

**Putting Compassion to Work:
A Case for Compassion in the Workplace**

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Putting Compassion to Work: A Case for Compassion in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT**Putting Compassion to Work:
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By

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This paper was developed to explore the benefits of compassion in the workplace. Today's organizations run lean and have few resources to dedicate to anything that does not drive revenue. This study demonstrates that compassion does more than make people feel good. Organizations that successfully include compassion as part of their corporate culture reap tangible benefits. Employees who experience compassion at work have a more positive perception of their employer and are likely to work harder for that employer and produce higher quality work. Organizations that treat employees compassionately have better employer-employee relations and when faced with tough times, these organizations tend to be more resilient.

This study uses a Buddhist inspired definition of compassion, and shows how the benefits of compassion can be quantified. This is accomplished by providing examples of organizations that have made compassion part of their corporate culture.

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Introduction

In the *Lost Art of Compassion*, Lorne Ladner, PH.D, laments the lack of study among Western psychologists of positive emotions and specifically the study of compassion. He states that a number of thinkers have traced this back to our scientific and economic traditions that only value that which can be measured. Our tradition of mathematics science and capitalism places more and more emphasis on those things which can be measured and given specific economic value. He says, "Europeans taught themselves to believe anything that cannot be priced is without worth. Values like compassion and empathy are unquantifiable and therefore impossible to treat as a commodity and so they began to seem archaic, maybe unreal." ¹

It seems unlikely that a business organization would openly state that they are NOT compassionate. Yet to Dr. Ladner's point, will an organization embrace compassion as part of their culture and value and point to compassion as something which provides them a strategic advantage? With the exclusion of non-profits, the purpose of most businesses is to bring in revenue and be profitable; those who do not make a profit do not survive. Today's organizations run lean and have few resources to dedicate to anything that does not drive revenue. Compassion must therefore be seen as something that brings not just intangible 'feel good' qualities, but must be perceived or proven to help drive the bottom line. With that thought in mind, the purpose of this study is to examine whether or not the inclusion of compassion in corporate culture does more than make people feel good.

¹ Lorne Ladner, *The Lost Art of Compassion: Discovering the Practice of Happiness in the Meeting of Buddhism and Psychology* ([San Francisco]: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), xv.

Does compassion contribute to revenue and if so what examples are there of organizations who successfully include compassion as part of their corporate culture?

How can a leader act compassionately?

It should be noted that for the purposes of this study the discussion will be restricted to compassion in the workplace and to workplace compassion which is directed toward human beings (as opposed to other sentient beings).

In order to pursue this study of compassion in the workplace we will first discuss the nature of compassion and arrive at a Buddhist-informed definition. Next we will review the current state of the science of compassion so that we might consider what drives compassion (or a lack thereof) in human beings. With that information in hand we will turn our attention toward whether or not the benefits of compassion can be quantified and then examine some organizations that have made compassion part of their corporate culture. This leads to a discussion on some of the hallmarks of compassionate leadership.

What is Compassion?

And other beings' pain
I do not feel, and yet,
Because I take them for myself,
Their suffering is mine and therefore hard to bear.

And therefore I will dispel the pain of others,
For it is simply pain, just like my own.
And others I will aid in benefit,
For they are living beings like my body.

Since I and other beings both,
In wanting happiness, are equal and alike,
What difference is there to distinguish us,
That I should strive to have my bliss alone?²

To some Buddhists the above passage from *The Way of the Bodhisattva* is an important commentary on the value of compassion. Compassion is an important theme for many Buddhists. It is not reasonable to say that all Buddhists value compassion equally or that compassion is defined in the same way by all Buddhists. An exploration of compassion across all Buddhist traditions is a full undertaking which will not be attempted in this discussion. Some Buddhist views on compassion will be included in this discussion along with a discussion of some Judeo-Christian definitions of compassion. Just as it is unreasonable to say that there is one definitive Buddhist definition of compassion, it is also unreasonable to present one Judeo-Christian definition of compassion as the one true definition of compassion. After considering some of these

² Śāntideva, Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho, and Comité de traduction Padmakara, *The Way of the Bodhisattva: A Translation of the Bodhicharyāvataṛa* (Boston, Mass.; Enfield: Shambhala ; Publishers Group UK [distributor], 2008), 205.

varying definitions of compassion, one will be selected and used as a reference point for the rest of this discussion.

The word compassion means feeling with. That seems simple enough. Where it begins to become complicated is in defining and discussing exactly what is being felt, by whom, why and even when. Compassion is not pity nor is it sympathy. A person who feels sympathy may or may not do anything about it, but compassion requires an element of action. Despite the declaration that compassion is not sympathy it is important to note the work of Max Scheler and specifically his work entitled *The Nature of Sympathy*. In *The Nature of Sympathy* Scheler uses sympathy as the overarching definition for ten different manners in which humans experience fellow-feeling or the sharing of the feelings of others. These ten traits or elements of sympathy are:

1. Benevolence
2. Commiseration/pity
3. Community of Feeling
4. Compassion
5. Emotional Identification
6. Emotional Infection
7. Empathy
8. Fellow-feeling
9. Love
10. Rejoicing³

³ Steve Bein, *Compassion and Moral Guidance*, 2013, 3.

Compassion is considered to be the strongest form of commiseration. Although fellow-feeling is listed separately, fellow-feeling is considered the primary driver toward the other items on the list with the exception of love. Unlike the other traits love is not considered to be a degree of sympathy, love is separate and perhaps higher. Per Scheler fellow-feeling cannot exist without some sort of love. Love drives fellow-feeling, fellow-feeling drives the other degrees of sympathy. This love is not necessarily romantic love, in fact in *The Nature of Sympathy* one definition of love is, “love is an emotional gesture and a spiritual act”.⁴ In *Compassion and Moral Guidance* Steve Bein asserts that Scheler’s concept of love which connects us as a species and can bring us closer to the basis or foundation of all things is heavily influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer who in turn was heavily influenced by his studies of Indian philosophy.⁵ Steve Bein draws a correlation between Scheler’s use of love as the driver for the traits of sympathy and the Buddhist karunā, which he defines as compassion which co-arises with prajñā or wisdom. Bein notes that where some Buddhists would conclude that karunā with prajñā leads to the realization of interconnections, Scheler finds love to be what creates this realization while Schopenhauer bases this realization on commiseration and pity. Bein asserts that Schopenhauer derived his account of commiseration and pity from his own understandings of Buddhism and Brahmanism.⁶ Schopenhauer defined compassion as the participation in the suffering of another and also in the prevention or elimination of that suffering. Included with his definition of compassion is the belief that compassion is the

⁴ Bein, *Compassion and Moral Guidance*, 6 – 7.

⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁶ Ibid., 8 – 9.

basis for voluntary justice and true loving-kindness. He posits that an action only has a moral value if it has in fact originated from a place of compassion.⁷

More recent work on the study and discussion of compassion in the Judeo-Christian arena can be found in the writings of Lawrence A. Blum, Robert C. Solomon, Nancy Snow, Dana Radcliffe and Martha Nussbaum. The themes from their works will be used here to depict a current understanding of compassion and should not be interpreted as a definitive study on the Judeo-Christian belief systems as they relate to compassion. Such a study is beyond the scope of this work.

Robert C. Solomon, Nancy Snow and Dana Radcliffe have drawn from and been influenced by the works of Lawrence A. Blum. Blum's definition of compassion has been stated as:

Compassion is not a simple feeling-state but a complex emotional attitude toward another, characteristically involving imaginative dwelling on the condition of the other person, an active regard for his good, a view of him as a fellow human being, and emotional responses of a certain degree of intensity.⁸

Solomon interprets Blum's definition of compassion as 'a felt concern for another who is in some serious or grave condition'.⁹ Solomon describes compassion as 'fundamentally other-regarding rather than self-regarding'.¹⁰ For him compassion is not just an emotion but a mode of having emotions. Compassion may be based upon or driven by emotions but it goes beyond simply having or experiencing these emotions. An interesting component of Solomon's theory of compassion is that an individual cannot enter this mode of having emotions without having had experienced his or her own

⁷ Richard Reilly, *Ethics of Compassion: Bridging Ethical Theory and Religious Moral Discourse* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 22.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁹ Bein, *Compassion and Moral Guidance*, 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

painful experiences and the difficult emotions which arise from such experiences. Solomon's compassion incorporates anger, because without this anger and sense of injustice one cannot have a sense of justice. He finds the Buddha to be an admirable exception, an individual who was able to experience compassion without having experienced injustice. He turns to Jesus as an example of one who experienced extreme injustice.¹¹

Nancy Snow interprets Lawrence A. Blum's compassion as an emotion which is highly important to the foundation of society. To Snow compassion is a rational emotional response. It is an emotion which occurs based on a reasonable belief that what is being suffered by another could be suffered by me. She does not believe that compassion occurs because the one who feels the compassion or in her nomenclature the "C-feeler", imagines an identification with another or in her nomenclature the "C-object"; it occurs because the "C-feeler" thinks that could be me.¹² Snow understands that the C-feeler might imagine that they are similar to the C-object but does not think that this is enough to account for a true experience of compassion. In order for an individual to truly experience compassion, that individual must move from reconstructing the experience of the C-object in their imagination and really believe 'that could be me'. The C-feeler must truly be able to believe that whatever unfortunate scenario is being faced by the C-object is something that could really happen to them as well.¹³ When this is the case the C-feeler reaches a place of altruistic concern coupled with a sense of urgency to do something to help alleviate the suffering that the C-object is experiencing.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid., 38 – 39.

¹² Ibid., 39 – 40.

¹³ Reilly, *Ethics of Compassion*, 30.

¹⁴ Bein, *Compassion and Moral Guidance*, 41.

