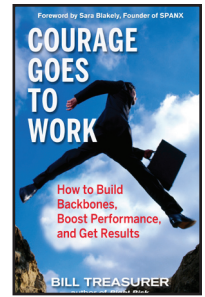


# Courage Goes to Work

Helping employees develop a little more courage—  
and deliver a lot more results



***In seeking the safety of sameness, “comfeartable” workers withhold their energy and creativity.***

Tired of managing “comfeartable” employees—workers who are either too comfortable or too fearful to do things differently and deliver results?

Meet Bill Treasurer. A workplace expert specializing in courage-building, Treasurer is on a mission to help managers create a more courageous workforce.

“Comfeartable workers perpetuate the status quo,” says Treasurer, founder of Giant Leap Consulting and author of *Courage Goes to Work: How to Build Backbones, Boost Performance, and Get Results* (Berrett-Koehler, 2008, \$26.95). “In seeking the safety of sameness, they withhold their energy and creativity—often when the company and the boss need it most.”

The good news?

According to Treasurer, courage can be *learned*. “It’s a skill—teachable and learnable—that managers can help workers develop.”

Better yet, says Treasurer, we’re not talking about extraordinary courage—the superhuman kind—but ordinary *everyday* courage. “It’s about helping employees be a little more courageous in the face of everyday fears.”

Treasurer, a former member of the U.S. High Diving Team, advises managers to establish a strong foundation and build a “courage-friendly” environment. Four specific steps: “jump first” (modeling courageous behavior); “create safety nets” (providing support); “harness fear” (using fear’s energy); and “modulate comfort” (moving people in and out of their comfort zone).

From there, says Treasurer, managers need to understand three specific types of courage and learn how to develop them in workers: *try* courage (taking action); *trust* courage (relinquishing control); and *tell* courage (speaking out).

In *Courage Goes to Work*, Treasurer draws on 15 years of consulting and training experience to present a sensible, step-by-step process for developing workers’ courage and delivering business results. He also shares inspiring success stories from real-life managers and shows how courageous workers:

- ▶ Take on more challenging and complex projects
- ▶ Seek opportunities to stretch their skills and capabilities
- ▶ Speak up more frequently and forcefully
- ▶ Respond to company changes with more ease and enthusiasm
- ▶ Demonstrate more confidence, commitment, and creativity

— more —

Bottom line: The hardest part of a manager's job is not setting priorities, staying on task, or sticking to budgets. It is dealing with workers who play it safe at all costs. Treasurer offers hope and help with a real-world approach to helping workers develop a little more courage—and deliver a lot more results.

**Bill Treasurer** is a workplace expert and author of *Courage Goes to Work: How to Build Backbones, Boost Performance, and Get Results* (Berrett-Koehler, 2008). Founder of Giant Leap Consulting, Inc., a consulting and training company specializing in courage-building, he advises organizations such as IBM, Accenture, SPANX, Spirit Airlines, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He is an avid whitewater kayaker and a former member of the U.S. High Diving Team, where he often performed as the fire-diving superhero "Captain Inferno." Author or editor of two additional books—*Right Risk* (Berrett Koehler, 2003) and *Positively M.A.D.* (Berrett-Koehler, 2004)—he is a professional speaker and frequent media source. He lives in Asheville, North Carolina, with his wife and their three children. Contact him on the Web at [giantleapconsulting.com](http://giantleapconsulting.com) or [couragegoestowork.com](http://couragegoestowork.com).

**COURAGE GOES TO WORK:  
How to Build Backbones,  
Boost Performance,  
and Get Results**

Bill Treasurer

Berrett-Koehler Publishers

ISBN 978-1-57675-501-3

Hardcover  
210 pages

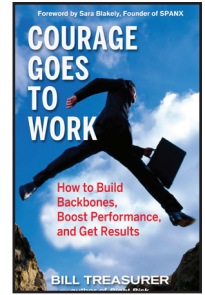
October 2008  
\$26.95

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# Managing Comfeartable Workers

10 ways to manage employees' comfort and fear—and help courage go to work



**People won't take a chance without some degree of support.**

*Ask any manager.* The workplace is full of “comfeartable” employees—workers who are too comfortable or too fearful to take initiative, trust others, or talk openly and honestly. Worse, when you're a manager, your own success and satisfaction depend on them. The antidote? *Courage*. Not the superhuman kind, but *everyday* courage—accessible to everyone. Ten ways to manage employees' comfort and fear—and help courage go to work:

▶ **Go first.**

Be a courageous role model. Jump first—whatever the leap—and workers are more likely to follow your lead.

▶ **Provide a view.**

Forget the canned corporate vision statement. Provide a “view”—a smaller, more personalized vision—to help employees see their own big picture and how, at an individual level, their courage will be rewarded.

