

LIVING BRAVETM LEADERSHIP

LEARN HOW TRUST, ACCOUNTABILITY, BRAVERY,
CONNECTION AND BIG PANTS DEFINE YOU
AND YOUR ORGANISATION AS LIVING BRAVETM



GUY BLOOM

LIVING BRAVE LEADERSHIP

LIVING BRAVE *leadership*

Learn how
Umbrella Beliefs, Trust, Accountability, Bravery
and Connection define you
and your organisation as Living Brave

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DEDICATED TO...

Milo & Hugo

I have made lots of mistakes, I hope this goes
some way to helping you to be the best you can be.

Without you, what would the point be? *

*That's rhetorical. There wouldn't be one.

LIVING BRAVE LEADERSHIP

Guy Bloom is the driving force behind Living Brave®, working with individuals and organisations to create truly trusted, accountable, brave and connected leaders. He has spent his working life investigating the human and organisational drivers that create long term systemic change.

A life-long martial artist he is an instructor in three martial art systems, a four-time Hall of Famer and an advocate of how fears can be overcome with proven technique, the correct mindset and the bit no one likes..... practice and feedback.

He spends most of his work life as an executive and team coach. In his spare time Guy judge's leadership awards, has won a few of them, writes articles, is working on a second and third book.

This is all geared to ensure his two sons have a clear legacy of what leadership is for themselves and that those who truly want to define themselves as Living Brave have an approach that is deeply rooted in methodology and mindset.

His favourite quote is from the lawyer, politician and diplomat Adlai E. Stevenson, "It's hard to lead a cavalry charge if you think you look funny on a horse", as Guy says after sharing this, "I'll that let sit for a moment"

FOREWORD

By
Major General Paul Nanson, CBE
Commandant Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst

I suspect many of you reading this book will remember your first significant leadership challenge. As a British Army officer, you will perhaps not be surprised to find that mine came with my first taste of combat. Where perhaps you may be a little more intrigued is in how much of my leadership journey and my resolution to develop and be the best leader I could be, resonates with the text of this book.

Not long after finishing basic training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst I found myself in Forming Up Place (FUP) GREEN on the border between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, in command of a Platoon of 24 men. FUP GREEN for us marked the beginning of the ground offensive stage of Operation GRANBY – more commonly known by its US title, DESERT STORM; the operation to liberate Kuwait. The definition of an ‘FUP’ is the place from which you launch an attack or an advance. It is the place where you wait for preparatory artillery or air fires to finish; it’s a place where final orders are given, last minute kit checks are made, and bayonets are fixed. It’s also a place where you have time to think!

For me and I suspect the rest of my platoon, these were thoughts that soldiers have had for centuries before being committed to combat for the first time. Thoughts of loved ones, of purpose, of those friends and comrades around you – but mostly fear! Fear of the unknown, of the unexpected and fear of failure. ‘What happens if I am the one who, when the time comes, lets the rest down?’ Perhaps these are just traditional fight or flight emotions, but for me, the Platoon Leader, there was another and perhaps stronger fear; that of failing as a leader. Leadership suddenly got very real; a poor judgement or a wrong decision and my men might die!

Fortunately, my training had prepared me well. For those of you who haven’t been, Sandhurst is the home of the British Army Officer, situated in the town of Camberley, Surrey. All of us who hold the Queen’s commission are trained there. It was constructed towards the end of the 18th Century and designed to educate potential Army officers for the leadership challenges ahead. And that is what it has done ever since.

The foundation of leadership taught at Sandhurst reflects the Army Leadership Doctrine that has evolved over centuries. It is founded on a basic framework – who you are, what you know and what you do. At Sandhurst

we are taught the enduring nature of leadership; the need to inspire your people, to be able to translate values into leadership behaviours, and to lead through the power of unselfish example – ‘Serve to Lead’ is the motto of the Academy.

But Sandhurst also teaches us that leadership is a journey of development and that we will need to adapt our leadership style and approach depending on the changing character of the challenge; be that on operations or due to a change of job or role.

As the operational environment becomes more complicated, as the characteristics of the generation of those we lead evolves, and as the rate and pace of change accelerates, so we need to constantly think about the way we lead. The Army teaches us to take time to think, to consider the context, to analyse our performance and how we want to develop and improve, to have an ‘FUP’ moment to consider how we might approach the next challenge.

