7

Courage

Standing Up

Chapter Overview

When customers reported Samsung phones were catching fire, the company implemented a recall, but the communication wasn't clear, and the replacement phones also caught on fire. Courageous leaders make unpopular decisions and stand up for worthy goals. They are confident and resilient and don't fear confrontation or difficult conversations. Being courageous means taking measured risks, yet keeping self-righteousness in check.

Samsung Botches a Recall

In September 2016, after reports of 35 Samsung Galaxy Note 7 phones catching fire, the company recalled 2.5 million products, calling it an "exchange program" and "replacement program." They had to do something; photos and videos of phones melted, charred, and in flames because of a battery cell malfunction were going viral.

Adding insult to injury, regulatory agencies banned the phones from airplanes.[1] A phone in a man's pocket caught fire on a Southwest plane, so the decision was necessary. But the embarrassment to Samsung continued because airlines announced the ban in airports and on flights before takeoff.

Samsung blamed a "minute flaw," but the recall was enormous, affecting phones in 10 countries.[2] And it came at a bad time, just as Samsung was trying to compete against Apple's iPhone and was trying to "humanize" the brand with friendly-looking people and celebrity sponsors like Lil Wayne.[3]

Offering replacements seemed like a good decision. Although some questioned why it took the company a few days to respond to reports, other analysts applauded the speed.[4]

Unfortunately, replacement phones also exploded. More people were injured, and some phones caused fires.[5] The company reported that 90% of users chose a replacement Note 7 instead of switching to another device, which was good news.[6] However, the decision turned out to be a hasty one—perhaps a sign of wanting the trouble to simply go away. The tougher decision was to stop production (Figure 7.1). After reports of replacement phones burning, Samsung finally stopped production of the Galaxy Note 7 (Figure 7.1).[7,8,9]

A *Fast Company* article, "How Did Samsung Botch the Galaxy Note 7 Crisis? It's a Failure of Leadership," puts responsibility at the top of the organization. The article argues that company leaders should have stopped production of the phone until they were sure the battery issue was fixed.[10] The article continues:

> Just yesterday, when the news was already out that Samsung had (temporarily) stopped production of the Note 7, the company sent out a statement saying it had "adjusted its production schedules." It's this sort of mealymouthed talk that gives the impression that the whole thing is more about spin and share price than the real needs—indeed the safety—of customers.[11]

Being called "mealymouthed," downplaying the problem, taking shortcuts—some might call this lacking courage. Samsung's actions illustrate the opposite of courage, as we define the character dimension next.

Figure 7.1   Samsung recall unfolds

August–September, 2016	Several Note 7 phones overheat and catch on fire.
September 2, 2016	Samsung offers replacements or refunds.
September 8, 2016	Airlines tell passengers to turn off Note 7 phones.
September 15, 2016	The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission issues a recall.
October 6, 2016	Replacement phone ignites on Southwest flight.
October 11, 2016	Samsung halts all sales and production, yet hides this information within a website link.
October 14, 2016	The Department of Transportation bans Note 7 phones from airplanes.
January 23, 2016	Samsung accepts responsibility for its role in poor battery and smartphone design.

Sources: "Galaxy Note 7: Timeline of Samsung's Phones Woes," *BBC News*, October 11, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-37615496, accessed July 5, 2017; Arjun Kharpal, "Samsung Permanently Halts Production of Its Galaxy Note 7; $18 Billion Wiped Off Shares," *CNBC*, October 11, 2016, http://www.cnbc.com/2016/10/11/samsung-permanently-halts-production-of-its-galaxy-note-7-18-billion-wiped-off-shares.html, accessed June 16, 2017.

Courageous Leaders Fight for Worthy Goals

Leaders demonstrate courage when they overcome fear to pursue worthy goals. After defining courage, we'll see how this dimension is measured and how it relates to other aspects of character.

Courage Defined

As with trust, courage is demonstrated in any job and in small moves—less typically by war heroes or people running into a burning house to save a cat. An employee demonstrates courage by refusing to work overtime to attend

a family event. A manager demonstrates courage by speaking out against an unfair policy. A client demonstrates courage by questioning an invoice because the product is defective.

In each of these situations, people "voluntarily pursue a worthy goal in the face of fear or risk," as courage is defined in the academic literature. Courageous acts include an expression of the *individual* (standing out) and *involvement* (for the collective).[12] Not everyone is willing or able to stand out, and not everyone is committed to team goals. Courageous leaders aren't afraid of confrontation that will bring about positive change for others.

For leadership character, we're focusing on moral courage instead of physical courage, such as facing physical pain. In his book *Moral Courage*, Rushworth Kidder identifies three elements of moral courage: "a commitment to moral *principles*, an awareness of the *danger* involved in supporting those principles, and a willing *endurance* of that danger."[13]

Mary Crossan and her colleagues define behaviors of the courageous leader: "Does the right thing even though it may be unpopular, actively discouraged, and/or result in a negative outcome for him/her. Shows an unrelenting determination, confidence, and perseverance in confronting difficult situations. Rebounds quickly from setbacks."[14] Descriptors include *brave*, *determined*, *tenacious*, *resilient*, and *confident*.[15]

Embedded in this definition is the concept of grit. Angela Duckworth and her colleagues found that grit—"perseverance and passion for long-term goals"—is one predictor of academic success. In their definition, we see courage: "Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress."[16]

We also see courage in commonly used words. To *encourage* means to fill with courage, spirit, or confidence.[17] We get *discouraged* when we're deprived of these qualities.[18] One question on Duckworth's Grit Scale is "Setbacks don't discourage me."[19] It takes courage to plow through when we feel discouraged and when someone else is actively discouraging us. The opposite of courage is cowardice—the cowardly lion in *The Wizard of Oz* who is afraid of his own shadow.

