

The Willis Harman Spirit at Work Award

Name of Organization: Sounds True, Inc.

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Name of Nominating Party: Judi Neal, Spirit at Work.

Nature and Scope of the Business/ Vision and Mission/ Principal Products and Services:

Sounds True is a publisher of spoken-word audio, video, and music titles in the fields of spiritual transformation, health, healing, creativity, visionary business, and other related areas of interest. Our mission, since 1985, is to disseminate spiritual wisdom-- to offer practical tools that serve to catalyze transformation both in individuals and in societies.

We consider our organization a teaching company which embraces the major spiritual traditions of the world and the arts and humanities, as embodied by the leading authors, teachers, and experts of our times. Through their voices, we offer our listeners the opportunity to pursue a lifetime of learning.

Sounds True offers more than 600 titles containing important new ideas in a compact, undiluted form -- often years before such information is presented in books. Over the years, we have recorded the most prominent teachers of our day, including Andrew Weil, Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Deepak Chopra, Thich Nhat Hanh, Huston Smith, Julia Cameron, Eckhart Tolle, Jack Kornfield, Pema Chodron, Alice Walker, Ram Dass, Marion Woodman, Jean Shinoda Bolen, Caroline Myss, and hundreds of others.

Core Values:

At Sounds True, we are experimenting with the creation of a unique business culture. We are dedicated to the quality, efficiency, productivity, and profitability of our work. And, we are equally dedicated to enjoying the process of the work itself, aware of the opportunity that exists at work for celebration, personal growth, and the acknowledgment of the everyday sacred.

The following are certain core values or central ideas that have guided the creation of the Sounds True work environment

1. Sounds True is both mission-driven and profit-driven

Sounds True is a mission-driven company, dedicated to making transformative spiritual teachings widely available. Knowing that we need to

be financially healthy in order to fulfill our mission, we pay attention to financial realities and are determined to generate annual profits.

2. We build workplace community

By prioritizing monthly all-company meetings, all-company events, community rituals, and open forums for dialogue, we actively build workplace community and create opportunities for people to foster authentic connections with one another.

3. We encourage authenticity in the workplace

While being respectful of others, employees are invited to bring their “authentic self” to work - their creativity, their ideas, their voice, their feelings, their sense of humor. We do not have a dress code, and we encourage people to feel comfortable at work

4. We honor individual differences and diversity

Sounds True is founded on the principle that humanity benefits when we share wisdom across cultural boundaries. Wanting to create a rich and diverse workplace culture, we honor cultural diversity and we are determined that no one at Sounds True is disrespected (under any circumstances and particularly) on the basis of race, creed, religion, physical ability, or sexual orientation. We also acknowledge that people have different learning and communication styles, and we strive to understand and respect our differences.

5. Open communication

Information, strategy, and financial data are freely and openly shared with the conviction that an accurately informed staff can best contribute to the growth and health of Sounds True. Information about individual compensation is confidential, however all other information is shared throughout the organization, including the financial reports of the company via open book management.

6. Animals are welcome

Because we feel that the presence of animals benefits our work environment, dogs (and other well-behaved animals) are welcome at Sounds True as long as their owner takes complete responsibility for their behavior at all times.

7. We place a high value on creativity, innovation, and ideas

Sounds True is a “work-in-progress”, and our success depends on our ability to continually experiment and fine-tune our efforts by trying new things,

inventing new products, developing new systems. Creativity, innovation, and new ideas are recognized and highly valued.

8. Opportunities exist for flexible work schedules

Acknowledging the importance of flexibility in attracting and retaining talented and creative people, Sounds True offers employees (in departments where the work flow permits) the opportunity to creatively structure their work schedules in exchange for superior job performance and responsible communication with everyone in their department.

9. Teams determine the best way to reach their goals

Individual teams are given the freedom to organize and execute the work of their department under the stewardship of the Publisher and within the limits of budgetary constraints and performance goals. Managers, while maintaining clarity of expectations, are encouraged to empower their employees to work with as much autonomy as possible.

10. We honor and include a contemplative dimension in the workplace

At Sounds True, we strive to practice mindfulness in every aspect of our work. Recognizing the importance of silence, inward attention, active listening and being centered, Sounds True begins its all-company meetings with a minute of silence and maintains a meditation room on-site for employees to utilize throughout the day.

11. We reach out to a diverse community

We are committed to donating our products to people who would otherwise not have access to our titles. We request donations from our customers to the Prison Library Project as well as donating our returned inventory to non-profit groups in our community and across the country. We are also committed to creating opportunities for employees to volunteer in the community on paid time.

12. We strive to protect and preserve the Earth

Aware of the impact of our business activities on the environment, we continuously strive to minimize waste, and recycle all office paper, products, and packaging to the maximum extent. We also strive to use recycled goods whenever possible.

13. We have a relationship with our customers that is based on integrity

We are dedicated to doing everything we can so that all Sounds True customers are completely satisfied with their Sounds True experience. From

customer service representatives taking orders and handling returns with our retail clients to our wholesale sales staff creating relationships with vendors and distributors, the point of contact with the people using and selling our products is critical. We listen to customer feedback and actively seek out customer responses via surveys, polls, and bounce-back cards. We pour our heart and talents into crafting high-quality programs and we honor our customers by creating sales copy and advertisements that accurately reflect the content of our titles and by shipping orders accurately and within stated time frames.

14. We acknowledge that every person in the organization carries wisdom

We acknowledge that all Sounds True employees, regardless of title or position, hold the wisdom of the Organization and we strive to find ways for every person to give input into the creation of our products, our company culture and our systems. Sounds True gets better each year because employees speak their minds and offer suggestions. All employees are encouraged to find appropriate avenues for communicating their opinions and suggesting solutions.

