

## Transcription - Being Brave At Work

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Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today I want to explore the idea of being brave. The word brave, I don't want you to confuse with being heroic. Brave is about something else entirely, I think, in a business sense, and we'll explore that in a minute.

The idea was triggered by a client of mine that I was helping, earlier in the week, prepare for a speech that she has to make at a fundraising function.

This is a person who, like many, many of my clients, does not want to speak in public, is not comfortable about speaking in public, but has made a decision that this is a speech that she has to make because she needs to be brave and they were the words that she used when she asked

for my assistance in preparing for the speech. The situation is because her family has had a health trauma in the past 12 months involving her brother and it has meant, in her eyes, that he has had to be brave in terms of how he faces the world in the coming years and the family during the time of his illness and ongoing recuperation have needed to be brave in the face of the adversity that they feel has struck them.

So the word brave came to mind and she talked about it when we had an initial discussion, she talked about being brave and that her brother

had had to be brave in facing his life, changes in his life. And so everyone else in the family felt that it was a responsibility for them to choose something to be brave about, to choose something that they didn't want to do, but that was a task that they should do to recognise and acknowledge

the bravery that her brother has shown and that to me was an interesting interpretation of being brave. It wasn't about being heroic and I think often we get the two terms confused.

So if we look at being brave in terms of the work situation, in terms of our businesses or our work environments, what does that mean? What does being brave mean in a work environment?

Well, for me, being brave in a working environment is just what I have talked about previously, it's about taking on a task that you know you should do, that you don't want to do, that you're avoiding doing, that you're procrastinating about and procrastination is something for a whole other podcast, which we might do fairly soon because I have been listening to a great podcast, specifically about procrastination. But that aside, let's go back to being brave. So being brave in a work environment, it's about doing the task or taking on a project or taking on an element of a project that you don't want to do and looking at the reasons that you don't want to do it. Is it because you don't feel competent? Is there a way that you could become competent? By doing it, will you become competent? Is there a way that you can find a mentor or a coach that will help you in the actual activity itself? Being brave is also about voicing your opinions in a meeting, it doesn't have to be a big thing, it can be something as simple as you've thought about a particular project or a particular task and you've got an idea that might be a better way to do it or you want to question why something is done in the first place.

Fulyana and I both come from a public sector background and we were immersed in reports that we had to do every week, every month and they went off to a place called Central Office which was based in Canberra and I think it was not in our makeup, certainly when we first started for me, let's not talk about her, but when I first started I was junior, I thought it's not my place to question these things, this is the way it's been done, this is the way it must work, it should always be done this way, no one else questions it, who am I to ask the question. What you need to recognise and acknowledge and celebrate is that you can't know organisations regardless of how much experience you've had with other experience, with life experience, with university experience, whatever it is, and a questioning mind so long as you're prepared to listen to the answers and that's a very important part of the equation, is going to benefit any organisation. The questioning mind will always look at the why of situations and think about a better way, not just the why for the sake of what the two-year-olds say, but why, but why and my response was always because. We don't want the because answer, we want to understand how that particular task or that particular project or that particular activity or report, whatever it is, fits into this great scheme of things. I know we've talked about this in other podcasts but in this one we want to talk about being brave, about questioning the status quo, about looking at what you're doing, understand why you're doing it and is it the best way to be doing it? Because being brave is about always moving forward. Being heroic is about whatever situation presents itself, that you have to make the best of that situation, but that's my interpretations.

To me being brave at work means having the courage as well. Now it is very much on the lines of what Kim was saying and that is putting yourself out there, being able to make that presentation, go against an opinion, come up with a new idea that is way out there, whatever it is. Yes, that's being brave. I also want to touch on the fact that having the courage is doing it, but more importantly having the courage to live with the consequences of what you are saying or doing. In other words it's all right to say okay, I'm going to come up with this idea. I know I might get a bit offside with some people by bringing it up or somebody's going to actually support me or someone not going to support me, whatever that is. Now whatever that is, can I cope with the outcome? That's when I need the courage, the courage to accept what I did, why I did it and how I am going to deal with it. That's how I see that.

The being brave in the working environment, again, might be something as simple as asking for help. You know that might be something that is not part of your makeup to ask for assistance to do something. I think that's probably the case with my client, is that she really didn't want to do this task. She didn't want to make this speech but she was brave enough to ask for my help and my response, let's look at the response.