Courage Scale

Researchers have developed a scale for measuring "professional moral courage" as a managerial competency (Figure 7.2). The items are useful for showing us what courage involves in organizations. To compare results by theme, add scores for each (three questions) and divide by three. For an overall score, add all scores and divide by 15.

Figure 7.2   Professional Moral Courage Scale illustrates aspects of courage

Theme 1: Moral Agency

A predisposition toward moral behavior and possessing a persistence of will to engage as a moral agent.

1	I am the type of person who is unfailing when it comes to doing the right thing at work.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True
2	When I do my job, I regularly take additional measures to ensure my actions reduce harms to others.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True
3	My work associates would describe me as someone who is always working to achieve ethical performance, making every effort to be honorable in all my actions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True

Theme 2: Multiple Values

The ability to draw on multiple value sets in moral decision making and to effectively sort out and determine what needs to be exercised, and to hold firm to beliefs despite external concerns or demands.

4	I am the type of person who uses a guiding set of principles from the organization when I make ethical decisions on the job.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True
5	No matter what, I consider how both my organization's values and my personal values apply to the situation before making decisions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True
6	When making decisions, I often consider how my role in the organization, my command, and my upbringing must be applied to any final action.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True

Theme 3: Endurance of Threats

Facing ethical or moral difficulty, whether a perceived or real danger or threat, with endurance.

7	When I encounter an ethical challenge, I take it on with moral action, regardless of how it may pose a negative impact on how others see me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True
8	I hold my ground on moral matters, even if there are opposing social pressures.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True

9	I act morally even if it puts me in an uncomfortable position with my supervisors.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True

Theme 4: Going Beyond Compliance

Not only considering the rules but reflecting on their purpose going beyond compliance-based measures to consider what is right, just, and appropriate.

10	My coworkers would say that when I do my job, I do more than follow the regulations; I do everything I can to ensure my actions are morally sound.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True
11	When I go about my daily tasks, I make sure to comply with the rules but also look to understand their intent to ensure that this is being accomplished as well.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True
12	It is important that we go beyond the legal requirements but seek to accomplish our tasks with ethical action as well.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True

Theme 5: Moral Goals

A drive for task accomplishment that includes the use of virtues (e.g., prudence, honesty, and justice) throughout the decision-making process to achieve a virtuous outcome.

13	It is important for me to use prudential judgment in making decisions at work.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True
14	I think about my motives when achieving the mission to ensure they are based upon moral ends.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True
15	I act morally because it is the right thing to do.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never True Always True

Source: Adapted from Leslie E. Sekerka, Richard P. Bagozzi, and Richard Charnigo, "Facing Ethical Challenges in the Workplace: Conceptualizing and Measuring Professional Moral Courage," *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (2009), pp. 565–579. Some items were updated to avoid reverse scoring (see https://www.signup4.net/Upload/KAIS13A/PHYE332E/PMC%20Instrument%20Sekerka%20Bagozzi%20Charnigo%201-13.pdf).

Courage includes resisting the temptation to compromise or carry out unethical acts. This can be challenging, given the organizational context for ethical decisions discussed earlier. When everyone is cheating or stealing, we want the same benefit or result. But the courageous leader doesn't take shortcuts and is willing to call others out for doing so. We saw examples of whistleblowers demonstrating courage when they went against their company to report wrongdoing.

Courage and Other Aspects of Character

Courage has connections to other character dimensions discussed so far. In a study of military soldiers during a training program, researchers found that what links authentic leadership to followers' ethical and prosocial behavior is moral courage. In other words, leaders who demonstrate a moral perspective and are open, transparent, and self-aware may promote moral courage in their followers. These leaders inspired others to demonstrate moral reasoning and to put the group's interests above their own.[20]

Another study explored the relationship between behavioral integrity and moral courage. The authors concluded, "One way to manage behavioral courage ['the perceived consistency of action under adverse conditions'] is by managing behavioral integrity." Particularly in tough times, when leaders emphasize how they are living their values and following through on promises, they are seen as more courageous, and their performance is viewed more positively.[21]

Taking Measured Risks Improves Outcomes

When leaders demonstrate moral courage, they take risks, but they aren't foolish. Accurately assessing risk helps ensure a good outcome, and a government model serves as one guide. Yet people aren't "brave" for just being who they are.

Assessing Risk

Leaders at all levels in an organization make decisions by assessing risk. Without some measure of risk, courage is excessive. Jumping off a bridge or driving your car into a wall will likely get you killed. Creating a product without doing market research is a bold move—and it's probably foolish. A daredevil may be courageous, or he may be reckless.[22]

Rushworth Kidder suggests assessing potential risks in demonstrating moral courage. First, we must be willing to face ambiguity and confusion. Situations that require courage are rarely straightforward. Can we handle conflicting, complex points of view without having one "right" answer? Second, are we willing to face exposure? By taking action, we make ourselves vulnerable. Are we ready for the leadership role that's required? Third, can we accept the loss? We may lose our reputation, our relationships, or our job.[23]

In his book *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, Albert O. Hirschman discusses the tradeoffs between voicing complaints and leaving an organization. For example, an employee decides whether to complain about poor management practices or leave for a new job. Hirschman argues that exiting continues the cycle and may lead to further decline.[24]

