Acknowledging religious diversity: Opportunities and challenges

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Abstract Because federal law protects an employee’s right to religious accommodation, managers cannot ignore the issue of religious diversity. The matter is far broader than simple legal compliance, though. Certainly, managers need to better understand the laws protecting employees’ rights for accommodation and prohibiting disparate treatment, religious harassment, and retaliation. However, they also need to understand the various opportunities and challenges associated with acknowledging religious diversity. Concerning opportunities, research suggests that allowing employees to express aspects of their religion can enhance their work lives and, thus, the value they place on the organization. Furthermore, respect for religious diversity can encourage a useful mindset for communicating with other stakeholders in areas from advertising to the sports interests of salespeople. Since learning more about a range of faiths can lead to greater skills in working with diverse groups, we offer information on Prothero’s God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World—and Why Their Differences Matter and on different religions’ practices associated with death-related issues. In conclusion, we provide insight regarding the benefits of acknowledging religious diversity while respecting those who identify with no religion, and we do so without opening the door to proselytizing.

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1. Two issues: Religion and diversity

Recommending that managers pay attention to religious diversity may at first appear to combine two taboo topics. Most people have been advised over the years not to discuss religion, given the assumption that it is a controversial and emotionally charged issue. In addition, the idea that religious differences should be ignored is something a preschooler learns from an embarrassed parent after the child has pointed to a nun’s habit, an Orthodox Jew’s yarmulke, or a Muslim woman’s hijab, and loudly asked: “What’s that?”

Understandably, then, any manager may have unconsciously translated these ‘Don’t comment!’ taboos into a predisposition not to think about religious diversity as a facet of one’s work life. We, along with American Express and Accenture, take the opposite perspective. The legal mandate for
religious accommodations for employees provides the first reason that managers should pay attention to religious diversity, but customers are also increasingly diverse. We assert, therefore, that these and other 21st century developments justify a rethinking of the extant religion/diversity taboos.

Beginning with the need to meet legal requirements, that thinking brings benefits and challenges. To assist managers with this delicate balance, we start with a ‘big-picture’ approach, placing religion in the culture in which any business operates. Then, we move on to developments in the year 2000 and beyond that affect the full range of a firm’s stakeholders, and to the laws that mandate attention to religious diversity. Finally, we take a closer look at opportunities and challenges associated with such attention.

2. Since culture matters, religion matters

No sensible manager believes that religion is irrelevant to his/her job responsibilities, but it may not be clear just how pervasive its influence is. Asking an employee in the United States to work from 10 a.m. to noon on a Sunday clearly differs from the same request for 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on a Tuesday or 10 a.m. to noon on Christmas Day. However, other examples of issues that all cultures associate with religion may be less clear.

One example is death, as realtors have found when they showed prospective buyers a home that was the site of a well-publicized murder, or as American International Group Inc. discovered when it tried to sell securities backed by insurance policies on older people’s lives and was castigated for doing so. For someone of Chinese heritage, for instance, a clock is associated with death, and therefore is considered an inappropriate gift; the same is true of white flowers. Far different examples are subtle aspects of the internal corporate environment: acceptable versus non-acceptable signs and symbols relating to jewelry, clothing, or even a worker’s desk, as well as acceptable versus non-acceptable four-letter words, including “Good Lord!” The point here is that recognizing the importance of religion appears not only wise but also necessary, particularly because the 21st century witnessed the following developments:

- Religious diversity has increased. Data from the American Religious Identification Survey show that from 1990 to 2008, non-Christian religious groups and faiths in the United States increased by 3 million, to 8.8 million (Kosmin & Keysar, 2009).

Consequently, marketers face new issues, ranging from appropriate symbols and holidays in advertising to salespeople’s attire. Simultaneously, laws now mandate—and employees expect—consideration of requirements that may fall outside the religious mainstream, including holidays, days of worship, dress, grooming, and diet, as well as duties that conflict with their religious beliefs.

