



2008 International Spirit at Work Award Application

All applications must be submitted by e-mail to the Committee Chair, Elisa Mallis, at elisa@spiritatwork.org.

The contact persons cited on the application must make themselves available for questions should Committee members require more information.

Basic Data

Name of organization: Berrett-Koehler Publishers
Date of founding: 1992
Number of employees: 20 Full-time and 2 Part-time
Nature and scope of business: Independent book publisher
Locations: San Francisco, CA
Website address: <http://www.bkconnection.com>

Contact Information

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A Brief Description of Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Berrett-Koehler Publishers is an independent publisher, which means that it is not owned or managed by a parent company nor publicly traded. Berrett-Koehler publishes books in three distinct but complementary lines: BK Currents, BK Business, and BK Life. BK Currents are titles that advance social and economic justice by exploring the critical intersections between business and society. BK Business pioneers new and progressive leadership and management practices promoting socially responsible approaches to business, innovative organizational change methods, and more humane and effective organizations. BK Life titles help people create positive change in their lives and align their personal practices with their aspirations for a better world. These titles show people how they can improve their lives in ways that are beneficial for the families, organizations, communities, nations, and world in which they live and work.

We have chosen to focus primarily on the areas of business, current affairs and personal growth, because these are central elements in many people's lives today. Furthermore, the world is going through tumultuous changes, from the decline of job security to the rise of new structures for organizing people and work. We believe that change is needed at all levels—individual, organizational, community, and global—and our publications address each of these levels.

What are the vision, mission, philosophy, and core values of your organization?

Berrett-Koehler's mission statement is "creating a world that works for all."

Our core value is stewardship. We define stewardship as a deep sense of responsibility to administer the company for the benefit of all of our stakeholder groups: authors, customers, employees, investors, service providers, suppliers, sales partners, and the communities and environment around us. We seek to establish a relationship with each stakeholder that is open, equitable, and collaborative.

Other values that BK observes are: servant leadership, fairness, transparency in business, integrity, respect, openness, and social and environmental responsibility.

How does your organization define Spirituality? How do you talk about the "vertical" and "horizontal" dimensions of spirituality? (minimum 500 words)

Berrett-Koehler has never attempted to define spirituality for its employees or stakeholders. Neither have we attempted to "talk" about the dimensions of spirituality as in the sense of being spiritual. At BK, we believe that spirituality is a personal choice each individual makes and defines for him or herself. Instead, BK has focused its discussions around concepts like stewardship, sustainability, openness, social and environmental responsibility, integrity, fairness, respect, diversity, egalitarianism, dignity, community, and economic justice. BK believes that these concepts are more than popular ideologies or new turn-of-the-century philosophies. They are age-old actionable concepts that when put into practice not only make the world a better place, but also define who we are and what we really believe. In our planning sessions, meetings, and when situations arise, we talk about doing what is right. We ask ourselves, "What is the right thing to do?" "How will this decision or action impact others?" How do we talk about spirituality, in either dimension? ...With openness, respect, and courtesy.

In addition to sacred and ecclesiastical matters, spirituality is defined by Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as "of relating to, consisting of, or *affecting* the spirit." In most cases, employees, authors, business partners, readers, and other stakeholders find that their spirits are positively affected because of *how* BK does business with them, our purpose of truly creating a world that works for all, and the messages BK chooses to publish to support that purpose.

Vertical Dimensions of Spirituality

Berrett-Koehler is structured much like other organizations, with a CEO, vice presidents and the like, but because BK has a relatively flat operational structure it lends itself to

allow an easy flow of its vertical values and strategies into the horizontal dimension and vice versa. The company's strong focus on stewardship, servant leadership, personal and professional integrity, and respect propels both dimensions.

Berrett-Koehler has set itself apart within the publishing industry and business as a whole by creating unconventionally fair contracts with its authors and business partners. BK has created a publishing contract that not only allows the author to retain ownership of the copyright, but to end the contract at will if they are not satisfied with BK's service. This is virtually unheard of in the industry.

