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Executive Influence:

Impacting Your Workplace for Christ

A Quick Focus

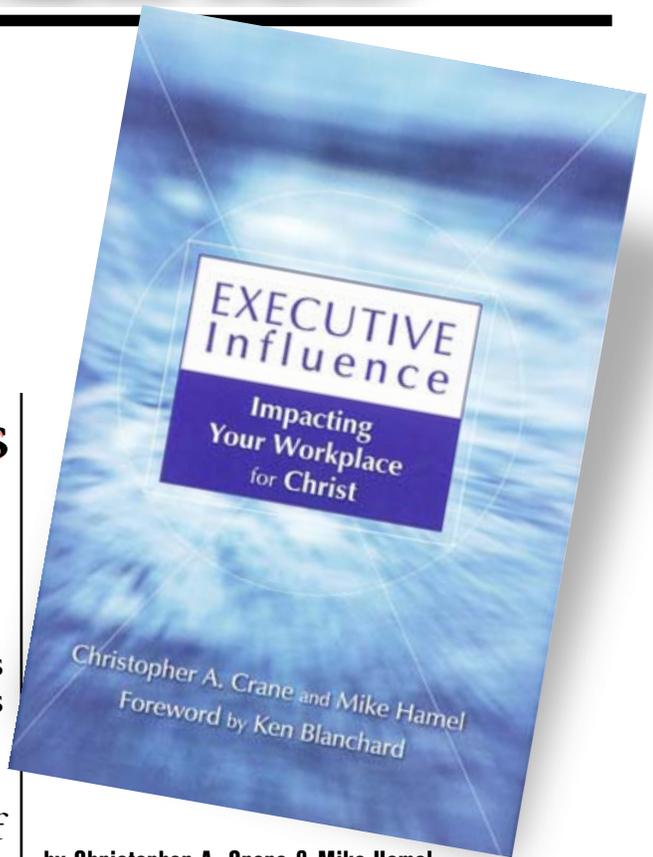
The Book's Purpose

- Affirm the sacred calling of representing God in the workplace
- Illustrate the impact executives can have in the lives of others
- Share a variety of approaches to influencing co-workers
- Emphasize the importance of example in on-the-job witness
- Challenge readers to create and maintain faith-friendly corporate cultures

The Book's Message

Everybody has influence. But some people, by virtue of their position in the business world, have a special opportunity to impact the lives of others. Can this be done without running aground of workplace restrictions? Will people respond to overt displays of faith? Is it really possible to succeed in business while taking a stand for Christ?

A diverse group of business leaders answer these questions in a personal and positive manner. Their testimonies, augmented by pertinent biblical insight, will help others apply these principles in their



by Christopher A. Crane & Mike Hamel
Navpress

own settings. They believe that blending boldness with uprightness, humility, and compassion both honors God in their professional lives and points others to Him in the process.

Five Main Points

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Called to the Marketplace

Bill Pollard, The ServiceMaster

A former professor at Wheaton College, Bill Pollard took over the helm at ServiceMaster in 1977 and has moved this highly respected company into the Fortune 500. Insisting that there is no conflict between making money and shaping human character, he fosters openness about spiritual matters and treats people as whole persons created in the image of God.

ServiceMaster operates according to four well-known business values:

- 1) honoring God,
- 2) developing people,
- 3) pursuing excellence, and
- 4) growing profitably.

Some, however, wonder how employees react to this “God language” and what happens to those who don’t accept Bill’s religious beliefs. The key, explains Pollard, is to promote a spiritual environment, which is not necessarily Christian but nevertheless facilitates sharing Christ. So Bible studies at ServiceMaster are initiated by employees, and Muslims have perfect freedom to pray five times a day.

Pollard does not see himself as a preacher but as a gentle leader. He demonstrates his faith in his business decisions, in his family, in his values, and in the way he treats people. He warns against the abuse of executive power and cares for people according to the humble example of Christ himself.

for the elderly—into their relationships with employees.

Being a high-profile executive can have its downside, as criticism is inevitable. The Klaasens have even been

“I’ve had people come into my office and accept Christ as their Savior. I’ve had the same experience while travelling. When the Spirit is at work, the opportunities are there, but one has to be careful not to proceed based on position.”

Paul and Terry Klaasen, The Business of True Religion

Most people who want to minister to those in need opt to do so through a non-profit organization. The Klaasens, however, have chosen a surprisingly different route.

While watching her father care for her terminally ill mother, Terry developed a heart for the elderly. After her marriage to Paul, they volunteered in several senior-care facilities but were unhappy with what they saw—so much so that they sold their home and began the resident-centered Sunrise home. Within 10 years they opened 20 assisted living centers, and the company went public in 1996.

