

When you think of a great leader,

who comes to mind? Lincoln, Merkel, Benioff, Malala, or Bezos? Mary Barra or a lesser-known? Chances are, the leader you thought of has these qualities:

- They speak candidly.
- They have a bold vision.
- They never shy away from hard conversations.
- They seek out diverse perspectives that challenge their own.
- They are decisive amid the uncertainties.
- They play to win.
- They take risks.

And when their efforts fall short, they mine their failures for the nuggets and then press on, wiser than before. They are not immune to fear. Instead, they have the courage to act in its presence.

That same courage resides in you. And as you look toward the future, you are being called to lead with more of it — to seize the opportunities adversity always holds. Given the disruption of recent times, opportunities abound, although many are still obscured from view. Of course, if it were easy to lead bravely, more people would, and there would be fewer organizations struggling to stay competitive.

Leading with courage requires mastering fear, overriding your loss-aversion bias, and leaning toward the high risks you're hardwired to avoid. Leading with courage requires emboldening others to rise above their fear — challenging old paradigms, experimenting with new ideas, and risking failure faster. Here are three ways you can dial up your courage to lead through change and look back on this time as a profoundly transformative one.



REAL LEADERS ARE NOT IMMUNE TO FEAR. INSTEAD, THEY HAVE THE COURAGE TO ACT IN ITS PRESENCE. AS WE MOVE INTO A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD, THERE IS STILL MUCH TO OVERCOME, NOT LEAST THE ABILITY TO LEAN TOWARD THE RISKS THAT YOU'RE USUALLY HARDWIRED TO AVOID. HERE'S HOW TO TURN TOUGH TIMES INTO A LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

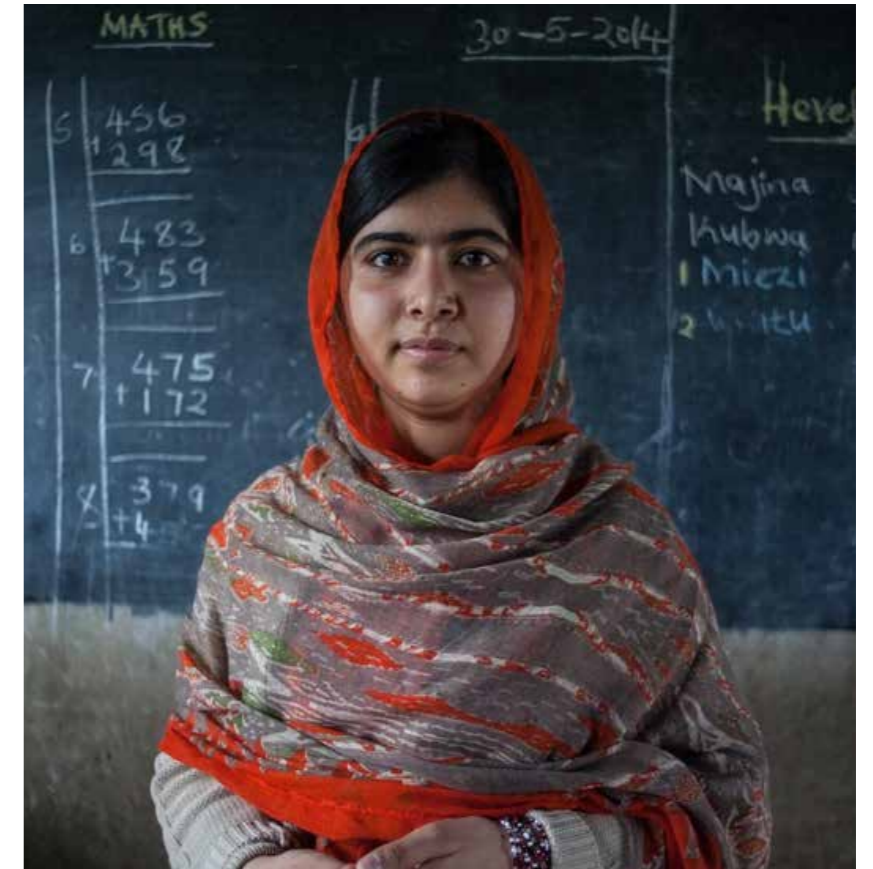
HOW TO BE A BRAVE LEADER IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

By Margie Warrell



“DO EVERY JOB YOU’RE IN LIKE YOU’RE GOING TO DO IT FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE, AND DEMONSTRATE THAT OWNERSHIP OF IT”

— MARY BARRA

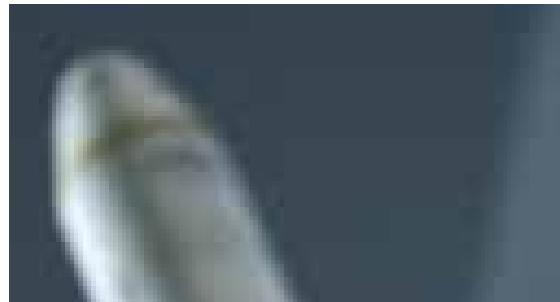


“SET A BOLD VISION THAT EXCEEDS YOUR CURRENT CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE IT.”

