The vision of Lifework Leadership is simple. Develop Christian business leaders with a clear understanding of their calling, connect them through dynamic relationships with other Christian influencers and captivate them with a desire to utilize their God-given influence for the good of the city. After 15 years applying this model in South Florida, Lifework Leadership has impacted the corporate culture of area businesses, filled the board rooms of local charities and resulted in an uncommon spirit of generosity and service in the region.

Featuring world-class speakers and case studies from prominent business people, Lifework Leadership is a nine month leadership program offered by the National Christian Foundation South Florida that includes literary discussion with practical life application, examining the life of Jesus as the best example of leadership. Beyond the course work, it’s the relationships built in small groups led by caring coaches that often catalyze the greatest change.

“What we’ve done is created an opportunity for business leaders to sit back and to contemplate, use imagineering and say, how can I use my business to give God glory?” explained Stephan Tchividjian, National Christian Foundation President. “We often say, you as a leader don’t have to lead for the next several hours. It’s this platform where they come and through the experience, through the network, through the resources provided, they begin to have a vision for something perhaps that’s new or maybe has been dormant in their lives and in many ways they come alive.”

Alumni transformations

With an alumni network that is now more than 800 business leaders strong in South Florida, Lifework’s influence is extensive. And several alumni credit their experience at Lifework Leadership with spurring them on to begin a new work or improve their current business.

For example, after the Moore family was directly affected by the issue of bullying, Roy Moore, founder of Be Strong, enlisted a group of local leaders he met through Lifework Leadership to volunteer to help tackle the issue of bullying by reaching students with life-saving skills. The idea has since been developed into a national ministry.

Don Campion, president of Banyan Air Service, Inc., has built a company culture second to none, and credits Lifework Leadership for challenging him to do more. A South Floridian who was raised in Nigeria by missionary parents, he recently restored the missionary hospital in the African bush of Egbe, Nigeria, where his parents once served. He also invited Corporate Chaplains of America to help meet the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of his team at Banyan Air after learning about them at Lifework Leadership.

Now a sponsor of the leadership class, Campion said, “Where Lifework helped me the most was realizing how the business could fit into Kingdom work, and how I look at Banyan now as a ministry. Then I felt that God had prepared me for the ministry of the revitalization of Egbe Hospital. I never dreamed in a million years that somehow I would have influence in the rebuilding of a ministry that would then look after tens of thousands of sick in the bush. As a result of that, many of them would come to know the Lord. And Lifework kind of connected those dots.”

Ginger Martin, chief executive officer of American National Bank, climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, completed climbs in the Grand Tetons and Rocky Mountain National Park, summited seven peaks higher than 14,000 feet in Colorado and hiked the Salcantee Trail to Matchu Picchu with Freedom Challenge, an organization that combats human trafficking worldwide. “Climb higher! That’s my motto. I want to climb higher and I want to take other people with me. That’s why I am involved in Lifework Leadership as an alum, as a coach and as a sponsor because I think Lifework is doing that,” explained Ginger Martin.

Her involvement with Freedom Challenge began after Lori Degler, formerly with Operation Mobilization and a Lifework Leadership classmate, invited her to a luncheon about the program.

“I think the community of leaders that have been connected through Lifework has been incredibly impactful,” said Amanda Forman, a Lifework Leadership alum and former Lifework Program Director. “There are so many alumni that have encouraged each other, started nonprofits together,
been examples or leadership or support to one another. Having a strong community of Christian leaders is so important, and I think Lifework Leadership has fostered that here in South Florida.”

Now working as lead business designer for Zone in the UK, Forman gave this example: “I was talking to a friend from Lifework the other day about managing teams - she said that every time she walks into her place of work she views it as walking in to God’s temple and prays that God would give her an open mind. What an encouraging reminder!”

Good News Publisher Leslie Feldman, who is also a Lifework Alum, said, “To me, Lifework Leadership has been the breeding ground of spirituality, like a tree that has been producing the fruit that is now nourishing our community.”

“I feel like I’m in the spiritual formation business,” said Brad Schmidt, lead pastor at City-Church Fort Lauderdale and the current director of Equip, which includes Lifework Leadership. Having been involved in several related initiatives, Schmidt is passionate about the integration of faith and work. He explains why: “Barna research says 78 percent of American Christians compartmentalize their faith from their work... Saint Paul said, ‘Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it all for the glory of the Lord.’ If people aren’t able to worship God Monday through Friday in their work, that’s a big problem. I think the worship of God is at stake. I think the relevance of the church is at stake... so to be a part of a movement that is connecting Sunday to Monday to me is the most important task I can possibly do.”

