URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/blog/videos/learning-from-failures

Penchina shares some of his failures and discusses lessons learned from them.

Transcript

When you put your resume together and you start thinking about how to highlight all the good stuff you've done, it reminds me of an old GE saying we used to have that if at first you don't succeed, bury all evidence that you ever tried.. I forgot about that but I actually find that the failures are much more helpful for me going forward than the success story because usually the successes were I got lucky and the failures are actually where I learned something.. So a couple; one is my first year at eBay, we were a startup.. It was crazy and I felt like the more stuff I could involved in, the more important I would be.. So I took on one project and then I took on a second project and then I took on a third project and this was on top of my day job which was taking 12 hours a day and the five hours a day I was spending interviewing the 700 people we hired that year.. I had taken all these projects because that way, I'd be working with all sorts of really interesting people and in my spare time, I was planning our wedding with my wife.. I finally hit the ignition level where I just sort of launched off the planet and was just in total stress mode and it was really bad.. I was cranky all the time.. I was being incredibly rude to people because I'm look, I'm busy, I'm doing all this important stuff, and feeling really actually pretty depressed that people weren't giving me credit for all the stuff I was doing.. I'm doing all this stuff, why aren't they like more psyched about what I'm doing? I eventually basically imploded..

I remember the day where I got yelled at by my boss, his boss, the COO and then the CEO over a six-hour period where I just sat in the conference room and waited for more and more people to come in and yell at me because I had yelled at one of the partners at benchmark who was RBC because I thought he was an idiot and I realized after I probably shouldn't have said it.. So many lessons in that one.. One is it's a really small world that we live in.. It's a really small world and I keep running into the same people over and over and over again so now I'm like, probably I shouldn't have been quite so unpleasant to them, but I had an excuse, I was really busy.. The other thing I would say is it's actually better to do a few things well than to do a lot of things poorly and I was definitely doing a lot of things poorly.. It turns out most of those stuff really kind of didn't need to get done anyway and wasn't that important but since I was dumb enough to volunteer for it, they let me go do it.. So I got a bunch of lessons out of it about how important it is to be respectful of others, how to sort of gauge your own personal stress level.. Everyone thinks they're invincible and invulnerable and can do everything.. Well, at least I haven't been able to do that.. Maybe you'll be more successful but being able to gauge that and really manage it..

So I had a new employee in Poland.. My employee won at eBay Poland and the one piece of advice I gave him is I said, "you know, Shermack, when you start here the first few months, you may only be working like four hours a day because there's just only so much stuff to do.. Don't freak out and start chasing all these new projects and doing all these things.. Go home and just sort of relax and you know what, the crazy times will come." You'll get 12 hours a day but keep some capacity.. Don't over-commit so that when the crazy stuff happens you actually have the time and the energy and the ability to ramp up and pull the all-nighter to pass your exam or to deal with the project problem.. So I think if I learned anything, it was have some breathing time and don't over-commit and that makes you a better person.. It makes you a better manager.. Frankly, it makes me a better husband and parent as well.. It was a real learning for me and I had to get to a pretty ugly place to get there...