This quandary raises the ultimate question when deciding whether to take action: Is it worth it? Do the benefits of demonstrating courage outweigh the risks? Who will be hurt, and are the casualties worth the positive outcomes for the greater good? These are some of the difficult questions a leader asks before choosing a courageous path. Whatever we choose, having people in your life to help weigh options and to support your decision is important.
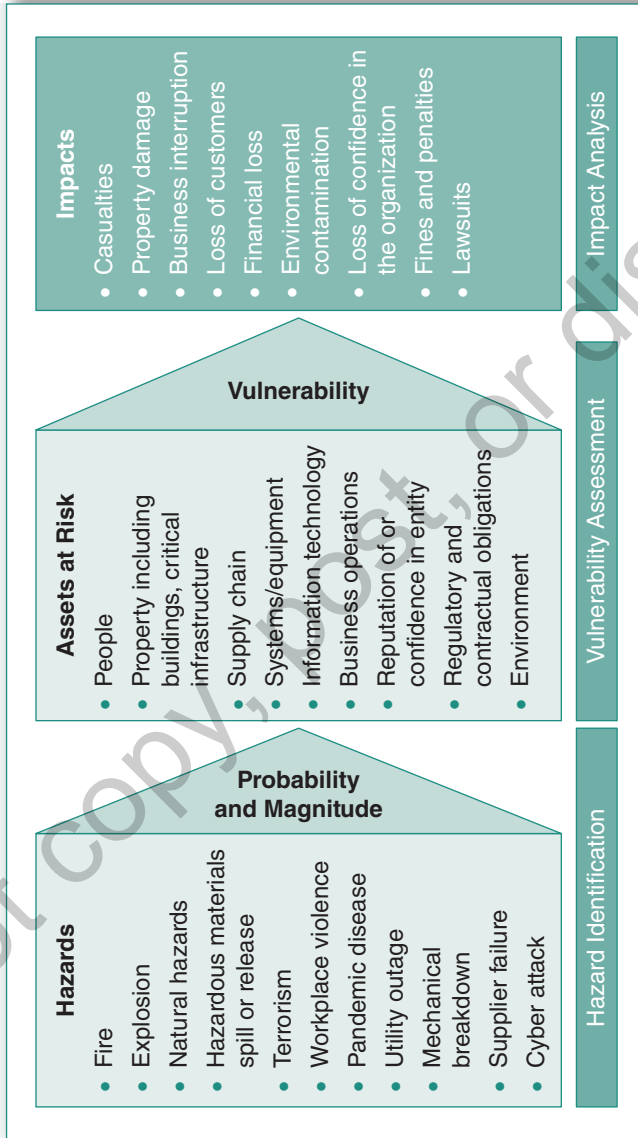
A Government Model

The U.S. government gives us a useful risk assessment model we can apply to business situations such as Samsung (Figure 7.3). The first hazards are fire and explosion—clearly serious issues to avoid. The first assets at risk listed are people and property—also relevant to the Samsung situation. Relevant impacts are property damage, business interruption, loss of customers, financial loss, and loss of confidence. Given Samsung's communications, we might assume it placed business interests ahead of people and property. Perhaps, out of fear, the leaders underestimated the risk of battery issues in the replacement phones and the potential damage to people, property, and the brand.[25]

House of Cards Example

Another good example of risk assessment is actress Robin Wright fighting Netflix for equal pay for her role in the TV show *House of Cards*. On the show, she plays an executive of a nonprofit organization, and her husband and costar is a politician, played by Kevin Spacey.[26] In an interview, Wright said women get paid about 82% of what men do, and she wanted to be paid the same as her costar:

> I was looking at statistics, and Claire Underwood [Wright's character] . . . was more popular than [Spacey's character] for a period of time in a season, so I capitalized on that moment. And I was like, you'd better pay me, or I'm gonna go public.[27]

Figure 7.3 A risk assessment model applies to the Samsung situation

Hazards
- Fire
- Explosion
- Natural hazards
- Hazardous materials spill or release
- Terrorism
- Workplace violence
- Pandemic disease
- Utility outage
- Mechanical breakdown
- Supplier failure
- Cyber attack

Probability and Magnitude

Hazard Identification

Assets at Risk
- People
- Property including buildings, critical infrastructure
- Supply chain
- Systems/equipment
- Information technology
- Business operations
- Reputation of or confidence in entity
- Regulatory and contractual obligations
- Environment

Vulnerability

Vulnerability Assessment

Impacts
- Casualties
- Property damage
- Business interruption
- Loss of customers
- Financial loss
- Environmental contamination
- Loss of confidence in the organization
- Fines and penalties
- Lawsuits

Impact Analysis

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Wright took a measured risk and acted at the right moment—when her character's ratings were high.[28] She stood up for what she thought was right but was no fool: she waited until she had the upper hand to ask for what she thought she deserved. The network responded, and she got her pay raise.

When Risk Isn't Involved

Courage must involve taking risks. In a moving TED Talk, "I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much," Stella Young, a comedian and journalist who uses a wheelchair, says she tires of strangers telling her she's so brave. Although she knows people mean it as a compliment, Young says we've been "told this lie that disability makes you exceptional." She also says the label is objectifying, as are images of people with disabilities on posters with motivational slogans. They benefit people without disabilities—to think "things aren't so bad for you, to put your worries into perspective."[29]

Young tells us she takes no extraordinary risks—she just lives her life as the rest of us do. Sure, she has physical challenges, but she says our expectations are far too low. Instead, we should reward real achievement.[30] Why do we call people with physical limitations an "inspiration"? Perhaps it's about our own fear. What if we were in a wheelchair? How well would we manage our lives?

Courage Means Facing Our Fears

To take risks, we must face our fears. Vulnerability is essential to courage, and we see an example in a common anxiety: public speaking.

Managing Fear and Panic

Fear is useful; without it, human beings would not survive. Fear warns us of physical danger to our lives and livelihood. Panic warns us of emotional danger of losing key relationships.[31] Both help us protect ourselves.

