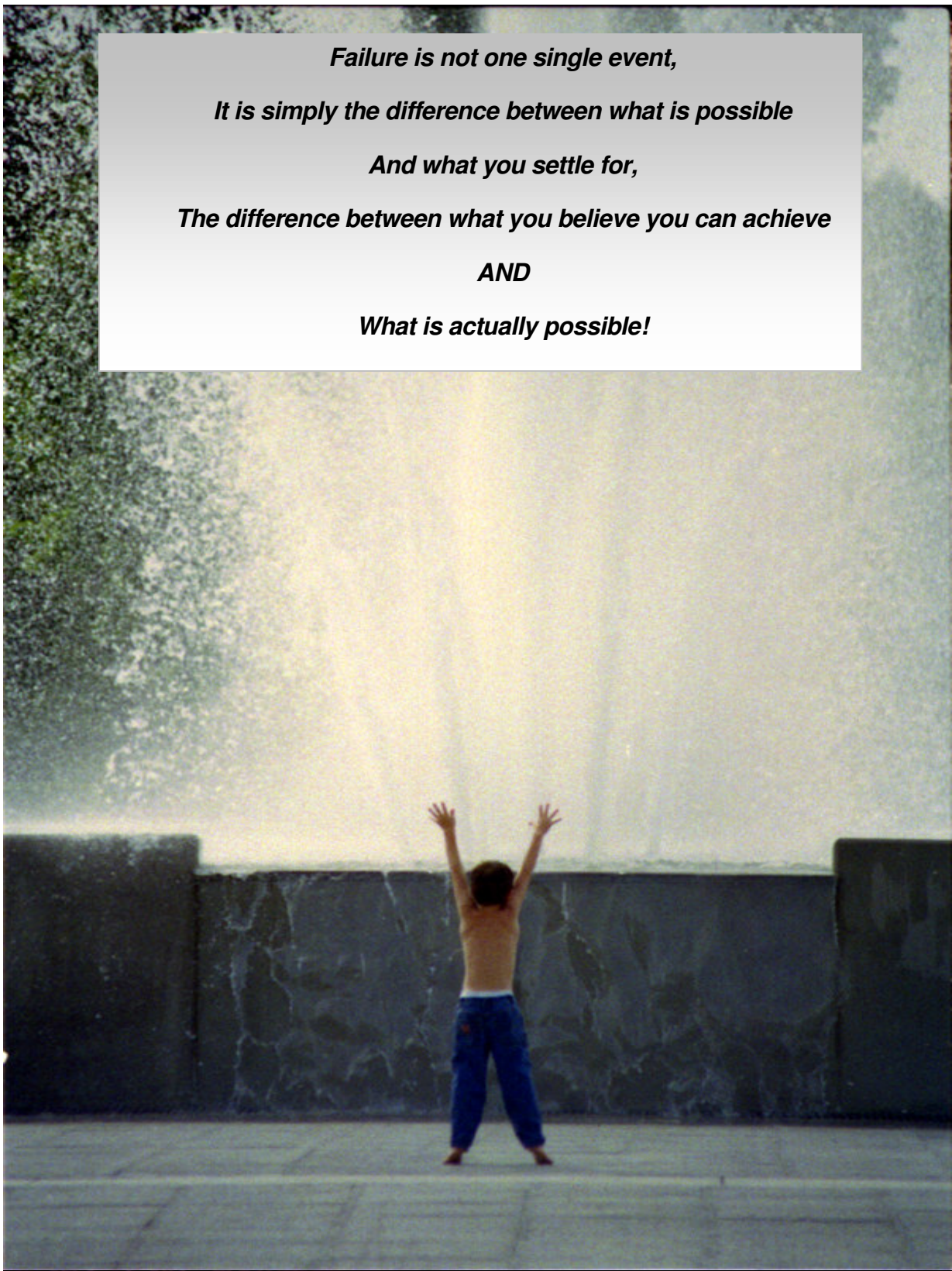


*Failure is not one single event,
It is simply the difference between what is possible
And what you settle for,
The difference between what you believe you can achieve
AND
What is actually possible!*



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Why Prepare This Presentation?

This is a very different way of introducing you to something NEW, because “it is NEW”! This is an introduction to a NEW way of learning, that will have your staff realising that they do not get paid by the hour for their time, but they get paid for the value that they put into their time

(Your Business)!

