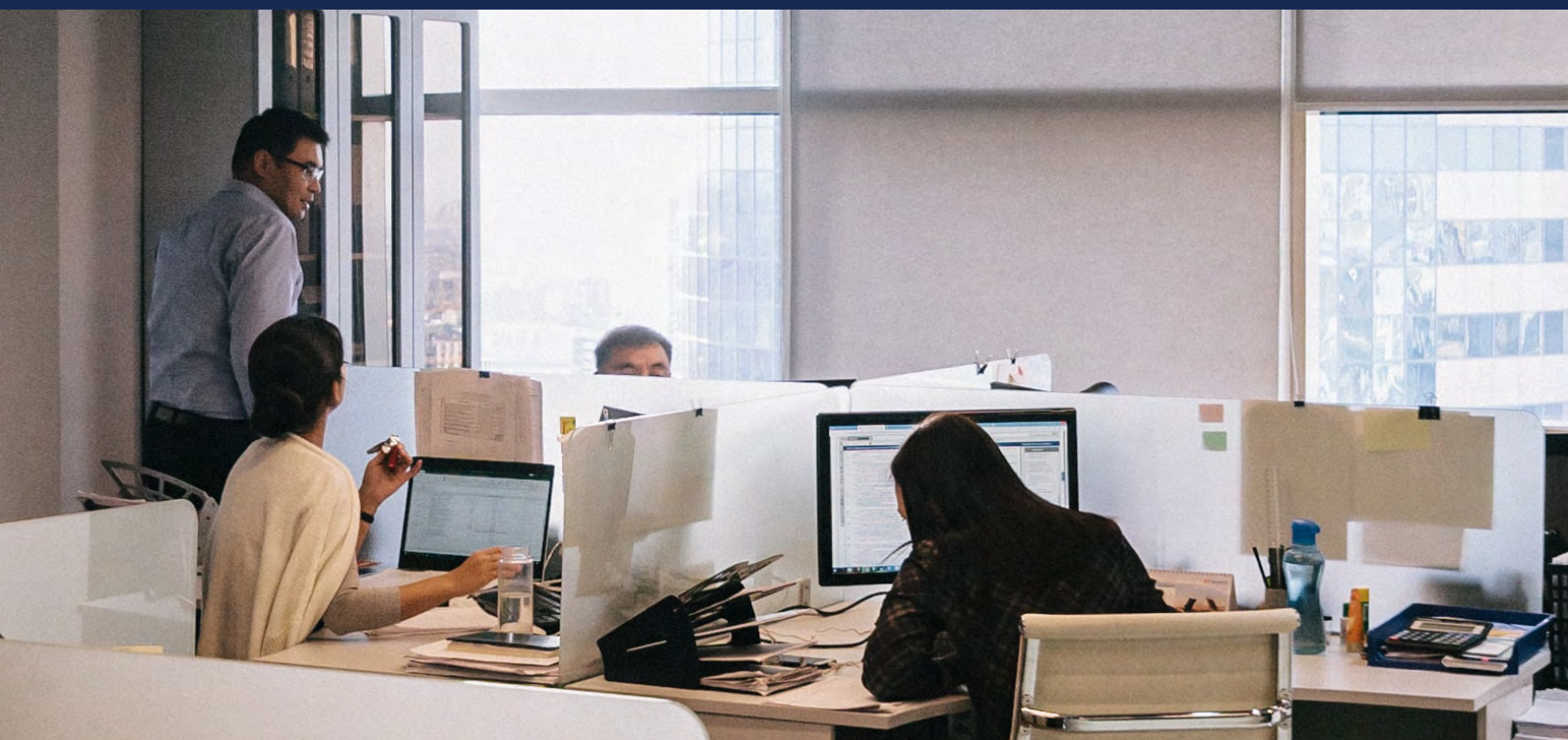




State of Faith in the Marketplace

CENTER FOR FAITH AND INNOVATION
ANNUAL REPORT

2022 - 2023



Report Contributors

Hannah Jackson '23 | Business/Economics

“I believe God is calling me to live a life serving others in the marketplace.”

