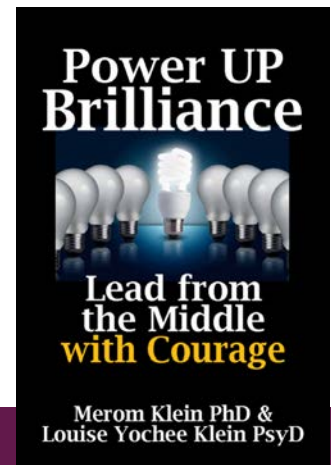


# PowerUP Brilliance™: How leaders build courage to drive breakthrough solutions

by Merom Klein PhD and Louise Yochee Klein PsyD  
Co-Directors, Courage International



“To conserve energy, we need lightbulbs with luminous efficiency - to emit brilliance with little power and little residual heat. We also need teams with luminous efficiency – to illuminate ever tougher and ever more complex opportunities with less push from the top-down and less noise and heat.”

## A SHORTAGE OF BRILLIANCE?

A recent posting from the Frankfurt Auto Show commented about how few “wows” the automotive journalist saw on the showroom floor. It’s really gotten bad, she said, when the biggest hoopla a large German automaker can make focuses on the engineering behind their next generation of headlamps. With the incredible unmet needs that have to be addressed for personal automobile transportation to be sustainable, the journalist was gobsmacked that the only efficiency upgrade that was featured was the luminous efficiency of the new car’s headlamps.

A study from the Ontario Innovation Centre looked across industries — not just automakers — and differentiated “bold” innovation from “me-too” upgrades and iterations. The study warned that we’ve become so risk-averse and short-term focused that our corporations have innovation pipelines clogged with too few real breakthroughs and too many tweaks and cosmetic changes masquerading as innovation.

Why? Is it a lack of imagination, brilliance, creativity amongst engineers and middle managers who orchestrate their work? Have we gotten intellectually or

scientifically lazy? That’s the obvious answer — according to a survey of Fortune 1500 CEOs published by IBM. Most CEOs look across their enterprises and see too much play-it-safe conformity and don’t-rock-the-boat mediocrity — and too few standouts who say, “We can do much better” and who raise the bar to make it happen. Their conclusion: We need to hire more luminaries with the guts to stand out, and fewer good soldiers and conformists.

## LUMINOUS EFFICIENCY: WHAT STANDOUTS NEED.

As business owners ourselves, we sympathize with the frustration of CEOs who themselves lead from the middle, and answer to impatient and demanding investors, regulators and payers. And we see what they see in too many meetings where the real issues get raised after everyone leaves the room. Or when the sterling opportunities don’t get presented, because we don’t think a few key Sponsors will get it right away or be receptive. Against a backdrop of these norms, politics, resource constraints and the very real fear that the job you have could be shifted or downsized tomorrow, is it any won-

der that we hire luminaries, plug them in and that they don't have the energy to shine?

We get two types of coaching assignments to PowerUp Brilliance. One is for reasonable people — who come to us as part of a cadre of high-potentials who are being groomed to advance to the next level by showing that they have a defined set of competencies. Many of these reasonable people certainly have the *capacity* for brilliance that will produce breakthrough innovation, above and beyond steady-Eddie incremental performance upgrades. But few of them will be tapped, or will volunteer, to make that happen.

In our second type of coaching assignments, we work with unreasonable people. When we get these calls, it's a "one-off," rather a component in a well-crafted talent management architecture. Usually a senior executive calls — or asks HR to call — and the conversation starts like this, "We have this incredible genius in our team. She sees things that no one else sees and gets things done that no one else could get done. But her unreasonableness is making people crazy. She needs your help." (Yes, gender-conscious readers, sometimes it's a "he" rather than a "she" who's asked to take "the cure," but aggressiveness and intolerance for pedestrian or incremental improvements are still tolerated more from men than from women at work. Even in the new millennium.)

When we work with unreasonable people, the goal is almost never to make them more reasonable. A CEO told us, in our very first meeting: "This won't be my first 360. I've been told I can be a demanding SOB. I want to keep being demanding. I just want to lose the SOB."

