

HOW TO LEAD WITH COURAGE IN 2020

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When we think of leaders, we might be tempted to think of courageous and heroic figures. The leader is the person at the vanguard of the Marine infantry unit, leading the charge and taking the brunt of any enemy attacks. Leadership is the General Manager or coach of professional sports team, selecting and positioning the team to make the playoffs and compete in the world series or the super bowl. Leadership is the man or woman who stood up for the rights and freedoms of the oppressed, abused, sick, and the poor taking on the majority, and those with deep rooted opposing or old beliefs to provide those they are fighting for a future filled with hope, opportunity, and prosperity.

Of course, this is not the reality for most of us. Most people are supervisors, managers, small business owners, or parents. Our days consist of very little gunfire, billions of dollars in infrastructure and employees, or high-profile community activism.

But that doesn't mean you can rest on your laurels. It is still very important to be courageous and heroic. It's just that this courage will take a different form with no less importance or impact on those you influence and impact.

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What is the Definition of Leader?

There are thousands of books on leadership, each one containing definitions, competencies, and traits of great leaders. Great leaders come in all shapes, sizes, ethnicities. They come from diverse backgrounds, industries, and life experiences. Whenever two or more people come together, leadership emerges.

Leadership competencies and traits can be used to positively influence others with the goal of achieving results for the good or benefit of all. Those same competencies and traits can be used negatively like the mafia boss, a gang leader, a politician, or the media to assert control, obtain or maintain power, or for other selfish, controlling, or financial benefits.

Leadership comes with great responsibility. As a leader with courage you must know what your personal values, have an clear understanding of what your responsibility is and how you will service serve the individuals or the team you are leading.

- ❖ “Leadership is the art of **getting someone else to do something** you want done because he wants to do it.”
 - Dwight D. Eisenhower

- ❖ “Leadership is **influence**. It is not about a title, or position. True Leadership cannot be awarded or assigned. It is earned.”
 - John Maxwell

- ❖ “Leadership is the influence of others in a **positive, vision-driven** direction and is done through the example, conviction, and character of the leader.”
 - Chris Brady

- ❖ Leadership - The character traits, knowledge, and ability of a person to **inspire** and **influence** others to **execute** and **achieve success**.
 - Mark Johnston

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Leading Through Action and Example

The best leaders are action-takers. When we lead through action, we set a positive example for our team and inspire them to similarly take action. In this way, we avoid one of the worst traits that any leader can possess: hypocrisy.

There are few things that will inspire dissent in your ranks as quickly as being seen to be hypocritical.

Nobody likes being asked to do things because they feel that their superior is simply unwilling or even afraid to do it themselves. You are in charge and with that comes responsibility. Simply giving the difficult, hard, or uncomfortable assignments to your team and not taking part in them yourself is an abuse of your power.

People follow others who are **compassionate** and have empathy for others. Each person wants to know you care about how they feel and how safety, finances, business, politics, and changes affect their lives, work, responsibilities, and emotions. They must know that you care about them, the goal or cause, and the value of the results and outcomes of the mission and a vision for a better future.

After they know you care, they want to know you are **competent**. Competency can be observed from a leader and their team by how they plan and achieve their goals, and their drive for results. Great leaders also demonstrate competency as continuous learners who seek out opportunities to sharpen the sword and gain additional knowledge and skills to enhance their leadership capabilities, business acumen, communication skills, and those competencies necessary to lead and achieve success.

People also need to have confidence that the leaders they choose to follow are **capable**. Courageous leaders are capable of doing the things they ask others and are role models. They are capable of implementing and adapting to an everchanging environment. Courageous leaders are capable of motivating and inspiring others with empathy. They are capable of soliciting and accepting the ideas and opinions of others.

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Decisiveness

Leading through action also means being decisive. It means being able to quickly make a decision and be willing to commit to that action.

Many lesser leaders make the mistake of deferring or avoiding decision-making. Their fear is that they'll make the wrong decision and thus lose the respect of their staff.

However, being indecisive is worse than making an unwise or incorrect decision. Being indecisive makes you seem weak. And while taking action can result in a negative outcome, delaying a decision will only ever have negative consequences.

Conversely, it's nearly always inspiring to see someone who makes quick decisions and doesn't doubt themselves. Decisiveness also builds confidence in your team members.

Responsibility

How is decisiveness a mark of courage?

Simply, it means that you're willing to accept the responsibility that comes with the role of being a leader. Being a leader doesn't mean telling others what to do and it certainly doesn't mean getting to take all the credit.

Being a leader means taking responsibility for those you serve and the team. It means protecting them, so they can do their best work. It means making decisions and being willing to deal with the consequences. It's only when we don't want to look bad that we avoid making decisions... and that is ultimately a mark of cowardice.

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Stoicism

Finally, being a courageous leader means that you take your lumps when things do go sour. If you make a mistake, it's important to not only own up to it, but also stay calm and collected when you're reprimanded by your own superiors, or when the organization risks collapsing.

Likewise, it's crucial to remain calm and maintain your bearing in a crisis. That means setting a good example when things seem to be going wrong for the team. Prevent your team from going into a panic. **Stay calm and you'll be able to address the issue in the best possible way.**

How to Be the Hero They Need

Where does all this courage and stoicism come from? How can you acquire it if you don't possess it naturally?

Does it mean trying to act tough?

Not at all.

Being a truly great and courageous leader comes from having the right priorities.

It means forgetting yourself and, instead, focussing on the goals of your organization and the happiness and comfort of your team. When you do that, it's easy to be a courageous leader.