

WHITE PAPER

Faith and Belief at Work: From Compliance to Capability

A Board-Level Framework for Human-Centred Organisations,
Trust, Talent and Responsible AI

Brian J. Grim, Ph.D.

From legal baseline to reliable practice.

From belonging to lasting value.

A journey of purpose, people and performance.



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A Board-Level Framework for Trust, Human Capital and
Responsible AI

Draft White Paper for UK Boards

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Faith and belief are already present wherever people are present. The question is whether organisations will engage them with clarity, confidence and care.

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Executive Summary

In an age of artificial intelligence, organisations will increasingly compete not only on technology, but on their ability to cultivate the uniquely human qualities that technology cannot generate. Faith-friendly workplaces are one practical expression of that human-centred capability.

Faith and belief in the workplace have moved from a peripheral inclusion issue to a Board-level governance question about culture, trust, risk, human capital, talent management, responsible technology and organisational maturity.

This White Paper argues that faith-friendly workplaces are not simply another inclusion initiative. They are one practical and measurable expression of human-centred business: the capacity to recognise people as whole persons with dignity, conscience, identity, relationships, responsibilities and purpose.

Key Evidence

Faith and belief are already present wherever people are present. They shape identity, ethics, family life, community, service, vocation and moral judgement for many employees. For others, deeply held philosophical, humanist or non-religious convictions play a similar role. These convictions do not disappear when people come to work. They influence how people understand fairness, responsibility, trust, dignity and contribution.

This is not a marginal issue in the UK workforce. Leading sources differ in their estimates because they use different methods, geographies and question wording. But together they show the same governance reality: Britain remains substantially religious, while also including a very large non-religious population. Boards should therefore avoid assuming either that religion has disappeared from working life or that one religious pattern defines the workforce.

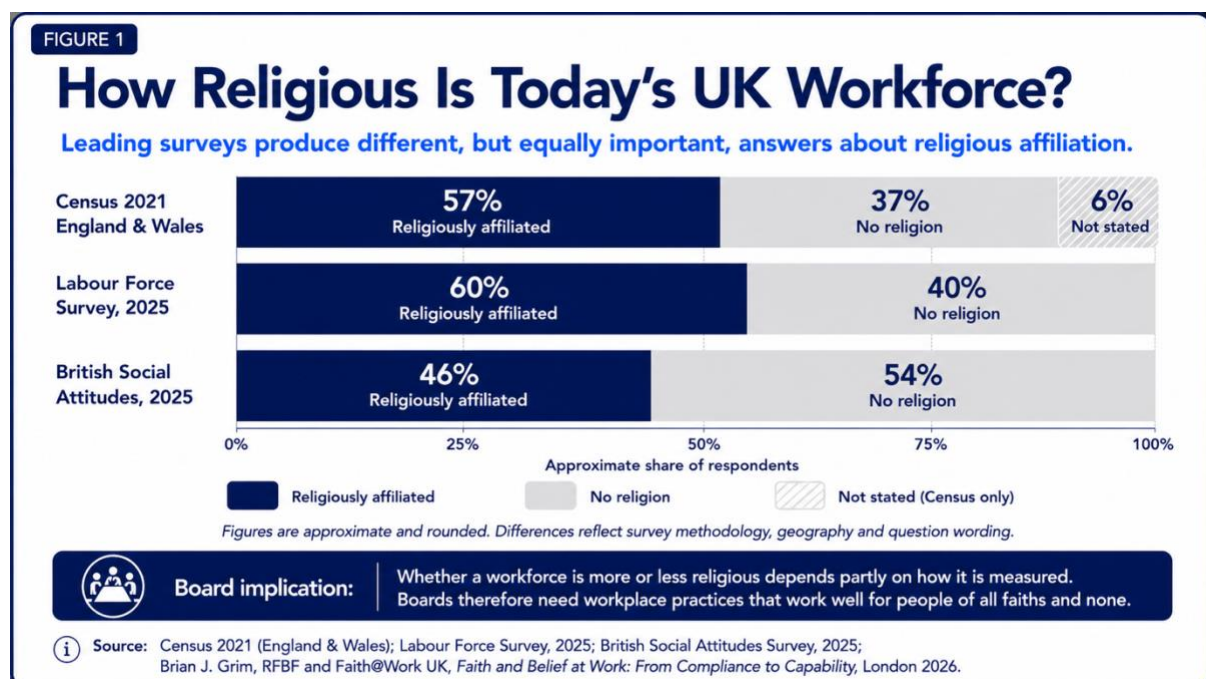


Figure 1: How Religious Is Today's UK Workforce?

