

# Workplace chaplains boost morale, productivity

Having a man or woman of the cloth around the office is a growing trend for companies keen on work/life benefits. Thousands of clergymen and clergywomen work full time or part time in corporate America as chaplains, ministering to employees' spiritual needs and providing counseling services.

"In the '90s, spirituality in the workplace became an OK thing to talk about and, in fact, became quite popular," says Diana Dale, executive director of the Institute of Work/Life Ministry in Houston. "The chaplains really have their ears tuned to things that are going on in the corporate structure that will impact work/life quality."

Estimates on the number of corporate clergy range widely, between 4,000 and 25,000, with the greatest number in the Southeast and Southwest. They may work as paid employees, contractors or volunteers.

## A 'ministry of presence'

Most typical is the part-time chaplain, on contract through a placement agency, who counsels employees at several firms. The chaplain might make weekly visits to each company, check in with the work/life or HR director for employee news and then make the rounds, chatting with employees and making time for requested private visits.

Their work varies, depending on the organization and events. One chaplain describes helping employees deal with the suicide of a company officer and the deaths of co-workers. Chaplains visit sick and bereaved employees. The service is akin to the counseling that some seek through Employee Assistance Programs, yet it's on the spot.

Corporate chaplains call it a "ministry of presence."

It's not just crises that get chaplains' attention. They keep employers abreast when they spot problem trends among employees, who often feel comfortable confiding in chaplains about routine work and personal issues because the conversations are confidential.

## Options, issues to consider

If you think your organization might benefit from having a chaplain in the workplace, consider how you will structure his or her employment and the qualifications that will best serve your employees.

**You can put a pastor on the payroll full time or part time.** *Example:* Meat processing giant Tyson Foods employs 128 chaplains to minister to 85,000 employees. The firm's CEO also employs an ordained minister as an executive coach.

**Rent your reverend through one of the growing number of outsourcing firms** devoted to supplying part-time or occasional spiritual guides. They charge up to \$100 an hour for individual employee sessions and on-site visits—and a bit more for company training sessions. Some placement agencies charge per use, while

others work out deals in which the company pays \$30 or \$40 per employee every quarter for all employees, whether or not they use the service.

**Choose a clinically trained, nondenominational chaplain**, like those in hospitals and the military.

**Look for a chaplain whose training is not just in divinity** but in organizational behavior, counseling, mediation and critical debriefing.

**Cover the cost of the service so employees don't have to pay anything.**

**Assure the staff that all conversations** between employees and the chaplain will be confidential.

## **Find a chaplain**

- Marketplace Ministries: [www.marketplaceministries.com](http://www.marketplaceministries.com)
- Corporate Chaplains of America: [www.iamchap.org](http://www.iamchap.org)
- Chaplains at Work: [www.chaplainsatwork.com](http://www.chaplainsatwork.com)
- Institute of Work/Life Ministry: [www.worklifeministry.com](http://www.worklifeministry.com)
- National Institute of Business and Industrial Chaplains: [www.nibic.com](http://www.nibic.com)
- Workplace Chaplains: [www.workplacechaplains.com](http://www.workplacechaplains.com)