

Your Cheque's in the Mail, and so is Your Confidence
Courage and confidence never arrive at the same time in business

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Courage has always been an interesting character trait to me and over time I've decided that it's not a trait; it's a learnable skill. This scarce and most necessary of all human abilities is essential for anyone in business seeking to be anything but average.

For over fifteen years, I've worked in business financial advice helping simplify complexities so my clients can lead bigger lives and ultimately become better versions of themselves. The older I get, the more I realize there isn't much left worthy to be afraid of. The standard of what's perfect continues to develop with knowledge and experience.

Regardless of this progression, what doesn't evolve is courage. This elusive learnable skill seems to require recapture each day, through each major decision and each moment in business. So how do you become courageous? Where do you find your courage? And how does it relate to business life?

There's a deep price to shallow thinking.

Any trip to the airport seems to bring with it a spare hour or two where I inevitably fall prey to the wiles of the airport bookshop. No business trip would feel right without a compulsory browse through the business section to advance my continuing quest to find what may be the missing link for my business and my team.

Each year there's a plethora of new books vying for my attention and all touting the latest messages shouted at time-poor business owners like myself. The new best business method, the latest leadership framework and the biting social commentary about whatever is wrong with whoever is the current generation of young people.

You can find Navy SEAL teams telling you all you need to succeed is battle strategy. There's a host of former sporting stars all put out to pasture and suggesting you can win your game with their team approach. There's a clutch of consultants with frameworks dodging standard deviations and for the people of faith, a monk or two and a promise my problems only exist if I think they do.

We're all looking for the perfect book, the perfect panacea and the shortcut to happiness and a healthy profit-and-loss statement. If you can make it pain free, that's a bonus.

Notable by its absence and conspicuous by its presence, the unmistakable missing piece for every business owner is courage. In business, courage isn't a one-time event, but sadly we often tell our stories like it is.

We confuse courage with confidence.

In the same way we shy away from clarity because we equate it with brutality, the skill of applying courage is often misportrayed as a feeling of absolute certainty about the rightness of doing a particular task.

But that's not courage; that's confidence. Courage is not about confidence.

Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is a decision. It's resistance to the paralyzing effect of fear and a decision to do the task anyway. You could say the main difference between courage and confidence is confidence always feels good where courage always feels uncomfortable; so get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Courage is an ageless choice to make.

One of the most courageous people I've met was a seven-year-old boy; I'll call him David (not his real name). A long time ago in a legal career far, far away, I was acting for the Crown in a criminal case of child abuse and David was my witness.

Before he took the witness stand to tell his version of events, we had the chance to chat privately together along with his foster parents. After reading through his written statement, I explained to him I already knew what had happened, but I needed him to help me tell *how* it happened.

Then I did something I still look back in disbelief about. I tucked my access-all-areas court security pass into the outside of his belt, to wear under his jumper, so when he was in the witness box, if he felt scared, he could simply place his hands on his waist and hold onto it. And he would know that I would know how he was feeling.

That afternoon, David stood up with courage and simply told the court what had happened, and how it happened, all the while with his hands confidently resting on his hips, and his left hand over my official security pass. He felt the fear; he decided not to let it stop him and he bravely spoke about something terrible to a courtroom full of strangers and me. David was undoubtedly courageous in the way that most inspires me.

So where do you find the confidence to be courageous in business?

Quite simply, you don't.

The most interesting thing about confidence in business is it usually arrives late. Over time, I've found I can't wait until I feel an overwhelming sense of confidence about my business decisions. The market will change; the opportunity will move and the windows may close all while I'm patiently waiting for my confidence to arrive.

When it comes to courage and confidence in business (and perhaps in dating too), *courage* arrives like the overnight express mail while *confidence* about your choices arrives surface mail. It's late and usually gets mis-delivered, and then you actually have to go to the post office to pick it up on a weekend because there's postage still owing on it and you have to pay the difference before the parcel is released to you.

The 3 step sequence when you need to decide to be courageous:

1. First you have to *commit* to the action you want to take.
2. Then you need to be *willing to feel the fear* regardless of that commitment.
3. Then you have to *decide* to be courageous so you can take action.

Afterwards, you will have to *wait* for the emotional mail to arrive with your confidence. (And be prepared for it to arrive late every single time, if at all.) There will always be pain in business; whether it's the pain of regret or the pain of discipline. So ask yourself this question:

“What would I be doing in my business now, if I decided to acknowledge the fear but chose to be courageous anyway?”

Drew Browne is an award-winning author, speaker and financial adviser who's specialises in helping small and medium business owners and their families protect themselves from their business. He is known as the financial adviser who believes financial advice isn't just about money but managing complexity. His company can be found at sapience.com.au