

Courage

On this sombre occasion, the 100 year anniversary of the Gallipoli landing, ANZAC day, again, I caught myself thinking of the unimaginable horror that confronted our very young soldiers forced onto the shores of Gallipoli. The greatest of all physical courage. Unfortunately, history indicates there was a lack of moral courage on the part of their leaders - did they act correctly by sending these soldiers into a situation with little to no chance of survival, let alone victory? We will never forget the heroism and sacrifice of our men and women, past and present, who continue to sacrifice and serve to protect our great country and its values – it is after all, the ultimate courage to put your life on the line for the protection of others. Lest we forget.

In the relative safe surrounds of business, fortunately, the act of courage isn't a matter of life and death, but similarities exist. Picture this, you have a secure job, a mortgage to service, yet, you go off on your own and try your luck – it takes courage to do this. You're an employee who knows right from wrong and annoyed that the business owner has taken an unscrupulous path, and you're part of it. The encouraged act of camaraderie with work colleagues, an important ingredient of teamwork often presents uncomfortable gossip situations – deep down you know your colleagues view of your boss is wrong or unfair. Do you shut them down?

These are all typical examples of situations we constantly face which challenge our courage, the will to go against the popular view, face the fear, anger and possible vindictiveness that may come from it all. I think we've all been there.

Courage is never an easy virtue to exercise. We all want to be liked, keep the peace, maintain the harmony, etc and therefore having the courage to state your belief against the norm will always challenge us. Yes, some bridges may be burnt, but these virtuous acts have a knack of all coming good. And we certainly do not want to be a rebel, a troublemaker, looking for opportunities to exercise our courage.

In the context of business, there are many characteristics of courage. I'll start with the following but I'm keen to get your thoughts on others:

- Deliberate often, decide once: Think long and hard about an issue, consult widely, weigh up the pros and cons, place your values and beliefs at the centre of it all. Then decide and stick to it, attempting at all times to take others with you knowing full well there will be a few who will not follow.
- Accept Uncertainty: As John Finley, English historian and mathematician aptly put it maturity is the capacity to accept uncertainty. Understand the risks, the potential pitfalls and develop contingencies. Build resilience and perseverance in your plan, knowing full well that uncertainties may occur. But remember, true courage is not foolhardy, but prepared.
- Moral clarity: A great book, "Right & Wrong" by Hugh Mackay outlines ways to test the clarity of your moral courage....would I do this if this was the only thing that people would use to judge my overall integrity and write my epitaph? Would I stand in front of an audience, made up of my family and closest friends and tell them what I did?
- Tell it the way it is: When a view or belief is popular, it is hard to contradict it and swim against the current. But when the situation demands it, courage requires that we do just that.

The courage required in business and our daily life pale into insignificance when compared to the physical courage shown by the men and women of the armed forces who place themselves in harm's way to protect our way of life. As we go about our normal lives, let's not forget.

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