That is where this book speaks so strongly to me – and I believe it will to do you. It encourages us to think about how we lead, providing a framework within which we can analyse our current position, identify a pathway to success and allows us to put in place plans to achieve these. It talks about ‘trust’ and the need to build that honest relationship with those in your team; a relationship built on belief. It deals with ‘accountability’ and the need for the leader to understand the consequences of his or her actions. It talks of ‘bravery’ and the need for moral courage when making tough decisions. And finally, it talks of the need for an emotional ‘connection’ with those who you are lucky enough to lead; servant leadership – ‘Serve to Lead.’

Whilst I have been fortunate, and many will see my experiences as lying towards the more extreme end of some of the leadership challenges that we can face, the important thing is that every trial that we face is uniquely personal and special to each individual. Every one of us can be a better leader. Even those times where our team is small, or we are not “the boss”, our ability to step forward, set the example, be brave and stand up for what is right is what, as part of a connected society brings results and reward. From the most junior supervisor to the top CEO, everyone is a leader – it is beholden on the individual to decide how successful they wish to be.

So, I have no hesitation in recommending this book to you. Guy makes us stop and think; allowing us the opportunity to reflect on our own style of leadership and how we might adapt and evolve to meet the challenges ahead – to face your own FUP moment. Enjoy!

TESTIMONIALS

Over the years, Guy has become trusted counsel to the senior management team. He is authentic and has the ability to energise the room. He is motivational, inspirational and continues to make a positive value-add contribution to the success of our business. He has a fantastic ability to 'cut through the noise' and deal with the things that really matter. Guy is also insightful, bringing to life certain situations through management experience and with great stories that allow easier understanding of the subject matter. I could not recommend him highly enough.

- Anthony O'Keeffe - CEO, Link Asset Services

With your help we have come a very long way as a team - we all feel that we are well on our way from good to great as a result of working with you. The specific exercise we did yesterday will live with me well into the future, I have already witnessed the learning in action twice today! I have no hesitation in recommending you to any organisation that wants to invest in the development and success of their leaders.

- Dawn Marriott-Simms - Hg Capital - Partner

Guy has amazing insight, high integrity and has presence and impact on the group. He is working with. He strives for results and gets them and does so in a collaborative and compassionate way. He has a fearless ability to deal with the 'real' issue and won't shy away from tough but necessary conversations. Guy is a supportive and insightful coach too. I would highly recommend working with Guy.

- Julia Dell - HR Director at RFU (Rugby Football Union)

Very rarely in life do you come across someone who genuinely inspires you and your colleagues to greater leadership, gives you the tools to excel and is truly brilliant at what they do. Guy is outstanding in his ability to coach, mentor, communicate, inspire, present, motivate and above all he delivers the results that add true value to an organisation.

- Mark Taylor - Global CEO - InXpress

Guy has been a breath of fresh air to our business and instrumental in converting our hopes and aspirations into a reality through our management development/culture change program. I would have no hesitation in recommending Guy to anyone who is committed to change within their business and open to ideas.

- Colin Jellicoe - HR Director at VINCI Plc

His drive and energy to deliver to our management group has been inspirational, with very tangible results in engagement from the attendees and a clear positive change in their approach to the daily tasks and their people

- Richard Pollington - Global Customer Director
- Europe at Fletcher Building

Guy has given me a good listening to on many occasions! He is impartial but challenging, helps sets high goals and aspirations whilst being pragmatic. Top coach, top man.

- Kevin Robins - SVP Chief Technology Officer
- First Data Corporation

His presentations add tremendous value to people's thinking, many of whom base their subsequent thoughts on his delivery. He is very engaging and delivers with conviction and humour, challenging peoples' way of thinking.

- Jonathan Story, COO, Windsor Leadership Trust

The feedback from the team surpassed my expectations. Guy draws on a raft of experience's and really engages the team, but he challenges and holds them accountable for what they are going to do differently. I am looking forward to Guy working more of his magic!

- Julie Priestley, Human Resources Director, Agrial

His experience is clear to see, and there is no situation/ team dynamic he hasn't worked with before. As a first-time founder, I believe Guy is helping avoid a lot of the typical pitfalls young executives make when trying to build a high performing team, and all my guys have complete trust in his process.