- Islam, a religion barely known to many Americans previously, roared into their consciousness in September of 2001. Managers found themselves (and may still find themselves) dealing with customers, suppliers, and employees who were in some cases demonized and in other cases demonizing based on a religion that had been a non-issue in the workplace a month earlier.

- Religious interest groups increasingly watch and often comment on corporations’ actions. For example, some such groups may have problems with the product categories with which a company is associated (whether as a manufacturer or retailer), the political causes an organization supports, or a business’ direct religious symbolism (e.g., whether it is open on Good Friday).

- The non-religious now expect explicit recognition. The popularity of books like Sam Harris’ The End of Faith, Christopher Hitchens’ God Is Not Great, and Richard Dawkins’ The God Delusion is accompanied by survey data showing that 16% of Americans state no religious ties—a significant change from 50 years ago, when this number was only approximately 2% (Newport, 2010). In any formal or casual discussion, the concept of inclusiveness may require naming ‘those with no religion’ among a listing of specific religious groups.

Given these developments, it becomes increasingly necessary for managers to consider the varieties of religion—or even non-religion—in the lives of an organization’s stakeholders, whether they are customers, suppliers, employees, or managers. Wise managers consider the question, “How might religious diversity be relevant here?” when making any decision that affects these groups or individuals.

3. Religion in the legal environment

First, the question must be considered in relation to actions concerning employees. Because businesses must adhere to legal requirements for religion-related employment discrimination, managers need to be familiar with applicable laws, primarily
Table 1. Avoiding religious diversity: Opportunities and challenges

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<th>Cause of Action and Definition</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Best Practices</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Failure to Accommodate:</strong> Denying “a requested reasonable accommodation of an applicant’s or employee’s sincerely held religious practices—or lack thereof—if an accommodation will not impose an undue hardship on the conduct of the business.”</td>
<td>• Failing to permit flexible schedules</td>
<td>• Conduct neutral case-by-case evaluations of religious accommodation requests</td>
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<td>• Denying requests to alter workplace policies or practices</td>
<td>• Thoroughly discuss feasible options for meeting religious needs</td>
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<td><strong>Disparate Treatment Discrimination:</strong> Treating applicants or employees differently “based on their religious beliefs or practices—or lack thereof—in any aspect of employment, including recruitment, hiring, assignments, discipline, promotion, and benefits.”</td>
<td>• Refusing to hire or promote applicants because of their religious beliefs or customers’ religious preferences</td>
<td>• Apply selection and performance criteria consistently</td>
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<td>• Prohibiting employees from displaying items in the workplace that are representative of particular religions</td>
<td>• Base disciplinary action on documented performance deficiencies or other job-related reasons</td>
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<td><strong>Unlawful Religious Harassment:</strong> Requiring or coercing employees to “abandon, alter, or adopt a religious practice as a condition of employment” and subjecting employees to “unwelcome statements or conduct that is based on religion and is so severe or pervasive that the individual being harassed reasonably finds the work environment to be hostile or abusive.”</td>
<td>• Requiring participation in religious activities to receive a promotion or avoid disciplinary action</td>
<td>• Take proactive steps to stop potentially harassing conduct directed at applicants or employees even in the absence of a complaint</td>
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<td>• Making frequent derogatory or insensitive statements about others’ religious beliefs or practices</td>
<td>• Conduct thorough investigations of complaints and take necessary corrective action</td>
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<td><strong>Retaliation:</strong> Taking action against an employee for engaging in a “protected activity, including participation (e.g., filing an Equal Employment Opportunity charge or testifying as a witness in someone else’s EEO matter), or opposition relating to alleged religious discrimination (e.g., complaining to human resources department about alleged religious discrimination).”</td>
<td>• Termination, demotion, suspension, denial of a raise, or failure to promote for requesting accommodations or complaining about mandatory participation in activities counter to religious beliefs</td>
<td>• Base discipline or other adverse employment actions on documented performance deficiencies or other job-related reasons and communicate these reasons to employees</td>
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consisting of federal and state statutes. At the federal level, religious discrimination is prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Most states provide statutory protection against religious discrimination similar to that of Title VII, although variances exist in terms of employer coverage, exclusions, and allowable remedies and damages.