Hannah Jackson is graduating from Wheaton College with a B.A. in Business Economics. She is passionate about strategizing and problem solving to improve business performance. After her semesters as an iScholar, Hannah became an intern at the Christian Fellowship Community (CFC) in Downers Grove, IL. Post-graduation, Hannah will become the Operations Coordinator at CFC.

Dr. Trishia Kholodenko | Director of Innovation & Operations, CFI

“I live and work to impact the world for the Kingdom of God, one life at a time, one day at a time.”

Trishia Kholodenko brings over two decades of leadership experience from nonprofit, for-profit, and social enterprise ventures. Having served most of her career bi-vocationally, Trish dedicates herself as a seasoned minister, executive and adjunct professor. She has a proven commitment to innovating impactful programs with particular focus on the margins of society. A self-confessed night owl, Trish best replenishes through quiet time with God in nature and quality time with loved ones. Holding both an MDiv and MBA, Trish also earned her Doctorate in Urban Ministry from North Park Theological Seminary.

Gloria Kim '24 | Computer Science & Psychology

“My calling is to serve others faithfully and bring positive change in marginalized communities across the globe through innovative technology.”

Gloria Kim is a junior studying computer science and psychology. As a MK/TCK, she is currently exploring what it means to be a Christian in the workplace from a multicultural viewpoint. Gloria is passionate about using innovative technologies & cross-disciplinary approaches to solve problems. She hopes to integrate her understanding of cognition and artificial intelligence to support marginalized communities.]

Nah Hyun Lee '23 | Psychology & Business/Economics

“I believe that God has called me to genuinely love and serve others in the community that I belong to.”

Nah Hyun Lee is a Senior at Wheaton College majoring in Business/Economics and minoring in Psychology. She loves spending time with friends and family in her spare time. She believes that the field of business is an important missional calling. The goal of her life is to serve others with the knowledge and experience that she will build throughout her life. She is looking forward to a flourishing journey, focused on accounting. She aspires to become a servant leader in this specialized area to help various organizations for Christ and His Kingdom.

Report Contributors

Haili McConnell '24

“In recent years, I have felt called to help people in ways they would not necessarily think they needed help. By being in the service industry, I am able to be a listening ear, a distraction from their reality, and I like to think that helps them take a break from the stress of daily life.”

Haili McConnell is a junior studying Business Economics at Wheaton College. On campus, she is involved with the frisbee team as a Captain. She also cuts hair and is an iLab Scholar with CFI. She holds a dual license in Cosmetology but desires to pursue a career in business where she can glorify God and show His love in the workplace.

Dr. Hannah Stolze | Founding Director, CFI

“In all of life and in all my work, I endeavor to serve God and others with wisdom that is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere.”

Dr. Hannah Stolze is an author, teacher, speaker, and academic with a focus on sustainable supply chain management and the intersection of faith and business strategy. Hannah is the inaugural William E. Crenshaw Endowed Chair in Supply Chain Management in the Department of Management in Baylor’s nationally ranked Hankamer School of Business. She is the founding director of the Wheaton Center for Faith & Innovation at Wheaton College. A former member of the U.S. Army, Stolze worked in public affairs, as a civilian in international business, and was a 2020 Fulbright Scholar in Indonesia. Stolze has conducted research with 50+ companies in the areas of global supply chain management and social and environmental sustainability. She recently published an article on sustainable SCM and bad press in the Harvard Business Review. Dr. Stolze authored the book, *Wisdom Based Business: Applying Biblical Principles and Evidence Based Research for a Purposeful and Profitable Business*.

Celine Widjaja '23 | Psychology & Business/Economics

“I believe that God has called me in my life to use creativity, empathy, and excellence to help others achieve healing and a whole life, whether it be in a personal, system, or cultural level.”

