



Why I Love Failure

-Ann M. Butera, CRP

“I am inspired by others’ accomplishments, particularly when they exceed mine”

Most of us were taught to succeed and win at whatever we do. So, you’re probably wondering why I would love failure. The fact is that I’m a total Type A competitor, but I never realized this until I was almost 30. How could this reality have escaped my attention? I simply thought I was a perfectionist focused on becoming the best person I could be. While that may have some resemblance to the truth, the fact is I am inspired by others’ accomplishments, particularly when they exceed mine.

I love failure for four reasons:

First, failure forces me to do post-mortems and engage in root cause analysis. It sparks me to dig and question and think until I understand why my outcome was not what I wanted or thought it would be. This analysis enables me to assess whether my failure was the result of something I did or didn’t do. Or, was the failure a result of external conditions or other people – situations I could never control but need to anticipate.

Second, failure motivates me to develop a better approach or process --- some way to avoid the pitfall I experienced. It causes me to confront the unconscious or unwitting assumptions I made. It makes me aware of the limitations in my thinking and planning. It causes me to question whether I involved the right people in the decision-making process and whether I obtained and considered the right data needed to reach useful outcomes.

Third, failure is evidence that I have taken a chance and tried something new. If I succeeded all the time, I probably wouldn’t learn anything or enjoy any new experiences.

Finally, failure enables me to enjoy my PhD from the School of Hard Knocks and has enhanced my ability to teach others. It enables me to alert and warn others --- and most importantly, to support my messages with detailed examples.

Okay, so if you want the truth...I don’t really love failure. I like the ultimate result. The result that emerges after I’ve felt the shame of failure, experienced the insomnia triggered by dreaming about the failure; engaged in root cause analysis, and exchanged perspectives with others involved in the project (while trying not to sound defensive).

How does failure inspire you?



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