Even with hardware, it's easy to increase the lumens you get out of a light-producing device by pumping more energy into it and tolerating the residual heat it produces. But this CEO knew what many unreasonable geniuses have to discover. Enterprises have a finite amount of energy. They need bright stars not just to be luminaries, but to do it with luminous efficiency — using as little bandwidth or energy as possible to wrestle down key issues and find breakthroughs, with the least possible output of residual heat. If you go into any hardware store, you'll see bulbs rated (and priced) on luminous efficiency. Just as you will if you sit in on a talent meeting and hear deliberations about who will be selected to head which key innovation initiative.

In Merom's hometown, Philadelphia, just mention the

initials T-O and, 10 years after he left the Eagles Football team, you'll still get a groan. No one doubts Terrell Owen's genius as a football superstar. But the energy he consumed and the residual heat he left behind are still considered to be the main reason that the Eagles performed so dismally in the 2005 Super Bowl. Brilliance, yes. Luminous efficiency? Not even close. To be honest, we've seen few geniuses in business or government with an ego as out-of-control as T-O. When we do, we may refer them for therapy (and, sometimes, for medication) in addition to what we do as coaches.

But we have seen a pharmaceutical company CFO who looks at the numbers and sees cash burn on a dangerous trajectory — far outstripping the milestone payments, outside investment and the license fees that their first product to market is generating. We've seen her demonized and dismissed as "Chicken Little" and "not a team player" when she demanded less costly clinical trials, more prudent portfolio decisions or more imaginative and truly outstanding (as opposed to incremental) business development accomplishments. When we were introduced to her, we were told, "Make her easier to do business with."

We've seen Regulatory, QA, Safety and Pharmacovigilance experts chided for looking beyond their silos and daring to suggest upgrades that don't just comply with the bare minimum, but promise a "best-in-class" designation. Research from Cornell's Labor Relations School tells us what these outliers know all too well. There's a bias against creativity and innovation when you don't have the hegemony to say, "Here's what we should do," and have other disciplines predisposed to defer to your judgment. When we were introduced to one Regulatory Affairs star, we were told, "If he can't be less demanding when he comes to the Product Team's meetings, we may need to leave him out of the sub-team that is preparing for our meetings with Health Canada."

We've seen a CMO (Chief Marketing officer) create a compelling provocative neon orange and black branding identity in a very conservative burgundy and grey chemical industry. She got accolades from customers and Business Unit General Managers, equipped commercial managers to start very different conversations with key customers — and was also called to task for not tolerating missed deadlines, misspellings or missed opportunities to reinforce and strengthen the branding statement.

We've seen a Chief Counsel tapped to head an Enterprise Project Management Office (EPMO) who stunned her team at our first leadership workshop, when she said she expected them to gallop through the archaic post-M&A work flows and legacy systems like a wild herd of 1000 thundering horses, stopping just long enough to get riders to jump on board. And be asked to work with us because, as a tall, athletic, strong-presence woman, "she scares the team she's inherited."

### ENNOBLING DIALOGUES: 5 COURAGE ACTIVATORS TO POWERUP BRILLIANCE™

So here you are — the EPMO Head, CFO, CMO, QA or Regulatory luminary. You take the call for breakthrough innovation, not just incremental pedestrian iterations, seriously. You see how it can be done. You don't have the authority to impose your will — and, even if you did, you wouldn't play that card because that would just get people to do what you say, not lift their own ingenuity and business acumen. It's a moment of truth, anytime you PowerUP the light and see folks squint, blink or close