Probably the single most baffling problem that any organisation will face is in how to improve the performance of its staff. There are literally thousands of courses and seminars on the market to choose from, but why is it, that after having spent thousands of dollars to improve people’s performance, there is usually little or no increase in productivity? The notes that people take when attending courses get filed away and rarely ever used. Why is it that when staff have so much time and money spent on them by their organisations to improve them, they show little or no sign of wanting to improve themselves?

The time honoured saying rings true, **“you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink”!**

We at the **TRAC Consulting** believe that the only way to truly learn **is by experience**. If you put your hand into a fire, it hurts, and because it hurts you know not to do it again. We all know the saying “you can’t teach an old dog to learn new tricks,” but isn’t that what we have been taught to believe?

Rather than tell someone where he or she might be going wrong, it is a very different approach to show them what they could have done, as opposed to what they would normally do. To show someone “what is possible to achieve”, is to open all doors for the individual and allow that individual to determine their own potential.

The TRAC Consulting definition of learning:

‘You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink’, but if you help the horse to understand, ‘that it needs to drink to live, it will drink all the water you give it.’

TRAC Consulting has developed an **“innovative and interactive way of helping people learn”**, where all participants have to become **involved in the learning process**. We make the time they spend with us an enjoyable and impacting experience in which they will learn and spend their time productively. You cannot teach anyone, but you can show him or her, if they will give you their time!

Time is the only one commodity that we all possess, there are no limitations on my time compared to anybody else’s, I have twenty-four hours in my day, as do you. So what is the difference between us all? The key difference is **the amount of value and expertise we put into the time** that we have. What makes one man a success and another man a failure? The answer to this is; it is the amount of value that they put into their time and not the amount of time that they spend. For once you have spent an hour you can never have that hour back, the more valuable you make it, the more it is worth to you.

You the reader are in a position of responsibility, not only to yourself, but also to those that work with and for you. You will have been bombarded with information on ways to increase your wealth, the efficiency of your staff and to provide a better atmosphere in which you and your staff can work. This bombardment as unwelcome as it may be, has some value, because this presentation is part of that same bombardment, but I promise you **‘this is new and has unlimited value’**.

This presentation has taken a great deal of my **time** to put together. The reason I have presented it to you in this format is, so that even if we were to never meet, some of the ideas that I have given you may remain with you.

I have spent my time to introduce you, to **‘something different’** and all I ask is that you, the reader, do me the justice of taking your time to read it.

Does your organisation maximise its learning opportunities?

Few large corporations live even half as long as a person. In 1983, a *Shell* survey found that one third of the firms in the 'Fortune 500' in 1970 had vanished. *Shell* estimated that the average lifetime of the largest industrial enterprises is less than forty years, roughly half the lifetime of a human being! The chances are fifty-fifty that you the reader will see your present organisation, as it is today change or disappear during your lifetime. Merges and restructures today are every day occurrences.

In most companies that fail, there was an abundance of evidence that the business was in trouble. This evidence goes sometimes unheeded, even when individual managers are aware of it. The organisation as a whole cannot recognise impending threats, understand the implications of those threats, or come up with alternatives.

Perhaps under the laws of '**survival of the fittest**,' this continual death of businesses is fine for society. Painful though it may be for the employees and the owners, it is simply a turnover of the economic soil, redistributing the resources of production to new companies and new cultures. But **what if** the high corporate mortality rate is only a symptom of deeper problems that afflict all companies, not just the ones that die? **What if** even the most successful companies are poor learners, they survive but never live up to their potential? **What if**, in light of what organisations could achieve and perceive as '**excellence**' is **actually ONLY 'mediocrity'**?

It is no surprise that most organisations learn poorly. Quite often many companies fail to learn from past experience and continue to make the same mistakes time and time again. (HABITS) The way they are designed and managed, the way peoples jobs are defined, and most importantly, the way they have been taught to think and interact and communicate create fundamental learning disabilities. These disabilities operate despite the best efforts of bright, committed and well-trained people. Often the harder they try to solve problems, the worse the results become. What learning does occur despite these apparent learning disabilities is often in the wrong direction.

Learning disabilities are tragic in children, especially when they go undetected. They are **NO LESS** tragic in organisations, when they also go undetected.

The first step in curing learning disabilities is to begin to identify them. Once Identified any organisation can maximise its learning opportunities.

