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*We Help You Focus Clearly,
Organize Effectively,
And Act With Courage*



January, 1992 – Volume 1, Issue 3

What Does Courage Look Like in an Organization?

Courage can often be seen in seemingly small ways. Everyday we make decisions, and so it is the "everyday courage" that sets an organization apart. Here are examples of "everyday courage" that had a major impact:

In an organization where the business was headed south, the division controller was told that it would be political suicide to forecast anything other than a "make" on year end numbers. Despite threats and personal risk, this person consistently told the truth. After a while this "lone voice" was joined by others who also could not deny the reality of their situation. The company is now actively addressing its business concerns.

In another organization, the interpersonal dynamics of the top management team threatened the success of the company. The team could have deflected its energy by focusing only on the strategic plan, but they had the courage to face up to deeper issues. They invited employees and others to offer feedback and insight into their team's impact on the organization. Through their commitment to change, management opened up communication channels that had been long closed. They are now working actively to create a new culture, living it *first* inside their team for true success. □ CMP

Organizational Courage

What saddens me most as a consultant is watching people compromise their dreams and visions because they are too scared to follow them. We organize because we want to accomplish something. And when that "something" beckons us to reach beyond ourselves and become the best that we can be, it is called a vision. **The role of courage is to make our vision and values real.** Courage is not the absence of fear. It is the will to act, *in spite of* fear or despair, for the purpose of human growth.

What is organizational courage?

- **Living values and vision:** It takes courage to tell people what you believe in, ask to be challenged if you do not live up to it, and then really listen when someone gives you feedback.
- **Facing and naming reality:** It is extremely hard to be honest with ourselves about our current reality, especially if it is so far from our vision. Unless we acknowledge it, we are blind to potential choices that will move us closer our vision.
- **Setting priorities:** In an age of "do it all, now!" it takes courage to set priorities and make strategic choices, because not everyone may be happy with them.
- **Sustaining spirit:** Have you ever felt literally beaten down by "the system?" It takes an incredible amount of energy to overcome system barriers, and it takes real courage to continue to fund that energy to create change when what you feel is despair.
- **Facing fears:** Fear feeds on itself and can paralyze an organization. It's normal and okay to be afraid. How we act on our fear is what's important. Courage means walking *with* fear - not denying it! If we can acknowledge our fear, it loses its grip and we can choose to progress despite it. □

This is an excerpt from Perme's article "Building Organizational Courage in Your Company," found in the September/October issue of Minnesota Ventures. For more information or speaking engagements on the subject call (952) 831-4131.

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