15. Employees participate in profit sharing and ownership

Through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan and a quarterly profit sharing plan, the employees of Sounds True have the opportunity to share in the growth and financial success of Sounds True. Instead of using artificial, external motivation techniques, we allow motivation towards the companies success to arise from within through direct rewards.

Spirit at Work:

In order to be successful in helping to create genuine transformation in the lives of our listeners and in our world, it is critical that Sounds True directly manifest certain values in the workplace itself. In order to accomplish this Sounds True has implemented the following programs, practices, and policies:

1. Meditation Room/ Group Meditation. Sounds True has a company meditation room on the upper floor of our office building which may be used by any employee throughout the day. Group meditation is held daily at 12:30 p.m. and conducted in a non-secular way. Whether engaging in Christian Contemplative Prayer, silent Sufi Dhikr, Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation, or one's own individual quiet practice, the Meditation Room provides a peaceful refuge from the demands of the workplace.

2. Gym. In order to help to promote the physical well being of our staff, as well as the mental and emotional benefits that occur as a result of physical exercise, Sounds True offers a gym on-site, along with a shower, which is available to employees during business hours.

3. *Moments of Silence.* From our all-company meetings each week to our various gatherings throughout the day, all Sounds True meetings begin with a moment of silence-- a short period which allows all meeting participants to gather themselves in the present moment and clarify their intentions for the upcoming work to be done.

4. *Open Book Management.* All financial information related to the company is shared freely with all employees, regardless of where the employee happens to be situated on the organizational chart. In our experience, such freedom of information is critical in creating an environment of trust and honesty in the workplace.

5. *ESOP.* Sounds True has a very active Employee Stock Program which was established to make all Sounds True employees co-owners of the company. Regardless of one's position at the company, each and every employee is viewed as playing an integral part in the furthering of our mission.

6. *Direct Access to Authors/ Transformational Materials.* With over 30 authors visiting our studios each year and with over 600 titles in print, we have a tremendous amount of material available for our employees to explore their own inner lives. It is our goal to have each author connect with the employees in as deep a way as possible to help keep the fire of transformation alive in the workplace. Further, we have a large library of audio, video, and written materials that employees may access at any time. Employees are encouraged to engage deeply with the work we do at Sounds True and take paid personal time to do so.

7. *Discretionary Funds for Team Building.* Each team at Sounds True receives funds quarterly for team building activities. We have discovered that when we can come together as friends, truly as *sangha*, our work lives are immeasurably enriched and the work we put out into the world is that much more alive and effective.

8. *Flexible Work Schedules.* We recognize that each employee is unique and has a certain rhythm to the way they work and contribute to a transformational workplace. We also realize that many employees have family and work responsibilities that fall within the traditional 9-5 workday. To this end, we encourage employees, within reason of course, to create a work schedule that allows them to have a realistic family life as well as letting their talents and inclinations shine.

9. *Personal Time.* What traditional have been called "Sick Days" in an employee benefits package are called "Personal Days" here. Instead of only being able to ask for time off if one is ill, we are committed to offering each and every employee time out of the office to pursue their own personal and spiritual interests, including attending prayer and meditation retreats. It is important to us to allow employees to develop their spiritual and personal interests as well as taking time to care for themselves before they become sick.

10. *Continuing Education for Employees.* Whether it is to take a computer class, a course in Contract Law, or to attend a meditation retreat given by one of our authors, each employee is entitled to certain monies each year for continuing education.

11. *Utilization of Wind Energy.* As a result of employee interest and eventually a majority vote, we have contracted to replace all electricity used by Sounds True with electricity generated from renewable sources.

Effects of Policies and Programs:

Very frequently, we hear directly from our customers-- thanking us for making available the teachers and tools which help to create transformation in their lives. The following customer comments are offered in illustration:

"A trusted physician started me listening to Shinzen Young's Break Through Pain, and I was relieved from a lifetime of suffering!"-S.D.

"Keep up the good work. The Sound True collection is invaluable with the state of things being as they are at present - what was it Bill Stafford said: "the darkness around us is deep." Your material supports the light. Warm regards" -- C. M, Mosman NSW Australia

"This tape opened doors on meditation practice that led in a new direction." -- VB, Green Bay WI

"Your products are superb! I do appreciate your integrity, professionalism, and courage. Bless you, Sounds True." -- E. M.

Our customers are also inspired by programs such as the Sounds True's Prison Library Project that allow them to give back the richness they receive:

"Dear Sounds True Staff, I would like to donate the enclosed tape to the Prison Audio Project. Your company has offered tapes, which have changed my life – from S. Levine, to P. Chodron, to W. Muller, C. Grof, and the list could go on and on. I have been on a spiritual journey for years, and you have offered help each step along the way. I'm glad I have a chance to pass this information on to prisoners. (I am also a therapist, and have shared what I have learned with many clients) Your offerings of information have such a ripple effect on so many. Thank you— "M. M., New Orleans LA

"This is a wonderful thing you are doing. While I appreciate the gift certificate you will be sending me, I am deeply grateful for being able to donate my used tapes to the Prison Project. Thank you." -- NW, Baltimore MD

Finally, Sounds True has a 100% lifetime guarantee on all titles. Whether a tape breaks, the customer listens to the program and doesn't like it, or for any other reason we will refund the customer's money or replace the tape-- no questions asked. This fosters an atmosphere of trust with our customers and has served us quite well over the years. This policy allows our customers to experiment with the teachings and tools out in the marketplace to find which work for them, passing on ones which may not fit what they need at any given moment in time.