The entire enterprise is founded on the sacred value of human life. And they carry that respect for people beyond the care they provide

accused of using their faith to manipulate people into their homes. But Terry insists that when you go public with your faith you must accept the bad along with the good.

“To be maligned for genuinely trying to live out your faith is a risk that Christians must accept. But it’s not easy. I have to challenge

myself to be more bold about my faith without worrying if I will be misunderstood.”

Paul insists, however, that the upside is worth it. He and Terry determine what values are emphasized in a very sizable community. He finds that caring for people at life’s end is a natural platform for talking about faith, for no holistic approach can focus solely on the physical and ignore the spiritual.

They are up-front with potential employees about the history and values of their company. And they not only promote spirituality within the company, but in the broader community as well. Both are active in national executive organizations, encouraging others to see work as a vocation and avoid the trap of a compartmentalized faith. 

The Importance of Integrity

David Weekly, Doing Things Right

The product of a godly home, David went into the construction business after college. And when he complained about unethical practices in the company, he quickly lost his job. So he started his own company on a shoestring, and a few years later he was building 600 houses a year.

David doesn't promote his business with the name "Christian." But when he discovered that they had installed bad pipe in 500 homes (even though it was a manufacturer's defect and he did not know if they would reimburse him), he spent \$2 million to fix the problem. That kind of commitment to quality is a powerful statement.

Such integrity comes out of a vision to enhance people's lives, a principle he applies to his employees as well as to his customers. David provides a chaplain for his staff. And instead of driving his people harder so that he personally will have more to give away, he allows them to select charities that he funds.

Handling financial success in the context of faith remains a challenge, but Weekly is invigorated by his commitment to donate half of his time and money. As a result, he has seen God's faithfulness and looks forward to the next stage of the journey.

Doug and Edward Hawkins, Jr., A Family Affair

Modeling godly integrity in the marketplace has special meaning in a family business. Doug and Edward have managed to demonstrate this

Christlikeness while building Litehouse Foods into a company with sales of \$70 million in 2001.

Their story began many years ago, when their father came up with a unique bleu cheese salad dressing as an answer to prayer. When he bought the Litehouse restaurant in Idaho some years later, he took the recipe with him. The restaurant, however, began to struggle, and the family prayed for God's direction. They believe that God showed them they needed to be looking beyond themselves—and set their sights on providing jobs for the community. In time, the salad dressing proved to be the means to that end.

Doug and Edward have opted for a high profile, low-pressure approach to witnessing. They pay more attention to their local reputation than to their national one. A widely held respect for their company in their community is the foundation of their spiritual testimony.

The brothers are committed to depending on God through good times and bad, realizing that every business has its ups and downs. They pray before sales meetings and even company outings, bringing every aspect of their work before God. When others observe how Doug and Edward stick to their core values no matter what—and see how God blesses the business—the message is very clear.

“We try to lead by example and to teach our employees to do the right thing because it's the right thing.”

Dale Gifford, Quiet Credibility

Dale Gifford began working at Hewitt Associates as an actuary when there were only 140 associates. Since that time their employees have swelled to almost 13,000—and the firm has been named as one of the 100 Best Companies to Work for in America. Dale is now the CEO.

Though he shies away from public declarations of his faith and is careful about abusing his authority, those who know him know his faith as well. When it seems appropriate, he does share his faith, but he lets the nature of the relationship dictate those opportunities. His influence is one that flows from credibility earned through character.

Dale talks about the importance of matching a person's position with his or her natural talents and spiritual gifts. He sees his CEO position as a divine calling, and he feels a strong sense of accountability for the way he uses his money and influence. Gifford's goal is to leave an imprint on the organization that stresses significance over success.

“We can serve most effectively in the position that fits our unique calling and giftedness, no matter where that puts us on the organizational chart. This will be our personal ‘best place’ to influence others.”

The Workplace Congregation

Ken Eldred, Bold Consistency

When Ken started up the first company ever to market computer products by catalog, venture capitalists pressured him to work non-stop. He said no. Eldred continued to work 40 hours a week, spent time with his family, and put the business in God's hands. Soon Inmac was a prosperous company.

“Believers should not be afraid to be public about their faith... I’ve taken flak for being so open...However, I’ve also had people who have given me a bad time come back privately and say they respect the fact that I’m not ashamed of my faith.”

Ken recognizes that he has, at times, stepped over the line. But over the years he learned not to approach people when they were busy and not to upset supervisors by allowing Bible studies to go overtime. And he makes sure that people do not receive special treatment or promotions based on their religious views.

