

LEARNING FROM SHIJO KINGO — 3
Where It's At — The Workplace
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Regard your service to your Lord as the practice of the Lotus Sutra. [The Hokke Gengi makes precisely this point when it says:] “No affairs of life or work are in any way different from the ultimate reality.” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 270)

Human relations are challenging in general, so when put in the context of the work environment they can seem even more so than normal. One reason is because in the workplace you depend not only on your talent or ability but also on the people around you to perform a good job.

What happens when relationships sour at work? Your performance may be questioned; you may feel your boss is unreasonable and lacks respect for you; or you may have jealous co-workers who are very competitive and trying to make you look bad in the eyes of your boss.

On the other hand, what happens when your attitude sours at work? You may feel secure that nothing can happen to you so you constantly come in late or are always on the phone with personal calls. Or you may think that “I’ve done my job, the rest is up to everyone else.” These may seem like extreme cases, but from time to time they are our reality. These reflect the different conditions of life that one can experience in the course of a day or over a period of time.

In the above passage the Daishonin encourages the letter’s recipient (believed to be Shijo Kingo) about the importance of using faith in every aspect of our lives. Over a four-year period Kingo struggled with Lord Ema, his “employer,” and his fellow samurai, his “co-workers,” because of his faith in the Daishonin’s teachings.

Knowing Kingo’s bad temper, Nichiren Daishonin consistently encouraged him not to rely on his ego to solve his problems with Lord Ema, but to use the strategy of the Lotus Sutra.

After all, faith does not exist apart from what we do day-to- day. Faith exists to enhance all our daily affairs and to enable us to show actual proof.

In an upcoming “Discussions on Youth” installment on the meaning of work, SGI President Ikeda says: “When working in a company — which is like a society or community all of its own — it is important to forge harmonious relations with your colleagues and superiors, employing wisdom and discretion along the way.... Wisdom is vital to being successful at one’s place of work.” As SGI members we have faith — the greatest strategy for winning at work.

When we love our work, we can continue in spite of our surroundings because we have a focus, a sense of mission. On the other hand, if we begrudge our work environment then we cannot give 100 percent to our jobs.

It is our practice of faith that enables us to seek alternative solutions to common problems at work. The reality is that if we don’t experience problems or obstacles we will never tap the true benefit this Buddhism offers: to allow us to do our human revolution and thus live happy existences. The workplace is a great place to do this.

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