- Simon Phelan, Founder, Hometree

Guy has high EQ which enables him to quickly assess the dynamic of any team in the most direct yet subtle way. He strips that team bare then rebuilds its collective strengths whilst being crystal clear on the challenges your company faces. Whichever company I lead, I always turn to Guy for help. Authentic and effective, he makes teams perform better.

- Dawn Airey, Getty Images

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LIVING BRAVE CREDO

Don't hide.

You are intrinsically valuable.

There is no permission required for you to have an opinion.

Curiosity is not challenge it's okay to ask a genuine question.

Offering your observations and counsel is not opinionated.

Ask yourself "who am I doing this for?" The answer will guide you.

Holding a position is not aggression.

Learning is the route to your future self.

Learning is knowledge and experience.

It's ok to be scared, we all about something.

Help others, don't create a dependency for you or them.

Say yes if you want to.

Say no if you want to.

Say maybe if you want to.

Being an elegant version of yourself is the goal.

Hurting others because you are being yourself is bullying, don't be that person.

Not everything is a battle but recognise when you are in one.

The more you put yourself out there, the more successes and the more failures,

it's not a paradox, it's supposed to be that way.

You have more impact than you think.

There is no 'being neutral'.

When all is said and done, stand for something, make some ripples,

leave a positive imprint in people's lives.

INTRODUCTION

Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible;
and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

- *Saint Francis of Assisi*

Sometimes things creep up on you. A little thing that starts as an idea or turn of phrase grows into something you end up having tattooed on your back. That's how it's been for the thinking, the tools and ultimately, for me, the way of life that is symbolised by the concept of Living Brave.

Living Brave evolved out of three decades teaching martial arts and being constantly challenged to step up to the plate and deliver excellence on the mental, physical and emotional platforms that drive personal performance, enable new behaviours and add value to life.

Living Brave comes from two decades of service and delivery in commercial environments as an executive coach, speaker, director, award-winning training provider and team coach for leadership teams within national and global organisations.

It is the output of 20+ years of leadership development, executive coaching, team effectiveness and cultural transformation. It is the result of seeing the impact that the philosophies in this book have made to individuals, teams and entire cultures.

It's become clear that I don't have the right to NOT write this book.

If I am the person I profess to be and want to be, then Living Brave needed to be written and held out for others to engage with.

It came to a head when I was at a conference with Marc Jantzen, one of the best leaders I've had the privilege of working for. We were all given a book by the keynote speaker and that night I tried to read it. I say tried, as it was a terrible read. The next day I spoke to Marc and said, "I tried to read some of this last night, it's pretty rubbish". He paused, looked at me, smiled and said: "Yes I know. However, it's better than your book." I hadn't of course written a book at that time.

Ouch! That was like getting a punch in the solar plexus. It stopped me in my tracks and put me in my place. He had, with great elegance and

craft, berated me, coached me and challenged me... the worst book in the world was better than the one I still hadn't written.

This was also why I trusted Marc implicitly. He gives direct feedback, calling this 'taking it to the source'; he'd been Accountable and challenged me to be; he'd been Brave enough, through his accountability, to tell me the truth. He challenged me to look in the mirror to see that. And he'd been fully Connected to the moment, not waiting, delaying or procrastinating. He challenged me there and then to get on with the writing of this book.

So here we are Living Brave. I hope to do more than explain my concept to you. My intent is to share my thinking, vocabulary, mindset and approach to a way of thinking that drives high performance in individuals, teams and organisations. I am clear in my focus. I want you to feel that this book provides a framework for you to move towards and excel through a Living Brave mindset and, through this mindset, enable others.

My experience with Living Brave is organic. Every day I discover increasingly elegant ways to approach the idea of truly Living Brave. As I coach, train and give keynote speeches the feedback continues to grow, and the calibrations get ever-more refined. I hope it never stops.

Living Brave is both a question and a statement.

Consider it as a way of challenging yourself with the question "Living Brave?". As an individual, a team member or team leader, you will recognise those moments where the question "Am I/are we Living Brave?" is the trigger for recognising the reality of the moment and the need for Trust, Accountability, Bravery and Connection.

Think about it as a method of self-reinforcement. The statement "Living Brave!" is a way of affirming the reality of your bravery. If a team asks itself whether it is "Living Brave?" in order to make the decisions it has to make, being able to then declare it is "Living Brave!" acts as a call to arms, a catalyst and reinforcement.