▶ **Set up safety nets.**

Most people won't take a chance without some degree of support. Create safety nets—from protecting jobs to preserving reputations—to reinforce courageous actions.

▶ **Give permission.**

Many workers think they aren't “allowed” to do courageous things. Loud and clear, give people permission to *go for it*.

▶ **Value good mistakes.**

Making *no* mistakes is just as dangerous as making too many. Let employees know that you value “good” mistakes—strong effort, weak results—and, odds are, they'll step out of their comfort zone.

▶ **Have their backs.**

People want to know that you've got their back. Show them you do by going to bat for them—consistently and courageously—with higher-ups.

▶ **Normalize fear.**

Fear is a normal part of the work experience. Help workers see their doubts and fears as a *natural* occurrence, and they can refocus their energy to the job at hand.

▶ **Modulate comfort.**

Adjust employees' comfort and discomfort with incrementally greater challenges. You'll steadily stretch their capacity to deal with uncomfortable situations and exert more courage.

— more —

► **Ask the holy question.**

Find out what really matters to people by asking the holy question: *What do you want?* Only then can you give them personally meaningful assignments worth stretching for.

► **Clarify courage.**

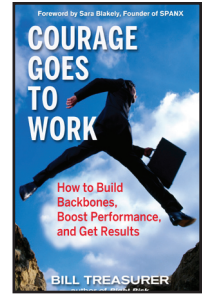
You can't be courageous *unless you're afraid*. Remind workers that courage isn't the absence of fear, but an ability to carry on in its presence.

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# Creating a Courageous Workforce

**Try. Trust. Tell. How to build the three types of courage in your workers**



**Managers must understand three specific types of courage—“try” courage, “trust” courage, and “tell” courage—and learn how to develop them in workers.**

Who wins in a courageous workforce? *Everyone*. With less fear and more courage, workers take on harder projects, deal better with change, and start speaking up on important issues. The company and the boss benefit and, in boosting their own performance, employees do, too. Building this winning workforce, however, requires both will and skill. Managers must understand three specific types of courage—*try* courage, *trust* courage, and *tell* courage—and learn how to develop them in workers. A guide to getting started:

## ► **Try courage**

Want people to step up to the plate? *Try* courage—the courage of initiative and action—is the answer. With *try* courage, employees have the guts to take the lead and do something new—even attempt a “first.” They welcome challenges, stretch their skills, and make things happen—all with little or no hand-holding. To help workers develop *try* courage:

- **Emphasize the risks of not risking.** The risk of *inaction* is usually more perilous than the risk of action. When assigning tough tasks, emphasize the dangers of *not* taking the risk, including a potential hit to employees’ personal and career development or, worst-case scenario, their job security.
- **Play to their strengths.** Build on employees’ existing strengths and capabilities when giving them a risky new task or project. It’s easier to be courageous with even a little experience on a big task.
- **Give them something to prove.** Provide challenges that cause people to prove themselves *to* themselves. When the going gets rough, having something to prove can be a source of energy and motivation.

## ► **Trust courage**

Want people to give others the benefit of the doubt? *Trust* courage—the courage of confidence in others—is the answer. With *trust* courage, employees let go of their need to control situations or outcomes and, instead, put their faith in those around them. They are open to direction and change, and don’t waste time questioning motives or looking for hidden agendas. To help workers develop *trust* courage:

- **Trust first.** Resist the temptation to turn trust into a quid pro quo—*I will give you trust after you give me trust*—and end up producing a stalemate in which nobody trusts anyone. Trust first—period.

— more —

- **Build “instant trust.”** With the right conditions, trust can be gained surprisingly quickly. Create a trusting environment by establishing ground rules with employees on issues such as keeping confidences, respecting others, and fostering true professionalism.
- **Know the criteria.** Get to know people—who they are and what they value—and find out the criteria by which they give their trust. Ask each person on your team to complete the statement: *I will trust you when...*

► **Tell courage**

Want people to speak their minds? *Tell* courage—the courage of voice—is the answer. With *tell* courage, employees engage others with candor and conviction. They raise difficult issues, provide tough feedback, and share unpopular opinions. To help workers develop *tell* courage:

- **Encourage precision.** To be most effective, *tell* courage requires thought and precision. Ask workers to know—in exact terms—what they want to say and what they hope to achieve.
- **Take action.** Employees get frustrated—rightfully so—when they muster up the courage to speak up, only to have it fall on deaf ears. Respect and reinforce *tell* courage by taking swift and sure action on what people say.
- **Be careful what you wish for.** As a manager, you may *think* you want workers to have more *tell* courage. But when they start speaking out, you may think otherwise. Commit yourself to listening to what people have to say—no matter how hard it is to hear—and refrain from responding rashly or defensively. Have the courage to be told to!

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