

Greenwich Leadership Forum

Greg Page, CEO Cargill, Inc

Take-Aways from GLF

February 20, 2007

Greg Page spoke candidly about several ethical situations he has faced over his career at Cargill, both domestically and internationally. In like fashion, he shared how his faith underpins and shapes his ethics and leadership. Here are a few nuggets from his visit to GLF to take with you into your own business world.

What is his ethical framework? It has four parts:

Transparency – Greg commented, “We too often wash our human laundry in the dark.” Not only is lack of transparency a warning sign of potential ethical problems, but you also lose the chance for others to learn from the situation. We are called to be salt and light in the world, where light conquers darkness (Matthew 5:13-15; John 1:1-5)

Multiple voices – it can be dangerous to rely just on “gut feel” as sometimes it is wrong. Therefore, taking counsel from multiple voices and perspectives enriches the ethical discernment. Put another way, “Nuns come in many habits.” As leaders we need to be open to hearing truth from the strangest sources. (Read Numbers 22, and look for the wisdom that came from Balaam’s ass!)

Guiding principles – ensure you have guiding principles to help you navigate the gray zone. (Consider the 10 Commandments and Jesus’ Great Commandment)

Story telling – create a culture where management tells stories as part of training and communication. Ethics is better taught through stories that demonstrate good (and bad) ethical judgment than through propositional statements and policies. With rare exception, Jesus taught mostly through stories and parables.

One other nugget – Greg referred to the book of James and the image of looking in the mirror as a personal reminder to ensure he does not compartmentalize his faith.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. (James 1: 22-25)

For those of you who missed Greg's visit, I hope this gives you just a small taste of the great wisdom he brought us. Godspeed in your own leadership, and integration of faith and work.

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God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement (Oxford University Press, 2007)