

## Unfear Newsletter: Inspire the Heroes

Dear Reader,

Every hero's journey forces the protagonist to abandon the comfort of their homes. To face and overcome fear, uncertainty, and untold perils. In other words, they must stretch, reach beyond their comfort zones and discover new skills and reserves of strength.

This begs the questions: why does anyone undertake such a risky adventure? How can an unfear organization encourage employees to see themselves as heroes and their colleagues as companions on a quest? Finally, what can an organization do to inspire these employees to stretch beyond what they believe is possible?

### Unfear Organization Mindset One: The Oh! Wow Story

There are two primary ways that an organization can inspire its employees. Many rely on a fear-based narrative, what we at Co-Creation Partners call the Oh, Sh\*\*! or Burning Platform story. In this tale, the organization paints a dire picture of the status quo to motivate action, e.g., "New competitors have hurt our market share and profit margin, so we need to cut costs while improving performance."

The truth is: this story works in the short term. It pushes employees to put in superhuman effort to survive. But over a more extended period, an Oh Sh\*\*! story wears employees down, leading to burnout, second-guessing, and wasteful internal competition and politics. Worse, such a story doesn't allow employees to cast themselves as a hero. They feel more like ants dodging falling beams in a building on fire than Odysseus fighting to return to Penelope and reclaim his throne.

On the other hand, an unfear organization creates stretch by focusing on the company's vision. They don't tell Burning Platform stories. Rather, they share what we call an Oh, Wow! story that emphasizes the beautiful future the organization is seeking to create. They talk about expanding into new markets, serving more and more customers, and, most importantly, leaving a lasting, positive impact. The Oh, Wow! story doesn't ignore the difficulties of the current reality. Instead, it acknowledges the fear and uncertainty inherent in the status quo and then reframes that fear in the context of the grand vision. Suddenly, the discomfort has a meaning beyond mere survival. And that meaning allows people to choose to do what needs to be done, despite the short-term pain.

### "Teach Them to Yearn for the Vast and Endless Sea"

Antoine de St. Exupery, aviation pioneer and author of *The Little Prince*, wrote, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea." Humans yearn for meaning, for the chance to contribute to a larger purpose. If an organization can tap into this desire, it will unlock limitless reserves of energy, creativity, and resilience. When people feel that their work matters, they devote themselves to it and bring their full brilliance and capacity to their tasks. On top of that, a shared purpose unites people. Employees will feel more camaraderie and focus and will collaborate with greater ease, leading to even more powerful results.

### Worth thinking about

When you try to motivate yourself, do you tell yourself an Oh, Sh\*\*! story, or the Oh, wow! story? What about your peers? The top leaders in your organization?

### Take it to go

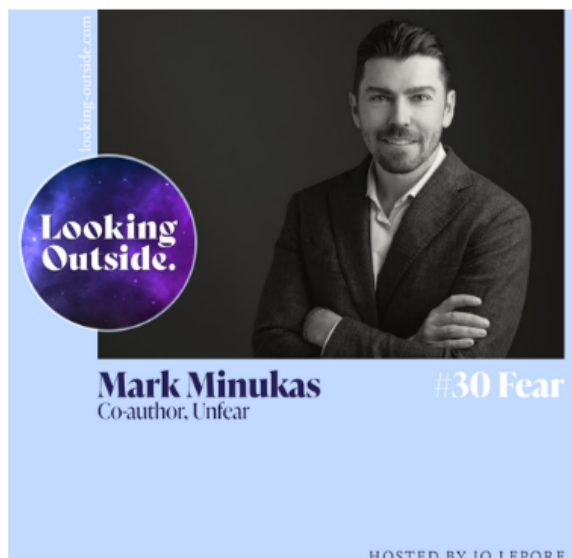
The next time you need to coordinate with a peer or direct report, pay attention to the language you use. Do you frame requests around what might go wrong, or do you emphasize the prize in where you and the team hope to end up?

### Questions?

Please contact us and schedule a call if you are interested in applying Unfear to improve your team and organizational culture and effectiveness. We'd love to hear from you.

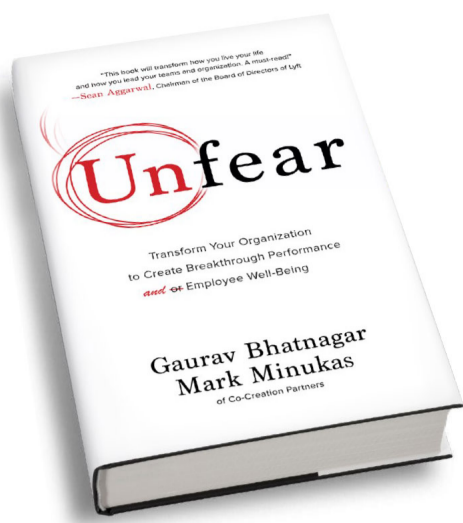
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