Under many states’ employment discrimination laws, individual managers face personal liability for violations. And while that is not typical under federal law, the doctrine of vicarious liability characterizes managers as agents for their employers. Therefore, companies can be held liable for individual managers’ decisions and actions, thus demonstrating the importance for managers to be familiar with conceptualizations of religious discrimination under Title VII and parallel state statutes. Currently, courts recognize four legal causes of action: (1) failure to accommodate, (2) disparate treatment, (3) religious harassment, and (4) retaliation. Table 1 defines each and provides examples, as well as best practices for avoiding religious discrimination. Next, we offer examples of cases involving each of these four areas.

A common mistake managers make that can result in legal action is failing to provide employees with reasonable accommodations for their religious beliefs (i.e., failure to accommodate). Often, enabling
employees to fulfill religious requirements simply involves being flexible with schedules and policies. Commenting on a case in which AT&T was ordered to pay $1.3 million for firing two customer service technicians who took time off to work at a Jehovah’s Witness convention, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Acting Chairman, Stuart J. Ishimaru, stated: “These two employees should never have had to choose between their jobs and their sincerely held religious beliefs. With increased religious diversity in the workplace, employers need to be extra vigilant in guarding against discrimination based on religion” (U.S. EEOC, 2009). Another decision reflecting a lack of religious accommodation required Belk, Inc. to pay $55,000 in damages to settle a lawsuit filed by the EEOC against the department store chain. In this case, an employee in gift-wrapping whose religious beliefs prohibited the celebration of holidays was terminated after refusing to wear a Santa hat and apron throughout the Christmas shopping season (U.S. EEOC, 2011a).

Intentionally treating applicants or employees differently due to their religion (i.e., disparate treatment) may involve not only detrimental employment action, but also beneficial behavior. Consider this: The University of Phoenix agreed to pay approximately $1.8 million in damages for giving preferential treatment to Mormon employees. Discriminatory actions included giving more promising student leads to Mormon enrollment counselors, failing to discipline Mormon employees for behaviors that resulted in actions against non-Mormons, and promoting Mormon employees who were less qualified than non-Mormon candidates (U.S. EEOC, 2008b).

Another issue is religious harassment, which includes both coerced participation in religious activities and behaviors that create a hostile work environment. In a case of religious coercion, the EEOC sued Oak Tree Inn, alleging that a hotel manager threatened to reduce hours to compel employees to participate in religious prayer ceremonies that conflicted with their religious beliefs. The resulting settlement was $75,000 (U.S. EEOC, 2010a). Dealing ineffectively with derogatory and insensitive comments and actions can also lead to costly results for companies. One Communications Corp. recently agreed to pay $66,000 to settle a religious harassment case in which managers failed to respond appropriately to complaints from Jewish employees regarding anti-Semitic comments made by their boss (U.S. EEOC, 2010b).

Terminating employees who complain about violations of these employer mandates can give rise to claims of retaliation, as well. For example, a U.S. appeals court upheld a jury verdict in Ollis v. HearthStone (2007) after evidence indicated that the company terminated an employee who opposed required attendance at Mind Body Energy (MBE) sessions that included Buddhist and Hindu readings. Doyle Ollis Jr., the HearthStone sales associate who sued his employer, felt that participation in the MBE sessions was inconsistent with his religious beliefs, expressed this sentiment to the company’s owner, and was later terminated for poor leadership and lack of judgment.

The best practices listed in Table 1 provide guidance on how to avoid the kind of adverse judgments detailed here; these practices can best be summarized as consistency, documentation, and—certainly—awareness of the law. Anticipating legal challenges is always wise because formal complaints and lawsuits in this area are increasing. EEOC charge receipts alleging religion-based discrimination grew over a 13-year period from 1,709 in 1997 to 3,790 in 2010, and monetary benefits grew over the same timeframe from $2.2 million to $10 million excluding benefits obtained through litigation (U.S. EEOC, 2011b). In addition, between 2004 and 2010 in the category of lawsuits that included religious discrimination, juries awarded plaintiffs an average of $376,585 each in compensatory damages (Nolf, 2011).

