

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week, I want to talk about “Mismatch Theory.” What is Mismatch Theory and what has it got to do with us? This comes from an article from Harvard Business Review, January 7th of '22. And the article was about courageous leadership. But this idea of mismatch theory sort of grabbed my attention. So, what is it?

Mismatch theory is this concept that traits that were at one time advantageous to us become less useful as time moves on. And they talk some in the article about evolution. The things that made us evolutionarily successful. Is that a word? Don't work in modern society. We're no longer hunter gatherers, for example. So, what about this is important to you? Well, evolution happens in the workplace too, doesn't it?

Behaviors that were formerly acceptable in the workplace not that long ago are just out of bounds now. Things that were considered best practices, not that long ago are out of bounds now. So, when you think of a successful leader, especially in construction, what adjectives immediately come to mind? Tough, brave, or courageous, rugged, kind of that Superman or Superwoman kind of individual. That's who leaps at you as the prototypical construction leader. But in this Harvard Business Review article, the author, James R. Detert says that we need to rethink courage, and he talks about three things, specifically. Three new definitions if you will, about courage. He says first, courageous leaders, modern courageous leaders are open and humble.

The idea of doors always open kind of a thing. Well, this is like years beyond that, isn't it? You got to be competent first off. You're going to be a leader; you have to be competent. That's a given, but it's also realistic to say you can't know everything. Nobody knows everything. So, these leaders that think they have to put on their armor and be somehow invulnerable to doubt or invulnerable to not knowing, simply not knowing, that just doesn't fly anymore. They acknowledge when they're afraid. They acknowledge when they're uncertain. And they acknowledge especially when they screwed up, because we all screw up some things. So being courageous also means being vulnerable, I think.

The second piece he says is the modern courageous leader leads with principles first. It's not a popularity contest. Modern leaders need to allow for differing opinions, even conflict up to a point, as people passionately express what their opinions are on a given subject in the workplace, and then accepting different viewpoints and pushing them all together to come up with good solutions is a piece of it. And the third thing, maybe the biggest thing to me is psychological safety. You've heard us talk about this all the time. The idea of psychological safety is that people can say things. They can take reasonable risks without the fear that a ton of bricks is going to fall on them. That allows people to learn and change and just sort of flower in the workplace as they're allowed to try and do new things.

Superman, the Superman comic books were wildly popular when they first came out and then they became less popular as other competing comic books came out. And it dawned on the authors that one of the reasons that Superman was losing popularity, even though it was this very charismatic character, was that he was invulnerable. He had no weaknesses. He couldn't be defeated. He was the perfect human being, whatever he was, the perfect being. And because his popularity was declining and they traced it back to this invulnerability, they created kryptonite and suddenly Superman became a little more vulnerable and a little more likable. Again, we could relate. It's hard to relate to the perfect being. It's not so hard to relate to somebody that has faults and flaws. And so, that makes a little sense.

So, I'd like to know what are your revolutionary changes? What are you doing in your companies to demonstrate 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership versus the old kind of butt kicking construction leadership that we're used to?

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