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## Google goes spiritual

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### FROM THE ARCHIVES: Drawing on “Emotional Intelligence” author Daniel Goleman and a recent Oprah guest, Google launches a School of Personal Growth

**PAUL KAIHLA** — Apple isn't the only Silicon Valley anchor-tenant that knows how to execute a stealth launch. For Google, though, this one wasn't about products — and it seems that the world's largest search engine and online ad agency prefers to keep this news quiet, even post-launch. Last summer with zero fanfare, Google joined the human potential movement. The vehicle: Google University, which is in a building one street down from the main Googleplex in Mountain View.



One of the institution's four departments: The School of Personal Growth.

Inspired by the work of psychologists like [Daniel Goleman](#) (*Emotional Intelligence*) and figures who have taught at California's fabled spiritual retreat, [Esalen Institute](#), the existence of the new school leaked out during [a conference at the end of 2008 at San Francisco's Westin Hotel](#) ([Soul's Code](#) was a sponsor).

“Google has always had a global vision, and wants to change the world from the inside out,” says Monika Broecker, a leadership coach and therapist from Germany who was an architect of the program. “You need to have inner peace to make peace in the world.”



Broecker, who left Google to start her own Center for Personal Growth, doesn't speak for the company — nor has Google ever issued a press release about the startling new program. But one of its founding fathers, an early Google engineer and [practicing Buddhist](#), [Chade-Meng Tan](#) (left, with Barack Obama), appeared in a panel discussion at the conference, which was a gathering of psychologists, neuroscientists and Buddhists associated with the Dalai Lama under the banner, [Happiness & Its Causes](#).

Tan suggested that Google's School of Personal Growth is a futuristic model for every workplace. “Google wants to help Googlers grow as human beings on all levels,” Tan said in his presentation. “Emotional, mental, physical and ‘beyond the self.’”

(This) is why Google University instituted the School of Personal Growth, perhaps the first of its kind in a large corporation. We don't just pamper Googlers, we want to help them fulfill

their full human potential.

But Google did not permit Tan, [whom the New York Times once nicknamed the firm's “in-house Zelig”](#), to give interviews about the stealth spiritual school at the conference — and you have to be a Google employee to access its curriculum through the corporate intranet.

The school's courses fall into four baskets: mental development; emotional development; holistic health and well-being; and a Buddhist notion, ‘beyond the self’. So far, Googlers have taken classes with titles like “The Neuroscience of Empathy” and “Search Inside Yourself.” The latter includes an introductory lecture by [Stanford neuroscientist](#), [Philippe Goldin](#), and counts Zoketsu Norman Fischer as an instructor. A poet and Zen priest, Fischer taught at San Francisco's Zen Center for several years and has led Googlers in a full-day mindfulness meditation retreat. He recently appeared on Oprah.



Engineers can only make up 50 percent of any class; they are cross-fertilized with a mix of marketers, managers and employees from sales. The company's strategy here is to boost the brainstorming powers of Google's best and brightest, as well as their powers of self-examination. “It's very effective because studies have proven that if people are relaxed and open, they won't repeat the same ideas and mistakes,” added Broecker. “They are more creative.”



Though you can't participate in Google's offerings unless you work there, you *can* experience it through [Broecker's start-up](#), which reflects the curriculum she helped set up at Google — and open



to the public.

Her similarly-named, Center for Personal Growth, offers private coaching sessions, workshops and consulting services to other companies that want to mimic Google's personal growth program. "At Google, I had a dream job," says Broecker (above). "I built the School of Personal Growth within Google University and it's strategy. Now I want to bring this mission to the whole world."

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FROM THE ARCHIVES, Science & Psychology, Science and the Brain

Buddhism, Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence, Google, neurology, Paul Kaibla, Philippe Goldin

## 10 Responses to "Google goes spiritual"

### 1. Judy Reply 09. Jan, 2009 at 7:51 am

I really question why google is launching this at this particular time. Are they trying to get on board with the spirituality movement? Are they trying to appease their workers who aren't getting all the perks that they used to, with the decline of the economy setting in? It's interesting that they have kept this so quiet. What do others think?