But our fears can stymie us. You have probably heard the expression "analysis paralysis." Sometimes people in organizations get stuck—they can't make a decision because they want it to be perfect, or they choose analysis over action because it's safe. They dread a negative outcome. If a decision doesn't turn out well, particularly in risk-averse organizations, senior management looks around for someone to blame. That dread causes people to get stuck, and it takes courage to manage through it.

Courage and Vulnerability

In addition to authenticity and integrity, courage and vulnerability are closely related. Courage is the ability to manage our anxiety even in difficult and potentially dangerous situations.

According to Brené Brown, "vulnerability is our most accurate measure of courage."[32] When we discussed integrity, we saw the link between small acts of kindness and strengthening trust. These small acts require courage—the courage to face another's emotions and to face our own vulnerability. We tend to avoid situations that make us uncomfortable, but we can choose to sit with discomfort and work through it instead. Brown suggests we make more courageous choices:

> Rather than deny our vulnerability, we lean into both the beauty and agony of our shared humanity. Choosing courage does not mean that we're unafraid; it means that we are brave enough to love despite the fear and uncertainty.[33]

In Chapter 2, we talked about TV mogul Shonda Rhimes. It took courage to manage her anxiety, but she chose hope over fear in order to have a better, more fulfilling life.

Anxiety About Public Speaking as an Example

Let's consider another example: speech anxiety. People in organizations give many types of formal and informal presentations, and all require some level of confidence and courage.

Speech anxiety is common but can be overcome, just like anything we dread. The anxiety manifests differently in each of us: some people experience a quivering voice, sweat profusely, or turn red, while others experience such intense anxiety that they feel paralyzed. A tool for managing anxiety offers 22 research-based strategies to try before, during, and after a presentation based on what works for each of us (Figure 7.4). Online, each strategy includes references and explanations.[34]

Many of these strategies are helpful for mustering courage for other leadership challenges. One way to change your thinking (a cognitive strategy) is to write out all your fears, identify which are irrational, and write a coping mechanism for each.[35] A behavioral, or physical, strategy is to practice mindful breathing, which we discussed as a strategy to manage failure. An affective, or emotional, strategy is to allow yourself to experience the feelings of anxiety and to reframe them as excitement. Your body reacts similarly to anxiety and excitement, so try to focus on the positive emotion instead of telling yourself to calm down or relax, which probably won't work.[36]

Figure 7.4   Speech anxiety can be overcome with strategies before, during, and after a presentation

How to Feel Confident for a Presentation

. . . . and overcome speech anxiety

| Before | Presentation Day | After |

Teal = Cognitive, Red = Physical/Behavioral, Orange = Affective

Source: Amy Newman, "How to Feel Confident for a Presentation . . . and Overcome Speech Anxiety," speaking.amynewman.com.

Public, Unpopular Decisions Take Courage

Courage means taking the tougher road and doing so publicly. Although Samsung fell short, we see better examples, including one from Facebook.

Difficult Decisions

Samsung's leaders wanted to fix things quickly and took what seemed like the easy way out. Recalling phones without offering replacements would have angered customers and may have turned them toward Apple or other competitors. Halting production may have angered shareholders, who would resent the loss in revenue. Samsung tried to avoid both.

We have better examples of courageous leaders who make unpopular decisions and do so publicly. In the book introduction, we learned about Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, who disobeyed instructions and risked

155 lives by landing a US Airways plane in the Hudson River. He then spoke out about failings in the airline industry.

In Chapter 6, we learned about Kim Gwang-ho, the longtime employee of Hyundai, who spoke publicly about safety issues. He defied his employer—and his wife—to do the right thing.

Facebook Example

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg took a stand in a "Black Lives Matter" controversy. Someone at Facebook's Menlo Park, California, office wrote "Black Lives Matter" on the company's graffiti wall—a large, open space for employees to write anything. The expression typically stands for the activist movement against violence and racism toward Black people. Some Facebook employees didn't appreciate the sentiment; more than once, they crossed out the writing and replaced it with "All Lives Matter." The slogan suggests that other people, such as police officers, also matter, but it is considered an affront to the Black Lives Matter movement.

At Facebook, particularly, this is a touchy subject: only 2% of the company's employees are Black, and 4% are Hispanic.[37] Zuckerberg condemned the word change in a message to all employees (Figure 7.5). He could have stayed out of the fray. Instead, he jumped into the controversy and talked publicly about his disappointment. He also used strong language, calling the acts "disrespectful," "malicious," "deeply hurtful," and "tiresome."[38]

After Zuckerberg sent his message, dozens of Facebook employees showed their support, sitting or standing together at the company headquarters and holding "Black Lives Matter" signs.[39]

Courageous Leaders Tackle Difficult Conversations

Although it's tempting to hide during tough times, courageous leaders don't shy away from difficult conversations. Again, Samsung's communication failures show us what to avoid, and better examples show us how to stand up to others.

Samsung's Passivity

Samsung missed the chance to communicate more actively and directly. Critics call the response "passive" and point to recall announcements

Figure 7.5   Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg condemns changing "Black Lives Matter"

Refers to previously taking a stand on the issue.

Mark Zuckerberg
16 hrs

There have been several recent instances of people crossing out "black lives matter" and writing "all lives matter" on the walls at MPK.

Despite my clear communication at Q&A last week that this was unacceptable, and messages from several other leaders from across the company, this has happened again. I was already very disappointed by this disrespectful behavior before, but after my communication I now consider this malicious as well.

There are specific issues affecting the black community in the United States, coming from a history of oppression and racism. 'Black lives matter' doesn't mean other lives don't -- it's simply asking that the black community also achieves the justice they deserve.

