

## How to Fix Mistakes and Learn from Failures as The Innovative Admin 01/03/2021

Admins are often expected to do their jobs perfectly, and with good cause – a single mistake can be costly to your company, your boss and your career. Yet The Innovative Admin knows that failure is a necessary and integral part of the innovation process. You don't create and implement new ideas without things going wrong along the way. The problem is we often confuse mistakes with failures when they are not exactly the same thing.

Mistakes are inaccuracies or errors that should have been caught. Typos in a document or misquoting information are mistakes. It can also be errors in judgement, poor decision-making, or misunderstanding a request or assignment. Missing a deadline or sending information to the wrong person also fall into the mistake category.

Failure is typically defined as a lack of success or may be related to underperforming. You didn't accomplish something you set out to do. Author Seth Godin wrote, "A failure is a project that doesn't work, an initiative that teaches you something. And it's only when failures are repeated that they become mistakes."

One of the things that sets The Innovative Admin apart is his or her ability to take initiative. Taking initiative can mean a lot of things – from developing your office procedures to creating a better system for project management or even helping your boss shorten their learning curve on new software or technology. Initiative is about gaining the confidence to take charge, develop a plan and implement your ideas for improving things. And taking initiative also means that some of your plans will succeed and some will fail.

To excel in your career and provide the most value in your admin job, you have to accept that failure and mistakes are inevitable. It's what you learn from your experiences and apply to the next idea you implement that will make you stand out.

So, what do you do when you make a mistake?

I've made plenty of mistakes throughout my career, and I've learned that the best way to handle them is to admit them quickly. Here's how I usually approach an error:

Look at the mistake and identify the cause. Watch for patterns that increase mistakes, such as stressful situations, not following a proper process, fatigue or rushing to get something done. Develop new habits or create a better system to support mistake-free work so the mistake doesn't happen again. Communicate those changes to those impacted so they know you have a new or better system in place.

What about failure? What do you do if you take the initiative on something and it fails?

You try again.

Oftentimes, you have to try several things before the one thing you're trying to do works. If you're looking for a better system for project management, you may have to test several programmes before you can determine what will work the best for your team. If you take the initiative to instigate a daily meeting with your boss but you struggle to make these meetings consistent, you may need to keep trying different approaches. When you're tasked with coordinating a recurring virtual social meeting for your team, it may take trial and error to figure out what they enjoy and what works best in the virtual environment before you can perfect the formula.

It's also important to pay attention to how and when you admit to a mistake. For instance:

- I made a mistake. I'll improve and do better next time. (Not "I am a failure.")
- I misunderstood my boss's request. I'll ask more clarifying questions next time. (Not "I am a failure.")
- The implementation of my idea failed on the first attempt. I'll try again. (Not "I am a failure.")
- They didn't like the solution I demonstrated. I'll keep working on it. (Not "I am a failure.")

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The words mistake and failure are commonly used synonymously; let's change that! You should avoid making mistakes while embracing the innovation mindset, and get comfortable with things failing from time to time. When you continue to adapt your ideas until you find the winning solution, failure can help you propel your career forward. Understanding this distinction will help you evolve and expand your potential as The Innovative Admin.

*Julie Perrine, is the founder and CEO of All Things Admin, providing training, mentoring and resources for administrative professionals worldwide. Julie applies her administrative expertise and passion for lifelong learning to serving as an enthusiastic mentor, speaker and author who educates admins around the world on how to be more effective every day.*