CASE STUDY 1

Faith-Inclusive Leadership in Global Business

Bruce Owen, Equinix, and the pathway from leadership judgement to organisational decisions

Online resource for *The Overlooked Source of Human Capability and Character: Why Faith and Belief Matter in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*

Organisation	Equinix: digital infrastructure. Bruce Owen is President, Equinix EMEA (Europe, the Middle East and Africa)
Speaker	Bruce Owen, President, Equinix EMEA
Faith or belief contribution	Faith-informed judgement and responsibility
Pathway (Figure 9)	Leadership to organisational decisions
Related points in the paper	Points 1 and 2 (competence and character); Point 6 (religion or belief worldwide); Point 8 (traditions and character); Point 9 (five pathways); Points 11 and 13 (governance)
Key themes	Leadership; crisis management; global operations; faith-and-belief employee networks; Ramadan; stakeholder trust; employee safety; interfaith learning; Board governance
Primary audience	Boards; CEOs; CHROs; General Counsel; faith-and-belief ERG sponsors; global operations leaders; crisis management teams; responsible business leaders

Summary

This case study illustrates the first of the five pathways in Figure 9 of the paper: leadership. It shows how faith-informed judgement and responsibility, together with awareness of religious practice, can shape organisational decisions.

The paper argues that as artificial intelligence changes the balance between competence and character, organisations depend more heavily on qualities of character: wise judgement, integrity, responsibility, trustworthiness, courage, stewardship and care for others. Organisations do not create these qualities from scratch. For many people they are formed and renewed through religion or belief. The Board question is whether organisational conditions allow that character to contribute.

Bruce Owen's reflections on faith-inclusive leadership in global business provide a powerful example. Speaking from his experience leading digital infrastructure across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Owen described a live crisis involving critical national infrastructure, regional security threats, Ramadan, employee safety, customer continuity and high-stakes leadership.

His central message was simple: in global business, faith is already present. The question is whether leaders have the maturity to recognise it, respect it and draw on it wisely.

The business context: crisis, infrastructure and human judgement

Owen began with a crisis.

Tensions in the Middle East had escalated rapidly, and critical national infrastructure across the region had become a target. The data centres his company runs are part of that infrastructure. From that point, he and his team were meeting every morning on crisis calls, receiving intelligence from multiple sources and sometimes reacting by the hour.

Three things came into immediate focus.

First, the safety of people. The company runs 24-hour facilities and had a construction site in the UAE with 600 people building the next data centre. Many of those workers were far from home, and most were Muslim.

Second, customers. The company serves 10,000 customers, including banks, governments, hospitals and communication platforms. If the data centres go dark, parts of the region may go dark with them.

Third, leadership nerve. The crisis was unfolding during Ramadan, the holiest month of the Islamic calendar, when many employees were fasting, praying and reflecting.

In that setting, faith was not an abstract inclusion topic. It was part of real-time operational decision-making. Leaders had to consider safety, customer continuity, geopolitical risk, religious observance, fatigue, judgement, trust and moral responsibility.

Owen put the point starkly: the world is not made only of risk matrices and service-level agreements. Nor can the world be paused because employees are fasting, praying or carrying the emotional weight of conflict in their home region.

This is the leadership pathway in action. Faith and belief are not being handled only as occasional requests or calendar issues. They are part of how leaders understand people, risk, resilience and responsible judgement.

From inclusion issue to strategy, resilience and talent

Owen challenged the common assumption that faith inclusion is only an inclusion question. In global business, he argued, it is also a strategy question, a resilience question and a talent question.

He asked when leaders last heard someone in a high-stakes business setting speak openly about what faith, belief or conscience was telling them. His answer was that this happens rarely. That should concern leaders, because when decisions are made under pressure, in crises or in ethical grey zones, leaders are guided not only by training decks or spreadsheets. They are guided by deeper sources of values, character and judgement.

This connects directly to the paper’s argument that organisations depend on character they did not create (Point 3), and that religion or belief is, for many people, one of the sources through which that character is formed and renewed (Point 7). In Owen’s framing, for many people faith and belief also shape the deeper architecture of leadership.

For global companies, this cannot be treated as marginal. Owen noted that most of the world identifies with a religious or spiritual tradition, and that in the markets he leads across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, faith is not a private hobby. It is woven into how people understand time, money, family, ethics, conflict and trust. The paper makes the same point: major global estimates put religious affiliation at between three-quarters and nearly nine in ten people worldwide, which makes religion or belief a people, customer and market issue for global businesses (Point 6).