At times, marketplace consequences and legal consequences may become a corporate concern. Customers of Hertz at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport encountered pickets as they approached the rental company’s counter in October 2011. Thirty-four Muslim shuttle drivers employed by Hertz claimed they were suspended for praying during work hours, while the company contended they were abusing break times (Turnbull, 2011).

4. Opportunities

As the preceding discussion should make clear, conforming to the law requires paying attention to religious diversity. Fortunately, doing so offers benefits beyond legal requirements. Research suggests that the quality of employee work life can be improved if religious expression is not automatically frowned on. In addition, managers who acquire sophistication concerning unfamiliar religions gain skills in avoiding gaffes and in responding respectfully to issues like a death in the family of an employee or customer. Finally, by simply making it acceptable to consider the issue of religious diversity, decision making in other areas of management can also be improved.

4.1. Enhancing work life for employees

The idea that recognizing religious diversity leads to a better workplace comes from academic journal
publications on the relationship between religion and management. These have encompassed at least two perspectives.

Presenting an overview of the links between religion and leadership, the first perspective advocates creating a structure and organizational culture via which leaders and followers can respectfully negotiate religious and spiritual diversity. Speaking to this, a professor of leadership studies and religion (Hicks, 2002) argues against the common idea that spirituality unites while religion divides. He sees the separation between the two constructs as neither clear nor useful because he views religious differences as a potential source of innovation. He argues that diverse employees have to work together, and that it seems naive to believe they can leave an essential component of who they are outside the work setting. Therefore, he suggests religious differences should be managed rather than wished away by excluding the whole topic from consideration.

A recent empirical study appears to justify that argument. Researchers tested the proposition that if employees feel comfortable expressing their religious identity at work, such comfort will be associated with favorable organizational outcomes. They also tested the idea that feeling welcome to express one’s religious identity is associated with reduced burnout, greater job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, as well as with more organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), such as agreement with the statement: “I am always ready to lend a helping hand to those around me at work” (Kutcher, Bragger, Rodriguez-Srednicki, & Masco, 2010, p. 326). They found that religiosity overall was associated with lower stress and burnout, and with greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment, although the relationships were complex in some cases. Two psychologists (Sasaki & Kim, 2011) offer a possible explanation: religious coping strategies predict positive psychological outcomes, with the most helpful being a sense of control gained by believing that one shares problem-solving responsibilities with God.

The second perspective useful for linking organizational attention to religion with favorable organizational outcomes is a construct described in management journals as emotional labor: efforts employees must make to regulate their emotions to meet their organizations’ requirements. The authors of one study note two possible approaches: either modifying one’s emotions or ‘faking it.’ Their research found no consequences for job performance or turnover from the former, but poorer performance and greater turnover associated with the latter (Goodwin, Groth, & Frenkel, 2011). In other words, requiring an employee to deviate from the way he/she expresses adherence to a religion (Discussing it? Dress? Food?) can carry negative consequences for organizational outcomes. For example, some individuals’ natural response to sad health news from a customer or coworker is to say, “I’ll pray for you”; however, that individual may feel thwarted by the perception that doing so could be frowned upon. A study focusing on emotional labor among managers suggests that authenticity suffers when the need for emotional labor is high, leading to lower trust by subordinates and lower well-being for leaders (Gardner, Fischer, & Hunt, 2009).

