

OOPS!

FINDING THE GIFT IN THE GAFFE

by Craig Harrison

In sports it's the losing team that often improves the most, learning from their mistakes, rethinking their preparation and training regimens and rededicating themselves to success. What about you? Are you learning from your mistakes, or just refining how you make them? When we get beyond the shame, embarrassment or awkwardness at having made a mistake, we can actually benefit from our misstep or miscue.

You may know the story about the man who jumped off the top floor of a skyscraper. While in free fall another man sticks his head out of a lower window and asks him: "How are you doing?" The jumper replies as he plummets past the man: "So far, so good!" To which I ask, must you hit rock bottom before you reconsider the direction you're heading? In the case of this anecdote, it will be too late once the person pounds the pavement.

Learning from OPM (Other Peoples' Mistakes)

CNN, the newspaper, trade magazines and the grapevine are full of industry stories of success and fiasco, of triumph and tragedy. Rather than gloat over others' failures, learn from them. Learning from other peoples' mistakes can shorten months or years of your learning curve and help you avoid similar missteps.

Fail Forward

Silicon Valley is full of start-ups that went belly-up; Wall Street has become Stal1 Street for previously solid institutions; the business world is laden with once-successful companies that ultimate-



ly blew up...only to be reborn in different incarnations. Talent reconstitutes itself in new formations. Leaders learn from their failures, regroup and regenerate. The seeds of success are often sown from failure. When you use failure as fertilizer you grow stronger and can succeed anew.

"Fail early, fail often and fail forward!" These words of wisdom come from leadership guru John C. Maxwell. In his book *Failing Forward*, explains that playing it safe is playing to lose. He points out that

adversity borne of failure creates resiliency, leads to opportunity, prompts innovation, motivates and so much more.

Mirror Mirror

Look anew at your performance. Where were you strong? Where were you weak? Where did you misstep? What would you do differently? If you could change one thing about a failed project or initiative, what would it be? Did you have the right personnel? Proper funding? Appropriate equipment? Accurate time projections? Enough lead time? Ask yourself the hard questions. Convene a CSI session to dissect the dissolution of your product, campaign or project. The answer, in part, is in the questions you ask.

Get Going!

You know the old adage: when the going gets tough the tough get going. In a manner of speaking, set yourself on fire. The world rewards dreamers who implement, visionaries who are industrious and objects, human or otherwise, which are in motion. And don't forget your sense of humor. If you can laugh and your gaffe, you can learn from it too. So forward the action. Go forth and win! ■

San Francisco Bay Area-based Professional speaker Craig Harrison founded Expressions of Excellence!™ to provide sales and service solutions through speaking. For information on keynotes, training, coaching, curriculum for licensing and more, call (510)547-0664 or email to: Craig@ExpressionsOfExcellence.com

