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ABSTRACT

Salience of Faith: The Role of Religious Values and Practices on Strategic Decision-Making of Christian Business Owners

Peter Drucker (2001), the highly regarded dean of management thought, defined a decision as simply “a judgment. It is a choice between alternatives.” While sounding simple and straightforward, that choice can have long lasting implications to a small business if it’s the wrong choice. This research project was designed to explore whether Christian business owners, whose religious faith is of high importance to them, employ that faith when making decisions that stand to have significant impact on their businesses. The question this research sought to answer was: “How does religious salience impact the strategic decision-making process of the Christian business owner?”

Using a mixed methods research design, quantitative data were gathered using an on-line survey completed by 170 Christian business owners. This survey looked at decision making processes, the practices used to integrate faith into business decisions, the purpose for respondents’ businesses, and calling to business. Survey responses were analyzed using factor analysis, independent t-tests and regression analysis. Qualitative interviews followed with a small number of survey respondents.

The study identified the use of an expanded decision-making model by Christian business owners. The practice of prayer was actively relied upon by owners in their strategic decision process. There was strong awareness of the practices of seeking the counsel of other Christian owners and using scripture to guide decision processes. The

practices of fasting and securing counsel of a pastor, however, were not on anyone's radar screen. There did not appear to be a linkage between any of the religious practices used and the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of a Christian business owner even though there was strong agreement that prayer gave the owners greater confidence in the decisions they make. Business owners sensed themselves being called to the business world and gifted for business. They also considered Kingdom impact a primary reason for their businesses. The study also found weak to moderate support for Christian business owners with high faith salience recognizing intuitive decision processes as faith.