



Dear Friend,

Oops!

If you've been an **EA Insights** reader for any length of time, you know that I opt for transparency in these opening messages. Well, this month is no exception.

So, here's a quiz for you. What do the following have in common?

- Making a grilled cheese sandwich in the toaster
- Pulling the dog's tail while she's eating
- Entering a new workplace and seeking to make sweeping changes immediately

No clue? I'll fill you in. These are all ways that I've messed up over the years. (Now, stop laughing! The first two happened when I was a goofy kid!)

Seriously, messing up is a part of life. And, if you haven't had a good one yet, keep living...it's on its way!

Here's what I'll ask you, though. Are your mess-ups worthless or worthwhile? Do they get you somewhere, or are they just gigantic wastes of time? Believe it or not, if handled well, a mess-up can yield wonderful, and unexpected, results...for you, and for those around you.

So, read on. In this month's edition of **EA Insights**, we focus on some precious gifts -- priceless lessons that are hidden in the wrapping of failure, but that are just begging to be discovered.

Oh, and did I mention, don't try making grilled cheese in the toaster!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Poll: What's Your Biggest Workplace Challenge?

Readers, Executive Advantage wants to hear from YOU! What's the biggest workplace challenge you're facing right now? You know, what's that thing about work that keeps you up at night and gives you the 6:00 PM Sunday blues when you think about going to work on Monday?

Take a minute, and let us know what's causing you grief. We'll reveal poll results in next month's **EA Insights**. And, we'll give you a hand by tackling your workplace challenges in upcoming issues.

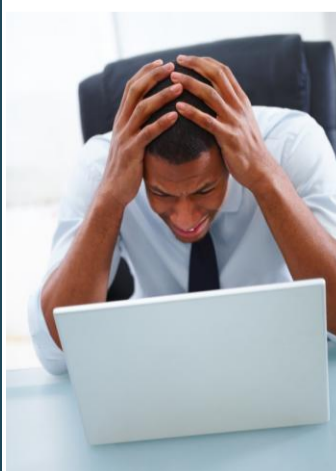
So, what's your biggest workplace challenge?

- Your boss?
- Inspiring your team?
- Coming up with good ideas?
- Getting lost in meaningless stuff?
- Something else?

[Click here to vote!](#)

Learning from Failure

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How do you make mistakes?

I'm not asking whether your mistakes are big or small, public or private, self-focused or far reaching. Rather, the gist of my question is this. When you make a mistake, what's *your* response? How do you react?

For some folks, a snafu is a fate worse than death. It's something to be avoided at all costs. And, when there is a slip-up, they resort to "flight mode;" that is, they run for cover until the dust settles.

For others, making a mistake is second-nature. It happens frequently and is no big deal any more. Mess-ups aren't something to prevent; they're taken for granted, expected, and brushed aside as expendable experiences.

If you ask me, there's got to be some mid-point between these two bookends.

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"Quotes"

"It is the nature of babies to be in bliss."

~Deepak Chopra

"Show me a person who has never made a mistake, and I'll show you somebody who has never achieved much."

~Joan Collins

"It's hard work every day taking countless reps, listening to your coach, trying not to get frustrated. But I learn from each mistake."

~Maddy Coon

"Flee an enemy who knows your weakness."

~Pierre Corneille

"Every blunder behind us is giving a cheer for us, and only for those who were willing to fail are the dangers and splendors of life."

~Carl Sandberg

"I was cooking breakfast this morning for my kids, and I thought, He's just like a Teflon frying pan. Nothing sticks to him."

~Patricia Schroeder

"It is a mistake to suppose that people succeed through success; they often succeed through failures."

~Unknown

"Defeat may test you; it need not stop you. If at first you don't succeed, try

While it's probably not a good idea to go out in search of opportunities to blow it, there's got to be a way to approach errors, when they do occur, in a way that's productive.

So, how do you make the experience positive, despite the pain? I think the answer is to learn from failure.

Learn about Yourself

Blunders provide an excellent opportunity to stop, look in the mirror, and take stock of what you see. Is there something about you that is uncovered by what just happened?

- Is there something to learn about the way you think about yourself or others?
- Is there anything instructive here about how you're making decisions?
- Look at how you responded when you (or others) became aware of your goof. What does your response reveal about you?
- Has this situation shown anything about your character strengths or character flaws?
- If the situation just occurred, how are you planning to rebound? If some time has passed, how did you actually regroup (or did you)?