1. "I AM MY POSITION"

We are trained to be loyal to our jobs, so much so that we confuse them with our own identities. When a large steel company began closing plants in the early 1980s, it offered to train the displaced steelworkers for new jobs. **But the training never 'took'**, the workers drifted into unemployment and odd jobs instead. Psychologists came in to find out why, and found the steelworkers suffering from an acute identity crisis. *"How could I do anything else?"* asked the workers. *"I am only a lathe operator."*

When asked what they do for a living, most people will describe the tasks that they perform every day, not the purposes of the greater enterprise in which they take part. Most see themselves within a 'system' over which they have little or no influence. They **'do their job,' put in their time**, and try to cope with the forces that are out of their control. Consequently, they tend to see their responsibilities as limited to the boundaries of their position.

Recently, managers of a car manufacturer stripped down a Japanese import to understand why the Japanese were able to achieve extraordinary precision and reliability at lower cost on a particular assembly process. They found that the same standard type of bolt had been used three times on the engine block. Each time it mounted a different type of component. On their car, the same assembly required three different bolts, which required three different wrenches and three different inventories of bolts, making the car much slower and more costly to assemble. Why did they use three different bolts? Because their design organisation had three groups of engineers, each responsible for **'their component only.'** The Japanese had one designer responsible for the entire engine mounting, and probably much more. The irony is that each of their groups of engineers considered their work successful because **'their bolt and assembly worked just fine.'**

When people in organisations focus only on their position, they have little sense of responsibility for the results produced when all positions interact. Moreover, when results are disappointing, it can be very difficult to know why. All they can do is assume that **'someone messed up.'**

Experiential Learning and Interactive Developmental programs change functional behaviour and are about encouraging people to think and act differently. The learning transfer is emphasised with activities that are customised to align with the client's culture. Program objectives are usually well integrated to align with the organisation's goals.

2. "THE ENEMY IS OUT THERE"

A friend once told me the story of a boy he coached in Cricket, who after dropping three catches in the slips, threw down his cap and marched off the pitch. *"No one can catch a ball in the slips,"* he said.

There is in each of us a propensity to find someone or something other than ourselves to blame, when things go wrong. Some organisations elevate this propensity to a commandment: *'Thou shalt always find an external agent to blame.'* Marketing blames manufacturing: *"The reason we keep missing sales targets is that our quality is not competitive."* Manufacturing blames engineering, engineering blames marketing: *"If they'd only quit messing around with our designs and let us design what we are capable of, we'd be an industry leader."*

The *'enemy is out there'* syndrome is actually a by-product of *'I am my position,'* and the non-systematic ways of looking at the world that it fosters. When we focus only on our position, we do not see how our own actions extend beyond the boundary of that position. When those actions have consequences that come back to hurt us, we misperceive these new problems as externally caused. Like the person being chased by his own shadow, who cannot seem to shake it.

'*The Enemy is out there*' syndrome is not limited to assigning blame within the organisation. During its last years of operation, the once highly successful *People Express Airlines* slashed its prices, boosted marketing, and bought *Frontier Airlines*, all in a frantic attempt to fight against the perceived cause of its demise: perceived as increasingly aggressive competitors. Yet, none of these moves arrested the company's mounting losses or corrected its core problem, their service quality had declined so far, that low fares were its only remaining pull on customers.

'*The enemy is out there,*' is almost always an incomplete story. '*Out there*' and '*in there*' are usually part of a single problem. This learning disability makes it almost impossible to detect the leverage which we can use '*in here*' on problems that straddle the boundary between us and '*out there.*'

Experiential learning activities (indoor and or outdoor) **challenge and change the thinking process** and are about learning from new experiences. The learning is usually profound, memorable and lasting. This results in the elimination of blame or the 'out there' mentality as the new learning relates back to the participant's ownership and application of the new learning process.

3. 'THE ILLUSION OF TAKING CHARGE'

Managers frequently proclaim the need for **taking charge** when faced with difficult problems. What this typically means, is that we should face up to difficult issues, stop waiting for someone else to do something, and solve problems before they grow into crises. In particular, being **pro-active** is frequently seen as an antidote to being '**reactive**', waiting until a situation gets out of hand before taking a step.

In recent times various insurance companies have decided to fight claims rather than to pay them, only to realise, sometimes too late, that the cost of litigation was more than the amount saved.

All too often, 'pro-activeness' is 're-activeness' in disguise. If we simply become more aggressive fighting the '*enemy out there,*' we are reacting regardless of what we call it. True pro-activeness comes from seeing how we contribute to our own problems. It is a product of our way of thinking, not our emotional state. Companies or organisations in too many circumstances, end up having to deal with major situations, that were once just small nagging problems that at the time of their discovery 'could be shelved.' If only we focused on the future as well as today's results.