Leading sources produce different estimates of religious affiliation because they use different methods, geographies and question wording. But they point to the same practical conclusion for Boards: the UK workforce includes both substantial religious affiliation and substantial non-affiliation. Organisations should therefore avoid relying on a single headline statistic and instead build workplace practices that work well for people of all faiths and none.

The practical implication is clear. Faith-friendly practice is not about privileging religion over non-religion, or Christianity over other traditions. It is about building organisational capability for a mixed society: employees who identify with religious communities, employees who identify with no religion, and employees whose beliefs, conscience or worldview may not fit neatly into either category. For Boards, this strengthens the case for clear principles, equipped managers, trusted processes and a culture in which people of all faiths and none can contribute with dignity.

This mixed workforce already sits within a legal framework that protects religion or belief. In Great Britain, the Equality Act 2010 covers religion, philosophical belief and lack of religion or belief, with protections against direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Acas guidance makes clear that these protections apply across workplace decisions, colleague behaviour, work-related social events and remote working contexts. In Northern Ireland, the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and related legislation protect religious belief and political opinion.

Yet the case for faith-friendly workplaces is not only demographic or legal. It is also strategic. A 2026 Religious Freedom & Business Foundation global study, *Faith, Belief, and the Future of Corporate Culture*, analysed the publicly stated values of 400 leading companies across the United States, Europe, Southeast Asia and China. The study found strong convergence around deeply human values, including innovation, integrity, people focus, collaboration, customer focus, responsibility, sustainability and corporate citizenship.

These are not merely technical capabilities. They are human virtues. They are formed through relationships, communities, moral traditions and systems of meaning. Faith and belief traditions are among the places where many employees develop the habits of conscience, service, stewardship, responsibility and moral judgement on which healthy organisational cultures depend.

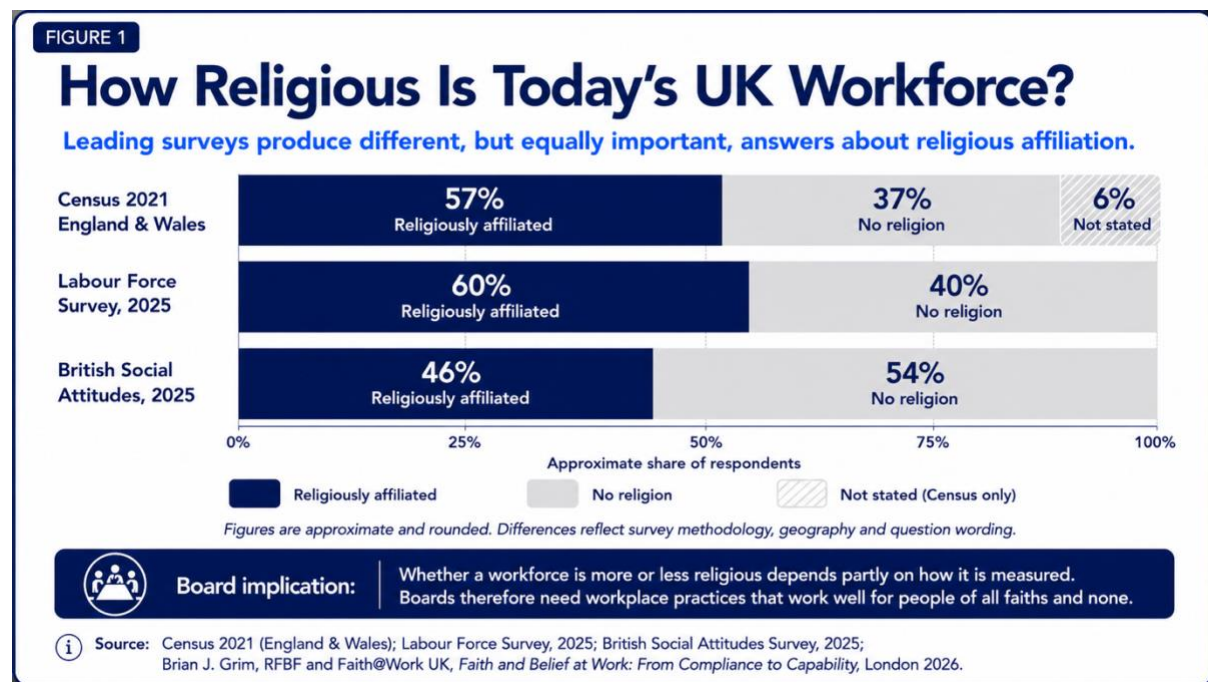


Figure 2: Global Top Corporate Values.

A 2026 Religious Freedom & Business Foundation analysis of 400 leading companies across the United States, Europe, Southeast Asia and China found strong convergence around deeply human values, including innovation, integrity, people focus, collaboration, customer focus and responsibility. This reinforces the case that organisations increasingly depend on qualities formed through culture, relationships, moral judgement and systems of meaning.