Your life is a journey and within that, there is the overall mindset of what Living Brave will mean to both you and to those who surround you either socially or at work. The idea of Living Brave is an overall approach, a commitment to striving to own your space and to hold strong in situations where your identity is threatened.

Living Brave has the capacity to make a great impact within an organisation. When individuals with a Living Brave attitude comprise of the

teams, that are the organisation, that make up the senior levels that represent the system.

Living Brave changes the conversations, that change the culture. Is Living Brave a panacea for all ills and woes? The answer is ‘that the wrong question’, the question is ‘can it help me/us navigate complexity, ambiguity and enable our resilience?’.... then the answer is ‘yes’.

This isn’t a panacea, a quick fix, a cure-all; in fact, it is far from that. Living Brave doesn’t offer to make you the caricature of successful, a millionaire or to be walking around in joy, it doesn’t offer a business of everybody being at one with the universe.

Living Brave is a vehicle to enable individuals, teams and cultures to make the decisions that need to be made, to own them, to adjust as required and to ‘Face Into’ the issues at hand.

In fact I’d go as far as to say that most of the feedback I receive from those that take the course of action in their lives to be Living Brave is that the more they take on board the mindset and the methodology then the greater their resilience, willingness to adjust to the reality of the situation and thus the more agile they and the team are as they have created Trust, taken Accountability, been Brave and stayed Connected to their true self, the team vision and the overall organisational drivers.

WHAT IS LIVING BRAVE?

Living Brave represents a way of ‘thinking and being’ that operates across one’s whole life: personal, social and commercial that I firmly believe holds the key to wellbeing, resilience, mental health and pride in the actions of oneself and those around us.

Living Brave is a way of thinking, a way of feeling and most importantly a way of being, a way of being that I believe doesn’t just affect but will in the most positive way infect the way you consider yourself and interact with others.

It is an enabler for the individual and an enabler for the organisation, an enabler that I fundamentally believe can be the differentiation that embodies the ideas, models and thinking that is contained within this book.

It is asking you to consider your actions as an individual and as a collective, as they have been, as they are today, how they are likely to be in the future as indicated by all the evidence to date, compare this against

the vision you have for yourself, the team, the organisation and head towards it.

To have a personal and collective view that does not look for validation from others yet uses others as a calibrator for behaviour. To have a voice that is balanced between the need to contribute, the need to respect the opinion and value of others, the willingness to be led when others take the lead role and to lead when others wish to follow.

Living Brave sets out a way of framing your own and others existence in the world that creates a balance that once understood, practised and embedded in one's own behaviour becomes a catalyst and enabler for the behaviour of others.

AM I DOING ANY OF THIS NOW?

Some of us are already Living Brave and some of us are not, for some Living Brave will:

- Confirm what is already being done, reinforce it and give Living Brave a vocabulary and focus that will enable you to guide others to be Living Brave
- For others Living Brave will enable the steps that will create a new way of living in the world

One thing is clear, that Living Brave is liberation, it comes with many routes to the final reality of making this part of an individual's life, a team's practice and an organisations culture.

Simply said, Living Brave works if you embrace the process intelligently. If you read this book, whilst thinking 'I bet this won't work' then you'd be right. Well done for validating your own reality. By the same token neither will it help you to go full cult member and become an evangelist, with a T-Shirt that states, "I'm Living Brave, are you?" or "Ask me about Living Brave". It needs elegant balance, common sense and hard work alongside the moments of easy successes.

And finally, while I am on a roll, I haven't aimed this book at any one person, team or culture in any particular phase of their life cycle. The idea for Living Brave is an encompassing philosophy that is large enough for you to take it and work it into your life whatever it is, whoever you are and wherever you are in time, geography and life.

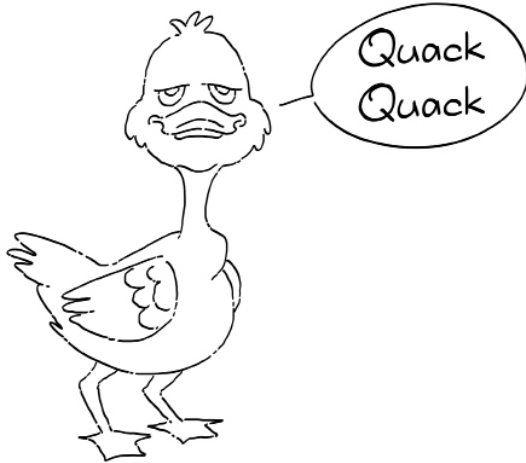
And that's important, because Living Brave is not trying to fit a niche, I

have over the years talked to people about the ideas and the concepts and I'd say for nearly every person I have come across it seems to resonate at some level, that either enables the individual in the moment or serves to aid their thinking or the thinking of others they pass it onto at some point in the future.