4. 'THE FIXATION ON EVENTS'

Conversations in organisations are dominated by concern with events: last months sales, the new budget cuts, last quarters earnings, who just got promoted or fired, or the new product was just launched by a competitor. **The collapse of an organisation rarely comes from one single event, but from an accumulation of many small events, that were so small, that they went unnoticed.** So often is the case that we look for external events to justify reactions in our own organisations and thus justify to ourselves that the results to our production or output were out of our control.

Have you ever heard '*a bankrupt individual*' or '*ex director*' of an organisation, admit that the failure of the organisation was down to them, and that they had missed something or not noticed an opportunity. They will normally always blame an external event for their failure, for it is not normal human behaviour to analyse one's own failure. It is a whole lot easier to look to the outside rather than the inside, when we deal with the traumas that life throws at us.

5. 'THE FAILURE TO ADAPT'

The inability to adapt to gradually building threats to survival is so pervasive in systems studies of corporate failure that it has given rise to the parable of the '*boiled frog.*'

If you place a frog into a boiling pot of water, it will immediately try to scramble out. But if you place the same frog in room temperature water, and don't scare it, it'll stay put. Now if the pot is put onto a heat source, and you gradually turn up the temperature, something very interesting happens. As the temperature rises from 70 to 80 degrees F., the frog will do nothing. In fact it will show every sign of enjoying itself. As the temperature gradually increases, the frog will become groggier and groggier, until it is unable to climb out of the pot. Though there is nothing restraining it, it will just sit there and boil. Why? Because the frog's internal apparatus for sensing threats to survival is geared to sudden changes in its environment, not to slow, gradual changes.

Learning to see slow, gradual processes requires slowing down our frenetic pace and paying attention to the subtle, as well as the dramatic. By nature we are also scared or afraid of change, and so we learn to **live with what we have as opposed to what we could achieve.**

6. 'LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE'

The most powerful learning comes from direct experience!

Indeed, we learn eating, crawling, walking, and communication through direct trial and error, through taking an action and seeing the consequences of that action, then taking a new and different action. But what happens when we can no longer see the consequences of our actions? What happens if the primary consequences of our actions are in the distant future or in a distant part of the larger system within which we operate? We each have a '*learning horizon*,' a breadth of vision in time and space within which we assess our effectiveness. When our actions have consequences beyond our learning horizon, it becomes impossible to learn from direct experience.

Herein lies the **core-learning dilemma** that confronts organisations: we learn best from experience, but we never directly experience the consequences of many of our most important decisions – therefore we negate the opportunity to learn.

Traditionally, organisations attempt to surmount the difficulty of coping with the breadth of impact from decisions by breaking themselves up into components. The result: analysis of the most important problems in a company, the complex issues that cross-functional lines, becomes a perilous or nonexistent exercise.

Experiential Learning often relates directly to metaphors. **Metaphoric transfer** is the attempt to narrow the gap between apparently different learning environments through client realised metaphors. A metaphor is an idea, object, or decision used in place of the original learning environment. By finding metaphors, clients can bring seemingly different learning environments much closer together. Example: Climbing a mountain is like completing a sales presentation, it needs to be structured and taken one step at a time!

7. 'THE MYTH OF THE MANAGEMENT TEAM'

Standing forward to do battle with these dilemmas and disabilities is '*the management team*,' the collection of savvy, experienced managers who represent the organisation's different functions and areas of expertise. What confidence do we really have that the typical management team can surmount these learning difficulties? **If the situation had been correctly managed from the start, there would not be any problems to solve.**

All too often, teams in business tend to spend their time fighting for turf, avoiding anything that will make them look bad personally, and pretending that everyone is behind the team's collective strategy, thus maintaining the appearance of a cohesive team.

To keep up the image they seek to squelch disagreement; people with serious reservations avoid stating them publicly, joint decisions are weak compromises reflecting what everyone can live with or reflecting one person's view and forced onto the team (usually the 'Boss' and the other team members are too afraid to voice their own opinion, when the 'Boss' would probably prefer them to do so!). If there is disagreement, it's usually expressed in a way that lays blame, polarises opinion, and fails to reveal the underlying differences in assumptions and experience in a way that the team as a whole could learn. The team may function quite well with routine issues, but when they are confronted with complex issues that may be embarrassing or threatening, the team seems to go to pieces.

