

Tales of artful work

We are all assigned roles by our families, our educational institutions, and our workplaces. We also assign roles to ourselves. These roles often restrict us, limiting our creativity, our artfulness, and our personal potency. Ellen, like Ted and Bill, decided to bring more of herself to her work. None of the three of them underwent any major personality change. They merely decided to shed restrictive roles or challenge restrictive organizational norms, and to bring more of themselves to their work. They decided to be more self-expressive, more artful in their work.

The best thing we can do for ourselves, if we want to be more artful and effective at our work, is ask ourselves these two questions:

1. What aspect of myself do I value and enjoy that I do not currently bring to my work?
2. How might I bring that aspect of myself to my work?

And, the best thing we can do for one another is to see who the people around us ARE and quit assigning roles to one another. If we could do that, it would make it easier for all of us to bring ourselves to our work, to truly transform our work into art, and to celebrate ourselves as the self-expressive, creative beings that we are.

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America, A Proselytizing Society

by Eric B. Dent, Ph.D.

Americans have a history of sharing and being generous. If we find something good in life, we want to tell others about it so that they can share in the goodness. For a few weeks I kept track of all the ways that I was proselytized by people I encountered. I was told, often passionately and emphatically, that I should

- Send my kids to a particular school(s)
- Become a fan of a certain sports team(s) (I was really harangued about this)
- Buy a specific type of car
- Do Pilates, the South Beach diet, and the Atkins diet (do I really look that fat?)
- Read a particular book(s)
- Shop at a certain online site(s)
- Take shag dancing lessons
- Invest in a particular stock
- Go see a certain movie
- Eat in a new restaurant
- Have laser surgery on my eyes

It would take about two more pages to list everything I was proselytized about in just a few weeks. The point is that we are constantly bombarded with advice and recruiting by our family, friends, business colleagues, and others. This proselytizing is simply part and parcel of American discourse. We accept it and we've learned how to deal with these unsolicited

recommendations. Sometimes the advice of an overbearing mother or friend who lost 100 pounds on the South Beach diet strains our patience. Still, we make adjustments accordingly, perhaps, tuning out mom or eating donuts in front of the friend.

There is one dimension of life, though, in which some people believe proselytizing should not be allowed, especially at work - religion (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Some even say that it is offensive for one person to mention the goodness she has found in her faith to another person. Offensive is a term that should be reserved for the haranguing we receive when moving from one hotbed of ACC basketball to another! Are we really so thin-skinned, fragile, and impressionable in one realm of life that we can't hear about someone's religious beliefs but we can hear about their political, sports, shopping, restaurant, and child-rearing ones? I'm not afraid. Tell more your religious beliefs. But, please, don't tell me how much weight you've lost and what diet I should be on.

References

Mitroff, I.I., & Denton, E.A. (1999). A spiritual audit of corporate America A hard look at spirituality, religion, and values in the workplace. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers