

## Allowing Your Business Process to Fail

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It may sound counterintuitive but there can be advantages to allowing your business process to include some failure. Here's what we mean by that. We know that you have spent time defining your purpose, your goals, and how you get things done with your staff. We've talked about efficient and effective work procedures. So why would we talk about including failure now?

Because the business world keeps changing. If you keep doing things the way you have always done things, then you and your staff will start to be complacent and neglect the changing wishes and needs of your customers. Your business process will become obsolete. You'll lose your competitive edge.

We believe that business problems can be defined as either the people or the process. Either the people are not equipped with the talent and skills they need or there is a glitch in how the work is getting done. Either way a problem emerges and you may see that there is a failure to get work done and delivered on time; you see that there is a dip in the quality of work being completed; or maybe you simply notice conflict among staff.

Keeping your business running smoothly and maintaining a competitive edge requires one essential ingredient. Innovation. Innovation is only effective if you allow your company culture to experience failure from time to time. Using employees' time and energy wisely is your company's best return on investment. Clearly defining the ultimate role of innovation will set the future trajectory of your organization and clarify how everyone is working towards the same goal. With a clear vision, people prioritize which new ideas upon which to focus.

As a leader, you will find that your staff is much more willing to try new methods to improve productivity and product design if they know you support their efforts. Yet we know that society is obsessed with perfection, but to be perfect, there is fear in trying something that may go wrong. Such an obsession stops innovation dead in its tracks. Many people think of new ideas, whether it's new ways of doing things, or new things to try. Our research shows that 80% of improvement ideas come from personnel on the front lines—not from the C-Suites.

A company that embraces innovation, embraces and encourages this on all levels of the organization. You, the leader should be the champion of creativity and celebrate the new ideas being suggested. Not everything

will be a success but failing to act on an idea will never produce success. As a leader, being willing to take risks should be part of the job. Realize that the only company that never experiences failure is the company that never tries anything new. How do we define failure? Failing to take action.

So, how do you as a leader encourage innovation in your business? Let's look at some character traits. We have found that honesty and integrity are two of the most valued traits employees find in leaders. Other traits include imagination, inspiration, knowledge, boldness, persistence and, occasionally, a contrarian mind-set. Leaders who can admit they made a mistake, or that the strategy they thought would work did not produce the expected results is more respected than one who never takes a chance. Failure is an event, not a character trait.

Leaders who take the time to bring the best talent into their business process know the rewards. If you never give your people the opportunity to make decisions and support them even when the decision doesn't work out, learning stops. People will not take a risk to make a decision if they know that the leader will not show support, or worse, chastise them for mistakes. Experiencing the limited consequences of poor judgment in smaller decisions is a learning opportunity for emerging leaders and a necessary step in their ability to handle more impactful decisions.

Trial and error is a part of being innovative. Anyone working on new ideas needs to know that you have their backs. When projects fail, and they will, workers who learn and move on will become more innovative. Risks will be taken when employees are encouraged to innovate and learn from failures. However, employees will become risk adverse if they are unsure of what you expect or are not given room to practice their own style of work.

Companies that embrace innovation within their culture, find ways to motivate and sustain that attitude. If your organization values integrated solutions, you will need to find employee recognition strategies that allow your workers to identify how their efforts and values are aligned with those of the company. Employees will be motivated to go above and beyond the set requirements of a project when they believe their voices are being heard and they are being recognized for their efforts to further the company's mission.

Building an innovative workplace can be elusive for a business, especially if workers are uncertain if there will be repercussions for making mistakes. Products that people don't buy and processes that are becoming cumbersome should be eliminated so that your staff can embark on fresh ideas and productive activities. More important than financial resources, time is a finite resource and people need to be engaged to be contributing to the bottom line.

This means you must be aware of obsolete ways of doing things. An innovative culture is an optimistic culture. The belief that employees can create new solutions will lead to a motivated workforce—people don't like feeling like they're wasting time. Innovative results are guaranteed when companies combine great talent with the right capabilities and dream big.

What we are relating here is that when a business process fails, it can be highly beneficial if you learn from the failure. Now you have a chance to improve. This is a reminder to take a deep look at the process, find out why it didn't work and then change the process. If the right talent is not in the right job, change the personnel. But regular check-ups are important. Since personnel changes will occur, and people can complete the same tasks in slightly different ways, it's always good to review efficiency and effectiveness.

The key here is to view failure as progress not a problem in and of itself. The processes you are building will be the key to your later freedom.

### About the Authors

Dr. Ann Gatty is a business development strategist. She helps her clients clarify the vision for their businesses, boost their leadership capabilities and add quality talent to help the clients reach their goals. Dr. Gatty is a frequent writer and contributor [www.AllBusiness.com](http://www.AllBusiness.com), and [www.WomenOnBusiness.com](http://www.WomenOnBusiness.com). She is the author of [Leadership Unleashed](#), [A Great Dane's Wisdom for the Business World](#). Her interactive speaking engagements assist participants in discovering new-found talents and skills that they can immediately apply in the workplace. Join her [Facebook Group](#), [Strategic Thinking Summit Elites](#) for strategies you can implement to grow your business success and enjoy camaraderie with others entrepreneur members.

Shawn McBride, also known as The Our Shawn, works with successful, private business owners on ways to build companies to stand the test of time. He is all about empowering business owners, employees and others to live a life they love so he'll work hard to make that happen for you and your audiences. The Our Shawn earned a J.D. from the University of Maryland School of Law and a CPA from Townson University. He is the host of the popular show, [The Future Done Right](#). His experience in business, law and speaking means he can effectively deliver powerful results for you and your teams. Learn more about him at [Planning Done Right](#).

Join us on this business building journey where we move from Entrepreneur to CEO. We'll be examining how to get from simply making money to building a sustainable business in the following chapters. Look for our upcoming book, **Entrepreneur to CEO**. This article is a small portion of the content of the book being co-authored by The Our Shawn McBride and Ann Gatty. If you want updates on the book including the possibility of joining our release team or getting one of the first copies please [join our mailing list here](#).