QUACK, QUACK

Ever heard the saying, "if it walks like a duck, looks like a duck and quacks like a duck.... it's a duck!" I can't recall when I first heard that, but it just rang true with me.

So I say, "if it feels like it'll work, looks like it works, and it feels like it works then....do you know....it probably works!" (Quack, quack!)



CHAPTER

EIGHT

THE LIVING BRAVE MINDSETS

This is where we...

Living Brave Mindsets | Trust | Accountability
The Interview Question Fear | Bravery | Connection
Hummingbird Moments

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE LIVING BRAVE MINDSETS

“The true method of knowledge is experiment.”

- *William Blake, poet, painter, printmaker*

We now have this whole way of framing the world, a set of 3 lenses (Umbrella Beliefs, Levers & Face Into's) that says you want to be Living Brave. We know that we don't need to get our Living Brave on if we run out of milk, we just go down the store. We get our Living Brave on when the situation is taking from us when it's making us less and when it is in some way destructive. Or with a frame of reference that allows us to approach the day in a positive mindset as you understand your own point of reference for the cut and thrust of life.

In the last chapter we looked at Umbrella Beliefs as the hub of the Living Brave Mindsets, they exist to hold us on course.

IT'S ABOUT TRUST

How we are experienced influences whether or not we are trusted. When people operate in a manner that means stakeholders, clients and direct reports don't trust them, it damages everything associated with them, so our ability to manage that is key. Remember being trusted, isn't the same as being liked. They are very different.

IT'S ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is a crucial characteristic of Living Brave. The questions

that many of us ask is “is this person, a person of their word?”, “Will they strive to be accountable, to own their thoughts, position and outcome in a manner that means, regardless of the outcome, I can believe in their intent to be accountable?”

IT'S ABOUT BRAVERY

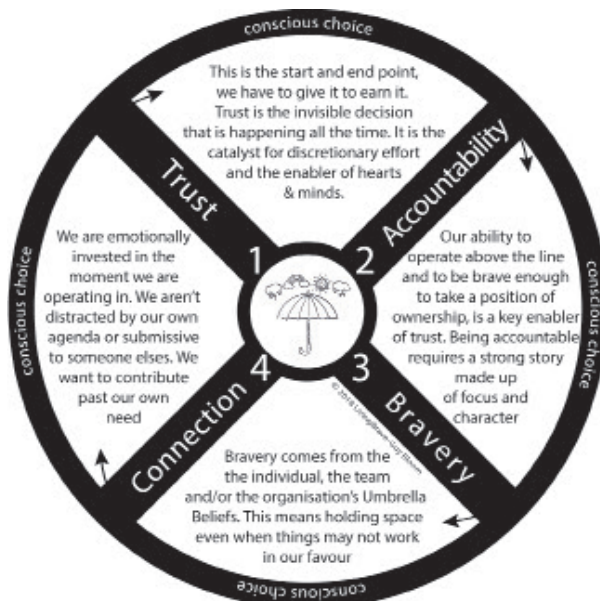
The thing about being accountable is that you have to be brave in taking action. You may need to be brave enough to be the only person in the room who steps forward to be heard, to bring questions, to express an opinion.

IT'S ABOUT CONNECTION

You need to stay aware of the person/team/organisation you want to be, in order not to be pushed into a state of being that creates a submissive or aggressive response. Staying connected ensures that you maintain your focus on Accountability, on being Brave and on staying Connected to your true, aspirational and even inspirational self. It is about being Connected enough to contribute to the things outside of your own need.

The four Living Brave Mindsets represent the mindset and behaviour that when actioned drive us towards Living Brave, it is the supporting structure of Living Brave that determine mindset and behaviour.

Fig 11: Living Brave Mindsets



Each one of the mindsets works in isolation to enable great steps forwards in mindset, methodology and motivation. However, when unified, the four form an incredibly robust frame of reference to one's own inner point of reference and dialogue and thus the way in which one faces the world.

