



From Failure to Success

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Failure is another word for learning. Use your failures wisely, and you can make them pay off more than you think. Want to learn? Try failure—the best natural teacher available! Let's take a look at some famous failures.

J.K. Rowling's manuscript for Harry Potter was rejected by 15 publishers. "You might never fail on the scale I did," Rowling told an audience. "But it is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all—in which case, you fail by default."

When Apple, the company he had created, fired Steve Jobs he was so devastated friends and colleagues were worried he may commit suicide.

Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper for "a lack of ideas"; Einstein's Ph.D. thesis on special relativity was rejected twice, he submitted another paper on a different topic, which was also rejected, he changed one word and re-submitted it and it was accepted; Sony's first product was a rice cooker which sold less than 100 units.

In his book, *Negotiation Mastery*, author Simon Horton focuses on these stories. And common to all is how they never took the failure as final. It was always simply a learning episode that enabled their ultimate success. According to Simon,

“Failures often enable you to launch to the next level of performance with even greater strength and success. According to Joseph Campbell, the American mythologist, all of the heroes of the world’s cultures follow a similar path, a path that includes many setbacks. These are both fuel and learning episodes, which ultimately lead to the hero’s success. Crucially, *they would not be successful had they not had the setbacks.* “

In “Firing Back: How great leaders rebound after career disasters”, Jeffrey Sonnenfeld of Yale and Andrew Ward of the University of Georgia, describe five steps for fighting back. They are:

1. Don’t give in. Fight it, choosing the right battles to fight.
2. Don’t retreat into your cave of grief. Use the support of others to help you.
3. Don’t blame yourself. Put things into context, keep your self-esteem.
4. Show your capability. Prove you are good.
5. Set yourself a mission that will drive you.

As prizefighter Jack Dempsey says, “Champions get up when they can’t”.

J.K. Rowling became the first ever person to become a billionaire from writing books. That was setback to success. That was setback to success. Steve Jobs took some time off, travelled around Europe, went cycling and camping under the stars. He set up NeXT, sold it to Apple in 1996 and became their CEO again in 1997, when it was going through difficult times. He introduced the iMac, the iPod and the iPhone. By 2012, Apple became the most highly capitalized company in the world. That was setback to success. Success.

Negotiation setback to success

So if your negotiation fails? Don’t worry, it’s what happens. Failure isn’t final. Learn. The negotiation is never over.

One of the greatest negotiations ever was the Good Friday peace agreement in Northern Ireland. George Mitchell, the U.S. envoy who led the process, described it as “700 days of failure and one day of success”. But it was the one-day that mattered.

References

Negotiation Mastery, Simon Horton, <http://www.negotiation-mastery.com/from-setback-to-success/>

Firing Back: How great leaders rebound after career disasters", Jeffrey Sonnenfeld of Yale and Andrew Ward of the University of Georgia

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