

## Unlocking Courage with Fear

In the increasingly complex and chaotic conditions of the modern economy, finding the courage to lead is no easy task. How do we lead when we are not sure? How do we act when the risks are huge? How do we take others with us when we know there is no way back?

Philosopher Peter Koestenbaum, described as resident sage, company therapist and secular priest to many large organisations, asserts that the best leaders operate in four dimensions: **Vision, Reality, Ethics and Courage**. The first three domains are familiar to us and no leader worth his or her salt will be operating, today, in the absence of them (- a quick scan of the internet reveals books, journals, and magazines aplenty on these subjects for anyone who needs help!) But courage is another matter.

So how do business leaders deal with uncertainty and threat from known and unknown sources? And what happens when uncertainty and threat generate little more than fear? Recently I have taken a new approach with the organisational leaders I work with. I encourage them to think of fear, not as proof of their lack of courage, but as an opportunity to display it. Without fear, taking action is just business as usual - and there is nothing very brave about that. This reframing of fear and courage can be liberating. Intellectually it helps individuals to see a way forward when previously they could only see no-win situations. Emotionally, it validates them as human beings, as people who can create connection with those whom they lead.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of all is that by using courage to confront their fears, leaders become more aware of the power they have in situations which, previously, had confounded them. No longer a debilitating force, fear together with courage suddenly becomes a force for creativity and change. And what happens when they can combine this realisation with Vision, Reality and Ethics - those aspects of their leadership which they already have in place? Well, then they can lead when they are not sure, they can act when the risks are huge, and they can take others with them, even when they know there is no way back.

**Kate Cowie is Managing Director  
of The Chaos Game and a  
member of the NTL Institute**

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