FACTOR III: COURAGE
CLUSTER H: DEALING WITH TROUBLE

9 Command Skills

A crisis is an opportunity riding the dangerous wind. – Chinese proverb

Section 1: Your Development Need(s)

Unskilled

☐ More comfortable following
☐ May avoid conflict and crises, be unwilling to take the heat, have problems with taking a tough stand
☐ Might be laid back and quiet
☐ Too concerned about what others may say or think
☐ May worry too much about being liked, correct or above criticism
☐ May be conflict shy or lack perseverance
☐ May not be cool under pressure
☐ May not display a sense of urgency

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.

Substitutes: 1,5,12,13,16,20,30,34,35,36,37,39,49,57,65

Skilled

☐ Relishes leading
☐ Takes unpopular stands if necessary
☐ Encourages direct and tough debate but isn’t afraid to end it and move on
☐ Is looked to for direction in a crisis
☐ Faces adversity head on
☐ Energized by tough challenges

Overused Skill

☐ May not be a team player
☐ May not be tolerant of other people’s ways of doing things
☐ May choose to strongly lead when other more team-based tactics would do as well or better
☐ May not develop other leaders
☐ May become controversial and be rejected by others

Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.

Compensators: 3,7,10,19,31,33,36,38,41,47,52,59,60

Some Causes

☐ Avoid crises
☐ Can’t set common cause
☐ Can’t take a tough stand
☐ Can’t take the heat of leading
☐ Fear of criticism/failure
☐ Getting others to believe
☐ Not cool under pressure
☐ Not credible leader
☐ Shy

**Leadership Architect® Factors and Clusters**
This competency is in the Courage Factor (III). This competency is in the Dealing with Trouble Cluster (H) with: 12, 13, 34, 57. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

**The Map**
Leading makes you more visible and more open to criticism. The heat is the hottest on the nose cone of the rocket. Leading is exciting and puts you in control. Leading in tough or crisis conditions is all about creating aligned and sustained motion. It involves keeping your eye on the goal, setting common causes, dealing with the inevitable heat, managing your emotions, being a role model, taking tough stands and getting others to believe in where you’re headed.

**Section 2: Learning on Your Own**
*These self-development remedies will help you build your skill(s).*

**Some Remedies**

☐ **1. Taking heat? Face criticism with courage.** Leading is riskier than following. While there are a lot of personal rewards for leading, leading puts you in the limelight. Think about what happens to political leaders and the scrutiny they face. Leaders have to be internally secure. Do you feel good about yourself? They have to please themselves first that they are on the right track. Can you defend to a critical and impartial audience the wisdom of what you’re doing? They have to accept lightning bolts from detractors. Can you take the heat? People will always say it should have been done differently. Listen to them, but be skeptical. Even great leaders are wrong sometimes. They accept personal responsibility for errors and move on to lead some more. Don’t let criticism prevent you from taking the lead. Build up your heat shield. Conduct a postmortem immediately after finishing milestone efforts. This will indicate to all that you’re open to continuous improvement whether the result was stellar or not.
2. Facing a difficult issue? Prepare to take tough stands against the grain. Taking a tough stand demands utter confidence in what you’re saying along with the humility that you might be wrong—one of life’s paradoxes. To prepare to take the lead on a tough issue, work on your stand through mental interrogation until you can clearly state in a few sentences what your stand is and why you hold it. Build the business case. How do others win? People don’t line up behind laundry lists or ambiguous objectives. Ask others for advice—scope the problem, consider options, pick one, develop a rationale, then go with it until proven wrong. Then redo the process. If this doesn’t help, find out where the pain is for you. What have you been avoiding? Examine your past and see where taking-charge behavior has gotten you in trouble or you thought it would get you in trouble. Isolate the most troublesome elements, such as forgetting things under pressure, trouble with fierce debate, problems with unpopular stands, and things moving too fast. Devise counter strategies.

