



## Entrepreneurship Success & Failure – The Real Truth

By Robert Porter Lynch

If you're thinking that there is much more to building a successful business than just making money, you are asking the right questions.

Below the daily operational issues on the surface lay powerful forces within the spirit of business itself that will determine your company's future in very fundamental ways.

In this article, we will link this bold new future to deeper wisdom of the ages, because we believe that there are some transcendent truths that apply no matter what era we live in – business and economics may be changing dramatically, but nature of humans is not. In times of change, wisdom is more important than information, government debates, or stock market reports.

### *Failure is an Illusion*

Each of the authors of this book grew up with Thomas Edison as a hero and mentor. One of Edison's statements intrigues us deeply:

*Why, I've not failed 10,000 times,  
I now know 10,000 ways not to make a light bulb.<sup>1</sup>*

Most of us would've quit after the 10th, or maybe the 100th failure, but not Edison.

Why? How did his mind work such that it propelled him forward when challenged with overwhelming rejection?

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<sup>1</sup> This is a true story. I researched it, finding that Edison developed over 3,000 "theories" of a light bulb, and created 3-4 experiments per theory, thus the 10,000 experiments.



For leaders, entrepreneurs, and virtually all college graduates, the fear of failure is deeper and more pervasive than the fear of death or fear of heights.<sup>1</sup> Franklin Roosevelt had some important insight into this issue which he proclaimed in his inaugural address:

*Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance... [Greater] perils ... our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid.*

Great fear is most often nothing but a phantom that haunts our souls and limits our potential. Roosevelt advised that we conquer fear not with fearlessness, but with more powerful beliefs. Studies have shown that the most successful entrepreneurs have typically failed in two or three business prior to their real success.

***The hallmark of a successful person  
is not how they dealt with success,  
but how they dealt with failure.***

As the poet Rudyard Kipling (from poem *If*) said:

*If you can dream -- and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think -- and not make thoughts your aim,  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;  
...Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it!*



Everybody who goes into business wants to be successful. The mistake most of us make .... are all the failures that play a critical role in every success story. Many of those failures are personal .... not living up to expectations, not rising to the challenge, blowing opportunities, giving up, falling by the wayside. I'm talking about serious miscalculations, grave lapses in judgment, disastrous blunders, severe disappointments, even betrays...

And yet, as a business, we've grown stronger with every failure.... Success is a series of manageable failures. I didn't see that at first. For a long time, I let the failures get to me. I found them very discouraging. They made me question what we were doing. It slowly began to dawn on me, however, that there was an important lesson in the failures.

Ownership Rule: Failures are fine, as long as they strengthen the company. Everything depends on making the company successful.... Rewards only come after success, not before.... You can learn from your mistakes. The company only gets in trouble when people lose sight of the common goal.

You're going to have a lot of failures. We had our full share. But each failure took us a step closer to our dream, which proved to be very good for everyone who persevered.

-- Jack Stack, CEO SRC, from A Stake in the Outcome, p 78

### ***Making Commitment Larger than Fear***

The truth be told, for most of us our fears remain with us much of our lives. Advising that we must be fearless seldom makes us so.

But are we relegated to a life as cowards? Hell, no!

***Courage is not the lack of fear, but making commitment to a vision or purpose much larger than our fears.***

Listen to any Congressional Medal of Honor recipient who saved the life of a fellow soldier or sailor. They all say they were scared, but their commitment to their comrade was larger than their fear for their



personal safety. These heroes put the greater good ahead of their self interest. That's Honorable Purpose in action.

Fear is a dangerous weapon in business because it has a boomerang effect, often multiplying on its way back in ways we can neither predict nor control. Fear is the root of distrust, thus it will pervasively undermine the innovative spirit in each of us.

For the large part of us, our most creative time of life was as a child, when we had few pressures to perform, few fears of the real world, few worries about how we were perceived by others. Edison could accept ten thousand failures because he had transcended the fears held by most of us. He stayed in his child-like spirit, and made a purposeful commitment to something larger than himself. In this way, there were no failures, just learning and results.

