



The Courage to Act

Five Factors of Courage to Transform Business

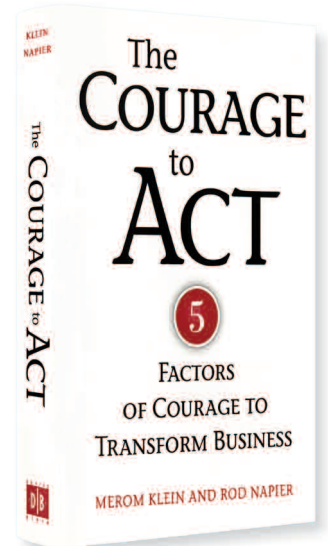
THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Courage is not just the extraordinary acts of adventurers and visionaries. In workplaces where jobs can change with the stroke of a pen, having the courage to speak and hear the truth, inspire hope, take a stand and trust in relationships is what defines high performers. With powerful examples of courage in action, *The Courage to Act* explores the skills you need to embrace change and capitalize on opportunities, inspire courage in your teammates, and respond to your own personal moments of truth with the courage to push ahead and make the right things happen.

In a time when we all have more discretion and mobility, and our judgment has far-reaching consequences for the success of our enterprises, we all need more courage. We need to find it within ourselves and inspire it in those around us, whether they are below us or above us in the organizational hierarchy. What we say and what we intend is less important, in this environment, than what we do and how we act.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why courage is necessary in a time of uncertainty, challenge and conflict.
- The five factors of courage and how to assess them within your team or organization.
- How to build individual courage in your teammates and a climate of courage within your team.
- How to imbue others with the courage to act.
- A five-part formula for dealing with conflict.



by Merom Klein and Rod Napier

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: THE COURAGE TO ACT

by Merom Klein and Rod Napier

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PART ONE: WHY COURAGE NOW?

Virtually everyone has been part of a team at some point in his or her organizational life. But the teams of today can't be compared to the teams of 10 or 20 years ago, any more than raising a family today can be compared to the lifestyles of Ozzie and Harriet. The pressures, responsibilities, diversity, pace, mobility and outside influences are dramatically different. Semi-autonomous cells, virtual partnerships and loosely connected networks nest within organizational hierarchies. The bar is always being raised; there is always more to learn, no matter how close you feel to the top of your game.

Despite the fact that we still draw our charts with boxes, silos and pyramids, we're supposed to solve problems and seize opportunities as though the hierarchy didn't really matter. We're supposed to solicit and listen to know-how, wherever it resides. We're expected to coordinate our work with that of colleagues in other departments and other divisions so that the ultimate enterprise-wide objective takes precedence over narrow parochial orders or policies. You can't order someone to do something when he or she doesn't reside in your pyramid or silo on the formal hierarchy; so you have to explain your logic, build relationships, and rely on trust and influence rather than command and control.

Influence, not authority and power, is the way business is done in the new economy. No one has as much control or autonomy as they'd like anymore, including those at the very top of the organization.

Resource Competition

Project teams (and project team leaders) have to compete for scarce resources, for visibility, for time, and for executive support. It's easy to get tunnel vision and expect decisions to be made on a first come, first served basis or a "but you promised" standard of fairness, rather than constantly reassessing priorities according to triage criteria.

Knowledge Gaps

In a speech to business leaders after his retirement, General Norman Schwartzkopf described the daily agony he felt being responsible for thousands of lives in the Gulf War. What was the most frightening aspect of command for this war hero? It was the fact that he knew less about the technology and field conditions than many of the young men and women under his command. Nobody likes to feel inadequate or uneducated, especially when she or he is supposed to be in control. It takes courage to seek help and admit that you don't know what you don't know.

New team-based structures test the mettle of managers and workers like nothing else in the history of modern management. Bureaucracies were slow and expensive, but they also gave people a measure of security. If their needs weren't met or directions weren't clear, they simply looked higher up in the organization chart. However, teams reward people for darting in and out and changing lanes quickly on an information highway that's fast and crowded. This is the reality we now face on our organizational highways. ●



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The Dilemma

Our own studies, plus previous years of research reviewed in this book, have resulted in the isolation of five factors that, together, help to imbue team members with the courage to act in situations of stress, conflict or ambiguity. We have termed these factors candor, purpose, will, rigor and risk.