3. Need to win over detractors? Sell your leadership. While some people may welcome what you say and want to do, others will go after you or even try to minimize the situation. Some will sabotage. To sell your leadership, keep your eyes on the prize but don’t specify how to get there. Present the outcomes, targets and goals without the how to’s. Welcome their ideas, good and bad. Any negative response is a positive if you learn from it. Allow them to fill in the blanks, ask questions, and disagree without appearing impatient with them. Allow others to save face; concede small points, invite criticism of your own. Help them figure out how to win. Keep to the facts and the problem before the group; stay away from personal clashes. More help? – See #12 Conflict Management.

4. Too emotional? Keep your cool. Manage your emotional reactions. Sometimes your emotional reactions lead others to think you have problems with tough leadership situations. In the situations where this happens, what emotional reactions do you have? Do you show impatience or non-verbals like increasing voice volume or drumming your fingers? Learn to recognize those as soon as they start. Substitute something more neutral. If you tend to blurt out disagreement when uncomfortable or surprised by a point of view, ask a question instead to buy time. Or, ask the person to tell you more about his/her point of view. Don’t go for the quick, obvious response. That’s stress getting the better of you. Or, ask yourself questions. An angry activist group once demanded the microphone from a university chancellor during commencement. He handed it to them, said you’ve got five minutes, and stepped back. Asked about his move, he said, “I asked myself what’s the worst that could happen? It’s hard for people to remain angry when no one is resisting. So they talked for five minutes. It seemed a small price. And they were awfully glad when their time was up.” More help? – See #11 Composure and #107 Lack of Composure.
5. **Making mistakes? Develop a philosophical stance toward failure/criticism.** After all, most innovations fail, most proposals fail, most efforts to lead change fail. Anything worth doing takes repeated effort. Anything could always have been done better. Research says that successful general managers have made more mistakes in their careers than the people they were promoted over. They got promoted because they had the guts to lead, not because they were always right. Other studies suggest really good general managers are right about 65% of the time. Put errors, mistakes and failures on your menu. Everyone has to have some spinach for a balanced diet.

6. **Dealing with tough opponents? Practice the rules of one-on-one combat.** Leading always involves dealing with pure one-on-one confrontation. You want one thing, he/she wants something else. When that happens, keep it to the facts. You won’t always win. Stay objective. Listen as long as he/she will talk. Ask a lot of questions. Sometimes he/she will talk him/herself to your point of view if you let him/her talk long enough. Always listen to understand first, not judge. Then restate his/her points until he/she says that’s right. Then find something to agree with, however small that may be. Refute his/her points starting with the one you have the most objective information on. Then move down the line. You will always have points left that didn’t get resolved. Document those and give a copy to your opponent. The objective is to get the list as small as possible. Then decide whether you are going to pull rank and go ahead. Delay and get more data. Go to a higher source for arbitration. More help? – See #12 Conflict Management.

7. **Heard enough? Draw the line.** When all else fails, you may have to pull someone aside and say, “I have listened to all of your objections and have tried to understand them, but the train is moving on. Are you on or off?” Always follow the rules of dealing with conflict: Depersonalize; keep it on the problem not the person; try one last time to make your case; note the person’s objections but don’t concede anything; be clear; now is not the time for negotiation; give the person a day to think it over. Worst-case, if the person is a direct report, you may have to ask him/her to leave the unit. More help? – See #13 Confronting Direct Reports. If the person is a peer or colleague, inform your boss of the impasse and your intention to proceed without his/her support.

8. **Caught off guard? Prepare for crises.** Studies say followers really appreciate sound leadership during a crisis. They want to know there is a firm hand on the tiller. During a crisis, time is the enemy, so be prepared. In a recent book, Mitroff and Anagnos say you must prepare for the seven types of crises: economic, loss of confidential information or computer records, physical/equipment, human resources (public embarrassment, crime, sabotage), reputational, psychopathic acts, and natural disasters. Their advice: Anticipate what hasn’t occurred. Come up with signal detectors, such as increase in costs or threats for all potential crises. Collect all the data you can. Think through all of the worst-case consequences and assign a person or a team to prepare for them. When a crisis strikes, use the data you
have and ask others for suggestions and thoughts. Then decide and execute the decision with an instant feedback loop. Make adjustments as you go. And communicate, communicate, communicate.