Dana Radcliffe believes that the Christian Gospel gives the direction to act from compassion. If this is the case, then God must have provided humans with the ability to summon compassion. She also believes that to act from a place of spontaneous compassion is equivalent to being in a state of moral perfection. This is certainly an aspiration, but is not always possible in everyday living. What is within reach for most is to make the decision to seek to act compassionately as often as possible. And this is where Radcliffe incorporates Lawrence A. Blum's thoughts on compassion into her work.¹⁵

Radcliffe embraces Lawrence A. Blum's theory that compassion comes from an imaginative state. In writing on whether or not individuals can develop a compassion which is based upon the Christian concept of God's love for humankind, she concludes that it can be necessary to imagine and reconstruct the suffering of others in order to motivate one to be moved to help those who are suffering. If an individual is able to dwell on the suffering of others with enough intensity, that individual will be able to overcome any reluctance or hesitancy to help. In this way imaging the suffering of others drives compassionate behavior.¹⁶

Martha Nussbaum sees compassion as a response to another individuals suffering, but breaks the experience of compassion into four different types of judgments. These four judgments can even be viewed as checklist items or conditions which must be met in order for compassion to exist. To assist in explaining these conditions, the terms C-feeler and C-object as used by Nancy Snow and discussed previously will be put into practice. The first condition is that the C-feeler must believe that the suffering felt by the C-object

¹⁵ Reilly, *Ethics of Compassion*, 40.

¹⁶ Ibid.

is sufficiently serious. If the C-feeler does not judge the suffering to be truly serious, then compassion will not be forthcoming. Next the C-feeler must believe that the C-object does not deserve the suffering which they are enduring. It is Nussbaum's belief that we are not capable of extending compassion toward someone who we think is receiving suffering which is justified. We do not offer compassion to someone who is suffering if we believe they deserve that suffering, we only extend compassion when we think that suffering is unwarranted. The third condition is in agreement with Nancy Snow's contention that compassion comes when we believe "That could have been me." The fourth condition is referred to as a eudemonistic judgment. Eudemonism holds that the highest ethical goal is personal happiness and well-being. With this in mind actions which are moral or right can be defined by their ability to produce happiness. In Nussbaum's approach this translates into the judgment that the person experiencing the suffering is important to us. If the C-feeler does not feel strongly about either the C-object or the reason for the C-objects suffering, there will be no compassion.¹⁷

While Lawrence A. Blum, Robert C. Solomon, Nancy Snow, Dana Radcliffe and Martha Nussbaum each have their own perspectives on compassion. There are some similarities. Compassion is not the same thing as sympathy or pity. Compassion requires outward thinking. Compassion is primarily directed at the observation that another is experiencing suffering as opposed to the recognition that another is experiencing joy. Compassion is complex and involves emotions and compassion requires moving from feelings to actions.

¹⁷ Bein, *Compassion and Moral Guidance*, 44 – 45.

An overview of some of the elements of compassion as they are understood in the Madhyamika school of Mahāyāna in contrast to Martha Nussbaum's theory of compassion is provided in "Reflection on Martha Nussbaum's Work on Compassion from a Buddhist Perspective" by Maria Vanden Eynde.¹⁸ This provides a basis for a discussion on some of the elements of a Buddhist perspective on compassion.

Mettā and karunā are both Palī words that are often translated as compassion. Both may be part of compassion, but they do not mean the exact same thing. Mettā is a word that means loving kindness whereas karunā indicates participating in a negative experience or commiserating over suffering. In this way to some schools of Buddhism a full definition of compassion involves the sharing of the positive and the wish for others to experience loving-kindness in addition to feeling the suffering of others.¹⁹

In Buddhist compassion as discussed in "Reflection on Martha Nussbaum's Work on Compassion from a Buddhist Perspective" karunā must be accompanied with prajñā or wisdom. Prajñā is not just any wisdom; it is the insight into the true nature of reality or emptiness. Part of the understanding of emptiness in the Madhyamika school of Mahāyāna Buddhism includes an understanding of praṭītya-samutpāda or conditioned arising. Conditioned arising refers to the doctrine that psychological and physical phenomena are interdependent. They all mutually condition one another. Interdependence requires a concern for all living creatures as all are interdependent.²⁰

Martha Nussbaum's eudemonistic judgment means that to feel compassion the C-feeler must consider the C-object to be of value to them. They must consider that C-

¹⁸ Maria Vanden Eynde, "Reflection on Martha Nussbaum's Work on Compassion from a Buddhist Perspective," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 11 (2004): 47.

¹⁹ Bein, *Compassion and Moral Guidance*, 51.

²⁰ Eynde, "Reflection on Martha Nussbaum's Work on Compassion from a Buddhist Perspective," 47.

object to be an important part of their own world. In a Buddhist view based on interdependence, compassion must be extended to all, because all are an important part of the world.²¹

The Way of the Bodhisattva gives the advice to take others as yourself:

Identify yourself as “other.”
Then, without another thought,
Immerse yourself in envy, pride, and rivalry.²²

Nussbaum’s compassion is also based on the condition that the C-feeler believes that what is happening to the C-object could also be happening to them. Nussbaum views vulnerability as a necessity for compassion. If human beings cannot look at others who are suffering without detachment compassion is not possible. Compassion is possible when the C-feeler views the suffering experienced by the C-object as serious, is unwarranted and the C-object is someone worthy of concern and that the C-feeler could also experience what the C-object is experiencing. It can be that last piece, the process of the C-feeler imaging that they are the C-object which can be the motivator which propels the C-feeler from empathy to compassion.²³ But Śāntideva does not mean just put yourself in the shoes of another. That is not enough to account for the concept of karma and cause and effect. Others are the same because all are subject to the same laws of karma. In simple terms karma means deed or action. Deeds or actions committed bear fruit. That fruit could be positive or negative. When conditions are right the fruit of the deed will ripen. Part of the conditions required for the ripening of that fruit is intention. Did the individual intend his or her results to be positive or negatives?

²¹ Ibid., 48.

²² Śāntideva, Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho, and Comité de traduction Padmakara, *The way of the Bodhisattva*, 217.

²³ Eynde, “Reflection on Martha Nussbaum’s Work on Compassion from a Buddhist Perspective,” 50.

Maria Vanden Eynde describes the relationship between karma and deeds and no self:

The Buddhist teaching that we lack an inherently existing Self (anatta) shows that suffering does not really “belong” to anyone. It arises, in the life-stream of various sentient beings. To try and reduce it in “my” stream at the expense of increasing it in another life-stream is folly, both because this will in fact bring more suffering back to me (karma), and because it depends on the deluded notion that “I” am an inviolable entity that is not dependent and can treat others as if only they are limited and conditioned.²⁴

In the Buddhist view of compassion discussed above, to exchange yourself with other does not mean to put yourself in the shoes of another. It does not mean to think “That could happen to me”. It means to recognize that the suffering of one is the suffering of all.

As with Nussbaum’s theory of compassion and the other Judeo-Christian theories of compassion discussed earlier, Buddhist compassion does involve the recognition of suffering and it requires that one take action to alleviate that suffering. Buddhist compassion involves the recognition of loving-kindness. Although rejoicing is noted as one of Scheler grades of sympathy, loving-kindness or positive emotions are frequently omitted from the Judeo-Christian discussions on compassion. Buddhist compassion also differs in that it does not come from a place of an ‘I’ or of a place of separate selves. The primary motivator for compassion comes from a place of interdependence. In *Putting Buddhism to Work: A New Approach to Management and Business* Shinichi Inoue summarizes it well when he states:

Rather, Buddhist compassion comes from the knowledge that one is ultimately the same as, or equal to, those who are less privileged. Helping others is thus the way

²⁴ Ibid., 51.

to help oneself. This connection of one heart to another lies at the core of the Buddhist attitude toward welfare.²⁵

The end result may appear to be the same for these types of compassion, but the cause behind the compassion has very different roots.

After careful consideration the definition of compassion that will serve as the reference point for the rest of this discussion is based on the definition proposed by Steve Bein in *Compassion and Moral Guidance* and also on that of Thupten Jinpa. Jinpa is a Tibetan scholar and an English translator to the Dalai Lama. Steve Bein arrives at what he calls a heavily Buddhist influenced definition of compassion and describes compassion as “attentiveness to suffering and satisfaction, coupled with the will to bring about the alleviation of suffering and the multiplication of satisfaction.”²⁶ Thupten Jinpa says of compassion: “Compassion is a mental state endowed with a sense of concern for the suffering of others and the aspiration to see that suffering relieved.” Specifically, he defines compassion as having three components:

1. A cognitive component: “I understand you”
2. An affective component: “I feel for you”
3. A motivational component: “I want to help you”²⁷

The definition of compassion being carried forward from this point is that compassion requires that one notices that another individual (or individuals) is suffering, that one develops feelings of empathy with regard to that suffering and that one is moved to act and to help to decrease or eliminate that suffering.

²⁵ 井上信一, *Putting Buddhism to Work: A New Approach to Management and Business* (Tokyo; New York; New York: Kodansha International ; Distributed in the United States by Kodansha America, 1997), 117.

²⁶ Bein, *Compassion and Moral Guidance*, 88.

²⁷ “Compassionate Leaders Are Effective Leaders,” accessed November 11, 2013, http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/compassionate_leaders_are_effective_leaders.

The Science of Compassion

Is compassion nature or nurture? Given the fact that most people do show compassion at some point in their lives it is possible that that compassion is an innate part of the make-up of a human being.²⁸ Yet the definition of compassion used in this discussion indicates that compassion is a process, a combination of emotions and behaviors that lead to an action. Do all human beings come with the inclination to participate in the process of compassion? There is much work to be done within the study of the science of compassion and it is too early to make a definitive case as to what leads human beings to behave compassionately. There are some strong arguments for compassion as an evolutionary trait and some of those arguments will be discussed here.

Jules Masserman led a group of psychiatrists in a study at Northwestern University. The results of this study were reported in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* in 1964. In the study rhesus monkeys were taught to pull a chain in order to receive food. Then after having been taught to pull the chain for food, one group of monkeys pulled the chain and received food but when the chain was pulled the other group of monkeys received a strong electrical shock. The act of pulling the chain delivered food to part of the group and pain to the other part of the group. Monkeys stopped pulling the chain, even though those who pulled the chain were not the recipients of the painful shock. In one extreme case, one monkey risked starvation by refusing to pull the chain for a period of twelve days.²⁹ Empathetic responses have also been noted in chimpanzees. Chimpanzees are members of the anthropoid ape family. From an evolutionary biology perspective

²⁸ Reilly, *Ethics of Compassion*, 41.