We've never had rules around what people can write on our walls -- we expect everybody to treat each other with respect. Regardless of the content or location, crossing out something means silencing speech, or that one person's speech is more important than another's. Facebook should be a service and a community where everyone is treated with respect.

This has been a deeply hurtful and tiresome experience for the black community and really the entire Facebook community, and we are now investigating the current incidents.

I hope and encourage people to participate in the Black@ town hall on 3/4 to educate themselves about what the Black Lives Matter movement is about.

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ➤ Share

Clearly labels behavior and his reaction.

Identifies the issue directly.

Uses strong, emotional language.

Source: Michael Nunez, "Mark Zuckerberg Asks Racist Facebook Employees to Stop Crossing Out Black Lives Matter Slogans," *Gizmodo*, February 25, 2016, http://gizmodo .com/mark-zuckerberg-asks-racist-facebook-employees-to-stop-1761272768, accessed June 21, 2017.

hidden on the website. For a defect that, as one brand consultant said, "can literally catch fire and burn your house down with you in it," communications fell short.[40]

Not until October 13—more than a week following reports of the *replacement* phones catching fire—did we hear from any company leader. At that point, Dong-jin Koh, president of mobile communications business for Samsung, gave the company's first apology.[41] (Another apology came a month later from Samsung president and CEO Gregory Lee—two months after the first recall.[42])

Communication experts also criticize Samsung leaders for their silence on social media:

> After you press send, tweet, and share your first media statement with your community, don't curl up under your desk and hope the issue will go away. It's vital that you keep your community updated on what is happening on a regular basis and keep the engagement live.[43]

Samsung's lack of communication shows us the importance of being actively public, particularly during harsh criticism. Samsung's first "replacement" announcement misses the opportunity for courageous communication (Figure 7.6).

In January 2017, Samsung announced the results of an investigation (Figure 7.7). We can see how using passive voice makes the response sound weak. The company's messages are ironic: Samsung products are intended to enable communication—not muddy it.

Tackling Tough Conversations

Few of us enjoy difficult conversations. Ending a relationship, firing an employee, quitting a job—many of us would rather send a text message. Unfortunately, these types of situations end up on social media and in the news. Authorities who took over a General Motors plant in Venezuela, leaving 2,700 employees out of work, communicated by text:

> GM informs you that social benefits will be transferred to employees' accounts due to the termination of your contracts.[44]

Although people prefer to give bad news later in a discussion—to ease into it—research tells us that receivers prefer to hear it first and get it over with.[45] Scholars have identified good reasons for delivering bad news in person, such as the ability to use and detect body language and to convey

Figure 7.6   Samsung's first replacement announcement lacks courage

Press Resources > Issues&Facts > Statements

[Statement] Samsung Will Replace Current Note7 with New One

Samsung is committed to producing the highest quality products and we take every incident report from our valued customers very seriously. In response to recently reported cases of the new Galaxy Note7, we conducted a thorough investigation and found a battery cell issue.

To date (as of September 1) there have been 35 cases that have been reported globally and we are currently conducting a thorough inspection with our suppliers to identify possible affected batteries in the market. However, because our customers' safety is an absolute priority at Samsung, we have stopped sales of the Galaxy Note7.

For customers who already have Galaxy Note7 devices, we will voluntarily replace their current device with a new one over the coming weeks.

We acknowledge the inconvenience this may cause in the market but this is to ensure that Samsung continues to deliver the highest quality products to our customers. We are working closely with our partners to ensure the replacement experience is as convenient and efficient as possible.

- Was hidden behind a link: "Updated Consumer Guidance for the Galaxy Note7."
- Muddies the recall with vague language.
- Fails to mention the danger of catching on fire.
- Stops sales but not production.
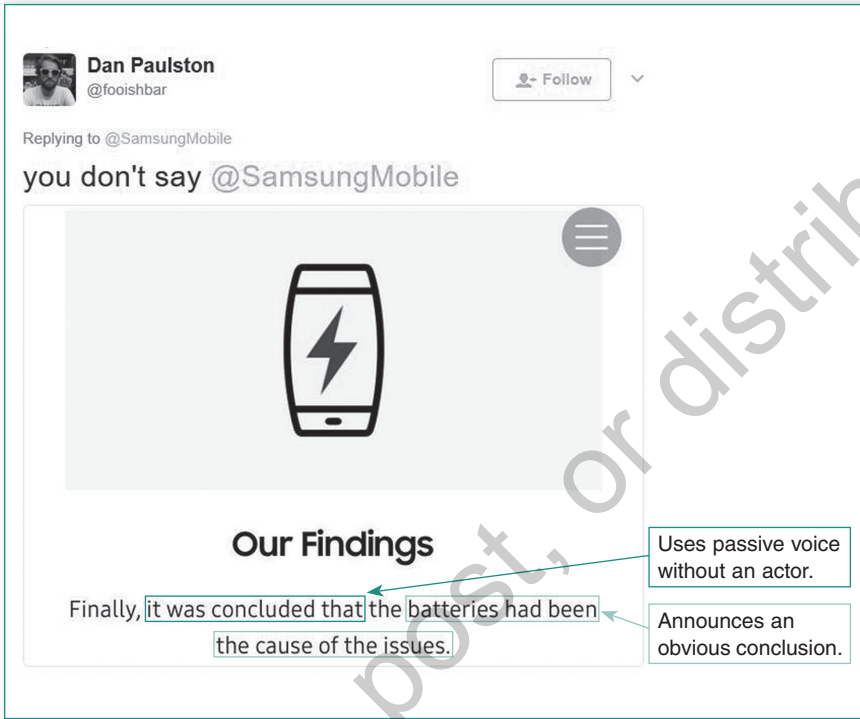- Replaces phones with devices that also catch on fire.
- Again, downplays the potential harm.

