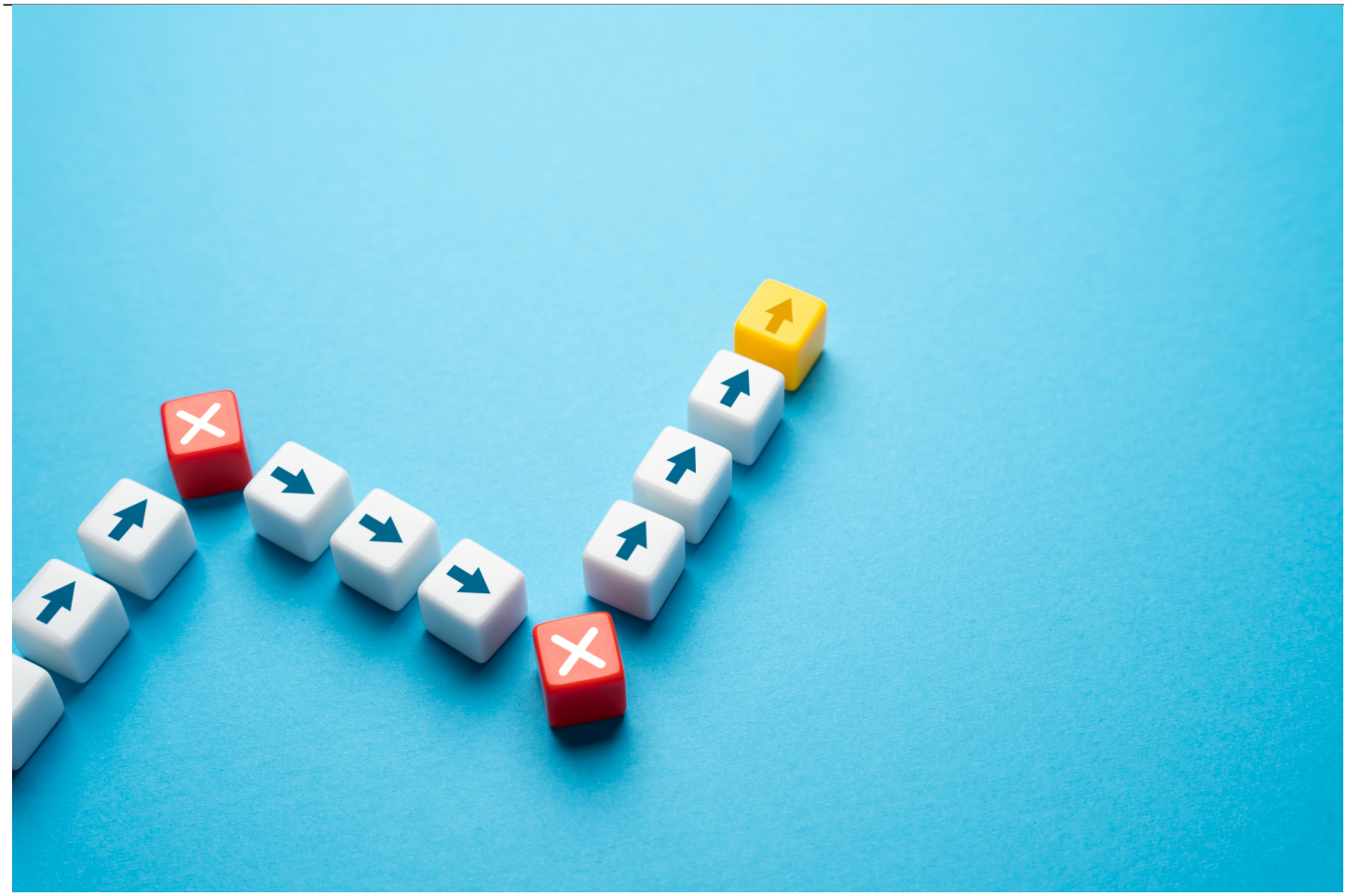


Failure as a Catalyst to Growth

Career Development



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It’s January, a time for resolutions. Many people will make commitments they will not keep. But even if they don’t keep their resolution, does that mean they are failures?



Clarity often comes through the trials of failure. Artwork by Adam Yee / *Shutterstock.com*

Listen. We're all just trying to get it "right." What that means is different for every situation. Whether that's in our relationships, careers, or hobbies.

