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## Shoreline

### THE EDUCATIONAL MOMENT

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March 10, 2020

## Success & Failure Both Leave Clues

by Anthony Iannarino\*

**Failure, if you are willing to look at it, is feedback.** There are two ways you can learn what you need to know to improve your (1) success and (2) results. While both are important, one is faster and more certain.

#### 1 Lessons learned

Failure is a part of success, not something separate from it. Anyone who suggests otherwise is dishonest and should be avoided. Don't plan to fail. Do the best you can with what you have. If you give less than 100%, expect less than 100%. You should not believe that failing due to your gross negligence, sloppiness, or outright lack of caring is something positive. The only lesson here is you should've executed better. **Because you are going to fail, it is important that you learn something from the failure that will allow you to avoid repeating the mistakes that caused you to fail in the first place.** It is, however, impossible to learn from a failure if you are going to absolve yourself of responsibility.

#### 2 What did you learn?

The way to convert a failure into a lesson is to review what you did – or didn't do – that caused the failure. You cannot learn something if you blame someone or something for your lack of success. **Laying the blame for losing a big opportunity on the prospect for not seeing YOUR value or solution is to have learned nothing.** More still, it indicates you should expect to experience this failure again, and not too long in the future. Pricing, product and/or external factors each can play a role; blaming any or all of them misses the opportunity to adjust your approach to improve your future outcomes. Learn from it by recognizing what you might do to change the outcomes in the future. Here, the greatest failure is your failure to take responsibility.

- What caused the failure?
- What can you do differently in the future that might lead to success?
- What are the circumstances or fact patterns that will allow you to recognize when one approach is better than some other potential course of action?

#### 3 Learning from the lessons of others

How you learn is as important as what you learn. One of the best ways to learn the lessons without actually having to suffer the failure yourself, is to learn from other people's failures – and successes. Instead, you can learn from people who experienced those painful failures. Jim Rohn said, "Success leaves clues." Failure also leaves clues, many of which are known, written in books, magazines, and websites. The lessons learned are documented; very few problems are novel. They may be a horse of a different color, nonetheless – nothing new. **Reducing the incidence of failing without learning the hard way means looking to the lessons of people who have already failed and discovered how to succeed.** Instead of having to try to discover some strategy or approach that might work, you can look to what others have already discovered. Regardless of your challenge, if you know the outcome you want, it's likely because you have already seen someone else produce it. If someone else has already achieved what you want, the strategies to succeed are already known.

#### 4 Gross negligence

If what you call a success is already well-known, extremely well-documented, and easily available, it is gross negligence not to study what is known as your best path to success, limiting the likelihood of failing in the many ways that others have already failed in the past. **When it is your craft or chosen profession that offers the opportunity to succeed or fail, and when failures come with consequences, there is no reason not to look first to what is already known** – instead of repeating the mistakes of others for yourself, spending time and effort learning for yourself – and harming yourself, your company, and your clients in the process. Of the two ways you can learn from failure, one is better than the other.

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Sourced from <https://thesalesblog.com/2020/03/07/a-better-way-to-learn-from-failure/> (03/07/2020)