For Boards and senior leaders, the lesson is clear: to ignore faith and belief in global business is to lead with incomplete information.

Faith traditions as sources of leadership wisdom

One of the strongest parts of Owen's talk was his description of faith and belief traditions as sources of wisdom for business.

He did not present them as competing claims. He presented them as reservoirs of insight into human flourishing, ethical judgement and life with others.

He pointed to:

- Christianity's emphasis on love, including love of the difficult person, as a discipline relevant to performance management, customer escalations and competitor relationships.
- Islam's principle of justice, with implications for fair transactions, balanced relationships and procurement.
- Judaism's principle of repairing the world, with implications for ESG and stewardship.
- Hindu and Dharmic traditions' emphasis on duty, with implications for leadership pipelines and responsibility.
- Buddhism's pairing of compassion with clear sight, with implications for feedback cultures.
- Sikhism's emphasis on selfless service, with implications for leadership as service to others.
- Secular humanism's commitment to human dignity, evidence and individual rights.

The point was not that a business should adopt any one tradition. The point was that organisations already employ people drawing on these moral and philosophical resources every day, usually silently.

The paper makes a parallel point in Point 8 and Figure 8, which show how teachings and practices across religious and non-religious traditions can help form the character behind the values companies declare. The paper is equally clear that no tradition guarantees good conduct.

Translating this into organisational capability means building the maturity to recognise that these sources can contribute to ethical culture, leadership development, trust, stakeholder understanding and long-term value.

Building guardrails: invite, learn, respect

Owen was equally clear about risk.

Faith can be used badly. It can be weaponised. It can exclude, coerce, divide or import external conflicts into the workplace. For that reason, he argued, organisations that invite faith into workplace life must also build guardrails.

He described Equinix's Faith Connect employee resource group as open to any faith, non-faith and worldview. It has no doctrinal test, no membership card and no insider language. It is built on three commitments:

> **"Invite. Learn. Respect."**

Invite means welcoming people into practices and observances, such as Christmas, Ramadan iftar, Diwali, Yom Kippur or a moment of secular reflection on Human Rights Day.

Learn means coming together not to agree or convert, but to understand. Assumption, he argued, is where much workforce conflict around belief begins.

Respect means protecting the freedom of every person, including the freedom not to believe, to question or to change one's mind.

For the paper, this is a practical example of the governance principles set out in Point 11: voluntary participation, respectful disagreement, clear boundaries and protection from coercion. Faith Connect is not merely a support group or a celebration calendar. It provides a structured way to build religious literacy, trust across difference and maturity around difficult questions.

Back to the crisis room: when faith becomes business capability

Owen returned to the crisis room in the Middle East.

During Ramadan, leaders were making decisions about the construction site, employee safety and customer continuity in the middle of acute geopolitical tension. They were not making those decisions through risk modelling alone.

He described watching Muslim colleagues fast through daylight hours while making decisions of enormous consequence, with live intelligence streaming in about threats in the region they call home. They showed up with resolve, steadfastness, patience and care for one another.

He also described Jewish colleagues in London facing antisemitic attacks in their neighbourhoods, yet continuing to serve global colleagues and customers.

This was not sentimental. It was operational.

The data centres stayed up. The construction site stayed safe. Customers were served. Employees went home to their families.

Owen's conclusion was that this is not a distraction from business. It is business.

That is the heart of this case. Character formed in part through faith or belief found expression in organisational decisions. Faith and belief are not treated as separate from performance, resilience or leadership. They are recognised as part of the human foundations that make performance, resilience and leadership possible.

What this case shows

This case illustrates at least seven ways in which faith or belief gained organisational expression through leadership.

1. **Faith and belief are connected to leadership judgement**
   Owen's example shows faith and belief shaping how leaders think under pressure, especially when the spreadsheets run out of answers. This aligns with the paper's argument that wise judgement, responsibility and trustworthiness become more consequential as technology and complexity increase (Points 1 and 2).

2. **Faith and belief are connected to global operations**
   The crisis involved data centres, government intelligence, regional conflict, 24-hour facilities, construction workers, customers and critical infrastructure. Faith was present because people were present, and because global operations take place in societies where religion shapes time, trust, obligation and community.

3. **Faith and belief are connected to employee safety and wellbeing**
   Hundreds of workers were fasting during Ramadan while operating in a heightened risk environment. Leaders had to understand the practical and human realities of observance, fatigue, resilience and care.

4. **Faith and belief are connected to customer and stakeholder trust**
   The company's customers included banks, governments, hospitals and communication platforms. Keeping infrastructure operating was a matter of public trust as well as business continuity.

