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## "Achieving Excellence" Issue 27 - July 2024

*Creating Individual and Organizational Excellence via Leadership Development, Management Development, Mentoring, Coaching, Team Building, Skill Building*

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*Welcome  
In Your Quest for Excellence  
Providing Constructive Feedback - A Critical Component in the Manager's Toolkit  
Why Every Leader Needs to Fail*

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## Welcome

Welcome to the July issue of "Achieving Excellence" which is inspired by clients and friends of Seventeen Gorman Advisors. We enjoy new ways of thinking and new ways of helping you achieve your goals.

Seventeen Gorman Advisors is a consulting practice focused on improving individual and organizational performance through skill building programs and developmental services.

Our approach to problem solving and issue resolution involves client participation at all points in the process. Above all, we listen to our clients to understand their needs and goals so that the solution we develop together - as true partners - provides a sustainable business advantage.

Best Regards,

*Jeffrey C. Leventry  
Principal*

# In Your Quest For Excellence

"Feedback, when given well, should not alienate the receiver of the feedback, but should motivate them to perform better" - *M.O. (Manager at a Fortune 500 Company)*

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## Providing Constructive Feedback - A Critical Component in the Manager's Toolkit



Several weeks ago, a former Manager colleague of mine sent me an email from his boss that provided him with glowing feedback about his performance over a period of many years. Among other things, she highlighted his ability to form and manage high-performance Teams that always achieved departmental goals and objectives that contributed to the firm's immense success. In addition, she cited several of his direct reports who advanced in their careers to assume senior leadership positions in the organization, as a result of his guidance and support.

Since we both worked for his boss at different times during our careers, I was immediately surprised by her positive feedback since she was not known as a Manager who provided basic performance feedback, let alone constructive feedback. When my former colleague and I spoke, we both wondered what motivated her to alter her normal approach toward providing feedback. Although we are confused by this abrupt change, we are hopeful that it signals her new attitude toward the importance of providing meaningful feedback.

This recent conversation caused me to reflect on the many Managers I have worked for over the course of my career, including those who developed their employees by providing effective constructive feedback. These are the same Managers who were most admired by their Teams and were highly respected by the entire organization.

**How does constructive feedback rank within the primary responsibilities of Managers?**

Managers play a critical role in the success of all organizations, and the best ones are normally groomed for leadership roles once they have honed their management skills and have proven their value.

Most experts agree that the primary responsibilities of Managers include the following:

- Recruiting and hiring associates with the right culture fit and job fit for the Team
- Establishing performance objectives for their employees that support organizational goals
- Providing a positive, transparent work environment where employee performance can flourish
- Supporting professional development through coaching and development programs – including training
- Managing workflow and distributing tasks and assignments that help to build employee skill sets
- Evaluating performance and providing constructive feedback that enhances the value of each employee to the organization, and enables career advancement
- Administering the company's compensation program in a fair and equitable manner

While I agree that all of these duties are vital to the Manager's ultimate success, the most critical component in the Manager toolkit is providing constructive feedback that enhances the value of each employee to the organization. The reason for this is that it aids employee development so they can add real value to the organization while they advance in their careers.

### **What are the best practices for providing constructive feedback to employees?**

Successful Managers employ many diverse approaches for delivering constructive feedback to their employees. While some are preferable to others, the ones that achieve the most return on their investment are as follows:

- Establish performance goals and objectives at the start of each year so the employee knows how their performance will be measured. In addition, invite the employee to share their personal objectives with you so you can understand their career aspirations and interests – both short-term and long-term.
- Make feedback a routine part of the Manager / Employee relationship so it becomes part of the ordinary course of business. It should be expected and anticipated by the employee since it is a valuable component of the ongoing relationship.
- Be direct, transparent and clear with your employee so they understand what you are suggesting and the reason why it is important for the employee's professional development. If the employee is going to incorporate your feedback into his / her overall work effort, they need to comprehend what you are recommending and understand how it fits within the plan of development.
- Relate the feedback back to their role in the organization so they know how their improved performance translates to both individual and organizational success.
- Commit to joint ownership so the employee knows that the Manager is working in partnership with the employee to achieve mutual success. This entails appropriate levels of support, as needed, so a "Win / Win" approach can be effectuated.

- Invite others in the organization to participate in the process so the employee gains insight from those who offer unique and diverse perspectives. Carefully select associates who have achieved career success, and who are willing to share their knowledge and expertise with your employee so you can maximize the return on everyone's investment of time and energy.

### **What is the impact of effective constructive feedback?**

The Manager's investment in providing constructive feedback is important since it yields numerous benefits to both the employee and the organization. In my experience, it is well worth the time commitment and the effort on the part of the Manager, and pays significant dividends. Among other things, the positive impact of constructive feedback includes the following:

- Enhances self-awareness so employees understand their strengths and areas of improvement
- Strengthens Manager / Employee relationships that foster trust and partnership
- Improves employee engagement, focus and performance to achieve goals and objectives
- Increases motivation to excel in the role played by the employee at the firm so he / she can add value
- Augments the organization's ability to attract and retain talented employees who strive for success
- Contributes to a positive corporate culture where staff are comfortable engaging in difficult conversations to address important issues and concerns
- Helps create a positive cycle where candid feedback fuels professional growth, and growth supports improved business outcomes that impact the bottom line

### **The Challenge**

In conclusion, the ability to provide constructive feedback is a critical skill in the Manager's toolkit that needs to be acquired by all Managers as they perform their important role in the organization. Instead of making this a once-a-year ritual during the annual performance review, it should be a routine practice throughout the year in order to reap the benefits articulated above.