The challenge is that workplace practice has not yet caught up with this human-centred aspiration. Many organisations still default either to legal compliance or quiet avoidance when it comes to religion or belief. A smaller number have developed structured, faith-friendly approaches that strengthen belonging, employee voice, manager confidence and trust.

Employee experience confirms that this is not merely an organisational-practice gap. Pearn Kandola's 2023 *Religion at Work* research, based on 6,315 survey participants across six religious groups in the UK and US and a follow-up qualitative survey of 470 participants, found that many religious employees experience significant barriers to religious expression at work. Only 36% felt their line manager was happy for them to take time off for religious festivals. Forty-seven per cent did not feel comfortable discussing religious festivals they celebrate at work. Nineteen per cent had requests to take annual leave for religious holidays or festivals rejected. Of those who wore religious dress or symbols in other aspects of life, only 23% were prepared to do so at work, and among those who did wear religious dress or symbols at work, only 16% felt comfortable doing so. The report concluded that people of all faiths, including Christians, often felt as if they were in the minority in the workplace.



Figure 3: Religion at Work: The Employee Experience Gap.

Pearn Kandola's 2023 Religion at Work research shows that many employees of faith experience barriers to religious expression at work, including discomfort discussing religious festivals, uncertainty about manager support, rejected leave requests and reluctance to wear religious dress or symbols. The Board lesson is clear: legal protection does not automatically create lived confidence, psychological safety or consistent practice.

The same gap is visible at organisational level. The 2026 FTSE 100 REDI Monitor, a public-facing research analysis by the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, assesses visible evidence of faith-and-belief workplace practice among major companies. Unlike the full Faith-Friendly Workplace REDI Index, which is based on company-submitted evidence, the REDI Monitor examines what can be seen externally through public sources. In 2026, more than one-third of FTSE 100 companies showed no visible evidence of faith-and-belief workplace practice, while fewer than one in five demonstrated leading visible practice. The median score was 2 out of 15. This does not mean nothing is happening internally. It means practice is fragmented, uneven and often not yet visible, measurable or governed at Board level.

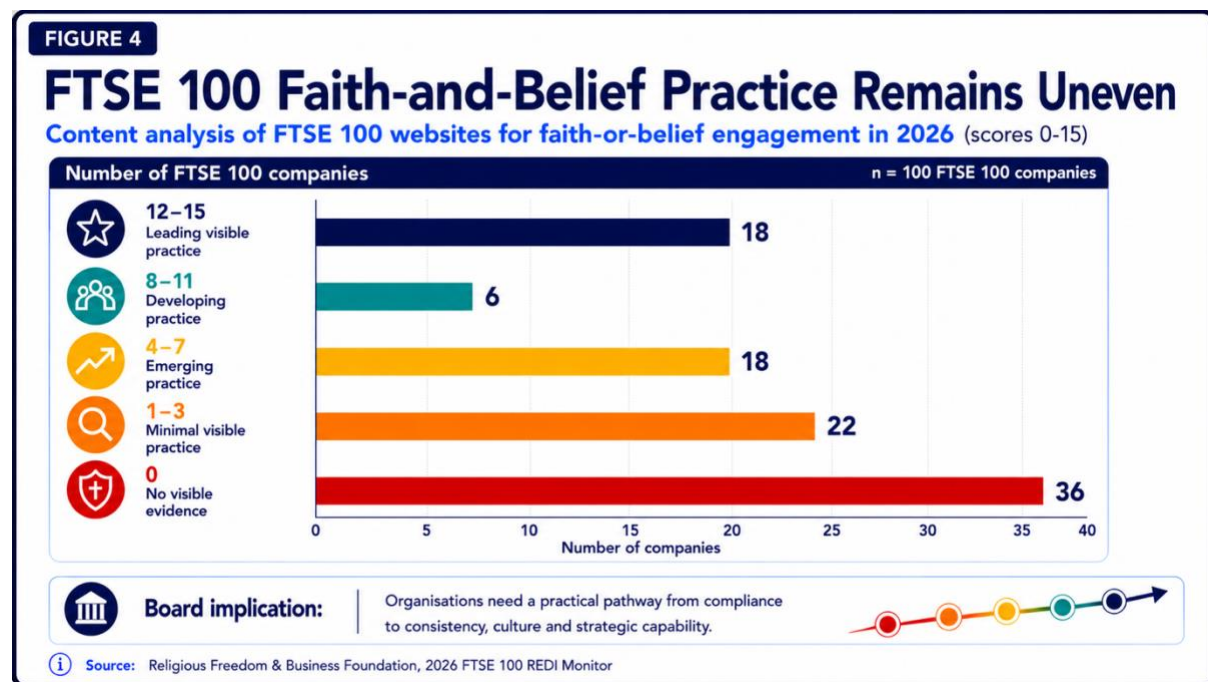


Figure 4: FTSE 100 Faith-and-Belief Practice Remains Uneven.