Every human being has three powerful forces (or "drives") simultaneously at play within them: Ego, Soul, and Creative Intellect<sup>ii</sup>. How these three forces interact determines your life. For most people, these three forces act independently and are thus misaligned, resulting in a helter-skelter life; the truly great have carefully mastered the art of alignment within.

Successful entrepreneurs use their ego drive to push for higher and higher achievement. Their competitive instinct can be used powerfully to improve and to grow continuously, and to lead as a great coach to inspire their teams to execute with great precision.

The entrepreneur's soul-drive provides a focus on noble cause, compassion, and recognition of the achievements of others. This sets the standard and transfers rapidly to employees who can then pay close attention to the needs of customers, thus maintaining strong customer loyalty and serve. Each employee wants to be in an organization they can trust serving with fellow employees they can trust as well. When strong trust prevails throughout the organization, everyone's joint energies align with a quantum burst of exuberance and enthusiasm. The entrepreneur that invests in building a system of trust as the foundation of the organization's culture will reap enormous personal satisfaction as well a financial wealth.



We live in rapidly changing times requiring large quantities of innovation. When entrepreneurs tap into the collective creative intellect of all employees, the resulting innovation engine can keep the human energy high and the produce a regenerative stream of new ideas and improvements, continually honing the competitive edge.

In this way the old idea of the organizational leader as “emperor” shifts to “empowerer.”

### ***True Essence of Success***

We've never met a leader who wasn't interested in success. In our society, we judge money as the measure of success. The insatiable quest to accumulate cash has driven some people into jail, caused financial crises, and led others into bankruptcy.

There is nothing inherently wrong with money, and we encourage people to enjoy their wealth. But the true measure of success is not actually money. Money is just one of the measures. Einstein, a man of preeminent creative intellect and soulful explorations, advised:

***Try not to become a person of success,  
but rather ... become a person of value.***

Albert Schweitzer, the great physician of the same era understood the nature of value when he stated:

*I don't know what your destiny will be, but I do know that  
those who will be really happy are those who have sought  
and found how to serve... By practicing reverence for life  
we become good, deep, and alive.*

Viktor Frankl, a German Jew, survived Hitler's hideous concentration camps by learning about the nature of humanity while being tortured. He later wrote in *Man's Search for Meaning*:

*Don't Aim at Success;  
The more you Aim at it, and make it a Target, the more you will Miss It.  
For Success, like Happiness, Cannot be Pursued, It must Ensur..  
As the Unintended Side Effect Of one's Personal Dedication  
to a Course Greater Than Oneself.*



These three men knew that success and failure were all illusions that can get in the way of real learning and a higher destiny.

### *The Nature of Money*

Often people have been twisted by the Wall Street mantra that the purpose of business is to make money. This is unfortunate because it perverts the true nature of the world of business. Yes, it is true that capitalism's investment & banking sector's purpose is to make money; but the purpose of business is different – it is to provide goods and services competitively at a profit. Making money for business is one, and only one, measure of success.

#### **SUCCESS, CHARACTER, and WEALTH**

Money doesn't change men, it merely unmasks them. If a man is naturally selfish or arrogant or greedy, the money brings that out, that's all.... A business that makes nothing but money is a poor kind of business.

Wealth, like happiness, is never attained when sought after directly. It comes as a by-product of providing a useful service.

The highest use of capital is not to make more money, but to make money do more for the betterment of life.

If money is your only hope for independence, you will never have it. The only real security that a person can have in this world is a reserve of knowledge, experience, and ability. Without these qualities, money is practically useless.

-- Henry Ford



Too often, success is little but the agglomeration of material illusions that mask our settling for a dream not noble enough to be worthy of failure.

Your world shifts by replacing hope and success with commitment to purpose and never letting a torrent of fear uproot rationality. In the movie *Grumpy Old Men* the question was asked:

“When looking back on your life what do you remember and what do you regret?”

Answer: “I remember the relationships with people. I regret the risks I did not take.”

