

## **New theology for doing business Ottawa realtor incorporates prayer at work**

Sunday, March 23, 2008

Tag: 0803230687

Edition: Final

Section: News

Length: 56 lines

Page: 4

BY DONNA CASEY

Theresa Quann Bakker doesn't wear her Christian faith on her sleeve but she knows she does business differently than other hard-driving real estate agents in the city. A few years ago, the 54-year-old realtor decided she wanted to learn how to run "a Kingdom business."

"I don't want to make people uncomfortable with where I am. I want them to see the way we do business as a little bit different," she says.

Every morning, she gathers with at least one of her five team members to pray at their Bells Corners office.

### CONFERENCE NEXT WEEK

"We just really believe that we want to offer our business up to the Lord," says Bakker, who will join a handful of other Ottawa business people at the Canadian Workplace Conference in Toronto next week.

The conference, dubbed Purpose@Work, will feature speakers and workshops that aim "to impact the world through spiritual transformation in the workplace," according to its program.

The conference, which is co-sponsored by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, is part of a new North American movement in workplace spirituality that's been happening in Europe for years, says Paul Williams, professor of marketplace theology and spirituality at Regent College, a Christian studies graduate school affiliated with the University of British Columbia.

"A lot of the time what passes for workplace spirituality is finding ways of making my life feel more meaningful, given the alienation of our society," Williams says of large corporations that offer prayer and meditation rooms and yoga classes for employees.

Alan Kearns, founder of CareerJoy, an Ottawa-based talent recruiting agency, sees helping employees finding meaning in their jobs as "redemptive work."

"When you have a group of people who are fulfilled in their work, what happens is the business is happier and the business is sustainable," says Kearns, who is scheduled to speak at the conference.

But most Canadians are still torn about the role of religious beliefs in the workplace, says Williams.

While many employees rankle at "the kind of unbridled, self-interested capitalism that surrounds us most of the time," Williams says there's still a cultural fear that workplaces could become "an arena for evangelists."

"There's still a latent fear of what will happen if we start getting strong moral voices in that public space."

Illustration:

photo by A.D. Wilson, Sun Media

Realtor Theresa Quann Bakker sits at her desk at Keller Williams VIP Realty with her Bible. Bakker made a decision a few years ago to run a "Kingdom business," devoting her work to the Lord. Bakker and a handful of other local business people will be attending the Purpose@Work conference in Toronto, where spirituality in the workplace will be explored.

Keywords: NATIONAL

© Copyright 2008, The Ottawa Sun Unauthorized reproduction or Web posting prohibited.