

# COURAGE: Mental Strength, Tenacity and Perseverance

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Courage:

## Mental Strength, Tenacity and Perseverance

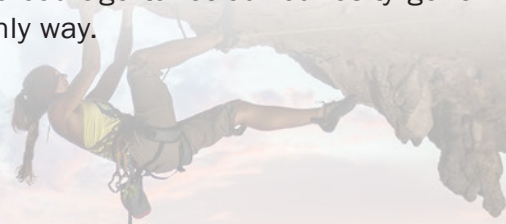
As you think about these troubled times, we would ask you to reflect on the language of leadership. In particular, a word that is currently very much on our mind, “courage.” Courage in times of war is, of course, putting one’s very life on the line for something you believe in deeply. The ultimate expression of courage.

Change the context and you change the meaning of a word. In the midst of today’s business turmoil, leadership is clearly not about life or death. It does demand courage, however. A different kind of courage. A willingness to interrogate reality. The recognition that mental strength, tenacity and perseverance are the currency of continued success. The emotional courage to ask ourselves, “What does it really mean to be a leader?” “Do I possess the leadership capability the team needs in the future?” “Am I learning at least as fast as the changes taking place in the external business environment?” “What kind of legacy will I leave?”

As we dig deeper, the following leadership themes demand a level of comfort with being uncomfortable beyond anything previously asked of us:

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**C**URIOSITY. This is far more than simply taking a keen interest in your surroundings. It’s peering through the window of change with new eyes. When a critical decision needs to be made it’s not simply wanting to know, it’s demanding to know. It’s recognising that leaders are readers. It’s asking the questions that make others uncomfortable. It’s acting on the belief that there is always a better way. Without the courage to let our curiosity gene take flight, the status quo becomes the only way.





**O**RGANIZE the business with tomorrow in mind. This speaks to creating tomorrow's culture, today. It's hiring with strategic intent. It's sharing stories and introducing metaphors that equip people for the world we are entering. It's recognising that what got us here won't get us to where we need to be. It's thinking about the organization as a network of shared interest; a team of teams where the underlying design is Fast, Flat, Flexible, Focused and Fertile (to new ideas). It's the courage to make tomorrow's organization a reality.

**U**NDERSTAND that what keeps top talent isn't financial reward, position on the hierarchy or the illusion of job security. What retains those you can least afford to lose is a role that has a compelling purpose; an overall sense of belonging; an environment that matches opportunity with capability; and the overt and undeniable recognition that fairness underscores everything the organization does. Courage is moving beyond the rhetoric and treating employees as you would your best customer. If you don't, you will lose both.







