



Keeping faith on the job

Sherri Richards

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David Miller pointed to the photo collage of disgraced high-powered executives like Enron's Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling. They all have more in common than scandal and jail time, he said.

They all described themselves as people of faith, even Sunday school teachers, Miller said.

"They separated those two worlds and they became someone else," said Miller, executive director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture at the Divinity School of Yale University.

Ethical workplace behavior, along with job satisfaction and personal fulfillment, are reasons more businesses are connecting the dots between faith and the workplace.

Miller goes so far as to call it a movement.

"Faith at work – it's exploding and not just in the Bible belt," Miller said. "There's a spiritual yearning and hunger today that did not exist when I was growing up and entering the marketplace."

Miller and Tim Irwin, a corporate psychologist, spoke to business leaders and professors Friday in Fargo as part of a Concordia College ethics event. "Living One's Faith in the Marketplace" was sponsored by the Center for Ethical Leadership at Concordia.

"People, when they go to work on Monday morning, shouldn't have to give up their beliefs just because they're in a different environment," said Jim Legler, director of the center.

Howard Dahl, CEO and president of Amity Technology in Fargo, brought in Miller and Irwin. Both men have written books on the subject.

Dahl said employees today don't want to be a different person at work than at home.

"If I'm a person of faith, that means something about having my faith be a part of my everyday life," he said. "It doesn't mean preaching. It doesn't mean constantly talking about it. But it means letting it be a reality."

Miller encouraged companies to provide a "faith-friendly" atmosphere, one that is inclusive, respectful and embracing.

For example, Tyson Foods has 127 chaplains on its payroll, he said. Its public core values describe the company as faith-friendly, striving to "honor God and be respectful of each other, our customers and other stakeholders."

Irwin said he has found effective leaders often use biblical concepts and wisdom, such as engaging people, encouraging them to find meaning in their jobs and engendering trust.

"Success really is rooted in the wisdom of scripture," Irwin said. "There is nothing incompatible with scripture and being successful in business."

Readers can reach Forum reporter Sherri Richards at (701) 241-5525