participant is energetically coming into the meeting. Each check-out focused on how the meeting went and how everyone was feeling leaving the conversation.

Throughout the late 90s and well into the 2000s, there was a special focus on “People and Culture,” social consciousness, and sustainability that attracted and inspired employees who were in alignment with the mission and vision of the company. The company continued to grow steadily until the US. economic downturn began in 2008. At that time, brick and mortar retail stores were facing significant competition from online stores. This has a major impact on the EF retail market and even luxury goods like EILEEN FISHER clothing were impacted. EF weathered these challenges with remarkable care and industry best practices (Sampson, Betters-Reed, and Misiaszek 2015). Renewed prosperity and continued growth increased the need for professional management and EF was faced with ongoing leadership transitions.

Transformation at EF

The time between 2013 and 2018 was a period of radical transformation where the company introduced several innovative ideas to address the shifting and evolving retail market. Digital transformation, greater movement to e-commerce, the shifting face of traditional retail stores, and a shifting demographic were all driving the need to transform the company with new mindsets and technologies.

In 2013, Fisher introduced a “Personal Transformation” initiative into the company for employees to engage in deeper level consciousness work in order to respond to the large-scale changes happening in the business. The idea was to support systemic organizational transformation through employee involvement in their own personal transformation journeys so they could navigate complex changes more easily without ego or self-sabotage. The large-scale organizational transformation focused on feminine leadership principles through shared leadership models, called the Circle Structure (Baldwin and Linnea 2010), as well as introducing “Purpose” work into the company for both the company and the employees. The digital and technology changes were designed to bring the company together and serve customers with more ease. The EF efforts were a great example of responding to external changes through personal transformation as well as business systems restructuring.

EF also launched a Personal Transformation Learning Lab for its customers and the greater community where transformational teachers in the mindfulness, somatic, and consciousness domain would be able to share insight and wisdom. Together, these changes were designed to help EF remain a competitive player in the retail environment and adjust to radically shifting market forces while keeping a human-first approach to employees and customers.

Methodology and interview analysis

In addition to reviewing published journal articles on the company (c.f. Betters-Reed, Gray, and Fuller 2013), 16 interviews were conducted with leaders at different levels and in different functions of the business. The interviews were conducted from an appreciative inquiry lens, looking at what works regarding nurturing and sustaining organizational soul. Each interview lasted approximately 1 h and was either conducted in person or via Zoom with one of the three authors. Each participant was promised anonymity and confidentiality. Quotes used in this article have been approved by the interviewees, and only numeric identification has been used. The interviews were transcribed and entered into a horizontalization table (Storberg-Walker 2019) for purposes of phenomenological reduction. The interviewees included all top leaders with the exception of Eileen Fisher who was not available. Corporate roles included: Vice-Presidents of Employee Engagement & Communication, IT, and Digital; Director of Talent Acquisition; Social Impact Associate; Wellness Leader; Culture Officer; Executive Director of EF Leadership Institute; Sustainability Leader; Personal Assistant to Eileen Fisher; and Retail Leader. Store managers and mid-level leaders were also interviewed. The following interview questions were provided in advance of the interviews, which took place between July and September 2018. Following each question is a brief summary of the themes from interviews along with a sample of relevant quotes from EF employees. Quotes have been edited slightly to aid ease of reading.

- (1) How do you experience the soul of EILEEN FISHER, Inc. today and how did you experience the soul when you started?

Generally, most of the respondents reported a strong sense of the soul of the company when they first joined EF, with less of a sense of soul being reported at the time of the interviews. Most expressed faith that soul is still alive in the “DNA” of Fisher with her vision of a culture of collaboration and teams and her celebration of the joy inherent in the aesthetic and the feminine empowerment of product design. Interviewees expressed experiencing the soul of the company in various rituals, practices, and processes such as moments of silence and check-ins at the beginning of meetings, celebrations, social consciousness, new programs, product and customer connections, HR and wellness practices, philanthropy, teams, and EF values. A common theme was that Fisher and her values are the source of soul at EF. There was a general concern about the loss of soul during the transition to more business-like practices and professionalization.