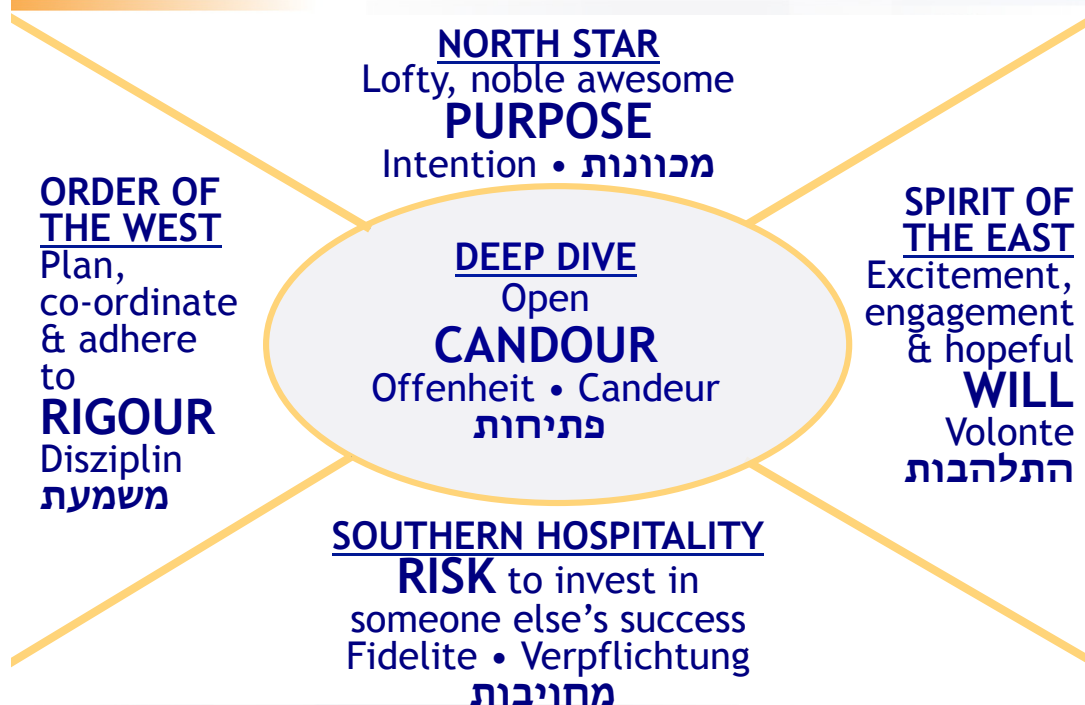
their eyes. What do you do?

Our research on this topic began decades ago, with field sales teams in an industry that was facing more competition and a sluggish economy. Yet some of the territories were still posting pre-recession gains — or more. We wondered. Was it luck or was something different in the sub-cultures of those sales teams and in the leadership creating those performance gains?

Here were the differentiators we found — which made unreasonable pushy demanding sales managers **partners**, or, as we call them now, **ennoblers** who lifted their teams to audacious, not just achievable, performance goals. Twenty years after we did our first research studies, the co-author of our first book, Professor Rod Napier, showed us that 4 of the 5 activators we identified lined up North-South-East-West on the First Nations (or, in the US, Native American) Medicine Wheel:

**I. PURPOSE. The compass NORTH.** The research is clear. We're more willing to stretch when it's for a noble cause than "just to make the numbers work." And when we get a better "why" than, "because I'm the head of this function and this is inside my domain." Even

## 5 Courage Activators PowerUP Brilliance



with CEOs, we rehearse the call to action so it's compelling and uplifting — not just a directive.

**2. RISK. The generosity of the SOUTH.** Look at the numbers. Trust isn't just kumbaya. It's the key to running lean — with equipment that can be shared, resources that can be leveraged and allocated by triage-priority and not just “first-come-first-served,” and redundant inspections and re-inspections that could be streamlined. If you get past adversarial turf-battles and negotiate for mutuality and optimization, opportunities can go to those in the best position to push them forward.

**3. CANDOR. A deep dive to the CENTRE.** Share accountability. Set goals. Set benchmarks. Be open and transparent. Show how decisions can be fact-based rather than opinion-based or position-opposing-position based — even if you are looking forward at a business case, rather than backward at performance trendlines.

**4. WILL. The spirit of the EAST.** Remember what you learned about Pygmalion and self-fulfilling prophecies? Uplifting ennobling leaders do. They convey a tone of appreciation and encouragement, an upbeat cadence, an infectious laugh, a bounce in their step, a smile, a nod. They keep the team looking forward, not back — unless it's building pride in how far we've already come.