The 2026 FTSE 100 REDI Monitor shows highly uneven visible faith-and-belief practice. While 18 companies demonstrate leading visible practice, 36 show no visible evidence, and the median score is 2 out of 15. This points to the need for a practical Board-level maturity model.

The core problem this White Paper addresses is simple:

Faith and belief are protected by law and central to identity for many employees, yet most organisations lack a consistent, strategic framework for engaging them in ways that build trust, reduce risk and strengthen culture.

The aim is not to make workplaces religious. It is to make them more human.

This matters more urgently because artificial intelligence is reshaping work. AI is changing how organisations make decisions, organise work, assess performance, support employees, serve customers and create value. It can increase speed, scale and efficiency. But it cannot generate the human qualities on which organisations depend: dignity, conscience, trust, belonging, judgement, compassion, courage and purpose.

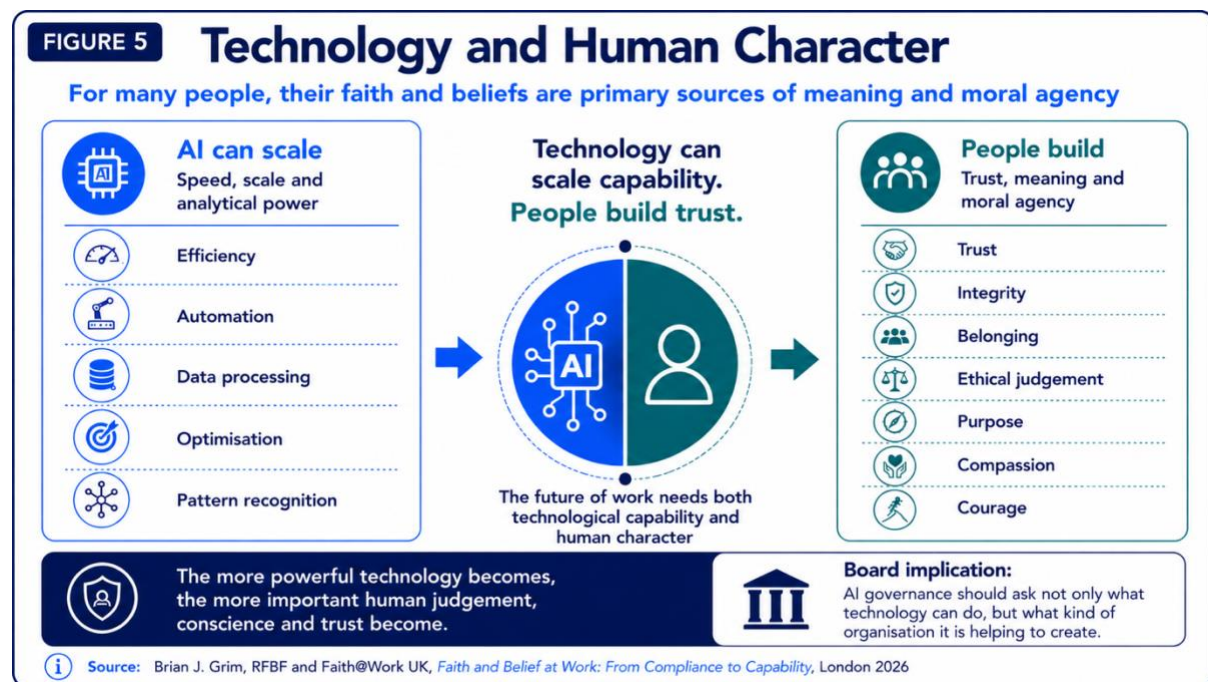


Figure 5: Technology and Human Character.

AI can scale efficiency, automation, data processing, optimisation and pattern recognition. But high-performing organisations also require trust, integrity, belonging, ethical judgement, purpose, compassion and courage. The more powerful technology becomes, the more important human judgement, conscience and trust become.

As organisations become more technologically powerful, Boards need to ask whether they are also becoming more human.

This White Paper uses the **Faith-and-Belief Maturity Journey** as its practical Board model. The model helps Boards move from legal baseline to reliable practice, from belonging to lasting value, and from fragmented activity to strategic capability. It is grounded in a wider human-centred view of business: the conviction that people are whole persons, not simply workers, consumers, data points or costs.

