

Christian Business Management Excellence

Pak T. Lee

“Excellence is the result of caring more than others think is wise, risking more than others think is safe, dreaming more than others think is practical, and expecting more than others think is possible.” Ronnie Oldham”

Abstract

The 21st century business environment demands superior performance, and high outcomes. Best management practices are seen as the ways to meet such demands and challenges. This means developing and emulating behaviours that are considered to be the best in the world. It is the belief that this type of approach will create an opportunity to bring in high monetary rewards and material gains. While this may be the secular world’s approach to achieving excellence in terms of high performance outcomes, there are organizations striving to attain management excellence from a different perspective by adopting and integrating the best practices from biblical principles and Christian literature. This approach should not be ignored. Christian business practitioners look beyond what secular organizations aim at – profits and material gains. They desire that their intended practices are consistent with God’s character, are being done with good motives and bring the high level of performance desired by the business enterprise.

Introduction

A secular business enterprise exists to serve personal and corporate interests. Its foundation is based on human philosophy and values. It is materialistic in outlook with the intent of wealth accumulation and maximization of profit for the owners. Over the last twenty-five years, different management concepts and ideas have been used by business organizations to create excellence in achievements. Related literature (Leonard & Denney, 2007; Shelton, Darling & Walker, 2002) suggests that organization and management excellence can be achieved by having a self-assessment framework for measuring the strengths and areas for improvement of an organization across all its activities. Quality circles, self-directed managerial teams, total quality management, processes and systems improvements, customer focus, continuous improvements, innovations and creativity, have been frequently used to build a framework for achievement of business excellence (Foster, 2010). None of these have been proven to be a direct path to achieve it. The framework focuses on what an organization does or could do, to provide an excellent service or product to its customers, service to users or stakeholders. With such a framework in place, achievement of high performance results (profits) are thought to be possible in terms of productivity, employee and customer satisfaction through driving policy and strategy, people, partnership and resources, leading ultimately to excellence in key performance results.

This purpose of this paper is to briefly present a Christian’s view of business management excellence, a different perspective by adopting and integrating the best practices from biblical principles and Christian literature. The Christian approach is not centred on human effort alone. It is a partnership with God, who is the centre of our being. This approach consists of seven dimensions. Each dimension will be defined and discussed. The final part of this article is an attempt to integrate all the dimensions together to form a Christian approach to business management excellence.

Meaning of Management Excellence

At this point, a few definitions are essential. First, what is business excellence? Excellence seems to mean different things to different people. It is difficult to define and even more difficult to achieve. Not knowing what it is makes it difficult to know whether it is being attained. The secular concept of excellence in terms of management and organization performance was introduced over thirty years ago by Peters and Waterman (1982). They presented a model comprising seven success criteria for excellence. The seven criteria are (1) *structure*, (2) *strategy*, (3) *systems*, (4) *shared values*, (5) *skill*, (6) *staff*, and (7) *style*. They did not attempt to define excellence but they revealed that managers achieved better performance results when they gave attention to all seven criteria rather than two or three of them.

There are many definitions of business management excellence in secular literature. The following two definitions are typical examples. One source defines business management excellence as:

“...the systematic use of quality management principles and tools in business management, with the goal of improving performance based on the principles of customer focus, stakeholder value, and process management.” (Business Excellence, What is it? www.enablingresults.com/business-excellence/, para 1)

The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) defines business management excellence as:

“Outstanding practices in managing the organisation and achieving results, all based on a set of eight fundamental concepts, these being, results orientation; customer focus; leadership and constancy of purpose; management by processes and facts; people development and involvement; continuous learning, innovation and improvement; partnership development; and public responsibility” (BPIR, 2002, para. 5).

The key driver behind business management excellence is high performance results in terms of profit, market share, and monetary and material gains. Having greater market shares, better customer and employee satisfaction, higher productivity or more product innovations, are seen as the means of achieving better performance results and greater returns on investments. Shareholders' high expectations of the returns on their investments also play an important role in pushing business leaders to continue their search for higher and higher achievements in performance. All these are important and have value, but not one of them has proven to be a direct path to business management excellence.

The two terms, model and framework, are used interchangeably here. Business management excellence models, are defined as “frameworks that, when applied within an organization, can help to focus thought and action in a more systematic and structured way that should lead to increased performance” (BPIR, 2002, para. 3). These two terms are often used interchangeably in related literature on business management excellence (Leonard & Denney, 2007)

There are plenty of business management excellence frameworks (Dahlgaard-Park and Dahlgaard, 2007; Peter and Austin, 1985, cited in Daglgaard-Park and Dahlgaard, n.d.; and BPIR.com Ltd, n.d.). Most, if not all of the secular frameworks or models, are very similar with some small differences in the ways the concepts and criteria are packaged together. All of them seem to focus on changing the organization (its people, processes or products) in the quest for high performance results.