**5. RIGOR. The precision of the WEST.** Timelines, plans, support agreements, co-ordinating and idea-sharing, process improvement and learning mechanisms — all these keep a team on belay and equip luminaries to orchestrate a team effort, rather than trying to do too much themselves. Like any good GPS system, ennoblers know how to bring the perspective up and get a “from-the-moon” view and how when to beam in and see which part of the team needs more Purpose, Risk, Candor, Will and Rigor.

## FROM GETTING THE IDEA TO FLUENCY UNDER PRESSURE

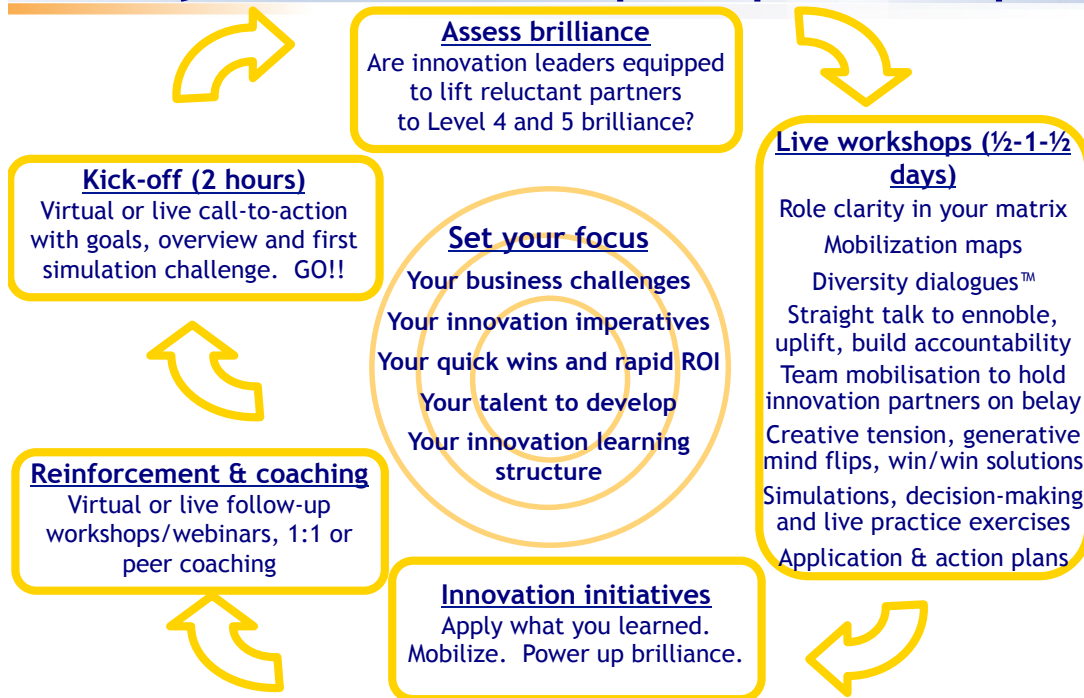
Most experienced leaders “get” the 5 Courage Activators in as much time as it took to read the descriptions in this article. Most say, “It's an elegant formulation — but none of the 5 Activators are brand-new.” But knowing the words and the grammar is one thing. Delivering with fluency — especially under pressure — is something else.

Before we moved to Israel, we did summers of language immersion. We bought the tapes. Went to class. In the protected confines of our kibbutz, it felt pretty good. Then we got into the world — where “conversational Hebrew” ended and “argumentative Hebrew” began. Where gestures and intonation became as important as words and phrases. When you got into the flow, or found yourself a beat behind, you were able to follow until you got exhausted, but not able to lead.

After leaders nod and tell us they've “got” the North-South-Center-East-West in mind, we give them a problem to solve — either in a team, if we're working with a cadre of impatient unreasonable luminary standouts, or 1:1 in a coaching consultation. We assure them — it's not to trick them or trip them up, but to simulate the real distractions, emotional triggers, pressures to conform, hierarchy traps and bias against creativity they'll face as they move past easy obvious incremental upgrades and into bold game-changing niche-defining innovations. Each of the problems is a fun interactive gameified challenge. With vivid insights and applications — that get leaders *fluent* with the 5 Courage Activators. And give them practice on the ones that they need to strengthen, to round out their impact and influence — in a safe setting, where it's easy to hit the reset button and play over, without jeopardizing a key commercial partnership or an enterprise-critical decision.