Celine Widjaja is a graduating senior at Wheaton College majoring in Psychology and Business-Economics. She is passionate about using creativity, empathy, and critical thinking to achieve healing and human flourishing for individuals and businesses alike. This passion led to her involvement in the Center for Faith and Innovation, where discussions of faith and work integration take place. As an international student from Indonesia, she enjoys seeking new experiences of sight and taste to foster belonging and a global culture on campus. In her free time, she enjoys living life a little slower by taking sunset walks, trying new coffee shops, and catching up with friends. The same dedication that led her to CFI leads her to Sovereign’s Capital, where she will start her career as an Analyst post-graduation.

MISSION

The purpose for the Center for Faith and Innovation is to develop Christian marketplace leaders through theology and liberal arts research to create innovative solutions for business. The Wheaton Center for Faith and Innovation, established in 2019, primarily fosters the integration of faith and work. The critical intersection between marketplace and ministry necessitates that the Wheaton Center for Faith and Innovation 1) dedicates resources to theological and liberal arts interdisciplinary research, 2) cultivates healthy Christian leaders to impact both the Church and corporate spheres, 3) creates innovative solutions to support the success of for-profit businesses and non-profit organizations.

To achieve our mission and vision, CFI focuses on the following five strategies:



CONNECT

CFI connects liberal arts faculty, experts, and business leaders to create a network of Christians committed to living faithfully in the marketplace.



DISSEMINATE

Be a reservoir of best practice, distributed through scholarly publications, blogs, whitepapers, an online library, a fall forum and annual seminar, CFI shares insights for greater Kingdom impact.



EDUCATE

To provide the next generation of business leaders with experiential learning resources, CFI utilizes corporate partnerships and our Innovation Lab for Wheaton students from all majors.



EQUIP

Encourage and equip emerging and current business professionals, CFI provides certification programs, seminars, and workshops.



RESEARCH

Integrate a rich theology with leading edge business research, CFI generates actionable insights for the everyday realities that businesses face.

VISION

The Center for Faith and Innovation empowers Christians to pursue their work in the marketplace as an act of discipleship to Jesus Christ. In the process, business leaders and student scholars form powerful collaborations in order to design innovative strategies that solve current local and global challenges.



Fall Executive Forum and State of Faith in the Marketplace Report

Each year a diverse community of Christians with executive experience in business gathers with the Center for Faith & Innovation in Wheaton to learn and grow together. During this Fall Executive Forum, the Center engages these participants in a series of structured conversations about how faith enters and interacts with their approach to business leadership, their values, and their day-to-day decision-making. CFI captures and synthesizes these conversations into research outputs and insights for Executive Members to equip marketplace leaders and the local church. Our goal is to resource the body of believers based on the current topics and trends relevant to Christ followers for that year. This report is the outcome and summary of this insightful research.

APPLICATION OF FAITH AND WORK

Over the years at CFI, we have leveraged the fall executive forum to gather Christian leaders in the marketplace to foster further integration of their faith with their work in everyday business. Throughout the forum, executives inspire, listen, and build a community of discipleship to encourage one another in Kingdom work. Along the way, we have found that believers are on a continuum in their journey of faith integration, ranging from a total sacred secular divide to an approach where all of life and work becomes an act of worship.

We have learned that integration is best learned and practiced in community. Therefore, outside of the Fall Forum, this report is built through collaborative research and writing. As a collaboration between business practitioners, business researchers, and Wheaton College students, this analysis and summary is delivered as the deliverable from the fruitful conversations held during the 2022 Fall Executive Forum round tables.



SUMMARY FINDINGS AND SOURCES

November 4, 2022, in Wheaton Illinois. Over 80 executives participated in these focus groups with representation from over 3 countries (the US, Ukraine, and the UK) and 16 states (AZ, CA, CO, GA, IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, NY, PA, SC, TN, TX, WA, WI). Executives represented a range of leadership positions C-Suite and above.

