

Foreword by Sara Blakely, Founder of SPANX

COURAGE GOES TO WORK

A man in a dark suit is captured in mid-air, jumping over a chasm. He is holding a black briefcase in his right hand. The background is a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The ground below is dark and rocky.

**How to Build
Backbones,
Boost Performance,
and Get Results**

BILL TREASURER
author of *Right Risk*

High Praise for Courage Goes to Work

“*Courage Goes to Work* helps solve the most perplexing management dilemma of all: how to inspire employees who are too comfortable and too afraid (or, as Bill says, comfeartable). Don’t just read it . . . absorb it!

Lilicia P. Bailey, Chief People Officer, Manheim

“This book is truly awesome! Bill Treasurer has stolen courage from the gods and brought it to the workplace, where it is desperately needed. Everyone in a leadership role should put this book on their must-read list. After reading it, you may find the courage to buy a copy for your boss!”

Chip Bell, author of *Customer Loyalty Guaranteed*

“There are few business books that can truly be called transformative, and *Courage Goes to Work* is one of them. It offers tangible ideas for helping workers have more initiative, confidence, and backbone. If your employees could use more of those things, then this book is for you.”

David Baruch, CIO, Hewitt Associates

“*Courage Goes to Work* is an excellent, well-written, and relevant book that captures the nuances of courage that will enable readers build courage—for themselves and for others. This is truly a thoughtful composition of the lessons learned on a figurative and literal high dive.”

Chuck McManus, Vice President
(Fund of Hedge Funds Data Management), Morgan Stanley

“Courage is the first and most important component of success in business. Without it, there is nothing more than mediocrity and boredom. Bill Treasurer captures this awareness in his book and instructs us in making sure we’re not overlooking that important aspect of fulfillment and success in our working life. Have the courage to leap, he says, even from dizzying heights. The water will embrace you and reward you. He knows—he’s been there.”

David Ryback, coauthor of *Psychology of Champions*

“Bill Treasurer is like a modern-day Wizard of Oz who helps to make us more courageous, not just at work, but in life. Instead of giving us medals to remind us not to be afraid, he offers buckets of specific tools that show us how to tap into our inner courage whenever and wherever we need it. This will be one of the most dog-eared books on my shelf. And it will hold a place of honor right next to his other gem, *Right Risk*.”

Marilynn T. Mobley, Senior Vice President and Strategic Counsel,
Edelman & Associates

“You will not find a more clear voice on *courage* than Bill Treasurer’s. Like Bill, I have worked for over a decade exploring courage in the high-risk realm of leader-follower relations with senior political figures and management teams. I do a good job of this at a foundational level. Bill’s work is the graduate program. Let him guide you to the heights where your life and work become extraordinary—because you understand your fear and that of others and bring out the courage in each.”

Ira Chaleff, author of *The Courageous Follower*

“Having spent over two decades in HR, I have seen a good number of books come and go. Only a handful really make you think, and *Courage Goes to Work* is one of them. It introduces an important new management practice: courage building. This powerful yet often-ignored concept can change the way people and organizations succeed. Put this book at the top of your management reading list—you’ll be glad you did.”

Keith Hicks, Vice President of Human Resources, Radiant Systems

“Even for people who are full of courage, instilling courage in others can be a daunting task. As someone who knows a thing or two about courage, I found this book is an invaluable tool every manager can and should use. The only thing worse than the quagmire of an office locked in comfort or fear is a manager too afraid to do something about it!”

Dustin Webster, seven-time world cliff-diving champion
and Executive Director, W.E. Rock Events, Inc.

“Bill Treasurer brings a true blend of wisdom, compassion, and personal experience to the understanding of courage and brings a practical approach to giving people the courage to stretch themselves and achieve great results. *Courage Goes to Work* raises people’s standards so they can stop coasting along in the safety of ‘good enough.’”

Conor Neill, CEO, Taxijet Spain, and Professor
of Managerial Communications, IESE Business School, Barcelona

“Whether you’re facing a hundred-foot diving board or your board of directors, Bill’s advice is practical, fun, and immediately applicable. His insightful and refreshing way of dealing with mental obstacles shows how fear, in both yourself and those around you, is nothing to be scared of.”

Justin Roux, Senior Vice President, Luvata Group

“Courage is good for any industry. But when you work in the wicked world of drug law enforcement the stakes are even higher. In my field an absence of courage in an agent at any level, from those working the street to senior executives, can cost lives. It is great news that it turns out that courage can be taught—thanks to Bill Treasurer.”