“With so much pressure to fit in, support team decisions and go with the flow for rapid execution, no wonder sources of innovation are afraid to speak up. How they handle their fear – and the fear of others who prefer to be supported rather than challenged – can stifle brilliance or PowerUP Brilliance™.”

## 63 days from start-up to power-up



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### RESULTS IN 63 DAYS OR LESS TO PROFIT FROM ACTION LEARNING

PoweringUP Brilliance™ to accelerate innovation is a real energy rush. It's great to feel you've made a difference — in an unmet need that can treat a disease, save the planet, enrich our aesthetic senses — and to see how you've brought out the best in a team that lifted their game from pedestrian to truly great. But our sponsors don't invest in an energy rush or fulfillment for its own sake. They've got an enterprise to run.

We have real data about how leaders learn to lead. The data say — application, more so than workshops or coaching. And we have real data about how innovations get from concept to prototype and from prototype to commercialization. Again the data say — application, not in strategy deliberations.

So, when you want to equip leaders to PowerUP Brilliance, that's where to start — application. If you're running a business unit or are re-purposing a group like QA, Safety, HR, Enterprise Project Management, IT, Marketing or any other potential thought-leadership function to Lead from the Middle, you'll want to state explicitly

why it's an enterprise priority — and why now. You'll want to be clear about the terrain, the landmines, the cross-cultural or mixed-generation sensitivities, rivalries, resource constraints and the other boundary conditions. THEN you can turn to HR and get clear about the competencies — both what's there in your current map and what might be missing, if you want to look beyond incremental upgrades and step-up-the-ladder career advancement into breakthrough bold innovation.

When you come to 1:1 coaching as a luminary who wants to get traction, you should seek more than a catharsis and a sympathetic ear. In your first consultation, before the 360-feedback data are in, you should seek some insight and some first step that you can take, right away, to achieve an immediate quick win.

In the best team workshops we've ever done, Sponsors and internal HR consultants have brought participants into the meeting room with a goalposts clearly in sight — before we ever get out on the playing field. It's not just, "the topic of the quarter (or the theme of the annual meeting), see what you can learn." It's a jump-start, a springboard, a dress rehearsal for something real and



**“A Japanese proverb says, "Hammer down the nail that sticks out." In harmony-seeking cultures, it takes enormous finesse to step up, speak out and say, "Houston, we have a problem." It has to be learned - quickly - or the bias against creativity will isolate and silence those who see things differently and push for innovation.”**

bold, that's only achievable if we PowerUP Brilliance™ in ourselves and the people we hope to mobilize and lead.

Then we can equip leaders to mobilize the teams that need to get going, orchestrate their efforts — and equip them with the creative ideation, storyboarding, process mapping, business cases and breakthrough engineering to put that PoweredUP Brilliance to work.

### **THE NEED FOR COURAGE TO POWERUP BRILLIANCE™**

One national leader said, “Courage is special know-how. It's knowing how to fear what you ought to fear — and how not to fear what you ought not fear.”

Knowing how to fear what you ought to fear. Research at Israel's Weizman Institute has discovered a brain region in the sgACC that lights up when we are afraid of something but draw it closer to get a better look and deal with the things that frighten us, rather than avoiding or running away. The good news in this research is that we come hard-wired for courage — with the ability to override panic reactions and irrational false sense of urgency decisions and to look at situations rationally and adaptively. That's what Captain Chesley Sullenberger did when he piloted his incapacitated USAir flight to a safe “miracle on the Hudson” landing. It took lots of practice, Captain Sullenberger said, to know how to fear what ought to be feared, without letting it cloud good judgment. To PowerUP Brilliance, that's practice you also need to have.