Participants engaged in a series of structured conversations about how faith enters and interacts with their approach to business leadership, their values, and their day-to-day decision-making. Our research team and student scholars capture and synthesize these conversations into research outputs and insights for Executive Members.

Over the recent months, our CFI research and writing team poured over transcripts and code to understand the challenges, opportunities, and values of participants. Consistent with past reports, there was a continued focus on people, specifically the desire to bring the whole self into the workplace and to be honored and respected as a whole person within their given vocation.

An observable theme in the roundtable discussions held at the forum centered on the rising demands of a global marketplace. Many participants discussed the need for love and respect in an increasingly diverse workforce. Frequently highlighted topics also included the development of employees and the centrality of mentorship for the growth of successful leaders in the marketplace.

The remainder of this report draws on our research analysis of all the recorded and transcribed conversations from the Fall Executive Forum. We searched for patterns and insights across the data to determine what are the current trends and values pressing against the need to integrate faith in the marketplace. In the following pages, we will elaborate on the five trends listed below that thematically arose to the surface within these coded discussions:

- **A Call for DEI Improvement**
- **Relational Embeddedness and the Impact of Faith**
- **Reaching the Next Generation**
- **Authenticity and the Whole Person**
- **Individual and Employee Development**



THEME 01

A Call for DEI Improvement



STUDENT REFLECTION BY HANNAH JACKSON

“Create a very intentional set of initiatives that have measurable outcomes, that have a budget, that has approval from the C-suite. Because if you do not have that cover and involvement in senior-level support from the very top... it is just perfunctory and not really helpful.”

“It is absolutely worthwhile and worthy to pursue DEI just knowing where it falls in the grand spectrum of what God is doing”

Diversity in the workplace can lead to increased innovation, creativity, and company growth. By hiring individuals with diverse backgrounds, CFC forum participants acknowledged that companies benefit from the unique experiences and perspectives that each employee brings to the table. In addition to these instrumental benefits, prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace reflects the Christian virtues of inclusivity, equity, representation, and belonging. Christian executives recognize the necessity of stepping beyond their homogenous work environments and actively embracing individuals of diverse backgrounds. A successful global workforce cannot afford to neglect diversity.

To promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, participants expressed the belief that it is crucial for companies to examine their job descriptions and hiring practices. Even unintentional language can be discriminatory and limit the applicant pool. Therefore,

companies should strive to create job listings that appeal to a wide range of people from diverse backgrounds. This will help build a more inclusive hiring pool, where everyone has an equal chance to succeed based on their qualifications, not just their experience. For instance, instead of using gender-specific language or terms that might exclude certain groups, companies should use neutral language that does not reinforce stereotypes or perpetuate biases. In the end, the goal is to hire individuals based on their character, values, and abilities, which will create a more diverse and productive workforce.

Employee resource groups (ERGs) received an overwhelmingly positive response from forum attendees, with many finding them to be valuable tools for fostering inclusivity and promoting diversity in the workplace. Christian executives emphasized the importance of creating a sense of belonging for minority groups and highlighted ERGs as an effective way to achieve this goal. ERGs provide a supportive community for individuals who share similar backgrounds, experiences, and interests, allowing them to exchange ideas, mentor one another, and grow both personally and professionally. By bringing people together and celebrating their differences, ERGs are helping to create a more welcoming and equitable workplace for all.



THEME 02

Relational Embeddedness and the Impact of Faith



STUDENT REFLECTION BY HAILI MCCONNELL

Demonstrating our love is the best way to be a representative of Christ to any non-believer, and right now the workplace is one of the most needed places for outreach. It is one of the few areas today where believers and non-believers engage with each other and work together for a common goal. That means how we act as individuals makes a difference on how Christians overall are seen, which can be inspiring or judgmental. Negative stereotypes of Christianity do exist, and it is our responsibility to change that.

Over the past few decades, the church has become a place where people feel judged and excluded, rather than welcomed and included. Then, outside of church, Christians are forgetting to live out their faith. To change that, we as Christians need to fearlessly bring Christ out into the world, which is done by representing Him through love, compassion, and understanding. “In terms of what we do on a daily basis, we are showing up being who we are: loving, leading, understanding what the needs are and purposefully meeting needs to earn the right to share.”