MINDSET 1 – TRUST

I talk a lot about the role of Living Brave in generating Trust. Trust is a very important part of your currency in the world.

People gravitate towards, want to be friends with, engage with, place orders with, promote, give repeat business to, back up and help out those they trust.

It's the currency with the greatest value. It beats everything. It is the primary tenet of Living Brave.

- Do I trust him, her, them, myself?
- Am I trusted by her, him, them?

Jobs that are given out, deals that are made, relationships that are entered into are all about trust.

I am going to say No Trust = No Deal, in anything.

Trust is made up of many facets. They are, in many ways, pieces in the jigsaw puzzle that make up the complexity of your character, the character of a team or an organisation's culture.

- Am I trustworthy?
- Are they trustworthy?
- Do they think I am trustworthy?
- Are we trustworthy?

My intent is to give you a working model for how to frame Trust and at the same time how to maybe bring your own identity to it.

The component parts of Trust are what it means to be a leader, to reflect on your own personal trust, the team that you have and are in, and the business, the product, the service, and the interaction that you have with the customer.

I've got a couple of great quotes which I've picked up along the way around trust and unfortunately, I don't know who they've come from

and I think this is more because they are generically true, rather than maybe the from one specific person.

The first one I have is “when you start to wonder whether you can trust someone or not, that is when you already know that you don’t.” Let me just say that again, “when you start to wonder whether you can trust someone or not, that is when you already know that you don’t.”

I think that you can replace the word someone with, team business, product or service, so when you start to wonder whether you can trust that team or not, that is when you already know that you don’t. When you start to wonder whether you can trust a product or not, that is when you already know that you don’t.

I’m one of those people that instinctively give trust to people. I’m one of those people that says, “do you know what, I’m going to start from a position that says, I already trust you”. Knowing of course that I can be let down, but I will do that. When it comes to a product or a service I flip that around other than for a few, I see it the other way, I’m generally pretty distrustful. I work under the assumption that the product or the service is trying to sell to me, to market to me, so I instinctively don’t trust a product or a brand, in the same way, I do a person. Of course all of this has its degrees, but generally this is how it works for me and of course, there’s every version in between for every one of us.

Trust is a pretty precarious thing to hold onto, we constantly do things that reinforce people’s trust at the same time, it really only takes one misstep, one breaking of the belief system that somebody has around what they think trust is in relation to you or the team or the organisation, and it’s really hard to win that back.



In the social media age we live in, we know the ability for people to communicate at speed around their opinion of whether or not they trust the individual, the team, the organisation, the product, the service that's the stuff that stays on the internet after the fact.

You do something untrustworthy as a company it stays online forever, you do it as an individual or a team and that stays in the social memory banks for as long as there is someone to remember it.

There's a great saying 'a falsehood can get around the world before the truth has got its boots on'. And that's pretty well true. People will spread a rumour, their thoughts, their perceptions, their emotive reactions to an individual or to an experience that is negative far quicker than they will anything positive.

When people have good things to say, they tend to tell people close at hand. When people have negative things to say they tend to broadcast it.

Trust when it has gone, is a heck of a thing to try and get back.

When something hasn't gone quite right, we can bridge gaps, we can repair, we can put things back on track. Some people will be able to forgive and forget and let go of the past. But, on social media, slip-ups are held in a digital context and that means that when you put someone's name into a search engine, the good, the bad, and the ugly shows up.

Kintsugi by Myriam Greff



The Japanese have a beautiful art called Kintsugi(45), or Kintsukuroi which means 'golden repair'. It is the centuries-old Japanese art of fixing broken pottery with a special lacquer dusted and powdered gold, silver

or platinum. Beautiful metallic seams glint in the cracks of ceramic ware, giving a unique appearance to the repaired piece. The images take my breath away, and in the work, I do with organisations, I use it as an example of how to remake a relationship. But relationship re-building, like Kintsugi, is a craft. And it takes real effort. My counsel is that it's far easier if you just avoid breaking trust in the first place!

In a commercial context Trust is a baton to be passed on, using Accountability as the delivery vehicle.



