



## **Golden Opportunities**

### **by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP**

When something does not go according to plan, we often get a sinking feeling of failure. Throughout our formative years, we were taught that success is the goal and failure is anathema. In this brief article, I want to discuss how we can change around our mindset so that when things go wrong we gain the maximum benefit from the situation.

We learn much more from our failures than from our successes in life. Think about how you learned to walk. You tried to stand up, and gravity won over, time after time. Each time you got back up, your skill level at balancing all that weight on those two tiny round feet improved. Over time you became so skilled that standing erect was easier than eating pumpkin pie.

I often think our education system is missing a key point by not having a primary school course in how to fail well. Instead, we teach our children that failure is to be avoided at all cost, so we carry that idea in our subconscious mind for the rest of our life. The “Whatever you do, don’t fail” mentality needs to be replaced by “Make sure to embrace and learn from your failures.” Our failures not only allow us the opportunity to learn and grow, but they provide an opportunity to leap forward and make a paradigm change.

In every situation that doesn’t go our way, there is a moment of decision. We decide to just accept our bad luck and feel badly about it, or we decide to turn our problem into an advantage. This is true in our personal life, and it carries over to our business life as well. A great recovery from something that didn’t go as planned is the hallmark of winners in any occupation. When we are able to take a bad situation and totally WOW the customer, the problem turns into a huge positive force for our business.

I read a story about Zappo’s Shoes in one of my favorite leadership books: *Triple Crown Leadership* by Bob and Gregg Vanourek. Apparently a woman arrived in Las Vegas and found that she had left the shoes she intended to wear that evening at home. She called Zappo’s in a panic to reorder a new pair. The customer service person looked them up and explained that they were out of that style in her particular size. This was

the moment of decision for the service rep. He could have accepted the problem, or he could choose to do something to change it. The woman sighed, and the service rep said “What hotel are you staying at? I will take care of this.” Then he left his work station and walked the malls until he found the shoes in her size. He had them gift wrapped, and hand delivered them to her room with no charge because they were out of stock. Imagine the impact that recovery had on that woman and everyone who has heard the story since that time.

Taking a customer problem and finding some way to not only resolve it, but totally blow the customer away, really works. I call it the Golden Opportunity Moment. Having a customer with a problem is a *wonderful moment of truth* because the customer is upset with you, and usually has low expectations based on typical customer service levels like “Tough luck you banana.” Against the backdrop of low expectations, the customer is all primed to be totally amazed when you in effect leap over the counter and offer a significant accommodation that was above and beyond anything she expected.

There are numerous stories like the Zappo’s one where an organization was able to take a real live problem and turn it into a raving customer for life. Teach all people in your organization the philosophy of turning problems into Golden Opportunities. Greg Lederman wrote a good book on this idea with lots of examples, entitled *ENGAGED!: Outbehave your Competition to Create Customers for Life*.

Failure is a state of mind that can be overcome by replacing the sinking feeling with the joy of learning something new. Next time you start feeling down because something did not work as you had hoped, focus on what you have gained by the experience. Whenever a failure makes another person disappointed, rather than add to the disappointment, take the initiative to turn it into a Golden Opportunity. When the other person is down is really the perfect time to create a lasting positive memory. You will have a wonderful feeling of satisfaction while creating a fan for life.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of four books: 1. *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals* (2003), 2. *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online* (2006), 3. *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind* (2009), and 4. *Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change* (2014). In addition, he has authored over 500 articles and videos on various topics in leadership and trust. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations. For more information, or to bring Bob in to speak at your next event, **contact him at [www.Leadergrow.com](http://www.Leadergrow.com), [bwhipple@leadergrow.com](mailto:bwhipple@leadergrow.com) or 585.392.7763**