And how not to fear what out not be feared? A head of R&D brought his leadership team together to raise the bar — from a pipeline filled with “me-too” incremental to one with fewer but better and truer innovations. It was as Pavlovian a reaction as if we had run a bell. Instantly they started to talk about the board that would never support a reassessment, about the costs

of rationalization, about the jobs that could be lost and the sunk costs that would not be recovered. The Head of R&D strode up to the flipchart and wrote 3 words: WORK THE PROBLEM. “What you've listed so far are distractions,” he told his team. “Some of them are issues we will have to face. Some are unpleasant. But none of these are things we can afford to fear.” Purpose. Risk. Candor. Will. Rigor. If he could do it, to create a call to action before there was a crisis or calamity, we believe you can too.

To see if your team or leaders can fire on all 5 Courage Activators and PowerUP Brilliance, we invite you to take the assessment that's on our website @ [www.courageadvisors.com](http://www.courageadvisors.com) and read our new book, PowerUP Brilliance. Or call our colleagues at Mobius Leadership for a dialogue. ■



**Merom Klein, PhD and Louise Yochee Klein, PsyD** are business psychologists with 25+ years of leadership development experience — equipping large corporations, agencies and entrepreneurial teams to accelerate innovation and lead transformational change. They are known for executive coaching

that equips innovation leaders to identify promising innovation opportunities and PowerUP Brilliance™ to build solutions and for leadership workshops that use simulations, live practice, cases and diversity dialogues that ennoble partners-in-innovation to make better sharper decisions about change.

# PowerUP leadership for bigger impact



**Faster better business impact with more joy and less stress. See what more is possible when you stop pushing boulders uphill and generate momentum. With leaders who build Courage to go beyond conventional industry best practices, silos and hierarchies.**

**In a few weeks, see your leaders PowerUP more accountability - imagination - ingenuity - less uphill effort, prodding and heavy lifting. To...**

- Bring promising ideas from concept to monetization faster. And accelerate R&D
- Deliver better solutions to value-conscious buyers. And boost impact and productivity.
- Co-ordinate smooth end-to-end work flows across value chains. And run leaner.
- Increase joy and decrease your stress. And unleash your team's creative potential.
- Win investor confidence, So they say, "Wow" when domain experts show what is possible
- Initiate and create opportunities rather than waiting for invitations. To out-think competitors.

**Courage.** So more leaders step up as Level 5 value-creators and champions - and outperform Level 3 order-takers by > 30%. And prosper in a volatile complex value-conscious business environment.

Imagine. What more is possible if leaders have Courage to PowerUP Level 5 ingenuity - accountability - urgency. Before you have to ask.

- Level 5. Get others moving
- Level 4. Find better solutions
- Level 3. Follow directions
- Level 2. Wait and act if prodded
- Level 1. Protest/complain
- Level 0. Avoid - step back - retreat



**PowerUP Leadership.**  
**To achieve a sure ascent. Skills to last an entire career. And business impact. Fast.**

**Weeks 6-14**  
**New PowerUP dialogues**

**Weeks 4-8**  
**New tools**

**Week 1**  
**New AIMS to achieve:**  
**Thrive, invent, expand, profit**

**Week 3**  
**New insights**

**Week 1 dares to re-define success.** To thrive under performance pressure, invent better solutions, expand your role and reach in the matrix, and upgrade skills to accelerate wealth-creation

**Week 3 breaks out of old ruts and traps.** With impact assessments and an Individual Development Plan to build on your strength, own your power and advance your career, poise and impact.

**Weeks 4-8 implement new orchestration tools.** Track accomplishments, mobilize support from investors, staff and external partners, wrestle down key issues and hold everyone accountable

**Weeks 6-14 rehearse PowerUP Dialogues**  
 Increase your presence, impact, influence. With a **proven success formula** that equips you to overcome performance gaps, resolve contentious issues, close better deals, bridge diverse cultures, delegate, empower and replace defensive thinking with Level 4-5 initiative, courage and creativity

**Ready to start?** Contact us to schedule a no-obligation Week 1 consultation – and see how to get traction for a fast ascent even in slippery terrain

**The PowerUP formula: 5 Activators**

30+ years of research and leadership development.

How Level 5 leaders thrive in fast-moving competitive markets, complexity, resource constrained operations and politically charged dialogues.

Proven success with high-potential fast-track executives and diverse matrix teams in global 1000 corporations, government, start up and mid market enterprises