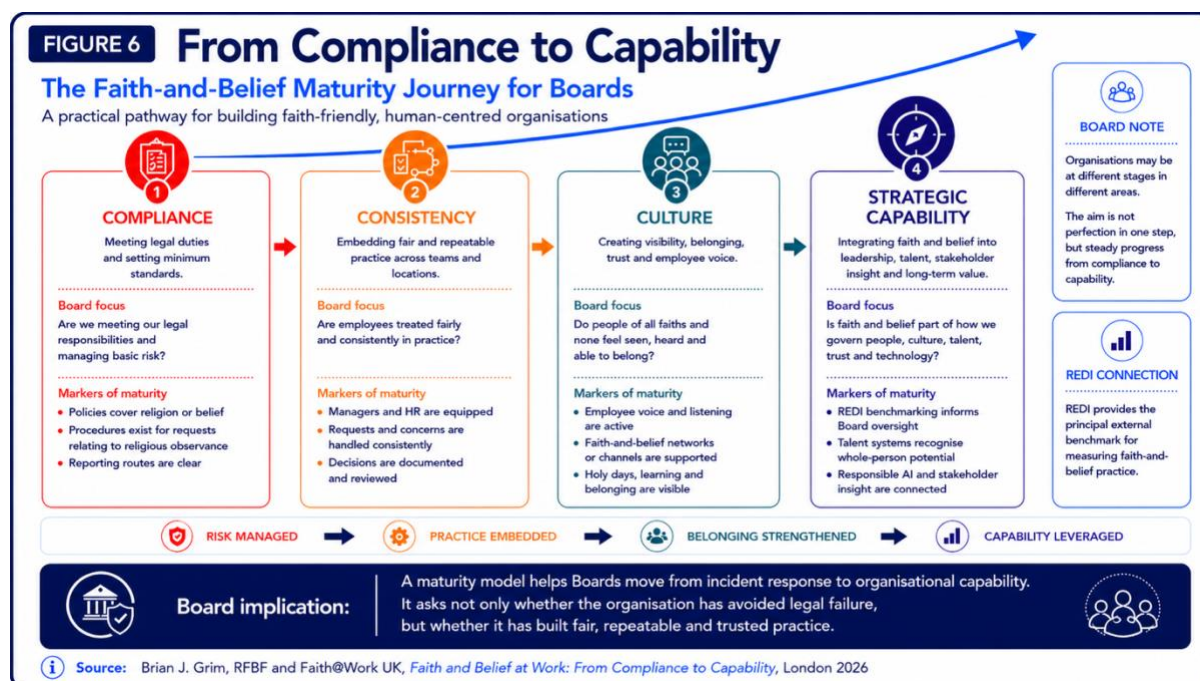


Figure 6: From Compliance to Capability: The Faith-and-Belief Maturity Journey.

Developed by Brian J. Grim for the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation and Faith@Work UK as part of Faith and Belief at Work: From Compliance to Capability, prepared for Dare to Overcome: The Economics of Kindness, London 2026.

The four-stage maturity journey helps Boards assess how organisations move from legal baseline to consistent practice, lived culture and strategic capability. REDI provides the principal external benchmark for measuring faith-and-belief practice, while the Board Toolkit translates the journey into assessment, action and oversight.

The journey has four stages:

1. **Compliance:** meeting legal duties and setting minimum standards.
2. **Consistency:** embedding fair and repeatable practice across teams and locations.
3. **Culture:** creating visibility, belonging, trust and employee voice.
4. **Strategic Capability:** integrating faith and belief into leadership, talent, stakeholder insight and long-term value.

Within that wider human-centred lens, faith-friendly practice becomes one of the clearest practical tests of organisational maturity. Religion or belief touches some of the deepest dimensions of human identity: conscience, meaning, values and worldview. Organisations that engage these dimensions well are building capabilities that reach far beyond religion itself: listening, fairness, practical flexibility, dialogue, ethical judgement, trust across difference and respect for the whole person.

There are clear organisational reasons to act. Faith-friendly workplaces can strengthen belonging, wellbeing, engagement, retention, ethical culture, trust across difference, cultural intelligence, stakeholder understanding and responsible innovation. They help organisations become more mature human institutions.

External research reinforces this wider human-centred business case. Gartner's 2022 Future of Work Reinvented Implementation Survey found that work models combining flexible experiences, intentional collaboration and empathy-based management were associated with markedly stronger employee outcomes. Where these human-centric attributes were

present, employees were 3.8 times more likely to report high performance, 3.2 times more likely to report high intent to stay and 3.1 times more likely to report low fatigue. The research did not examine faith-and-belief practice directly. Its relevance is that it demonstrates the organisational value of designing work around human needs rather than expecting people to conform to rigid systems. This White Paper treats faith-friendly practice as one practical expression of that wider human-centred capability.