4.2. Enhancing a manager’s own skills concerning religious issues

An additional advantage of paying attention to religious diversity is the motivation to learn more about the eight major faiths described by professor of religion Stephen Prothero (2010). According to Prothero, these religions run the world based on their historical and/or contemporary influence; therefore, it is sensible to gain basic familiarity with each. In Appendix 1, we offer an abridged version of Prothero’s descriptions as an overview. For other ideas on developing sensitivity to religious issues, managers can bookmark websites offering thoughtful discussions of such issues, including the following:

- Religion News Service: http://religionnews.com
- Religion Clause: http://www.religionclause.blogspot.com
- Tanenbaum: https://www.tanenbaum.org/religion-at-work

As one example of what appears on such a website, religionnews.com carried a story reporting the results of a Gallup survey asking 550,000 people about their physical and emotional health and their work environment. ‘Very religious’ individuals had a score of 68.7% on Gallup’s well-being index. These individuals said religion is an important part of their daily lives and that they attend worship services at least every week or almost every week. Both the ‘moderately religious’ and the ‘non-religious’ received a well-being score of 64.2% (Banks, 2011). Some of the aforementioned websites carry not only news articles but also blogs, many of which report
how people handled issues similar to those managers will encounter in the workplace, offering alternatives to broaden one’s range of possible responses and modeling tolerance for diverse perspectives.

One issue that brings religion to the forefront is death, whether it involves the demise of a customer or employee, or of a family member of a customer or employee. Because death often highlights how religions differ in dealing with important life matters, Appendix 2 offers guidance to help managers handle the topic of death with employees or customers who have unfamiliar religions. The content of Appendix 2 is based on interviews with individuals self-identified as Buddhist, Christian (several denominations), Daoist, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim. At least two individuals from each group were interviewed. For a manager, the religion-related dilemmas that can accompany death are, after all, unique. If invited to a wedding, child-naming ceremony, or other religious occasion, one has time to ask advice on what to wear, for example; however, nobody foresees an invitation to final rites.

Managers can also encourage employees to learn from one another, as two companies have demonstrated. Since 1990, American Express has supported three faith-based networks created by employees for employees: Christian, Buddhist, and Muslim. Management considers these networks’ chief benefit to be the respect for diversity the company shows by encouraging each to flourish. Similarly, Accenture has taken a related tack. The consulting firm’s United Kingdom operation has six networks: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh. Each organizes activities ranging from educational workshops and prayer sessions to festival celebrations and events. A statement by the firm’s managing director of global inclusion and diversity sums up the company’s motivation for encouraging these networks: "People want to work where they are respected and where they can be their authentic selves” (Nikravan, 2011).

4.3. Extending the benefits of ‘diversity thinking’

Additional advantages arise as managers apply a religious diversity filter when developing any communication—whether with customers, employees, or the public at large. For instance, one bank marketer in Delaware looked at an ad her agency prepared to run in December, and said:

Beautiful fir tree. No problem with the tree or the snow. That’s winter. Nobody who sees us associate ourselves with winter feels excluded. Big problem with presents under the tree for non-Christians, and they are certainly part of our customer base. Take out the presents.

As this example demonstrates, communication that is universal rather than sectarian not only offers explicit messages, but also implicit messages of awareness that not all individuals worship alike, and that some do not worship at all. That kind of reasoning may prompt an important mindset that pays off in a range of corporate activities, helping to counter the ‘everybody is like me’ bias that pervades work life. For instance, thinking about diversity may prompt an employee planning a holiday party to reconsider the assumption that alcohol in the punch will be universally welcome. However, far beyond religious issues, thinking about cultural diversity may encourage individuals to rethink how they deal with everyone they encounter. A salesperson who always talks football with customers, for example, may finally bone up on soccer in the realization that not all people prefer the same sport: “Not everybody is like me.”

5. Challenges

Despite the advantages of relaxing the taboo against religious expression, managers should anticipate some trepidation on the part of employees. This may stem from fear that if expression of one’s religion is permitted, non-religious individuals will feel ostracized. Others may worry that the next step will be to allow proselytizing or discussion of that other forbidden topic, politics. Such qualms echo the concerns two decades ago regarding Casual Fridays: “How long will it take for pajamas and bathing suits to be allowed in the workplace?” Wise managers can presumably meet such comments with the observation that taking two aspirin should not be prohibited simply because it is a bad idea to take 10. At this point, it is vital to emphasize that we are suggesting managers pay attention to and respect religion; we are not suggesting that they or their organizations promote it. Several issues make this distinction necessary.