A Christian Approach to Management Excellence

Gary Inrig presented seven concepts of excellence in his book, *A Call to Excellence* (1985, pp 34-35). The writer of this paper is indebted to Inrig for the seven dimensions conceptual framework.

Scripture presents God as the centre of all excellence. This is usually not part of the secular frameworks, and too often, it seems, those who claim to practice the Christian approach as well. Rush presented a similar point of view by saying that the secular management philosophy is diametrically opposed to biblical principles, for it has been suggested that if Christian enterprises are to accomplish the tasks for which God has raised them up, their management and organizational leadership must employ the Christian principles as they are outlined in scripture (Rush, 1983). Putting God as the foundation and centre of an organization impacts on everything management stands for and does. God, being the foundation for the Christian's approach of management excellence, must make a difference in the motives behind the actions of Christian organizations and the ways

they operate their businesses. In other words, the actions may appear to be the same for both the secular and the Christian approaches, but the motives are different. Often the secular management philosophy of business and management excellence are applied in the management of Christian organizations. Profits and material gains appear to be the main focus. At times employees are treated as a factor of production of goods and services. Christians are admonished to avoid such an approach (Matthew 20:20-28; I Kings 12:7; Philippians 2:5-7).

A Christian approach to management excellence does not deny all that is found in the secular frameworks and models. However, organizational management practices under the Christian approach is more than simply taking current socially accepted business practices and adding some religious jargon to them. It sets the consideration of organizational management in an entirely different context. The foundation for business management excellence in a Christian approach is more than a human equation. The motive of the Christian approach is not about maximising one's wealth, being the most productive, maintaining a competitive advantage over rival businesses, positioning the organization's products against competitors or being number one, but rather it is honouring, glorifying, and promoting God, and pleasing Him in all respects, by serving others and helping every employee to reach their full potential and the realization of their aspirations. This is not saying that Christian organizations should not make profits, be competitive, be the best, or be productive. They should. But these are secondary goals. Christian organizations believe that they have a higher goal to achieve: to walk worthy of the Lord and to please God in every respect.

The organizational management philosophy of the Christian approach is different from the secular models. The Christian approach (Figure 1) has a different foundation, a different benchmark and standard to compare, a different role model to emulate, a different set of goals to accomplish, a different focus for activities, a different set of management values to guide management practice, a different motive behind the operational and business activities, and a different source of empowerment to get the work done in order to accomplish the vision and mission of the organization. The differences are the result of a different foundation, a God foundation, that is absent in the secular models. The secular models are based on human philosophy and are human centred, but the Christian framework is God centred. The secular frameworks are based on human values and the Christian approach is based on God's values. The Christian framework values excellence of achievement, but only when it is an extension of excellence of character (2 Peter 1:2-11). The secular tends to define management excellence in terms of human achievements and pays little attention to the question of character.

God is the foundation and centre of the Christian approach (Figure 1). Christians believe that God created the world and the human race (Genesis 1:26, John 1:1-3), and He is the centre of human existence. "In God we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28, NIV). From the preceding texts, it can be deduced that it is God that gives meaningfulness to a Christian's existence. God is the very reason why Christians build and operate organisations like schools, hospitals, and other business oriented enterprises, to promote Christ-given messages to the world and to give honour and glory to Him. Christians believe that God is the owner (Deuteronomy 10:14, Psalm 50:10-12, Psalm 24:1, Haggai 2:8, 1 Chronicle 29:11, Colossians 1:16) and people are His managers and stewards, accountable for their actions (Luke 12:48, Matthew 25:26-27). In other words, God is the heart and mind of all truly biblically-based Christian business enterprises.

From a search of Scripture and Christian literature, an approach of Christian organizational management excellence with seven dimensions is presented. These dimensions of excellence are: God, the Christians' benchmark and standard for management excellence; Christ, the role model for management and leadership excellence; Christlikeness, the goal of management practices and excellence; serving the needs of others, the focus of management excellence; Christian values, the basis of management philosophy for excellence; God's glory, the motive of management excellence; and God's Love and compassion, the source of empowerment for management excellence (Figure 1). These seven dimensions are closely connected to the foundation and to one another. The integration of these dimensions, with God in the centre, influences organizational practices and operations at all levels within the organization. This approach is shown in Figure 2, in the latter part of this paper.

Dimensions of a Christian Approach to Management Excellence

The following will focus on the dimensions of the Christian approach to business management excellence.