- **9. Haven't found your passion to lead? Lead outside the workplace.** Try small things. Try some leadership roles and tasks off-work. Volunteer for a leadership role in your place of worship, school, or the neighborhood. Volunteer to head a task force. Start up a credit union. Volunteer for the United Way drive. Start a softball league.

- **10. Not capturing enough attention? Enhance your leadership presence.** Leading takes presence. You have to look and sound like a leader. Voice is strong. Eye contact. Intensity. Confidence. A lot of leadership presence has to do with forceful presentation skills. Giving good presentations is a known technology. There are several books and workshops you can take. Look to workshops that use video taping. Join your local Toastmasters club for some low-risk training and practice. Look to small things such as do you look like a leader? What colors do you wear? Do you dress the part? Are your glasses right? Is your office configured right? Do you sound confident? Do you whine and complain or do you solve problems? If I met you for the first time in a group of 10, would I pick you as the leader?

**Section 3: Learning from Feedback**

*These sources would give you the most accurate and detailed feedback on your skill(s).*

- **1. Direct Reports**
  Across a variety of settings, your direct reports probably see you the most. They are the recipients of most of your managerial behaviors. They know your work. They can compare you with former bosses. Since they may hesitate to give you negative feedback, you have to set the atmosphere to make it easier for them. You have to ask.

- **2. Human Resource Professionals**
  Human Resource professionals have both a formal and informal feedback role. Since they have access to unique and confidential information, they can provide the right context for feedback you’ve received. Sometimes they may be “directed” to give you feedback. Other times, they may pass on feedback just to be helpful to you.

- **3. Past Associates/Constituencies**
  When confronted with a present performance problem, some claim, “I wasn’t like that before; it must be the current situation.” When feedback is available from former associates, about 50% support that claim. In the
other half of the cases, the people were like that before and probably didn’t know it. It sometimes makes sense to access the past to clearly see the present.

Section 4: Learning from Develop-in-Place Assignments

These part-time develop-in-place assignments will help you build your skill(s).

☐ Relaunch an existing product or service that’s not doing well.
☐ Assign a project with a tight deadline to a group.
☐ Manage a group of resistant people with low morale through an unpopular change or project.
☐ Manage a group of low-competence or low-performing people through a task they couldn’t do by themselves.
☐ Help shut down a plant, regional office, product line, business, operation, etc.
☐ Prepare and present a proposal of some consequence to top management.
☐ Work on a team that’s deciding whom to keep and whom to let go in a layoff, shutdown, delayering, or merger.
☐ Take on a tough and undoable project, one where others who have tried it have failed.
☐ Manage a cost-cutting project.
☐ Resolve an issue in conflict between two people, units, geographies, functions, etc.

Section 5: Learning from Full-Time Jobs

These full-time jobs offer the opportunity to build your skill(s).

☐ 1. Change Manager

The core demands to qualify as a Change Manager are: (1) Leader of a significant effort to change something or implement something of significance. (2) Success and failure will be evident. (3) Always something new and unique to the organization. (4) Must get many others to buy in and cooperate. (5) Involves cross-boundary change. (6) High visibility sponsor. (7) Exposure to significant decision makers and key stakeholders. (8) Resistance is expected and near-universal. (9) Cost of failure is significant.

Examples include: (1) Total Work Systems like TQM, ISO, or Six Sigma. (2) Business restructurings like a move away from a core competence and into a new product space or industry, i.e., American carmakers move into smaller, more fuel-efficient products. (3) Installing major systems (like an ERP or HRIS) and procedures for the first time. (4) M&A integrations, responding to major competitor initiatives that threaten the organization. (5) Extensive reorganizations. (6) Long-term post-corporate scandal recovery.