### 2. David Rickey Reply 09. Jan, 2009 at 9:12 am

I'm actually heartened by this development, what ever Google's motives are. Recognizing that creativity is better when people are aligned with deeper awareness within (beyond ego, a la Eckhart Tolle), it could very well be that this movement will spread to other corporate entities and actually effect a change in the way the world does business. Since many if not most of the readers here know that one of the big "world problems" is the dehumanization of corporate structures and the subsequent mis-use of the planets resources, both human and "natural", perhaps this potential for awakening can bring about a major shift on the planets. No matter what the motive that spawned this, I applaud it!

### 3. Deborah Johnson Reply 12. Jan, 2009 at 3:32 pm

I love what David said; ditto, ditto, ditto!

If they "Are they trying to appease their workers who aren't getting all the perks that they used to, with the decline of the economy setting in?" then BRAVO because people will need a place to process and feel appreciated and recognized if they felt the old perks were giving them that then this brilliant program will give them the place to express their thoughts!

It's incredible.

### 4. Darren Littlejohn Reply 13. Jan, 2009 at 10:42 pm

Google really is revolutionary. When all the high tech firms were competing with how extravagant of perks they could offer during the dot.com boom, we thought that was progressive. Adding child care and oil changes and gyms and yoga and massages and Google ice cream bars for free around every corner looked like a good idea to create culture and keep people comfortable on the job. But offering spiritual education in a non-religious manner is truly renegade. I love it. Bravo Google. Well done.

-d

Darren Littlejohn, author, facilitator  
the 12-Step Buddhist – Atria/Beyond Words – March '09  
<http://the12stepbuddhist.com>

### 5. Penny Allen Reply 14. Jan, 2009 at 5:49 am

Great idea Google and welcome back to the 60's & 70's. This is not revolutionary, it is part of the full circle we travel over and over again. When our material world falls apart we seek alternative sources of happiness. Google is capitalizing on this and making it mainstream. For the many of us who continuously seek inner peace through non-religious spirituality, welcome aboard.

### 6. Nhys Glover Reply 18. Jan, 2009 at 10:35 am

I once read that there was a Google Wall where all the statistics of searches were posted. It was described as god, by the writer. The top request was for Pamela Anderson pics and the writer said this said a lot about the mind of man and what he prayed for. I've always thought about that. To me it does gauge where the mind of man is focused. And it is becoming more and more focused on the spiritual. Check out the searches and the fact that the self-help industry is pulling in 11 billion dollars a year. And its not about money, its about what people are valuing. When they are using their money (energy)for personal growth then we are getting better. That Google, the cybergod has now joined the movement seems the next natural step. This huge cyber-information company seems to be moving one step closer to 'godliness' 😊

### 7. Luis Reply 11. Mar, 2009 at 9:49 am

"The word spiritual comes originally from the Latin spiritus, which means "that which gives life or vitality to a system." The spiritual in human beings makes us ask why we are doing and makes us seek some fundamentally better way of doing it. It makes us want our lives and enterprises to make a difference."

"Spiritual capital is the amount of spiritual knowledge and expertise available to an individual, or a culture, where spiritual is taken to mean "meaning, values, and fundamental purposes."

“Spiritual capital is reflected in what a community or organization

- Exist for
- Aspires to
- Takes responsibility for”

Source: “Spiritual Capital: Wealth We Can Live By”, Danah Zohar & Ian Marshall

Nowadays management should recognize the spiritual intelligence and its relation with the needs and changing motivations of the new employee as a search of individual meaning.

The current focus to direct and manage people in the modern organization could not be providing a meaning or life purpose to employees.

A focus of intelligent leadership is required through which the SQ needs (spiritual capital) and the motivations of the new employee can be directed. That’s what Google is doing.

8. Lindsay [Reply 13. Apr, 2009 at 5:47 am](#)

Landmark Forum, anyone?

9. reviews [Reply 21. May, 2009 at 11:35 am](#)

Lovely, informative site, thanks

10. Натан [Reply 16. Oct, 2009 at 10:32 pm](#)

Однажды в студеную зимнюю пору. Бродил Я по нету. Наткнулся на пост. Понравилось очень! Респект выражаю! И даже в закладки себе добавляю!

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## Love Scroll

**QUESTION: What is the most loving thing anyone has ever said or done for you?**

POSTED BY ZAROD

**someone wrote me a super long poem, but then I realized how creepy it was because the person was someone I hated...**

POSTED BY LIZ

**My boyfriend said to me "I love your mother because she gave me you."**

POSTED BY LAKSHMI NARAYAN

Say

*Someone showed the love on Thu, 11:39 pm*

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