Dimension 1: God - the Christians' benchmark and standard for management excellence. Benchmarking,

as it is applied to organizational operations, is a practice that compares the performance of the firm to an external standard. The firm measures its products, services, processes or organizational practices against industry leaders in the field (Rothman, 1992).

In benchmarking, managers search for the best practices that are more superior to their own (Walleck and Leader, 1991). Hence operating devices of an organization are measured against an external standard, usually the market leader, whose practices are considered as the best-in-class. Camp (1989, p. 12) gave a generic definition of benchmarking as “a basis for establishing rational performance goals through the search for industry best practices that will lead to superior performance”.

As one struggles with the issue of organizational management excellence, the pages of Scripture provide a critical framework for understanding many human endeavours, including improving business practices (Hodgetts, Luthans, & Lee, 1994). The so-called “world class” organizations that strive to be the best in the world at what they can do or achieve in terms of human effort, are not the appropriate measurement standard for Christian organizations. The goal of business practices and improvements should not be solely on the basis of being admired by other organizations, being more profitable, or being the most competitive. Christians do not measure their works and accomplishments by what others have done, but by what the Lord has done (Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 2:12). Human endeavours are not God’s ways. **Isaiah 55:9 (NIV) says:** “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Furthermore, God looks at motives, not actions alone. “The Lord does not look at the things that man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV). God’s standard of management excellence is very different from the human standard of excellence.

Standards are essential to excellence because they provide necessary criteria to measure achievement. Christians value excellence of achievement, but only when it is consistent with God’s character. For Christian organizations or business enterprises, the character of God provides the point of comparison, not the management practices of the most admired and successful organizations, a common practice that compares the performance of the firm to a reference standard (another firm). Many of the practices of the secular models are not compatible with the Character of God. Christian business practitioners take into consideration whether the intended practice is consistent with God’s character, being done with the proper motives, and bringing honour and glory to God. Making profits to keep the organization operating to meet the needs of the community is also important and comes with honouring God. It is the Christian’s belief that God will bless and honour those who honour him (John 12:26).

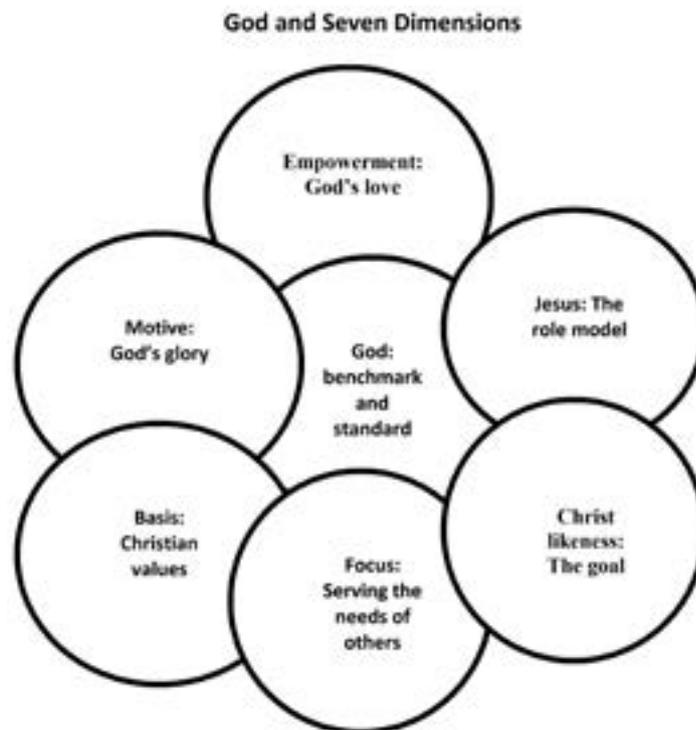


Figure 1: A Christian Approach for Business Management Excellence

Christians live under a mandate, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2 NKJ); “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16, NKJ). The Lord Jesus Himself commanded, “You must be perfect - just as your Father in heaven is perfect!” (Matthew 5:48, GNB). This principle is awesome. The Christian standard is nothing less than the Character of God. Inrig (1985) reminds Christians that such a standard or benchmark imposes humility on every believer. In God, every thing, in every respect, is immeasurably superior. It infinitely transcends the capacity of mortal beings. The fact that such a standard and benchmark is ultimately unreachable does not mean that it is inoperable or meaningless. On the contrary, it provides a high and holy incentive to move beyond customer satisfaction and loyalty, market share, and profits. As the Scriptural references above indicate, God is the true benchmark and standard for Christian management excellence, and nothing less.