There’s something kind of sparkly about the culture here. People feel happy, they feel energetic, they feel an authenticity, and aliveness. I think that stems from this familial sense, mutual support. It’s not competitive . . . There are some distinctive rituals that no longer take place. I used to be able to go to lunch or go for a walk. The time pressure was not as much as it

is now. . . . But the culture of wellness is still intact. Yoga and meditation classes used to happen during the day but now mostly happen after hours. Technology is a huge driver of the time pressure as well as the international nature of the business. (Interviewee #1)

I experience a very soulful space because of what Eileen has created and the way she has made women feel, the women that she dresses, and the women that felt so connected to that that they became employees. We are different from most companies but I would argue that we are similar to other soulful companies that don't compromise their values, that do not take shortcuts, that are in it for the long haul, that are in it for the health of their communities and the health of the brand and the health of their people. (Interviewee #2)

The soul is very implicit – it is embedded. It is even hard for Eileen to articulate it. It is related to the feminine energy. EF is one of the few companies capable of articulating the feminine leadership model. It's organic, emerging. It's being connecting, being kind, very loose in structure, not talking about strategy – she's very ahead of her time. I still experience the soul as quite present, but because of the size and complexity of the company and bringing more mainstream tools, processes and approaches, this as in opposition to the essence . . . there is less expression of the soul. (Interviewee #4).

We are bigger and we are trying a lot of different things. The business model is changing so it's requiring us to think differently. We need to be very clear about what is changing and what is not changing. You prune a plant to help it grow. There's a nucleus in the culture that we always want to hold on to: Eileen's vision, the esthetic, has always got to remain as a nucleus. Soul harkens back to the importance of feeling, you get a vibe, you pick things up. It is the emotional aspect of things. (Interviewee #3).

- (2) Can you tell me a story of a time when the company (or your department) expressed its soul or was living in alignment with its soul?

The responses to this question ranged from very personal interactions with other EF employees to company rituals to descriptions of system-wide events such as the 2009 layoff process.

When J.F. lost her father, we had a meeting the next day during the funeral – one person came forward and said we needed to be focused on J.F. and said let's go to the funeral . . . we all left the meeting to be with her. (Interviewee #8)

If we had a terminally ill employee or someone who passed away, we'd gather together by the river or in the yoga room and we would sing and share memories of that employee. We don't do that anymore. We don't do offsites, parties, excursions, field trips, gathering together as a community as much as we used to. When we don't do this, it dampens the sense of connection with people I don't usually see. If we don't take excursions or field trips, we lose a sense of inspiration or motivation. We used to be more entrepreneurial, a sense of "all hands on deck." (Interviewee #1)

During the 2009 layoff process, the whole community was engaged in minimizing expenses. Reduction in salary by leaders and a voluntary transition-out program – total transparency. In 2007 we disposed of performance ratings, shared salary increases and developed a new structure for People and Culture that was very thoughtful. (Interviewee #5)

- (3) Who embodies the soul of EF? Why do you think this?

While five of the 16 respondents identified Eileen Fisher as embodying the soul of EF, two people identified “everyone,” and two people identified the company’s “social consciousness” as embodying the soul. Seven different individuals were also mentioned. The reasons for the responses varied widely. This wide variety of responses are reflected below in the breadth of descriptions and perspectives on what it means to embody the soul of the company:

One leader described a coworker in her area: “There’s something about her that I greatly admire. Her ability to listen and really understand the inner message. Her opinion is greatly esteemed. She’s very intuitive and that’s valued. Intuition was more highly valued and now it’s more equal with data. (Interviewee #1)

Eileen herself. Things of value – like soul and essence – collapse when you try to put something in words. Some people in the stores, it’s amazing how they show up – the people who have been with the company 15 years. They embrace you. One of the issues in the company right now is people are labelled. “You get it, you don’t get it.” Those who “get it” are closer to Eileen. Eileen is having a hard time to see the soul being expressed in design. There was a moment when J. from design and Eileen were talking about a garment. They were sensing the garment and touching it, and looking into each other’s eyes, and you could feel the soul in that moment. But it is very hard to teach that to someone. Personal transformation is helpful but it’s not enough. It’s got to be more systemic. (Interviewee #4)

Eileen. She is the north star. Everyone is responsible for embodying the soul of EF. The spirit of Eileen gets passed onto new employees through storytelling. (Interviewee #13)

Eileen herself. When Eileen is not with us, what happens to our soul? Eileen is a spiritual figure head who embodies the spirit of the company. The virtues of interconnectedness, humanity, and humility are embedded in the culture. Eileen is a spiritual center where her people are naturally drawn to her and she is a legend among women. This is bigger than herself without any personal effort. (Interviewee #16)

Everybody – we are all interdependent for the entity to be alive – we are collective. The interview process screens for the fit in the collective to hold on to the soul. T. was the first one who challenged us to think in different ways while still holding on to what is important. I worry about the legacy of collaboration, not to make a decision until we hear everyone’s input. But not everything needs consensus – maybe not for best decision. Consensus meant being nice. (Interviewee #8)

H. has been with 20 USD years . . . Her relationship with Eileen is extremely close and she holds Eileen’s vision very well. She’s very attuned to our business product and culture given her exposure across the organization. She’s got amazing relationships with people, not just senior leaders. She’s that bridge that we really need to hold on to soul. (Interviewee # 3)

(4) What are your greatest concerns as the company evolves?