²⁹ Dacher Keltner, Jason Marsh, and Jeremy Adam Smith, *The Compassionate Instinct: The Science of Human Goodness* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 18.

anthropoid apes are considered to be the closest relations to humans. One scientist reported that when her research chimpanzee (Joni) would hide or perhaps climb the roof of her house, the only way she could get Joni to return to her would be to cry or emulate crying. Whenever this occurred Joni would immediately approach her and take her face into his hands and gently touch her face.³⁰ Empathy is not the same thing as compassion, but empathy is a part of the process of compassion. To have compassion it is necessary to have sensitivity toward what another is feeling.

Jonathan Haidt, a psychologist at the University of Virginia, has investigated why some people are moved by the sight of a stranger helping another stranger. The term he uses for the feeling people experience when they witness unexpected acts of human goodness is elevation. His research has led him to believe that we are programmed to be inspired or feel elevated when we observe people helping others. Haidt has found that most people who see someone help the sick or the poor experience elevation. *Kandou* is the Japanese word for being moved in this way or to experience elevation. In a study conducted in Japan a participant stated that they felt *kandou* when they were a passenger on a very crowded train and they saw a rough looking gangster type offer his seat to an elderly man.³¹

What about those who do not notice the experience of another, develop feelings for them and seek to alleviate their suffering? A study conducted at Concordia University in Montreal, followed a group of twins from infancy until they reached seventeen years of age. Among the tests or measurements which came from studying this group was a

³⁰ Keltner, Marsh, and Smith, *The Compassionate Instinct*, 19.

³¹ Daniel Goleman, "The Roots of Compassion," *Opinionator*, accessed November 22, 2013, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2006/12/19/the-roots-of-compassion/>.

measurement of how upset they were when their own mother experienced distress. Those who at from five to seven years of age were the least upset by their mother's distress went on to become the group who were most likely to exhibit behavior that was considered antisocial or even to have a criminal record.³²

It may be that the feeling of elevation described by Jonathan Haidt can be traced to the brain's pain center. Members of the field of social neuroscience have found that it is possible that empathy arises in the brain's pain center due to an interaction with mirror neurons. Mirror neurons appear to pick up the emotions and movement and intentions of others and in a sense broadcast them to our own brain. Our brain center may then pick up that broadcast and experience it as our own emotions or feelings.³³

It is possible to measure the effect of compassion on the central nervous system. A simple explanation for this is that the autonomic nervous system helps to create emotion-related actions. An individual placed in a situation which triggers fear will most often experience what is called fight-or-flight. In other words they will rise up against that which is causing them fear or they will flee from that which is causing them fear. When faced with fear or a fight-or-flight situation it is common for an individual to experience an increased heart rate. Compassion which is a call to action that is not based on fear has been measured to show a decrease in heart rate. To the body and to the autonomic nervous system distress versus assisting someone who is experiencing distress are two different events.³⁴ Does the body have another different response if an individual senses that another feels pain and that pain is deserved versus sensing that another is in pain and

³² "The Roots of Compassion," *Opinionator*, accessed November 10, 2013, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2006/12/19/the-roots-of-compassion/>.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Jennifer L. Goetz, Dacher Keltner, and Emiliana Simon-Thomas, "Compassion: An Evolutionary Analysis and Empirical Review," *Psychological Bulletin* 136, no. 3 (2010): 362, doi:10.1037/a0018807.

that their pain is undeserved? What about a situation where the risk of behaving compassionately outweighs the benefits of behaving compassionately, does this trigger differing responses in the nervous system? This is an area where there is more work to be accomplished.³⁵

It would seem that if empathetic responses, an important part of the process of compassion can be traced to our closest evolutionary relatives and the response of compassion can be measured within the body, that perhaps the discussion around compassion as an evolutionary trait is a done deal. That is not necessarily the case. Putting aside those who reject evolution completely, there are at least three evolutionary arguments that are still being discussed with regard to why compassion is part of human evolution. Those three evolutionary arguments are:

1. Compassion evolved as part of a caregiving response to vulnerable offspring, to ensure survival of the species. Advocates of this argument contend that compassion is most likely to occur when the sufferer is genetically related or shares very common interests in which case an individual will act as a caregiver toward the one who is suffering. This is the case of a parent protecting a child or in the absence of a parent another adult coming to the aid of a child in distress.³⁶
2. Compassionate individuals were preferred in the mate selection process and so the compassionate instinct evolved through partner selection and the resultant offspring. Charles Darwin was an advocate of this argument and stated:
“Sympathy will have been increased through natural selection; for those

³⁵ Ibid., 367.

³⁶ Ibid., 356

communities, which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring”³⁷

3. Compassion emerged as a desirable trait even among non-kin as a way to ensure survival of the species. This presents an argument that individuals prefer long-term relationships and that those relationships are more easily formed with compassionate individuals because compassionate individuals tend to be more trustworthy and agreeable. Work conducted by Q. Zhou and others and published in *Child Development* indicates that children displaying higher degrees of compassionate behavior have stronger and more developed friendship networks.³⁸

No conclusion or preference for one versus the other of these arguments will be made here. This is an area where research is still being conducted. Some research has shown that compassion appears to have distinct appraisal processes (behaviors that have been observed and have been shown as repeatable in varying tests using varying subjects); which can be linked to the observation of others receiving undeserved suffering. The responses showed up as specific patterns of touch, posture and vocalization. As with the heart acceleration and deceleration tests, the responses which fit the profile of compassionate behavior were different than the responses which fit the profile of distress and sadness. Once again the evidence indicated that compassion is a distinct emotion.

More research is needed in the area how compassion is displayed in various cultures and more work is necessary in the area of neural correlations and the brain science of

³⁷ Ibid., 355.

³⁸ Ibid.

compassion. It would also be interesting to know, if compassion is in fact an evolutionary trait, how strong is that trait or instinct in comparison with our other evolutionary traits?

Making a Business Case for Compassion

Employees, who experience higher levels of stress, have higher levels of the hormone cortisol in their systems. In fact cortisol is sometimes referred to as the ‘stress hormone’. Although there are multiple factors which can lead to stress, poor working relationships is a strong contributing factor. The employee who does not get along with a leader or a colleague is subject to more stress than an employee whose relationships are stronger and healthier. This does not mean that a lack of conflict leads to a lack of stress. It does mean that how conflict is handled within working relationships can significantly impact those stress levels. Conflict which is suppressed and not released using positive channels leads to resentment. Now let us stop and consider, what does this have to do with compassion? If compassion is comprised of understanding or recognizing what another is experiencing and then feeling for that person and then wanting to help that person, this leaves little room for pent up resentments and the accumulation of hard feelings. When a compassionate employee considers a colleague or leader with whom they have a disagreement, their full expression of compassion will lead them to some form of forgiveness. The action component of compassion, offering help, is difficult to execute without some softening of the heart.

Studies have been conducted which show that people who are involved in or have been asked to think about a very difficult relationship, a relationship where they had yet to come to a place of forgiveness have measurably higher levels of cortisol the ‘stress hormone’. In fact these individuals had lower scores on tests that measured their general

willingness to others. When they were asked about their difficult relationships they had even higher cortisol reactivity, in other words their cortisol measures jumped again.³⁹

Conversely those with more forgiving attitudes towards others or who self-identified as being involved in happy relationships had quite different responses, their cortisol or ‘stress hormone’ measurements were well within the normal range. The ability to forgive does seem to increase with age. And although this is not meant to promote age discrimination in hiring, it should be noted that a study led by Loren Toussaint, a psychologist at Luther College in Iowa, indicated middle-aged people were able to forgive others more easily. A related study conducted by David Williams, Mark Musick and Susan Everson correlated the degree to which individuals practice forgiveness to positive mental and physical health. For example people over 45 years of age who had forgiven others reported greater satisfaction with their lives and were less likely to report symptoms of psychological distress such as nervousness, restlessness and sadness. Leaders of this study firmly contend that hostility is present in those who are unable to forgive and that hostility contributes to stress-related physical illnesses, such as increased risk of cardiovascular disease.⁴⁰

Employees who have unresolved conflict in their working relationships have stress. An inability to forgive contributes to that stress and this can lead to a compromised immune system. Stress causes illness which decreases workplace productivity. Employees who are able to ward off illness take fewer sick days and they expose their peers to fewer illnesses too.

³⁹ Keltner, Marsh, and Smith, *The Compassionate Instinct*, 65 – 66.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Employees who are able to come to a place of forgiveness may still contract illnesses from others, but are less likely to experience other stress related diseases.

If strained relationships cause stress then positive relationships help to combat stress. In fact social support among employees does help reduce the negative effects of other work related stress factors. In one laboratory study participants were exposed to equivalent levels of stressors. Researchers leading the study found that members of cohesive groups reported the least amounts of stress. Similar evidence has been found that shows that social support among employees reduces the negative effects of work related stress on work outcomes.⁴¹ It is hard to imagine a viable social support structure existing without some element of compassion. If social support is critical in helping employees cope with the stress which is experienced during normal business operations, that social support must be even more critical during times of extreme duress. This leads us to focus on the airline industry in the post September 11, 2001 era in the United States.

The attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City in September 2001 put the United States of America to quite a test. Since many World War II veterans were no longer alive, for many this was the first experience of an attack on United States soil. The concept of such a large scale act of terrorism was something that was not part of the collective consciousness of American society. An act of terrorism is certainly the antithesis of an act of compassion. And it was in this moment that the United States airline industry faced significant crisis. According to Kevin Murphy (2001), an airline industry analyst for Morgan Stanley, "If ever there was a stress test for a good business this is it." Even with \$15 billion in government relief the industry continued to lose

⁴¹ Jody Hoffer Gittel et al., "Relationships, Layoffs, and Organizational Resilience: Airline Industry Responses to September 11," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 42, no. 3 (September 2006): 300.

millions of dollars on a daily basis. To counteract these losses airlines, in the weeks right after the attacks airlines cut their flights by an average of about 20% and laid off an average of 16% of their workforces. In the midst of this crisis and the setbacks that followed some airlines never recovered and yet some emerged stronger and more resilient.⁴²

In “Relationships, Layoffs, and Organizational Resilience: Airline Industry Responses to September 11”, authors Jody Hoffer Gittell, Cameron Ki, Sandy Lim and Victor Rivas make a case for a viable business model as dependent upon financial reserves and relational reserves. Financial reserves help by providing resources to draw upon when business and therefore revenues decline. An organization that has strong financial reserves is one with strong cash flow and low debt levels. To create and sustain strong financial reserves requires an organization to have a business model which fits within the current economic environment.⁴³ All of these elements become of even greater importance when a company or an industry is faced with a crisis. Financial reserves alone are not enough and it is very difficult to have a compelling business model without the right human resources available to execute that business model. When faced with a crisis it is also necessary to have relational reserves or positive employee relationships, after all it is not the money or the business plan which pulls itself together and faces the crisis, it is the people who draw upon the financial reserves and the plan to help carry the organization forward.

Unfortunately layoffs can be a go-to response when an organization is facing financial trouble. This does provide short term financial relief. Layoffs also potentially damage the

⁴² Ibid., 302.

⁴³ Ibid., 303.

relationships or relational reserves which are needed to really carry the organization all the way through to the end of the crisis.⁴⁴

The damage to relational reserves that is caused by layoffs can be quantified. After downsizing most organizations will have face a decline in their profitability, a decline in the quality of the goods or services they produce and experience negative changes to their organizational culture. This is not the case for organizations that choose not to downsize. When the market share price of downsized companies was compared with the market share price of companies within the same industry that did not downsize, the downsized companies share prices averaged approximately 26% below that of their competitors. During the recession of 2001 companies with similar growth rates that did not downsize consistently outperformed those that downsize.⁴⁵

The hallmarks of a high performing team include the ability to trust one another, to be able to face conflicts together, to focus on and to buy-in to the same goal and share a commitment in reaching that goal. In a 1990 McKinley study some common negative outcomes associated with downsizing were documented. These outcomes include declines in trust, poor social networking, poor communication, decreased commitment to the job and to the organization and decreased innovation. Studies conducted by other organizations also conducted during the 1990s reveal similar types of outcomes from downsizing.⁴⁶ Just when a team is needed to be at its strongest and have the highest ability to perform, downsizing will reduce that team to their weakest state. Downsizing might be a good short-term financial solution, but it is not good for relational resources.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 302.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 303.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

An organization will save money, but will very likely be left without the positive employee relationships which are necessary to successfully navigate recovery. These positive relationships are part of what helps an organization become resilient during times of crisis.

This is a good time to discuss the relationship between layoffs, relational resources and compassion. Is an organization that lays off employees necessarily uncompassionate? The answer is no. Despite trying other measures, there may be times when it is necessary for an organization to layoff. Certainly an organization which allows employees to stay on and gives them no warning that there is trouble and then without notice or severance packages simply closes its doors, is an organization lacking compassion. When an organization is faced with having to lay off some of its employees it is how that organization handles the layoff that marks them as either compassionate or uncompassionate. What makes the decision of one of the airlines that we are about to discuss compassionate is the reasoning behind choosing not to lay off employees. It is that instead of choosing to cut expenses by letting go people a decision was made to place people first. And that shows the elements of paying attention, understanding the feelings of others and then taking action based upon those feelings. As will be shown here the compassionate action paid off.

Using fifteen years of data from the airline industry Jody Hoffer Gittell, Cameron Ki, Sandy Lim and Victor Rivas track results from ten major United States based airlines and compare their performance.⁴⁷ Their findings make a strong case in support of financial reserves combined with relational reserves as key components required for an

⁴⁷ Ibid.

organization to recover from a crisis. The two charts which follow help to illustrate the financial resources of the ten airlines included in this study. Figure 4 shows the number of days of cash on hand for each airline prior to the attacks on September 11, 2001 and Figure 5 shows their debt-to-equity ratios.

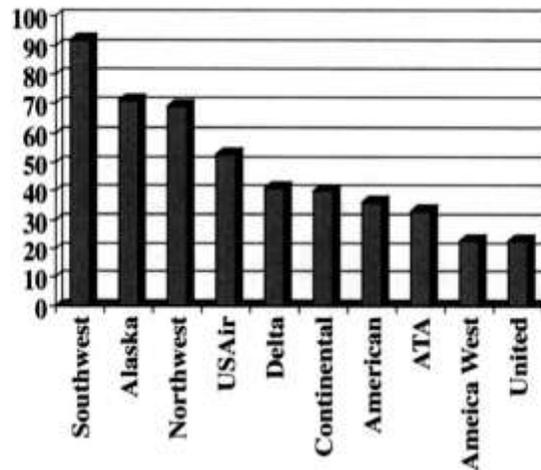


FIGURE 4: Days of Cash on Hand Preceding September 11

SOURCE: Isidore (2001) and SEC filings.

NOTE: Estimates are based on June 30, 2001, cash positions and daily cash operating expenses of each major airline. ATA = American Trans Air.

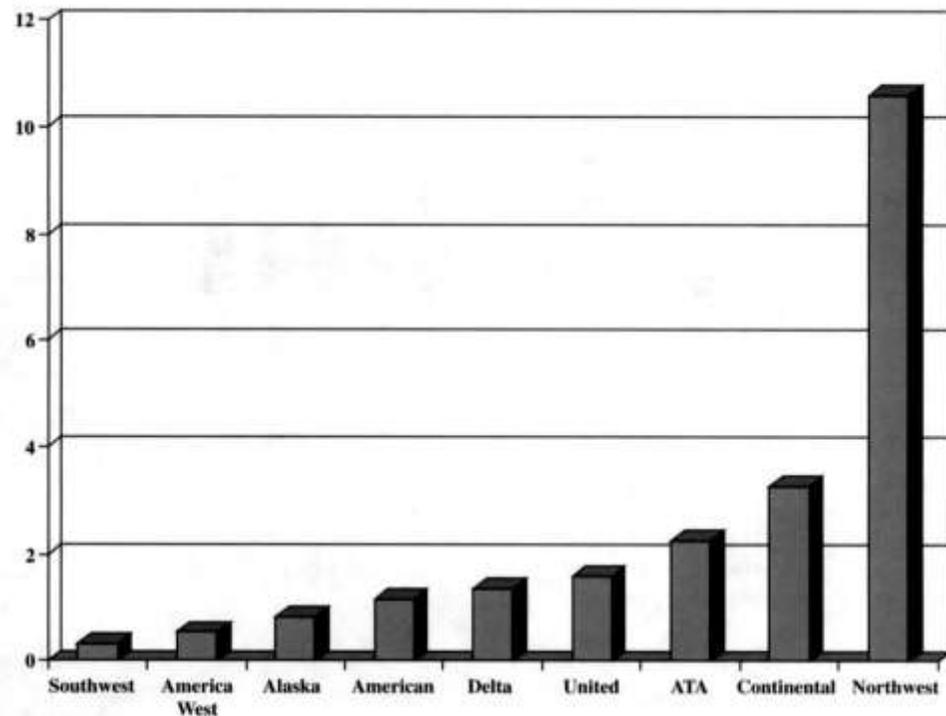


FIGURE 5: Debt to Equity Ratios Preceding September 11

SOURCE: Yahoo Finance (<http://finance.yahoo.com/q?s=yhoo>) and Thomson Financial (<http://tprod.thomson.com/financial/financial.jsp>).

NOTE: US Airways was off the chart with a debt/equity ratio of 300. ATA = American Trans Air.

Using both measures, Southwest and Alaska are soundly within the top three airlines in terms of financial reserves. Southwest had a fiscal policy of managing their money in good times as-if they were in bad times and this approach gave them tremendous flexibility. American West has a good debt to equity ratio but poor cash on hand and Northwest has good cash on hand, yet the weakest debt to equity ratio position. This position placed Northwest at risk as cash on hand does not last long when revenues decrease and there is considerable amount of debt to be paid. This also made the need for Northwest to engage in layoffs more pressing, the cash on hand may not necessarily have been enough to support payroll and other debts.

Another financial indicator discussed in the study is that of unit cost. Trends in the airline industry just prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks pointed at lower unit costs as an important piece of a viable business model. Unit costs are measured as seat costs per mile of flight. Low unit costs typically correlate with a lower debt to equity ratio and an airline with lower unit costs tended to experience fewer layoffs.⁴⁸ For most of the ten airlines included in the study layoffs were a post September 11, 2001 necessity.

Southwest airlines took a very different approach. Although Southwest airlines reported losing significant amounts of money, Southwest, invested in people and did not opt for a short term financial solution which included layoffs. Southwest's CEO Jim Parker stated: "We are willing to suffer some damage, even to our stock price, to protect the jobs of our people."⁴⁹

The tables which follows reflects layoff by airline and then recovery by airline. For the purposes of this study performance recovery was measured by comparing stock prices for airlines on September 10, 2001 against quarterly prices taken between December 10, 2001 and September 10, 2005. Current stock price divided by the stock price on September 10, 2001 was the equation used to derive the recovery measurement. If an airline's stock price rebounded to its September 10, 2001 price it would have a recovery measurement of 100%.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid., 307.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 314.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 305.

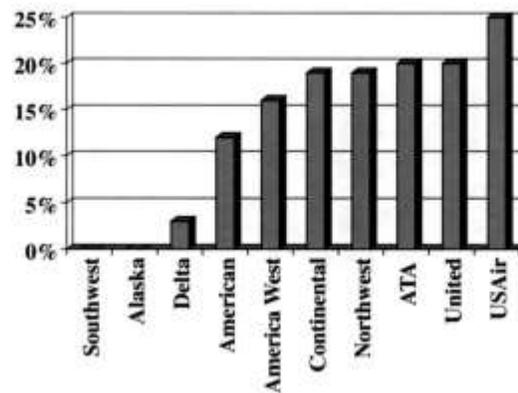


FIGURE 2: Employee Layoffs After September 11

SOURCE: Layoffs reported in press after September 11, divided by year-end employment for 2000 as reported by Bureau of Transportation Statistics.

NOTE: ATA = American Trans Air.