Berrett-Koehler has committed itself to transparency of business practices on several levels. There are few, if any, business or trade secrets. One example of this is that the company's unconventional contract is published on the internet so that other publishers may use it as a model. Detailed company financials are even posted on the company's intranet. Stakeholders and authors enjoy the fact that BK keeps them informed on the progress of their books and is open and honest about royalties and payment.

A great deal of Berrett-Koehler's transparency stems from its democratic environment, where staff and stakeholders give input and vote on major decisions concerning the business.

Horizontal Dimensions of Spirituality

Each employee and stakeholder carries on the practices of democracy, a minute of silence before team meetings, respect and fairness towards one another and their constituents. The vertical component flows into the horizontal dimensions and vice versa.

How do you handle concerns about diversity of religions and what boundaries do you set around employees trying to convert each other, or in any way making others uncomfortable? To what degree do employees have a choice about participating in spirituality in the workplace activities? To what degree are employees able to express their own spirituality? Is there any form of spirituality that is excluded from the organization?
(minimum 500 words)

Berrett-Koehler is represented by many different religious traditions among its staff members and authors. Very early in the history of the company some staff meetings were opened with prayer, but the practice was modified when some staff members expressed discomfort with this. We now begin many meetings with a moment of silence when individuals can meditate, say a silent prayer, prepare for the agenda, or whatever they wish. Since 1992 we have not been aware of any issues with employees trying to convert each other or friction as a result of any employees expressing their faith or religious beliefs.

Since Berrett-Koehler is a very collaborative and democratic organization, employees have the right and the responsibility to speak up about their participation in any spiritual workplace activity. One of our core values is respect, and we respect each person as

having their own spiritual and religious convictions — giving room for expression as long as it doesn't hinder or offend another.

Employees understand that they have the option to express their spirituality at work or not to. Whether through everyday language of giving thanks or gratefulness, through prayer or meditation, displaying spiritual artifacts, or even being silent during the moment of silence at meetings.

Berrett-Koehler did not set out to distinguish itself as a spiritually-based company, which explains why there are not many spiritual activities or policies surrounding sacred or ecclesiastical matters. It did, however, purpose to be a company that could help to create “a world that works for all” based on the highest principles and character. It started out as one person's convictions, in addition to his business ethics, to just do what was right and to be an example of what could be achieved with right values. In that, he created a business model that is so powerful and sacrificed the secrecy of its success to a behemoth of an industry that operates on completely opposite principles. Not that it was possible to keep such wonderful concepts and outcomes secret; Berrett-Koehler Publishers has become a rising star in an oppressed and glutted industry. The spiritual principles of virtue, respect, servant leadership, and integrity were purposely woven into the fabric of the organization and its stakeholders. Employees, investors, and authors, all choose to perpetuate these values because it makes their world better, it makes business better, and it makes life better.

What policies, programs, or practices explicitly promote or enable spirituality at work?. Finally, do you believe these programs will be sustainable over time? If so, why? (minimum of 1000 words)

Description of Policies, Programs, or Practices (employees and stakeholders)

A Moment of Silence

As stated above, in 1992 when the company first began a short prayer was instituted before each staff meeting. The practice was modified when some staff members expressed discomfort with this. We now begin many meetings with a moment of silence when individuals can meditate, say a silent prayer, prepare for the agenda, or whatever they wish. This practice isn't very public but when guests, such as authors or other stakeholders, join our meetings they are welcomed to participate, if they wish.

One-on-One Prayer/Meditation

One practice that an employee has when visited by an author or stakeholder is to ask them if they mind having a prayer together before beginning their meeting. The prayer is short and the two quickly get down to business. There are no closed doors and the other party(s) involved is made to feel comfortable in the fact that something good is being said in a spiritual context to propel the success of their work and the collaboration with BK Publishers. If the guest chooses not to participate in prayer, they are still respected for their decision and made to feel comfortable in the process of business.

Religious Holiday Observation

BK supports employees' observation of their faith's religious holidays. This is a part of the company policy that was instituted at inception. Employees are not only encouraged

to observe the holy days of their faith but are also allowed to take additional time off in support of their religious beliefs as they see fit. Normally, the employee will exchange days in lieu of the standard calendared holidays. For example, an employee may exchange Christmas for a Jewish holiday or take time off in the afternoon to observe Sabbath.