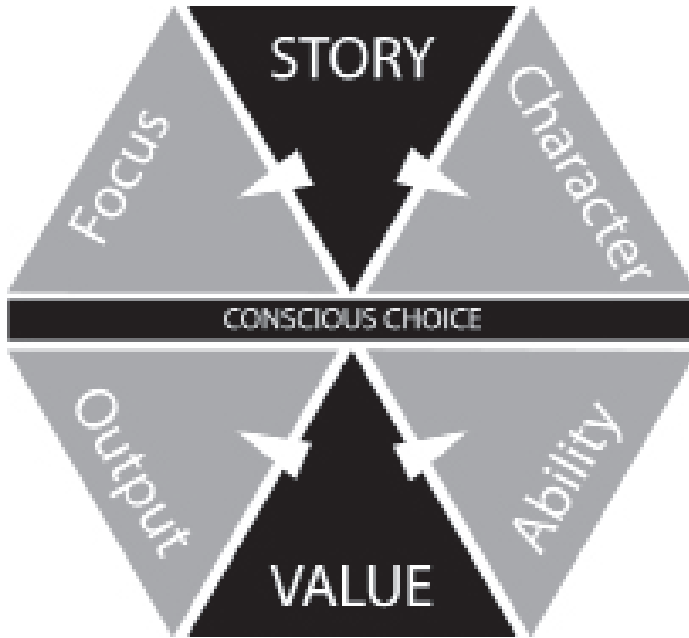
When we leave this place and space and we baton-pass to the next team and culture, we're not just handing over an organisation that has a good process and which is vigorous in the marketplace. We're actually handing over a legacy of stories and a Legend which the next person, team will reinforce, grow or lose. Trust in a product or service is not simply in terms of its reliability, but also lies in how people interact and perceive the team and the organisation as a story. So, Trust is something that we're really passing through to those that come after us just like we are passing through any other product, service, process, strategy.

I'm going to offer you the idea of thinking about Trust with two main factors: 'story' and 'value'.

For me, when you think about Trust, you're thinking about the 'story' of a person and you're also then thinking about the value that they bring. You're thinking about their 'story' when you think about a team, a division, a department, a business, you're thinking about their 'story' you're thinking about the 'story' of them. You are also thinking about the 'value', the promise of what could be delivered. When I reflect on a business through its product, its service, the experience I have when I ring through and I talk to customer service people or somebody from

that organisation comes into mind, there's the 'story' of them and then there's the 'value' that they bring.

Fig 12: TRUST



HOW STORY CREATES TRUST

When we are learning about the story of an individual, we look for clues as to their 'character' and their 'focus'.

Character

What's the game plan of the other person, short to long term? What are their Umbrella Beliefs? Who do they think they are? What is it that they want to contribute? How do they offer themselves to the outside world? What is the brand that they offer out? What is the story of them they are trying to get me to understand or buy into? How honest do they feel to me? How are others reacting to the experience of them? What is my innate reaction to them, that I might not have data for but is still a feeling I have to acknowledge?

Focus

I want to know if they act as the person they profess to be to me and others. I want to know if they are one person in all arenas or they consciously or

unconsciously subvert their behaviour to fit in. Are they strong in their focus? Do they hold space, offering genuine curiosity? Are they willing to risk their brand in order to write their own story and hold to a positive and authentic Legend of their own imagining? What do they actually do in regards to what they said they would do? Are they actually playing an honest game as who they say they are matches what they actually do? Does the story of them match the brand they offer?

When trying to understand Trust in your context, think of the board team, a senior team, your team, your own behaviour and consider: “Does the ‘focus’ and ‘character’ add up to a ‘story’?”

HOW VALUE CREATES TRUST

When we are learning about the story of an individual, we look for clues as to their ‘ability’ and their ‘output’.

Ability

When I think of a leader and the value they bring, it starts with ‘ability’, the possession of the means or skill to do something. It’s about what they know through their experience, capability, skill set, commitment to learning, focus on personal growth, development and willingness to discover things about themselves and others in a truly transparent, curious way. In many ways, it is the relationship with knowledge. What do they know? What are they willing to find out? How focused are they on staying at the forefront or working to get there?

In my experience, a team’s knowledge can get stuck, fail to grow and wear out if it isn’t keeping ahead of or, at the very least aligned to, the changes that are going around them.

Professor Reg Revan(46) the Action Learning pioneer, had an equation around learning which says ‘learning should be equal to or greater than the change that is going on around you’.

