

# Disappointment Is Opportunity in Disguise by Harvey Mackay

Handling disappointment is one of life's little challenges, and often an indication of how we deal with adversity at work as well. Anyone who has been in business can tell war stories about the bumps in the road. But if they've outlasted the competition, ask for their stories about survival. They've figured out how to turn disappointments into opportunities.

Lose one of your best customers? Bummer. But it's not necessarily a defeat. Find out why their orders are going elsewhere. If you messed up, fix what you can and resolve not to make the same mistake again. If the purchasing manager has a new brother-in-law who sells for your competition, well, that's not a disappointment anymore. That's your new challenge. Just don't lower your expectations. If you expect nothing, that's exactly what you'll get.

Didn't get the promotion? Be honest with yourself. Were you right for the job? Was it right for you? Do you have a future with the company? Use your disappointment to do some soul-searching. If there were two qualified people ahead of you, it could be a matter of timing. If you've been passed over before, it's time to quit being disappointed and recognize that you might have to jump to another lily pad. You'll thank your old company later for helping you get out in time.

Take a lesson from James Whitaker, the first American to reach the summit of Mount Everest. Even though he was emotionally and physically prepared, he encountered more than his share of disappointments: avalanches, dehydration, hypothermia, and the physical and mental fatigue caused by the lack of oxygen at 29,000 feet. Why did Whitaker succeed where so many had given in to their disappointments? "You don't really conquer such a mountain," he said. "You conquer yourself. You overcome the sickness and everything else—your pain, aches, fears—to reach the summit."

Achievers, like Whitaker, focus on the road, rather than the bumps in it, to reach their destination.

OK, you're on the other side of the desk. Can't find the right person for a job? That's not a disappointment, that's a business emergency. It's time to call in the pros. I use a headhunter and an industrial psychologist for all my key hires. I can't afford to be disappointed.

Is your staff underperforming? Time for another look in the mirror. Perhaps they're as disappointed in you as you are in them. If you can make their job more satisfying... challenging... rewarding, do it. The results won't disappoint you.

Next time you're on the golf course, pick up your golf ball and take a close look. The first golf balls manufactured had smooth covers. An avid, but broke, golfer couldn't afford new ones, so he used whatever he found along the course: beat up, nicked golf balls. His playing partners soon noticed that their smooth-covered balls didn't fly as accurately or as far as his. What was going on? But they finally figured out what gave their friend the advantage.

Today, golf balls have as many as 432 dimples. The "rough spots" enhance the ball's distance and accuracy.

Life's like that: rough spots sharpen our performance. And more often than not, the obstacles can be turned into advantages. You just can't let your disappointment get in the way.