

MOMENTUM PRINCIPLE

Do the next right thing, not the next thing right.

Obtaining an education was not easy for Harry, who was raised by a single mother in an impoverished community. However, his high energy and determination enabled him to earn a certification as an emergency technician, gaining the respect of the hospital staff where he worked.

In his role, Harry often found himself on the front lines, treating trauma victims. He was deeply troubled that many patients arrived at the hospital too late. "If only better care could be offered right at the scene of the accident," he thought. Unfortunately, in his country, there was neither the budget nor the infrastructure to provide such care. He eventually realized that simply complaining would not bring about change. If anything was going to happen, he would have to take action himself.

Harry began by simply walking into a village along the highway and announcing his availability to teach first responder care. The response was overwhelming. He now leads an organization with several employees, a couple of vehicles, and a significant waitlist for training sessions. He takes pride in the quality and popularity of the program but is even more satisfied with the respect and empowerment it brings to the people he serves.

Traveller, the path is your tracks. And nothing more. Traveller, there is no path. The path is made by walking. By walking you make a path.¹

Change doesn't come from standing still; movement is required. William Shockley, one of the founders of Silicon Valley—the birthplace of modern technology—taught that progress is impossible without movement. He acknowledged that movement will inevitably involve failures. However, stumbling along the way is beneficial, as it helps establish a baseline for future efforts. In fact, Shockley asserted that success is often built on the foundation of failure.

One of the things that is least effective in encouraging creativity is to give the impression that... all of the nice things, the important things, are found out nicely and neatly. It has been my experience that everything, all of the more difficult inventions I've made...most of these require many failures to accomplish. It is my own experience that to do creative work one must overextend oneself, one must count on falling on his face, on getting into difficulties, one must learn from these failures and not be stopped by them.²

¹ Antonio Machado, *Traveler, There is No Path*, Proverbs and Songs, 1912 (translated by Betty Jean Craige, *Selected Poems by Antonio Machado*, 1979)

² William Shockley interviewed in 1969 by Jane Morgan - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWGVuoisDbI>

The Motion Principle recognizes that failures are unavoidable. When we embrace these missteps, they become valuable teaching moments that enhance the quality of our efforts. Conversely, if we ignore mistakes, they can gradually undermine a project's effectiveness and lead to stagnation. Like steering a car, motion requires adjustments along the way; without them, we risk ending up in a ditch, far from our destination.

In 2006, Alan Mulally, the CEO of Ford Motor Company, asked his managers to colour-code their reports: green for doing well, yellow for concerns, and red for issues with no immediate solutions. Initially, all reports came back green, even though the company was facing a \$17 billion loss. Something was clearly wrong, but the managers were afraid to admit it..

Eventually, despite fearing for his job, an executive submitted a red-coded report. This was precisely what Mulally was waiting for; he couldn't help but clap and smile. His unexpected reaction broke the ice, encouraging others to admit their problems courageously. As the fears in the room dissipated, honest interactions, new proposals, and practical solutions emerged. "At that moment, we all knew that we were going to trust each other," Mulally reflected. "We were going to share everything about the plan, and we were going to support each other in turning the reds into yellows and greens."³

Whereas fear binds, restricts, and hinders advancement, freedom allows honest feedback, fresh innovation, and, ultimately, progress. A well-known motto in Silicon Valley is, "Fail fast, fail often." Although failure can be humbling, it provides invaluable lessons. Every effort should be made to create open channels for honest feedback, which will undoubtedly require humility on the part of those receiving it.

Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, "Master, save me!" Jesus didn't hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand. Then he said, "Faint-heart, what got into you?"⁴

Peter was a passionate disciple, always eager to be on the move. The moment he walked on water is often highlighted in this narrative. Still, it tends to overshadow a more profound and more significant message: Peter's courageous decision to step onto the water. Despite the real risk of sinking, he did not hesitate to leave the safety of the boat. As a result, he sank. It's noteworthy that even after

³ Daniel Harkavy, 7 Perspectives of Leadership, p45

⁴ Matthew 14:29-31 The Message

Peter's failure, Jesus still chose to change Simon's name to Peter, recognizing his potential and resilience. Transformative progress in a community is built on strong individuals like Peter—people who are willing to forge a path where none exists.

Summary Statement:

When communities come together and take action, they are set in motion. Even though there may be challenges along the way, each small step puts a community on the trajectory of sustainable development.

Discussion

1. What fears might be holding you or others in your community back from making progress?
2. What are some small things you can do in your community within the next few days? These actions may not be significant in scale but can still lead to positive change. For instance, consider doing something kind for a neighbour, supporting a school teacher, or cleaning up a local road.
3. In 1985, Rick Hansen wheeled 40,000 kilometres through 34 countries to raise awareness for people with disabilities. His tour, called "Man in Motion," inspired his community to raise \$26 million. What examples of inspiring actions have you seen in your community?
4. Establishing a space where individuals feel comfortable sharing their failures is challenging. Simon Sinek, a motivational speaker, refers to this as the "Circle of Safety." Communities can learn valuable lessons from both successes and setbacks. What can you do to foster a safe environment for sharing in your community?
5. Feedback loops are crucial for any intervention because they facilitate the adjustment of action plans as they progress. Think of a project you are involved in. What types of feedback loops could you implement to enhance the effectiveness of your intervention?