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May 17th, 2001

Values as a Power Factor (Long Version)

C. William Pollard

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What is your Business!

Mgt as behavioral Act!

Ethics

Subjects to Consider For Future Writing or Speeches

- 1) MANAGEMENT AS behavioral Act
- 2) Ethics
- 3) THE VALUE OF PROFIT
- 4) THE FIRM AS A MORAL COMMUNITY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN CHARACTER
- 5) THE LEADER AS A SERVANT
- 6) MISSION AS ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE OF THE FIRM
- 7) MORE THAN A PAIR OF HANDS
- 8) THE CUSTOMER HAS A FACE
- 9) THE GIFT OF ADVISORY
- 10) KNOWING GOD ON THE HORIZON
- 11) LEADERSHIP AS A PROCESS NOT AN END
- 12) EFFECTIVE Decision making
 - Delegation ^{to} _{being} ^{people} _{set out} ^{structure} _{to}
 - Decision process / disagreement / right / wrong
 - Synthesis or emerge

**St. Gallen – ISC Symposium
“Values as a Power Factor”**

May 17, 2001

**C. William Pollard
The ServiceMaster Company**

We live in a world of accelerated change and choice. These forces of change and choice are affecting the way we live, the decisions we make, and the function and operation of the organizations that provide order and structure to our societies. In such an environment of rapid change, people are searching for meaning and purpose in life and in work.

As we seek to understand these forces of change, we are exercising the art of being human. In so doing, we realize that our humanity is not only physical and rational, but is also spiritual. One’s character, one’s ability to determine right or wrong, to recognize good or evil, to make moral judgements, to love or hate, are all part of our unique human dimension. In the past, there have been moral standards or the recognition of a higher authority that has guided the behavior of people as they relate to each other, and has provided a balance for the exercise of power and authority. Are these moral standards of the past applicable to the future? In a fast-paced changing world, involving advancements in technology, is there room for the development of the spiritual side of the person? What is the

role of the business organization in the development of human character and behavior?

In his classic, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber concluded that the Protestant Reformation was one of the driving forces for the growth of capitalism. He also observed, however, that by the beginning of the 20th century the growing bureaucracy of large business organizations had assumed control over the worker. The worker was part of a machine of production trapped in what Weber described as the “iron cage” without hope of relating the specifics of a work task to the process of human development or glorifying God. The worker no longer had a choice to be “called.” Work had become just a matter of survival.

So, almost 100 years later, how are we to view the corporation or the role of work as we enter the 21st century? The forces of a free market are as pervasive as they ever have been and work is no longer limited by an office or a specific location. It is being restructured and re-engineered. Technology is allowing us to move work to where the worker is instead of always requiring the worker to come to work. For some, any place where you can plug in a modem is a place to work.

However, the change and flexibility of work has also brought fear and uncertainty to many workers. We often use words like downsizing and rightsizing

to mask the reality that people lose jobs for reasons other than performance. They simply may not be able to keep up with changing requirements of the job. In fact, it has been suggested by some that we now live in a post-job world with work opportunities involving changing levels of contribution without a title or a defined job.

The availability and access to information at all levels of an organization by employees, customers, competitors, has resulted in a new level of openness and transparency. Candor is the best way for a leader to earn credibility. A leader's life, both private and public, will increasingly become an open book. Whether he or she has the character to lead will be known to all.

But where does this character come from? In his recent book, *The Death of Character*, James Hunter, a sociologist from the University of Virginia, concludes that while children today are innately as capable of developing character as they ever were in the past, there are now few cultural or institutional guidelines that call for its cultivation in children or its maintenance in adults. The reason, he suggests, is because there is no consensus of moral authority.

There is general agreement among most economists that the wealth creation formula of the future will be more dependent upon human capital than on the availability of land or reproducible material assets. This human capital factor is

estimated by most economists to have a value that is twice as great as any physical resources. If human capital is so important to our future, how do we then lead in nurturing the development of human character? How do people find a sense of purpose, develop a strong family ethic, a sense of community, a relationship to others, an ethic of benevolence, a willingness to engage diversity, a sense of right and wrong, good and evil, a capacity to risk the lure of hedonism, a sense of discipline, a capacity for education, a thirst for knowledge and appreciation of quality, a willingness to love instead of hate?

History has taught us that there is a definite association between the individual character of the leaders of society and the collective well-being of those being led. Plato suggested that if leaders were not people of character, there would be a social disintegration.

It was Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in his classic work, *The Gulag Archipelago*, who said: “Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes, not through states, not between classes or between political parties, but right through every human heart. Inside us it oscillates. Even within hearts that overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained; and even in the best of hearts, there remains a small corner of evil. It is impossible to expel evil from the world in its entirety, but it is possible to constrict it within each person.” But where does this restriction or constraint come from today?

Fogel, an economics professor from the University of Chicago and a 1993 Nobel Prize winner, recently authored a book tracing the history of religion and faith in God in America and its effect upon issues in our society and in our economy. He concludes that the biggest issue today is not lack of the distribution of economic resources or lack of diversity or equal opportunity. It is, in his opinion, a lack of the distribution of spiritual resources or assets.

Recently, the Wall Street Journal had a feature article describing how business people were searching for God again. The author noted that a growing number of people in the workplace were seeking deeper meaning in life, but he also noted that most of them turned first to psychotherapy because they are embarrassed to talk about church or religion.

