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The Wider Quaker Fellowship is a program of Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas. Through our mailings we seek to lift up voices of Friends of different countries, languages, cultures and Quaker traditions, and invite all to enter into spiritual community with Friends.

The Fellowship was founded in 1936 by Rufus M. Jones, a North American Quaker teacher, activist and mystic, as a way for like-minded people who were interested in Quaker beliefs and practices to stay in contact with the Religious Society of Friends, while maintaining their own religious affiliation, if any. Today, WQF Fellows live in over 90 countries, and include non-Friends, inquirers, Quakers living in isolated circumstances, and active members and attenders of Friends meetings and churches. Wider Quaker Fellowship depends on the financial support of its readers to provide this service.

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# Bringing Business into the Light

RICHARD HOLDEN



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The year he graduated from Earlham, Chris Hardee '99 joined his friend Mark Stosberg '98 in creating Summersault LLC, a Web development and Web services firm in uptown Richmond. "We started the company saying we'll be a green company—working only for good causes," he said, with his face revealing a hint of abashment. "We were not going to work with any big corporations, and we were going to recycle everything.

"We had a lot of ideals then. We quickly found out that it was not the same world out there that we had imagined and that ideals didn't always match up with our goals. We quickly fell into a model of working with clients we might not otherwise choose, but we would charge them our standard rate, and then turn around and work for a better cause and charge those clients a little less. Then we could provide our services to organizations who might otherwise not be able to afford them."

Chris Hardee confessed that his personal ethics and values are still in the process of refinement. "But I can say that my faith and spirituality, and the way I practice them, lead to looking around at the beautiful world we have, and seeing all the horrible things that are happening to it, and trying to figure what I can do to help."

He and his partner Mark Stosberg look for ways of bringing Summersault into this effort, "using technology as a means. I think it's accurate to say that technology has done more to bring people together than to separate them."

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Holden, who attends West Richmond (IN) Friends Meeting, is retired director of public information at Earlham College. He is the editor of the "Earlhamite" magazine and, in his spare time, teaches English and language arts to disadvantaged and problem-beset teenagers at the Richmond State Hospital School.

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could find true purpose in the business field. “Since the early 90s, with the end of the Cold War, interest in conflict resolution has moved to the realm of commercial competition. There has been a trend over the past 50 or so years to militarize the business process. Much of modern business management theory comes directly out of the World War II experience.”

When he recognized that the trend was increasing even within his own corporation, Mark Myers initiated some countervailing steps. “I arranged a meeting in Tokyo between the chief executive officers of Xerox and Canon. It was done with the intention of changing the nature of the dialogue, at least with this particular competitor. I believed we could learn a great deal from them if we got to know them in a human context.”

Two young small business owners shared their experiences and how they had already established some ethical limits. Jessica Bucciarelli, who moved her newsletter and editorial services business from Berkeley, California, to Richmond, Indiana, finds that life as a self-employed entrepreneur suits her Quakerism.

“I have stepped out of the organizational structure,” she said—a position that accords an impressive list of risks and freedoms. “Being self-employed, I am pretty darned free to do what I want. I have no boss or employee board or board of directors or stockholders to tell me what to do, how to behave, or how to dress. I can even refuse to do business with people I feel are socially irresponsible. I have the luxury of walking away.”

Beyond that, Jessica Bucciarelli said she tries to avoid extravagance in design and materials and makes it a practice to treat clients and vendors “openly and honestly.”

is now executive professor of management at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, spoke in a session on "How Faith Influences My Business Practices." He said he tried to keep a close recall of Quaker principles during his 30-plus years at Xerox. He itemized those principles as integrity and trustworthiness, respect for the dignity of individuals, respect for the ideas of others, openness in all dealings, plain speaking, truth-seeking—and peacemaking.

Likening life in an intensely competitive enterprise to "walking through a minefield every day," Mark Myers said it is especially helpful to have a ready set of principles, "especially when you must make decisions despite the fact that you are dealing with a high level of fog, working with less information than you need, and are also under enormous time pressures."