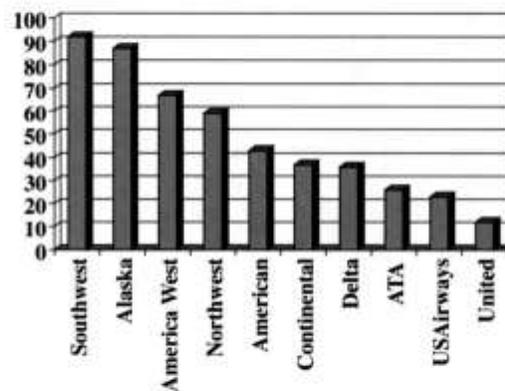


FIGURE 3: Average Stock Price Recovery From December 10, 2001, to September 10, 2005, to September 10, 2001, Levels

SOURCE: Yahoo Finance (<http://finance.yahoo.com/q?s=yahoo>).

NOTE: Percentage change in stock price relative to September 10, 2001, levels measured quarterly from December 10, 2001, to September 10, 2005. ATA = American Trans Air.

In this study Southwest comes out as a clear winner. There is certainly more to the story in terms of the financial and relational challenges that other airlines faced, but some of those stories include themes of violating employee contracts and a degradation of the employer-employee relationship. Southwest reminded their employees that they were more than just numbers and in their decision to forsake layoffs they strengthened their team and deepened employee relationships. As early as February 2002, Southwest was

hiring new employees, many of whom had been laid off by the other airlines.⁵¹ In the fall of 2002 *Money* magazine celebrated its thirtieth anniversary by running an article called, “The 30 Best Stocks”; here is an excerpt from that article:

It was straight out of Ripley’s. When *Money* asked Ned David Research this summer to compile a list of the 30 best performing stocks since our debut in 1972, it seemed obvious that the No.1 performer would reflect the brawn-to-business transformation of the U.S. economy. Probably a technology stock. Or a big name in pharmaceuticals.

What we were not expecting was an airline – Southwest Airlines, to be precise. Since August 1972, Southwest had produced annualized returns of 25.99%, which means that had you invested \$10,000 in Southwest 30 years ago, your stake would be worth a little over \$10.2 million today. Southwest, of course is not your typical airline.⁵²

A group of researchers who call themselves the POS or Positive Organizational Scholarship take a look at organizations, not from the perspective of where they fail, but from the perspective of what they call “positive deviances”, instances of organizations that successfully develop inspiration among employees.⁵³ Jane Dutton, a professor at the University of Michigan and a leader in the POS movement calls their work a combination of positive psychology, sociology and anthropology. She states, “POS seeks to cultivate hope and a sense of possibility that people do not always know is there. “ The group has conducted studies with companies such as Newsweek, Reuters, Macy’s and Cisco Systems. In these studies employees completed surveys and some participated in structured interviews. What they found was that employees who experience compassion at work tend to view their coworkers and their organization in a more positive light than

⁵¹ Ibid., 318.

⁵² Marc Gunther, *Faith and Fortune: How Compassionate Capitalism Is Transforming American Business* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004), 68.

⁵³ Keltner, Marsh, and Smith, *The Compassionate Instinct*, 134 –135.

those who did not experience compassion in the work place.⁵⁴ When compassion is absent from the workplace it is possible that a few employees may leave while others will simply not give anything more than is required. Those who feel cared about at work are often more likely to give extra effort.⁵⁵ Dutton describes compassion as a natural response to seeing others in distress and believes it is something that we are programmed to do. She does express that sometimes employers find it difficult to bring compassion into the workplace because they do not know what to express or how to express it. It is to their advantage to become comfortable with compassion at work. Dutton notes “If compassion heals, as our research suggests, then people will be able to get back to work more quickly to bounce back from lifes setbacks”.⁵⁶

Not everyone agrees that compassion belongs in the workplace. Ben Hunnicut, a professor of leisure studies at the University of Iowa believes that attempts to make life at work more rewarding simply distracts from what should be bigger goals for employees. To look at this dilemma through his lens would be to focus on higher-paying shorter work weeks. He is not in favor of encouraging people to pursue satisfaction through work because they will spend more time at work and less time with their family, less time involved in religious pursuits or with art. In other words, work should not replace other important aspects of life. Professor Hunnicut says, “Instead of trying to work better, we should be working less.”⁵⁷

Whether Professor Hunnicut is correct or not, is really a decision to be made by each individual worker. What can be said is that the time that is spent at work can be improved

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 137.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 134 - 135.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 138 – 139.

by the inclusion of compassion in the corporate culture. Cultures of compassion tend to include less work related stress. Lower work related stress results in fewer absences due to mental and physical health issues. Organizations and management teams that build relational reserves are more likely to have the right human resources in place with the right frame of mind to guide an organization through challenging times and employees who have experienced compassion in the workplace have a more positive attitude toward their employer, which feeds right back into the strengthening of relational reserves.

Profiles in Compassion

Many non-profit organizations are tied to religious organizations and to humanitarian causes and it is reasonable to expect that these non-profits act out of compassion and hopefully embrace compassion in their daily work lives. Some would equate compassion with religion and consider it to be a religious ideal or concept. In the United States the concept of the separation of church and state ties back to the founding fathers of the United States and is also covered in the first amendment of the United States. It is an important concept and continues to spark much debate. Despite this potential aversion to embracing a religious concept in a secular for profit organization, there are companies who in fact do include and encourage acts of compassion in their corporate cultures. We have already considered Southwest Airlines and their compassionate refusal to engage in layoffs, now let us now turn our attention to a few other companies and their use of compassion. The good news is that this is not an exhaustive list of all United States companies where compassion at work is encouraged.

Cisco Systems Inc. is a San Jose, California based company that designs, manufactures and sells networking equipment. A review of the vision, strategy and values of Cisco Systems, Inc. does not reveal any explicit statements about compassion. They do however include statements such as respect and care for one another and always doing the right thing.⁵⁸ CEO John Chambers does extend compassion to his employees. Chambers has made it a policy to personally extend condolences to employees who suffer a significant loss. When he learns about an employee suffering a loss, perhaps the death

⁵⁸ "Welcome to Cisco," *Cisco.com*, accessed December 1, 2013, <http://www.cisco.com/en/US/hmpgs/index.html>.

of a family member, he personally reaches out to them within eight hours of learning about their loss.⁵⁹

Cisco Systems, Inc. does not just report and measure company progress based on financial returns. Since 2005 Cisco Systems, Inc. has compiled a yearly report on their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) work. An excerpt from Cisco.com encourages employees by stating:

These are the issues we believe in and work on every day. What is *your* expertise, *your* passion, *your* innovation? How can you build human networks that help you make an impact? And how can technology help multiply that impact?

We have seen this formula come to life around the world as human and technology networks combine to do good: you + networks = impact multiplied.

*Be part of the equation.*⁶⁰

The yearly Corporate Social Responsibility reports are posted on Cisco.com and are easily downloadable. Cisco evaluates performance using Governance and Ethics, Supply Chain, People, Society and Environment. With regard to the Society category, Cisco states that they:

Invest in scalable and self-sustaining programs that use technology to meet some of society's biggest challenges. Our programs are focused on four issue areas where we believe Cisco can add the most value and make a significant and lasting impact.⁶¹

The four issues Cisco focuses on are: education, healthcare, economic empowerment and critical human needs and disaster response. Project Samudaya is an example of how

⁵⁹ Keltner, Marsh, and Smith, *The Compassionate Instinct*, 136.

⁶⁰ "Welcome to Cisco."

⁶¹ Ibid.

Cisco takes on human needs and disaster response issues. Cisco responded to the 2009 flooding in Karnataka India with services, cash, solutions and equipment with a combined value of US \$10 million. After the flooding more than one million people were homeless, schools were destroyed and crops were lost. The resources provided by Cisco contributed to the building of three thousand homes, two schools and one primary healthcare center. Systems were put in place to connect villagers from some of the harder to reach villages with doctors and specialists in farther away Bangalore. Additionally some of the funds were used to provide educational programs for the children to assist them in English, mathematics, science and social science.⁶² As a company Cisco Systems, Inc. notices the suffering of others develops feelings of empathy with regard to that suffering and is moved to act and to help to decrease or eliminate that suffering. Cisco Systems, Inc. is a frequent entry on the list when *Fortune* magazine publishes the yearly article on 'Best 100 Companies to Work For'. In 2013 Cisco placed forty-second on the list.⁶³ Number one on the list is Google, Inc.

Chade-Meng Tan is one of the original engineers at Google, Inc. He is now officially the "Jolly Good Fellow" of the search engine giant. "Jolly Good Fellow" is really his title. It means that he is the head of personal development. He proudly displays a copy of his business card on his website. His job title is, "'Enlighten minds, open hearts, create world peace".⁶⁴ Part of what he does is to teach mindfulness meditation at the "Googleplex" in California to over-stressed computer engineers. Along with teaching meditation he also leads "Googlers" (employees at Google refer to themselves as

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "Best Companies to Work For 2013 - Fortune," *CNNMoney*, accessed December 1, 2013, <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/best-companies/2013/list/>.

⁶⁴ Chade-Meng Tan, "Meng's Little Space." *Meng's Little Space*, n.d. <http://www.chademeng.com/index.html>.

“Googlers”) through personal development courses which draw from emotional intelligence, Buddhist philosophy and brain science.⁶⁵ *Search Inside Yourself* takes one of Tan’s more popular classes and makes it available to all. He donates the profits from his book sales to the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute, a non-profit which is an offshoot from his work with Google. Tan who does identify himself as a Buddhist writes this about his book: “Some people buy books that teach them to be liked, others buy books that teach them to be successful. This book teaches you both. You are so lucky.”⁶⁶ It should be noted that Tan has a very self-deprecating sense of humor and frequently jokes about the irony of an engineer teaching others soft skills.

Tan is one person in a very large organization; does Google make room for compassion? Per their website Google’s mission is to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful. Additionally Google’s philosophy is stated as “Ten things we know to be true.” Included with these ten things is this statement, “You can make money without doing evil.”⁶⁷ This statement is followed by a discussion on advertising principles and how Google really seeks to ensure that even though much revenue is earned from internet advertising, this must be balanced with ensuring that the advertising which is displayed when a customer performs an internet search is directly relevant to the search and is not spam or misleading. How does this bring us to compassion at Google? Compassion at Google is an intersection of the company culture and the fact that this culture encourages Googlers to act compassionately. Like Cisco

⁶⁵ Maureen Fiedler, “The Zen Master of Google,” accessed December 1, 2013, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/zen-master-google>.

