

Study identifies four types of evangelicals in American leadership

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A new Rice University study based on interviews with 360 American leaders who are evangelical Christians (including CEOs, presidents and chairs of large businesses and their equivalents in government and politics, nonprofits, arts, entertainment, the media and professional athletics) finds enormous variety in how leaders engage their personal faith in workplace decision-making.

The study, the largest of its kind, was co-authored by sociologists D. Michael Lindsay of Rice University and Bradley C. Smith of Princeton. The pair extrapolated the information from more than 5,000 pages of data produced by hundreds of hours' worth of personal interviews conducted over three years by Lindsay for his book "Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite" (Oxford University Press).

"I think that the word 'evangelical' has been used too broadly in today's lexicon," Lindsay said. "We did the study to find what role religion plays in business decision-making and to better define these different evangelicals to better understand their motives.

"While everyone in the workplace has to make decisions -- whether they're the janitor or the manager -- the most consequential decisions are made at the top, and we wanted to look at how they affect their businesses."

Lindsay found that most evangelical leaders fit into one of four

categories when it comes to their decision-making: pragmatic, heroic, circumspect and brazen.

"Pragmatic" leaders are like former PepsiCo CEO Steve Reinemund who said, "Black and white issues are easy; it's the ones that are hard that you struggle with as a business leader." This means that "his faith did not give him clear direction on particular business decisions that he had to make," Lindsay said. "Most people assume that evangelicals think that they have all the answers. I've found that there is a large segment of business leaders who are evangelical who are certain that they don't have all the answers. Their decision-making is largely pragmatic, and they hope they wind up making the right decisions."

"Heroic" is not synonymous with "hero," Lindsay said. A heroic evangelical is a person who sees his decisions as correct and right, regardless of whether others would agree. In some cases, they are right. Lindsay cites Enron whistleblower Sherron Watkins as a good example of this. "Sherron Watkins is the perfect example of a person in power who is religious and couldn't let her morals get checked at the door. After speaking with her, I learned that her religion played a significant role in her deciding to do something that would likely cost her job and could bring down a major company."

"Circumspect," such as John Aden, formerly of Mac Tools and now senior vice president of Walmart International, is "someone who is deeply religious but isn't outward about it," Lindsay said. "Aden is someone who cares about where he works. He is attracted to companies where he feels his values can resonate with his faith convictions. While Aden might not be a vocal evangelical, he does manage as one and makes personal decisions based on his faith."

Lindsay said that former Arizona Cardinals quarterback Kurt Warner is a good example of a "brazen" evangelical. "If you're a sports fan and

you've seen, heard or read comments by Warner, you know he comes to his job with a religious zeal," Lindsay said. "Brazen evangelicals are the most unabashed and feel that religion and their job go hand in hand. Because he is leader in the locker room, there is no doubt that his religious life affected the team - both positively and I'm sure negatively, at times."

Lindsay said that religion and work are huge influences in people's lives and that most people are probably curious about what their leaders believe and how it affects their company ... and in turn their communities and their personal lives.

More information: To read the complete study, visit [jaar.oxfordjournals.org/content ... /08/13/jaarel.lfq034](http://jaar.oxfordjournals.org/content.../08/13/jaarel.lfq034)
To see the complete list of the 360 people interviewed for the study, go to www.owl.net.rice.edu/~mlindsay/platinum.html

Provided by Rice University

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