10 GREAT LEADERS TAKE WHEN THINGS GO WRONG
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At the end of the day, it’s how you embrace your mistakes in the pursuit of success that defines your character as a leader.
Great leaders accept that failure is inevitable.
ACCEPTING THAT FAILURE IS PART OF THE PROCESS WILL MOTIVATE YOU TO TAKE MORE RISKS AND TRY HARDER.
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Bill Gates dropped out of Harvard and started a company, Traf-O-Data, which went nowhere. But his passion for computers remained. He went on to build the Microsoft empire and is now one of the wealthiest men in the world.
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He took risks. He didn’t give up.
GREAT LEADERS CONFRONT FAILURE.
FROM A YOUNG AGE WE ARE TAUGHT THAT MAKING MISTAKES IS BAD.
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Painful memories of past failures trigger negative emotions like fear and anxiety which prevent us from taking risks in the present. It’s better to confront your failure than to run away from it.
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TAKE TIME TO REFLECT ON THE MISTAKES YOU HAVE MADE

Evaluate how you could have improved on the situation. Write down the lessons you have learned.
GREAT LEADERS ARE VULNERABLE.
SUCCESSFUL LEADERS NEVER HIDE THE FACT THAT THEY MAKE MISTAKES.
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OPEN UP TO YOUR TEAM WHEN YOU GET IT WRONG
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Surround yourself with a strong team who will rally behind you or a mentor who will hold you accountable and offer guidance. This will ensure you don’t make the same mistake twice.
GREAT LEADERS FAIL FORWARD.
THOMAS EDISON SAID,
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found 10,000 ways
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Change your perspective.
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Change your perspective. See your failures as stepping stones to greatness and let go of your fear of getting it wrong.
WRITE DOWN MOTIVATIONAL QUOTES OR STORIES ABOUT LEADERS
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- Stick them up in your office.
- Make them your mantra to turn to when you feel defeated.
GREAT LEADERS RECOVER FAST.
WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG, PEOPLE WILL INEVITABLY SEEK CONTEXT.
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THE BEST LEADERS DO NOT LET THE BURDEN OF THE BLAME GET TO THEM.
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• Help people to understand the context of the problem.
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THE BEST LEADERS DO NOT LET THE BURDEN OF THE BLAME GET TO THEM.

• Help people to understand the context of the problem.
• Respond confidently with solutions.
6 GREAT LEADERS FIGHT BACK.
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- Fight back. - Be energised by failure.
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- Fight back.
- Be energised by failure.
- Look for the opportunities it brings.
7

GREAT LEADERS
MAKE TOUGH CHOICES.
YOU ARE WISER BECAUSE OF YOUR FAILURES.
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Weigh up the worth of your mistake and decide whether it’s worth fighting for or letting go of.
DEVELOP A STRATEGY TO MOVE FORWARD. TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS.
Develop a strategy to move forward. Trust your instincts.

Akio Morita co-founded Sony. The first product they sold was a rice-cooker which burnt rice more than it cooked it. They made the choice to abandon this idea and moved on to building a multi-billion dollar software company.
GREAT LEADERS REALISE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY.
APPRECIATE THE DUTY YOU HAVE AS A LEADER TO OVERCOME ADVERSITY.
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HOW ARE YOU USING THE LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED TO INFLUENCE THOSE AROUND YOU?
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HOW ARE YOU USING THE LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED TO INFLUENCE THOSE AROUND YOU?

Find innovative ways to improve your skills and become a more effective leader for your team.
GREAT LEADERS TAKE ONE FOR THE TEAM.
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BE PREPARED TO HAVE THEIR BACK IF THEY FAIL. BUT LET THEM TAKE THE RISK ANYWAY.
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Establish a company culture where failure is celebrated.
GREAT LEADERS KNOW WHEN TO TAKE A STEP BACK.
IT’S REFLECTION TIME AGAIN.
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Take a step back and consider the failures you identified, the lessons learnt and the opportunities available.
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WRITE DOWN HOW THIS HAS IMPACTED YOU AS A LEADER.
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Use this as a reminder for next time something goes wrong.
ONE FINAL PIECE OF INSPIRATION:
ONE FINAL PIECE OF INSPIRATION:

“Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly.”

– ROBERT F. KENNEDY
How will you use today’s failure for tomorrow’s success?
Empower yourself with a world-class education from the University of Cape Town and GetSmarter:

getsmarter.co.za
Improving lives through better education

getsmarter.co.za