Dimension 2: Christ is the role model for organizational management excellence. A role model is someone worthy of imitation, a person who serves as an example for others. The concepts of role modelling and models are used extensively in the management of organizations. Managements use successful organisations as their models to follow. Leaders of organizations are expected to be good examples (role models) to their employees and others. They are expected to take on the role of motivating, inspiring, influencing and leading others in the organization to work together productively in pursuit of the organization’s goals.

Jesus was a role model for His disciples. The impact of His role modelling was noticed by the Jewish leaders. “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13, NIV) Jesus is the role model for all Christians at all times and in all vocations and professions. “It was to this that God called you, for Christ himself suffered for you and left you an example, so that you would follow in his steps.” (1 Peter 2:21, GNB). “I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you.” (John 13:15, GNB). The message is undeniably clear.

Jesus is the role model for all walks of life. He is the role model for managing limited resources. In the parable of the three servants, He richly rewarded those who managed the resources well (Matthew 25:14-27; Luke 19:11-27). He took away the resources from the one who failed to manage them and gave them to the two who did well. Jesus taught his disciples to eliminate waste. At the end of feeding the five thousand, all leftovers were gathered. Nothing was to be wasted. (John 6:1-13; Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17). All leftovers were collected and put to good use. In another situation (Luke 16:1-15), Jesus also praised a manager not because of his dishonesty but rather his strategic use of resources. The manager’s time was short, so he took what he had and transformed it into something that would provide for him long into his future. He was praised for acting shrewdly or astutely.

Jesus set Christians an example of putting God first in every aspect of their living. He placed God first in His life and expects Christians to do the same as He did. “I can do nothing on my own authority; I judge only as God tells me, so my judgement is right, because I am not trying to do what I want, but only what he who sent me wants.” (John 5:30, GNB). Christ did not put on a front. He was completely genuine. He rebuked the Jewish leaders for being bad models (Luke 20:45-47; Matthew 23:27). Jesus had humility in spite of who He was (Matthew 19:16-17).

Christ showed His concern for people (Matthew 4:23, Matthew 8 and 9 are just a few examples in the gospels). Jesus was concerned about workers’ productivity, “...that you bear much fruit, so that you will be my disciples” (John 15:8 NKJ). Employees are expected to be productive. John 15:2 says that “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (NKJ). The example of Jesus compels all Christians, leaders and workers, to do as He did. Christ is the Christian’s role model in all walks of life.

Dimension 3: Christlikeness is the goal of business management excellence. What is being Christlike? The word “Christian” means “Christlike”. The true meaning is learning to live and act like Christ. Scripture tells of the importance of Christ-likeness. The Philippian Christians were told to have the same mind in them that was in Christ (Philippians 2:5). Paul said that Christ lived in him so completely that he no longer lived but Christ lived in him (Galatians 2:20). To be Christ-like, Christians should think and reason as Christ thought (Ephesians 4:21-24); love and obey God as Christ loved and obeyed God (Philippians 2:5-8); learn to love and meet the needs of other people as Christ did (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John gospels); seek to be holy as Christ was holy (1 Peter 1:13-16). These scriptural references have important managerial and employee implications.

Excellence is a progressive realization of the God-given purpose of Christ-likeness. Romans 8:29 says that “Those whom God had already chosen He also set apart to be like his son” (NEB). This goal of Christlikeness must shape human conduct in every area of life, whether in public or private. The book of Romans further

provides the basis for business and organizational excellence. For it says, “Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and is pleasing to Him and is perfect” (12:2, NEB). Being Christ-like can be translated to mean being honest (Ephesians 4:25; Romans 12:17), being fair (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31; 1 Timothy 5:18), doing what is right (Philippians 4:8), not taking advantage of others, which include employees and customers, (Deuteronomy 25:13-15; 1 Timothy 5:18), and taking responsibility for one’s actions (Romans 14:12).

God does not like cheating. Deuteronomy 25:13-16 says:

You shall not have in your bag different weights, a heavy and a light. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the Lord your God. (NKJ)

This is the principle of giving a full amount in exchange for a fair payment. In other words, give full quality for what is paid for and according to what is advertised. “Do for others just what you want them to do for you” (Luke 6:31, GNB).

Being Christ like calls for total honesty in all things. Ephesians (4:25) calls for the speaking of truth. The Living Bible best sums it up in Romans (12:17) which says, “Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honest clear through”. Then there is personal responsibility. Christians must take full responsibility for their own actions and decisions. They should not try to excuse their actions based on pressure within the business or organization to do what they know is not right. Christians must accept the responsibility for what they have said or done and not try to pass that responsibility on to someone else or try to blame it on some set of circumstances. Romans 12 verse 2 warns of the danger of allowing the world to shape Christians into its mould.

