

FINALIST

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Courage: The Essential Trait Of A Leader

Business owners, managers, or leaders of any kind have a lot going through their heads every minute of every day. What key decisions to make, if a new employee or player is fit for the spot, or simply if there is even enough hours in a day to do everything that needs to be done: this list could go on and on. While the responsibilities of leaders may be diverse, a key attribute that every leader must have is courage. Courage comes from the Latin word "cor" which means heart. One very common misconception of the word is comparing it to bravery or strength; however, to be courageous is to take heartfelt actions (Pater). This would imply that the opposite of courage would not be cowardice, fearfulness, or weakness but being disheartened or giving up. Another example of the opposite of courage is not doing what is deeply called, or to ignore an opportunity to step up and lead. Leadership is the ability to attain positive results by working with and through others, and this cannot be done without a courageous attitude. Because courage is a matter of heart and action, leadership is essential to being a courageous person, encouragement aids the definition of courage, and courage increases productivity, energy, and trust in a team or organization.

Owning a thriving business or coaching a winning team requires courageous leadership. Leadership without courage is a car without fuel (the car has a purpose, but without fuel it won't go far). A coach without courage shows up to the practices and teaches the players how to play the game, but when it comes to game time, he blatantly stands on the sidelines watching. He makes no decisions, he's not fired up about a bad call, he's not encouraging the team, and he's not doing a thing to help win the game. Similarly, a manager without courage might not offer the right amount of encouragement and support to an employee who is just not grasping the job like she had hoped. For example, she lashed out in anger, avoids conflict at all costs, or even pulling the plug and firing the rookie without much of a chance. A real leader would step in and encourage the player or employee every step of the way, teaching and helping him to learn how to do the job to his fullest potential. Courageous leadership requires the extra measure of added heartfelt encouragement to achieve the positive results.

The word encouragement, with emphasis on courage, does a better job at putting the word courage in context. Encouragement is picking a little kid up who is frustrated and has had it with his bike and saying, "Hey, man, you're so close! Keep at it and you'll get there!" Encouragement is helping a friend through who is in a rut in life, and needs someone to lean on. Encouragement is taking heartfelt actions and building someone up, and these heartfelt actions make up the real meaning of courage. This is what makes a real leader.

When courageous leadership is utilized and fulfilled, it can increase work productivity, energy

and trust in an organization. Employees are often more likely to follow heartened leadership as opposed to following someone because of position or title. If a manager takes aside the new employee and works with him, the rookie will inevitably increase productivity because he will have a better understanding of what he is doing. The energy he will have for work will increase because the struggle with constant failures and mistakes will be much less. And now a relationship will be formed between the manager and employee, building trust. This act of courage in leadership is what will attain positive results that come from working with and through others, making businesses and teams thrive.

What makes a good leader is the attribute of courage – real courage, meaning heartfelt actions, rather than bravery or strength. Encouragement has courage imbedded in its core, and it represents that action of real courage. Today, courage is defined as more of a heroic, self glorified word, but real courageous leadership is achieving positive results by working in and through others using heartfelt actions.

Works Cited:

- McCain, John. "In Search Of Courage." *General Reference Center Gold*. Gale, Sept. 2004. Web. Feb. 2014.
- Pater, Robert. "Becoming a Courageous Leader." *General Reference Center Gold*. Gale, May 2006. Web. Feb. 2014.