To bring our faith into the workforce, Christians must earn the right to share who we are and what we believe. It is more than simply sharing the good news about Jesus and telling people why they need salvation because all that will do is push people away. The key will be to go into work and build relationships, build trust, and establish what makes us different. Our coworkers will not be impacted by us trying to change them, but they will be impacted by our love and investment in them. “But do you know

what impact you want to leave individually from your presence and the places that God has called you?”

Not only will love in the workplace demonstrate Christ, but it will also disrupt the stereotypes set around Christianity. We will be known for the love and kindness that we show to those around us, rather than for excluding those not like us. “If you’re actually loving at people that are different than you, that is the love of Christ.” By showing God’s love in our workplaces, we will be correlating positivity, inspiration, and love all alongside of being a Christian. Jesus came into the world to demonstrate the ultimate example of love, which is something we can only strive towards, and we owe it to our neighbors to show them the love Jesus has shown us.

This can look like being a friend to the coworker you see struggling, treating everyone with respect, or even just striving to do your best in everything you are assigned. The important part is that we are listening, caring, asking deep questions, and creating an environment where everyone feels welcome. Being that loving Christian will be what breaks the paradigms and shift the expectations and perspectives of Christianity.



THEME 03

Empowering the Next Generation, Insights from Leaders and Mentors



STUDENT REFLECTION BY CELINE WIDJAJA

The world is changing rapidly and so are the priorities of the younger generation. While some may see this as a challenge, participants in the 2022 Fall Executive Forum recognized it as a unique opportunity to invest in the next generation and prepare them for their calling. Across fields, participants identified two critical observations: a greater degree of freedom in making life choices and a crucial shift from “paycheck to purpose.” Younger employees are asking leadership questions such as “What is God doing in your life?” This demonstrates a special concern over understanding what they want out of life. Gen Z sees work as a big piece of the purpose puzzle. “They don’t want a boss, they want a coach,” said one participant.

The gap between generations is felt to be more prevalent than ever. Yet participants noticed that Gen Z still looks up to their elders. There is a desire for somebody to see them, to mentor them, to invest in them, to make them feel like there is at least one person that believes that they can step into what God has called them to do.

With this eye on purpose, the younger generation is not shying away from addressing problems of workplace culture, questioning systems that may not have people’s best interests at heart. Leaders and mentors acknowledge that the next generation can pick up skills online but cannot attain self-development and wisdom as easily and see themselves as playing a significant part in closing that void.

Collectively, attendees expressed three visions for the next generation: to empower young leaders towards their calling, to prepare the next generation to receive well, and to tighten the connection between different generations. Wherever God takes them, they are to be light in the dark, and preparing them to be such an influence requires bringing the young out of shelters. How? By “moving student/young adults to new areas to expose them to new ideas, find appreciation for different cultures, learn other

best practices across cultures, [and] transporting students into a global environment” suggested one participant.

Mentorship was a key discussion topic, and attendees emphasized the importance of being able to receive well. From professors and mentors as well as from God. It was remarked that,

“In addition to being able to identify and ask for a mentor, I think it’s being in a position [...] where your heart and your mind is ready to really be mentored and to be in that type of relationship [...] Because there’s a sense of letting go of judgement, being willing to be truthful and vulnerable and honest about things that you could present an opportunity for you to develop and grow.”

Another participant added that in a comparable way, “God is always at work. In some way, we need to open up and really respond to his work in our life.”

Building courage was also noted as part of being able to receive well. Lastly, we saw a desire to bridge generation gaps. One attendee was particularly concerned with the increasing prevalence of cross-national family relationships, asking how families can still foster an inter-generational bond in such a context.