He noted that corporations, like all organizations, are "political" because they are made up of human beings who naturally possess vanities and ambitions. "Factions and power interests develop." He drew laughter when he recalled his response to senior executives who tried to enlist him in gathering and reporting politically useful information about other workers. "I said yes, I would provide the information, but first I would have to inform the people who I was being asked to inform on. With that, the information lost its currency and value, so I never had to do it."

While other religions may also instill a high degree of integrity and respect for individuals, Quakers are particularly knowledgeable about and skilled in peacemaking, he said. "Peacemaking is not a common skill." He suggested Quakers

## BRINGING BUSINESS INTO THE LIGHT

It is a fair generalization that Quakers, at least U.S. Quakers, view the pursuit of business suspiciously.

Jay Marshall said as much when he opened the Conference on Business Ethics at Earlham School of Religion (ESR) one Saturday morning in November, 2002.

"I hope this won't be one of those gatherings where we simply bash all people who are in business," the seminary's dean cautioned the audience. "There are moments when I think that Quakers perceive business in the anti-establishment terms that were rife in the 1960s. But, I hope today we will think seriously what it means to be people of faith and consider that business can be a place where we lead by example."

Listening with a hint of bemused recognition on their faces were several Quakers with strong business credentials. They included Mark Myers, retired senior vice president for development for Xerox; Howard Mills, former CEO of Maplehurst dairy and baking enterprises in Indianapolis; and Phillip Hartley Smith, retired steel company chief who has written a book on the subject, *Quaker Business Ethics*.

Others at the gathering were small business owners and representatives of the nonprofit sector—among them Donald McNemar, former president of Guilford College—plus an assortment of self-employed professionals, seminarians, and members of the public, who have been amazed at the national drum rolls of corporate scandals. Howard Mills recalled attending a 1994 conference at the Earlham School of Religion

organized to examine the theme, “What Should Our Attitude Be towards Profits?” At a similar gathering in 2000, he remembered, one of the conclusions was that the business area most consistent with Quaker values and testimonies is the nonprofit sector.

“Those gatherings implied that profits were immoral, or something unbecoming. To me, to a business, it would be like asking, ‘Is it immoral to breathe?’—because if you don’t have any profits you literally don’t have any business.”

Howard Mills wondered whether such questions result from the confusion many Quakers have developed about business. “There seems to be confusion between competition and unfairness, confusion between toughness and ruthlessness, and confusion between the system of free enterprise and the abuses of some corporations within the system.”

He said he had spent most of his working career struggling not only with big business in competition, but with big labor in negotiations and big government in regulations. “I try to maintain a balanced perspective towards these institutions,” he said, although he added that he might have witnessed too many regrettable experiences as a representative of management to be completely non-judgmental.

He recounted a situation he faced in 1970 when the union threatened to strike the smaller of two Maplehurst production plants unless it received the same wage package paid to workers at the large, automated plant. The small, less automated one was located in the inner city of Indianapolis, employed largely African American women, and was dedicated almost exclusively to producing a specific dairy-based product for a major

international company.

The international company steadfastly refused to accept any hike in costs that a major wage increase would entail, he said. Nevertheless, the union increased the pressure by threatening to strike the large factory. To avoid a disastrous sympathy strike, Maplehurst agreed to equalize wages at the smaller plant. But the result was the loss of the international customer, and within 90 days, the closing of the inner city factory.

“It ended up that everything went down the drain,” he reflected. “Everybody lost because there was no give. The result may have been ethical, but it was certainly not what the union intended and certainly not where we wanted to go.”

Howard Mills illustrated, too, how the question of social values can arise with the products and services a business provides. He recalled that in the 70s Maplehurst had created a chain of 20 convenience stores in the greater Indianapolis area, most of them connected with service stations. When his wife examined the books she informed him that 40 percent of sales from those stores was for cigarettes. “I couldn’t imagine that,” he declared. “And another 35 percent came from the sales of soda pop and candy. ‘Do you know what you’re selling?’ she asked. I thought we were selling milk and bread!”

He drew the line at cigarettes and sold the convenience stores to the Village Pantry chain. “It probably doesn’t make any difference to the world whether we were selling them or somebody else was, but personally I couldn’t stand being that big a purveyor of cigarettes.”

Mark Myers, who holds a doctorate in materials sciences and