Candor: The Courage to Speak and Hear the Truth. You can't mandate or require candor, yet it stands as the first quality for building courage. It is the one upon which everything else is built. If individuals on a team are inhibited from speaking the truth, or if they fail to take feedback about their current reality to heart, they might fail to act quickly enough or skillfully enough.

People desperately want to speak their minds and their hearts, but they are unwilling to be humiliated, publicly criticized, put on the defensive or to have their futures jeopardized. However, when we witness individuals putting their ideas and feelings on the table and see that they are accepted without repercussion in the moment or later reprisal, then people are emboldened and courage is imbued in other team members.

Purpose: The Courage to Pursue Lofty Goals. Most organizations live and die by the numbers. One aspect of leadership is the ability to tie the numbers to a loftier mission, sense of purpose and achievement. We work hardest, research shows, when we feel personally connected to the outcomes we are achieving — when the work is personally meaningful, gratifying and interesting and when we see a benefit to our daily work.

Will: The Courage to Inspire Optimism, Spirit and Promise. The ability to inspire, to create a sense of hope and opportunity, can infuse a team and have a multiplier effect on the group. In difficult or trying circumstances, most reasonable people do experience fear, anguish, pain and worry. According to research with decorated war heroes conducted by Reuven Gal (1986), former chief psychologist of the Israeli Defense Force, even the bravest soldiers often admit that they were scared, frustrated and hurt. Their course doesn't hinge on whether they experience these emotions; what matters is whether they let these emotions hold them back from doing what needs to be done.

Rigor: The Courage to Invent Disciplines and Make Them Stick. With rigor, a team establishes protocols, rules and agreements that bring consistency and predictability to the way that the team operates. Rigor

Let Teammates Gather Their Thoughts

- Form duos or trios; groups of four are too large. Ask a question that requires some thought and allow 15 to 30 minutes for the small group to work on it before reporting their ideas to the entire forum.
- Send background material out ahead of time, with specific questions that you'd like to discuss or specific feedback and input you'd like to receive.
- Take a short break in a meeting and ask individual participants to jot notes in a journal or on a worksheet. When you start the meeting again, go around the room and ask for a report from each participant.

helps the team commit to new ways of doing business and re-contract to alter old norms, expectations and interdependencies.

Teams and organizations with courage empower people and give them discretion and autonomy and, at the same time, expect them to operate within a strict code of ethics and honor, in which the spirit of the protocol is even more important than the letter of the regulation.

Risk: The Courage to Empower, Trust and Invest in Relationships. Risk is a vital factor in the process and maintenance of team life. Without taking the risk of doing what's right rather than what's expedient or in one's own narrow self-interest, the remaining four factors — candor, purpose, will and rigor — will all be undermined. Thus, a primary focus must be how to build and maintain a sense of community and relationships of trust within the team; building community is a business consideration, not just something that's nice to do when you have spare time or resources.

Courage is Not a Halfway Proposition

The five courage factors are not independent. Imagine slipping in behind the wheel of a sleek, new convertible sports coupe. You start the engine, turn on the stereo and make your way down an open country road. Suddenly, a red light appears on your dashboard, and the car starts to buck and sputter. You pull into a service station. "Not bad," the mechanic says. "You're doing fine on three out of four cylinders, the fourth is working at 75 percent of what it should and the fifth really isn't that important, is it?" The analogy applies to the five courage factors. Four out of five isn't enough. ●

PART TWO: HOW TO BUILD COURAGE

Candor: The Courage to Speak and Hear the Truth

Supposedly, we value people who tell the truth, who deal with us straight. Yet, candor is a rare commodity. Its absence, whether on our teams or in our boardrooms, adds untold millions to our bottom lines and kills our best efforts to improve morale. A lack of candor is a cancer that has eaten away at courage. Unless candor can be restored, there is little hope that any other aspect of courage can become part of the fabric of the team.

Timing

Several months before the collapse of Enron, Sherron Watkins, one of the vice presidents, tried to get her concerns about the firm's accounting practices on the CEO's radar screen. In a memo she wrote detailing her observations, Watkins told the CEO that she had grave concerns about the company's future. By the time her warnings were taken seriously, the damage was already done.

There's no guarantee that your voice will be heard, even if you bring mission-critical information to those who need to hear it. And there are risks. But it isn't impossible to be heard if you have the facts, the right people assembled, and a process to define shared goals and common ground.

