How to Be a Hero for More Than One Day
Patricia Fripp & Robert Fripp

On Being a Hero

PF: David Bowie sang, “We can be heroes, just for one day.”
RF: So, if we can be heroes, just for one day, can we be heroes for longer than that? And if we can’t be a hero for all of one day, can we be a hero for ten minutes? Or an hour?

PF: What does it mean to be a hero?

Heroes aspire to embody three qualities:
   - The clarity to see what is required of them
   - The courage to accept what is required of them
   - The capacity to discharge what is required of them

*Clarity, courage, capacity.*

Three categories of hero:
   - The unlikely, or occasional, hero
   - The everyday, or ordinary, hero
   - The superhero

The occasional, or unlikely, hero is one who responds honorably to an unlikely or unexpected event. They rise to an occasion, to a challenge when it presents itself. They are called occasional, or unlikely, because their heroism is unreliable; the next time a challenge presents itself, they may not be able to respond heroically. The challenge comes from the outside, and their heroism is externally driven.

The everyday, ordinary hero is *reliably, repeatably, and responsibly heroic on a daily basis.* They are proficient and sufficient. *The world continues to run because of them.* Although this category of hero is described as *ordinary,* such heroism is already extraordinary. *The world continues to turn* because of the heroism of ordinary heroes.

The superhero is one who *directs the way the world runs.* They hold the overview of the whole of their particular field of endeavor, undertaking, or corporation. They see the operation of all departments, on all floors, in all the offices of the corporation, and, most likely, of all the people who work in them. The effects and repercussions of their decision-making, initiatives, and actions extend in time and space. Not every corporation is fortunate enough to have a superhero.
The heroism of ordinary heroes and superheroes is internally driven. Their heroism grows from a sense of necessity, rightness, and personal discipline.

The ordinary hero and the superheroes bring a degree of quality to what they do, a level of care and attention, on a regular basis. These heroes do what they can do, plus 10%, on a daily basis. They regularly manifest acts of quality.

II

PF: How do we become heroes?
RF: Practice!

We practice acts of heroism. The intentions of heroic behavior are to undertake, manifest, and demonstrate acts of quality on a regular basis. The two key points: quality, regularity.

Two approaches to practising: the extensive and the intensive.

The extensive: the hero does what is possible for them, plus 10%. This gradually extends the parameters of our competence. We begin with what is possible and move gradually towards the impossible.

The intensive: to undertake an act of quality. In Guitar Craft, this is addressed in the Exercise of Qualitative Endeavor.

A third approach is extensive-intensive: we undertake acts of quality on a regular basis.

III

PF: What is an act of quality?
RF: An act of quality follows the injunction: honor necessity, honor sufficiency.

Honor necessity is the Rule of Quality. Honor sufficiency is the Rule of Quantity.

When we honor necessity, we do what is required of us, regardless of like or dislike, personal interest, inclination, and not by arbitrary impulse.

When we honor sufficiency, we use the right amount of the right kind of the right energy necessary to discharge the function. That is, we address the economy, ecology, and efficiency of the energy supply: the quality, quantity, and intensity of energy needed to do the job.

The aim is effortless effort, grace in motion, beautiful strength; that is, developed calisthenics. The aim is to do as little as possible and as much as necessary.
One practical example from my own field: holding the guitar pick.

On Guitar Craft courses, this has been presented to perhaps 3,000 people (as of December 2011) in four continents over a period of 26 years. It is necessary for the guitarist to hold a pick. Very little energy is required. This is effortless effort. Nothing is wasted. The action is necessary and sufficient. Even if you tried to pull the pick from my hand with pliers, you would fail.

In the *Exercise of Qualitative Endeavor*, we choose one small task and discharge it superbly. This one small thing must be available with simple and clear description, execution, and verification. The principles from any one field are the same principles from another field. So, how we hold our pick is how we live our life.

In practice, an act of quality is governed by the quality of our attention. An important part of practicing acts of quality is in practicing attention.