Source: Samsung, "Samsung Will Replace Current Note7 With New One," Samsung website, September 2, 2016, https://news.samsung.com/global/statement-on-galaxy-note7, accessed June 22, 2017.

respect and sensitivity.[46] At the same time, research shows some advantages of communicating bad news via email, for example, delivering a clear, consistent message to multiple employees at the same time.[47]

Communication researchers at Griffith University in Queensland identified more ways to tackle difficult conversations. They argue that these discussions typically involve "disagreement, defensiveness, and resistance," which can be mitigated with supportive behaviors, such as "empathy, equality, and description."[48] Demonstrating our understanding, relating to people as equals, and explaining issues clearly and objectively helps smooth these tough talks.

Figure 7.7   Samsung uses passive voice to announce obvious
investigation results

Dan Paulston
@fooishbar

Replying to @SamsungMobile

you don't say @SamsungMobile

Our Findings

Finally, it was concluded that the batteries had been
the cause of the issues.

Uses passive voice
without an actor.

Announces an
obvious conclusion.

Source: Dan Paulston (@fooishbar), "You Don't Say @SamsungMobile," Twitter, January 23, 2017, https://twitter.com/fooishbar/status/823452930791575552, accessed November 8, 2017.

In their book *Crucial Conversations*, Kerry Patterson and her coauthors also stress the importance of handling difficult discussions well. They define crucial conversations as "a discussion between two or more people where (1) the stakes are high, (2) opinions vary, and (3) emotions run strong." According to the authors, people tend to handle these situations either with silence (sarcasm, sugarcoating, avoiding, or withdrawing) or with violence (controlling, labeling, or attacking).[49]

Indian Bank and Xerox Examples

Courageous leaders have difficult conversations without going to either extreme—silence or violence. When Ranjana Kumar took over as Indian

Bank's chair and managing director, she inherited bad loans, many from political and corrupt sources. Kumar tackled the situation head on, fighting what she called "fear psychosis" among the staff. She replaced staff and went after delinquent customers.[50] A former colleague describes her courage:

> As much as she cared about communicating with all members of her staff, she was not afraid to challenge the high and mighty defaulter customers, even in their own backyards. Her willingness to confront when warranted made her highly effective. In fact, her ability to call a spade a spade was what earned her the most respect.[51]

The Economist called her "India's turn-round queen." After a three-year restructuring plan, the bank added 800,000 new customers and turned an operating profit of 2.6 billion rupees.[52]

Former Xerox CEO Ursula Burns serves as another good example of courageous communication. In a CNN interview, Burns described growing up in a housing project in Brooklyn, New York:

> New York is a tough place. You have to speak up. You have to be a little gritty. . . . People would sleep under the stairs. You know, drug addicts or bums . . . it smelt like urine out in the hallway. It was definitely not safe.[53]

Burns described attending a company event 20 years before she become CEO. She recalled a comment from a coworker: "He didn't say 'Black people,' he said, 'Why are we hiring all these different types of people and women?'" She wasn't happy with the executive's comment, according to the CNN report:

> She stood up in front of everyone and chided him for displaying a lack of passion and principles. Her comments led to an "unfriendly" exchange between the two. Burns said, "I thought I was going to be fired. And my $29,004 would go 'poof' into the wind."[54]

The executive counseled Burns on her "inappropriate tone" but later hired her into a job that was instrumental to her career progression to CEO.[55] Her courage paid off, and Burns illustrates vulnerability and authenticity.

Radical Candor and Radical Transparency Are Two Ways Leaders Demonstrate Courage

Radical candor and radical transparency are tools for addressing difficult situations head on and for practicing openness. Both require vulnerability and courage.
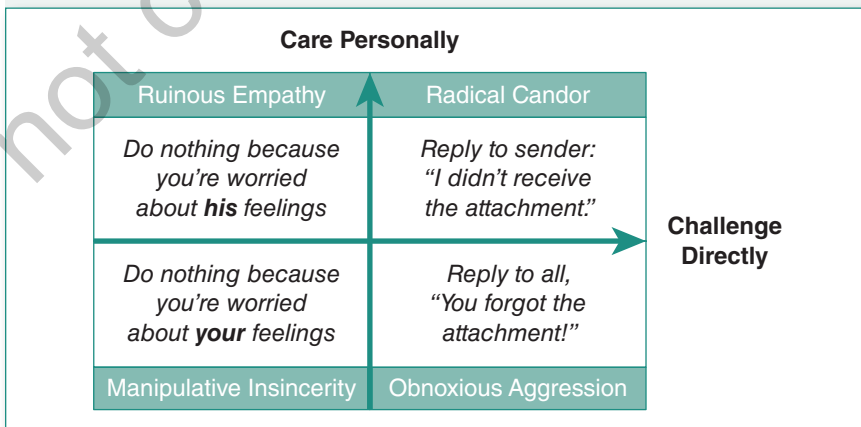
Radical Candor

A direct approach to difficult conversations is best and takes courage. We want to avoid discomfort, but the better strategy is to work through it. Being uncomfortable is a sign that we're engaged in something important and difficult. Discomfort can inspire us to forge ahead—to take the opportunity to improve a relationship, even if the conversation is difficult.

In her book *Radical Candor*, Kim Scott supports a direct approach. To practice radical candor, leaders—again, at any level of the organization—care personally and challenge directly. An example of responding to someone who sends an email and forgets the attachment is shown in Figure 7.8.[56]

Scott promotes bringing your whole self to work, as we discussed in Chapter 4. She advocates knowing each other well in the workplace to build caring, supportive relationships. Although people may be distant at work, Scott encourages people to connect more on a human level.