Watch the climate and tone that you create when you present data and take part in deliberations. Heavy, judgmental, grave tones can cast a pall over a group and can stifle participation. A lighter and more easygoing touch can bring out the best thinking that everyone can offer. ●

Purpose: The Courage to Pursue Lofty and Audacious Goals

Like key players in a competitive sport, people with purpose are keenly aware of what the score is, how much time is left and what has to be done to win, even when their mood is lighthearted. People with a sense of purpose are ambitious. Place a mountain in front of them and they'll find a way to climb it. Given a choice, they prefer to do things that stretch them professionally and are artistically rewarding, and they eschew tasks that are tedious or routine. They want to feel that they are making progress and they take pride in being at the top of their game.

When there is a sense of purpose, people feel connected to the organization's vision and understand how they, personally, contribute to bringing that vision to life.

Talk Up the Vision

On one level, banners, flags, T-shirts and "feel-good" public interest articles do little to change the realities on the ground. A catchy and clever slogan isn't enough to persuade an embittered cynic. But banners can get people talking and talking can be persuasive.

In corporate lunchrooms and meeting rooms, it's easy to see when people have lost sight of the vision and are going through the motions. You can say nothing or you can reaffirm your commitment, restate your purpose and rekindle the light in the tower.

Andy is a junior executive in a biotech company who's uncertain about whether he should stay the course or move on. His gruff manner and glib sense of humor have offended some of his co-workers and, as a result, he's being denied a much-coveted promotion. Unless Andy can see the prospects of a future promotion, he will be a flight risk. Management values his scientific contributions and needs him to keep performing at the top of his game. The leading cause of defections in scientific companies is uncertain future prospects. When people don't see a promising future, they start to look elsewhere for opportunities that beckon.

Taking Personal Responsibility

If anything positive has come out of the Enron collapse, it is that we are redefining professional responsibility and personal accountability; what's right isn't always what's politically expedient.

The Hippocratic oath gives physicians a clear definition of what their job is about and what choices they are expected to make. Most of us don't have a canon of professional ethics that's as sacrosanct as the Hippocratic oath, which makes it tougher for us to decide what to do when our judgment and ethics contradict the group consensus or the company's policy. In an era when very few people can count on employment for life, it's easy to accept the group consensus, follow the path of least resistance and not put our jobs in jeopardy. It's easy to rationalize costly mistakes when we are just following orders. "If you don't stand for something," a popular anti-drug slogan says, "you'll fall for anything." So, you may have to decide what you really stand for and trust that another employer will respect you for that, even if your current one doesn't.

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Accept Personal Accountability

Most managers have to choose how far they'll go to hit their own numbers and maximize their bonuses, when doing so can jeopardize the long-term health of the enterprise. Just because you're told that you're empowered to make particular choices doesn't mean that you won't have to defend your judgment — or ask for special dispensation if you sacrifice your own performance statistics to help the enterprise achieve a bigger win. ●

Will: The Courage to Inspire Optimism, Spirit and Promise

Most people approach performance improvement by looking for the factors that inhibit or slow the progress of the team so that they can focus on and fix the problems. They set out to improve employee morale by finding out what makes workers unhappy or frustrated so they know where to focus their attention. Or they look for the people who are causing problems and single them out for remedial attention.

But the logic of this approach has a flaw. Watch a group articulate the things that bother or frustrate them and see what happens to their energy and optimism, their enthusiasm and their will to persevere. Invariably it wanes. In contrast, watch what happens to the energy of a team that talks about their hopes and aspirations, their accomplishments and successes, their strengths and passions. Their passion and enthusiasm rise.

See the Glass as Half Full

You may be painfully aware of what your team could do better. You may need to remind yourself why you wanted certain individuals on your team in the first place and get beyond your own frustration and panic to identify the things they do well.

Make it personal. If you don't know the individual members of the team well enough to articulate their personal strengths and contributions — as individuals, rather than en masse — find a way to get to know them better.

Make it relevant. Praising people for things that they don't value or that they take for granted in themselves doesn't have as much impact as recognizing the strengths that give them pride and a sense of professional accomplishment. What, specifically, do you see in each of your team members that makes you believe they are up to the challenge that lies ahead?

Make it explicit. Openly comment on the successes, virtues and skills that give you confidence that team-

mates can succeed in achieving the lofty and audacious goals that are expected of the team. Let them know why you have confidence in them.