☐ 2. Crisis Manager

The core demands to qualify as Crisis Manager are: (1) Leader responsible for an unpredictable, unique crisis of significant proportion. (2) Success and failure will be evident and visible. (3) Takes Herculean effort
to solve. (4) Learning something on the fly. (5) Solution requires cross-boundary team. (6) Leader will be a spokesperson and potentially subjected to media scrutiny. (7) Hostile questioning and suspicious atmosphere is common. (8) Time pressure is extreme. (9) Solution involves working with parties outside the organization. (10) Usually short-term (up to three months). (11) Other parts of job would have to be temporarily set aside. Examples of crisis management would be: (1) A product safety recall; product or system failure. (2) Unexpected death of a CEO or senior corporate executive. (3) Unexpected termination or scandal involving a CEO or senior corporate executive. (4) Trouble with a key customer or supplier that decreases revenue or production. (5) Natural disasters. (6) Terrorist attacks. (7) Kidnapping or arrest of employees; violent crime against employees.

3. Fix-Its/Turnarounds

The core demands to qualify as a Fix-it or Turnaround assignment are: (1) Cleaning up a mess. (2) Serious people issues/problems like credibility/performance/morale. (3) Tight deadline. (4) Serious business performance failure. (5) Last chance to fix. Four types of Fix-Its/Turnarounds: (1) Fixing a failed business/unit involving taking control, stopping losses, managing damage, planning the turnaround, dealing with people problems, installing new processes and systems, and rebuilding the spirit and performance of the unit. (2) Managing sizable disasters like mishandled labor negotiations and strikes, thefts, history of significant business losses, poor staff, failed leadership, hidden problems, fraud, public relations nightmares, etc. (3) Significant reorganization and restructuring (e.g., stabilizing the business, re-forming unit, introducing new systems, making people changes, resetting strategy and tactics). (4) Significant system/process breakdown (e.g., MIS, financial coordination processes, audits, standards, etc.) across units requiring working from a distant position to change something, providing advice and counsel, and installing or implementing a major process improvement or system change outside your own unit and/or with customers outside the organization.

4. Significant People Demands

Core demands required to qualify as a Significant People Demands assignment are: (1) A sizable increase in either the number of people managed and/or the complexity of the challenges involved. (2) Longer-term assignment (two or more years). (3) Quality of people management is critical to achieving results. (4) Involves groups not worked with before (e.g., union, new technical areas, nationalities). Examples of Significant People Demands jobs would be: (1) Downsizing a department—making staff changes. (2) Leading an organization through a reorganization or restructuring. (3) Managing a newly merged business unit comprised of people from disparate units/cultures. (4) Rebuilding a team that has a history of conflict or hardship. (5) Mentoring and coaching inexperienced people. (6) Leading geographically distributed teams. (7) Absorbing a new team/unit into an existing structure. (8) Leading a company or function with a rapidly growing employee base.
5. Start-Ups

The core demands to qualify as a start from scratch are: (1) Starting something new for you and/or for the organization. (2) Forging a new team. (3) Creating new systems/facilities/staffs/programs/procedures. (4) Contextual adversity (e.g., uncertainty, government regulation, unions, difficult environment). Seven types of start from scratches: (1) Planning, building, hiring, and managing (e.g., building a new facility, opening up a new location, moving a unit or company). (2) Heading something new (e.g., new product, new service, new line of business, new department/function, major new program). (3) Taking over a group/product/service/program that had existed for less than a year and was off to a fast start. (4) Establishing overseas operations. (5) Implementing major new designs for existing systems. (6) Moving a successful program from one unit to another. (7) Installing a new organization-wide process as a full-time job like Total Work Systems (e.g., TQM/ISO/Six Sigma).

Section 6: Learning from Your Plan

*These additional remedies will help make this development plan more effective for you.*

Learning to Learn Better

1. Sell Something to a Tough Group/Audience

   Think of the person or group who will be the toughest to sell, the most critical, skeptical, or resistant, and sell that person or group first. Take time to understand the opposing viewpoints. Find common ground and leverage points; line up your best data and arguments and go for it.

Learning from Experience, Feedback, and Other People

2. Learning from Bosses

   Bosses can be an excellent and ready source for learning. All bosses do some things exceptionally well and other things poorly. Distance your feelings from the boss/direct report relationship and study things that work and things that don't work for your boss. What would you have done? What could you use and what should you avoid?