Eldred likes to raise awareness of God through public acts of dependence on Him. Once, in the early days of Inmac, when things were slow, God showed him in prayer that they would have a \$7,000 day rather than their average of \$2,200. He shared this information with his employees, none of whom were Christians. When the day's sales totaled \$7,050, it made quite an impression.

Ken believes that the biggest mistake Christians make is keeping quiet about their faith. God has cer-

tainly blessed his boldness. In 1996 Inmac merged with Microwarehouse, allowing Eldred to found Ariba Technologies and start a foundation to promote Christian work worldwide.

Ray Berryman, The How-to Christian Executive

The experience of Ray Berryman, CEO of a major civil engineering firm, illustrates three important principles for Christian executives.

First, be open without being overbearing. Ray has Christian literature in the lobby of his corporate headquarters. He encourages employee prayer meetings. And he gives a salvation message every year at the Christmas party. However, he doesn't usually bring up the subject of spirituality in business conversations, and when there is interest he typically follows up after work. He is always ready to pray with people over any sort of problem, but he doesn't use it as an evangelistic tool.

Second, be gracious but firm with those who contest your right to share your faith. There are bound to be some people who will take offense at expressions of your faith. Sometimes you can win them over; other times you must just accept it as the cost of following Christ. But Berryman always makes it clear in a loving way that honoring God is his prerogative and that he will continue to exercise it.

Third, know what is permissible in the workplace and don't abuse your platform. There are legal issues to consider, but most of the time mutual respect and common sense dictate the parameters. Berryman also recommends a moment-by-moment sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

“If a company is an expression of an entrepreneur's faith in God, why shouldn't that faith be visible? And if Christian business owners care deeply about their people, how can those owners not share the love of God with them?”

John Beckett, Within His Rights

Although believers are to submit to the government, in America that government derives its authority, not from an administration or a session of Congress but from the Constitution itself. So, when a given policy restricts religious freedom in an unconstitutional way, we must resist that intrusion in order to truly submit.

John Beckett, CEO of The R.W. Beckett Corporation, has become a leading opponent of federal intrusion. According to Beckett, current laws and EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) guidelines ensure considerable religious freedom in the workplace. Nevertheless, he has had to wrangle with new currents in the EEOC which threatened to broaden the definition of harassment to include almost all overt displays of faith on the job. These new guidelines would also force companies to provide benefits for same-sex partners and include abortion coverage in the medical insurance package.

Believers may influence the democratic process like any other concerned citizens with strong beliefs and convictions. But the most powerfully influential weapon we have in this conflict is love. Beckett illustrated love-in-action when he established a manufacturing company where he could hire and train disadvantaged people. Though some did not make it, many others discovered discipline and dignity, and moved on to productive careers.

He sees himself not as a layman, but as a priest (I Peter 2). By clearly communicating to everyone that his is a biblically-based company, by focusing on prayer, and by seizing opportunities to witness, John has both prospered and impacted the lives of others.



Purpose Beyond Profit

Donna Auguste, Capitalizing on Diversity

Christianity contains the ultimate message of inclusiveness, bringing together all classes and ethnicities under the banner of the cross. Donna Auguste, founder of Freshwater Software, is passionate about modeling that diversity.

In 1996 Donna, along with John Meier, started Freshwater. From the very beginning they determined that their firm would follow Jesus' example of reaching out to all people, making cultural diversity and customer service the pillars of their business. As an African-American, Donna was accustomed to being in the minority and she had a special heart for bringing people together.

“Embracing diversity doesn't mean that truth is subjective, or that all roads lead to the same place. But it does mean respecting people for who they are, and relating to them where they are.”

Donna's way of relating to people enables her to influence them, and she is always on the alert for opportunities to talk about spiritual things. She believes that a little strategically placed salt can create a thirst for the water of life.

She emphasizes the importance of serving a living, all-powerful God who sometimes uses us to accomplish those wonderful purposes. For this reason Donna cautions executives not to aim too low. Neither, she points out, should they pursue grandiose goals for which they take the credit. To keep the proper perspective, she recommends mixing a reliance on prayer with a Nehemiah-like vision for action.

Dennis Bakke, Taking Stewardship Seriously

“A corporation's goal should not be to make money, or create jobs, or be an instrument of the state. From my understanding, the purpose should be to use what it has been given to make the world a better place...to glorify God by stewarding the resources we've been given in order to meet the needs of others, and, along the way, to meet our own needs.”

Dennis Bakke did not learn this lesson during his time at Harvard Business School—but from biblical teaching on stewardship. And he believes it is applicable to corporations as well as individuals, since corporations are simply a collection of individuals.