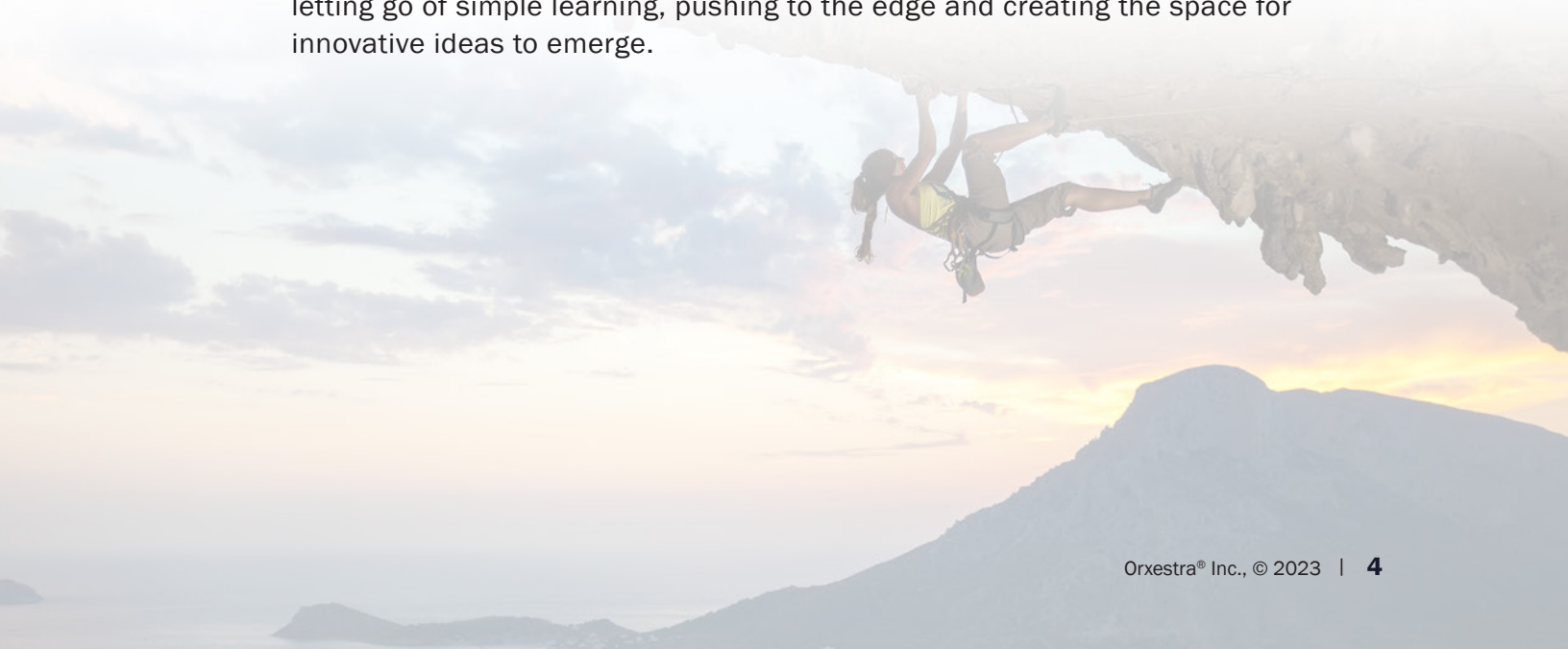
**R**ESILIENCE. Disruption, the emergence of new technology, that COVID-19 has reinvented the workplace, that blended employment is an undeniable reality, “the great exit,” supply chain problems, to say nothing of a war in Europe, all make the competency we call “leadership” ever more challenging. It’s not enough to ride the crest of the waves of change; it’s not enough to endure and then slowly bounce back. To succeed in the world we are in is to be resilient. Resilience is a state of mind. It implies enduring, bouncing back and riding the crest of the waves of change, but beyond that, it means learning and growing from the experience. Courage is to ask hard questions about our own actions. It’s to actively learn to become more resilient.

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**A**CCEPT that in everything we do creating tomorrow’s customer is the very heartbeat of ongoing success. We have to also accept that without trust our customers have little reason to partner with us. Building trust moves through four levels. One: assumed capability. Two: shared values. Three: a record of successful performance. Four: we stop asking, “How do we make money from this?” and start asking, “How do we make the customer’s business better?” Courage is developing a mindset where the customer’s success is more important than our own.