Overall, the passion that participants had for building the next generation is commendable. From mentoring the young in their family to pouring into younger employees, investing in the younger generation is a key opportunity to spread Kingdom influence at work. More simply, attendees saw themselves in the younger generation and wanted them to succeed as Christians and as professionals. One participant professed, “All of us wish we had examples earlier in our careers of people who would’ve helped us in this conversation, and we wish this conversation happened earlier.”



THEME 04

Whole Person & Authenticity



STUDENT REFLECTION BY NAH HYUN LEE

Meaningful Relationships

“But generally...I think good employers are recognizing the fact that... our most important matter is our employees.”

“It’s about us coming in and connecting and being a better team.”

Work is more than just finishing the tasks that were given for the day. So much of our life centers around vocation, that in a time when life is often fragmented, it has become increasingly important for people to feel supported as a whole person in the workplace. For example, we discovered how meaningful relationships at work have become the foundation of a healthy and successful workspace. Building relationships that are based on trust is especially important, individuals then feel comfortable bringing their whole selves rather than simply a compartmentalized aspect of their vocational self.

We were created as relational beings. As relationships are an important part of every area in our life, building relationships is essential in

the workplace as well. We build relationships with other workers, work for the common purpose in a safe space, and become a team that supports one another. Better team also results in better performance. As relationships require us to be intentional, building meaningful relationships in the workplace requires investing in people. It is important to spend time and effort to understand, support, and love one another when building relationship.

Bringing the whole person to work requires individuals to first understand themselves as a whole person. In this process, relationships that can guide individuals to understand who they are and how their role at work integrates within the larger fabric of their lives. Therefore, creating a safe work environment where everyone feels comfortable and accepted as themselves should go along with this relationship. Therefore, acceptance as a whole person at the workplace involves multiple layers. At the center, however, is the cultivation of a corporate culture that encourages vulnerability, honesty, and trust.

STUDENT REFLECTION BY NAH HYUN LEE

Authenticity and Corporate Care

“So, if the business doesn’t care for the person, the business will suffer too.”

“Invest your time being authentic, being kindly sincere and really in that when you are talking in that level, you don’t really need to mention anything.”

Building authentic relationships will lead individuals to bring their whole selves and feel understood and accepted as themselves at the same time. Authenticity will create a safe space for the individual to be fully accepted in their workplace. This will lead to the creation of a healthy organizational culture that benefits both individuals and the working community.

As building relationships is essential in the workplace, building a healthy working culture is all about showing care to the individuals. Caring for others will enable authentic relationships and people to feel supported and loved. This will lead to increased employee satisfaction and appreciation potentially resulting in deeper commitment to organizational success. Business without a caring culture cannot have a strong foundation as a healthy working culture is crucial for successful business.

Spiritual Needs and Mentorship

“I love when people come together with their different stories and you would naturally help each other out, I think that’s the way that God works.”

Spiritual needs are an important part of a whole person and should not be overlooked in the workplace either. Christian leaders in the workplace can encourage individuals to share their faith and help their spiritual needs to be fulfilled in the workplace. Providing guidance to the individual’s spiritual life requires mutual intentionality. Creating touch points for individuals to engage in meaningful conversation around faith can foster a more open dialogue and sense of integrated faith in the work community.

Within efforts to support spiritual needs, mentorship can play a key role to helping employees bring their whole self to work. Helping younger generations to grow personally, professionally, and spiritually through mentorship is a meaningful investment. When providing guidance to mentees, providing constructive feedback with the heart of care and love is just as important as providing positive encouragement. A wealth of wisdom can be passed through this special relationship in the workplace.



THEME 05

Employee and Individual Development, Encouraging God-given Talent



STUDENT REFLECTION BY GLORIA KIM

As a business leader, it is important to harness the unique God-given talents and abilities within the organization. Participants sought to understand the life experiences of their employees beyond their current position and find ways to incorporate those experiences into their tasks. It can be challenging to avoid creating a dependency on the in mentorship and create space for mentees to shine in their own right, but by recognizing the different measures of talent and success for individuals, mentors can help their mentees find and develop their strengths while encouraging them to become self-sufficient. A leader who maintains a genuine curiosity and interest in their people can build a strong relationship based on mutual respect and trust, because people notice when there is genuine interest. Looking for the unique way God has designed people and celebrating it can help them reach their full potential and achieve their goals. Successful management involves fostering a relationship where the people can grow and flourish while receiving guidance and support.