Make it for real. Most teammates are perceptive enough to know when praise isn't sincere. If you truly can't see an individual from a glass-half-full perspective, it's time to counsel him or her off the team.

Keep score. We suggest using a five-for-one rule; we sometimes insist that executives give five pieces of praise and thank-yous for every one piece of criticism. We also suggest “no criticism” afternoons. ●

Rigor: The Courage to Invent Disciplines and Make Them Stick

We want take-charge, get-it-done team members to be empowered and to take initiative. We don't want them to let a promising opportunity slip away while they wait for permission to act. We want them to use common sense without worrying about whether they'll be reprimanded or have to justify themselves. We want them to think creatively about ways to improve efficiency.

At the same time, there are some lines that we don't want people to cross, some regulations and protocols that have to be respected, even if doing so slows things down. Rigor is a matter of judgment and discretion, consideration and self-discipline.

Get it Done, Whatever it Takes

In a large government agency, Jackie was a bit of an anomaly. She ran her operation like a businessperson, not a bureaucrat or a politician. She was a pragmatic, resourceful field manager. She didn't have a lot of time or patience for fiefdoms, mindless obedience, “not-my-job” small-mindedness or filling out in triplicate forms that no one would look at. When she was promoted to head of enforcement in the state capital, Jackie was grateful that she'd inherited a team of people who shared her spunk and ingenuity.

At first, Jackie rolled her eyes when she heard complaints about the shortcuts that her lieutenants took. But Jackie couldn't dismiss the audit results by rolling her eyes and reassuring her staff. The audit showed that Jackie's lieutenants had crossed some uncrossable lines, albeit with the best of intentions.

The choice was Jackie's. On the surface, it looked like facing off and preparing for a bitter fight against the auditors was the tack that required the most courage. But that wasn't true. It actually took more courage for Jackie to admit that the auditors might have some wis-

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dom to share and that their scrutiny, while embarrassing, might help her team members improve the way they ran field investigations and avoid the appearance of impropriety or favoritism. She expected her staff to listen to the rationale, run an objective cost/benefit analysis, and assess the severity of safety risks, ethical breaches or the appearance of impropriety.

Determine Whether Rigor is the Issue

If frontline workers don't have the will to do more than follow the rules and go through the motions, they won't muster creative energy when the path of least resistance doesn't work. If frontline people don't feel free to ask candid questions, offer ideas and let someone coach them when they make clumsy attempts to try something new, they'll seek the comfort of what they know and what the rule book tells them. Ask open-ended questions and wait for someone to answer, even if that means enduring uncomfortable silence.

Whether you are training new hires or retraining experienced teammates to meet new business requirements, you can't avoid the fact that training is an expensive investment. Not everyone will "get it" quickly enough to make that investment worthwhile. Carrying teammates who simply aren't capable of learning to perform with rigor, without more attention and supervision than you can afford to provide, is an expensive indulgence. A system of training isn't a cure-all. It needs to include a system of assessment — and consequences if learners aren't making the grade.

Create a Learning Organization

Today, what teammates already know is less important than how quickly they learn. Today's systems will be obsolete tomorrow. Ingenuity, improvisation and resourcefulness don't just "happen." They are carefully cultivated, with lots of short practice drills, direct feedback, good-natured ridicule and exhortations to keep trying.

In a hierarchy, the rules of decision-making are simple and clear. The boss gets the final say, unless he or she delegates that authority to someone else and chooses not to exercise veto power after the fact. But in a molecular team, it's hard to tell where the buck stops unless you explicitly define who has the following powers.

- **Input power.** Good decisions cannot be made without adequate information. Stakeholders who can provide relevant data, therefore, should have input, which should be taken seriously by others.

- **Deliberation power.** Good decisions cannot be made without an adequate understanding of how others will be affected. If there is not impact on anyone else,

one person might be able to make the decision alone. But when there are interdependencies, what's good on one continent may create difficulties somewhere else.

- **Veto power.** Good decisions are effective only if they stick. If they aren't executed, they're only a fantasy. Some sponsors, experts and executors have the power to block decisions that they don't buy into. And some make threats and blow loud and hard but, like it or not, have to bow to those who have a mandate to decide. It isn't always easy to tell the difference between these two, and it isn't always pleasant to remind others that you have veto power. ●

Risk: The Courage to Empower, Trust and Invest in Relationships

In a hospital emergency room (ER), it takes a special brand of courage to trust the system and empower others. The ER staff take stock of the cases that present for treatment and make ongoing triage assessments. Those that are most serious and life threatening receive care first. Other patients are expected to trust the system, empower the caregivers, and have the strength and compassion to wait and endure their discomfort.

