Whitepaper

Transformation in a Courageous Workplace

CourageousWorkplaces works with Leaders and Communities to inspire, assess, advise, develop and implement courageous workplaces.

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Courage - the critical factor for organisational success

You must be the change you wish to see in the world. **Mahatma Gandhi**

Is courage in the workplace now 'coming of age'? The turbulence of the marketplace, new opportunities constantly emerging, the uncertainty about the future, the lack of job security, the need for greater flexibility and creativity all indicates that predictability is history.

When organisations are unable to predict the future, they have to rely upon employees who are prepared to step out of their job descriptions and identify issues and opportunities, share better practices, take risks, believe in the organisation and want it to be successful.

Courage is the competency that allows employees to act differently from what has been done in the past or from what are accepted 'norms'. However, employees who act or behave differently risk being socially excluded or ostracised from their workgroup or the organisation.

Courageous employees are prepared to act in a way that is unlike the past and recognise that they are taking personal (social) risks in doing so. However, they base their decisions and draw strength from commonly held values and goals and pursue a greater good by doing 'the right thing'.

The Business Case for a Courageous Workforce

Courage in the workplace is an action, the difference between intention and implementation where the desired action is new, untried or in some way has previously been rejected.

Where a workplace requires individuals, teams or the entire organisation to act in a different way, where there is potential fear of the new behaviour or the outcome, courage turns indecision into execution.

Benefits

The benefits of courageous workplaces are considered to include;

1. **Increased innovation**

    ■ Workplaces that encourage employees to try new ideas, make mistakes and understand risks are courageous workplaces. Consistent innovation occurs when employees are willing to bring different views and work together to create new products and services, even if that involves 'starting again'.

2. **Higher employee engagement**

   ▪ Employee engagement is concerned with employees who put discretionary effort into their work beyond the minimum required to get the job done. Highly engaged employees feel connected with their colleagues and feel valued, respected and involved by the wider organisation, care about doing a good job and ensuring that the organisation is successful. Engaged employees are more likely to take social risks in going beyond their job description in order to achieve their objectives i.e. are more likely to be courageous.

3. **Greater brand recognition**

   ▪ Courageous workplaces have a clear and consistent set of values and purpose. Greater brand recognition comes because employees are typically prouder of their organisation and more publicly willing to support it.

4. **Successful transformation change**

   ▪ Transformation is the process of a group or organisation creating a new way of working or culture, where the final outcome is planned for but uncertain. Successful transformation requires employees to work towards a shared vision or set of goals, recognising that the uncertainty of the final outcome breeds doubt and may require adaptation, but believing that it is the right thing to do. Courageous workplaces implement successful transformations.

What organisations benefit most from a courageous workforce?

Courageous workplaces benefit all organisations. There are both short-term and longer-term benefits from increasing the courage of employees.

However, **organisations often arrive at the 'gates of workplace courage' during times of great change** i.e. when undertaking a significant acquisition or merger, where survival is uncertain or where a radical change in strategy or business model is required. Such organisations are required to transform themselves and where there is uncertainty about the future, success is built on understanding the shared values, seeking and trusting all relevant information, agreeing and working towards new opportunities.

A courageous workforce believes in the organisation and what it stands for. Employees are therefore prepared to take personal risks in following the leadership team and owning a new future.

Where an **organisation or team is not facing the immediate need to transform**, i.e. they might be seeking to gain or retain competitive advantages or wanting to be more innovative or customer focused, building a courageous workforce is a long term strategy to engage employees in order to become more flexible and responsive, more willing to share and be creative and more willing to work for the greater good.

What can an organisation do?

Courage is a set of behaviours i.e. a combination of competencies and habits, so they can be

- Assessed and quantified (different levels are possible)

- Recruited

- Developed

- Supported

Organisations can build a courageous workplace by

- Removing blockers e.g. don't punish failure, reduce hierarchical power structures, focus job descriptions on output and not process

- Adding enablers e.g. 2 way communication, access to information, reward team working, articulate common values and goals, link employee roles to business strategy, reward innovation

- Creating a culture that recognises the value of all employees, encourages a shared responsibility and commitment to the greater good, articulates and supports shared values, seeks openness of knowledge

- Developing the courage competency and habits in individuals

If you'd like to know more about workplace courage and how you can build a courageous workplace, contact CourageousWorkplaces on 0845 862 1767 or enquiries@courageousworkplaces.com.

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Appendix - Workplace Courage Defined

Workplace courage is a form of social courage (as opposed to physical courage) where individuals who display such courage risk social exclusion or ridicule (as opposed to physical hurt or even death with physical courage) for a 'greater' good.

The 'greater good' can, but need not be, a set of over-riding ethics or values. The 'greater good' can be a set of personal beliefs, organisational values or societal norms – the key is that the individual sees those ideas as more important than their own possible rejection from the workplace.

Courageous Workplaces Courageous workplaces empower employees, articulating common values and goals, providing tools, information and clear boundaries of operation, accepting measured risk (and failure), treating employees as unique assets and not as fixed resources.

Courageous Workplace Individuals A courageous person in the workplace is one who has the desire and ability to take actions for the 'greater good' despite fear or anxiety of personal rejection.

Courageous Workplace Leaders Courageous leaders in the workplace are able to articulate their personal enduring vision and values of the 'greater good' despite fear or anxiety of personal rejection. Successful courageous leaders are able to transform their organisation by building an environment that allows others to take the courageous steps needed to follow their leaders.

About CourageousWorkplaces

At CourageousWorkplaces we work with Leaders and Communities to inspire, assess, advise, develop and implement courageous workplaces. We take academic theory and make it a practical reality to help you unlock your organisation's potential.

Our reach is global and we work with clients from a wide range of profit and non-profit organisations in every sector.