It takes a godly person to guide a corporation in this direction, however, which is what Bakke has done with AES, a company he launched some 20 years ago. It has now mushroomed into a multi-billion dollar worldwide enterprise with 50,000 employees serving over 120 million people.

According to Dennis, money is not what makes the world go around. When he lectures at prestigious schools of business, he always begins by stating that he is follower of Christ and that this commitment determines his philosophy—that

every person has value, that they are unique, and that they seek significance.

One of his cousins is a missionary, and his two brothers are pastors, so he has had to fight the mentality that the only reason to be in business is to support Christian work. He points out that most of the great heroes of the Bible were not priests but people who worked in secular positions.

When he started a business, he wanted it to be an extension of his faith. And he has created a successful model without written policies, handbooks, or HR and finance departments. He believes this structure to be even more biblically sound than that of most Christian organizations, because it reflects his beliefs about God and people.

At AES the rank-and-file employees make most of the important decisions. Bakke sees his role as that of a facilitating servant, creating a holistic environment in which people can be the same people at

work as at home—and play by the same set of moral rules.

Dennis devotes a great deal of time and money to Christian work, but he also gets others involved. The company matches employee gifts to non-profit organizations, with a goal of giving away 5% of its after-tax profits. And he does all this without losing sight of their primary stewardship emphasis—to serve the world with environmentally responsible and reasonably-priced electricity.

Albert Black Jr., Exceeding Expectations

Albert Black Jr. began his business career at age ten, when he and his friends borrowed a lawnmower and started Best Friends Lawn Service in the projects of Dallas. Refug-

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ing to accept that his starting point would determine what he could make of his life, Albert went on to college. And after his graduation in 1982, he and his wife started an industrial maintenance company that now produces \$40 million in annual revenues.

They use their business relationships to share Christ through actions that lend credence to their words. They are committed to developing high-quality employees as well as improving the inner city by turning tax-users into tax-producers. Albert is the first African-American to serve as chairman of the Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce.

Though he is active in his local church, Black realizes that his ministry is not in the pulpit. He focuses his attention on what God has called him to do—employ people, improve infrastructure, generate taxes, and provide community leadership.

“One of the most rewarding things about what I do is having people look me in the eye and say, ‘If it weren’t for this company, I wouldn’t have the life I have.’ Creating opportunity for people who otherwise would have none, that’s doing God’s work”

Race is still a powerful dynamic in the workplace. Black knows that others have often hired his firm to prove their lack of prejudice. But he also knows that many of those same people had very low expectations of a minority-run company. They have had to over-perform to maintain people's confidence.

He acknowledges that such discrimination is unfair, but he also maintains that it is a fact of life. The question for Black is what he will do about it, and the answer is to constantly exceed people's ex-

pectations. It's all about doing what you say, showing up on time, and reciprocating people's kindness.

Not only is Albert changing many minds in the white community, he is also challenging African-American prejudices as well. Being a model of a successful businessman to people in his own community is one of the most fulfilling parts of his work.

For Albert Black, being a successful Christian executive is all about surpassing expectations, being a leader, affecting change for today and for eternity—and giving the glory to God.

Anne Beiler, Surprised by Success

When their middle child, Angela, suffered a fatal accident just before her second birthday, Anne Beiler went into a ten-year spiritual tailspin that almost destroyed her marriage. While living in Texas, she and her husband, Jonas, came in contact with a Christian counselor who helped them put their relationship back together, and they were so excited about what God had done for them that they wanted to share it with other couples.

They began counseling in their home, and soon Jonas became passionately committed to that ministry. In 1987 they moved back to their Amish culture in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania with a vision to launch a counseling center. Anne believed in her husband's ministry and went to work to support it.

After working as a store manager, she borrowed \$6,000 to buy her own place and began to make Auntie Anne's Pretzels. Soon they were managing eight stores by themselves, and by 1990 they be-

gan franchising. They now have over 700 outlets.

Their dream was never to start an international company but simply to support Jonas's ministry. In 1992 they opened the Family Resource and Counseling Center, and they hope to develop another for every 50 to 100 new expansion stores.

“Our statement of purpose is summed up in the acrostic LIGHT: Lead by Example, Invest in employees, Give freely, Honor God, Treat all business contacts with integrity.”

Comments from other executives about possible lawsuits scared Anne away from overt displays of faith in the workplace—at first. Now, however, she sees her business as a mission field and has determined that faith, not fear, will be her guiding principle no matter what the consequences.

In the early days she also struggled with the fact that she had come home to do ministry and yet was so involved in the business. Then one day she saw herself rolling pretzels in the presence of Christ. Everything changed when she understood that this was the ministry to which God had called her.

