
WHAT'S IMPORTANT | Volume I, Issue 5 | October 12, 2005

"What's Important" is a universal concern. The phrase resonates with an infinite number of meanings. What's important is both a question and an answer, depending on the situation.

Oprah Winfrey. Michael Jordan. Thomas Edison. Three of the most successful people in their given fields share one important trait – they failed. But, failing didn't make them failures. In fact, it was key to their success.

- Fired from a job in television reporting, Oprah was told, "You're not fit for TV." Now, she's the most successful woman on TV and one of the wealthiest women on the planet.
- A skinny sophomore, at 5'11" Michael Jordan was cut from the Laney High School varsity basketball team in Wilmington, N.C. He went on to win six NBA championships, two Olympic gold medals, 39 NBA awards for outstanding play, and was named one of the 50 greatest players in NBA history.
- Thomas Edison conducted more than 6,000 failed experiments before hitting the jackpot with the electric light bulb. Through his perseverance, he registered 1,093 patents and started more than 100 companies, including General Electric. Edison once said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

Failure is one of life's greatest teachers. The lessons that come from real experience, even the botched attempts, are fundamental to growth and progress. But, at some point, many of us become afraid to fail. We become reluctant to stretch outside our comfort zone, to reach beyond "the sure thing."

The key is to try even when the outcome is uncertain, to learn from any situation that didn't turn out the way we had hoped, and to never lose the courage to try again.

Perhaps it's time we dare to fail ... not for failure's sake, but in hopes of accomplishing something of which we can be especially proud. And, perhaps it's time we gave the people around us, family and colleagues alike, a little room to fail. They might surprise us with what they are able to accomplish with the security of knowing that doing something really great trumps doing something right the first time.

What's important is to learn from what goes wrong and to have the courage to get it right next time. That is what transforms failure into success.

Email me at chuck@durakis.com to share your thoughts.

Thanks,

Chuck