School teaches us to never admit that we do not know the answer, and most corporations reinforce that lesson by rewarding people who agree with the corporations view, not for inquiring into complex issues. When was the last time within your organisation, that someone was rewarded for raising difficult questions about the company's current policies, rather than agreeing with all upper level decisions? Even if we feel uncertain or ignorant, we learn to protect ourselves from the pain of having to admit our own incompetence. '**Skilled incompetence**' equals teams of people who are incredibly proficient at keeping themselves from learning.

Experiential learning on the other hand provides the platform for personal and ownership of the learning outcomes and subsequent transfer into the organisation's culture. Not only are the learning experiences changed to fit the culture and its context in the organisation, but the consequences and rewards associated with the new learning experience are also changed to suit the organisations desired outcomes.

8. 'BUDGETS versus POSSIBILITIES'

Recently I had a conversation with someone that I greatly respect. He holds the position of '*state sales manager*' for a '*home improvement*' company that has a turnover in excess of \$20 million annually. I asked him a simple question, "***which month of which year, was the best month in sales for his company***"?

The answer I got was, 'October 1997.' I then asked why, that since the answer was not '*last month*' did this mean that the company was heading backwards.

The answer I got shocked me, he took his time, thought about it and then gave me a long list of reasons why **LAST MONTH** was not his answer, and in the words of Jim Rohn "***I could here the thorns settling in as he spoke.***"

All too often when budgets are set for the future in companies, they will average out the previous years turnover/sales and increase this amount slightly to show growth, but what if instead **they looked at what was 'possible'** rather than what they considered to be '**achievable.**' If you took the figure from the best day of sales from the previous year and then worked out each month by working days and used this figure as your average day, you end up with sales figures that are '**possible**'. This figure would usually be 2 to 3 times the usual budget target. When presented with this scenario all the '*sales managers*' I have ever met agree that the figures are possible but unrealistic to achieve. Why? The reason I put to you is that, ***this is how they have been trained to think.*** Most people at some time in their lives reach '*a high point*' when they performed at their '*full potential*'. They will then reminisce about this time probably for the rest of their life. What they cannot seem to be able to comprehend, is that they could repeat that event many times over in every aspect of their life, if they only had the right attitude. After all anything "**Is Possible**" if we really commit to it!

On the next page TRAC offers some solutions for your consideration.

'THE SOLUTIONS'

We at **TRAC Consulting** have only one aim, and that is to enrich all of those that attend our training events with a practical learning experience that will be remembered and used. We ask you to not only take notes, because notes are often filed away. We do though, ask you to take part in an interactive learning experience that will make you, the participants, more aware of the problems that you often face, and a skill set that shows you how to solve them.

We are so confident that everyone who attends one of **TRACS** impacting learning experiences will **'take something away'**, something that they will never forget, but more importantly, something that will **'improve their abilities and maximise their full potential.'**

Yes, this is a sales pitch... BUT the lessons exposed in the above briefing are ALL CORE to TRAC's innovative and proven learning strategies.

TRAC Consulting's impacting learning experiences will help you to:

- Create a common language for your organisation and work (sales) teams.
- Build a master plan for improved communication with your suppliers, customers, management team, staff and associates.
- Discover the critical issues that may be affecting your team's performance.
- Understand how as a team you can make more effective decisions!
- Empower people to accept responsibility for their own learning and personal development.
- Uncover and remove any resistance that may be inhibiting change.
- Build "Effective" Teams that reach their full potential.
- Create an "exceptional customer service" ethic within your organisation.

TRAC Consulting's unique experiential learning programs are not designed to 'tell people what to do', rather they are tailored to show each individual through an **'interactive learning experience'** what ***results are actually possible for their teams to achieve.***

TRAC will open up the barriers that exist between what you ***thought was 'achievable' and show you what is 'actually possible'***. TRAC's experiential events ensure that everybody must become involved, **'there is no sitting at the back or hiding in the corner'**. I would ask you, ***"that if any of the points in this presentation strike you as being relevant to your organisation"***, then you have nothing to lose and everything to gain for your organisation by talking to me further.

This presentation was researched and written by Mark Jones, for the purpose of introducing you and your organisation into a new and exciting interactive method of learning, a learning experience that will help you and your organisation become recognised as an industry leader in **"The Twenty First Century"**.

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Some of the material used and adapted to suit this presentation was first published in "The Fifth Discipline" by Peter. M. Senge.