

COURAGEOUS CULTURES

BY KARIN HURT & DAVID DYE

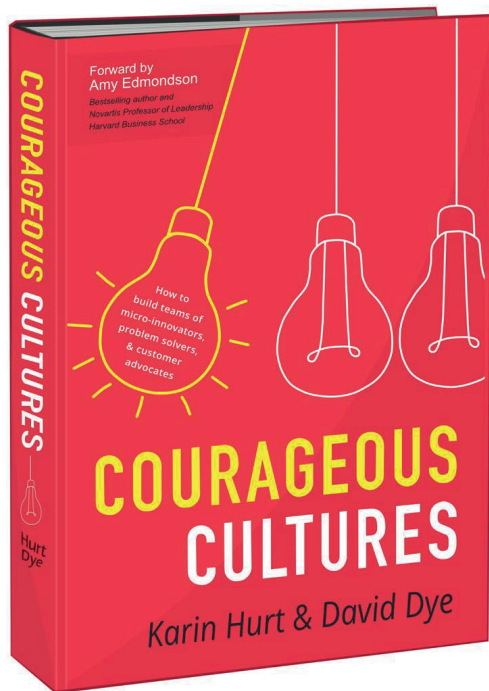
MANAGERIAL COURAGE:

7 PRACTICAL WAYS  
TO BE A BIT MORE

DARING



# Small Acts of Managerial Courage Build Confidence, Trust, and Connection



When we think of the most **courageous leaders we have worked with over our career**, it's not the BIG decisions they made or the SINGLE TIME they made the tough call that created a legacy of courage.

It's that you could count on them to CONSISTENTLY speak the truth, have your back, or be willing to let you experiment with a new idea.

They earned their reputation as a courageous manager one small daring moment at a time—small micro-moments of courage that led to better performance and deeper trust.

The best way to gain **confidence speaking up** and other small acts of courage is to experiment with getting out of your comfort zone, one mini-brave act at a time.

## What is managerial courage?

Most definitions of managerial courage involve speaking with candor, being willing to act with incomplete information, timely decision making, and addressing performance issues.

Courageous managers know their strengths, own them, and use them. They **will tell you their truth**, even if it's hard to hear. They surround themselves with people who will challenge them. And they give credit where it's due. They're consistently trying new approaches, coming to work each day curious about how to make work better, easier, or more efficient.

Every day. In little ways.

## 7 Practical Ways to Be a Bit More Daring

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We are here to encourage your courage and invite you to be just a bit more daring by taking on one or more of these managerial courage challenges. Start by owning your strengths, and then...

**01** Ask a colleague for feedback

**02** Open up with a bit of vulnerability

**03** Address a performance issue

**04** Share an idea

**05** Experiment with a new approach

**06** Advocate for a team member

**07** Ask for help

## First, Own Your Strengths

The best way to build confidence and courage is to know your strengths, own them and use them. Consider how your greatest strengths could be vital assets that are **transferable across different contexts**.

*Look for opportunities to show up as an interested expert ready to help.*



To start, ask yourself these questions.

What work doesn't feel so much like work?

Which elements of your work give you the most energy?

What do people continue to tell you you're good at... from role to role.

When you reflect back to your early childhood what were your natural gifts?

How are these still playing out in your approach to the world today?

Are there any talents you keep hidden from the people you work with today?

How could you bring more of your "extracurricular" strengths to your day job?

## #1

## Ask a colleague for feedback.

One of the best ways to demonstrate managerial courage is to invite (and act on) feedback.

If you're up for a small challenge, pick one area you want to improve and identify someone you trust to offer you candid feedback. **To get the best input, be specific.**



What's one best practice I could do to really improve my communication?

What's one thing I could do differently to make your meetings more productive?

I want to take my contributions to our team up a level this year. What's one change I could make that would make your job easier?

What's one change I could make that would increase your trust in me?

If you already regularly ask for such input and want to take on a bigger challenge, consider going on a DIY 360 ([or listening tour](#)).

We often include these DIY 360s in our [leadership development programs](#). We consistently hear that having these informal, voice-to-voice conversations builds deeper trust and connection, and opens the door to more collaboration, as well as helps to identify specific areas to work on.

