



mhca's e-Newsletter

Leadership Isn't for Cowards

A Guest Article from Michael Staver

What is one of the most important leadership traits for thriving in life and work? You might guess intuition (for knowing where to take your group next) or persuasiveness (for getting others to go along with you) or resourcefulness (for leveraging resources well). One of the most important is: Courage.

Here's the thing about operating in a challenging environment: there can be serious consequences for making the wrong move. And because demands are so intense and customers are so savvy, you may have to make some pretty courageous choices to get the job done.

Fortunately, there is good news. Courage is not a quality that you're born with or without. It can be developed and nurtured. And if you commit to leading with courage, acting courageously will soon become an automatic response.

Courage is the willingness and ability to face what needs to be faced and to do what needs to be done so that results are achieved, and the culture thrives. Courageous leadership is not only, or even primarily, about

regs and policy, or checklists and inspections, or even sales and profits. Certainly, those are things that must get done or you fail.

Courage is not the absence of fear. It's acting in the face of fear. Here are some elements of courageous leadership:

- **Stays** focused on the desirable results and is unwavering in pursuing them
- **Removes** the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving the result
- **Acts** decisively and takes responsibility for the choices that they make
- **Avoids** excuses and the people that make them
- **Listens** openly and non judgmentally

Here are six steps to help you develop courageous leadership:

A: Accept Your Current Circumstances. I have found that most leaders either overestimate or underestimate the health of their current culture. Very few people have a realistic grasp on it. You as a leader need to look reality in the face and accept it.

T: Take Responsibility. A courageous leader is willing to own the results of his or her choices. Don't blame the higher ups or any other outside conditions for circumstances. As a leader, they're your responsibility. Responsibility is not about blame; it is about response.

T: Take Action. You are never going to have all the data necessary to make the kinds of decisions you need to make as a leader. Analyze the pitfalls and act quickly.

A: Acknowledge Progress. Many leaders are so goal-oriented that they can't see the small wins along the way. Determine the desirable results, determine the benchmarks, and be certain that those benchmarks are acknowledged and celebrated when they are achieved.

C: Commit to Lifelong Learning. If you are leading, you're learning. If you're not learning, you're not leading, regardless of your title. So many leaders get into a leadership role and have the sense that they have "arrived." That's the death knell for leadership success.

K: Kindle Relationships. Courageous leaders are constantly developing people, engaging people, caring about people. This does not mean you should gather your employees and have them put their arms around each other and lead them all in singing Kum Ba Yah. Courageous leadership doesn't mean softening your approach with people. It actually means toughening your approach. It means challenging people, encouraging people, not letting them get away with being less than you know they can be.

Be Courageous!

Mike Staver is the author of *Leadership Isn't for Cowards* and an internationally respected speaker and coach. He led the Leadership Incubator at our recent Winter Conference and the recording is available to members at mhca.com.

For more information on how to lead courageously, visit www.mikestaver.com or send an email to info@mikestaver.com.

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