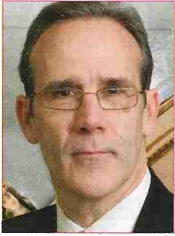




Courage As Catalyst

By Esther Muller and Michael Williams, Ph.D.



Courage ennobles vision, promotes possibilities, and fuels action. It is a cornerstone of entrepreneurship. Courage imbues purpose and drives mission. It encourages entrepreneurs to take risks, persevere through adversity, and achieve beyond expectations. Courage is a propellant powering business-centric professionals to become pioneers and leaders. Courage encourages entrepreneurs to forsake the known and stable, revel in the potential of possibility, and embrace the probability of failure. Courage mediates our indecision associated with pursuing business opportunities and facilitates the ability to act on viable data and informed market intelligence. As English Prime Minister and author Sir Winston Churchill offered, “Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities... because it is the quality which guarantees all others.”

Courage and Others

In *guaranteeing all others*, the *others* comprise a plethora of qualities that we apply in our personal and professional lives. Qualities including honesty, kindness, and fairness constitute our *core competencies* of societal interaction serving as catalysts for meaningful and productive interaction with others. As per Churchill, it is the *first* or *primary human quality*, it is a core competency. It influences thought, marshals action, and stimulates innovation beyond current awareness. Courage presses us to move. It requires us to unmoor ourselves from the dock of inertia, enlist fear and doubt as allies in achievement, and commit to building our visions of the future. Courage nurtures our willingness to evolve and mandates the necessity of change. It requires our cultivating fortitude.

Fortitude is platform courage. Inspired by Italian Renaissance painter Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510) painting *Fortitude* in his 1469 work *The Allegory of Fortitude*, we are reminded of the power and potential inherent in courage enabling us to achieve our personal and entrepreneurial goals. In living each day, we rely on our mental toughness to compete, survive, and sustain. Fortitude fuels courage enabling us to endure disappointment, celebrate achievement, and remain steadfast to our commitments to achievement and actions toward success.

Courage of Mind

Courage flows as consequence of thought. Our thinking defines action, in turn influencing achievement. Moreover, courage is rooted in faith; faith in our ability to encounter danger, endure adversity, and emerge wiser and more effective. Faith enables our beliefs; especially belief in ourselves. As Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero wrote, “A man of courage is also full of faith.” Faith informs our belief systems; what and how we believe. In their article “Toward a courageous mindset: The subjective act and experience of courage,” published in *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, the authors (Hannah, Sweeney & Lester, 2007) present a model of courage that suggests our belief in values such as integrity, honor, valor, independence, duty, selflessness, and loyalty encourage our courageousness. In addition, the authors offer that through our belief in values, we

develop “courageous states of mind” that promote courageous action. They identify four “states of mind” which enable our acting courageously:

1. Self-efficacy: Self-confidence enabled by the knowledge, competencies, and skills necessary to achieve desired goals.
2. Means efficacy: Belief that the means (e.g. resources, tools, or skills) present is sufficient for achieving goals.
3. State hope: Belief that accomplishing a goal is possible, strategies and tactics for goal achievement developable, and plans to achieve a goal will be executable when necessary.
4. Resilience: Belief in the ability to recover from resistance to achievement and continue progressing toward goal achievement.

Courage In Action

Courage requires our presence in action. We must be engaged; applying skills, implementing strategies, and driving toward succeed. Courage demands personal growth from misfortune, momentum from inertia, and wisdom from failure. Courage is intolerant of excuses that inhibit our realizing full potential. Courage compels us to *learn-in-the-moment*, enhancing our capability to achieve we want. As fabulist Aesop wrote “It is easy to be brave from a safe distance.” Courage will not suffer substitutes for the work necessary to become courageous. We must be *in-the-moment* and circumstance encountering, managing, and growing in courage.

Consider Barbara Corcoran, global real estate entrepreneur and panelist on the hit entrepreneurial reality show, *Shark Tank*. She exemplifies *courage-in-action*. After failing at 22 jobs, she borrowed \$1,000, launched The Corcoran Group building it into a six billion dollar global enterprise. Ms. Corcoran’s courage was palpable and applied displaying vision, dominating adversity, and succeeding through achievement.

Coaches are catalysts for developing courage. Through guided reflection and scripted action, coaches can help us establish courageous “states of mind” that enable our acting courageously. Coaches can assist in increasing our self-efficacy, means of efficacy, hope, and resilience.

Courage is a catalyst of change; coaches catalyze courage.

Get coached; get results. ■

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