## #2

### Open up just a bit more—and let your team learn something new about you.

Sometimes it's scary to let people see who you really are at work. And yet, people trust people they know at a human level.

If you want to take this on as a team challenge, our BECOME team-building exercise is a great way to encourage and facilitate deeper conversations.



Or, just head into your next round of **one-on-ones** with the intention of building a deeper connection—both ways. Share a bit more about yourself and be interested in learning something new about each person on your team.



*Courageous Cultures at Ally Bank, Charlotte, NC.*

# #3

## Address a performance issue.

When we ask high-performing employees “What’s one thing you wish your manager would do better?” the most frequent answer is that they would address the **performance issues** on their team.

If you’ve been letting a slacker slide, this managerial courage challenge is for you. Click on the link above for how to do this well. And if you need to reset expectations, the new year is a great time to do that too. More on **resetting performance expectations** [here](#).



## How to Provide More Meaningful Performance Feedback

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# #4

## Share an idea.

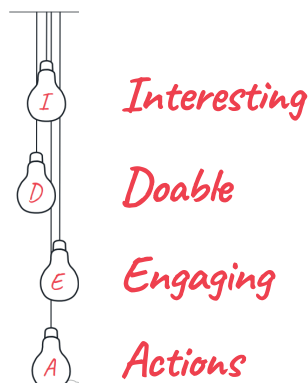
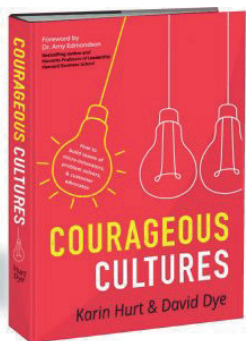
In our [Courageous Cultures research](#), 40% of respondents said they held back ideas to improve the business because they lack confidence. If you have an idea to improve the business but are stuck with [FOSU \(fear of speaking up\)](#), "If this is a challenge for you, start here to build more confidence to share your ideas.



**Here's a conversation starter that will make most managers really listen to what you have to say.**

“ We really care about our team and our success. I have an idea that will \_\_\_\_\_ (describe what strategic outcome your idea will improve, e.g. make us more money, save us time, improve retention). Do you have a few minutes for me to walk you through?” And then use our [I.D.E.A. model](#) to position your idea in a succinct and compelling way.

The worst that can happen is that they don't use your idea. But either way, you'll be seen as a critical thinker who cares about the team's success.



### I.D.E.A. Model

A good I.D.E.A. has a better chance of *being used and making a difference*. Use the four criteria below to assess and prioritize incoming ideas.

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## #5

## Experiment with a new approach.

"If It ain't broke, don't fix it" feels familiar, experimenting with a [well-run pilot](#) can go a long way in upping your managerial courage while managing your stress.

67% of the employees in our courageous cultures research said their manager operates around the notion of "This is the way we've always done it."

If this could be you, this is a managerial courage challenge for you.



## #6

## Advocate for a team member.

Courage is contagious. And, speaking up gets a whole lot easier when you have support.

If this is tricky for you, a good way to take on this challenge is to [find little ways to advocate for your team](#).

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# #7

## Ask for help.

Sometimes one of the most courageous acts is to admit that you need help.

If asking for help is hard, this might be the perfect managerial courage challenge to kick off the new year. Find one area of your work where you need some support and ask for the help you need.

Do you know what happens when you ask for help? You might actually get the help you need. And research shows that asking for help is a great way to **build trust and connection**.



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Contact us at  [info@letsgrowleaders.com](mailto:info@letsgrowleaders.com) to set up some time to talk



## About Karin & David

Karin Hurt and David Dye help human-centered leaders find clarity in uncertainty, drive innovation, and achieve breakthrough results. As CEO and President of Let's Grow Leaders, they are known for practical tools and leadership development programs that stick. Karin and David are the award-winning authors of five books including, *Courageous Cultures: How to Build Teams of Micro-Innovators*, *Problem Solvers*, and *Customer Advocates* and *Winning Well: A Manager's Guide to Getting Results-Without Losing Your Soul*. A former Verizon Wireless executive, Karin was named to Inc. Magazine's list of great leadership speakers. David Dye is a former executive and elected official. Karin and David are committed to their philanthropic initiative, *Winning Wells* – building clean water wells for the people of Cambodia.



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