

Does Meditation Help Fuel Entrepreneurial Success?

(RNS) Entrepreneurs behave just like most Americans when it comes to religion—but with one spiritual twist.

They're significantly more likely to pray several times a day or to meditate, said sociologist Kevin Dougherty, a co-author of the Baylor Religion Survey that was released Tuesday (Sept. 20).

The survey can't answer whether prayerful, peaceful folks are more likely to take a business risk, or whether the stress of a start-up drives folks to their knees or to the lotus position, Dougherty said.

But either way, 34 percent of entrepreneurs say they frequently look up to the Lord, compared with 27 percent of non-entrepreneurs. Nearly as many (32 percent) say they look inward in meditation, while just 22 percent of non-entrepreneurs say they practice any of the eight forms of meditation—including Christian, Jewish and Buddhist variations—listed on the survey.

Leading the way: Christian meditation, reported by 18 percent of entrepreneurs.

Leah Rampy of McLean, Va., who ran her own company as an executive leadership coach, said her prayers were often that “the spirit would work through me.”

Mindful meditation was cited by 17 percent of entrepreneurs. Wendy Woods, a consultant based in Toronto, shares with her corporate clients how “meditation helps me push away fear and bring in calm and creativity.”

Buddhist meditation worked for Ray Yeh, of Ukiah, Calif., who created and ran a software sales company for 20 years. He found “working 12 hours a day, seven days a week leaves you no time to think, to get in touch with your inner self.” Yeh

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sold the company in 1999 and now lives in a Buddhist monastery in Northern California.

Psychologist Kenneth Pargament, a scholar in residence at the Institute for Spirituality and Health at the Texas Medical Center in Houston, put it this way:

“Entrepreneurs have a strong sense they can take matters into their own hands. But they also face risk, unpredictability and uncertainty,” he said. “Prayer and meditation can be important resources for people who are trying to achieve a lot and yet still face the reality that there is only so much they can control.”

Questions on entrepreneurs were a part of the survey underwritten by Baylor’s sociology department, the National Study of Religion and Entrepreneurial Behavior and the National Science Foundation.

(Cathy Lynn Grossman writes for USA Today.)