

Does Leading Mean You're Brave?

Advocate for something you care about.

“Oh my goodness, this is so brave of you!” These words echoed through the air as I stood amidst a sea of people at a recent event. A feeling of uncertainty gnawed at me as I wondered what exactly had inspired this proclamation. The event was in full swing, with attendees mingling, laughing and enjoying refreshments. But bravery? Risk? I scanned the surroundings, failing to spot any imminent danger.

As the chat continued, it became apparent that this stranger viewed our efforts to pursue the “climate conversation” within the agricultural industry as courageous — a risky endeavor that ventured into uncharted territory.

It honestly had not occurred to me that tackling a challenging subject with a hesitant audience was actually dangerous. After all, we weren't embarking on life-threatening stunts or daring feats. We weren't even buying gas-station sushi. We're just advocating for opportunities and awareness within the agriculture sectors discussing climate solutions and promoting an all-encompassing approach to sustainability.

Seven thoughts on stepping into leadership

But as the conversation lingered in my mind, I began to reflect on the idea of stepping into leadership, and what it takes to put yourself out there for any issue that matters. The following are a few thoughts:

No. 1. Redefining bravery:

Bravery isn't solely reserved for daredevil feats. Stepping into leadership, especially in areas that require change, innovation and collaboration, is an act of courage in its own right.

No. 2. Embracing uncharted territory:

Leading means venturing into the unknown. Whether it's exploring new ideas or challenging the status quo, embracing uncertainty is part of driving change.

No. 3. Acknowledging professional risks:

Every leadership journey carries risks. Misunderstandings, being deemed too ahead of your time or facing resistance are all part of the game.

No. 4. Confronting misconceptions:

Others' perceptions of risk may not align with reality. Industries like beef production and agriculture can be misunderstood by people who lack awareness of food systems and rural areas. Address misconceptions and communicate your mission clearly.

No. 5. Engaging with purpose:

Fear of the unknown can hinder progress. If the issue matters enough to you, it likely matters to others in your sphere. As industry leaders, engaging in discussions, advocating

for change and participating in the dialogue is essential for shaping policy and progress.

No. 6. Self-awareness and reflection:

Before embarking on a major leadership journey, take time to reflect on your strengths, weaknesses, values and goals. Self-awareness is the cornerstone of effective leadership. Understand your leadership style, communication preferences and how you handle challenges.

No. 7. Leading by example:

Leadership is not about giving orders; it's about setting an example. Demonstrate the qualities you want to see in others who follow you. The perfect place to advocate may be your social platforms. Your actions will speak louder than words and inspire people to follow.

Fear may accompany leadership, especially when the path involves uncharted territory. Sometimes, when we care about a topic, such as defending modern agriculture or our right to farm and ranch, we often don't even realize that putting ourselves out there looks bold to others. Stepping into sustainability or any arena that demands change requires embracing uncertainty and confronting misconceptions. The risks may be real, but the greater risk lies in not engaging at all. **BA**

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