This is a great time to do some introspection. Don't shy away from it. Take an honest look at the situation, and yourself, and consider what can be learned about you. But, don't stop there, choose two or three of the big take-aways and develop a plan for how to use those self-lessons for the future.

Learn about Others

As much as trouble can teach you lessons about yourself, it also can shine a very revealing light on others in your circle. And, I do mean a very revealing light!

Although there certainly are many more categories, here are four big ones that you might recognize in the folks around you, when you blow it.

Babies-- These are people who care about you and want nothing but the best for you. Sounds like the folks you want in your corner, right? Not really. Babies can't stand to see you goof. They "can't handle the truth" that you're human. Your fallibility throws them for a loop. So, it's good to know who the babies in your life are because you'll want to be sensitive to them. You also need to know that they're not going to be of much help as you seek to sort things out post-goof.

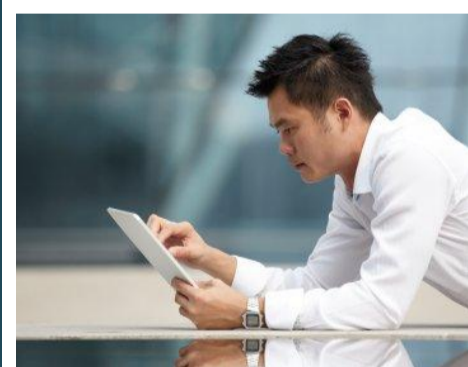
The Teflon Crew -- If you remember Teflon, then you already know where I'm going with this one. The Teflon crew will see your mistake; they may even be in it with you. However, their goal is to have it slide off of them -- to get as far away from the fray as possible -- so that they are untouched and unscathed. Again, these aren't folks whose assistance you want to count on when you're trying to learn something from this situation.

Backstabbers -- Okay, as much as we would like to think that everybody out there just loves us and wants to see us succeed, it's just not true. (I know. That blew me away too when I realized it!) Seriously, though, there is a third group of people in the wings, who are just waiting for your error. And, the bigger, the more public, the better. If you don't know who's a part of this group beforehand, you very well may learn who they are during this period. Note to self: Be careful with this bunch.

Supporters -- These are the folks we all need in our corner, especially after a blunder. Supporters are there for you. It's not about the joy of seeing you fall. It's not about how they'll profit from your misfortune. It's about being there by your side to help you back up, help you dust off, and help you start all over again. (Hmm, sounds like a song....) These are the folks that encourage your growth. Find them. Draw on them. Treasure them.

Learn Something New

On a recent business trip, I was chatting with some people before our meeting.



Knowing the area that I call "home" these days, one person commented that, though Washington, DC is a wonderful city, it's got to be one of the most frustrating places to navigate as an out-of-town driver. And, I was able to commiserate. I was reminded of my early days in the area, and the many, many times that, notwithstanding my Girl Scout training and my trusted regional map, I got lost trying to make it from Point A to Point B.

What I shared that day with the group, though, was that, through

those navigational mishaps, I made some of my greatest finds! Inevitably I would pass a place I'd heard people talking about but had never seen. I'd circle a block two, three, or more times and have it (and its wacky traffic pattern) engrained in my memory for the future. I learned the sequence of streets and quadrants of the city in ways that no map ever could teach.

Well, it's similar with blunders generally. They can result in wonderful, teachable moments, that is if we view them that way. There's always something new to learn. There's always a new experience to file away...for your own benefit or for another's.

So, will your next mishap end up being worthless or worthwhile? Please remember that no mistake is ever wasted, if you learn something valuable from it.

another way. For every obstacle there is a solution. Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. The greatest mistake is giving up."

~Unknown

"Failure is the key to success; each mistake teaches us something."

~Morihei Ueshiba

"[L]earn that when you do make a mistake, you'll surface that mistake so you can get it corrected, rather than trying to hide it and bury it, and it becomes a much bigger mistake, and maybe a fatal mistake."

~Sanford I. Weill

"Everything we enjoy in society is a direct result of the accumulated learning derived from millions of mistakes. No mistakes, no progress. Yet we still look at making a mistake as embarrassing, wrong, an act bordering on sin. If you're making mistakes, it means you're doing new things, taking risks, stretching yourself. You're growing, learning. And isn't the journey, the experience, not the destination, what life is all about?"

~Robert White

"We all feel the same. We all want to do what we can to help each other through it and give the support we need."

~Amy Wright

About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about **Executive Advantage**, contact us **online** or at **(301) 280-5950**.

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