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SEIZING OPPORTUNITY: “SUCCEEDING TO FAIL: A PATH TO TRANSFORMATION”

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Title

Part 4 of this issue's "Seizing Opportunity" special-invitation collection, "Succeeding to Fail: A Path to Transformation," first appeared in "Coaching Corner" (November 2011), a column in *The Mann Report-Residential real estate magazine* published in New York City. The article is reprinted by permission.

In failure we succeed. Our success is chronicled in increased self knowledge and discovered opportunities for growth and transformation. Failure and success are allies. They create conditions enabling us to be responsible for our decisions and accountable for results. For many, the relationship between success and failure is a mystery; a conundrum characterized by contentiousness and complexity. Success and failure share a multi-dimensional, symbiotic relationship; continuous and causal. Their interaction is powerful and potent able to fuel success or failure. A key to harnessing the power inherent in their relationship is transforming failure into a constructive learning experience. Failure is a litmus test of character. It tests our mettle and challenges our resolve to succeed. Failing offers us opportunities to become architects or victims of our own future. It provides us with the insights and experiences necessary to build character and realize our possible selves.

How can failure enable your success? Consider implementing the 3R's of managing failure toward success.

Reflection

Reflection is an acquired capability. It requires intention and attention to develop and apply. For many, the skills associated with reflection must be learned. Often, learning to be reflective can be unfamiliar even disquieting as thoughts and actions are examined relative to new ideas and opportunities. In his 1933 book *How We Think*, the American philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey offered three orientations promoting reflective practice; *open-mindedness*, *responsibility*, and *wholeheartedness*. These orientations can serve as conceptual frameworks for determining if we possess these qualities associated with reflection. To test your reflective capacity, apply Dewey's three orientations to your thoughts and behaviors in order to learn, grow, and innovate. Failing to reflect undermines success. However, successful failure yields information and inferences that can stimulate reflection. Reflection enables success. It is a reflective journey inward examining motivations, contexts, and value associated with failing. Reflection can render resolve to reengage a goal refreshed and reconfirmed. However, if reflection reveals that the activity you've engaged is not a calling, it is misaligned with your desires or skills, quit quickly, completely, and don't look back. Stop investing yourself and resources in ultimately unproductive endeavors.

Resolve

Resolution is a pivot point. It is a nexus of intersecting streams of data, thought, and reflection franked with the stamp of decision and imprinted with the indicia of resolve. Reflection requires resoluteness. We must resolve to be reflective in order to strengthen our resolve, in turn generate the courage necessary to transform failure into success. British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill wrote "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." Courage enables success. Being courageous enough to critically examine our failures can prove transfor-



mational. Consider the case of the British vessel HMS Resolute. In 1853 on an arctic expedition, the ship was trapped in ice and abandoned by its crew. In 1854, it was found adrift in an ice flow and in 1856 returned to Queen Victoria. In 1879, the HMS Resolute was retired and disassembled. The next year, 1880, the British government commissioned two large partner desks to be constructed from its timbers; one presented to then United States President Rutherford B. Hayes and the other given to Queen Victoria. Today, the presidential resolute desk is the center piece of the Oval Office having served every president since being received as a gift.

The HMS Resolute in name and legacy is a model of resolve. During its commission, the ship served proudly and purposefully surviving numerous challenges to its survival and success. Then, in the end when the ship was dissembled, its builders *resolved* that it would realize a new destiny, one with a purpose they had not foreseen 30 years earlier. It would become an instrument of state, a desktop on which presidents would sign the documents of history. The HMS Resolute fulfilled a destiny of transformation. Resolve empowers progress, fulfills destiny, and enables possible selves.

Respond

Reflection and resolve fuel response. Responding is purpose-in-action. When we determine a productive course of action in order to achieve a goal, the result may be failure. However, the seeds of future success may be present in unsuccessful action. The American statesman and inventor Benjamin Franklin wrote "I didn't fail the test. I just found 100 ways to do it wrong." Franklin's response to failure was to reflect, resolve to reengage, and respond to each *wrong way* in order to achieve the desired result. He forged ahead with courage and conviction; *open-minded, responsible, and wholehearted*. Franklin's willingness to fail enabled his success. Reflection, resolve, and responsiveness served as beacons lighting his way toward transformation.

Harness the power and potential inherent in failure to fuel your success.

Coaching can help you traverse the path from failure to success. Get coached.

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