First, many individuals associated with any organization—as customers, suppliers, or employees—may feel they are ‘not religious enough’ based on what they perceive others expect. Thus, managers must walk a fine line, making it clear that while they are aware of and respect religion, they equally respect the right to be non-observant of one’s own religious tradition or to have none.

A second reason to clarify that promoting religion lies entirely outside the workplace is to counter the sincere wish of many religious individuals to recruit
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others to their way of belief. Today’s workplace norms making active proselytizing unacceptable are not only useful, but also necessary. Setting up groups for employees to exchange knowledge of their own religious traditions, as AT&T and Accenture did, by no means encourages sectarian recruitment. In fact, it can have the opposite effect because such groups can be set up with guidelines to distinguish between sharing (encouraged) and persuasion (“not part of this program”). However, if an organization itself is in any sense promoting religion, employees who wish to promote their own may infer ‘wink, wink’ permission to do so. That possibility is reason enough for companies to stay far away from persuasion mode.

A final issue discouraging the promotion of religion concerns the risk of dramatic disapproval when a company associates itself with a specific religious organization. This is the realm where taboos make sense: yes to permitting employees to feel comfortable about their own diverse religions, no to a corporation associating itself with one religious perspective. Interest groups favoring their own theological perspective may argue for corporate support, but interest groups on the other side may bitterly resent it. In fact, partnering with religious organizations whose views prompt opposition, or even contributing funds to such organizations, can lead to Internet postings advocating customer boycotts. For instance, companies that partnered with organizations viewed as anti-gay found themselves targeted in 2011. In response, the CEO of Starbucks withdrew from a speaking engagement at the Willow Creek Association’s Global Leadership Summit; Apple removed iTunes from the Charity Give Back Group (CGBG), formerly known as the Christian Values Network; and the CEO of TOMS Shoes apologized for agreeing to an interview with Focus on the Family’s president (Neroulias, 2011; Ross, 2011).

Fortunately, corporations can demonstrate good citizenship and respect for diversity without tying such actions to a specific religion, thereby removing the potential for negative responses. For example, CNN listed Herman Miller—a high quality furniture company known for both environmental philanthropy and concern for its employees—among the top religious employers in the United States for endeavors to respect employees’ religious beliefs. The firm’s policies aimed at preserving jobs also led to its ranking on Fortune’s 100 Best Companies to Work For list (CNN Money, 2010). On the other hand, some corporations place such a priority on diversity that they take on the risk of negative public reactions. An example of this phenomenon is the Halal endorsement for Tom’s of Maine, certifying that its products conform to Islamic guidelines (Masood, 2011). In discussing the company’s plans for such compliance years earlier, Tom’s CEO commented: “I’ll allow Tom’s of Maine to think of itself as a white Christian organization. . .we’re in deep trouble” (Whitford, 2004).

For Tom’s—as with other organizations—recognizing the importance of religious diversity may involve tradeoffs, but ignoring the issue will not solve that problem. In many cases, managers have persuaded themselves to believe that ‘non-business’ issues are best ignored, and they have come to regret that posture. We, in contrast, believe that no manager needs to lose out on a promotion, antagonize a customer, or prompt a lawsuit because of his/her failure to discern the subtleties of what is or is not acceptable internally, to customers, and to the public at large. We simply recommend acknowledging the requirements of what has been called the world’s most religiously diverse nation (Eck, 2001), benefiting from its opportunities and confronting its challenges.

Acknowledgment

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Appendix 1. Brief summaries of the eight great religions

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<td><strong>Buddha</strong> means ‘awakened one.’ This religious tradition, roughly as old as Christianity, began with an ‘awakening’ experienced by a former prince in India who perceived that human beings suffer because we wish that our impermanent and ever-changing world were not as it is. He found that such understanding removed suffering and set the example of focusing on practices to cultivate self-awareness. Today, the religion’s adherents believe that human beings can solve the human problem on their own, without recourse to God or divine revelation—an idea shared with other religions, such as Jainism, Confucianism, and Daoism. The world’s fourth largest religion, Buddhism is concentrated in South and East Asia but is</td>
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also practiced throughout the United States, counting the late Steve Jobs as one of its adherents. Los Angeles alone has more than 300 Buddhist temples (Eck, 2001).

