

Yoga & Karma

http://www.yogaalliance.org_Karma Service Yoga.pdf

Karma Yoga is the process of achieving perfection in action. Karma yoga is an intrinsic part of any derivative types of yoga, and understood as **yoga of selfless (altruistic)** service. When Master Vivekananda brought Yoga to the United States in 1893 he stated that Karma Yoga was the most important part of yoga that one can do.

Finding Karma through exercise is an intrinsic part of Yoga. This experience has helped many people find their pathway and passions in life. Karma yoga is something we can be constantly doing; it's not strictly a large-scale endeavor. Karma can be done daily, and locally, each person we come across is an opportunity to spread positivity and act unselfishly.

New research suggests that we don't perform acts of altruism because it feels good but rather because we recognize that other people's actions and place in the world is meaningful (David Pescovitz, http://boingboing.net/author/david_pescovitz_Neuroscience_of_Altruism). Karma, though obviously beneficial to its recipients, also has benefits for those who spread it. According to a Cornell University study, "those who giveback suffer less from stress and anxiety, Karma is also known to increase the amount of dopamine and serotonin in the brain, which will lead to increased happiness" (Philanthropicpeople.com).

The importance of altruism and positive emotion is a proven fact; according to neuroscience, those who have a higher purpose are the happiest people. Dr. Barbara Frederickson at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill won the Templeton Prize in religion for her outstanding research on positive emotion. What is the purpose of positive emotion in business? Fredrickson's research points to at least 6 things that are the result of positive emotions that can help you be better in business:

1. We learn faster
2. We are more creative
3. We are better at problem solving
4. We score higher on every test of well being and life satisfaction
5. We thrive physically and at a cellular level
6. We are actively engaged in the creative flow state

(Dr. William K. Larkin, *Growing The Positive Mind*)

When it comes to yoga and business and the involvement of Karma, often it is easy for lines to be blurred. This is why it's important to support the philosophy of "**Conscious Business**". In this millennium it's critical for companies to be socially responsible in order to prosper from good will and good Karma. Together businesses can change the paradigm of what it means to do good business, and how their businesses impact the world.

In our economic culture and business driven society, Karma can often be forgotten. "Karma Yoga, is a system of discipline aiming at the attainment of freedom through good works" (*Pathway to Joy*). This idea can stand especially true in business. The notion that a business can make money, be successful, and grow for years doesn't have to be counterintuitive to a business giving back, providing free services, and improving their community; as a matter of fact, it can be a key step in the formation of a truly lasting, positive company. Businesses can easily participate in Karma, and it is a nearly foolproof way to improve the quality of your business. A company can improve business through Karma by:

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- ❖ Using Karma will help bring your community together, and bond them, associating your business with positivity.
- ❖ Karma is shared! When you do good for others, they are far more likely to do good for you, and support your business.
- ❖ Karma travels fast! News of your goodwill and unselfish business practices will spread, growing your database of customers.
- ❖ A happy customer is a loyal customer. Anyone you deal with professionally that leaves a conversation, or an email message with a smile, will remember their positive experience and how they felt dealing with your company, which is a great reason for them to return.
- ❖ What goes around comes around. As we all know, even if someone didn't see what you just did-Karma saw it. Businesses who conduct themselves unselfishly behind closed doors have nothing to hide or cover up. Create a business plan that allows for your practices to be transparent and obviously based in goodwill.

According to *Pathways to Joy* (Vivekananda), "All the great systems of ethics preach selflessness as the goal. Karma Yoga is the attaining through unselfish work of that blissful freedom which is the goal of all human nature. Every selfish action therefore retards our reaching the goal, and every unselfish action takes us towards the goal." This principle is easily applied to professional life, as unselfish, or team work for the greater good can often times create a more powerful impact than selfish work done by those weary of others successes, or failures.

Being that Karma isn't a trend, or passing thought, as it is based in every ideology, it's critical for businesses to act in accordance with Karma, implementing practices and procedures that create an unselfish community of people giving themselves for the greater good and solidarity that Karma brings. Each employee in a company has the ability to impact a company's Karma, be that negative or positive.

Another important factor to consider with Karma yoga is the concept of **tithing**. Tithing, in its simplest form is acknowledging that you're not the only one responsible for your successes, and that it's important to say thank you. Tithing is a direct line to Karma, we all know "what goes around comes around" and that speaks true to tithing. When you give back, you receive good will, karma, and even prosperity in return.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of Karma Yoga is giving back through community service. "*True sustenance is in service, and through it a man or woman reaches the eternal Brahman. But those who do not seek to serve are without a home in this world*" (Mitchell, Stephen, *Bhagavad Gita*). Through community service, our businesses learn about, and improve the communities that they serve. In return, you get to understand your community, and the way the world works, a little better. Few things teach us more than giving back through community service.

Through conscious business, community service, and tithing, businesses can carry Karma through every aspect of their company, and shift the paradigm that is good business, to great business.

"The goal of all nature is freedom, and freedom is to be attained only by perfect unselfishness; every thought, word, or moral. That definition, you will find, holds good in every religion, and every system of ethics."

– Pathways to Joy