There is the issue of reasonable profits. To a business, profit is the price of its service or product above its cost. To the employee it is the amount of his or her wages for the service to the organization. Luke 3:14 admonishes employees to be content with their wages, but the Bible also reminds the employers in 1 Timothy 5:18 that the labourers are worthy of their wages. Being Christlike means being fair on the part of employers and employees.

Christlikeness is the goal of Christian business and an important dimension of the Christian framework of business excellence. In every area of life and activity, the Christian serves as a representative of Christ. Christ-likeness should be seen in every deed and word in the management and operation of Christian organizations, from both the managerial and employee perspectives. Anything contrary to this is a misrepresentation of Christ-likeness.

Dimension 4: Serving the needs of others, the focus of organizational management excellence. The www.thefreedictionary.com gives the meaning of focus as “a center of interest or activity”. The definition is significant in terms of organizational management practices. The modern definition of business management is not about serving others, it is focusing on productivity, and ‘getting things done through other people in organizations’ (Hill & McShane, 2008), p. 4). The definition implies that people are to be controlled and used by management to achieve its goals and objectives. In the secular world of business management, success in managing people is seen as productivity output – getting things done with least cost. Unfortunately, whether intentional or unintentional, workers are frequently regarded as a factor of production.

Jesus taught a very different approach to management. He said,

You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you: but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28, NKJ)

Paul, in Philippians 2:3-4 (NEB) says,

Don’t do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble towards one another, always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another’s interest, not just for your own.”

Meeting the needs of others is about relationships. The Ten Commandments in Scripture (Exodus 20) focuses on two central themes about relationships – people’s relationship with God, and people’s relationships with others. The first four Commandments focus on relationship with God (serving God), and the last six Commandments focus on relationships with one another (meeting the needs of others). From the beginning of Scripture (Genesis) to the end of the Bible (Revelation), Christians are being reminded about these relationships. Everything Christians do rests on meeting and maintaining the right relationships with God and with their fellow human beings.

The measure of true success and excellence, from the Christians’ perspective, is relationship with God and relation with others. ‘Lording it over’ others and ‘exercising authority over’ others for the sake of establishing one’s superiority or authority creates relationship problems in organizations (Rush, 1983), and is an abuse of the relationship principles outlined in scripture. It destroys one’s relationship with God because it denies His rightful place as the superior being and it destroys relationship with others because it denies the dignity that is due to them as equal persons. The wisest man who ever lived said: “There is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt” (Ecclesiastes 8:9, NKJ). In His teachings, Jesus places the emphasis on responsibility rather than on authority (Luke 12:42-48).

Jesus told the disciples not to pattern their lives after the world’s philosophy, not to use authority and power to control people. He emphasized that people in positions of authority and power should use their authority and power to serve those under them (Matthew 20:25-28). The biblical model of organizational management is meeting the needs of people as they work at accomplishing their goals. As Christians give themselves to serving the needs of those under them, they will make a happy discovery. People will voluntarily and continually meet their needs in return (1 King 12:7). Christ was not self-serving but deliberately chose to serve others and meet their needs (Acts 10:38). Someone has said that you never diminish the flame of your own candle by lighting the flame of someone else. Lee Brase states “I have discovered if you train a man, he will become what you are...But if you serve him, the sky is the limit as to what he can become” (cited in Rush, 1983, p.13-14). Meeting the needs of others is the focus of Christian organisational management excellence. Christ has given Christians a perfect example to emulate.

Dimension 5: Christian values, the basis of management excellence

Excellence involves a statement of values. In *Search for Excellence*, Waterman and Peters (1982) return again and again to the theme of values and their importance in achieving excellence. According to Waterman and Peters, the most excellent companies place great emphasis on their few core values. These values run deep in the organisation. Every company they studied was clear on what they stood for and took the process of value-shaping seriously. Waterman and Peters uncovered the fact that these successful companies were driven by coherent value systems, and required and demanded extraordinary performance from the average employee. Waterman and Peters suggested that the companies they studied had seven basic values (cited in Inrig, 1983, p.37): (1) “A belief in being the best”; (2) “A belief in the importance of the details of execution, the nuts and bolts of doing the job well”; (3) “A belief in the importance of people as individuals”; (4) “A belief in superior quality and service”; (5) “A belief that most members of the organization should be innovators, and its corollary, the willingness to support failure”; (6) “A belief in the importance of informality to enhance communication”; and (7) “Explicit belief in and recognition of the importance of economic growth and profits.” The forgoing suggests that a strong value system is an important basis for achieving excellence.