Monthly Staff Lunch

Beginning in early 2008, BK began providing a staff lunch once a month to encourage staff members to eat together in a purely social environment, away from the rigors of projects and deadlines. It is a time for bonding and rejuvenation.

Workplace Democracy and Collaboration

In the rough-and-tumble world of book publishing, Berrett-Koehler stands out not only for its treatment of authors, but also for the manner in which it engages employees, business partners, readers and the community. Since the company's beginning in 1992 the democratic process has extended to BK employees "voting in" the company's code of ethics, a task that is often relegated to a company's board of directors and senior human resources management. Each staff member also has a voice in the selection, critique, and design of manuscripts for publication. The staff is consulted on all major decisions, such as annual salary increases. As Howard Karger, a BK author puts it, "These were people doing what they believed in and producing books they were proud of. Democracy for Berrett-Koehler is not just a slogan."

Author Day

Every author gets an Author Day—a full day during which the writer makes a lunchtime presentation about the book's content to Berrett-Koehler staff and guests. The author has editorial, design, and production meetings with BK staff and brainstorms with them about promotion and marketing. That's quite a switch from most publishers, where authors are lucky if they get a say in the book's title, design, format or price.

Author Day was introduced early in the company by Steve Piersanti and voted on by BK staff for implementation in response to the industry's lack of responsiveness to authors. Berrett-Koehler takes on the role of faithful steward, guide and co-collaborator of the author's creation. Author Day is a contradiction in an industry known for assuming ownership of the author's work and then becoming untouchable until publication or when royalties are due.

Future Search BK2020

A perfect example of how Berrett-Koehler has garnered much respect for its focus on creating quality product in collaboration with employees, business partners and customers.

The publishing industry is being roiled by massive changes, and at Berrett-Koehler we want to confront these changes head-on. So from January 30th to February 1 we held a strategic planning event entitled "BK 2020: Creating the Future We Want" at San Francisco's Commonwealth Club. Because Berrett-Koehler has always been a community that extends beyond it's employees, the seventy people at the event also included authors, customers, investors, suppliers, booksellers, publicists, service providers, sales partners, publishing community colleagues and potential new partners—some traveling from as far away as Europe and Asia.

The approach we chose for this event was the Future Search, a popular large-scale change method developed by BK author Marvin Weisbord. Facilitated by BK authors Dick and Emily Axelrod, BK 2020 was an extraordinarily fruitful gathering. We looked back at our history as a company and a community, clarified the core values that will guide us forward, and took an expansive look at what our future could be.

One of the more interesting ideas that emerged from BK 2020 was to create a “Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for BK Authors.” Our president, Steve Piersanti, got right to work on it, soliciting input from members of the BK community.

We talked about a host of other issues as well: finding new ways to connect with allied organizations and communities, managing work-life balance issues within the company, even rethinking the very meaning of publishing. All these discussions are feeding into our current company strategic planning process.

You can find more information on the BK 2020 website at:
<http://www.bkpextranet.com/bk20200/>

Members of the BK community on BK 2020

“I was delighted to participate in BK2020, and it was an inspiring experience to be with such a diverse group of dedicated, imaginative, and talented people. We are very honored to be BK’s partner in Japan, and hope we may work together to navigate the new, rapidly changing, publishing world.”

— Manami Tamaoki, Tuttle-Mori (our agent in Japan)

“I truly enjoyed the opportunity to meet, brainstorm with, and learn from so many esteemed individuals associated with BK. I have never been involved with an organizational process like this before...the three days gave me much food for thought.”

—Sharon Goldinger, Peoplespeak (one of BK’s production and marketing partners)

“Thanks for inviting us to the conference. It was an enriching experience. Anything I would do in the space of publishing in the future will be influenced by this conference.”

—Ragu Padmanabhan, Charity Focus (a nonprofit that “endeavors to leverage technology for inspiring greater volunteerism”)

Paul Hilton of Calvert says of Berrett-Koehler: “By bringing all stakeholders into the process, Berrett-Koehler demonstrates that it’s possible to create a media platform that encourages corporate responsibility and the plurality of voices necessary in a democratic society.”

