

Corporate Advice



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The concept of Managerial Courage is not new, but it is a term that many of us in business are not familiar with or know what it involves.

By definition, Managerial Courage is 'being able to tactfully dispense direct and actionable feedback to others and be open and direct with them without being intimidating.'

In essence it means to deal head-on with people problems and prickly situations.

Source: https://www.microsoft.com/en-au/education/training-and-events/education-competencies/managerial_courage.aspx

Dealing with workplace conflict and managing performance are typically two areas of difficulty that many Managers have when leading others.

Giving people 'unkind' feedback about their performance (or lack thereof) is an action many Managers choose not to do, unless absolutely necessary. Others do it badly. Few do it well.

One part of a Managers role is to ensure people down the line achieve high competence and reach all goals in their roles.

If a Manager is afraid or uncomfortable of managing poor performance, how will the department (or the Company overall) achieve its goals? Similarly, if conflict is occurring within a team, a Manager is in the position to help resolve the issue and direct 'peaceful' negotiations amongst employees who are experiencing the issue.

In highly performing teams, the team members themselves address the issue and ensure it is resolved.

Workplace Culture is Important in enhancing Managerial Courage

Recently I was asked by a large financial Organisation to speak to their middle and senior leaders about becoming more courageous in their Managerial roles.

Also to encourage them to 'speak up' when they need to, in order to resolve issues and help drive the organisation forward.

An organisation's culture is critical in determining if leaders engage in managerial courage or not.

If a company has a culture of achievement and support, and people are encouraged to respectfully 'have their say' and put their opinions and feedback forward respectfully without ramifications, managers (and staff at all levels) will have increased courage to do so over time.

If the organisational culture is one of blame, power games and hidden agendas, being open and providing direct feedback to others becomes a 'dangerous' task as the manager becomes unsure what paybacks may come from this.

So they become disinclined to show managerial courage.

Managerial Courage is best done in an organisational culture that allows and promotes free expression of opinion and respectful engagement.

If a culture does not promote this, Managerial Courage is often hidden under the layers of 'politics' or not developed within the culture.

Conclusion

Managerial Courage is not new but rather a key aspect of managing performance, people and difficult situations as a manager in organisations.

The higher up the Company your career goes, the higher the level of proficiency you need in order to deal with complex situations and people around you.

■ Caryn Walsh is an International Business Consultant, Executive Coach, Keynote Speaker. Do you have a question about your team or business. Write to us at info@puremagicbusiness.com.au. We will gladly answer it.

EXPERT VIEW

Managerial Courage - how much do you have?

Proficiency Levels of Managerial Courage

Research indicates that there are four levels of Managerial Courage, outlined below. Which is dominant in your Organisation?

| LEVEL 1: BASIC | LEVEL 2: | LEVEL 3: ADVANCED | LEVEL 4: EXPERT |
|--|--|--|--|
| Provides corrective feedback to others | Provides current, direct reinforcing and corrective feedback to others | Tactfully dispenses current, direct, complete, and 'actionable' feedback | Deals with corrective feedback in a manner that inspires accountability and self-redirection among colleagues and direct reports |
| Can be direct but tactful | Tells people where they stand | Is open and direct with others but does not seek to intimidate them | Has a commanding, undaunting presence |
| Can directly face up to people problems in most situations | Faces up to people problems with any person or in any situation quickly and directly | Faces up to people problems with any person or in any situation quickly and directly | Welcomes the opportunity to arbitrate people problems |
| Will take action to discipline others when necessary | Is comfortable taking action when necessary | Swiftly administers action if a situation merits it | Forcefully and definitively takes action to quench trouble |

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BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT MANAGERIAL COURAGE IS NOT

- 1 Giving feedback to a person in the workplace is important, but there is a fine line between managerial decency and being overly critical of staff.
- 2 Managerial Courage provides feedback to others that involves both positive feedback and areas for improvement and this balance is constantly maintained.
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HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE BEING CRITICAL AND NOT HAVE MANAGERIAL COURAGE?

Consider these four statements and assess how courageous you are in your Managerial role with your staff. It requires self-awareness and honesty with yourself.

- 1 You assess that you are more negative than positive with those whom you lead. This is not Managerial Courage
- 2 You often jump into solving situations without giving others the chance to do so
- 3 You are often argumentative and enjoy the battle more than the outcome
- 4 At times your intention is to demean, hurt or belittle others as opposed to give them helpful feedback that will build them up, grow them and encourage them

Rules of Managerial Courage

There are golden rules to abide by when showing Managerial Courage, with the most important being showing sensitivity to others around you. In particular to the person or team to whom you will be delivering the message, if applicable.

- ✓ If you have a difficult message to deliver, do it. Be respectful and get to the point
Prepare for the session you will have with the person beforehand and be ready for emotions that may arise
- ✓ Don't confront others when emotions are high. It is the worst time to try to resolve an issue or make a major decision. Wait until things are calmer
- ✓ Get all the information you need before you have the meeting and deliver your message
- ✓ Choose the right time. It is critical not to embarrass or demean the other person. Allow them the right and time to respond
- ✓ Use emotional intelligence in the process. Manage your emotions well so that you can hopefully keep the other person calm as well

How much Managerial Courage do you have?

To assess how managerially courageous you are, score yourself on each of these items out of 10 (10 being highest). Identify which you assess your lowest scores to be, then design an action plan outlining how you will improve your managerial courage in the future.

| Item | What it looks like | YOUR SCORE |
|--|--|------------|
| The Courage to face the truth and deal with it | You admit to yourself there is a problem and do something about it without procrastinating | |
| The Courage to rely on others | You readily delegate and relinquish control to others | |
| The Courage to make decisions in risky or uncertain situations | You may not have all the information but based on what you do have, you will make decisions if it is important | |
| The Courage to work outside your comfort zone | You know your limits but are happy to push yourself further, even if it is outside of what you know or are comfortable doing | |
| The Courage to impose rigorous standards | You can impose discipline and rigour on yourself and others, clarifying the rules and working relentlessly to see they are applied | |