

Working To Win
By LISA JONES
Staff Writer

At the Buddhism in the Workplace Conference, participants talk about how to excel in their careers.

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)

One of the highest, noblest Buddhist practices is to *enjoy*,” Dr. Eric Hauber said, opening the Buddhism in the Workplace Conference, the first-ever theme conference held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. SGI-USA members from around the country gathered April 9–12 to refresh their determination to prove the power of Buddhism in their careers.

For most of us, Dr. Hauber said, a day is made up of eight hours of work (at least), eight hours of sleep, and eight hours of everything else. So we spend at least a third of our time at work. If we can enjoy our work — and if we enjoy sleeping — then we’re enjoying most of our lives. This is a significant accomplishment.

The conference sessions this weekend were like intimate dialogues rather than lectures; all participants had an opportunity to share job-related problems and perspectives. Dialogue topics included material wealth and success, bringing compassion to the workplace, co-worker relationships, job security and contributing to world peace through work.

The central message of the conference: When viewed from the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, our careers are not separate from Buddhist practice. Our jobs provide us with an opportunity to grow, polish our characters and enrich the world.

On the job and in every aspect of life, Buddhists are working to win.

Conference Highlights

■ How can we respect others at work? One way is to become so large — to have such a broad perspective and generous heart — that we can do our jobs without judging others.

Allow people to be themselves. We can’t make anyone change.

At the same time, one of the greatest things we can do is wake up another person’s desire to change him- or herself for the better. But it’s only through wholehearted chanting that we can move another person’s heart. Not through nagging or giving unsolicited advice.

■ Discrimination in the workplace — racism, sexism, homophobia — does exist. When we experience injustice or inappropriate behavior, it’s important to have confidence and stand up for ourselves.

At the same time, someone else’s perceptions of us don’t limit us as human beings — unless we let them. It could be said that no one has as much power to hurt you as you have to hurt yourself.

We need to respect ourselves and challenge ourselves to do our jobs to the best of our ability, exceeding the expectations of others and becoming invaluable assets in the workplace. In this way, unfair or difficult situations can become the impetus for our growth and benefit.

■ Many people work for companies that they feel are not humanistic in their business practices or in the way that employees are treated. Down-sizing, cost-cutting and disrespect for the natural environment are issues with which some members are grappling. It's important to develop the capacity to recognize injustice and chant courageously for wisdom about how to deal with it.

The way to be a humanistic employee is to apply the teachings of Buddhism. There's no doubt that just one humanistic person of strong faith can change the nature of an entire corporation.

■ All the people in our lives are here to teach us how to be more humane. They teach us through both good and not-so-good examples.

What's more, people are mirrors for us. Sometimes they reflect qualities that we possess. Sometimes they show us the qualities that we lack, or how we lack the capacity to deal with some problems in a value-creative way. Without the people in our environment, we wouldn't be able to see ourselves. We wouldn't be able to change ourselves for the better. In this sense, our relationships with others provide our greatest opportunities for growth.

■ In a sense, to have compassion means to appreciate everything — the good, the bad and the ugly. All life, after all, is a manifestation of the universe's compassion. From this perspective, everything can be seen as a gift of compassion for us. If we truly recognize this, we can respond with appreciation to everything in our lives. For example, when a difficult situation arises, we can curse it and try to run from it, or we can see it as a gift and empower ourselves to handle it in the best way.

■ Compassion is something that most of us chant about manifesting toward others. It's equally important for us to have compassion for ourselves. This involves taking care of ourselves: eating right, getting enough sleep, and chanting with appreciation for being alive.

■ Compassion toward others could be defined as the generosity of heart to warmly embrace everyone. This requires a tremendous life-condition. It requires confidence and the realization that everything you need, you already have — so you can freely give to others. *Giving* means letting go of grudges. Looking into people's eyes and seeing the human being inside. Opening your life to others.

■ People want us to bring out their compassion and will celebrate us for doing so. One simple way to awaken compassion in others is to smile genuinely at people. While a smile may seem commonplace, it can warm and encourage others in an extraordinary way. Your smile can trigger an epidemic of smiles.

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