

Moving Beyond Your Comfort Zone

By Della Menechella

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Many professionals have attained a high level of competence in their particular fields. They have learned a lot in their careers and they have a good sense of what works and what doesn't. Some individuals have become so good at what they do that they can successfully perform their jobs "with their eyes closed." These people are operating within their comfort zones.

While operating within your comfort zone is safe, it does not give you the opportunity to grow in your career. You may be good at what you do, but if you continue to do things in the same way, your job may have a tendency to be boring. It may no longer offer you a challenge. Only by trying new things can you get your creative juices flowing and experience the thrill of reaching new heights of achievement.

Trying new things does entail some risks. When you try something new you may experience a sense of discomfort. This comes from not being completely sure of what will lead to success. You will also very likely make mistakes along the way -- sometimes many mistakes. However, most of us don't like to make mistakes. We may be concerned about reactions from others. When we have achieved a level of competence in our jobs, we enjoy admiration from others. But as we make mistakes during the process of learning something new, we run the risk of looking foolish to others and feeling embarrassed.

The way to deal with this inevitable part of the learning process is to look at mistakes as feedback. They are letting you know when you need to use a different strategy to accomplish something. They are learning guideposts, which let you know what you should continue doing and what you should change. Extraordinarily successful people in every field have made lots of mistakes -- that's how they became extraordinary. And if someone is "kind enough" to bring to your attention that you've made a mistake say, "I know. Isn't it great? Now I don't have to do it again." It will totally change that individual's reaction to the situation.

Trying new things does offer wonderful payoffs. When you try something new and you persist at it, you usually become very good at it. In addition to having acquired a new skill, you can then experience the exhilaration of having faced a challenge and succeeding.

So make a commitment to move beyond your comfort zone. Only by doing so can you move closer to becoming the best you can possibly be.

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