

The Courage Factor

A briefing for Human Capital and People leaders

Courage sits at the core of leadership. Almost nobody measures or develops it.

Four years of 360 data · 191 senior leaders · 1,868 observers · Better Business AG, Zurich

Two companies. Same strategy, same market, same talent. One moves. The other does not.

That difference is the Courage Factor.

Four courage behaviours explain 75.3% of the variation in organisational effectiveness. They can be measured, and they can be built, in leaders, teams and organisations.

The evidence

75.3%

Courage drives results

of the variation in organisational effectiveness is explained by four courage behaviours. Only two carry unique weight.

93.7%

Almost every leader has room

are rated higher on energising people than on delivering lasting results. Only 2.6% show the reverse.

1 in 3

Nobody sees it in themselves

overrate their own courage against what colleagues report. Only 1 in 9 underrate it. Self-report alone never works.

The two behaviours that predicted effectiveness are the two nobody develops.

And no engagement survey will surface it, because engagement was never the constraint.

191 senior leaders · 1,868 observers, median 10 per leader · five cohorts, 2022 to 2025 · continuing in year five

What the Courage Factor shows up as

Innovation

Unproven ideas get proposed and backed before the case is closed.

Entrepreneurship

People behave like owners because moving first is not punished.

Accountability

Decisions carry a name rather than a process.

Competitiveness

You move while competitors are still assembling certainty.

Speed to truth

Bad news reaches the people who can act on it while it is still cheap.

Transformation

Strategy becomes action instead of another deck and another deadline.

And now AI

An AI transition is a long run of unproven ideas, which is exactly the class of decision this silence suppresses. The constraint is no longer the technology. It is whether anyone will move on it.

Where it lands **Bottom line:** the truth not spoken. **Top line:** the opportunity not claimed.

What you could do with your own courage data

1 See which half your curriculum is buying.

Map your leadership development against the two behaviours that predicted effectiveness, and the two that did not.

2 Find the blind spot before the board does.

One in three leaders overrate their own courage. Multi-rater surfaces it at team and function level. Self-report cannot.

3 Give the transformation a number.

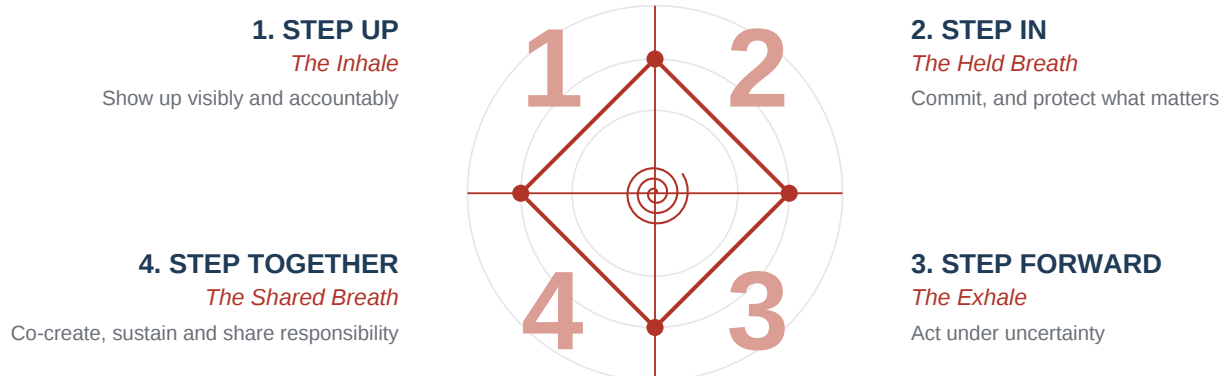
The frozen middle is usually described. This makes it measurable, so you can point at where strategy stops becoming action.

4 Change the budget conversation.

A behavioural measure that predicts organisational effectiveness is a different discussion with a CFO than an engagement score.

The Four Steps of Courage

Courage is the breath of leadership. It gives leadership energy, direction and action, and breathes life into everything else. A cycle, not a ladder. The four Steps connect, overlap and sometimes nest, and they run unconscious until you measure them.



The outer action in each Step is what observers rate. The inner journey behind it is what the practices develop. Steps 1 and 2 are defensive and well covered elsewhere. Steps 3 and 4 are proactive, and those are the two that differentiated.

Each Step is a measured dimension in the 48-question assessment, a chapter of every individual report, and a set of targeted practices. Every leader sees all four, self-view set against what observers reported. Because it is a cycle rather than a ladder, development starts wherever the data says it should.

How it is built, and how it scales

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| <p>1 Measure
The 48-question assessment. Multi-rater, at individual, team and organisational level.</p> | <p>2 Ignite
A one-day circuit through all four Steps, anchored to a real challenge.</p> | <p>3 Commit
One concrete action per Step. A Courage Map, not a certificate.</p> |
| <p>4 Practise
Twelve practices across four weeks, with a tracker.</p> | <p>5 Scale
The 30-Day Courage Challenge and the free 7-day email sprint, at near-zero marginal cost.</p> | <p>6 Sustain
Self-paced trios or guided Courage Circles. Reassess at 6 to 12 months.</p> |

Entry is free: a 4-question Courage Scan and a 20-question test on the site. The 48-question multi-rater assessment is the full profile.

Three questions you are going to ask

How is this different from the psychological safety work we already did?

Safety lowers the fear the organisation creates. It cannot touch the fear inside the act: propose something unproven and you might simply be wrong.

Can I defend the evidence to my board?

Four years, 191 senior leaders, 1,868 observers. Four behaviours explain 75.3% of variance in organisational effectiveness. One company and one sector, and we say so.

Is this another workshop that fades by Friday?

Transfer is designed in, and reassessed at 6 to 12 months. The day is the ignition, not the vehicle.

Background

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| The practice | Better Business AG in Zurich, with Digital Circles AG scaling the learning globally. For more than two decades Ralf Schneider and a small team of senior facilitators and coaches have advised CEOs, boards and senior teams across industries and continents. Earlier roles: PwC and HSBC. |
| The research | Four years, five cohorts, 191 senior leaders and 1,868 observers on a validated multi-rater 360 instrument, triangulated against leader-authored narrative. Continuing into year five. |

