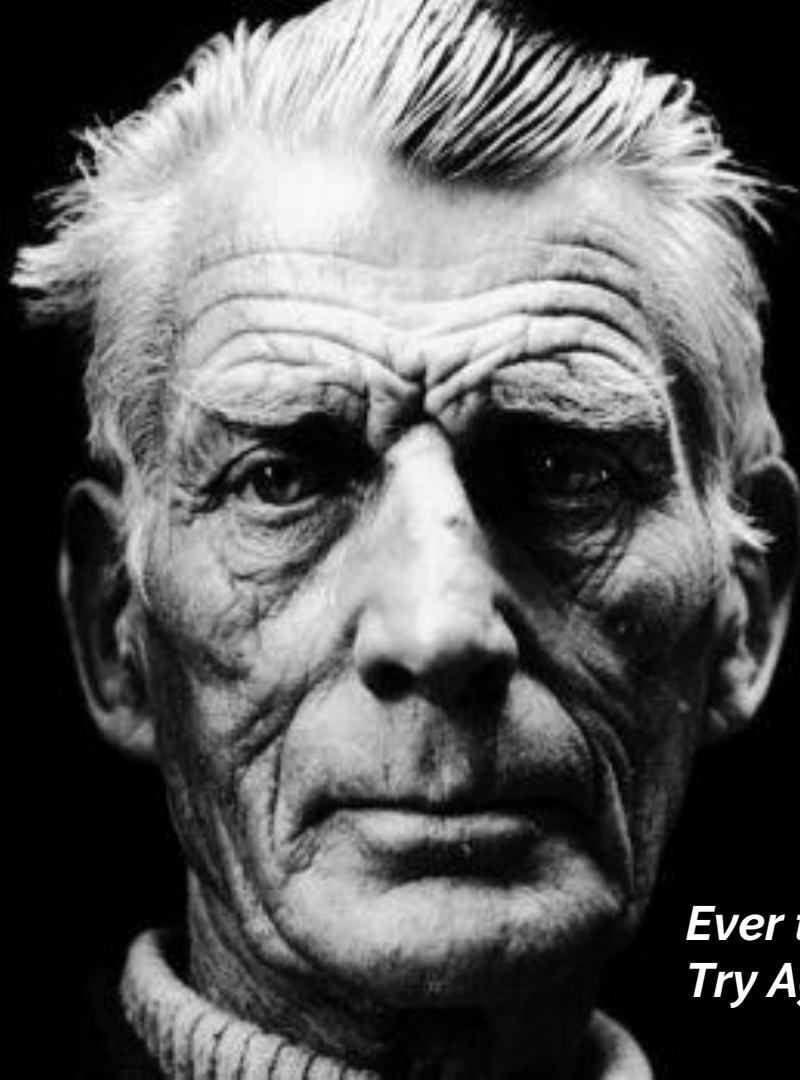# WHEN DOES FAILURE FUEL SUCCESS AND INNOVATION?
INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICING

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Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter.
Try Again. Fail again. Fail better.
Samuel Beckett

What is "failure"?

Failure: Basic definitions…

1. "Lack of success" (OED)
2. "The termination of an initiative that has fallen short of its goals" (McGrath, 1999)

Consequently, failure is:

- Specific
- Contextual
- Individual

www.warwickshirebusinesswatch.co.uk

cyber scam

virus   fraud   internal theft

burglary   identity theft

YOUR BUSINESS MATTERS
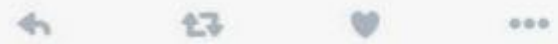
Warwickshire POLICE

Policing North Warks
@NWarksCops

Following

@ShipstonCops @RugbyCops @WellesbournCops *For Sale* 2016 Mobile Police Station, 187 miles, slight artwork issue....

1:29 PM - 14 Mar 2016

Why does failure happen?