If you're in a position where you have staff or contractors or people that you look after, it is your responsibility to acknowledge, it doesn't have to be verbally, but to acknowledge that somebody is being brave, that they are stepping out of their comfort zone, particularly when they're asking for assistance or for help or for explanation, and it's not the response for you to just jump in, boots and all to say, oh well I'll show you how to do it or I'll do it or can't you do it. You know, the irritated responses that we sometimes give without thinking. I think that we need to be brave, aware, I guess, we

need to be aware that people will try to be brave in situations and we need to make sure that our responses recognise the facts that they are being brave and help them through the brave interaction and question our own response and question our own reaction to that and look at whether we're just isolating ourselves and cocooning ourselves into a comfortable existence as supervisors and managers without thinking about whether we need also to be brave. If someone in our team is brave, should we not be brave as well?

I can probably benefit from a couple of examples of where we have been brave, so I'll talk about my event first and then I'll talk about one of Fulyana's. She won't want me to talk about it but I'm going to anyway because she talks about things that I don't want to talk about! My first thought when I was thinking about what is a situation where I had been brave, was that I was working as a consultant to an organisation and they were going through some changes as organisations do and it was about a family business was selling the business to a much larger organisation and they didn't particularly want the employees to know. Now that was their choice, that was their decision, I couldn't convince them otherwise, they stood fast on that decision and so I had to meet all of the staff individually and see what their thoughts were about a changeover in the organisation without trying to make it obvious that it was going to happen anyway.

As you would imagine, these people are not stupid, they worked in for this family for some considerable time and they knew that there was a change in the way the owners were acting and behaving and so they knew without being told what the situation was. When I went to report back to the owner about my meetings with the staff, I didn't get into the office before he started yelling, and I mean yelling to the point where I thought I'll leave the door open so that there's a witness to this, and he yelled for probably, well you know to me it seemed like a long time, but it was probably only a couple of minutes and I let him stop and I just looked him and I thought, I don't know that I can remember thinking to myself this is my time to be brave because my automatic reaction would have been, even though I was confident as a consultant, my automatic reaction would have been to not say anything more, just to let him rail against me and walk away from the meeting. But I didn't. I thought, no, this is not right. I said to him "have you finished?" just in that tone of voice. I thought, I'm not going to match fire with fire, I'm not going to drop myself down to your level of yelling and screaming because I can do that you know, I've got two boys. So I just said "have you finished" and the look on his face it was quite priceless, so I guess that's why I remember, because then I think he realised what he had done and that his whole frustration of the situation had been vented on me because he felt, and this is what came out of the ensuing conversation, he felt that I had told the staff about the sale and I let him say those words and then I said to him "why do you think I told them? why do you think they don't know? how long have these people worked for you? have you changed the way you interact with them? And you know I was able to bring him around to realising that perhaps his frustration and his anger was not at me, it was at the situation that he thought I had caused but that situation he now realised was because they had not done the right thing by their staff by not telling them what was happening. That was my brave situation and there's lots of others in a consulting role where I know that I have been brave and stood my ground or I have asked questions about a particular activity or I have told people who were not pulling their weight that they were not pulling their weight rather than just not feel like I should upset them and keep the status quo and then be frustrated by the lack of work around it.

Now for Fulyana's being brave. You all know, I'm sure, that she's not fond of video activity but she was brave enough to do the video, to do our introductory video and now that we've got that one over, even though she's still not comfortable about doing it, she will continue to do them periodically as we need to do videos, so that we can share video with you rather than just the podcast.

Having a couple of examples, like Kim did, will be very very useful I think. Now the first thing I wanted to talk about is the example that Kim used on me. She is absolutely right. Initially I really was reluctant to do podcasting, I really wasn't comfortable with my voice, my accent, my articulation

and now Kim, after 12 months, finally pushed me over that line to do the video and then when I thought about why am I resisting so much, I think it was because I was afraid of my own thoughts about me in a video, how I looked, how I sounded, how I stood, all those things that I didn't exactly analyze but I realized that's what's holding me back. It wasn't really anyone else. I've done presentations before, video and internal ads and stuff like that and I didn't ever receive any bad feedback, so it's all in my head. However that is real and it was scary for me. Anyway, the funny thing about it is, thanks to Kim, I pushed through it and we did it. After I did it, I got some feedback but I got one piece of feedback from a very very close person to me, that person said you know what, you've really got to ditch that smile, you just smiled right the way through it. Now to me, I thought that was friendly, that was warm, it was actually genuine, I wasn't putting it on but again, the feedback that I got wasn't anything like I thought I was portraying and certainly it was very helpful feedback because I now look at the video and I could see how it might have been excessive. On the other hand, I'd rather smile that not smile because that's me, so that's where I got to with that one and now I have to work my next stage and it's all really up to me to do that.