Figure 7.8   Radical candor includes caring personally and challenging directly

Scott also says that people fear communicating directly—both initiating and receiving direct communication—but eventually work better together:

> The most surprising thing about Radical Candor may be that its results are often the opposite of what you fear. You fear people will become angry or vindictive; instead they are usually grateful for the chance to talk it through. And even when you do get the initial anger, resentment, or sullenness, those emotions prove to be fleeting when the person knows you really care. As the people who report to you become more Radically Candid with each other, you spend less time mediating. When Radical Candor is encouraged and supported by the boss, communication flows, resentments that have festered come to the surface and get resolved, and people begin to love not just their work but whom they work with and where they work.[57]

People get emotional at work, and that's not a reason to avoid tough conversations. Instead, Scott recommends acknowledging emotions instead of ignoring them and taking a break in the conversation if necessary.[58] You might also prepare to be engaged viscerally. It's okay to feel physically tense, and you may want to close the conversation with a handshake or hug.

GM CEO Mary Barra also takes a direct approach, particularly during crisis situations. When asked how she motivates people, she explained, "One is being honest. I think people are smart and they're going to sense if you're BS'ing them a mile away. Don't try to sugarcoat things."[59]

Courageous leaders *want* to be challenged and have the guts to challenge others. If our ideas are sound, we won't cower when questioned.

Radical Transparency

Another approach that takes courage is practicing radical transparency, which means "putting openness above all other competing values."[60] In his *Wired* article "The See-Through CEO," Clive Thompson calls radical transparency "[a] judo move. Your customers are going to poke around in your business anyway, and your workers are going to blab about internal info—so why not make it work *for* you by turning everyone into a partner in the process and inviting them to do so?" Companies like Zappos allow employees to vent on a companywide wiki and tell suppliers about profits. According to CEO Tony Hsieh, "The more they know about us, the more they'll like us."[61]

To some leaders, radical transparency means everyone in the organization knows everything, for example, performance data. At Qualtrics, which provides online survey tools, all employees know each other's quarterly objectives, weekly goals, career history, and performance reviews and ratings.

Proponents of radical transparency argue that such openness removes worry about mistakes and false comparisons to colleagues.[62]

Bridgewater investment management is one example of a firm that promotes "radical truth and radical transparency." The company describes the practice: "We require people to be extremely open, air disagreements, test each other's logic, and view discovering mistakes and weaknesses as a good thing that leads to improvement and innovation."[63] To some, Bridgewater feels like a harsh place to work; employees are expected to tell what we might call the brutal truth. The company also has been criticized for being secretive about investment decisions.[64] We might call this a question of integrity: Do the leaders demonstrate consistency and wholeness?

Self-Righteousness Needs to Be Controlled

We discussed the problem of excess courage in the form of recklessness. Other extremes of courage may be considered self-righteousness or terror, and both should be avoided. We need perspective to make sure we're helping others, not hurting them.

About Self-Righteousness

Courage has been called the "difficult virtue" because it involves confrontation and is potentially destructive.[65] Let's be clear: having courage doesn't mean you're right. Courageous leaders have to keep themselves in check with others around them, which we'll revisit when we discuss humility. Otherwise, they may be considered self-righteous—smug and moralistic—as though only their view is the "right" one, and others' views are wrong.

Where's the line between courage and self-righteousness? Gavin Long shot three law enforcement officers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and left a suicide note to, perhaps reluctantly, justify his actions. In this excerpt, he wrote that he respected and knew good cops yet hated what bad cops got away with:[66]

> [N]ow if the bad cops, law makers, & justice system leaders care about the welfare, families, & well-being of their fellow good cops, then they (bad cops) will quit committing criminal acts against melanated people & the people in general. If not, my people, & the people in general will continue to strike back against all cops until we see that bad cops are no longer protected and allowed to flourish. B/C until this happens, we the people cannot differentiate the good from the bad.[67]

At the end, he wrote: "Look up, get up, & don't ever give up!" This was a call to action to challenge what he perceived as a corrupt system. This sounds like courage, but most people would call Long misguided at best and a terrorist at worst. He missed the risk assessment discussed earlier and did more harm than good.

Courageous leaders have to watch how they use force. Courage doesn't mean coercion; it involves making an offer you *can* refuse. If leaders resort to using force, maybe they aren't as confident as they think they are, or maybe the idea or solution isn't the right one after all. Radical candor means caring for others, not steamrolling them.

Starbucks Example

When President Trump enacted a travel ban for people from predominantly Muslim countries, people were fiercely divided, and Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz took a stand. In a message on the company's website, "Living Our Values in Uncertain Times," Schultz announced plans to help employees and hire 10,000 refugees.[68] Some considered his statement self-righteous—perhaps an excess of courage.

His statement was criticized on social media and at a shareholder meeting. An investor pointed out Schultz's inconsistency: he questioned why Schultz "lacked the courage to speak out" during travel bans under the Obama and Clinton administrations.[69]

At the shareholder meeting, Schultz had to wait for heckling to stop before defending his plans. He said the company had a "moral obligation" and promised no additional costs to the company to vet refugee hires. Schultz also said, "I can unequivocally tell you that there's zero, absolutely no evidence whatsoever, that there's any dilution in the Starbucks brand, reputation, or core business as a result of being compassionate."[70]

This statement may be true, broadly, but we have evidence that the brand and business did suffer in this case. After Schultz announced his refugee plan, a survey of about 4,800 people showed a decline in how people viewed the brand.[71] After the announcement, #BoycottStarbucks also was trending on Twitter.[72] Despite the impact on the business—and perhaps Schultz was in denial about some of it—he made an unpopular decision and stuck to it.