⁶⁶ Chade-Meng Tan, *Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace)* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 3.

⁶⁷ Google, Inc., “Google - About Google,” *Google.com*, accessed December 1, 2013, <https://www.google.com/intl/en/about/>.

Systems Inc., Google does seek to use technology to help make a difference in the world. Where Cisco has Corporate Social Responsibility programs, Google has Google.org a non-profit which states their purpose as:

We focus on problems where Google's assets and core capabilities—technology innovation, global presence, making massive amounts of information universally accessible and useful—play strongest and where the solutions we create have the most potential to scale.⁶⁸

It is not just Google.org which is the focus of compassion at Google. Google has a spirit of incorporating compassion as an integral part of life at Google. To learn about the spirit of everyday compassion at Google we turn again to Chade-Meng Tan and his TED (Technology, Engineering and Design) Talk entitled 'Everyday Compassion at Google.' Tan calls Google a company that was born of idealism, a company that still thrives on idealism. Tan would say that compassion at Google is organic and widespread. Individuals and groups are encouraged to act out of social responsibility and compassion and to do so independently without waiting for management direction or intervention. Some of the best compassion-based projects that have emerged from Google came from the bottom-up. Occasionally some of these ideas do turn into company sponsored projects. An example of this is an event where Googlers around the world donate their time to local charities. One of the more inspiring stories of Googlers acting from a combination of idealism and compassion involves the raising of funds to build a hospital in India. It started when three Googlers – a chef, an engineer and a massage therapist – learned of a region in India with a population of approximately two hundred thousand residents and no medical services and decided that something should be done. What they

⁶⁸ Ibid.

did was start a fund raiser which succeeded in securing the necessary funds to build a hospital. During the earthquake in Haiti, engineers worked together throughout the night to create a tool that would help individuals find their missing friends and family.⁶⁹

At Google, compassion is considered to be fun. But Chade-Meng Tan who describes compassion as feeling for others, understanding their suffering and wanting to help; contends that fun is not enough. Compassion is also profitable and good for business. Compassion creates an inspired workforce. Googlers who look at other Googlers and see that they have raised money to build a hospital in India cannot help but feel inspired. To keep the culture of compassion alive at Google involves three steps:

1. Create a culture of concern for the greater good. Always encourage employees to think about how their job and how their company serves the greater good.
2. Allow employees to act autonomously. If you have already have compassion, then people will do the right thing in the most compassionate way.
3. Build the character of your leaders. Provide opportunities for personal development and inner growth. Google has a program which involves attention training which helps improve cognitive and emotional functions; followed by the development of self-knowledge and self-mastery; followed by the encouragement to create new mental habits.⁷⁰ One new mental habit that is encouraged is to wish other happiness.

When Googlers walk around thinking “I want you to be happy”, others pick up on this view and intention. This creates trust and trust creates high quality working relationships. High quality working relationships generate compassion, or even more compassion.⁷¹

Although not on the 2013 list of ‘Best 100 Companies to Work For’ TOMS makes the list in terms of companies where compassion is alive and well. TOMS may be best

⁶⁹ Chade-Meng Tan, “Chade-Meng Tan: Everyday Compassion at Google,” TED.com video, 14:08, TED.com, November 2010. Accessed November 11, 2013, http://www.ted.com/talks/chade_meng_tan_everyday_compassion_at_google.html.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

known for the tagline One for One.[®] What One for One.[®] initially represented was that for every pair of shoes purchased by a customer, a pair of shoes would be donated to a child in need. Later One for One [®] expanded to include the donation of prescription glasses and medical treatment or eye surgery whenever a customer buys a pair of TOMS sunglasses. Recently TOMS has expanded beyond shoes and eye treatment, but before reviewing TOMS current endeavors, let us spend some time getting to know the company called TOMS.

TOMS is the creation of Blake Mycoskie. Mycoskie is called the Chief Shoe Giver of TOMS which is fitting as the original mission of TOMS was to provide shoes for needy children who were growing up without shoes. Mycoskie stumbled into the creation of TOMS on a 2006 trip to Argentina. Mycoskie states:

I was so overwhelmed by the spirit of the South American people, especially those who had so little, and I was instantly struck with the desire – the responsibility – to do more.⁷²

The first shoes that were designed and sold by TOMS were a type of canvas slip-on shoe, based on a type of shoe called the alpargata that Mycoskie saw being worn by some of the soccer plays in Argentina. He decided to create a for-profit business to help. He noticed the suffering of others, felt empathy for them and was moved to act. He opted to create a for-profit so that he would not be subject to the ebb and flow of donations. His preference was to build a strong business model and create a product that consumers would want to buy and would feel good about buying.⁷³ Since the launch of TOMS, a partner business and non-profit Friends of TOMS has been created. Friends of TOMS

⁷² “Bio of Blake Mycoskie, The Founder and Chief Shoe Giver of TOMS Shoes - TOMS.com,” *TOMS.com*, last modified 2014, <http://www.toms.com/blakes-bio/1>.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

allows those who would like to do more than purchase shoes and sunglasses to participate by volunteering in some of the countries served by TOMS. The primary business and the focus of this discussion is still TOMs the for-profit organization. TOMS is in the business of compassion.

Since 2006 TOMS has donated ten million pairs of shoes in sixty countries. The name TOMS was derived from the Shoes for Tomorrow Project, but the Shoes for Tomorrow Project did not fit on the initial labels and so the name became simply TOMS. TOMS began the eyewear program in 2011 and since that time purchases of TOMS eyewear has resulted in more than one hundred and fifty thousand people in thirteen countries regaining their vision. The TOMS mission is stated simply as: "With every product you purchase, TOMS will help a person in need. **One for One.**^{®74} Those who work for TOMS are driven by the goal of giving. TOMS does invest in employees and provides them competitive compensation packages, which include medical, dental, vision, long term disability and life insurance. Flexible work hours and paid family leave and a 401(k) program are also available to employees. Those who work at their Santa Monica, California headquarters also have access to onsite fitness and wellness classes.

In November 2013 TOMs launched a new venture, TOMS Marketplace.

The TOMS Marketplace represents something that is bigger than us," said Blake Mycoskie, Founder and Chief Shoe Giver of TOMS. "We believe social entrepreneurship is a movement that is here to stay, and the TOMS Marketplace is our way of bringing awareness to so many amazing companies, causes and products. For the past few years, I have been humbled by the number of social entrepreneurs who have been inspired by the TOMS business model. In fact, it wasn't too long ago that I found myself in a similar position. So I thought, 'What

⁷⁴ "Corporate Information - How TOMS Was Established - TOMS.com," *TOMS.com*, 2006, <http://www.toms.com/corporate-info/>.

can we do to help support these companies?' The TOMS Marketplace is the result.⁷⁵

TOMS Marketplace is a website which sells products from companies who follow a model similar to the TOMS One for One.[®] Any company featured on the TOMS Marketplace must donate a portion of their profits to charitable causes AND must also be prepared to meet the consumer demand which is anticipated – especially as the site was launched just prior to a time of year when retailers look to the holiday season and gift buying to stimulate sales. Right now the site features thirty companies. The types of products which are part of the initial launch include headphones with proceeds going to help people get their hearing back and necklaces whose profits are used to help women in Uganda receive counseling or earn consistent income. TOMS Marketplace was launched with an eye toward the holiday gift buying season but the goal is that it becomes a year-round enterprise. The site will continue to offer new products with opportunities to help even more charities.⁷⁶ At TOMS Blake Mycoskie has created a strong case study for the integration of profit and compassion.

Each of the three companies discussed here, Cisco Systems Inc., Google Inc. and TOMS have all found a way to infuse compassion into the workplace.

⁷⁵ “The TOMS Marketplace Launches At TOMS.com,” *Yahoo Finance*, accessed December 1, 2013, <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/toms-marketplace-launches-toms-com-120000609.html>.

⁷⁶ Jeff Macke, “TOMS Shoes Launches New Website for Gifts That Give Back,” *Yahoo Finance*, accessed December 1, 2013, <http://finance.yahoo.com/blogs/breakout/toms-shoes-launches-new-website-for-gifts-that-give-back-131705458.html>.

Compassionate Leadership

An organization does not have a culture of compassion simply because it has a nicely worded mission statement. Posters with corporate values printed on them do not guarantee compassionate behavior. Organizational culture can be defined as the personality of a corporation. It can be expressed by answering the question, if organization X was a personality, how would you describe that person and their personality? But where does that personality come from? The organization is not actually a person. The organization is made up of people and it is those people who define who the culture of the organization. Specifically it is the people who are the leaders and influencers within the organization that truly define the organizational culture. Cisco Systems, Inc., Google Inc. and TOMS each have leaders who champion the cause of compassion.

Bill George the former CEO of Medtronic believes that compassion creates highly effective leaders. It is his belief that a truly great leader transforms from thinking about ‘Me’ to thinking about ‘We’. In turn this transformation is highly motivational to team members. Many team members will follow the lead of those in charge, if the executives in charge think only about themselves, then so too will team members. If a leader stops focusing on his or her personal goals and ego, then so too will many of the team.⁷⁷ A group who looks outward instead of inward is more likely to notice and recognize what others are experiencing, develop feelings for those others and then to take action to help them, in other words to make compassion a real part of their culture. In *Good to Great* Jim Collins finds that it takes a special kind of a leader to take a company to greatness.

⁷⁷ “Compassionate Leaders Are Effective Leaders.”

He refers to these leaders as level five leaders. A level five leader is highly capable and also possesses humility and ambition; ambition that is directed toward the greater good not to inflate their own egos.⁷⁸

When leaders are not able to shift from ‘Me’ to ‘We’, they are unable to consider the feelings and experiences of their team members and may act in a manner which is considered to be uncompassionate. One such story is related in Daniel Goleman’s book *Social Intelligence*:

One of the worst periods I ever went through at work, was when the company was restructuring and people were being ‘disappeared’ daily. These disappearances were followed by lying memos stating that they had left ‘for personal reasons’. No one could focus on their work while that was occurring and there was there no real work done.⁷⁹

This story was told by an employee whose company was experiencing financial difficulties and layoffs. In this instance instead of handling the layoffs in a compassionate manner, leaders opted to follow a path which did not require them to acknowledge those financial difficulties. Instead of considering how employees felt, it would appear that leaders disregarded the feelings of the employees and perhaps acted in a manner that was easier for them. With no recognition of what employees might feel OR if there was recognition then without taking action to help them, an opportunity to model compassion at work was lost.