Strategic Capability in Practice: Three Executive Case Studies

Strategic Capability looks different in different organisations, but its underlying characteristics are remarkably consistent. To illustrate this, the White Paper is accompanied by three online executive case studies drawn from leading organisations in three very different industries: digital infrastructure, professional services, and consumer goods and beverages. Together they demonstrate that faith-and-belief capability is not sector-specific. Each organisation expresses it in its own way, yet all three show the same underlying pattern: faith and belief can strengthen leadership, culture, trust, purpose, resilience and long-term value.

Each in-depth case study includes a short executive video and a Board-level visual summary illustrating how organisations can progress along the Faith-and-Belief Maturity Journey from Compliance to Strategic Capability.

Bruce Owen of Equinix shows how faith-inclusive leadership strengthens judgement, resilience and trust in a global technology company.

Sumreen Ahmad of Accenture shows how faith inclusion evolves from employee-network activity into organisational culture, leadership and strategic capability.

J. Frank Harrison III of Coca-Cola Consolidated shows how purpose rooted in enduring faith-inspired values becomes organisational culture that develops people, strengthens service and sustains long-term growth.

The full case studies are [available online](#) as companion resources to this White Paper, providing practical examples of how organisations can move from compliance to capability in ways that strengthen both people and performance.

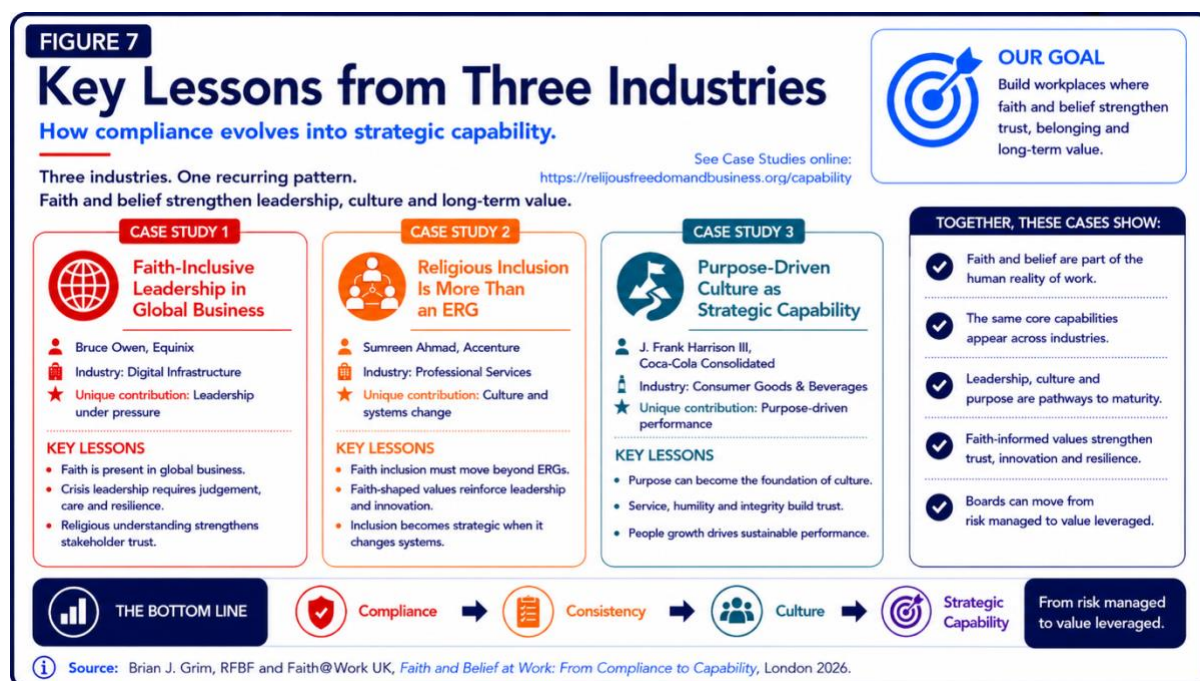


Figure 7: Key Lessons from Three Industries: How compliance evolves into strategic capability.

Across digital infrastructure, professional services, and consumer goods and beverages, these case studies show that the same core pattern appears: faith and belief can strengthen leadership, culture, trust, purpose, resilience and long-term value.

If it isn't counted, it doesn't count

Boards cannot govern what remains invisible. The Faith-Friendly Workplace REDI Index provides the principal external benchmark for measuring faith-and-belief workplace capability. Unlike the REDI Monitor, which is a public-facing scan of visible practice, the REDI Index is based on company-submitted evidence and is designed to help organisations assess, compare and improve their faith-and-belief workplace practice.

The point is not that everything important can be reduced to a metric. Belonging, trust, conscience, dignity and courage are deeper than measurement alone can capture. But measurement creates visibility, discipline and accountability. It helps Boards ask whether faith-and-belief practice is moving from aspiration to evidence, and from isolated activity to organisational capability.