The world is increasingly…
- Volatile
- Uncertain
- Complex
- Ambiguous

And there are ever greater levels of…
- Urgency
- Scrutiny

Why does failure happen?
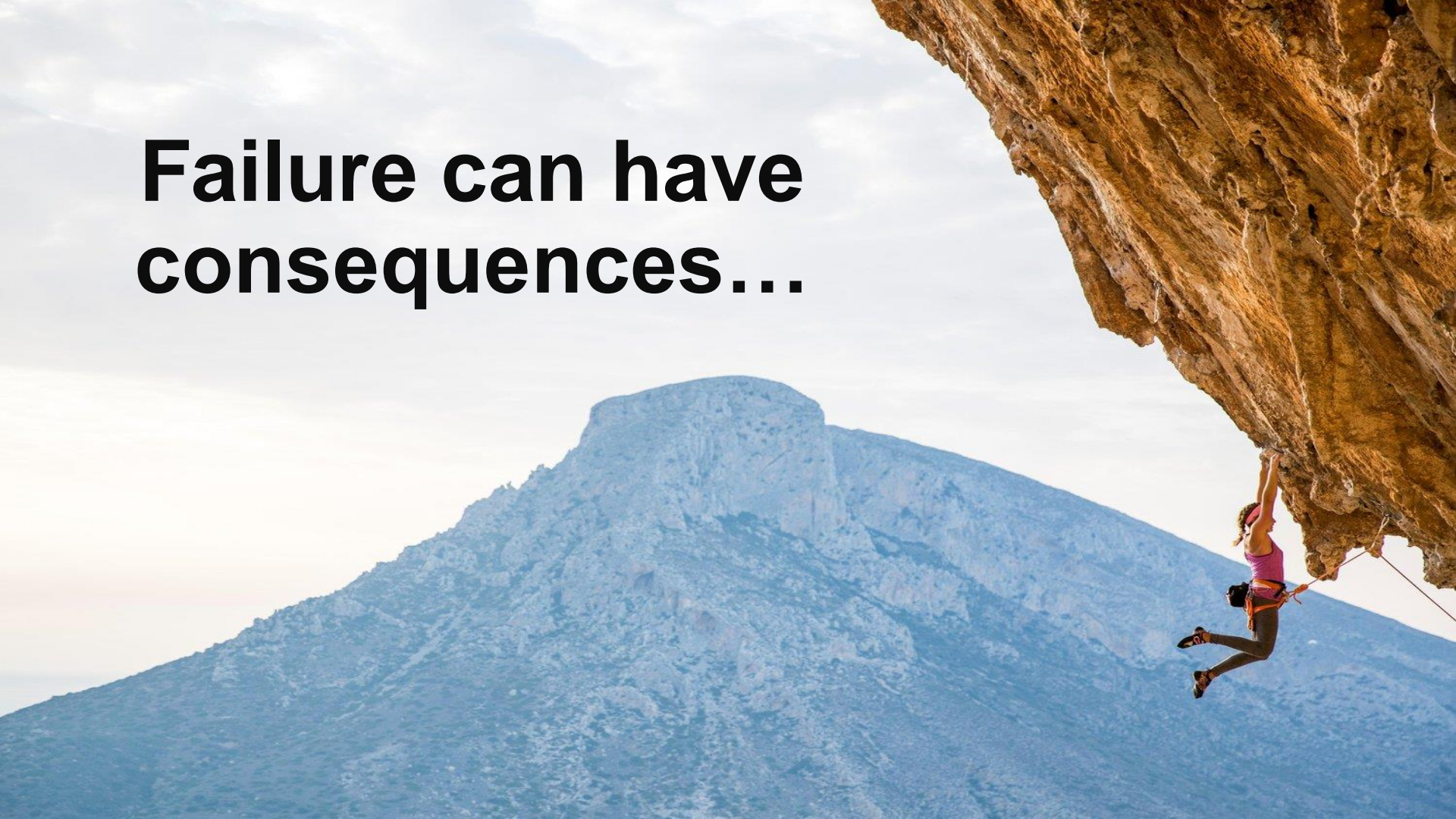

Undesirable

Desirable

- **Deviation**:   Conscious deviation from a process or practice
- **Inattention:**   Inadvertent deviation from a process or practice
- **Lack of ability:**   Individuals lack the skills, knowledge or training
- **Process inadequacy:**   Person is competent, process is flawed
- **Task challenge:**   The task is simply too difficult
- **Process complexity:**   A complex process breaks down leading to failure
- **Hypothesis Testing:**   An experiment to prove an idea or design fails
- **Exploratory testing:**   An experiment to expand knowledge and investigate a possibility leads to an undesired result

