

Peter Weaver Case Study

Peter Weaver doesn't like to follow the crowd. He thinks groupthink is a common problem in many organizations. This former director of marketing for a consumer products company believes differences of opinion should be heard and appreciated. As Weaver states, "I have always believed I should speak for what I believe to be true."

He demonstrated his belief in being direct and candid throughout his career. On one occasion, he was assigned to market Paul's spaghetti-sauce products. During the brand review, the company president said, "Our spaghetti sauce is losing out to price-cutting competitors. We need to cut our prices!"

Peter found the courage to say he disagreed with the president. He then explained the product line needed more variety and a larger advertising budget. Prices should not be cut. The president accepted Weaver's reasoning. Later, his supervisor approached him and said, "I wanted to say that, but I just didn't have the courage to challenge the president."

On another occasion, the president sent Weaver and 16 other executives to a weeklong seminar on strategic planning. Weaver soon concluded the consultants were off base and going down the wrong path. Between sessions, most of the other executives indicated they didn't think the consultants were on the right path. The consultants heard about the dissent and dramatically asked participants whether they were in or out. Those who said "Out" had to leave immediately.

As the consultants went around the room, every executive who privately grumbled about the session said "In." Weaver was fourth from last. When it was his turn, he said "Out" and left the room.

All leaders spend time in reflection and self-examination to identify what they truly believe and value. Their beliefs are tested and fine-tuned over time. True leaders can tell you, without hesitation, what they believe and why. They don't need a teleprompter to remind them of their core beliefs. And, they find the courage to speak up even when they know others will disagree.

- a) What leadership traits did Weaver exhibit?
- b) If you were in Weaver's shoes, what would you have done?
- c) Where does courage come from?
- d) List your three most important values.