

A 3D illustration of a road with a red arrow pointing forward, flanked by grey arrows pointing left and right, set against a maze background. The road is dark asphalt with yellow double lines in the center and white dashed lines on the sides. The maze is made of white walls. The red arrow is the central focus, pointing towards the horizon. The grey arrows are positioned on either side of the red arrow, pointing in the same direction. The text "Embracing Failure" is overlaid on the road, and "THE SECRET KEY TO SUCCESS" is below it.

Embracing Failure

THE SECRET KEY TO SUCCESS

What Do We Really Learn From Winning?



During WWII, Germany bombarded Britain for a solid 8 months in what was known as the blitz. Day and night, Nazi bombers flew raids over the British isle, culminating in a bombing raid on the capitol city of London, that dropped more than 30,000 incendiary bombs and claimed over 500 lives.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill faced many tough choices in formulating his responses to these attacks. Every bombing raid that resulted in loss of life was another failure in the eyes of the public and another victory in the eyes of the enemy. When faced with repeated

loss many people would act impulsively, or even desperately. The British strategy, though, was to stay the course. Maintain a strong defense until the opportunity opened for a strong attack. Take each loss as a lesson about the nature of the opponent and slowly build a plan for total victory.

Ultimately, the German empire would crumble at the hands of the allied powers, and Sir Winston Churchill would gain international fame and respect as one of the arbiters of peace that brought an end to the Nazis. Though his political career fizzled out shortly after the war, he left a legacy of strength and calm determination that is revered even today.



In WWII the British had a slogan to boost national morale which said simply, "Keep Calm and Carry On." Nobody seemed to embody this idea more than Churchill himself.

Towards the end of his storied career, he summed up this philosophy quite eloquently when he famously stated, "Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm." Failure is the start of success.

Understanding and embracing this fundamental concept is an integral
key to victory.

Knowing the Difference Between Failure & Fault



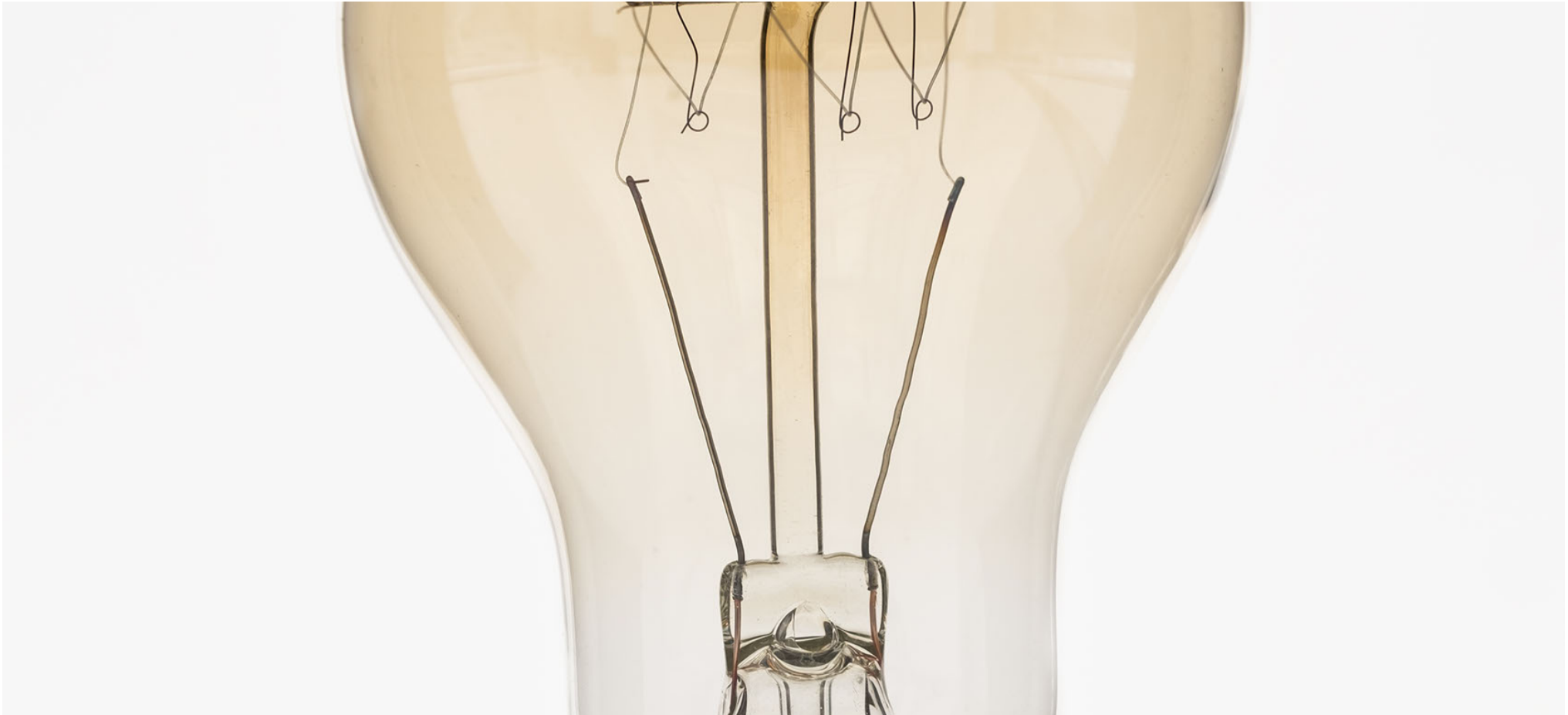
When plans fall through or we fail to achieve our goals, we quickly look for somewhere to place the blame. Sometimes it's placed on other people, outside forces, or even ourselves, but it is usually accompanied by a sense of guilt and shame.

