

# SUCCESS INSIGHTS

**#8 Stumbling Block – Not asking for feedback and correcting what doesn't work.** Before we discuss #8, let's do a quick review of the first 7 Stumbling Blocks.

- 1) Not knowing what you want.
- 2) Not knowing why you want it.
- 3) Not believing you can really achieve it.
- 4) Not setting specific goals or deadlines.
- 5) Not knowing the steps to reaching your goal – and letting that stop you.
- 6) Not being grateful for what you have.
- 7) Not surrounding yourself with like-minded, positive, successful people.

Of all the Stumbling Blocks, I think #8 might be the most challenging because it is bred into us at a very young age. Let me share a story.

There was a man who went to speak at elementary schools about a passion of his: sculpting. As he visited the different classrooms, he always started his talk with the same question, "How many artists are there in the room? Would you please raise your hands?"

The pattern of responses never varied.

FIRST GRADE: En masse the children leapt from their chairs, arms waving wildly, eager hands trying to reach the ceiling. Every child was an artist.

SECOND GRADE: About half the kids raised their hands, shoulder high, no higher. The raised hands were very still.

THIRD GRADE: At best, 10 kids out of 30 would raise a hand. Tentatively. Self-consciously.

And so on up through the grades. The higher the grade, the fewer children raised their hands. By time he reached the sixth grade, no more than one or two did so and then only ever-so-slightly, guardedly, their eyes glancing side to side uneasily.

So what is going on here? Are all the artists transferring out and going to art school? Or is something much more sinister than that at work?

Well, if you're like me, you may remember your school days as a time of constant correction. I recall very little encouragement, especially when I was creative, and much more I recall suppression of any thought or deed that was considered "outside the lines".

This may not have been intentional – just a desire of authority figures to have us be accurate and correct (i.e. safe). But slowly the lesson is learned, being right is more important than being creative. Mistakes are not valued, they are criticized. And that feeling of shame when we're corrected? Probably the most effective inhibitor of creative genius and independent thinking.

If these lessons continue on throughout school and then get reinforced in the home, is it any wonder we become less likely to take risks as we get older?

How does this show up in our lives? We're unwilling to try something new. We might look foolish. We're afraid to ask for help. And forget about asking for specific feedback or correction. That's like asking someone to tell us we're wrong.

I've even noticed in my weekly Yoga classes that whenever someone chooses to do a different pose than what the instructor is leading, people tend to give that person very strange looks. I can almost hear them thinking "Well, that's not what he/she is supposed to be doing."

Dr. Phil says most people would rather be right, than be happy. I concur and add, most people would rather be right than be successful.

The need to be right is usually what prohibits us from seeking feedback. However, when you are striving to achieve a goal you are never going to do everything perfectly along the way. You must expect some mistakes and setbacks.

Think about this: The Apollo 11 rocket which landed people on the moon for the first time back in 1969 was off-course 97% of the time. In other words, it was only ON-course a tiny 3% of its journey. And yet that rocket managed to hit its target and accomplish its mission. How? Through constant correction.

This is what Steve Farber, author of "The Radical Leap" has to say about the importance of seeking feedback (in a leadership context):

**Put Yourself at Risk.** Forget Superman. Forget Wonder Woman. There is no such thing as an invulnerable man or woman, so you can stop trying to be one at work. By asking for feedback (and meaning it) you automatically put yourself in what can feel like an exposed, underbelly-up-to-the-mad-wolves position. But — and this is counterintuitive — it's really a very strong position for a leader to be in. We follow human beings, not idealized icons of unattainable perfection, so your vulnerability gives us the opportunity to connect with you human to human, and a strong human connection engenders commitment and loyalty, the elements that every leader longs for in his or her team. Putting yourself at risk when asking for feedback not only gives you the chance to learn from those around you, it deepens the relationships as well.

It's also important whom you go to for feedback. Referring back to last e-iNights Stumbling Block about your associates, be careful who you take advice from. Successful people get advice from people who are more successful than they are. Unsuccessful people get advice from their friends who are just as unsuccessful as they are.

So where in your life right now are you blocked or stuck? Who could you ask for some guidance? And what will you do with that information once you have it?

## QUOTES

Would you like me to give you a formula for success? It's quite simple, really. Double your rate of failure. You're thinking of failure as the enemy of success. But it isn't at all. You can be discouraged by failure - or you can learn from it. So go ahead and make mistakes. Make all you can. Because, remember that's where you'll find success.

~ Thomas J. Watson

Prisoners learn early that the way to survive on the inside is to keep a low profile and follow orders. Sadly, that's the lesson that workers in most businesses learn.  
- John Borchert, GM, The Array Corp.

In times of change the **learners** will inherit the earth. The **knowers** will find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.  
~ Eric Hoffer

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