June W. Rodgers, retired special agent in charge, New England
Field Division, Drug Enforcement Administration

“*Courage Goes to Work* offers refreshing ideas about the most essential of all human qualities: courage. This is one of the rare business books that are relevant both personally and professionally. Read this book and go on the most important adventure of all—putting courage to work at your office, in your home, and in your life.”

Bill Murray, Director, Outward Bound Professional,
North Carolina Outward Bound

“*Courage Goes to Work* is a must-read for anyone who needs to show up with strength at work every single day. This is an inspiring book about how we can all be a little more brave, authentic, and effective in our professional and personal lives. I was personally inspired by the message and will be recommending this book to everyone I know.”

Brendon Burchard, author of *Life’s Golden Ticket*

“Whenever I’m feeling a bit chicken, I need only pick up Bill’s new book, *Courage Goes to Work*, and my own courage starts to rally. By the time I’m finished reading, I’m feeling like an eagle—ready to fly high and take on any challenge!”

BJ Gallagher, coauthor of *A Peacock in the Land of Penguins*

“Bill Treasurer is a peaceful warrior whose mission is to inspire others to take courageous action despite their fears. As a former combat fighter pilot, I am intimately familiar with what courage can do for the success of individuals and teams who work in high-pressure environments. Bill’s book is a compelling read and is packed full of thought-provoking, real-world anecdotes and simple yet powerful action steps to build courage at work. It’s one of a kind.”

Waldo Waldman, decorated fighter pilot and professional speaker

“What I love about *Courage Goes to Work* is its pragmatism. Courage is often seen as something inborn that only people like skydivers or serial entrepreneurs have. Bill Treasurer shows us that courage is a learned behavior that managers can teach through daily practice.”

Jonathon Flaum, Director, WriteMind Institute for Corporate Contemplation; author of *How the Paper Fish Learned to Swim* and *How the Red Wolf Found Its Howl*; and coauthor of *The 100-Mile Walk*

“Finally, a practical and inspiring book about the virtue that is perhaps most needed yet most lacking in the world today: courage. If you ever wish that you could overcome your apprehensions and fears so that you could more fully reach your potential and dreams, a good place to start is to read this book.”

Charles C. Manz, author of *The Power of Failure* and *The Leadership Wisdom of Jesus*, and coauthor of *The Virtuous Organization* and *Nice Guys Can Get the Corner Office*

“In *Courage Goes to Work* Bill Treasurer takes a mysterious and complex subject that touches everyone and breaks it into bite-size, manageable chunks. Looking at the small pieces enables you to take care of the critical task we all face—moving toward what we have feared and avoided in the past. Buy this book today and take action tomorrow!”

Stewart Levine, *Resolutionary*, author of *Getting to Resolution* and *The Book of Agreement*, and coauthor of *Collaboration 2.0*

“How do you motivate people who are too comfortable or too afraid? This is a common question from managers and supervisors. In *Courage Goes to Work* Bill Treasurer provides practical answers to this question. He points out that to instill courage is to encourage and wants you, as a manager, to become a chief encourager. Drawing on his experience as a seasoned business consultant and stunt diver, he will show you how. This book should be on every manager’s bookshelf.”

Cindy Ventrice, author of *Make Their Day!*

“To live and work in a world of accelerated change requires individual courage. Bill Treasurer captures the essence of courage in his newest book, *Courage Goes to Work*. He takes an attribute that others might think is ethereal and makes it concrete. He illustrates how anyone can access their courage and how others can create an environment where courageous behavior can flourish. With an abundance of courage, individual and organizational greatness can be achieved!”

Leslie Yerkes, President, Catalyst Consulting Group, Inc.,
and author of *Fun Works*

“*Courage Goes to Work* is an insightful call to summoning courage in self and courage in others. This is a very insightful guide, blending Treasurer’s expertise in areas of risk and courage and harnessing their impact for increased results, performance, and effectiveness.”

Harry E. Chambers, author of *My Way or the Highway*

“Bill Treasurer has a deep understanding of courage, and after reading *Courage Goes to Work*, so will you.”