The audience's lens matters, and reactions in such situations may depend on politics more than anything else. Still, as leaders, we should watch our own indignation. Is our view the only right one? Courage includes managing through ambiguity. A courageous leader considers nuance and can discern what's right from many perspectives. One test for self-righteousness

may be to ask whether we can receive negative feedback without being defensive. Can we accurately assess feedback and—if it's accurate—change our stance? Or do we just keep pounding our fists?

Having the confidence to live and lead by our conviction is good, but not if we don't consider others and not if we use them to justify our courage: "I know I'm right, so I will continue down this path regardless of those left behind." Passion is good; fanaticism is not.

SUMMARY

Samsung missed an opportunity to face the product recall more courageously. With stronger language and more decisive action, the company may have fared better in the media. Eventually, Samsung recovered. By the summer of 2017, the Galaxy S8 was selling well and, for the first time, Samsung's operating profits had outpaced Apple's.[73] But the Note 7 crisis is remembered as an example of the company's weak leadership.

Courageous leaders don't fear confrontation when necessary to accomplish goals for others. Radical candor and radical transparency require courage and may foster better relationships at work. At the same time, leaders need to assess risk and keep self-righteousness in check so they can serve others.

Professional tennis player Arthur Ashe encourages us to act courageously—with humility:

> True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost.[74]

We'll discuss humility as a character dimension next.

EXERCISES

Concept Review Questions

1. What does courage involve? What does a leader do to demonstrate courage?

2. How can a leader assess risk to improve the chances of a good outcome?

3. What are radical candor and radical transparency? What are some examples of what radical candor is *not*?

4. What's the danger of self-righteousness?

Self-Reflection

1. Describe a time when you held a minority view about something important yet didn't contradict the majority. What was the goal? Why wasn't it worth fighting for, or what held you back? What can you learn from the experience?

2. Who in your life would you call courageous? What is this person able to accomplish? What about this person do you admire?

3. Think about a time when you challenged someone's opinion or idea. What about it was hard for you, and what was easy? What did you accomplish?

4. Think about a time when you encouraged others to follow your idea or recommendation. What did you do successfully? How did others respond?

5. Think about a time when you had courage but underestimated the risk. What was the result, and how might you act differently in the future?

6. Has there been a time in your life that you may have been self-righteous? What was the position you held strongly? What consequences did your position have? How did it affect your relationships?

7. How comfortable are you with the idea of radical candor? To what extent have you practiced it in the past?

8. Have you experienced being cared for personally and challenged directly by a leader? How did it feel? How did it affect your performance or productivity?

Mini-Cases

Consider the following scenarios. On your own or with a partner, discuss the best course of action in each case. What would you do, and what factors into your decision?

Scenario 1

One of your team members submitted her section of a report for a class project, but you suspect it's not her own work. In a footnote on the last page are someone else's name, the same course number, and last year's date. She submitted the work online, and your three team members also have access to the file. How will you handle this situation?

Scenario 2

One of your coworkers wants flexible work hours so the team can work at staggered times, for example, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. or 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. You like the idea, but you're not willing to fight for it. On the other hand, this is very important to your coworker. She talks about it every day and tries to rally the rest of the team to support her. She has raised the suggestion three times during team meetings, and you and others usually redirect the conversation. How would you describe your coworker's behavior? What will you do in this situation?

Scenario 3

You support the idea of radical candor, but a teammate's behavior falls more into the "obnoxious aggression" category. Earlier in the day, you overheard him tell a customer, "You need to be more careful with the product. It's not a toy, and you'll be responsible if it breaks again." How will you handle this situation?

Self-Assessment

Take the Professional Moral Courage Assessment in Figure 7.2 to learn about yourself and how you demonstrate courage. Use a seven-point scale to rate each item, where 1 = *never*, 4 = *sometimes*, and 7 = *always*.

Add up your scores under each theme (three questions each). For each theme, divide by three to get one score. For an overall score, add all scores and divide by 15.

Paired Activity

With a partner, discuss your ratings on the Professional Moral Courage Assessment. You may use these questions as a guide:

- To what extent do your responses reflect how you view yourself? What, if anything, surprised you about the assessment and your responses? Provide examples to illustrate your points.
- What can you learn from this experience? What do you see as your strengths, and where can you develop moral courage?

Paired Activity

Scenario

Think about an upcoming situation that makes you fearful or anxious. Try to work through your feelings.

Planning Questions

1. What is the situation, and what is your goal?

2. How do you feel about it? Try to experience the emotion.

3. Why do you feel the way you do? For example, are you afraid of hurting someone else's feelings? Are you afraid of being vulnerable or looking foolish?

4. Which of your feelings are real, and which might be imagined? Try to distinguish each.

5. Identify the real risks. What is at stake?

6. What could be the positive results of your taking action in this situation? How will your actions help others?

7. How can you prepare to receive negative feedback or different points of view? You may reconsider your points—or you may choose not to let go.

Role Play Activity

Scenario

Role-play your part of the situation above to demonstrate courage. You may work with a partner to role-play the scenario together. You may video-record your part or role-play the scenario with another student to review it later.

Planning Questions

1. What did you learn from analyzing the situation above?

2. Analyze the other perspective: how might the other person or people react?

3. How will you begin your part? What will you say next?

4. How will you balance being courageous with sounding self-righteous or too forceful?

5. How can you describe the situation in a way that is helpful and transparent?

6. How will you acknowledge negative feedback or doubts?

Practice and Reflection

Did you demonstrate courage? Did you also demonstrate vulnerability? How did you feel? What did you learn from the role play?