Christianity
Orthodox and Catholic: The split between these traditions in the Middle Ages has left Russia and Greece with their own Orthodox churches, emphasizing ritual and icons of the saints. Orthodox churches contrast with Catholicism, which is based on a worldwide central authority. Catholics emphasize the accessibility of the sacred through prayer to saints, pilgrimages to their churches, celebrations of their feast days, and formal sacraments including baptism, confirmation, confession, and Holy Communion. Worldwide, 12% of Christians today are Orthodox and 50% are Catholic.

Protestant: Encompassing 36% of Christians, there are numerous Protestant denominations differing in holidays, rituals, symbols, dress, food, use of alcohol and tobacco, sex roles, and proselytizing (hardly a complete list). Like Orthodox and Catholics, they focus on Jesus Christ as the son of God and the representative of the power of God in the world. All respect the good news (‘gospel’) of the Christian New Testament that, despite the human propensity for wrongdoing, Jesus by his death on the cross took on the sins of humanity and then demonstrated God’s power over sin by rising from the dead. They preach that anyone who hears this story, confesses his/her sins, and turns to Jesus for forgiveness can be saved.

Other Christians: Denominations that arose in the United States include Seventh-Day Adventists; Jehovah’s Witnesses; Christian Scientists; and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), popularly known as Mormons. LDS members do not consider themselves Protestants and are not seen that way by most Protestants, who point to differences such as books besides the Bible that Mormons use as scriptures and their belief in ongoing revelation. Increasingly, Christians are Pentecostal, a spirit-filled, experience-focused faith that has become the world’s fastest growing Christian movement, emphasizing health and wealth in this world as well as traditional Christian salvation.

Confucianism
Confucianism’s key values are reverence for antiquity, respect for education, deference to elders, and filial piety, all of which influence how people in China and throughout East and Southeast Asia conduct business, interact socially, and expect others to act. Although they may describe themselves as Buddhists or Daoists, considering Confucianism a philosophy or way of life rather than a religion, Asian Americans are also influenced by the Confucian values of learning, hard work, and family. Important texts emphasize propriety and faithfulness, valuing moderation rather than extremes, staying within the rules, and knowing the accepted behavior and adhering to it.

Daoism
This Asian religion advocates harmony with the natural world rather than an afterlife. In the United States, Daoism informs Feng Shui, which is used in architecture and interior design, and the hundreds of books whose titles begin with the “Tao of . . .” [Physics, Chess, Poker, Golf, and many more]. All of these practices apply the idea of living life to the fullest and enjoying good health in a vital body, quite possibly in defiance of convention. Dao means ‘way’ and has been interpreted to mean the way of untamed nature and authentic human life, rather than a codified system.

Hinduism
Heartfelt devotion to the god of one’s choosing describes a traditional Hindu’s spiritual path. Hindus were historically believers in many gods, and their goal was to create and sustain cosmic order. To reach that goal traditionally included sacrifice symbolized by sacred fires that burn in marriage ceremonies and in the practice of cremation. Hindus also believe in feeding the gods with animals, milk, grains, and other plants to achieve order and all that sustains it. However, modern interpretations may emphasize Brahman as the main god, which, in turn, fulfills many Hindus’ desire to be perceived alongside Christianity and Islam. Currently, Hindu is the third largest religion in the United States (Hindu American Foundation, 2011).

Islam
A way of life as well as a missionary religion, Islam now has more than 1,000 mosques in the United States and is the world’s fastest growing religion, second only to Christianity in numbers, with 1 billion adherents. Like Jews and Christians, Muslims are ‘people of the book’ who believe that one God speaks to
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people through prophets. Islam means 'submission' or 'surrender.' It is demonstrated five times every day by a ritual prayer that includes prostrating oneself into a posture of total submission to Allah, the Arabic word for God, who is beyond gender—neither male nor female.