Workplace Egalitarianism

BK believes that everyone is created equal and should be treated equally and fairly. BK carries this value into its business meeting setting and is experienced during its monthly publication board meetings when employees give feedback on which books the company should publish. Sometimes, in the attempt to create democratic processes in the work environment, there is still the presence of the “Big I” and the “little you,” and depending on one’s title or position one’s vote is counted as having more or less weight.

At BK, everyone's voice is heard. Even interns have been invited to give feedback on various topics and provide their opinions on different issues. Everyone is given fair opportunity to voice their concerns or comments and is respected for their opinions.

Work/Life Balance

Employees have the ability to prioritize their own work/life balance to the degree that it makes sense for business as well as themselves. For instance, many of the employees have children. If their child has a play or a football game, the employee can without fear of criticism or unemployment say "Hey I'm going to be out on Friday to see my kid's game." BK encourages employees to work the way they work best. In other words, we don't have policies that spell out how their jobs are to be done.

Servant Leadership

One of Berrett-Koehler's mottos is "Lose yourself in service." The premise is that we as individuals become leaders by learning to serve the needs of others. For example, in an office space that is space-challenged, the most senior employees have opted to have their offices in an open hallway, leaving the more valued office space for all other lower ranking employees.

In 2005 Berrett-Koehler's distribution company went out of business, leaving not only Berrett-Koehler, but also other partnering and non-partnering businesses struggling and without a solution. Berrett-Koehler researched and found new avenues for distribution not only for itself but also for many of the other businesses. Berrett-Koehler refused to accept sweetened offers in exchange for persuading others in their decision for a new distributor, but continued to work on behalf of others leading the way for workable solutions for all.

Servant leadership is more than just a concept. It is a value-practice.

Environment-friendly Policy and Practices

Berrett-Koehler Book Paper Use

Berrett-Koehler's mission to help create a world that works for all compels us to be responsible stewards of the resources we use in making the products we sell. We care about the paper used in our books, where it comes from and how it is made. We work closely with our printers to buy paper that is manufactured by means that minimize its impact on the environment. We look for papers that are sturdy and long-lasting, because we intend our books to be useful for a long time. When our papers contain virgin wood fiber, we seek out papers made from trees grown using sustainable forestry practices, and from forests that are not composed of endangered firstgrowth trees. Almost all our papers come from temperate-zone forests in North America, and most of our paper comes from mills that are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

Currently the only statistical measurement that paper manufacturers in North America provide to us is the percentage of post-consumer waste (PCW) in the papers we buy. Post-consumer waste fiber comes from paper products that have been recycled after they were bought and used by the consumer. Most paper also contains recycled fiber from

various steps of the manufacturing processes before the paper is sold to the ultimate user, but figures are not reported about this content. Bearing in mind that the PCW content is only one indication of the environmental effect of paper-making, here are some numbers about the paper we used in printing our books from April 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008.

Overall, we used about 726,000 pounds (363 US tons) of paper to make 846,600 books. Aggregating all these books, the paper content was 38% PCW recycled fiber by weight. Individual books might have anywhere from zero to 100% PCW. In all, 80% of the paper we used contained no less than 15% PCW by weight, often more. Over 90% of the books we printed—about 764,000 units—contain some PCW content. We intend to continue to study the issues involved in papermaking and its effect on our planet, with the aim of minimizing our carbon footprint while still making durable and economical books for our readers. Several organizations, including the Book Industry Study Group (BISG) and the Green Press Initiative are gathering information that will help us better understand the overall carbon footprint of the book publishing industry.

To inform our readers of our efforts to preserve our forests, we include the following statement on the copyright page of all of our books.

Berrett-Koehler books are printed on long-lasting acid-free paper. When it is available, we choose paper that has been manufactured by environmentally responsible processes. These may include using trees grown in sustainable forests, incorporating recycled paper, minimizing chlorine in bleaching, or recycling the energy produced at the paper mill.