Administered annually by the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, the REDI Index assesses concrete practices including visible recognition of religion or belief, faith-and-belief employee networks, best-practice sharing, HR training, chaplaincy or spiritual care, stakeholder insight, procedures for requests relating to religious observance, religious discrimination reporting, faith-related professional development and approved events, matched giving to eligible faith-based and religious organisations, recognition of holy days, and optional bonus practices that demonstrate innovation and wider leadership.

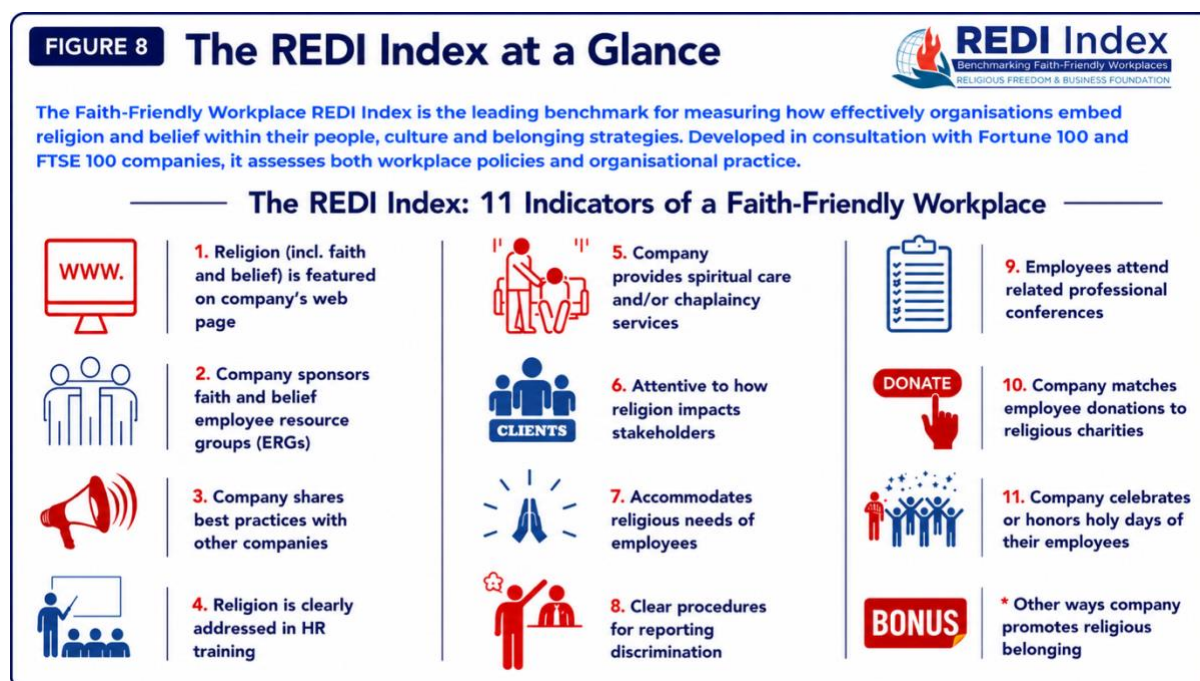


Figure 8: The REDI Index at a Glance.

*The Faith-Friendly Workplace REDI Index provides the principal external benchmark for faith-and-belief workplace capability. Its 11 indicators translate broad commitments into observable organisational practice: visible recognition of religion or belief, faith-and-belief employee resource groups, best-practice sharing, HR training, chaplaincy or spiritual care, stakeholder awareness, requests relating to religious observance, reporting routes, professional development, matched giving, holy day recognition and innovation. The full scoring framework is provided in **Appendix A: Board Toolkit**.*

For that reason, this White Paper recommends that Boards use the REDI Index as the principal external benchmark for faith-and-belief workplace capability, while using the tools in **Appendix A: Board Toolkit** to translate that external benchmark into internal assessment, Board discussion, action planning and reporting. Figure 9 provides an example of a key Board Diagnostic tool.



Figure 9: Board Diagnostic Tool

Four wider developments frame this White Paper.

The first is the growing interest in purpose-led business. Blueprint for Better Business provides an important companion framework because it asks companies to consider what kind of organisation they are becoming, not only what they produce. It argues that a purpose-driven business treats everyone with dignity, welcomes constructive dialogue, fosters innovation and personal accountability, and protects and nurtures those who work for it so that people learn, contribute and thrive. Faith-friendly workplaces provide one practical test of whether those commitments reach the whole person in day-to-day working life.

The second is artificial intelligence. AI is forcing organisations to ask deeper questions about human dignity, judgement, autonomy, trust and the purpose of work. Blueprint's AI framework challenges companies not only to ask how much they can automate or how much cost they can save, but to ask what outcome they are trying to move towards and how AI can help. Pope Leo XIV's *Magnifica Humanitas* similarly frames AI as a challenge requiring shared discernment about dignity, the common good, power, participation and the future of human community.