Noah Blumenthal, President, Leading Principles, Inc.,
and author of *You’re Addicted to You*

“Most of us take our minds to work but leave courage at the door. In this compelling book, Bill Treasurer provides three nourishing lunch buckets to take to work everyday, try courage, trust courage, and tell courage. In doing so, you’ll have all you need to be a better person and a better leader.”

Dick Axelrod, author of *Terms of Engagement*

“If ever there were a book that business and nonprofit executives need to read, this is it. Courage is every bit as important to an organization as leadership, innovation, and focus are, and this little gem is chock-full of powerful ideas that could transform your people and your workplace. Prepare to be en-couraged in unexpected ways!”

Sam Pettway, Founding Director, BoardWalk Consulting

COURAGE GOES TO WORK

**How to Build
Backbones,
Boost Performance,
and Get Results**

BILL TREASURER



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
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Courage Goes to Work

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*Dedicated to Alex, Bina, and Ian,
my three heartbeats.
In all you do, Be Courageous.*

*And to Olivia Grace, our cherub in heaven.
You are with us always.*

Foreword

by Sara Blakely, founder of SPANX

“What on earth am I doing?!”

The mind tries to make sense at the strangest times. The irony was, I wasn’t on earth . . . I was ten thousand feet in the air climbing up the side of a hot air balloon on a dangling rope ladder. (Yes, the girl who is afraid of heights and sometimes cries during airplane takeoffs.)

What led me to that moment? Well, there’s a short answer and a longer one. The short answer is that I was competing for \$1 million as a reality show contestant on Sir Richard Branson’s television show, *The Rebel Billionaire*. The long answer is that my whole life had been preparing me for a moment like this.

The value of courage was taught to me at an early age. Lessons about courage, in my household, were every bit as important as lessons about history or arithmetic. At the dinner table, my dad would ask my brother and me, “So, kids, what did you *fail* at this week?” If we didn’t have a good answer, he’d be disappointed. If we had failed—for example, “Dad, I tried out for this and I was horrible”—he would congratulate us and give us a big high five! Knowing that my parents supported and *expected* me to take risks took the fear out of failing.

One of my earliest memories of doing something courageous was in the sixth grade, when I had to transfer to a new school. I was afraid of change. I had been with the same

group of friends since I was five, and starting over was terrifying. Knowing that my “crazy” dad encouraged us to fail, I did the most courageous thing I could think of: I ran for class president...after attending the school for only one week! When I told my mom about my plan to run for president, she gently said, “But sweetie, you might not win.” She was right. In fact, I was almost guaranteed to lose. Through that experience, so many wonderful things happened. Among them, I immediately earned the respect of the new students and made fast friends. After a few months, no one remembered that I had lost the run for president; they just remembered me. I started to “get it.”

Now don’t get me wrong—although I consider myself a courageous person, I am scared of almost everything. Through the years, I have developed a mantra: “Sara, if you weren’t afraid, would you do it?” If the answer is yes, I take a deep breath and do it! I made a pact with myself long ago that I would never let fear get in the way of moving my life forward. Courage, not the absence of fear, is just doing it anyway.

All this doesn’t mean that I am fearless or reckless. It just means that if the road in front of me looks scary, I take fear along for the ride—but I keep on moving, *with* the fear. In every situation where I was ever courageous, you could just as easily substitute the word *afraid* for *courageous*. I was afraid, for example, when I started SPANX with \$5,000 in savings. I was afraid when I knocked on the doors of textile mills begging them to manufacture my prototype for a new footless pantyhose (for which I had written and earned a patent). I was afraid when I stood in front of the hot TV cameras on the QVC network for the first time. I was afraid when I traveled to

Dallas with my lucky red backpack to meet the buyer at Neiman Marcus to interest her in selling SPANX products. I was afraid the first time I was a guest on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. I was afraid when I did the same thing at Saks, Nordstrom, and Bloomingdale's. I was afraid when I called on Target and suggested that SPANX create a new product line for them called ASSETS. And I was afraid as I inched my way up a flimsy rope ladder on the side of a billowy hot air balloon.

Why do these things? Because courage has never let me down. Courage has brought me great friends, kept life fabulously interesting, and earned me a healthy income. The way I look at it, you are the writer, director, and producer of your own life. I don't want my movie to be boring. Courage ensures that it won't.