The author concluded that although the needs may be more spiritual than psychological, people feel like they don't have a convenient or comfortable place to discuss them. It would be just too nerdy or strange to talk about spiritual issues or needs in the work environment, and the traditional places of worship just don't understand the culture and issues of the marketplace.

In March of this year, *USA Today* had a cover story on the subject of God and technology. The author interviewed 9 CEOs of high tech companies and

concluded that all of them had spent a lot of time thinking about the big question of God and most of them had a strong belief in God. As they kept pushing science and technology to its known limits, they were often left with a sense of wonder about the order and organization of the universe and the Creator behind it all.

Do God and profit mix? Can the business firm be a moral community for the development of human character and behavior?

Now, as I raise these questions, I do so not as a philosopher, educator, political or religious leader, but simply as a business person; someone who is seeking to lead a fast growing and dynamic service company that we call ServiceMaster. A company that has experienced rapid growth over the last 25 years, doubling in size every 3 to 3 ½ years during this period, serving primarily in the United States, but also in 40 foreign countries, with customer level revenues exceeding \$8 billion. We are managing and employing over 250,000 people, serving over 12 million customers and, yes, we have experienced change. Over 85% of what we are doing today, we were not doing just ten years ago.

As a business firm, we want to excel at generating profits, creating value for our shareholders. If we don't want to play by these rules, we don't belong in the ballgame. But we also believe that we can be a community to help shape human character and behavior. An open community where questions of a person's

spiritual development, the existence of God and how we relate our faith to our work are issues for discussion, debate and, yes, even learning and understanding. The people of our firm are, in fact, the soul of our firm.

When you visit the headquarters of ServiceMaster, located west of the city of Chicago, you will walk into a large two-story lobby. On your right on a curving marble wall, 90 feet long and 18 feet high, carved in stone letters, are the four statements that constitute our company objectives – To honor God in all we do, To help people develop, To pursue excellence, To grow profitably.

If you were to tour the rest of our building, you would notice that nearly all of our workspaces are moveable. Most of the walls do not reach the ceiling. Practically everything in the building is changeable and adaptable, just like the marketplaces we serve with their changing demands and opportunities.

But the marble wall conveys a permanency that does not change. The first two objectives are end goals. The second two are means goals. As we seek to implement these objectives in the operation of our business, they provide for us a reference point for seeking to do that which is right and avoiding that which is wrong. They remind us that every person, regardless of faith, choice or label, has been created in the image of God with dignity and worth. They become the basis

for our single-minded focus on people as individuals, not just part of a protected group or classification.

We do not use our first objective as a basis of exclusion. It is, in fact, the reason for our promotion of diversity as we recognize that different people are all part of God's mix. And it does not mean that everything will be done right. We experience our share of mistakes. But because of a stated standard and reason for that standard, we cannot hide our mistakes. They are flushed out into the open for correction and, in some cases, forgiveness.

We serve and work in a diverse and pluralistic world. At the same time, we believe the work environment need not be emasculated to a neutrality of no belief or a "iron cage" without a soul.

Fortune Magazine has described the soulless company as suffering from an enemy within and cites a quote from Henry Ford as being descriptive of many business leaders even today when he said: "Why is it that I always get a whole person when all I really wanted was a pair of hands?" How many times as business leaders have we been guilty of looking at people in our firms or organizations as just a pair of hands or simply another producer; an economic animal that can be motivated by a compensation package or a new incentive plan or a stock option program.

Peter Drucker's classic definition of management is getting the right things done through others, but what I am suggesting is that the business firm of the future and its leadership cannot stop there. They must be concerned about what is happening to the person in the process. These people who are producing the profits are also human. They have cares and concerns and emotions, feelings, beliefs and convictions. They can love and they can hate. As the soul of the firm, they can contribute or detract, motivate or discourage.

If a leader is to be effective, he or she must be able to exercise authority and power and, in the world of accelerated change and choice, to do so he or she must be involved in what I refer to as soulcraft, developing the human character and responding to the basic questions of who people are and why they work, not just what they do and how they do it.

They must view people as the subject of work, not just the object of work. They must understand the basis for their moral authority and the role, if any, of God in their life. They are not just leaders of a profit machine. They must be leaders of a community – a moral community – committed to the development of human character and behavior.

I conclude my remarks with these lines from T. S. Eliot written over 50 years ago, but still very applicable to today and the future.

“What life have you if you not have life together?

There is no life that is not in community.

And no community not lived in praise of God.

And now you live dispersed on ribbon roads.

And no man knows or cares who is his neighbor,

Unless his neighbor makes too much disturbance.

And the wind shall say, here were decent Godless people.

Their only monument the asphalt road,

And a thousand lost golf balls.

Can you keep the city that the Lord keeps not with you?

A thousand policemen directing the traffic,

And not tell you why you come, or where you go.

When the stranger says: “What is the meaning of this city?”

Do you huddle close together because you love each other?

What will you answer? We all dwell together,

To make money from each other? Is this a community?

And the stranger will depart and return to the desert.

Oh my soul be prepared for the coming of the stranger.

Be prepared for him who knows how to ask questions.”

* * * * *

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power can be put by organized networks and
not governments ~~and~~

or nations and what amount of concern
And travel can quickly be turned into entertainment
a distraction