



Hardship Experiences

Learning from adverse situations

Re-issue of Fall 2016 Newsletter

The Development Hardship

First, an apology for not having issued our regular summer newsletter. Circumstances in our lives caused us to refocus our priorities in the late spring and as a result we had to be selective on our work related activities. This resulted in the newsletter being placed on the back burner. However, the situation we found ourselves in has caused us to pause and reflect, one aspect being what have we learnt from our experiences – has this been developmental?

Development takes on many guises, some are very clear and succinct, others can be abstract or prosaic. The value is in whether the individual can take something away from the experience that changes their behavior in a positive way. One of the biggest challenges that organizations, managers and individuals have in addressing development is looking beyond the obvious development solutions and one of these is to utilize assignments at work, or in an individual's private life.

Experience is the best teacher with people learning best by doing

Assignments, *or experiences*, provide the opportunity to:

- ◆ Build skills and competencies
- ◆ Provide the right experiences and exposures to build both perspective and operating knowledge

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

Thomas A. Edison

Just about all of you know of and/or use the **70:20:10** principle of development. However, there is another, a **4th component** to this principle, **Development Hardship**.

HARDSHIPS

There is a wealth of books, web-sites, YouTube videos, blogs, etc., that extol the value of training classes to fix a myriad of behavioral and experience based needs. The truth however is that until people are placed in the 'deep-end' tackling a *new experience*, one that is different and challenging

Life is a series of punches. It presents a lot of challenges. It presents a lot of hardship, but the people that are able to take those punches and able to move forward are the ones that really do have a lot of success and have a lot of joy in their life and have a lot of stories to tell, too.

Josh Turner, Musician

then minimal change, if any will take place. The same experiences and environments simply assist in reinforcing existing behaviors and will fail to broaden perspectives and capability.

Changing behaviors and providing beneficial experiences requires a shift, minor or seismic, in the work undertaken, associated responsibilities and the challenges faced, these can be an integral part of the development process.

HARDSHIP EXPERIENCES

According to Bob Eichinger in reference to the research done at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), i.e.:

- ◆ Learning from adverse situations - CAN'T PLAN FOR OR ARRANGE FOR THEM, and
- ◆ Personal experiences outside of work – AGAIN, CAN'T PLAN FOR THEM

Made up 25% of the key lessons learned for executives

The initial research was documented in the "Lessons of Experience" (McCall, Lombardo & Morrison, 1988) and has been researched several times (formally and informally) over the years. Yes, approximately **25% of development comes from diverse hardship experiences** which are necessary throughout a career to fully 'round' an individual out. These hardships identified in the CCL study focus on a:

- ◆ Personal trauma
- ◆ Career setback
- ◆ Risky job change
- ◆ Business mistake
- ◆ Subordinate performance problem

Others include:

- ◆ Receiving unexpected critical and/or negative feedback
- ◆ Working for a bad boss(es)
- ◆ Creating diversity issues, making errors, being politically incorrect

“And once the storm is over, you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.”

Haruki Murakami, Writer

What makes a hardship developmental is the need to shift focus inward, hardships require a person to be more thoughtful and introspective about the experience. We learn a lot from typical development experiences but these types of learnings focus more on the event, e.g. what additional *perspective* did I gain? Am I better at *motivating* my team? Hardships ask the critical

question – **WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT MYSELF?**

Hardships are not planned and are therefore out of our control, we consider these naturally occurring events and everyone has experienced a professional and/or a personal hardship at some point in their life. While we cannot include a hardship in a typical development plan, we can debrief them for lessons learned. And in many cases these have a greater impact on leadership than learning to motivate or gaining additional business perspective.

The CCL’s study of hardship concluded that there are many lessons that can be learned from adversity. The study describes **4 lessons** that came out of their research:

1. Self-knowledge
2. Sensitivity and compassion
3. Limits of control
4. Flexibility

Because hardship experiences are not intentional, they act as a “wake-up call” to look inwards and decide what is important for one’s life.

In the book “Geeks and Geezers” (Bennis & Thomas, 2002), they found that every leader in their study had “at least one

intense, transformational” experience. They refer to these experiences as “**crucible moments**”, where the geeks and geezers found significant meaning from their experience. So, does experiencing a hardship make one a better leader? Not necessarily.

The key question is, was their conscious learning from the experience? As with any type of development, did the individual just experience the event or have they taken the time to think about it through the lenses of:

- ◆ What happened?
- ◆ How did they manage it?
- ◆ What did they learn not only from the event, but more importantly about themselves?

“Sometimes adversity is what you need to face in order to become successful.”

Zig Ziglar

So back to the root of this newsletter, our summer which was a personal hardship...**have we learned anything from it?** The above list from the CCL is a good start and we could add some specifics such as perseverance and prioritizing to this list as to what is important in our lives. But to be frank we are still immersed in our own hardship experience and it may be too early to reflect on all the lessons from the summer, but when the dust settles it will be time for a much deeper reflection. What we do know is that it is time to shift our focus back to work and to move forward.

3 Gifts You Gain from HARDSHIPS

Center for Creative Leadership

 <p>Greater Insight into What Makes You Tick</p> <p>Greater self-awareness means you'll be equipped to make better choices next time.</p>	 <p>Increased Compassion for Others</p> <p>Increased humility and sympathy mean you'll support others more readily.</p>	 <p>Resilience</p> <p>Surviving means you'll be stronger, more flexible, and better able to tackle new challenges.</p>
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TO DISCUSS FURTHER OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT US AT:

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