Courage has been so important to my life that I've made instilling courage in others a top priority at SPANX. First, I try to be a courageous role model. People respond with courage of their own when they see me take chances and step up to challenges. Second, when people make mistakes, especially mistakes made by taking risks to move the company forward, I'm never disappointed. Instead, I go up to them and give them a big high five! The third way I instill courage at SPANX is to introduce SPANX's employees to new and original ideas, particularly if those ideas advance SPANX's mission of promoting confidence in women. Bill Treasurer's ideas about courage and risk taking resonated so strongly with the SPANX team that we ended up working with Bill and the Giant Leap team on three separate occasions. By our encouraging people to constantly try new and challenging things, and by our associating with companies that reinforce our values, the \$5,000 investment that started SPANX from

the back of my apartment grew into a \$200 million business. Yep, courage is good business.

How can you fill people with enough confidence that they'll set aside their fears and do extraordinary things? What can you do to put courage to work for you and the people you lead? Reading *Courage Goes to Work* is a great start. To be successful in business, you need great mentors—people who've "been there" and can help you to "go there." Bill's unique insights about courage come from unusual and hard-earned experiences, inside and outside of work. By drawing on his own courageous experiences, as well as on the work he's done with clients like SPANX, Bill has developed a practical way of understanding, categorizing, and inspiring courageous behavior.

I'm a big reader of books about human performance. Too many of them, though, are both unrealistic and unfulfilling. They tell you obvious things, like "Don't be afraid!" or "Tell yourself you're brave, and you will be!" What makes *Courage Goes to Work* so appealing is that it respects your intelligence by acknowledging that fear and comfort are business (and behavioral) realities. It offers specific suggestions for working *with* those realities instead of brushing them aside as though they don't matter. For managers, because they deal with the negative consequences of workers' fear and comfort on a daily basis, this book is particularly useful. By providing managers with specific advice for building people's courage, the book strengthens the backbones of managers and workers alike. The result is what every business strives for: higher confidence, higher morale, and higher aim.

To be sure, courage can come with payoffs. But don't be surprised if those payoffs come in the form of even greater and scarier challenges. My reward for summiting Richard

Branson's hot air balloon, which after forty-five terrifying minutes I eventually did, was the opportunity to travel to Africa. The catch? I had to dive into the outstretched arms of a fellow contestant—after leaping off a 380-foot cliff. As the saying goes, “Just another day at the office!”

Oh, but did I mention that I was runner-up and Richard Branson surprised me with his personal paycheck of \$750,000? I used the money to launch the Sara Blakely Foundation to help women and, among other things, sent 278 women to college in South Africa. So this is how transformative it can be when courage goes to work. One courageous moment on your part just might end up having a far greater impact than you could ever have imagined.

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Introduction

Too Much Comfort, Too Much Fear

Courage is the thing. All goes if courage goes.

Joseph Addison

*We have not journeyed across the centuries, across the oceans,
across the mountains, across the prairies,
because we are made of sugar candy.*

Winston Churchill

“Management sucks. And I’m a manager, so I guess I suck too. Or the people I’m managing suck. Either way, this ain’t fun and I want out.”

It was discouraging to see that Brian’s situation had deteriorated to this point. Only two years earlier, Brian had been fast-tracked into a front-line manager position. His upbeat attitude and make-it-happen work ethic had caught the attention of the company executives, who decided that he’d make a fine addition to their ranks. Yet here he was, ready to jump ship. And he hated himself for it.

“For the first time in my life, I feel like a failure. I couldn’t wait to be made a manager. But now I’m convinced that I’m

not cut out for it. I think the only reason I haven't quit already is because I'm too ashamed, or too competitive, to admit defeat. I hate being a manager."

I had been coaching Brian for a few months as part of a multiyear leadership program my company had developed for Brian's employer. The program had been developed for the company's high-potential leaders, and Brian had been handpicked by his boss to participate. Brian was highly regarded by the senior executives, so it was a bit surprising for me to hear that things had gotten so bad for him. Somehow this "hi-po" manager had been able to conceal his true feelings about the job from his boss and coworkers.

"It surprises me that you don't think you're cut out to be a manager, Brian. Is it the work? The pressure? What?" I asked.

"The pressure I can deal with. I was a college athlete and I kind of like pressure. It makes things seem more important and urgent, which gets me going. And the tactical part of the work, for the most part, isn't hard. You make a plan; you break it down into a set of goals, milestones, and delivery dates; you keep it all organized on a spreadsheet; and then you work the plan."