It has been said that organisational values are reflected in the ways managers and leaders do things (Robbins & Judge, 2009). A system of values is a driving force behind management’s behaviours in the allocation of resources and rewards; the development and implementation of management policies; the handling of crisis; the hiring and firing of employees; the organization and distribution of power and positions within the organizational structure; what is regarded as important or not important; and the ethical and social responsibility behaviours of people in the organization.

Christian organizations emphasize God’s values. Christians live in a world of distorted values and priorities. People tend to highly value things that God considers secondary. God values fairness (Deuteronomy 25:13-15); honesty and integrity (1 Corinthians 4:2; Philippians 4:8, Ephesians 4:25, Romans 12:17); servant leadership and service to others (Matthew 20:26-28); accountability (Romans 14:12); character (Luke 22:25-26); quality of products and services (Ecclesiastes 9:10, Colossians 3:23); relationships with Him and others (Exodus 20; 1 Corinthians 1:10); processes and strategies (Luke 9:1-6, Matthew 10:5-15, Mark 6:7-10); continuous improvements (Matthew 5:48); people (Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 10:25-37); good actions and motives (Luke 19:1-9); humility (Luke 14:7-14, Matthew 5:5); work and productivity (Luke 13:6-9, Matthew 21:18-20); performance evaluation (Colossians 3:23, Mark 7:37, Matthew 25); Planning (Proverbs 24:3-4 [LB], Jeremiah

29:11, Psalms 32:8); organizational structure (Exodus 18:15-24); and team work (Ecclesiastes 4:9-13, Mark 6:7-13, Ephesians 4:11-12, Mark 3:25, John 17:22-23, Genesis 11:6). These values are to be the fifth dimension of a Christian approach of organizational management excellence. Paul admonishes Christians with these words:

... my brothers, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honourable. Put into practice what you learnt and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. (Philippians 4:8, GNB)

Values play a critical role in an organization management excellence framework. Good management involves a statement of values. Christian organizations are no exception. What makes an organization stand out has much to do with the value system it holds. The values expressed by secular organizations are different from those of Christian organizations. They are means to an end, not an end in themselves. They are based on humanistic philosophy. The value system built on human philosophy cannot be enduring because its foundation is built on relativistic values. The Christian values are based on eternal principles – God’s principles. Christians must emulate God’s values in the management and operations of church related organizations.

Dimension 6: God’s glory is the motive of management excellence.

What is a motive? A motive is the reason behind an action. While an action is visible, the motive behind the action is not. There are such things as a good action with a good motive, a good action with a wrong motive, a wrong action with a good motive, and a wrong action with a wrong motive. The emphasis of the Christian framework of excellence is good/right actions with good/right motives.

The motive behind the secular framework of business management excellence is the bottom-line, business results, and wealth maximization of owners. This is not the case in the Christian approach to business management excellence. Consider an event recorded in the New Testament where Jesus observed a poor widow, whose actions were no different from the others in the temple. Many were putting money into the offering bag on this particular day.

Many rich men dropped in a lot of money; then a poor widow came along and dropped in two little copper coins, worth about a penny. He called his disciples together and said to them, ‘I tell you that this poor widow put more in the offering box than all the others. For the others put in what they had to spare of their riches; but she, poor as she is, put in all she had – she gave all she had to live on. (Mark 12:41-44, GNB)

Notice that Jesus focused not only on the action of the individual but also on the motive. The motive of the woman was remarkably different. Jesus told the disciples that her motive was one of faith because she sacrificed her own well being in giving her few, precious coins. The implication is very clear. The actions were similar but the motivation was different. Jesus emphasized the fact that thoughts and motives were just as important as one’s actions. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJ), reminds Christians that: “Whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God”, “...that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory....” 1 Peter 4:11, (NKJ).

There are a few cases in Scripture that provide examples of both action and motive of the decision maker (Luke 19:1-9; Acts 5:1-11; Philippians 1:15-17). Take the example of a Jewish man who collected taxes for a living – Zacchaeus. This story of Zacchaeus illustrates the importance of motives and actions. He was a very high ranking official – Chief Tax Collector. He was a member of a class called tax collectors, hated by the people. The hatred was the result of tax collectors’ harshness, greed, and deception in which they did their job of collecting taxes.

Zacchaeus had an encounter with Jesus. Because of this encounter, Zacchaeus changed his behaviour and started doing something good. He displayed a visible sign of an invisible change by saying that if he had falsely cheated anyone, he was willing to repay four times the amount. He said, “Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay him back four times as much.” (Luke 19:8, GNB) Zacchaeus was willing to make it right by redressing his relationship with those he had wronged. What is more, he announced that he would donate part of his wealth to the poor and correct the injustice done to others in the past. From the story, Zacchaeus’ behaviour or action was certainly good. What about his motive? Based on Jesus’ comment, Zacchaeus’ motive was right. Jesus said, “Salvation has come to this house today” (Luke 19:9 GNB). Zacchaeus was motivated by salvation that had come to his home.