More and more organizations are facing similar resource constraints. There aren't enough designers, programmers and office support staff to do everything. Constant triage assessments are required. The projects that are most mission-critical get care and resources first. People with less urgent requests are told to wait.

What does it take for patients in a busy, stretched-to-capacity ER to wait their turn while others are given a higher priority?

- **Empathy.** Being attuned to someone else's needs and emotions is a special kind of intelligence. Some have more of it than others. Fortunately, research on emotional intelligence has shown that people who lack empathy can develop more compassion. In our complex organizations, we need the capacity to understand the needs of other departments, professional disciplines and markets, and we need a shorthand that evokes empathy when our group is asked to give ground and endure discomfort so others can get the care and attention they need.

- **Belief that others are doing their best.** When others say, "I need your support," it's going to be hard to keep saying yes if you believe their needs were caused by carelessness, lack of planning or ineptitude. Benefit of the doubt has to be granted for a triage system to work.

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Objective criteria. Without explanations, people may feel “the cards are stacked against us” or “no one appreciates how hard we are working and how much we really produce.” Even when people are given explanations, they may challenge the criteria or try to negotiate. So be prepared to offer an explanation and be ready to justify it if it is challenged.

Someone to talk to if triage conditions change. What was not so urgent yesterday may be more critical tomorrow. If people know that they can ask for the same support and indulgence that they are willing to give as conditions change, it’s going to be easier to inspire trust and dedication. ●

PART THREE: THE FIVE FACTORS IN ACTION

A Five-Part Formula: Dealing With Conflict

Step One: Candor. The answer lies in what you do with your own fear. If it were easy to talk candidly, it wouldn’t take courage to speak the truth — or to acknowledge the fact that your own silence might be contributing to the problem.

Step Two: Purpose. Whose purpose should be served when conflicts are raised? If conflicts are moments of truth that you approach with a win-lose belief system, you will try to advance your agenda at the expense of others or allow them to advance their agenda at your expense.

In today’s environment, however, win-win solutions often are not enough. The real test isn’t just whether we’ve each found a way to satisfy our competing interests and achieve our individual or parochial objectives. It’s also whether we’ve done what’s right.

Step Three: Will. Whether you are trying to energize individual teammates to make personal or professional improvements or are trying to infuse an entire team or organization with the will to persevere when encountering frustrations, you’ll see little forward motion without a solid sense of purpose. Lofty and audacious goals will create some motivation for achievement-oriented teammates who buy into the purpose. But a sense of purpose alone doesn’t restore hope or make people optimistic when they run into setbacks, frustrations and conflicts that aren’t resolved quickly and easily. Unless people have the will to stay in the game, conflicts can shut down the candor in a group and make its members wonder whether mission critical goals are

achievable. A strong will keeps your stakeholders engaged and keeps them from settling for shortcuts that can damage your reputation when the straight and narrow seems too difficult.

Step Four: Rigor. What’s needed is a clear plan that maps out the following:

- Who will be the sponsors to sign off on, approve, and fund the solutions that are agreed on?
- Who will be the expert advisors enlisted to share best practices, evaluate new technologies, and adapt tools and techniques to the situation at hand?
- Who will be the recipients of the solutions — those who have to execute it and achieve the expected results?
- What is the know-how that teammates already have that will enable them to execute the plan and what is the know-how they need to acquire?

Step Five: Risk. Why are you being asked to take a risk and go out on a limb to support and trust someone else in your team? Perhaps:

- Someone is claiming leadership in a domain that was supposed to be your area of authority and control.
- Someone is counting on you to do something that really isn’t your job or that will require more sacrifices than you believe is fair.
- Someone expects to be empowered to handle an assignment independently and you aren’t sure that he or she is up to the challenge.

These risks and others represent moments of truth that will test your courage. You may not be able to put the fear aside. But you can decide whether to let the fear stop you from doing what needs to be done. ●

The Coach: Imbuing Others With The Courage to Act

If you’ve ever been on a truly great team, you will never forget the experience. It doesn’t matter if it was a basketball team, a scientific research group or an account team that was at the top of its game when you presented your proposal. When everything clicks on such a team, it looks and feels like magic. But as any magician will tell you, magic is an art that requires know-how and practice, as well as a few masters who can show you how the tricks are performed. Temple University basketball coach John Chaney is such a master.