Plastic and Aluminum Recycling Program

Berrett-Koehler believes that we can preserve our environment through simple everyday strategies. Recycling bottles, cans, paper, and other recyclable materials is a company practice that all staff and visitors are compelled to participate in.

The Question of Sustainability

Berrett-Koehler's sustainability lies in the fact that it is run in the interest of ALL stakeholder groups. This fundamental practice is embedded in every aspect of Berrett-Koehler. We believe that the company's policies and practices will also be sustained by bringing like-minded people together who stand for stewardship and egalitarianism, as well as our other values, and possess the courage to do what is right instead of what is easiest. Doing so will not only perpetuate the values and practices set forth in this document for the future, but will open up space for more of the same.

What has been the effect of policies, programs, or practices on the stakeholder community? (minimum 1000 words)

For the Berrett-Koehler employee, the effect of BK's policies, programs, or practices has produced an atmosphere of freedom, openness, security, and productivity. Berrett-Koehler employees find themselves free from fear of backlash or dismissal from their jobs for their spiritual values, expression, or ideas in the workplace. Employees express that the company allows them an openness for which they can talk to each other freely about one's spiritual practices, without the thought of that voicing their thoughts on

various projects and issues would be unacceptable company behavior. Staff members indicate that being acknowledged as a whole person: body, mind, and spirit is an important and refreshing aspect of working at Berrett-Koehler.

With true work/life balance practices in place, employees are able to focus more on company business while at work, bringing not only the company a greater return on its investment, but their families and communities benefit as well.

Berrett-Koehler has excellent employee retention because the company demonstrates value for the employee. Employees are treated respectfully as individuals, with feelings and families, and not just as a skill set or resource to be used and replaced. Over the entire history of the company no employees have been laid off due to company performance. Because of Berrett-Koehler's policies, practices, and values the company has attracted Fortune 100 talent at independent publisher salary levels. Even though BK has just over 20 full-time employees eight have been employed with Berrett-Koehler for over ten years. Another ten employees have been employed with Berrett-Koehler between five and ten years.

One of Berrett-Koehler's most notable aspects is that in the midst of a downturn in the publishing industry, we have the ability to attract and retain top authors. Not only are authors drawn to BK, but BK has also outperformed industry standards in terms of average number of copies sold and average revenue per book. Over 75 authors have published multiple books with BK and over 40 books have won national awards. Authors come to Berrett-Koehler because of our growing reputation in the marketplace for positive change, collaboration, fairness, and exceptional quality of work.

This is not to boast about BK's success but only serves as proof that treating your fellow man from a spiritual/humanist perspective pays in so many ways and on so many levels. It creates a win-win-win scenario: for each other, for our community, and for our world.

Has the organization been a model or inspiration for other companies in your industry or outside of it? (minimum 500 words)

Berrett-Koehler has received several awards and has been highlighted for its highly successful business practices. Some awards received are:

- 2007 WorldBlu List of Most Democratic Workplaces™
Awarded by WorldBlu Inc., Washington, DC
- 2006 Business Ethics Award for Stakeholder Accountability
Awarded by *CRO* magazine (Corporate Responsibility Officer) formerly *Business Ethics* magazine
- 2001 Spirituality in Business Award
Awarded by the Association of Unity Churches

Berrett-Koehler CEO, Steve Piersanti, is often asked to speak about the practices and policies described in this application. Following is a list of some of his past speaking engagements:

- National Speakers Association of Northern California
- Association of American Publishers, Keynote Speaker
- Symposium for Small Publishers
- Independent Book Publishers Association Conference
- Society for Training and Development (ASTD) Conference
- Unity Churches Award Recipient and Keynote Speaker
(Spoke to over 700 church leaders about spirituality in business)
- Thought Leader Gathering
(Subject matter was stewardship, community, and social responsibility)

As mentioned prior, Berrett-Koehler's Future Search strategic planning conference was a profitable and enlightening experience not only for BK, but also for many of the participating outside stakeholders. They reported that they also gained a great deal of value for their own work and organizations. For example, Joel Suzuki, president of an innovative video firm, remarked, "I cannot tell you how important the future search was to Star Thrower Distribution and our own future. During it, I often found myself rethinking our situation and how we have dealt with issues of creating infrastructure or clearly defining who our customers are in the broader sense of the word."