The third is the need for a more human-centred form of leadership. Baringa's work on the Economics of Kindness provides a practical managerial lens. Kindness in this context is not softness. It means giving people a voice, telling the truth, facing difficult issues directly and protecting dignity in difficult trade-offs. That discipline is especially important in pluralistic workplaces and in organisations navigating the impact of AI.

The fourth is the changing field of talent management. Organisations are increasingly asking how to identify, develop, deploy and retain human capability in a world shaped by AI, workforce disruption and continuous reinvention. The work of Binna Kandola at Pearn Kandola is especially relevant here, because it highlights how bias, identity, religion at work, workplace culture and organisational systems shape who is seen, heard, developed and advanced. Faith and belief belong in that conversation because they shape not only

belonging, but also motivation, visibility, development, satisfaction, retention and leadership potential. If organisations depend on integrity, judgement, collaboration, responsibility and purpose, they must ask whether their talent systems recognise the deeper sources of those qualities.

Faith and belief belong in this wider conversation because they raise the same underlying question: are people being treated as persons, or as productive units, behavioural data and costs to be managed? A faith-friendly workplace reminds organisations that employees are people with conscience, identity, purpose, relationships and moral agency. This is exactly the kind of human-centred lens that AI governance now requires.

The central recommendation is that organisations move from compliance to capability. Compliance is necessary, but it is only the floor. The greater opportunity is to build organisations that can engage religion or belief constructively as part of trust, belonging, culture, governance, talent management and human-centred leadership.

Within the next 12 months, Boards and executive teams can take practical steps: benchmark using the REDI Index, review policies, strengthen procedures for requests relating to religious observance and reporting, build manager capability, support faith-and-belief employee networks, include religion and belief in belonging communications, recognise holy days, review scheduling practices for faith-and-belief sensitivity, review talent systems for hidden assumptions, prepare communication principles for difficult moments, clarify expectations around personal social media and external expression, review AI governance through the lens of dignity and trust, identify stakeholder insight opportunities, and report progress to the Board as part of human capital oversight.

A mature organisation will not treat faith and belief as a problem to manage or a risk to avoid. It will recognise them as part of the human reality of work. It will build the capability to navigate difference with clarity, fairness and confidence, including external religion-related conflict, attacks on places of worship, competing commitments, conscience concerns, questions about participation in workplace campaigns or celebrations, and personal expression outside work that may affect workplace trust. It will also ask whether talent systems are capable of recognising whole-person potential, including the sources of meaning, conscience and moral motivation that shape how people lead and contribute.

This White Paper therefore calls organisations to make four shifts:

- from avoidance to confidence;
- from fragmented practice to strategic clarity;
- from compliance to capability;
- from policy to lived culture.

Key Actions for Boards and Executive Teams



This White Paper recommends that Boards and executive teams:

1. Treat faith and belief as a Board-level governance issue, recognising that it intersects with organisational culture, human capital, global operations, stakeholder expectations, responsible technology and risk.
2. Move from compliance to capability by building consistent policies, confident managers, trusted reporting channels and mature cultures of belonging, rather than relying on legal compliance alone.
3. Use the Faith-Friendly Workplace REDI Index as the principal external benchmark for assessing faith-and-belief inclusion, identifying gaps and measuring progress over time.
4. Build manager capability so that leaders can recognise when religion or belief may be relevant, respond respectfully, follow clear procedures, seek appropriate guidance and handle requests relating to religious observance with consistency and care.
5. Review talent systems to ensure that recruitment, performance assessment, promotion, succession, mentoring, sponsorship and retention practices recognise whole-person potential and do not unintentionally disadvantage employees whose faith or belief shapes identity, conscience, motivation or participation.
6. Prepare for difficult moments by establishing communication principles, escalation routes and fair processes for religion-related conflict, competing commitments, conscience concerns and personal expression outside work.
7. Connect faith-friendly practice to purpose-led and AI-enabled leadership, recognising that organisations increasingly depend on uniquely human qualities that technology cannot generate: dignity, conscience, trust, judgement, belonging and purpose.
8. Apply the Economics of Kindness as a leadership discipline, creating workplaces where people have a voice, difficult issues are addressed honestly, and dignity is protected in everyday decisions.
9. Use the Faith-and-Belief Maturity Journey, supported by REDI and the Board Toolkit, to assess whether governance, culture, leadership, talent systems and technology are strengthening the human foundations of long-term value.

Framing Question

That is the deeper test behind every recommendation in this White Paper:

As organisations become more technologically powerful, are they also becoming more human?