**PF:** Why is an act of quality important?

**RF:** Because this is how we transform our sorry world, one small act at a time.

The first principle: *Quality is ungovernable by number.*
So, a small act of quality is as big as a big act of quality.

In *The Gospels*, we have the parable of “The Widow’s Mite.”
In the World of Quantity, her donation was worthless.
In the World of Quality, she gave all that she had. The widow was a hero.

The second principle: *Quality spreads.*
An act of quality moves out and into the world and has effects in ways we’ll never know.
Although we may never see the effects and repercussions of an act of quality, we can have faith and confidence that *Right Action* has *Just Consequences.*

Our prime concern is the quality of our undertaking, not the effects of the undertaking.

**PF:** If this is true of the individual, does it also apply to a corporation?

**RF:** An act of quality is true. A company that acts truly, or rightly, will be an Ethical Company.

The Four Pillars of the Ethical Company:
Honesty
Responsibility
Equity
Goodwill
Recognizable features of the ethical company include these attributes:

- Straightforwardness
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Owning-up
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Distributive justice
- Equity
- Common decency
- Goodwill

Straightforwardness + Transparency translate as Honesty.
Accountability + Owning-up equate to Responsibility.
Distributive justice + Fairness we understand as Equity.
Common decency we recognize as Goodwill.

Honesty, Responsibility, Equity, and Goodwill are the Four Pillars of the Ethical Company.

In the music industry, the Four Pillars are notable by their absence.

VI

**PF:** How often do we practice being a hero?
**RF:** Every day.

We don’t become a hero by accident. Heroism requires practice.

We begin when we get out of bed in the morning and our feet hit the floor; our day begins with clarity, definition, and certainty. When our feet hit the floor, we say “Hello, God!” (whatever God may be for us). We call on, invoke, and invite what is Real and Good and True to enter our day.

As our heads hit the pillow, our day ends with clarity, definition, and certainty. Before our heads hit the pillow, we say, “Goodnight, God!” (whatever God may be for us) with gratitude for this day in our lives.

But before we say, “Goodnight, God,” we recapitulate the events of our day in reverse order.

VII

**PF:** Why recapitulate? Why in reverse order? Why the whole day?
**RF:** Nourishment; unseating mechanical mind; seeing the whole.

We recapitulate the events of today that we may better digest our experiencing and nourish our tomorrow.

Recapitulation in reverse unseats associational thinking and the hold of the mechanical mind.

We are training ourselves to hold the overview of one whole day, to see it as one complete moment in our lives.
PF: Is being a hero a lonely occupation?
RF: It can be, but not necessarily.

i
If a music-lover works with a major record label, this may well be a lonely life.
If a respecter-of-artists works in an artist-management company, he or she may well feel lonely.

ii
There is the Heroic Group.
A group forms in service to an aim.
A common aim is closer than blood.
The members of the group wish for each other what they wish for themselves.

The synergies of Group Heroism:
- One person: a solo
- Two people: two soloists and one duet
- Three people: three soloists, six duets, one trio with 6 forms of interaction: ABC, ACB, BAC, BCA, CAB, CBA
- Four people: four separate trios: ABC, ABD, ACD, BCD, each of which has 6 forms of interaction

(The number of distinct quartets that can be formed from a pool of 6 people is $15=\frac{(6*5*4*3)}{(4*3*2*1)}$, each with 24 possible circle/cycle forms. The number of distinct trios that can be formed is $20= \frac{(6*5*4)}{(3*2*1)}$. Personal Communication, David Snyder).

iii
The support of family and friends: they are not directly part of our heroic undertakings, but they offer goodwill, support, and kindness.
The first fifteen years of my touring life, at least, would not have been possible without the support of my mother and sister.

IX
The Performer as Hero

PF: Is the performer heroic?
RF: The Performer as Hero is a book in itself.

Guitar Craft is one approach to answering the question. The work of the Guitar Circle and The Orchestra of Crafty Guitarists are part of a continuing answer.
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