Attendees were so moved by the ideas and the spirit of collaboration at the conference that they committed to partnering with BK and/or other businesses to achieve much needed change in their areas of influence, whether through business endeavors or volunteering their expertise where needed.

Berrett-Koehler is a model and an inspiration for the publishing industry, which our numerous book and growing number of business awards show. According to a 2005 *Fast Company* article on Berrett-Koehler, the industry does seem to be paying attention. "The editor-in-chief of Random House, Jonathan Karp, stepped down in June to start an imprint that will devote much more time to its authors and publish just 12 books a year—one per month."

Stakeholder References

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<p>Jeevan Sivasubramaniam Senior Managing Editor Berrett-Koehler Publishers Phone: 415-743-6470 Email: jsiva@bkpub.com</p>	<p>Michael Crowley Senior Marketing Manager Berrett-Koehler Publishers Phone: 415-743-6464 Email: mcrowley@bkpub.com</p>

“It was the morning of Author’s Day—eight hours of reviewing my manuscript, discussing marketing, and giving a talk about my book to the Berrett-Koehler Publishers staff in San Francisco. I had attended another BK Author’s Day around the time BK had agreed to publish my book *Lean and Green: Profit for Your Workplace and the Environment* (2001), and was impressed with the open dialog between author, publishers, editors, and staff. But this early in my Author’s Day, the meeting room comprised only my literary agent Linda Allen, BK Publisher Steve Piersanti, and me. After we reviewed the day’s agenda, Steve surprised me by asking if Linda or I would like to start the day with a prayer. After a few seconds—long enough for my shock to melt into delight that the founder of this amazing publisher would create a spiritual beginning for our work together, I suggested the *Shehekhianu*, a Hebrew prayer that blesses the source of life and celebrates arriving at this particular moment. Steve immediately encouraged me to say the prayer (I sang it, actually), and I knew right then that this was no ordinary book publisher.”

*Submitted by Pamela J. Gordon, Berrett-Koehler author
Founder of Technology Forecasters Inc. and TFI Environment Lead Consultant*

“As a long time Berrett-Koehler author of five different books (and one of the five has a second edition) spanning a period of a decade, I would have to say that BK is one of, if not the, most spiritual organizations I have ever been associated with. And when I use the term "spirituality" I

am talking about the inclusive religious-transcendent meaning of the word. That is, while I believe various employees at BK (most notably The President and CEO Steve Piersanti) have deep religious beliefs, they do not proselytize but rather embrace and support people of various faiths and beliefs who have constructive ideas and who are doing good things in a way that allows for vast differences. I believe that the workforce at BK is authentically trying to make the world a better place through the books they publish and the various ways they connect with customers, authors, communities, etc. Perhaps the simplest and most accurate way to describe BK is to say it is a company that practices what I believe is the most straight forward and powerful human resource management principle in the world -- the Golden Rule. Berrett-Koehler will support others as they would themselves, even if those others are pursuing a project with another publisher that might compete with their own. BK exudes meaning and purpose in the way they act as a company and naturally supports efforts that make valuable contributions through out the world, without needing for such efforts to directly benefit BK. Consequently, they have perhaps the most loyal group of authors, clients and colleagues (both within and outside the company) that I have ever seen. They are a joy to work with and I always recommend Berrett-Koehler as a publisher to other authors before any other publishers, ... and I have worked with many publishers including several major New York publishing houses. I can't recommend BK too highly for the International Spirit at Work Award. They exemplify the very core of what I believe the award is all about."

*Submitted by Charles C. Manz, Berrett-Koehler author
Nirenberg Chaired Professor of Leadership, University of Massachusetts
(Author of more than 20 books with about 10 different publishers)*

Sources of additional information on the applicant:

- BK Rights and Responsibilities
- BK Identity Brochure
- <http://www.bkconnection.com>
- <http://www.bkpextranet.com/bk20200/>