What’s more, you work is more than just a job. So too with your employees. They are inspired when their work gives them honorable purpose which provides something meaningful to their lives.

#### **PURPOSE**

The world owes nothing to any man, but every man owes something to the world.

I pity the man without a purpose in life.

My main purpose in life is to make money so that I can afford to go on creating more inventions.

-- Thomas Edison

#### *The Nature of Work*

#### **REWARD IN WORK**

One might think that the monetary value of an invention constitutes its reward to the man who loves his work.

I can honestly say this is not so. ...I continue to find my greatest pleasure, and so my reward, in the work that precedes what the world calls success.

-- Thomas Edison

How does the collaborative entrepreneur regard the commitment of time and money and the risks involved when it comes to the daily grind of working intense hours? We think Susan Fowler Woodring said it well:



*The master in the Art of Living  
 Draws no distinction between  
 His work and his play,  
 His labor and his leisure,  
 His mind and his body,  
 His education and his recreation,  
 His love and his religion.  
 He hardly knows which is which.  
 He simply pursues his vision of  
 excellence through whatever he is  
 doing and leaves it to others to  
 determine whether he is working or  
 playing.  
 To himself, he is always doing both.*

The Secret of Life is  
 discovering it's not  
 all about you.  
 -- Scott Welch

If we keep in the forefront of our mind that every moment in business presents a unique opportunity for a precious fruit to ripen, for an idea whose time has come, for a river to flow, for separate voices to unite into one song, we can truly make our work a synergistic endeavor.

#### **Your Life's Work**

It's important that you believe that your "life's work" is important to other peoples' lives or you may as well stay home.

-- Scott Welch, successful entrepreneur and business builder



## Heroic Journey

Traveling into the future of business is not for the timid, nor for the uninspired. The journey of the cooperative entrepreneur is one of challenges, innovations, and soul-searching. Failures will occur – just fail faster, fail earlier, aim higher, learn more – and realize that failure was just an illusion your ego created.

Those destined to achieve will use wisdom and imagination to a level never experienced before on a sustained basis. Taking the responsibility of leading an organization takes both boldness and humble dignity peppered with a good sense of humor.

Brainpower alone is insufficient to drive the innovative spirit; innovation is a discipline of both head and heart. Be the champion of your life, – *believe fully, live fully.*

### **Champions are a Precious Resource**

RULE #1: Never mistreat an advocate. They're few and far between. They make a difference in your life  
-- Scott Welch

***Don't be afraid of dying.  
Be afraid of an "unlived life."***

Great champions understand that when in doubt about action, it's better to ask forgiveness after the fact than permission before the fact. And support those champions in your organization.

Be committed to attaining extraordinary results. Reasonable people produce reasonable results; extraordinary results flow from persistent visionaries committed to unreasonably worthy goals; their spirit thrives in a perpetual state of enlightened dissatisfaction committed to the idea: "it can be done!"

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## ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Several years ago around the family dinner table we had been exploring spiritual questions like “What are we doing here on earth? What’s the meaning of life?”

Kevin, my thirteen year old son, turned and looked me right in the eye with a look that instantly told me I was going to get an amazing answer. “Dad, don’t you know?”

Of course, I felt incredibly ignorant at that moment. My thirteen year-old is about to share with me the meaning of life, so, of course, he had my full attention. Kevin then said,

*The meaning of life is about  
learning, having fun, and giving back.*

He then left the room. I sat there stunned, thinking to myself, “that’s the most inspiring answer I’ve ever heard in my whole life.” Scott and Glen and I hope we’ve done that with this book.

*There are only two ways to live your life.  
One is as though nothing is a miracle.  
The other is as though everything is a miracle.*  
-- Albert Einstein

*Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.*  
-- Helen Keller

Who said it best? Einstein or Keller? You choose!

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<sup>i</sup> Our other deepest fears are the fear of betrayal and the fear of not making a difference. This is why betrayal and nullification are at the very bottom of the trust scale – they represent our deepest fears, which render us impotent.

<sup>ii</sup> There are actually four forces, the Sex drive is the other, but not the subject of this book