5. **Faith-and-belief networks provide more than belonging**
   Faith Connect demonstrates how an employee resource group can build religious literacy, interfaith trust, non-faith inclusion and respectful dialogue. It is an example of employee voice becoming organisational capability.

6. **Guardrails matter**
   Owen's "invite, learn, respect" framework recognises both the value and the risk of faith at work. It avoids coercion, insider language and exclusion by making freedom, learning and respect central.

7. **Senior leaders set the temperature**
   Owen's challenge to executives was clear: leaders do not need to share another person's faith to protect that person's right to bring it. Silence from senior leaders creates organisational silence. Sponsorship, presence and questions from leadership create permission and trust.

Board implications

For Boards, this case raises practical questions under each of the paper's four Board lenses.

RECOGNISE **Does the organisation recognise the potential contribution of religion or belief?**

- **Leadership:** Are senior leaders equipped to recognise when faith, belief or conscience may shape judgement, resilience and decision-making?
- **Global operations:** Do leaders understand how religion or belief shapes time, family, ethics, conflict, trust and stakeholder expectations in key markets?

ENABLE **Can employees bring religion or belief into working life appropriately and voluntarily?**

- **Guardrails:** Does the organisation have clear principles that make faith inclusion open, voluntary, respectful and inclusive of people of all faiths and none?
- **Talent:** Are employees encouraged to bring judgement, conscience, character and moral courage into leadership, without being pressured to disclose or perform identity?

VALUE **Is the organisation open to perspectives and insights shaped by religion or belief?**

- **Employee voice:** Are faith-and-belief employee networks treated only as inclusion groups, or are they also sources of cultural insight, trust and organisational learning?
- **Crisis governance:** Do crisis-management processes consider the human realities of faith, belief, observance, grief, fear, conflict and community obligation?

REVIEW **Are the organisational conditions working consistently and responsibly?**

- **Measurement:** Is faith-and-belief practice visible in Board reporting, human capital review, REDI benchmarking or culture measurement?

The four lenses are those in Figure 13 of the paper. They are not sequential steps. Boards govern the organisational conditions for contribution, not what employees believe.

Practical leadership lessons

This case suggests five practical lessons for senior leaders.

1. **Ask better questions**
   A simple leadership question can open space for maturity: What does faith inclusion look like for us?
2. **Sponsor without controlling**
   Senior leaders do not need to share every tradition represented in the workforce. They do need to protect the conditions in which people of all faiths and none can contribute with dignity.
3. **Build inclusive structures**
   Faith-and-belief work should not depend only on informal goodwill. Structures such as employee networks, clear principles, visible sponsorship and reporting routes help make practice reliable.
4. **Keep guardrails clear**
   Healthy faith inclusion requires openness, non-coercion, freedom of belief and non-belief, respect, and clear standards of conduct.
5. **Connect faith inclusion to business reality**
   Faith and belief may matter in crisis rooms, customer relationships, global markets, leadership pipelines, wellbeing, stakeholder trust and responsible decision-making. Mature organisations learn how to see those connections.

How this case connects to the paper

The Overlooked Source of Human Capability and Character argues that as AI expands what organisations can do, the character of those deciding what they should do becomes more consequential, and that religion or belief is an important and frequently overlooked source of that character.

Bruce Owen's example shows what that means in practice.

In this case, faith and belief are not peripheral. They are present in crisis response, global infrastructure, employee safety, customer continuity, leadership judgement, interfaith trust and organisational resilience.

This is the leadership pathway: faith-informed judgement and responsibility shaping organisational decisions, within guardrails that protect people of all faiths and none. As the paper notes, the five cases differ in sector, geography, scale and level of implementation. This one is offered as an illustration, not a template.

Key quotes

> **“Faith is present not as a policy, not as a decoration, but as a principle.”**

> **“Invite. Learn. Respect.”**

> **“Respect is the load-bearing wall.”**

> **“That is not a distraction from business. That is business.”**

Source note. This case study is based on Bruce Owen’s keynote, *Faith-Inclusive Leadership in Global Business*, given at Dare to Overcome 2026 in Washington, D.C. (20 to 21 May 2026), and on the framework developed in Brian J. Grim, *The Overlooked Source of Human Capability and Character: Why Faith and Belief Matter in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, Religious Freedom & Business Foundation and Faith@Work UK, London, 2026. It is one of five case studies summarised in Point 9 and Figure 9 of the paper. Watch the talk: vimeo.com/1196548364.

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