Take another example found in Philippians 1:15-17. From the text, several individuals were preaching the gospel of Christ but with different motives. According to Paul, the preaching of the gospel of Jesus certainly represented a good action. However, Paul clearly pointed out the wrong motives behind the preaching. The good action was motivated by wrong motives, to create trouble for Paul.

Excellence in organizational management may be sought for many reasons. The actions and motives must be good. The Christian's ambition is to please God and walk worthy of Him. This is a very strong incentive, born out of the grace of God experienced by the believer. Bruce (n.d.) strongly emphasizes that improving business practices is something that seems to be universally viewed as desirable, good, and important. He adds that becoming more efficient and effective is a clear indicator of good management or stewardship. This trait is very compatible with Christian belief. The issue is not so much about the need for improving the quality of the business and management but rather the means for that improvement. Those means must be evaluated in terms of actions themselves and the motives driving those actions. Practices that are consistent with Scriptural principles and result in superior organizational performance should be the goal of Christian business professionals who are seeking to integrate their faith with their vocation. The motive of management excellence in organizations is for God's glory, to recognize Him as the centre of human existence and human activities.

Dimension 7: God's Love and compassion being the source of empowerment for management excellence in Christian organizations. Empowerment is the catch word of the 21st century. The word is often used in management literature in relation to human resource management. It is the belief that organizations can improve productivity through employee empowerment (Daft & Marcic, 2009). They believe that this can happen in one of two ways. First, empowerment can strengthen motivation by providing employees with the opportunity to attain intrinsic rewards from their work, such as a greater sense of accomplishment and a feeling of importance. In some cases, intrinsic rewards such as job satisfaction and a sense of purposeful work can be more powerful than extrinsic rewards such as higher wages or bonuses. Motivated employees clearly tend to put forth more effort than those who are less motivated. The second means by which employee empowerment can increase productivity is through better decisions. Especially when decisions require task-specific knowledge, those on the front line can often better identify problems. These are compatible with Christian belief.

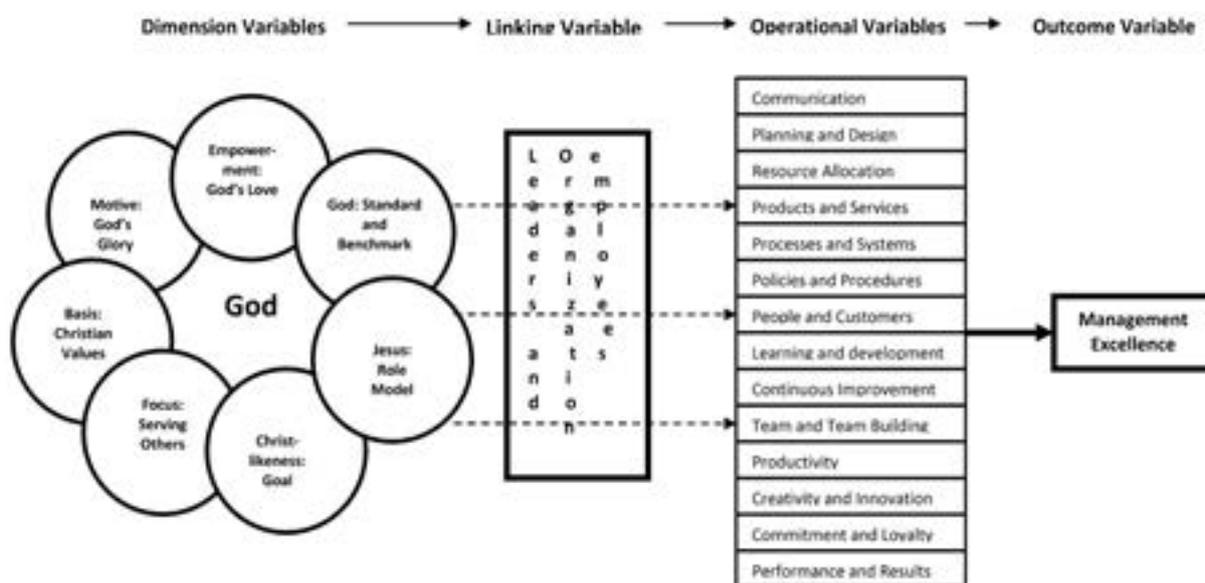


Figure 2: A Christian Framework for Business Management Excellence

A number of different human resource management programs are being used for employee empowerment to some extent. These include informal participative decision-making, job enrichment, quality circles, decision-making authority, continuous improvement, and self-managed work teams, just to mention a few (Daft & Marcic, 2009).