If you are a Manager who has not mastered the competency of providing constructive feedback, what is stopping you from taking steps to improve this important Manager skill?

If you are interested in enhancing your managerial performance to achieve better business results, please contact me at [jeff@17gormanadvisors.com](mailto:jeff@17gormanadvisors.com) so we can discuss approaches that may work for you.

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## **Why Every Leader Needs to Fail**

offers several Leadership lessons he has learned from setbacks during his career.

## Why Every Leader Needs to Fail

by Jason Richmond

May 3, 2024



### **Business setbacks are stepping-stones to greater success.**

The hypothesis seemed sound. Hospital teams that worked better together would make fewer medical errors. Instead, research showed the exact opposite. It was a major embarrassing setback for researcher Amy Edmondson early in her career. But she didn't let that stop her. Further analysis of the data uncovered an intriguing suggestion—the teams that worked well together reported more errors because those employees felt empowered to admit their mistakes.

The result was that Edmondson, now a Harvard Business School professor, came up with the concept of psychological safety which launched her career. "It's hard to remember that this work was born of failure because it's been such a successful research idea since," she told the HBS Working Knowledge publication.

The bottom line, which I've discovered in my own career and while working as a culture change strategist with companies across the country, is that failing can be good for you. Setbacks can be the impetus to make changes and inspire new successful undertakings.

In my case, I also had an early career setback that I was able to turnaround thanks to the wise counsel of my mentor. What happened was that after I'd become the leader of a sales team, I drove double-digit growth for four quarters. Then the next two quarters plateaued.

My business coach interviewed numerous people in my orbit, performing a deep dive into what was happening. Then he broke the news, "Jason, nobody likes you." Instead of leading and developing I'd been pulling and dragging. I made a major change in how I worked with people, and we were soon back on an upward trajectory.

It's something everyone can do if you apply yourself. Here are some of the leadership lessons I've learned from setbacks.

### **Acknowledge**



The first step in learning from setbacks is to accept that something went wrong. Don't be an ostrich with your head in the sand. Don't try to paper over an error and move on. Acknowledge the mistake. Take responsibility. And certainly don't point fingers at others if the fault is at your doorstep.

### **Analyze**

Step two is to investigate what happened. Perform a candid assessment. What went wrong? Why? Root out the contributing factors. Whether it's a product launch that flopped, a project that went over budget, or a deal that fell through, each setback provides a clear lens to evaluate decision-making processes and operational weaknesses.

Professor Edmondson, author of the excellent new book, *Right Kind of Wrong: The Science of Failing Well*, says, "Each and every one of us is a fallible human being. That's not a choice or a judgment, that's fact. We all make mistakes. We are all vulnerable to occasionally missing our goals—sometimes due to our own shortcomings and sometimes due to factors outside our control. Either way, the only good option is to learn as much as possible from mistakes and failures alike."

### **Be Transparent**

Be open and transparent when you encounter challenges. Create a space where your team feels okay to openly debate mistakes without fear of repercussions. By freely discussing failures you can eliminate any attached stigma. You build trust among team members and by eliminating the fear of failure you drive a culture where continuous improvement is valued over perfection and where innovation thrives.

### **Collaborate**

Solutions to issues are more readily developed when teams work together. Nurture a culture where employees are happy to collaborate, solve problems, and share in the success. Famed psychologist [Adam Grant](#), whose most recent book is *Hidden Potential: The Science of Achieving Greater Things*, says, "The most meaningful way to succeed is to help others succeed. To do that we need to learn from the feedback that setbacks offer us."

### **Change!**

Sometimes a setback is a clear signal that it's time to shake things up. Maybe your fundamental business model needs to be tweaked or the indications are you need to expand into new markets. It may well be the opportunity you've needed all along to switch gears. Take note that innovation is more than dreaming up new ideas. It's about learning what works, being agile, adapting, and pivoting away from old assumptions. And most important of all—implementing. Nothing else matters unless change occurs.

### **Celebrate**

Failure is a cause for celebration—as long as you learn from it. You can pop the champagne cork when you've made course corrections and celebrate the fact you wouldn't have got there if you hadn't overcome the initial setback. Celebrate the learning moments just as much as you do the victories.

### **Final Thoughts**

Setbacks are not merely obstacles; they are opportunities to learn, grow, and

innovate. By embracing these challenges, leaders can enhance their skills, strengthen their teams, and guide their organizations to greater heights. It's not the setbacks that define a leader, but the response to them. Embracing these lessons can transform potential defeats into valuable drivers of success. Every setback presents a new opportunity for growth. As long as you assess what went wrong, learn from it, and don't commit the same errors, today's failure can become tomorrow's triumph.

## Our Offerings Include The Following:

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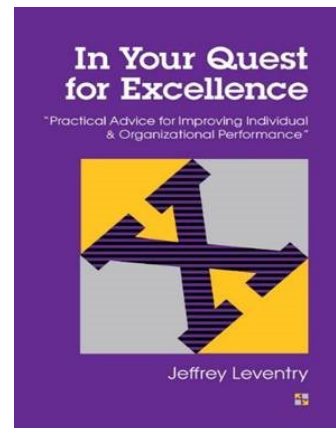
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If you wish to purchase a copy of my book that offers practical advice for improving individual and organizational performance,

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looks forward to collaborating with you.  
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