

What it Takes to be a Determined Leader



Podcast transcript

Hello, I'm Tricia Bachus with UF Training and Organizational Development. I would like to share with you the competency of Resolve and why it is important in getting sustainable results.

In working with leaders, it is striking when you come across those who remain unwavering despite substantial organizational challenges, who inspire imitation and fluently steer their teams' progress to meet or exceed their department's objectives year after year. When you find leaders like these, pay attention. What you'll often discover is they have a tremendous professional willpower, also known as resolve.

These leaders do not hesitate to do the hard, but right, things consistently. Peter Bregman, in his Harvard Business Review blog post, ***Why So Many Leadership Programs Ultimately Fail***, articulates this point vividly, “[Resolve] means speaking up when others are silent. And remaining steadfast, grounded, and measured in the face of uncertainty. It means responding productively to political opposition — maybe even bad-faith backstabbing — without getting sidetracked, distracted, or losing your focus. And staying in the discomfort of a colleague's anger without shutting off or becoming defensive.”

So, what keeps these determined leaders on track? What feeds their fortitude to do the tough things day after day?

There are many key attributes they possess, but in this podcast, I'd like to focus on four important qualities that create sustainable, high impact leadership.

They are:

- Passion
- Intentionality
- Emotional Courage, and
- Steadfastness

Let's walk through each one of these.

#1 – Passion

In reflecting on leaders I've known with great passion, many of them would not be described as larger than life. In fact, they are quiet, humble, deep thinkers who have an inner driving force that is contagious to anyone who comes into contact with them. Joel Stein, a columnist with TIME magazine, interviewed men for his book, ***Man Made: A Stupid Quest for Masculinity***. He found, much to his surprise, that masculinity was not based on the size of muscles or strength but on the size of the heart and the passion they demonstrated in doing what they loved—in fact, he found leaders in high stakes, heroic occupations were often very moderated in their approach. One example is Captain Buzz Smith, a firefighter in Hollywood, one of the busiest sections of Los Angeles. Stein describes him this way: *“What Capt. Smith understands is that inspiring people through your personality is a risky, exhausting endeavor. But if you make people feel like you're going to help them accomplish something far bigger than you — not just saving lives, but living by a system that provides dignity and pride — you can let your belief do the work for you.”*

Resolute leaders have a deep belief in their mission. They inspire others to believe in themselves to fulfill that mission.

#2 – Intentionality

Much of leadership has to do with intention, choosing or determining to act in a certain way to reach a dream or goal. Leaders with intentionality have the power to keep their minds directed towards the end result using mental pictures of what the end state will be. This vision illuminates their route. Intentionality is also a way that leaders tend to their organizations by carefully cultivating talent. They provide the right amount of critical feedback and positive encouragement to keep people on the path to achieve results.

Eleanor Roosevelt said, *“One’s philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes. In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.”* Being intentional means we are learning from our mistakes, persevering in the face of challenges, and following through by staying calibrated to our core values and beliefs. **Intentionality is about choosing to be resolute.**

#3 – Emotional Courage

Aristotle called courage the first virtue, because it makes all of the other virtues possible. In your career, it may be the most important leadership virtue to possess, as well.

In *Why Courage Matters*, US Senator John McCain describes it this way: *“Courage is that rare moment of unity between conscience, fear, and action, when something deep within us strikes the flint of love, of honor, of duty, to make the spark that fires our resolve. Courage is the highest quality of life attainable by human beings. It’s the moment -- however brief or singular -- when we are our complete, best self, when we know with an almost metaphysical certainty that we are right.”*

As leadership attributes go, emotional courage is a big one. Leaders must be bold and prepared to make unpopular decisions when necessary. Courage is acting on what is right, despite being afraid or uncomfortable, when facing situations involving pain, risk, uncertainty, opportunity, or intimidation. It is a state of mind that grows out of clarity of purpose. Without courage, our resolve will erode in the face of the fierce forces that often surround leaders. **Courage involves the head and the heart, but it also provides the firm backbone of resolve.**

#4 – Steadfastness

Steadfast leaders are committed. Dedication to their mission or vision runs deeply in them. They are grounded in purpose and values. Many often think of Nelson Mandela, Abraham Lincoln, or perhaps Steven Jobs as high-profile examples of this type of leader. But, each one of us has the ability to keep our eyes unwaveringly focused on the purpose for undertaking any initiative—the intended outcome and the greater good for all. Leaders can have abundant passion, high intentionality, and the courage of a lion. But when adversity or hard times swirl around, leaders must show patience, tenacity, and unshakeable faith. They understand the importance of setting their own pace to survive both sprints and marathons to maintain lasting results. **It takes steadfastness to stay determined in the face of challenges and successes.**

So, do you have what it takes to be a determined leader? The truth is we all have the potential to utilize these strengths we possess naturally. Think of these four

characteristics as muscles. You can strengthen your passion, intentionality, emotional courage, and steadfastness by exercising them a little bit each day. Build on small wins until you feel your confidence increasing. Even small advances have big benefits in becoming a high impact leader.