There was strong convergence of responses around understanding the retail environment industry challenges which dictated increased focus on the bottom line and internal budget cuts. For many respondents, there was a significant organizational shift that posed the question, “How do we make this transformation without losing the essence of soul?” Simultaneously the transition away from the founder was also a concern as Fisher is so tightly aligned with sustaining soul, but most respondents also recognized that she needs to let go. There was general sentiment that the new board and chair also need to hold the

essence of EF. A chart created by a relatively new executive describing “old to new” was mentioned three times as the example of the shift needed, but not all had bought into this. Concern for cultural and leadership alignment was a strong overall theme.

When Eileen founded the company, she very consciously put an emphasis on the well-being of the people in the company. Every time benefits are taken away or policies change, it immediately sends red flags up for some people. They think, “Gosh, do they still care?” (Interviewee #1)

My main concern is how to evolve when the founder steps away. What kind of succession planning do we have? Eileen would be the first to admit we have not done a good job of succession planning. She allowed people to do what they did best. The transference of that creative energy is one thing but recognizing it’s not going to be identical moving forward. Knowing when to let go is one of the things I worry about the most. If you don’t, you get stuck. That’s what happens to a lot of companies when they go through this transfer. We are ahead of our time in a lot of areas like sustainability. We are profoundly ahead of our time in this organizational structure and it could be a formula for success, by not transferring the founder’s energy to just one person. Eileen was very inclusive, and people mistake that as collaboration. She really is interested in hearing different viewpoints, but in the end, she uses that information and checks it with her gut and makes the decision. How do you turn that into an organization of circles without having that individual, and how do we use our practices and our soulfulness to get us there? (Interviewee #2)

The underlying element is how to best inform the future in a way to that brings the soul to the future and allow the people who are leaving the company to let it go, including Eileen. Eileen needs to be clear about what’s her purpose, what’s the company’s purpose and what legacy she wants to leave the company. And she needs to trust that the company will thrive and have a future without her, and we know that this is very hard. (Interviewee #4)

What keeps me up at night, is not the business stuff, but the huge risk of transition away from the founder. How do we make this transition? All of them: owner, creative, spiritual, brand. Eileen cycles in and out (3–5 year cycle). How do we break this cycle? How can we help the company to grow without her stepping back in. We need to think of brand and culture as being two sides of the same coin. We must be what we say, inside and outside. (Interviewee #10)

- (5) As the company continues to evolve what cultural practices are most in alignment with its organizational soul?

More than half (11 of 16) of the respondents identified the moment of silence at the beginning of meetings as a practice very much in alignment with the soul of the company. Notable also was repeated mention of a commitment to a democratic process seen in collaborative decision-making, use of teams or circle theory and social consciousness, caring for people, and excellent benefits including wellness programs. Other practices such as celebrations, company picnics, and newer programs, such as Innovative Space, Impact Kitchen, Renew, and Life Work were also identified.

Moment of silence. Hiring for our values. Not making short-sighted decisions. Establishing new rituals for today’s environment. More inclusive today with barriers coming down as evidenced by the recent Brand Leader Meeting. Movement to Circle structure. (Interviewee #13)

From a cultural perspective – care and empathy can drive others to become the best versions of themselves. Also, part of the feminine – that caring piece that touches the customer and supply chain in real ways. (Interviewee # 14)

Chime/silence, the space is open, with light not necessarily from a window. The yoga and lactation rooms. The programs for wellness. Benefits. Lunch and Learn. Learning Lab. Life Work programs. The focus on culture. Social consciousness: human rights, planet and environment, care and attention. (Interviewee #12)

The Circle structure totally embodies soul work as a collective. The diversity of people and opinions. Equal voice (Circles), this concept is connected to who we are, the concept of power down and out will help us be more agile and change, particularly when need to make decisions more quickly. Previously the executive team was a hierarchy – decision making took too long, got too granular, many didn't see this and that those with the longest tenure had power without expertise. (Interviewee #8)

(6) As you think about the soul of EF, what three wishes do you have for the company?