A Christian approach to business management excellence does not deny all that is found in the secular model regarding empowerment. However, Christians have a different and higher source of empowerment. Jesus describes the results of a growing relationship with Him as an abundant, overflowing life that comes from within. He explains that the source of this life is the Holy Spirit. Just as the Christian's relationship with God totally depends on what God has done through Jesus Christ, so the power to live a dynamic Christian life also comes totally from God (John 7:37-39, Ephesians 4:15-16). Grace is the greatest incentive for Christian

excellence as well as its enablement (Inrig, 1985). The spirit dwelling within the believer is able to do what he or she otherwise could not. The seventh dimension is the empowering force. Without the empowerment dimension, the workings of the other dimensions may be purely human effort.

Integration – Foundation, Dimensions, and Business/Management Practice

In the Christian approach of business management excellence (Figure 2), God is the foundation (centre) of the seven dimensions. These dimensions are: God as the standard and benchmark for excellence; Christ as the role model for organizational excellence; Christ likeness as the goal of business management excellence; God's values as the basis for business management excellence; serving others as the focus of management excellence; God's glory as the motive for organizational excellence; and God's love and compassion as the source of empowerment. These dimensions are directly connected to the foundation and to one another. The integration of the seven variables with God in the centre forms a powerful force in influencing or impacting the organization's leaders, employees and the operational variables at all levels of the organization (Figure 2). Take for example, when leaders and organization employees take on the work of developing, revising and executing the vision, mission, objectives and strategies of the organization; God is the benchmark and standard; Christ is the role model to follow; Christlikeness is the goal; serving others is the focus; Christian values are the basis; for God's glory is the motive; and God's love is the empowerment to do all these.

The organizational operation variables include but are not limited to the following: (1) organizational planing, design, forming the vision, mission, goals and strategies; (2) organizational systems and processes for conducting business activities; (3) relationships with internal and external customers; (4) communication within and with outside parties; (5) team building, and empowerment within and forming alliances with outside organizations; (6) organizational learning, employee training, and development in the workplace; (7) allocation and the use of resources; (8) quality of products and services provided by the business enterprise; (9) continuous improvement of processes and systems of getting work done including working policies, procedures, and practices; (10) compensation and reward systems for employees; (11) productivity, innovations and creativity (12) ethical and social responsibilities to the communities in which the business organization is located and to the wider business world. The final outcome is Christian management excellence. Figure 2 is an attempt to visualize what is being outlined in a diagrammatic form to create and communicate an understanding of the relationships among the elements in the Christian approach.

The source of empowerment in the Christian approach is God's love and compassion for the human race. Without God being the foundation of the framework and the integration of input variables with the foundation, the impact of these variables on organizational operation activity and practice variables are just human endeavours motivated and empowered by human desires and values and selfishness.

In the Christian approach, the actions of leaders and employees (management) are motivated by a different motive – to represent God and to give glory to Him. It is the foundation of this approach, God, which makes it different from all the other secular frameworks and models.

Summary and Conclusion

Business organizations, whether they are secular or Christian, desire to achieve excellence in management. This is a noble ambition. However, business management excellence means different things to different people. The motives driving the approach for management excellence may differ. For a secular organization, the motive behind business management excellence may be associated with high financial returns. Product or service quality, competitive advantage, market share, or customer service are the means of achieving high financial rewards. From this perspective, the framework of excellence in business management is associated with organizational or personal wealth accumulation. In other words, excellence of achievement has a priority over excellence of character. This priority has an important bearing on the establishment of priorities in an organization's dealings with others.

The Christian management excellence approach with God as the foundation or centre of the dimensions of management excellence, integrates the foundation and dimensions with all management operating activities and practices. A strong integration of these elements forms a framework to accomplish the Christian business management excellence. The Christian approach to business management excellence is based on principles found in Scripture and Christian literature. In this approach the standards of measurement in every aspect of an organization's operations and practices are not human-centred, but always God/Christ centred. Christian

organizations should not measure business and management achievement by what others have done, but by what God has done. Christians are to walk worthy of their heavenly calling (Ephesians 4:1); to live and conduct their activities worthy of the Gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27); and to walk worthy of God (1 Thessalonians 2:12)

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About the Author

Dr. Pak T. Lee is MBA Program Director and a principal lecturer in the Faculty of Business, Asia-Pacific International University, Thailand.