Introducing new models

This year, the National Christian Foundation South Florida has begun two new Lifework Leadership experiences: A new Thursday night program, entitled Lifework Journey, adapts the original Lifework Leadership curriculum to a condensed night class format to accommodate middle and upper-level managers and upwardly mobile professionals who often can’t break away from work during the day.

“Lifework Journey will reach new people, be more accessible and also create a community for the Lifework Alumni to come to as well. So if you’ve already been through Lifework, this is going to be new content. It’s going to be an annual renewable subscription. It’s going to be like a faith and work club.”

In addition, the National Christian Foundation South Florida has formed a partnership with Palm Beach Atlantic University, providing the traditional Lifework Leadership program through PBA’s Center for Biblical Leadership in Palm Beach County.

Laura Bishop, executive vice president of advancement at PBA and a Lifework Leadership Alum, explained, “At Palm Beach Atlantic University, we want to be positively impacting the community not just by producing great leaders that build companies, corporations, organizations but also directly impacting leaders. We saw Lifework Leadership as a really powerful way to be able to host that on campus, bring leaders here, be able to use our resource in our facilities and also invite the Lifework Leadership teams to mentor students and to be involved in helping shape The Center for Biblical Leadership, speaking into it and also just having them be part of our com-
Community as we have different guest speakers and different unique opportunities to also invite them to engage.”

Having served as executive director of the National Christian Foundation South Florida in the past, Bishop knows the ins and outs of Lifework Leadership intimately. “What was impactful for me from being a student to helping lead it … I was so blessed and intrigued to see the faces of these great leaders that I respected so much in the community, seeing the lightbulbs going off in their head of how they could more intentionally use their business – their non Christian business that was there to make a profit and to make a difference too – how they could use their business as ministry, and for the first time having heard about Corporate Chaplains of America, just putting the pieces of the puzzle together of how you can be a believer, run a business and have this neat opportunity to be able to shepherd your employees in a different kind of way.”

World-class speakers

Recalling her time in the program, Bishop added, “It’s just such a profound opportunity to hear from these incredible speakers known nation-wide who come so humbly and personally and in this kind of small setting to have 60 people in a room where you can process. They are so vulnerable and share their hearts and so often share mistakes they made and how God still comes through and blesses and gives second chances."

The lineup of speakers for their year’s class is shaping up to include Ed Kobel, president and CEO of DeBartolo Development; David McKinnon, one of the nation’s most successful franchise builders and Chairman at TriniD; Mart Green, founder and CEO of Mardel Christian & Education, and an heir to the Hobby Lobby companies; Bob Lupton, a Christian community developer and founder of FCS Urban Ministries in Atlanta; Os Guinness, an English author and social critic, and others. Local business case studies will also be presented by professionals such as Janice Worth, founder of Anushka Spa, Salon & Cosmedical Centre; Bob Denison, president of Denison Yachting, and Mike Pappas, President and CEO of The Keyes Company.

Global reach

Beyond this 15-year legacy, Lifework Leadership of South Florida is an affiliate of the global Lifework Leadership organization empowered by CityChangers that is bringing this leadership model to the world. Originally founded in Orlando as the Greater Orlando Leadership Forum in 1992, Lifework Leadership’s reach has grown to over 12 cities in six nations, beginning with Atlanta, GA, Northeast Ohio, Jacksonville, Nairobi, Kenya, New York City, Pretoria, South Africa, Tampa Bay, and Washington D.C.

According to Anton Venter, President of Lifework Leadership Global, the program has expanded to Europe and now to Australasia as well. “A lot of people here in South Florida don’t know about the global aspect, but there is a lot of value to know that you are a part of something bigger that is so successful globally.”

On a global level, Lifework Leadership has three programs: Lifework Glocal, the traditional Lifework Leadership experience and Lifework Groups.

Glocal is launching in September as a local journey with senior leaders from around the world for a global experience that combines in person and Zoom experiences on line. Small groups will meet in board rooms all over the world linked by Zoom with a live speaker from which they can ask questions.

Lifework Groups is a small group curriculum that runs 8 weeks with 15-minute videos church leaders can use to have a discussion around the integration of Church and Faith. This program is for everyone who wants to integrate their faith into their work space and has been active for about three years.

“Globally we now have about 4,000 people that have gone through the program and with all the new cities and continents, it is making inroads into cultures that are traditionally not that accessible… just by taking Christianity into the marketplace and not the traditional church venue… The whole idea of marketplace ministry and taking the gospel outside the four walls of the church is a marvelous mechanism.”

If you would like to learn more about Lifework Leadership locally, visit LifeworkSouthFlorida.com. The global leadership site can be reached at Lifeworkleadership.org.
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“Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it’s in your power to help them.”

~ Proverbs 3:27 NLT

Ginger Martin
President and CEO

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