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I absolutely buy into that. I think as an individual, as a team, as an organisation, we need to say one of the reasons that you can trust us and the value we bring to the table is that our knowledge has stayed in line with change.

Have you heard the anecdote about someone saying, “I’m an expert”, to which another person responds “how long have you been an expert?” The answer is “nine years”, which is followed by the somewhat tongue in cheek, yet possibly accurate remark, “does that mean you haven’t learned anything for nine years?”. We all know that the context of the individual, the team, the organisation is never fixed. It’s always morphing, it’s continually growing and it’s always moving forward. This means our learning has to be at the least, relative to that.

Ability should never be fixed and our learning must never end.

Output

It’s also about ‘output’. What has been created? What has been done that is quantifiable? That what you have achieved is of high quality and of an output that matches the ‘story’ of you, and that it matches your ability through what others know to be your ‘knowledge’ base, is crucial. When you are offering yourself as somebody who is to be trusted, this is a key jigsaw piece of your brand. People want to know that when you make you a promise, you stick to it and you see it through to the end simply because that’s what you do. The ‘story’ of you is that you have a ‘focus’ that you are the kind of ‘character’ that is willing to learn and to take feedback. So, your knowledge isn’t fixed and if you have not done something to the level that it should be, you will learn, and consequently, you will improve your ‘ability’ to create a better ‘output’.

You are striving for a reputation for doing the above as an individual. You can have a reputation for doing it as a team and you can have a reputation for doing it as an organisation. This can read “this is my/our story and this is the value that I/we bring to you, to the market, to the world”.

So, we are clear that Trust has multiple segments and a lot of questions to be answered. It’s not about likeability. It’s about ‘story’ and ‘value’.

WHEN GUY MET SIR STANLEY

As a very young man, I was a retail manager in a Curry’s high street electrical goods store in the UK. I was quite new in the role and we were really doing a good job. The store looked good, the team was motivated, sales were on the up.

I had a call from my Regional Manager “Sir Stanley Kalms is coming to visit your store”. I nearly threw up! Kalms was the founder, the MD, and a retail legend in the UK. When the big day arrived, he was flanked by an Area Manager, the Regional Manager and someone from Head Office. He said to the others “leave me and Guy to walk around”, so we did, we went around the store, into the stockroom and I was answering questions with a heightened adrenaline level.

He paused: “I’ve looked at your figures, seen the customer comments, you run a tight ship, well done... you can calm down”. I said “thank you” and said that I would calm down, but didn’t. He then said, “let’s go for a walk outside”. We did so and about 20 paces from the storefront, he turned around, looking at the store and said, “you know sometimes you try so hard, and because you look so intensely at the details because you want to get it right, you miss the big things”. I stared at him a little bit like some new monk in the monastery receiving wisdom without really knowing what it meant yet. He looked at me and said, “walk away for two minutes, then walk back as if looking at your store for the first time.”

So I did that and came back, looking at the store thinking “right, so I am Stanley Kalms looking at my store for the first time... ahhhhh crap.” There it was. I looked at him and said “I can’t believe it, I checked and checked... I’m so sorry.”

He laughed out loud and said “it’s fine, none of my senior team saw it, either. Do what you need to do and then call my PA and let her know it’s done.” He handed me a card with a number on it.

After he left, I got the team together, said a massive ‘thank you’, told them the story and that fact I/we had only changed the display in one of the two windows of the store to the current promotion. The other still had the last season’s promotion in it. They ran out to look.

I got a call a little later from the Area Manager saying, “well done”. I realised then that Sir Stanley Kalms hadn’t told them.

I called Mr Kalms’ PA and told her I’d changed the window. She paused and said, “Mr Kalms says well done, thank your team and always remember to walk away from the problem, give yourself a break and then come back in with fresh eyes.”

Of course, decades later I’m still telling that story. It was his Legend in my eyes and I want you to see that this is about Trust, his ‘story’, his

‘focus’ and his ‘character’. I could talk about his ‘value’ to the organisation in the context of what he knew and could generate, however, important as that is, it’s not the stuff of hearts and minds. It’s not his ‘focus’ on educating and enabling, on nurturing instead of shaming or the ‘character’ of a man that didn’t require to show others (Area & Regional Manager) that he was clever. It speaks volumes about the man and his not needing to be the centre of attention. That’s the stuff of Legend.