If an organization does not have a leader or leaders who model compassion, is it impossible for an organization to develop a culture of compassion? Professor Monica Worline of Emory University and also a member of the POS or Positive Organizational

⁷⁸ Chade-Meng Tan.

⁷⁹ Daniel Goleman, *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships* (New York: Bantam Books, 2006), 268.

Scholarship movement finds that lack of compassionate leaders does not have to be an obstacle to building a compassionate workplace. She finds that often when coworkers experience compassion, the display of compassion frequently comes from other coworkers and not necessarily from management. Despite that observation she has found that these acts of compassion are more likely to occur in organizations where positive contact between employees is encouraged. The more often that employees interact, the easier it is for them to notice if a coworker is in the midst of a difficult time. Professor Worline states: “in organization which has quality connections between people has much more fertile ground compassion to happen”.⁸⁰

Thus far the discussion compassionate leadership has been focused on those who have official leadership roles. Corporate culture or personality comes from the people who are the leaders and the people who are the influencers within the organization. Not all who are leaders are influencers and not all who are influencers are officially leaders.

Unfortunately there are times when those who are called leaders, are leaders in name only. They have a high-ranking position, a nice title and probably other benefits that are only awarded to a select few. All of these things may provide them formal authority but they do not make them a leader. There are also people within an organization who may never take a high-ranking position. However because they wield influence they are leaders. Their colleagues look to them as role models. This could be because they have considerable knowledge and skill in a specific area or perhaps they are charismatic. They are leaders because others willingly follow them. It is very possible for these ‘unofficial’ leaders to help to define the organization’s culture and to set an example of

⁸⁰ Keltner, Marsh, and Smith, *The Compassionate Instinct*, 136.

compassionate leadership. It is with this thought in mind that the rest of our discussion on compassionate leadership should be continued. A compassionate leader can be an executive, a middle manager or a non-managerial worker. Compassionate leadership can be adopted by all.

Earvin Staub is a Holocaust survivor who has spent much of his time seeking to understand what leads or motivates people to help others. In order to gain a better understanding of those who help versus those who do not, he has conducted several experiments. In one experiment people are placed in a room with another individual who takes on more of a lead role. The individual who takes on the lead role is a plant or a confederate. They are part of the experiment. The individuals who are being studied are sent to a small room with the lead under the guise of working together on a joint task. After they are in the room together, they hear loud noises coming from another room. The noises tend to be loud crashes and cries of distress. When the leader hears the sounds, but makes of light of them, perhaps saying something along the lines of “That sounds like a tape” or “That could just be part of another experiment”, only twenty-five percent of the study participants get up and go into the other room to see if everything and everyone is OK. When the leader makes comments that are along the lines of “That sounds bad” or “Maybe we should do something”, then sixty-six percent of the study participants took action. If the lead explicitly said to the study participant, “You should go into the next room and investigate”, then one hundred percent of the study participants did go and investigate. Although it is disappointing to think that more people did not take the initiative to help on their own, this does help to illustrate the need for compassionate

leaders at all levels of the organization. Leadership by example is a strong force.⁸¹ Daniel Goleman would refer to this as the relationship between power and emotional flow. His work on what he calls emotional contagion indicates that emotions flow from the more socially dominant person to the less socially dominant.⁸²

In *Buddhist Acts of Compassion* an employee shares his own story of modeling compassion for others at work. The employee in question was working as an internet producer for a supervisor who he felt really despised him. It was at the point where the internet producer had decided it was time to move on. Outside of work the internet producer was participating in meditation classes and working with a spiritual teacher. His teacher told him that he should consider this difficult supervisor as an opportunity to really develop patience and compassion. He stayed and one day there was a major disagreement between quite a few parties at work. The disagreement was not just between the internet producer and his supervisor; it spanned multiple departments as well. For a while an entire group of people engaged in shouting matches in one of the conference rooms. During this time, the internet producer practices a subtle breathing practice which was based on the Tibetan practice of Tonglen. He quietly breathed in the suffering of others and worked to breath out happiness. His coworkers were not aware of his focused breathing and meditation. Eventually one of the participants recommended that everyone take a mental step back and that they take turns discussing what they thought it would take to be able to get along and work together as professionals. To his surprise the internet producer was asked to go first. He approached it from the perspective that they all really wanted the same thing. They all wanted their project to be

⁸¹ Ibid., 185.

⁸² Goleman, *Social Intelligence*, 275.

successful they all wanted to have a happy work environment and to be treated with respect. To his further surprise, after he finished, his supervisor broke down and shared with the group that he had a troubled relationship with his mother and that they had not spoken in ten years and how he was going to relationship therapy. Everyone allowed the supervisor to just share and together they all just listened. From that point on the atmosphere took a turn for the better.⁸³ It is very important that some member of the group is able to behave compassionately and it is equally important to remember that it may or may not be the official leader who sets the tone.

If compassionate behavior makes for more effective leaders and creates for better team relationships then why don't more leaders behave more compassionately at work? Early in the discussion on organizations where compassion can be found in the work environment, it was noted that in the United States, where separation of religion and state is a theme, some confuse compassion with bringing religion into the workplace. If I am a Buddhist and I treat you or another with compassion, will I in turn be accused of trying to convert my coworkers to Buddhism? A similar question might occur to Christians or Jews or Hindus or Muslims. This is an unfortunate line of thinking. If an individual notices that someone is suffering and feels that suffering and acts to help that person that should not be considered an attempt at a religious conversion. Now if the help that is extended to the person who is suffering comes with strings attached, such as a statement like this one, "I will help you get your car repaired but in exchange you need to go to chanting practice with me tomorrow", that is inappropriate. It is also not a true representation of compassion as compassion does not come with ulterior motives.

⁸³ Pamela Bloom, *Buddhist Acts of Compassion* (Berkeley, Calif.: Conari Press, 2000), 62.

Unfortunately some leaders may be concerned that their compassion may be viewed as a sign of weakness. They are concerned that showing compassion will lead others to take advantage of them. In a blog posting for the Harvard Business Review, Roger Schwartz an organizational psychologist discusses the key reasons that leaders stop themselves from showing compassion. He describes compassion as “noticing when others suffer, connecting with them cognitively and emotionally, and responding to them.”⁸⁴ Three of the reasons discussed by Schwartz do tie to concerns about how a leader is perceived:

- 1) If I show compassion to an employee or colleague they will think that I agree with whatever it is that they have done.
- 2) If I treat an employee with compassion, I cannot hold them accountable to do their job.
- 3) Being compassionate could be like opening a can of worms, I am not a therapist.⁸⁵

None of these need to stop a leader from showing compassion. It is possible to let someone know that you feel for them, without agreeing with them. Consider an employee who does not receive a raise or bonus due to performance issues. It is difficult to imagine that this employee is happy about the situation. A compassionate leader gives the employee the raise and bonus they deserve. If what they deserve is no raise and no bonus, then a compassionate leader explains why it is the way it is and helps them by telling them what steps to take to help avoid a recurrence of this scenario. The employee is still accountable for taking those steps and improving his or her performance. If the employee needs to vent or discuss his or her performance and any issues that may have led to poor

⁸⁴ Roger Schwarz, “What Stops Leaders from Showing Compassion,” *Harvard Business Review*, 8:00 AM August 29 2013, accessed November 10, 2013. <http://blogs.hbr.org/2013/08/what-stops-leaders-from-showin/>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

performance, a compassionate leader listens. Listening does not turn a leader into a therapist and being concerned for an individual's well-being is not a sign of weakness.

It can be challenging for a leader to know what compassion at work looks like. There is no one size fits all, all-purpose solution. It can be providing extra time off or monetary rewards, but it is more often about paying attention to employees and colleagues. The approach that a leader chooses really needs to be customized to the individual. Some people want others around them to know when they are going through a difficult time, while others prefer privacy.⁸⁶

Although compassionate actions should be customized to be the most helpful to the recipient of those actions, there are certainly some guidelines that a leader can use to help shape his or her behaviors. At some point a leader will find it necessary to correct the work of an employee or to reprimand that employee or perhaps to teach that employee some new aspect of their job. This is when a saying such as this one is helpful:

“In criticizing the teacher is hoping to teach, that's all” – Zen Teacher Bankei⁸⁷

With that saying in mind, when a leader is considering criticizing another, he or she should first ask themselves, “Am I about to teach something? Am I free of all other motives?” In that way a leader can come from a place of compassion by using criticism to teach and only to teach.⁸⁸

, In *Buddhist Acts of Compassion* Pamela Bloom writes about her career as a music critic. There were many times when the reviews she wrote were less than flattering. When she needed to write a highly critical review about a musician, she worked very

⁸⁶ “The Roots of Compassion.”

⁸⁷ Franz Metcalf and B. J. Gallagher, *Being Buddha at Work: 101 Ancient Truths on Change, Stress, Money, and Success* (San Francisco, Calif.; London: Berrett-Koehler ; McGraw-Hill [distributor], 2012), 77.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

hard to become detached from the person she was writing about. Perhaps she even thought of them as a complete stranger or maybe even as a non-person. One day a famous musician strongly objected to a review that Ms. Bloom had written. The musician wrote a scathing letter to the publication for which Ms. Bloom worked. Much to her chagrin, her publication printed the letter. There it was published for anyone to read. Now she knew what it was like to be criticized publicly in writing. This experience did lead her to temper her approach. It was still her job to provide honest reviews of musicians, but in at least one case she changed how she wrote the review. As she began to write a negative review for a singer with a very unusual style, she stopped and instead of writing about how bad this singer was, she wrote about who this singer could be. After reading the review the singer contacted her and thanked her. Years later that singer was still performing and had in fact become the singer that Bloom had envisioned in her review.⁸⁹

With this approach in mind, a leader can levy criticism yet not leave an employee feeling belittled or without hope. The point of the criticism should be to teach that person a better way to do their job and to contribute and be productive. This does not mean to mislead an employee into thinking they are doing a good job and that everything is fine. It means to find a way to give the right amount of criticism in order to help the employee to change. This will vary from person to person. Too much criticism is harsh and may cause unnecessary stress and emotional wounds, too little criticism may not motivate a change in behavior. After the criticism has been made, it is an excellent idea to provide the employee a vision of them as the employee you wish them to become. To help paint a picture for them in which they are doing a good job.

