

LEADERSHIP & PERSISTENCE PART II: GREAT LESSONS LEARNED FROM FAILURE

In August 1978, the first successful trans-Atlantic balloon flight became a reality when the Double Eagle II touched ground in a barley field in the French village of Messery. Between 1873 and 1978, thirteen trans-Atlantic attempts had been made—all ending in failure. Double Eagle II had tried and failed, ending up in Iceland the previous year. What made the difference in 1978?

"Learning from experience," said expedition leader Maxie Anderson. "Success in any venture is just the intelligent application of failure."

FAILURE ONLY TRULY HARMS US —IT ALWAYS HURTS—WHEN WE IGNORE ITS GIFTS OF FEEDBACK AND INSIGHT. THOSE WHO LEARN TO FAIL WELL, EVENTUALLY LEARN HOW TO SUCCEED.

Winston Churchill, no stranger to failure or success, said it well.

"Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm."

Success often precedes failure by producing complacency. But, failures of the intelligent sort precede success by shattering complacency and prompting new learning.

Here a few examples that I hope you find encouraging.

On FedEx's first day in business they sent six packages to U. S. customers. Today, it is the world's largest express package delivery and freight company. It delivers more than five million items each working day to 215 countries, with a fleet of seventy thousand vehicles, over 600 aircraft and over 2,000 employees.

Michael Jordan was cut from the Laney High School (Wilmington, NC) varsity basketball team as a sophomore. Instead of giving up on his basketball future, Jordan used the disappointment to fuel his persistence and work ethic. He went about the business of working out and playing basketball after school to get ready for the next try-out. He reminisces,

"Whenever I was working out and got tired and figured I ought to stop, I'd close my eyes and see that list in the locker room without my name on it, and that usually got me going again."

Jordan made the team the next year and led them to the North Carolina state championship.

John Grisham got up and worked from 5-7 a.m. for three years on his first novel, A Time to Kill. Grisham spent another year shopping it to publishers. He was turned down by "thirty-some" publishers (he lost track) before a small New York publisher, Wynwood Press gave it a modest 5,000 copy printing. Grisham has gone on to be recognized as one of the world's bestselling novelists.

Edison's first experimental electric light bulbs were so dim that his research team had to use a gaslight to see it.

The Wright brothers' first flight lasted only twelve seconds and went 120 feet.

Abraham Lincoln had less than three years of formal education. His mother died when he was ten. He and his wife, Mary Todd had four boys, only one of which made it to adulthood. He failed in business in 1831. He was defeated for the Illinois State Legislature in 1832. He failed again in business in 1833. He was elected to the State Legislature in 1834. He was defeated for Illinois Speaker of the House in 1838. He was defeated for the U. S. Congress in 1843. He was elected to U. S. Congress in 1846. . He was defeated for U. S. Congress in 1848. He was defeated for the U. S. Senate in 1855. He was defeated for the Vice Presidential nomination in 1856. He was defeated for the U. S. Senate in 1858. He was elected President of the United States in 1860. His public life is testimony to the Norwegian proverb,

"A hero is one who hangs on one second longer."

We are glad he didn't stop.

On October 29, 1941, then British Prime Minister Winston Churchill visited his childhood school, Harrow, to hear the traditional songs he had sung there as a youth, as well as to speak to the students. Commenting on the difficult period the nation had just been through (the Battle for Britain and the London Blitz), Churchill ended his message with these memorable—and often-misquoted—words on persistence.

"But for everyone, surely, what we have gone through in this period – I am address myself to to the School – surely from this period of ten months, this is the lesson: Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never – in nothing, great or small, large or petty – never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy."

The world is indifferent to our aspirations and good intentions. Our victories, such as they are, are partial and never complete. Progress is not inevitable. Success is never guaranteed.

SOONER OR LATER, REGARDLESS OF ONE'S TALENT OR GENIUS, EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP COMES DOWN TO PLAIN, OLD-FASHIONED, ROLL-UP-YOUR SLEEVES HARD WORK AND PERSEVERANCE, OFTEN IN THE FACE OF FAILURE.

In a world full of obstacles and opposition, suffering and setbacks, difficulty and delay, persistence carries the day. As 19th century preacher Charles Spurgeon quipped,

"By perseverance the snail reached the Ark."

Work with us
www.Lead2Transform/Education
info@lead2transform.com