The answers to this question were positive and hopeful that the unique and authentic essence of Fisher would persist. They clustered around sustaining or continuing what has worked: caring, making a connection between self and work, making a difference in the world, sustaining innovation, and commitment to women and girls. There was also a theme of learning new ways of leading that included finding a balance between the old and new, between the masculine and the feminine, and using both the heart and the head. There were several suggestions about how the company could take advantage of the Circle structure and of people's strengths.

I hope that the company maintains its positioning that its being at the leading edge of this, whether its spirituality, or what it means to be an ethical business or a sustainable business, a "Business for Good" as we talk about it internally. I don't want us to become conventional. There's so much potential that we've barely tapped. I do hope that the essence of what Eileen has planted here in terms of the goodness of the soul and the intention of authenticity remains with us as core qualities that guide us in who we are and how we hire people. Much of the other work will flow naturally if we start from those basic characteristics. I hope that we can maintain our openness to the possibility out there, whatever that is in the Universe. Because I don't think we yet know how we're meant to be. (Interviewee #1)

We are comfortable with being unusual (and) recognize the value of being unusual. We need to continue to mentor each other and develop people internally – don't look to the outside as we have a rich set of resources internally. Don't allow ourselves to lose ourselves and the essence of EF – where EF becomes unrecognizable. (Interviewee #15)

I hope that we will continue to lead with head and heart, that we continue to make a difference in the world. I hope the circle structure is successful, that it will diminish hierarchy and tap into the brilliance of people. (Interviewee #5)

My wish is that people here embrace the change. Mistakes will be made. Try our best to move the company forward in a new way. We need all in. Find new ways and improve it and evolve it. Move from founder to a collective-CEO led organization. (Interviewee #11)

Conclusion and key learning points

EILEEN FISHER, Inc. is an exemplary organization in the workplace spirituality domain. This article reviewed the founding values of the company, provided a description of some of the company's practices, and summarized key themes from our interviews about what is happening to the soul of the company as EF adapts to a challenging external environment.

Studying EF through its transitions revealed many key learning points about how to nurture and sustain organizational soul. Perhaps most important to the support of organizational soul is understanding and commitment from the top. Founders and leaders must actually believe that there is such a thing as an "organizational soul." They must have a propensity toward a spiritual way of perceiving the world and knowledge of certain spiritual beliefs that allow them to be sensitive to the collective invisible energy that comprises the soul of the organization. They must see themselves as the holder of the organization's sense of meaning and purpose. The founders' personal and spiritual values are central to creating values-centered organizations that are intentional about investing in workplace spirituality and nurturing the soul of the organization. When these values are clear, it is important to be able to translate them into specific organizational practices and to embed them in the culture (Neal 2013).

Entrepreneurial organizations have more freedom to embrace workplace spirituality at the early stages. As an owner, the founder has control over financial and cultural decisions and does not need to focus solely on the bottom line. In the early stages of an organization, things are simpler, and the owner has more control than he or she might have later (Neal and Vallejo 2008). As the organization grows, there is a need for more specialization and for greater professionalism in the leaders. This usually leads to greater bureaucracy, increased control, and lower levels of trust. EF consciously has chosen to design the organization with less rigidity, more freedom and higher levels of trust in order to nurture employee sense of meaning and purpose as well as nurturing the organizational soul. It takes a tremendous commitment to the slow, organic process that holds the soul of an organization during the evolution of business growth and professionalization.

If an organization wants to emulate EF, one principle that is central to adopt is the commitment to the human first, before seeing them as "employee" or as "customer." This view of the dignity and worth of each human being drives everything from hiring practices to leadership style to customer service. It also has great implications for the kinds of training and development that are offered to employees, going beyond skills training. The commitment is to do whatever is possible to help each person fulfill his or her highest potential, trusting that if this is done then the organization will reach its highest potential.

Organizations that have been successful at integrating workplace spirituality always appear to have strong and effective cultures. The founders and early leaders think deeply and consciously about the kind of culture they want to create, and how they will go about institutionalizing and reinforcing this culture through HR practices such as hiring and training and development, through financial commitments such as the willingness to hire someone dedicated to a "People and Culture Role," through various practices such as silence before meetings and leadership retreats, and even through architecture and

design, where spiritual symbols and values are designed into the workspace. It also takes a commitment to organizational structures and processes that allow for conflict and critical questions during growth, space to reflect, teams that allow for diversity of opinion and expertise, and shared decision-making for balance of internal and external realities. Eileen Fisher best expresses the nurturing of soul in the following insight:

I know the idea for the company came through me in some way, but it's beyond me. I planted the first seed and now I look around and there's this amazing garden. I'm just an ordinary person. (Malcolm 2013).

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