Now she rejoices in the opportunity to touch people through the business, through the counseling center, and through their sponsorship of other ministries.



Cashing in on Circumstances

Greg Newman, Missionary to Silicon Valley

How can anyone have peace in the roller-coaster world of dot com business? Greg Newman finds himself in the eye of the storm. A former student at Moody Bible Institute preparing for missionary work, Newman has spent the past 20 years working in the Silicon Valley among those who regard religion as irrelevant. And he has been successful in establishing a vibrant counterculture.

After starting up the first desktop publishing company in the Valley at the age of 22, Newman hooked up with Macromedia, which quickly defined the multimedia industry. After developing Apple's *QuickTime*, Greg moved on to a senior executive position in the cut-throat corporate culture of Oracle. Maintaining his testimony was difficult. People took advantage of him and he often failed. But through it all God protected him and worked things out for his benefit.

He eventually left Oracle to start C2B Technologies with a Christian colleague from his Macromedia days. Now, at last, they had the chance to base their company on biblical principles. They set an example of prayer, limited work hours so that employees could be with their families, and insisted on integrity in every aspect of their business.

"It's not the norm to be completely aboveboard in this very competitive market, but we believed that we could compete fairly and vigorously from a position of consistent honesty and integrity. There were times that severely tested our resolve, but we stayed true to our original vision."

This light shone even brighter in the darkness of Silicon Valley, where money is God and technology is the solution to everything. God blessed Newman's commitment. They sold the company for \$132 million in 1998. He now divides his time between providing venture capital for high-tech start-ups and supplying internet-based tools for Christian work around the world, allowing him to fulfill his passion for missions in a unique and challenging way.

Dr. David Parsons, Professional Advice

Not all influence-wielding professionals are executives. Some use their skills to offer services that put them in a natural position to minister to others. Dr. David Parsons takes this responsibility seriously. After winning the Top Gun award as an Air Force pilot and flying hundreds of missions in Vietnam, he later became a doctor and eventually a surgeon. Having retired from the military in 1993, Parsons is thrilled by the ministry he now has with his patients.

They expect him to say something important, which creates a perfect opportunity to probe not only the physical but the spiritual needs of the patient. The link between spiritual and physical well-being is widely recognized, and Dr. Parsons believes it would be irresponsible not to share something with his patients which could contribute to their healing.

Of course, some people are not open to spiritual counsel, but Parsons usually finds a way to plant seeds. He learns about his patients' lives and looks for a point of contact, a place where he can share his own story. He has a 35-minute version of his testimony, a five-minute version,

and even a one-minute summary. He's recorded an audiotape of his story, and over the years he has distributed almost 1,000 of them.

"It takes a conscious obedience to the Holy Spirit to direct the conversation to spiritual issues. If you just wait for it to flow freely on its own, it may never happen."

On the way to surgery, he touches his patients and informs them that he has already prayed for them and that he will continue to do so as he operates. If the response is positive, he prays with them right then and there. Many people tell him later how much they appreciated this act, and no one has ever objected to the approach.

David Parsons is a man on a mission, and his goal is to emulate the Great Physician. God has so changed him that he now takes mission trips to Southeast Asia to minister to those he once tried to destroy. And he lovingly shares his story of new life with those who come to him for healing.

Merrill Oster, Communicating Christ in the Crisis

When the World Trade Center towers came down on September 11, 2001, Merrill Oster was in London. His company, however, was only a few blocks from Ground Zero. His more than 250 employees and the more than 250,000 financial analysts and traders who relied on information from Oster Communications looked to him for help.

The following Monday he went from office to office, reassuring his

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shaken staff. He brought in grief counselors. And he sent out a letter stating that his faith was in Christ and promising that good would ultimately triumph over evil. Others listened to him because they had seen him rely on God through thick and thin.

During the agricultural depression of the mid-1980s a bank called in Oster's loan, precipitating a corporate financial crisis. Oster prayed with his executives. He confessed his errors of judgment to his department heads. And he faced up to his creditors. Through it all, however, people saw the optimism of his faith.

That faith is part of the company mission statement, which begins with the words "We exist to serve God by..." Oster is convinced that being up front about your faith is the best way to create opportunities to share with others. It encourages them to talk about life issues and identifies you as a possible resource.

"Live with the confidence of one who has a divine calling and destiny, [and] do something to improve the world your grandkids will inherit."

Merrill has founded Pinnacle Forum to challenge other "cultural gatekeepers" to influence their peers and their society for God. He is committed to using his accumulated influence to promote a truly religious conservatism that uses crises to call the nation back to the values and the faith it has abandoned.



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