**Book Review**

*Leading with Wisdom: Spiritual-Based Leadership in Business*
by Peter Pruzan and Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen together with Debra and William Miller.

Reviewed by

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“There are two things I never thought I would see in my lifetime: one was the fall of the Russian empire; and the other was hearing the word ‘God’ spoken of in the Academy of Management”. Andre Delbecq, Dean, Graduate School of Business, Santa Clara University shares this thought to the authors of the book *Leading with Wisdom: Spiritual-Based Leadership in Business*. The book, from which the above said quote is taken, is co-authored by Peter Pruzan and Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen together with Debra and William Miller. The book is the result of a 5-year long research program and contains in-depth interviews with 31 leaders from across the globe, who speak about leadership, service, spirituality and restructuring. The reader of this book is taken through a journey in which how these leaders, belonging to verticals as diverse as IT and telecommunications, healthcare, retailing, manufacturing, food services, investment management, business academics and NGOs, tap their conscience to lead their daily work life.

Dr. Peter Pruzan is professor emeritus at the Copenhagen Business School, and is a globally known figure when it comes to academic study of corporate social responsibility. Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen is a journalist and former editor at Det Berlingske Hus, a publishing house in Denmark. Debra and William Miller are co-founders of Global Dharma Center, a non-sectarian, non-profit spiritual institution whose purpose is “to inspire and empower people from all cultures around the world, and all walks of life, to live and work from a spiritual basis, in accord with our inherent, spiritual nature”. The interviewees from India include AK Chattopadhyay (ACC Limited), Anand Pillai (HCL Comnet), Ashoke Maitra (Times of India), Deependra Moitra (Lucent), G Narayana (Excel Industries), NS Raghavan (Infosys), SK Welling (HMT International) and VV Ranganathan (Ernst &Young). Interviewees from other countries include personalities like Stephen Covey.

The interviews bring out interesting facets of leadership and personality. The story of Lars Kolind (Oticon), who in times of high business adversity, asks the best skilled and employable employees to leave the company while keeping the company running with relatively less skilled workers, or the story of Janiece Webb (Motorola) who refused to ascribe to unethical means of doing business, reinforces our belief that human values are indeed thriving in the field of business. James Sinclair, who called the market top for gold trading in 1980, tells his story of being an ethical warrior for a company’s stockholders against a management that was “stealing money from the stockholders for themselves and hurting people”.

It could have satisfied an intellectual mind if the book contained some objective studies that bring about a link between the organizational performance and the personal beliefs of the
leaders. However, as this reviewer has learned from his own academic pursuits, conclusions of such studies include a lot of grey areas. Spirituality is a personal journey and not everything is quantifiable in this journey.

The book adopts a story telling approach. The authors refrain from giving a definition to spirituality or leadership, and invite the interviewees to speak about their views, which are varied, on these topics. This is a welcome move, as it helps the readers to expand their thoughts on Leadership and Spirituality in different directions, thus resulting in an inner dialogue with oneself. The interviews are divided under eight sections which are Love, Looking and Listening within, Live it and Serve!, Compassion, Divinity, Purpose, Balance and grace and Harvesting the Wisdom. Another unique is the following quote from authors, “All the participants in Spiritual based Leadership Program, upon which the book is based, have volunteered their time and efforts. Therefore the authors do not accept any royalties from the sale of this book”.

Some times we wonder how admirable organizations are built. We do have a lot of studies based on that. While this book reviewer does not want to get into those details, here is an interesting observation made by N S Raghavan, Co-founder, Infosys that forms part of the book. It may give a clue to how good organizations are built. “When it comes to building an organization culture, I do not think you have to formally speak about it. I think people automatically observe and follow the way you behave and act. Even if you have a rulebook that says differently, people will still follow what the leader does. They will follow the behavior that they observe, not the behavior that they read about in the rulebook. It is not the rules; it is the spirit in which the work is undertaken”.

Students of leadership and management, bombarded with messages that symbols and rites of conspicuous consumption are associated with leadership, will find refreshingly new symbols, rites and languages of leadership, through this book. As leadership is not just restricted to field of business, Leading with Wisdom is a definite recommend for people from all spheres of life.