"So what's the crux of it, buddy?" I asked. "From what you just told me, you don't find management all that hard. What I didn't hear about was the stuff you hate about managing. What about that?"

Like lava inching its way up through the earth, the frustrations that had gotten Brian to this point began bubbling to the surface. "To me, the hard part about managing, the stuff I *hate*, is all the people stuff. I hate the fact that no one shows the initiative to take on work outside their own scope. I hate

the small way people think, and how the only thing they seem to care about is the itty-bitty task right in front of them. I hate having to continuously remind people about impending deadlines and that no one works with the same urgency or intensity as I do. I hate having to force people to accept changes that the company requires us to make and that are mostly in everyone's best interests. I hate all the psychoanalyzing that goes into figuring out how to get people to trust me. I also hate not being able to trust that people won't screw up and make me look bad when I assign important tasks to them. I hate having to confront people about their performance, especially when they think they're performing way better than they really are. I hate having to pry the truth out of people so that I know about problems before it's too late to solve them. And I especially hate all the crybaby excuses, finger-pointing, and shitty attitudes that get in the way of doing actual work."

The little venting moment helped Brian to purge all the surface stuff so that he could get closer to the core of the issue. After a moment his eyes got smaller, as if he'd found a shiny golden nugget while prospecting at the center of hell. He continued, "When it comes right down to it, I hate that people are either too comfortable doing things the way they've always done them or too afraid to do things differently."

Mixing Comfort and Fear

Over the years, I've coached a lot of people like Brian. Talented workers who get promoted because of their strong leadership potential, but who quickly grow frustrated with managing people who are slow to change, slow to trust, and slow getting things done. Brian's golden nugget insight is

spot-on: The problem has to do with comfort and fear. Workers who are too comfortable don't exert themselves any more than they have to. They become satisfied meeting a minimum standard of performance, equating "just enough" with good enough. Like a sofa loaded down with overstuffed relatives after a holiday dinner, teams with workers who are too comfortable become lethargic and heavy with the weight of mediocrity. At the same time, workers who are too fearful play it too safe. Fearful workers set *safe* goals, say *safe* things, and make *safe* choices. Because fearful workers spend far too much energy preserving what is instead of pursuing what could be, their preoccupation with safety ultimately becomes dangerous for the business.

Comfort and fear in smaller doses can be good things. Striving to gain comfort with new skills, for example, is a worthwhile goal. At the same time, fear helps workers to focus on preventing and mitigating risks by keeping them vigilant about small issues that could grow into big problems. But in higher doses, and especially when mixed together, comfort and fear become toxic, creating a situation where workers become what I call "comfeartable."

Comfeartable workers are those who grow comfortable working in a perpetual state of fear, which only serves to magnify the ill effects of both concepts. Comfeartable workers develop a high tolerance for misery, often staying in jobs they don't find gratifying or, worse yet, secretly despise. Some comfeartable workers are like impassive zombies, sleepwalking through their jobs with no sense of urgency or commitment. Others include excuse makers, people who choose apathy over action by cooking up all sorts of reasons why they can't do something instead of just doing it. Comfeart-

able workers also include people who dump problems in your lap but offer no solutions for solving them. For these workers, going the extra mile just takes too much effort. Instead, *comfeartable* workers give their deepest fidelity to safety and sameness, even if those things come at the expense of progress. When fused together, comfort and fear adhere to the same law: *Stay safe at all costs!* No initiative. No risk taking. No candor. No making waves. No more than what is asked. No innovating or extending or leading. And no support for those who do.

This book is for all the managers like Brian out there. Maybe you're one of them. If you've grown frustrated trying to get workers to stretch beyond their comfort zones, if you're at your wits' end trying to get workers to step up to their potential, or if you're tired of having to treat adults like frightened children, this book is for you.

Activating Com*feartable* Workers

As a manager, you may be tempted to adopt a scorched-earth campaign and just fire all the *comfeartable* workers. But a wholesale firing of such workers would do more harm than good. *Comfeartable* workers are so prevalent in the workplace that such a strategy would be the managerial equivalent of carpet bombing, potentially eviscerating the organization. A more constructive and practical approach would be to help workers face and overcome their *comfeartable* ways. The reality is, managing workers who are overly comfortable or fearful is the essence of management. At the core, management is all about transforming and inspiring *comfeartable* workers. All the other stuff—the planning, goal setting,