

Podcast guest brief: Ralf Schneider

Author, *Courage: Mind the Gap* (out 31 August 2026) · leadership researcher · Better Business AG

The conversation: why leadership fails on courage, not knowledge, and how to build it.

The guest

Three decades on both sides of the leadership fence: Global Partner Talent and Leadership at PwC, Group Head HR at HSBC, now researcher, advisor and founder of Better Business AG. Creator of the Four Steps of Courage framework and the Courage Assessment, a 360 degree mirror of courage in leaders, teams and organisations. Speaks from data and from scars, in English or German.

The research, in verbatim claims

75.3%

of the variance in judged leadership effectiveness is explained by four courage behaviours; only two carry unique weight, both proactive.

93.7%

of 191 senior executives are rated higher on energising people than on delivering lasting results; only 2.6% the reverse. We call it polite truth.

1 in 3

overrate their own courage against what colleagues report; only 1 in 9 underrate it. The blind spot is asymmetric.

The dataset: an executive study completed in 2025 and continuing today, now in its fifth year. 191 senior executives across five cohorts (2022 to 2025) at a global manufacturer, every record complete, rated by 1,868 360 degree observers (median ten per leader), plus 127 recorded and coded leadership visions. Early results, offered for scrutiny; the full methodology summary is available before recording.

Questions hosts like to ask

- You measured 191 senior leaders for four years. What did you expect, and what actually showed up?
- What is polite truth, and why does every difficult decision have the same two-second architecture?
- Is three-quarters of leadership just courage? Defend the number.
- Where is the line between courage and recklessness, between candour and cruelty?
- Why do transformations really fail?
- Responsibility cannot be automated: what does AI change about leadership courage?
- Micro-courage: what is the smallest act that changes a team's culture?
- Why write a funny illustrated book if the research is this serious?

The book

Courage: Mind the Gap. Please stand free of your comfort zone (Rowanvale Books, 31 August 2026). 56 illustrated provocations about the gap between knowing and acting, drawn in the visual language of the London Underground. Hardback £24.99 · Paperback £17.99 · Kindle £9.99. The light front door to the research; the methodology book, *The Courage Factor*, follows. Written to be passed on.

Practical

Records remotely with a studio-quality setup, Dubai time zone (UTC+4), flexible hours across time zones. In London in person 31 August to 4 September 2026. English and German (native). On acceptance: book PDF, cover art, headshot, methodology summary and an audio-ready intro. Promotes every episode to his LinkedIn community and newsletter.

Ralf Schneider ralf.schneider@betterbusinesspartners.biz 4stepstocourage.com

Hosts are welcome to take the free 2-minute Courage Scan and cite their own results on air.