



Seeing True to Break Through

Thoughts from Ron Chapman

August 2006

Hello again,

It seems our investigation into learning from failure is not yet complete. Again, the subject generated a lot of response as well as questions from last month's newsletter. Indications are we all know quite a lot about failure. More importantly, a number of us are very interested in how we can learn from it. Kudos again to Kate Mulqueen who appeared on my radio program, Straight to the Heart, to discuss it. It's an extremely rich subject, and I refer you to her website, [www.Consulting4HR](http://www.Consulting4HR.com), to learn more about her and her work.

In the June newsletter, I mentioned that Kate found a key attribute in those who learn from failure is willingness to test their reality with others. One newsletter subscriber, my sister, told me that she had recently been exposed to a national aging services corporation with an enviable track record. She had interviewed several of the executives. What she found was willingness to reveal and accept each others failures. They had created a nurturing setting that allowed risk taking and supported the failure that inevitably arises from it.

Most of us know that an important factor in personal and professional development is the ability to "get back on the horse." As someone wittily said, "Ninety-nine percent of all ventures fail if they aren't tried."

So now we see the power of telling our truths to others, even about failure. Talking things through with others, our trusted friends, peers or advisors, gives us a reality check so we can learn. It also nurtures resiliency, which is central to the ability to persevere. And there is no question, that's a major factor in success.

From an even larger perspective, we're talking about the ability to be and express our humanity. Make no mistake, failure and foibles are part of human experience, though there are many cultural norms that discourage admitting it.

A great example of the power of allowing our humanity to emerge comes from an experiment I've been playing out for several years. Whenever I can, especially in a setting where I am involved in conflict, I try admitting failure or failing. Almost without exception, an opening is created that allows for negotiation and compromise. In some cases complete resolution results. This is powerful anecdotal evidence of the value of revealing our humanity.

If you'd like an example from a more visible stage, notice how a majority of Americans respond when a governmental leader admits to a failing. Most often, it is received with a forgiving spirit, even when the admission appears to be a ploy.

There are a few secrets to finding effective ways to test our reality and open up to others. The first is to make sure you find people who can be objective. They need to be willing and able to tell the truth to you. And they must have the capacity to listen while resisting the good intention of trying to find a remedy. They probably have a capacity for empathy, as well as failures that have nurtured it in them. Of course, you must feel you can trust them.

Let me close with a personal story. For sixteen years I have had the counsel of one trusted confidante. I usually refer to him as my mentor, but that simply doesn't fully express the role he plays. During that same time I have had four other individuals who have served as sounding boards for my adventures.

I often receive accolades for my accomplishments. Sometimes I just say thank you, but most often I give credit to these mentors and teachers. I could never have done most of what I've done were it not for them. Best of all, they tend to acknowledge they couldn't have done it without me.

We really are in this thing together, even if we must do some of it alone. Thanks for playing your part. I couldn't do it without you.

Ron

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