Let's reframe failure not as a bad thing, but instead view it as a catalyst to growth to move forward in our pursuit of getting it “right.”

Failure is so often seen as a setback, but in reality, it’s simply a bump on the road to success.

Fail, reflect, and grow

Failure is a crucial step in the journey towards personal and professional growth. Yes, obviously, it does not feel like that in the moment, but I bet if you look back, you will feel that most of your failures lead to growth in your life. Failure is invaluable because you find the mistakes you made, you take those lessons that you’ve learned, and apply them to the next situation so that you can continuously move forward. Instead of looking at failure as a negative stigmatism, look at it as a catalyst to lead to an extraordinary life of growth and achievement.

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We can gain exceptional insights when failure occurs. When we use failure as a reflection, we gain a deeper understanding of our limitations, weaknesses, and areas that need improvement. These invaluable lessons serve as a guide for future endeavors, allowing us to refine our strategies for the future. Thomas Edison famously reflected, “I have not failed. I just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”



An exhibit from the Museum of Failure displays hits and misses in the pantheon of Oreo flavors. Photo courtesy of the Association of Corporate Counsel.

The Museum of Failure, spotlights over 150 innovative missteps, underscoring the crucial role of failure in progress and learning.

The museum's exhibits, including the Apple Newton, Google Glass, and a "hot rod" Harley-Davidson cologne, serve as tangible reminders that setbacks are stepping-stones to success.



Photo courtesy of the Association of Corporate Counsel.

Unwavering persistence in the face of failure leads to groundbreaking discoveries. Instead of thinking, “I have failed again,” reframe your mind to say, “This failure is going to transform me in ways that I never imagined for myself.”

Tenaciously pursuing growth

Even the start of failure creates growth immediately, because you are faced with two choices:

1. Do I persevere and continue this journey?

2. Do I surrender and feel bad for myself?

Let’s be honest for a second, sure you can feel bad in the moment, but what is that feeling going to do for you in the long run? Don’t get on that hamster wheel. Is that honestly how you want to live your life? I don’t think so! You’re born to do great things, so use the setbacks as lessons on your journey to do those great things.

I initially started a career path that society said was the right way. Well, it turned out to be a very wrong way for my personality and skillset. Instead of staying on that path, I took action to find my career happiness.

First, I practiced in a whole bunch of areas to achieve a diverse skillset, then I creatively climbed my way to a general counsel position in a multinational company. Even if my past career path doesn't give me the fondest memories, if I'm truly honest with myself, I knew where I wanted to be, so I took action, and still use some of those skills today. The sky is the limit if you know how to grow from setbacks.

> When we fail, we refine our approach, we think outside the box, and come up with novel solutions.

When you continue to persevere in the face of failure, you will develop an unwavering resilience that continuously moves you forward. Successful leaders frequently credit their failures as a driving force behind their greatest achievements. Look at Oprah Winfrey- fired from her first TV gig, J.K. Rowling- her relentless pursuit to make Harry Potter well known, and Steve Jobs- incredible journey through Apple. If not for these three, we would not have powerhouse talk shows, an entire amusement park dedicated to Harry, and the iPhone.

Failure as fertile ground for creativity

Failure also encourages creativity and innovation. When methods we use fail to give us our desired results, we change the process to explore other approaches. When we fail, we refine our approach, we think outside the box, and come up with novel solutions. Breakthroughs in science are not discovered immediately. It takes countless years of research and failed experiments to lead to the growth we see today. We need to embrace failure as a catalyst for growth.

Fear of failure does nothing other than set you back in life. So instead of looking at failure as a negative, reframe your mind to see it as an opportunity for growth. When we look at failure as a catalyst to growth, we gain valuable insights, develop unwavering persistence, and foster creativity. Embracing failure as a part of our journey allows us to learn from mistakes, refine our strategies, and ultimately achieve success and growth in our personal and professional lives. Failure is not the end. It is an essential step in the journey towards growth.

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Brittany Leonard



Fractional GC

Brittany Leonard is a seasoned General Counsel and business operations executive with deep experience leading M&A transactions, high-stakes commercial negotiations and strategic growth initiatives across global companies. She has built and led thriving legal teams while advising leadership on governance, risk and operational transformation in fast?moving, tech?driven environments.