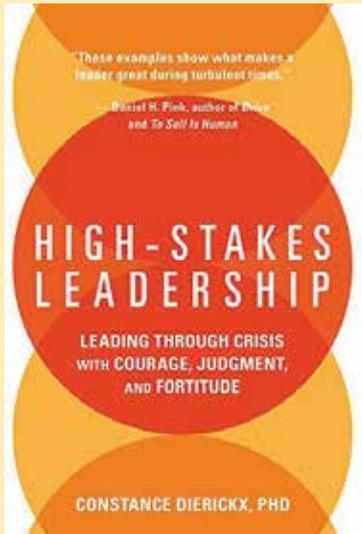


Courage, Judgement, Fortitude



High-Stakes Leadership: Leading Through Crisis with Courage, Judgment, and Fortitude

Author: Constance Dierickx

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Organisational and leadership consultant Constance Dierickx describes high-stakes leadership in a simple, three-part model that illuminates the mindsets, strategies, and tactics leaders must draw upon to make tough decisions, take an unpopular stand, or ignore convention, providing real-world examples across a range of sectors and industries. The essential aspects of good leadership endure even as the environment and tactics change.

In the first chapter of her book, *High-Stakes Leadership: Leading Through Crisis with Courage, Judgment and Fortitude*, author Constance Dierickx describes the joy of Girl Scouts of

Western Washington CEO Megan Ferland and her staff when they received a \$100,000 donation. The donation represented one-third of the organisation's annual budget. A few days later, however, Ferland received a letter from the donor asking her to "guarantee that our gift will not be used to support transgender girls. If you can't, please return the money."

Ferland returned the money despite the risks associated with turning away such a large donor. And that courageous act, as Dierickx explains, was only the beginning. "What happened next," she writes, "was nothing short of stunning. Ferland and her team went public with their decision. Then, they launched a fundraising campaign on Indiegogo. Next, they created a compelling video about what Girl Scouts is about." Ferland and her team never attacked the donor; they only focused on the positive story of the Girl Scouts and what they did for every girl who joined. In the end, the organization raised \$150,000 more than the original donation.

For Dierickx, the story of Megan Ferland and the donation with strings attached exemplifies the three foundational leadership attributes of courage, judgment and fortitude, which are required for what she calls "high-stakes leadership" — that is, "the ability to lead effectively in times of whitewater change and great risk."

Courage includes the courage to stay true to yourself and your organisation and the

Three key attributes form the basis of strong, effective leadership in these times of rapid change

willingness to make tough decisions. One of the courageous acts required in a crisis situation is to not be afraid to let go. However, the dilemma of sunk costs is one reason many leaders refuse to take the steps they need to take.

One CEO tried for three years to help a mediocre, arrogant and ethically challenged chief operating officer perform. Only when the CEO finally removed him did the organisation learn the extent of the damage created by this toxic manager.

Dierickx explores a number of different facets of judgment, including the power of decisiveness and patience and the negative impact of overconfidence. One of the deciding factors in good judgment is to ensure that all actions — and reactions — are grounded in values. When Hurricane Matthew cancelled a conference that Dierickx was attending, the staff's extraordinary response in safely evacuating the hotel and ensuring that all guests were fully taken care of demonstrated how values can lead companies and people to make the right calls even in the most unforeseen and risky situations.

Fortitude is not always easily defined. Dierickx uses the following formula to help define this valuable *high-stakes leadership* element:

Vision, she explains, is the aspiration of the organisation, while mission is the reason for its existence. Persistence is "the ability and intention to stay the course," she writes, adding that "far from blind ambition, it is a reasoned application of energy and resources." Character is at the heart of fortitude and is rooted in the desire to make a difference. Through the stories and guidance in *High-Stakes Leadership*, Dierickx hopes to inspire and help others to emulate the leadership of such high-stakes leaders as Megan Ferland. ■