



Failing... or shall we say learning?

I can't help it, but to me failing sounds so negative. And I believe you agree with me. Nobody wants to fail. Even if we have slogans like "Fail early and cheap in order to succeed sooner" we have a hurdle to overcome in accepting the word "failure" as something positive. How to accept it some times when most times we aim for "Failure Is Not An Option"?

The problems start with the mindsets of failure. If we use the following mindsets, the negative perception of failure is understandable:

- Failure reflects badly on people and their careers
- Failure is an end point – a terminal destination
- Failures are not common, but they are unfortunately unpredictable
- Failures are told in order prevent them ever from happening again
- Failure is not rewarded by the culture, only success is
- Failure is costly

However, if we would think of failure as follows, it would have a more positive inclination:

- Failure is a sign of courage, which is good for your career
- Failure... is not the end, it's not even the beginning of the end. It is, perhaps, the end of the beginning....

- Failures are considered the most likely outcome, and hence they are rather predictable
- Failures are told in order to avoid the same failure being repeated, inspiring people to try new ways
- Failures are also rewarded by people, because they were detected in due time
- Failure is inexpensive, if they go too far, we call failures Big Mistakes

This is better, isn't it? If we then instead of Failure use the word *Learning*, we would have an unambiguous look at it, right? Try it out! Learning is a sign of courage.... Learning is not the end.... etc

However, the best way to learn is not to be taught. It is to learn by yourself and in order to learn that way, you must do something new. Something you have not done before. A good way is to look at it **as rapid, controlled experimentation** in all areas, not only R&D. It would work even better on the market. The crux is only to find places where they have the same look at experimentation as you have. These places are called Lead Customers.

Rapid it is called because you will get a fast feed-back, and when you want to go fast, you need fast input to what you are doing.

Controlled it is called, because with control you know that the damages will not be devastating. You could cope with a bad result. A friend of mine uses the





phrase “Go ahead, please drill holes into the hull of the boat, but not below the waterline”.

Experimentation it is called because you actually do not know what the outcome will be.

Learning is the sure outcome, something you could sell on the market is a bonus!

Take Away:

*Phrasing things in a way for them to be palatable is important. Rephrasing a word with a historical negative touch means that you have to start with overcoming a negative hurdle. It is easier to exchange the words to more intuitively positive expressions instead. Hence, instead of Failure, use **Learning** out of **Rapid, controlled experimentation**.*

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