3. Learning from Observing Others

   Observe others. Find opportunities to observe without interacting with your model. This enables you to objectively study the person, note what he/she is doing or not doing, and compare that with what you would typically do in similar situations. Many times you can learn more by watching than asking. Your model may not be able to explain what he/she does or may be an unwilling teacher.
4. Learning from a Coach or Tutor
Ask a person to coach or tutor you directly. This has the additional benefit of skill building coupled with correcting feedback. Also observe the teacher teaching you. How does he/she teach? How does he/she adjust to you as a learner? After the process, ask for feedback about you as a learner.

5. Getting Feedback from Bosses and Superiors
Many bosses are reluctant to give negative feedback. They lack the managerial courage to face people directly with criticism. You can help by soliciting feedback and setting the tone. Show them you can handle criticism and that you are willing to work on issues they see as important.

6. Getting Feedback from Direct Reports
Direct reports often fear reprisals for giving negative feedback about bosses, whether in a formal process, like a questionnaire, or informally and face-to-face. Even with a guarantee of confidentiality, some are still hesitant. If you want feedback from direct reports, you have to set a positive tone and never act out of revenge.

7. Learning from Limited Staff
Most managers either inherit or hire staff from time to time who are inexperienced, incompetent, not up to the task, resistant, or dispirited. Any of these may create a hardship for you. The lessons to be learned are how to get things done with limited resources and how to fix the people situation. In the short term, this hardship is best addressed by assessing the combined strengths of the team and deploying the best you have against the problem. Almost everyone can do something well. Also, the team can contribute more than the combined individuals can. How can you empower and motivate the team? If you hired the troublesome staff, why did you err? What can you learn from your hiring mistakes? What wasn’t there that you thought was present? What led you astray? How can you prevent that same hiring error in the future? What do you need to do to fix the situation? Quick development? Start over? If you inherited the problem, how can you fix it? Can you implement a program of accelerated development? Do you have to start over and get new people? What did the prior manager do or not do that led to this situation in the first place? What can you learn from that? What will you do differently? How does the staff feel? What can you learn from their frustrations over not being able to do the job? How can you be a positive force under negative circumstances? How can you rally them to perform? What lasting lessons can you learn from someone in distress and trouble? If you’re going to try accelerated development, how can you get a quick assessment? How can you give the staff motivating feedback? How can you construct and implement development plans that will work? How can you get people on-line feedback for maximum growth? Do you know when to stop trying and start over? If you’re going to turn over some staff, how can you do it both rapidly and with the
least damage? How can you deliver the message in a constructive way? What can you learn from having
to take negative actions against people? How can you prevent this from happening again?

Learning from Courses

8. Supervisory Courses

Most new supervisors go through an “Introduction to Supervision” type course. They are designed to teach
the common practices a first-line supervisor needs to know to be effective. The content of most of those
courses is standard. There is general agreement on the principles of effective supervision. There are two
common problems: (1) Do the students have a strong motivation to learn? Do they know what they don’t
know? Is there any pain? Because motivated students with a need for the knowledge learn best,
participants should have had some trying experiences and some supervisory pain and hardships before
attending. (2) Are the instructors experienced supervisors? Have they practiced what they preach? Can
they share powerful anecdotes to make key points? Can they answer questions credibly? If possible, select
supervisory courses based on the instructors, since the content seems to be much the same for all such
courses. Lastly, does the course offer the opportunity for practicing each skill? Does it contain simulations?
Are there case studies you could easily identify with? Are there breakout groups? Is there opportunity for
action learning? Search for the most interactive course.

In really good companies, you have to lead. You have to come up with big ideas and express them
forcefully. I have always been encouraged—or sometimes forced—to confront the very natural fear
of being wrong. I was constantly pushed to find out what I really thought and then to speak up. Over
time, I came to see that waiting to discover which way the wind was blowing is an excellent way to
learn how to be a follower. Roger Enrico – American business leader and former CEO, PepsiCo
Suggested Readings