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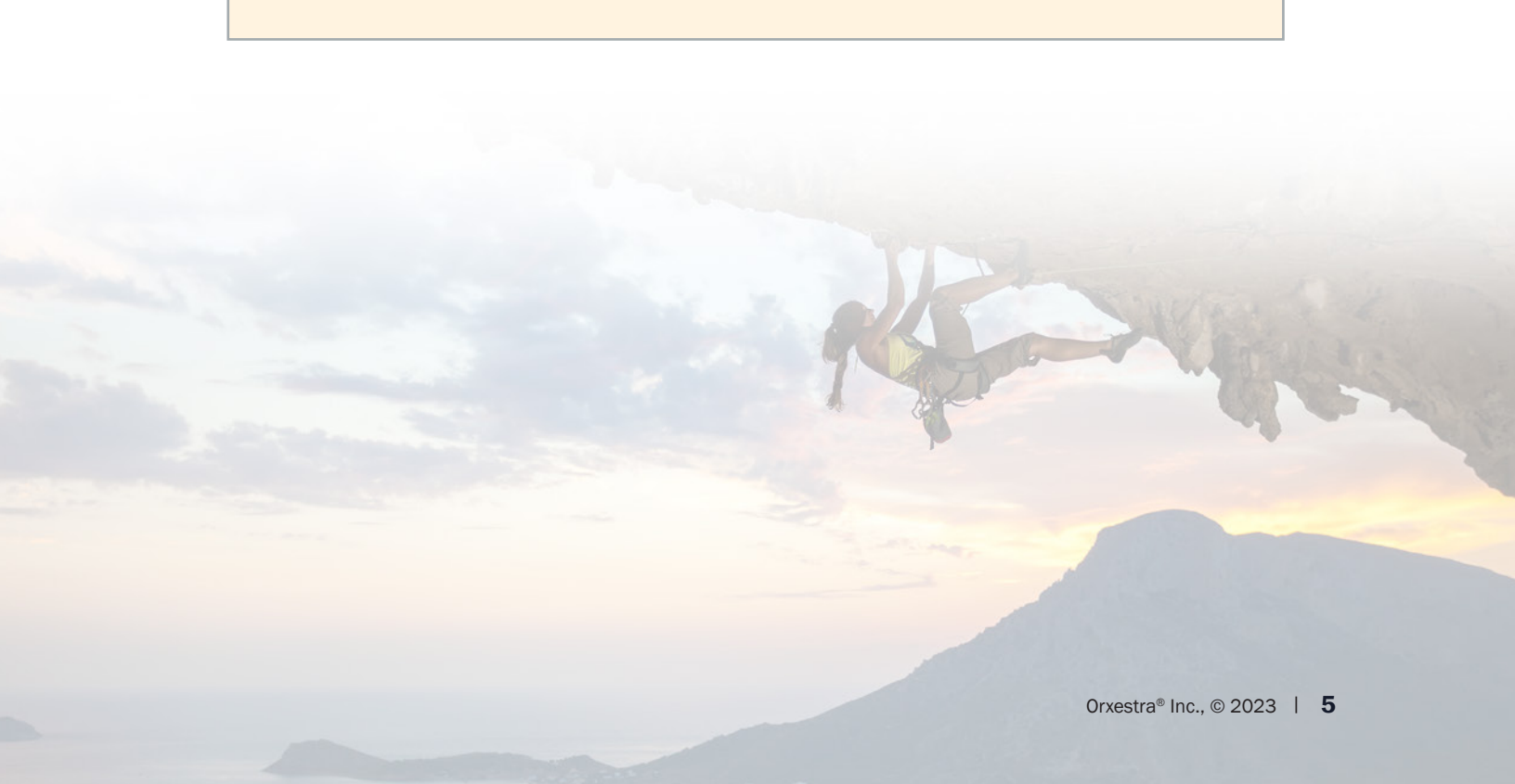
**G**ET FAST or get out of the way. Today is the fastest things have ever been but the slowest that they will ever be. The only sustainable competitive advantage is speed of learning. That’s true for both the organization and each of us as individuals. There are three plateaus of learning. One: simple learning, e.g., instruction. Two: learning how to learn. Three: learning how to learn limited only by the imagination of those involved. Courage is about letting go of simple learning, pushing to the edge and creating the space for innovative ideas to emerge.





**E**NGAGE the heart and enrich the spirit. When added to traditional leadership thinking – enabling the head and empowering the hand – we are describing a (the) 21st century leadership imperative: leadership balance. Without leadership balance coaching is viewed as a “nice to have” capability, empathy becomes important only in times of crisis and the success of the team is held hostage to the needs of those on the team with the most influence. Without leadership balance, diversity and inclusion become little more than a numbers game to placate the board and sustainability, at best, a public relations campaign. Breaking past patterns, examining the unexamined, listening for what isn’t said, challenging bias and being willing to fully recognise what, for those who are left behind, lies in plain sight takes courage.

For a leader, language isn’t important ... it’s everything. In that it is emotionally laden, courage is an especially powerful term. It’s also a linguistic frame that when you change the context you change its meaning. Beyond what has already been described, courage in business ultimately draws on the leadership of self. The mental strength needed to embark on the road less travelled. The tenacity to fully live your own story. And, in a world where only those who can see what others cannot see can do what others say cannot be done ... the perseverance to endure.







## Mental Strength, Tenacity and Perseverance





John has extensive international experience as a senior executive. As a consultant he has worked in more than 40 countries for organizations that are household names. He has worked on organization culture for some of the world's largest organizations. His thought leading intellectual property, in any one year, supports talent management in many hundreds of organizations around the world.

He holds a doctorate in management development and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. In addition to numerous business articles and twice being awarded article of the year by MCB publications, he has published 15 books on leadership, talent management, coaching and organization culture. A number of them bestsellers. He has recently completed his *Executive Playbook – It's Time to Rethink Succession*.

A range of John's recent books and articles are available for download on the TRANSEARCH International website.