Judaism
Jews see their history as a repeated story—exile and return, covenants with God made and broken—but forgiveness based on keeping the commandments and walking 'humbly with thy God.' Most people in the world have never met a Jew; they number only 14 million and have no history of seeking converts. Nevertheless, they have won one-quarter of all Nobel prizes. Judaism has no formal creed besides the traditional assertion that 'the Lord is one, but its religious values center on learning and debate.

Yoruba Religions
These traditions have as many as an estimated 100 million adherents in Africa, Cuba, and Brazil, but there is no official count. Their rituals connect adherents with sacred power through words, names, phenomena in nature, blood, drumming, trance dancing, poetry, and song. They approach nature with awe for the sacred power that animates it. However, many Yoruba in Africa also feel comfortable with Christianity or Islam. In the western hemisphere, Yoruba practitioners have associated their rituals with those of Catholicism, and the religion rests less on faith than on practice—such as worshipping the 'orisha' of one's town and consulting a religious intermediary to divine the future.

Appendix 2. Responding to the death of a customer, a coworker, or someone in their family

Buddhist/Confucianist/Daoist
These distinctions are not an issue to many Asians in the United States, who are likely to think in terms of cultural tradition rather than religion. At the death of a parent overseas, the oldest son leaves immediately to handle arrangements. All that is expected from someone who hears of a death is a spoken condoleance (e.g., "I am so sorry to hear about your grandmother"). For a death locally, the expectation is the same unless there is a personal relationship, not just a professional one. If the relationship is personal, attending a ceremony will be greatly appreciated; most often, it is held in a funeral home. Sending a white floral tribute from the organization is conventional even if the funeral is overseas. Traditionally, many Buddhists wear white to funerals, often a shirt without a jacket, but understand that those from other traditions may feel more comfortable in dark clothing.

Christian
Attending a funeral or memorial service shows respect, with dark clothes expected and possibly a head covering for women in Catholic churches. However, if rituals in the service—such as kneeling or taking Holy Communion—are not part of one's own faith, it is not appropriate to participate in them. A reception afterward offers an opportunity to convey personal condolences to family members. If the service is held elsewhere, the organization can send a floral arrangement or contribute to charity if the family suggests doing so. A note of condolence or personal expression of sympathy is all that is expected, however.

Hindu
The oldest son is expected to handle all arrangements, which will include cremation, even if doing so means an immediate trip out of the country. If the deceased relative lives nearby, a brief funeral ceremony will be held, and while attendance would be appreciated, it is not expected. At such a ceremony, some will wear white or light blue, but the only expectation is to remove one's shoes if others attending the ceremony do so. Upon leaving, one does not say "goodbye"; this is a solemn rather than a social occasion. For deaths elsewhere, a note is appropriate, with the message that you send a wish for strength in this time of difficulty.

Islam
A sequence of ceremonial occasions follow a death, including burial, but individuals outside the family circle are encouraged to attend only the funeral, which may take place at a mosque or in any public
space. Family members may stand at the door to receive condolences, and if the funeral occurs at a mosque, women and men will sit separately. Dress need not be formal, simply respectful, but a head covering is advisable for women. Those close to the family may take food to the family’s home. For deaths that take place elsewhere, simply expressing sympathy in a comment or note to the relative of the deceased is all that is expected.

**Judaism**

As is the case with Islam, burial is expected to take place as soon as practical after a death. Consequently, a Jewish funeral is likely to be held quickly. The setting will be a funeral home, not a synagogue. Dress conservatively in dark clothes with closed-toe shoes is appropriate. Instead of flowers, a gift to a charity is appreciated. If the family is Orthodox, they are not permitted to cook for 7 days of mourning; therefore, bringing a hot dish to their home is particularly welcome. For deaths elsewhere, the charitable contribution and expression of condolence are all that is expected.

**References**


Ollis v. HearthStone, 495 F.3d 570 (8th Cir. 2007).