Another example I want to talk about at work, there was a project and a project that had a fair bit of attention and I had a lot of people involved in it and it was kind of high profile.

Unfortunately it was not at all successful and it fell down very badly and what had happened was anybody who had anything to do it was distancing themselves from it. A few months went past, a lot of people talked about it and talked about why and how and who and all blame and all sorts of things, then a new member of a team, when I say new a person, they have been in the organization for long time, a very competent person, moved from one area to another and came up with the idea of a ,very similar project to the disaster one, but this person was saying look I know what happened but I really feel, we really need to do something and we need to go through a process improvement but slightly different tack on it. She was very very reluctant to articulate that to start off with. Knowing that she genuinely believed she can do this and it will benefit the organization and everybody working on this project or in this process, however, she was afraid of the backlash and the time lost and the money lost doing the project and wasn't sure about saying it anyway. What she did

was say to me afterwards, she decided what's the worst thing that can happen? I can go there and they'll say which part don't you understand about, it was a failure and nobody want to hear about it? Or would they listen? And when she thought long and hard and decided she will raise it because she will not feel comfortable and she felt, in her words, she is able to deal and had the courage to deal with doing something about it and wearing whatever the

consequences. She didn't have the, what she called the guts, to not do anything because she will be cranky with herself for a long long time. These are her words and that got me thinking, this is really really important because it's you that you've got to grow, as well you have accountability to yourself to participate and grow and be the one that sometimes will get rejected, sometimes will have a failure and hopefully more often than not success and growth.

Anyway back to that example. The person brought it up and as you can imagine at the meeting eyes were rolled, comments etc. The person said, no, I was expecting this but if you bear with me I'll put a proposal on what I'm thinking at this meeting because this meeting is still ongoing. I will give you something outside the meeting and she did that and then everybody was sort of, you could tell the atmosphere in the room and the whispers and after the meeting, the fact was people weren't going to do anything about it. They were going to take that bit of paper, whatever it is and ignore it. The beauty about this was when, at the end of the meeting, the person chairing the meeting, who is the manager of everyone around the table, said I just want to say I admire that you brought it up, at the moment, I'll be honest I have the same thoughts as nearly everyone around the table, should we be wasting any more time and money on this, however I'm going to stop right there and if you have the courage and you're brave enough to bring it up, I'm going to be brave enough to actually read it and take it seriously. That was an enormous factor in the whole thing because leadership was shown, exactly the same sort of culture that that person always talked about, they ended up demonstrating and at the end of the day we had two people who are passionate one about the topic and wanting to do something and the other one is a leader who supported their people and he made it very clear that he's not saying yes, but he's definitely not saying no, and he definitely is going to take it seriously. So that kind of led down the path of other people thinking, I can't reject it now because the boss is interested and what interests my boss, fascinates me. Anyway, it went ahead and the outcome was part of her proposal got implemented and accepted and made a big difference to the process. The other part wasn't appropriate so it partially happened.

When she told me all of this I wanted to know how she felt beforehand, after all of this and I was very interested to ask how she felt during that time and she explained to me that it was quite hard actually because a lot of people were doing it because the boss wanted to do it rather than they believed in her and she said but that was immaterial to me. She said, I knew that and what I wanted to do is make sure that I have got the facts and I have got absolute confidence in making an improvement. What I get from that is having the courage to not only come up with something or go against the tide or whatever it is, but how you deal with the outcome, whatever that is, positive negative etc. The other thing is, will it stop you, was my question to this person, would it stop you coming up with ideas if you had gotten an extremely hostile reaction and no support from anyone? She said to me, you know what, no, because I achieved what I wanted to achieve and that is to convince myself to have the courage to do it and then secondly it was, next time I will do it again but I also learned how. I said, what did you learn, what would you do differently and she said some of the things I would do is work with individuals before announcing it at the meeting, try and get some consensus around, or convince people, or get them on board in bits and pieces before the meeting. However, I will not, as long as I'm strong enough and brave enough, not to be discouraged if the first one, two, three, four or

five people actually said no. So where does it end? It ends up with the person it starts with and let's hope we all are the supporting person as per that example and we have the bravery, the courage, to stand up say what we think and support others.

So simple stuff, little stuff, doesn't have to be big stuff, doesn't have to be for anyone else, it can just be for you, but think about being brave, have it in the back of your mind, be brave or aware, I guess, be ready to acknowledge situations where you can be brave at work, where you can be brave in your career and let it happen and see where it takes you.

So there's us been on being brave at work. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.