⁸⁹ Bloom, *Buddhist Acts of Compassion*, 94 – 96.

In *Skill in Questions*, Ṭhānissaro Bhikku discusses the Buddha's openness to cross questioning on his teachings. He states that a teacher who welcomes cross questioning is concerned less with his or her status and is more concerned with the finished product as a communication of something that is useful and clear.⁹⁰ That is a desirable quality in a compassionate leader, to worry less about his or her status and care more about providing clear and valuable communications to employees and colleagues. There are leaders who do not like to be questioned. There are leaders who make pronouncements and communicate in a very one directional fashion and that direction is often downward. This type of leader may perceive questions as a threat or a challenge to their authority. This leaves their employees and colleagues to either come to an understanding on their own or to risk the wrath of their leader. A compassionate leader understands that role ambiguity and role conflict can lead to employee stress and seeks to eliminate unnecessary stress. Role ambiguity occurs when an individual is not clear about what is expected of them and role conflict occurs when an individual does not want to perform certain aspects of the job or thinks that someone else should perform those aspects of the job or wants to perform work which is not at all part of the role. Open dialogue with a leader will help clear up both of these unnecessary stressors. Open dialogue means back and forth, multi-directional communication and an employee must be allowed to ask questions about their work and even question the reasoning behind some of their work.

Ṭhānissaro Bhikku discusses the fact that in allowing his listeners to have the freedom to question him the Buddha demonstrated compassion. A key point is that through the use of hypothetical scenarios and encouraging listeners to both ask and answer questions and

⁹⁰ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *Skill in Questions* (Metta Forest Monastery, n.d.), 476 – 478.

to participate in debate the Buddha was able to negotiate conflict and clear up misunderstandings. The back and forth between the listener and the Buddha, allowed the Buddha to adjust his approach and guide listeners through their own doubts and to a place of understanding. The Buddha was not seeking to win a debate, he was acting from a sense of responsibility to not leave another with wrong views.⁹¹ The compassion comes from seeing someone in a place of confusion, understanding the difficulties this causes and acting to help that person emerge from that state of confusion.

Although we should not expect a leader to be the Buddha there is much to be learned from the Buddha's approach. When a leader needs to give instruction to an employee, it is an opportunity to teach. It is wise to allow for some cross questioning and debate, especially if that cross questioning and debate will help the employee more fully comprehend their role and what is expected of them. Certainly a leader can assume the role of a dictator and tell employees what to do and when to do it and there can be times when this approach is necessary. If the work to be performed requires following safety procedures such as wearing goggles while operating a piece of machinery, it makes sense to issue an ultimatum. Either wear the goggles or go home. In instances where it is not necessary to issue commands it is useful to help an employee understand the context of an assignment and what the benefits will be to the customer or other colleagues and the employee when that assignment has completed. This can be accomplished by creating a vision of what will be different when a particular task or project is completed. Invite the employee to add to that vision by sharing their perspective of what will be different when that task or project is completed. This provides an excellent opportunity for course

⁹¹ Ibid.

correction when needed and teaches the leader about the work as seen through the eyes of the employee.

The leader who develops an intention of truly seeking to help the employee become a more skillful employee as opposed to seeking to use power to inflict his or her will upon the employee can turn reprimands or counseling sessions into compassionate acts.

While it is not appropriate to refer to employees as servants, this passage from the Digha Nikaya is as relevant today as it was when it was first recorded:

A good employer ministers to his servants and employees in five ways: by assigning them work they can manage; by giving them food and money; by supporting them in sickness; by sharing special delicacies; and by granting them leave when appropriate. Digha Nikaya 31⁹²

In order for a leader to assign work that an employee can manage, that leader must pay attention to that employee and understand their capabilities and then make assignments that are within the capabilities of that employee. This does not mean that a leader does not expect an employee to stretch and to grow. It means that a leader guides the employee through a process of growth that provides a bit of tension, but is balanced so that the employee is able to use the tension or stress in a positive manner, much like an athlete pushes his or herself while training for an event. A compassionate leader allows employees to experience some failure and also some successes. Ideally the employee experiences more successes than failures. A compassionate leader gives guidance to the employee after a failure and celebrates their successes with them.

⁹² Metcalf and Gallagher, *Being Buddha at Work*, 104.

Walmart, a large United States (U.S.) based discount store provides some interesting material to assist with a discussion on what it means to compassionately give employees food and money.



Our Walmart. 2013. Source: CNN Money. 2013, Digital Image. Available from <http://money.cnn.com/2013/11/18/news/companies/walmart-thanksgiving-food-drive/index.html> (accessed November 22, 2013).

The picture above comes from the backroom of a Walmart store in Canton, Ohio. Although it is not known how many Walmart store locations host food drives for their own employees, this particular store has been hosting this type of food drive for several years. The goal is to help out employees whose families have experienced hardship. This would seem to be a case of noticing that others are going through a difficult time, understanding and feeling this difficult time with them and taking action to help them. The issue isn't the compassionate action the issue is the need for the compassionate action. This particular food drive has contributed to a debate around the minimum wage that should be paid to workers. Bill Simon the president and chief executive officer of Walmart U.S. has reported that less than half of Walmart employees in the U.S. make

more than \$25,000 per year. The federal poverty level for a family of four is \$23, 500.⁹³ The food drive is good; the fact that employees may need assistance because their employer pays them at or below the poverty level is not good or compassionate.

Skipping ahead to the reminder that an employer should grant employees leave when it is appropriate, Walmart takes a hit here too. Walmart had approximately one million workers in place throughout the Thanksgiving Holiday weekend. Walmart stores opened earlier than previous years, conducting a sale that began at 6:00 p.m. on Thanksgiving.⁹⁴ Walmart is not alone in the decision to ask employees to work on a holiday. There is quite a bit of discussion and debate circulating on social media and other sources with respect to the opening of stores on the holiday. Battle lines are being drawn on both sides of this issue.

To support an employee during sickness means to provide sick leave and also in cases of extreme hardship to work to come to the aid of an employee and their family.

A coworker, Katrice, had an adverse outcome to her abdominal surgery which resulted in several weeks of prolonged absence from work beyond her expected surgical leave. She has 3 young children for whom she was the primary caregiver. Cara, another coworker who shares our office, called her daily to offer emotional support, ran errands, and helped with the children during her off duty hours until the wounds healed and she was able to resume her normal physical activity. Cara even rearranged her work schedule to help drive Katrice to the doctor's visits so Katrice's husband wouldn't have to miss more work time.⁹⁵

In the above example Katrice takes an extended leave due to her difficult surgery, her husband is given time to tend to his wife and Katrice's employer also allows a coworker,

⁹³ Emily Jane Fox, "Wal-Mart Store Holds Thanksgiving Food Drive for Workers," *CNNMoney*, accessed November 22, 2013, <http://money.cnn.com/2013/11/18/news/companies/walmart-thanksgiving-food-drive/index.html>.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Kim S Cameron and Gretchen M Spreitzer, *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 277 – 278.

Cara to rearrange her work schedule in order to assist Katrice. This is compassionate support of an employee during sickness.

In addition to assigning work that employees can manage, giving them food and money, appropriate leave and supporting them in sickness, an employer is also to share special delicacies with employees. This really could mean special food treats, hosting a bagel day or a cinnamon roll day or paying for lunch. It can also be extended beyond special foods to include celebrations, special events and other rewards. If a leader receives an opportunity to attend a special event, perhaps an invitation to that event is passed on to employees or the tickets for that event are awarded to the employees so that they have an opportunity to reap some of the benefits that are offered to leaders. If the company has an exceptional year, then some type of extra employee recognition should occur it could be in the form of financial awards such as bonuses or in the form of a party or event that is hosted in honor of the employees. Sometimes what employees really appreciate is recognition. Offering sincere verbal public praise can be very motivational to some employees. Others may prefer a quieter more private recognition.

Compassion in an organization comes from people. People make up the organizational culture or personality of the company. To have a compassionate organization means to have an organization where compassionate people work. These compassionate people need to be people who others watch and admire and emulate. Compassionate leaders may in fact be official leaders, granted authority by virtue of their job title and position within the organization or they may be individuals who do not have official authority but are watched and admired by their colleagues. Either way, compassionate leadership requires combining the elements of compassion in way that results in actions that will most

benefit the targets of those actions. Despite the fact that compassionate actions require this customization, there are guidelines which can be used to help leaders demonstrate compassion in the workplace.

Conclusion

Compassion, the process of noticing that another individual (or individuals) is suffering, developing feelings of empathy with regard to that suffering, and then being moved to act and to help to decrease or eliminate that suffering is most likely an evolutionary trait. It should not be suppressed in the workplace. In fact employees who experience compassion at work have a more positive perception of their employer and are likely to work harder for that employer and produce higher quality work. Organizations who treat employees compassionately have better employer-employee relations and when faced with tough times, these organizations tend to be more resilient. In the case of Southwest Airlines after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, these strong relations resulted in higher performance numbers and could be tracked to financial returns.

Southwest Airlines is not the only United States based organization where compassion at work is encouraged. Both Cisco Systems, Inc. and Google Inc. have found ways to incorporate compassion into their corporate culture, while TOMS is in the business of compassion. A common theme for all three is that compassion is important to their leaders. When leaders make compassion a priority, team members will also make compassion a priority.

In *Putting Buddhism to Work: A New Approach to Management and Business* Shinichi Inoue states, “To put Buddhism to work is to see that economics and a moral and spiritual life are neither separate nor mutually exclusive.”⁹⁶ This can be used as the inspiration to craft a statement about compassion at work. To put compassion to work is

⁹⁶ 井上, *Putting Buddhism to Work*, 126.

to understand that compassion belongs in the workplace and it is not necessary to choose between acting compassionately and making a profit.

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