Elon Musk has no shortage of critics. Perhaps this is partly because he has no lack of vision. Asked about SpaceX and rocket technology in 2018, Musk shared that his vision for the future is one in which “Anyone can move to Mars and gas cars will seem like steam engines.” Will Musk’s prediction of humans landing on Mars by 2025 come true? Time will tell. What is certain is that his visionary leadership has unlocked ingenuity, pushed the envelope of possibility, and expanded the horizons of humankind.

“In the long run, all businesses and business leaders will be judged not by their profits or products, but by their impact on humanity,” says D.J. De Pree, founder of Herman Miller. As the world emerges from the cascading crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, you are uniquely positioned to lead others toward a vision that does. Do you have one?

Neuroscientists have found that when people work toward a meaningful “invented future” — one inspired by possibilities over probabilities — it enlarges their perspective to see opportunities others miss, ignites creativity, and fuels determination to prevail against the odds, individually and collectively. As you look forward to five or ten years from now, create a vision that expands the context of what others see as possible and taps into the deep human hunger for purpose. **A leader who cannot rally others behind an inspiring vision is like a river without water — dry and depressing.**



“BE DECISIVE AMID THE UNKNOWN.”

Our brains crave predictability and perceive ambiguity as a threat. When plans derail and our sense of certainties are shaken, our instincts steer us toward whatever shores up our sense of security. Yet this often results in short-sighted decision making (usually in the form of indecision), which, in turn, generally lands people and organizations in a more precarious, less secure position.

When the terrain ahead is awash with unknowns, it's easy to get pulled into “paralysis by analysis” and stick with the status quo. But indecision is a decision, one which deprives you of knowledge and an improved ability to assess the risk that you could gain from advancing amid the fog.

Great leaders don't wait for certainty before making their next move. Take Amazon's Jeff Bezos, who makes decisions with 70% of the information he wishes he had. “If you wait for 90%, in most cases, you're probably slow,” Bezos says. By setting a course amid the ambiguity and constantly iterating, Bezos has proven that bold action can reap extraordinary rewards. **The key: Be brave enough to make a decision and courageous enough to change it as new information comes to light.** Right now, this will be often.

Is your fear of making a poor decision stopping you from making a good one? If your left analytical brain is in overdrive, close down your spreadsheets and tune into another valuable source of intelligence: your intuition. **Keep in mind that gut instinct can't be forced. It needs space.** Albert Einstein's best ideas often came to him while sailing. Steve Jobs would take a walk when he'd been going in circles with a problem. Head outdoors or do something that shifts your brain into a different gear. Then stay open to the subtle clues and have the courage to trust them.



“NURTURE LOYAL DISSENT, TRADING CLEVERNESS FOR CURIOSITY.”

Abraham Lincoln always invited his political opponents into his cabinet. He figured this would ensure that his decision-making logic would always be adequately challenged. **Likewise, only when you actively seek diverse perspectives, inviting people to question your best thinking, can you identify your blind spots and arrive at smarter solutions.**

You may have accrued a wealth of knowledge throughout your career, but real leaders are life-long learners who value curiosity over cleverness and never assume a monopoly on wisdom. Only leaders who are open to unlearning what they think they know can relearn what they need to know.

So have the guts to say, “I don't know,” and to encourage loyal dissent in your ranks. Doing so will foster a culture of courage that unlocks ingenuity, fuels initiative, and harnesses diversity's full value.

Will the path ahead be smooth? Never was. Never will be. There will always be a tension between the desire to lead and serve and the desire to protect and play it safe. This is what it is to be human. Yet when you zoom up high enough, you can see how avoiding risk is a precarious strategy.

Peripheral risk-taking protects the core. So, embrace the discomfort that real leadership requires. Practice the courage you admire in the leader who came to mind at the start of this article. In today's culture of fear, leading with courage has never been more important. ■

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NOW IS THE TIME FOR TRUE CHAMPION LEADERS TO LEAN IN AND SHINE. THIS IS HOW GREAT LEADERS BUILD BACK AFTER DEFEAT.

By Coach Dana Cavalea

8 WAYS TO LEAD YOUR TEAM TO VICTORY IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