Sometimes blame is warranted, such as when something fails due intentional deviance or lack of effort, but should we still seek blame or guilt when something fails despite our best efforts?



The answer is a resounding no. When we fail to achieve our goals despite putting forth our best efforts, being too critical of ourselves or others or seeking to place blame or fault can be troublesome.

Sometimes things just don't work out how we planned. Plain and simple. If we spend our time lamenting the failure or trying to place blame, we will be unable to focus on the lessons we have to gain. Every missed goal brings with it a bit of knowledge on how to do better next time, but we can only gain that knowledge if we actively seek to grow from our failures.



In fact, without ever failing, how can we know what is needed to achieve and, most importantly, sustain success? Just as the British learned from every loss, so would it behoove each of us to be disciplined and patient in our approach to understanding both success and failure. For the latter cannot be had without first experiencing the former.

As Thomas Edison famously said when asked about his tireless efforts to invent a lasting filament light-bulb, "I have not failed. I have found 10,000 ways that don't work."

The Business of Failure



In 2004, Harvard Business review published a now highly regarded article entitled, "Strategies For Learning From Failure." Written by Harvard professor Amy C. Edmonton, it was one of the first mainstream articles published on the subject, and has sparked an entire field of study. Companies and organizations that once held rigidly critical views of failure have begun to nurture a culture that makes it safe to admit and report honestly on failure.

As the article states, "Leaders can create and reinforce a culture that counteracts the blame game and makes people feel both comfortable

with and responsible for surfacing and learning from failures."

We can see that trends are changing, and the modern corporate mindset is a progressive one. Constructive reflection on failure is becoming a standard across business, and this same mindset is integral to individual success as well.

"Never Confuse a Single Defeat With a Final Defeat"

Of course, all of this is still uncertain. Best laid plans often fall through and external forces can rarely be predicted. You may never achieve the standards of success you seek. The truth is, the future is unknowable and the present is hard to tame. One certain thing, however, is this: Success will absolutely never be achieved if you give up the first time you fail. Every misstep is an opportunity to recalculate and every failure is a chance to learn and grow.

As F. Scott Fitzgerald once said, "Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat." Instead, learn to embrace failure as the secret key to

success. The only way to truly fail is to quit, or even worse, never to try at all.



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