“If you can connect with people and resonate on an eternal front rather than a temporal front, it is a huge recruiting advantage. It is a retention advantage to get people to rally around a common mission and a purpose, which is critical when you are competing for talent every day.”

Coaching for Character

Coaching for character presents unique challenges that Christian business leaders should be prepared to address. It is essential to approach leadership as a coach rather than a boss, provoking growth with gentleness. Keeping promises and exemplifying character is key, as is creating an environment that fosters character development through demonstrated integrity. Incorporating character in the selection process for positions can help ensure alignment with core values as an entire organization. To develop character, it is crucial to share testaments and wrestle with challenging questions alongside others. This process of building character must involve pouring out non-judgmental love. Vulnerability is crucial for character growth, and many participants emphasized the willingness to allow others to enter the messiness of their lives. Character building involves seeing all people as image bearers of God and treating them with respect and dignity. Alongside skills training, it is vital to discuss sin issues and heart transformation, so that training will output better leaders who have reformed and sanctified hearts.

“It’s not about how quickly you get to an answer or being right, it’s helping your people develop their own ability to figure out the solution on own.”

STUDENT REFLECTION BY GLORIA KIM

Mentoring for Leadership

Finding or becoming a mentor can be daunting, particularly when developing leaders. One challenge that mentors may face is the fear of hierarchy and creating dependencies. Another challenge is finding the right people who are willing and able to lead. Additionally, gender can be a factor, as some men may be hesitant to mentor women. It is also important to create a culture where everyone feels like part of the team, regardless of their background or beliefs. It may also be easy to think of mentoring as giving away something valuable, such as knowledge or connections, with the expectation that it will not be returned. There is a fear that by developing someone, they will eventually surpass the mentor and render their job unnecessary. However, this perspective does not align with God's abundance, where giving and pouring into others can result in even greater rewards and blessings.

"There are two kinds of leaders. There is a leader that leads followers, and a leader that leads leaders."

Intentional Training

The initial step to intentional training is training with the whole person in mind, not just one aspect or skill. Participants spoke about going beyond asking about the project's progress to the sense of purpose in the process. Although consistent intentionality can be challenging, taking on a worship mentality can help in maintaining the attitude. Though participants discussed a common struggle of discomfort in talking about God in the workplace, they must confront the discomfort and be intentional about speaking truth into their mentees. Participants also expressed the need for prayer in intentional training, to carve out time of prayer to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in specific ways to be intentional.

"[I am] intentional about speaking truth and sharing my vision with employees. 'Here is what I see for you ... Here is what we need to do to develop you'"

Networking and Creating Support Systems

Networking and creating support systems have a tremendous influence in bringing Christians together workplace. To overcome the common struggles as a Christian in the corporate world, participants proposed strategies such as diversifying the network of relationships and connecting with those who can offer specific knowledge and expertise for a determined period. This way, the load is divided among the network and relaxes the responsibility of individuals who have limited availability. We also heard struggles from leaders about mentoring people who are similar to themselves or diversifying the people they mentor. By moving beyond – but not past – 1:1 mentoring relationship, people can learn from everyone in their lives and build a growing base of mentoring relationships. This approach not only provides access to those who may not naturally have mentors but also creates a safety net and safe spaces for people. Ultimately, a supportive network is necessary to help individuals feel less alone in their tasks, and leaders should strive to provide this support to those under their leadership.

"We are trying to encourage individual Christians to go from community to being on mission together. If there is not a Christian group, to start one. If there is one, to engage it and be on mission with the other Christians in that company and to figure out how they can best reflect Christ in their workplace."



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