



Trying something new is the meaning of innovation, but not every new idea will be a success. “Failure is not an option,” though, is a strong concept in many cultures. Parents say it. Professors say it. Bosses say it. So even when leaders say they will accept the failures that are part of the innovation process, how do we get employees to believe it? This session helps leaders understand how to manage risk and create a culture that encourages taking chances.

After a lifetime of being told that failure is a bad thing, simply handing out t-shirts that say “Innovate!” will not change their thinking. Even if your CEO stands up in a town hall meeting and says, “We want people to take chances,” it will be difficult for employees to believe that failures will not be punished. You cannot just “talk the talk,” you must “walk the walk” if you are going to convince your employees to try new ideas.

It will be hard to make money if your employees do not embrace the idea that it is ok to fail.

MANAGING CONSTRUCTIVE FAILURE

Accepting failure does not mean accepting ALL failure. If employees are negligent, or are working in areas where they have no knowledge or abilities, that is not acceptable; it is just dumb. This seminar will allow students to describe “constructive failure” in their own business setting, and figure out how to minimize the risk of those failures while ensuring a system exists to capture the lessons when failure does happen.

LEARNING FROM FAILURE

We often tell employees they should learn from their mistakes, but do we help them do that? Very often we expect learning to just happen automatically, even though we would never expect that in a classroom or other formal training. If we want to get the learning value out of failure, we need to help employees identify lessons, share them with others, and figure out what to do differently next time. For many of your employees – in fact, for many leaders, too – this is something new, and requires a new way of thinking about failure in the workplace.

CREATING A CULTURE THAT ACCEPTS RISK

Even if you think it is ok for your employees to take chances and sometimes fail, getting them to trust you on that can be hard. How do you develop a culture where it failure is accepted as a normal part of innovation? Students will explore methods for making the value of constructive failure into an acceptable part of your organisational culture. A mix of learning strategies, performance management policies, communication, and simple day-to-day conversation can help your employees see the value of failure.