Business is not sports, you might say. And you’d be right. In the world of business, there’s a thin veneer of civility but the competition is fierce and the killer instinct is vicious. And in business, unlike sports, the game isn’t over after 30, 40 or 60 minutes of play.

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If there are lessons that your teammates have already learned and mastered — aspects of candor, purpose, will, rigor and risk that are already part of their character — there are parts of the Chaney formula that you may be able to ignore, like any coach who tailors the practice regimen to the strengths and learning needs of the players. But just because your players start in a different class doesn't mean you don't have to pay as much attention to the five courage factors as Chaney does.

After all, a hotshot engineer who powers down the court to rush for the best projects and pushes colleagues out of the way to slam-dunk her solution isn't very different from the hotshots that Chaney might bench, even when they score the winning points. And in an era when the next merger is being planned even before you've integrated the operations of the last merger, risk doesn't come naturally.

Winning is about attitude — and courage. Without the right attitude, winning is an accident of fate. It's easy to rest on your laurels and get beaten by tougher competition or unexpected adversity tomorrow. The right attitude is what makes winning happen consistently and what makes it look like magic. ●

Moments of Truth: The Challenge of Courage

Courage isn't reflected in what you know or what you can recognize when you see it in others. Courage is reflected in what you do when you are put to the test and face real moments of truth.

Action Learning Principle 1: Know What You're Preparing For. Before training starts, you should know what the moments of truth are that will test the team's courage. You should know the conflict-prone realities that the team will have to face. You should know where the pressure points are in the system, and who will have to withstand more of the strain and take up more of the slack than others.

Action Learning Principle 2: Apply It. So before you invite people to the training session and before you design the training, think about the applications that you want to see. Form task forces to engineer the rigors that have to be implemented. Convene project teams to execute change. Raise the bar on performance standards. If there isn't an application, training will be an event or a motivational speech rather than the creation of a lasting upgrade in skills.

Action Learning Principle 3: Provide Feedback. Courage is personal, so the feedback has to be personal as well. Individuals need to know what they already do

well and where they need to improve. They need personal development plans with goals, time-lines and benchmarks. And they need to be acutely aware of how they affect the courage of others around them. For this reason, 360-degree feedback is an indispensable part of any training program that purports to build courage.

Action Learning Principle 4: Make it Active and Interactive. Courage isn't learned from a textbook. It's learned through action. Simulations, structured problems, and practice drills get people up and involved, and they hold the attention of impatient participants with low boredom thresholds. If the simulations or drills are properly selected and customized, they can replicate and dramatize the types of difficult situations that the team will actually have to face.

Action Learning Principle 5: Value, Honor, and Bridge Diversity. Like life, training isn't a level playing field in which everyone brings the same skills and strengths to the problem at hand. People don't play the same roles in a simulation or find the answers at the same time. The test of courage often comes when those with more insight or more strength have to work with those who don't see the solutions as quickly or who are lacking in the strengths or the knowledge that's mission-critical to solve a particular problem.

Action Learning Principle 6: Build a Code of Honor. Psychologist Martin Seligman (1998) wrote, "Optimists have a healthy defense against reality which enables them to see possibilities that don't yet exist." A code of honor shares that healthy defense against reality with others. To stay the course and work toward a vision of success that doesn't yet exist requires a shared delusion; a code of honor is part of what makes it possible to sustain that delusion despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Action Learning Principle 7: Make Learning Fun. It's easier to raise tough issues and stick with the discussion when you're able to laugh at the dilemma and see the humor in the situation. It's easier to persevere when you're having fun. And it's easier to get people to drop their defenses and act naturally when they lighten up. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *The Courage to Act*, you'll also like:

1. ***One Piece of Paper* by Mike Figliuolo.** Learn the "Leadership Maxims" approach to a simple, defining way to lead yourself and others.
2. ***The Invisible Spotlight* by Craig Wasserman and Doug Katz.** Based on four decades of experience as management consultants, the authors offer advice for how to survive the unblinking eye of the invisible spotlight.
3. ***Full Engagement!* by Brian Tracy.** Packed with powerful, practical ideas, this summary teaches you how to unlock the potential of each employee.