(Edmondson, 2011)

Failure can have consequences…

Potential consequences of failure…

- Personal

- Professional

- Social

- Psychological
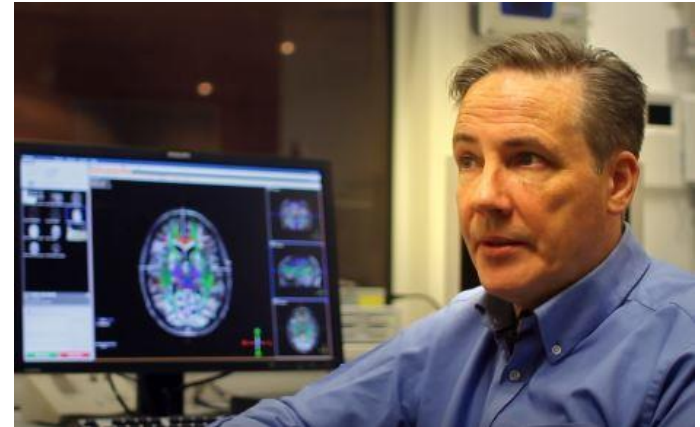
Psychological impacts of failure

- Stress
- Exhaustion
- Frustration
- Demotivation
- Disengagement
- Grief

"Pain, remorse, shame, humiliation, anger, guilt, and blame as well as the fear of the unknown"

(Ucbasaran et al., 2013, p.178)

Ongoing exposure to stress is particularly damaging

Experiencing stress causes release of stress hormones (cortisol and catecholamines, such as nor-adrenaline). Stress hormones provoke and control the fight-or-flight response. If overly prolonged, the fight-or-flight response results in compromised brain function… prolonged stress can even result in tissue loss in certain brain regions.

(O'Mara, 2015, p.106)

And these consequences can be overwhelming…

- Goals seem less attainable
- Perception of your abilities can be distorted
- A sense of helplessness can develop
- "Fear of failure" and performance anxiety
- Unconscious self-sabotaging

(See for example Clifford, 1980)

With particular impacts for policing

Failures by police have…

more serious consequences for society and public safety… I think we look to police as a source of authority and to help us when we are in trouble and I guess that we expect them to be a little more perfect than the rest of us are.

Professor David Wall, Centre for Criminal Justice Studies, Leeds University
(https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-38861475)

And the attitudes of individual police officers…

Police, unlike workers in most other jobs, are constantly being reminded of the fatefulness of their actions to themselves as well as to the public. They believe their jobs are on the line daily. So for police to avoid what would be viewed as a mistake by the department or the courts is an imperative.

One aspect of what police learn on the job, then, is what not to do. As an officer remarked, "In policing, don'ts are often more important than do's.”

(Bayley and Bittner, 1984, p.43)

96 police officers have died in Northern Ireland since 2002

17 have died by suicide

15 officers died on duty

81 officers died off duty

6682 total police workforce as of October '17

Yet there are benefits of failure

- Resilience
- Persistence
- Understanding
- Motivation
- Learning
- Innovation

How can we ensure failure leads to success and innovation?

Thriving in the face of failure

To thrive in the face of failure, organisations must:

- try new things, in the expectation that some will fail

- make failure survivable, because it will be common

- make sure that you know when you have failed

(Harford, 2011)

Three organisation capabilities critical for innovation…

- Creative abrasion
- Creative agility
- Creative resolution

(Hill, 2014)

Three organisation capabilities critical for innovation…

Creative abrasion

- creating a marketplace of ideas through debate and discourse. In innovative organizations, differences are amplified not minimised

Creative agility

- testing and refining the portfolio of ideas through quick pursuit, reflection and adjustment; discovery-driven learning where you act, rather than plan, your way to the future

Creative resolution

- combining even opposing ideas to reconfigure them in new combinations to produce a solution that is new and useful

Factors that hinder innovation…

- Harsh criticism of new ideas
- Organisational politics
- An emphasis on the status quo
- Risk-aversion among top management
- Excessive time pressure to complete work
- Excess focus on extrinsic motivators

(Amabile 2013)

Factors that support innovation…

- Challenge, freedom and autonomy

- Diversity and collaboration

- Encouragement, support and recognition of crea

- A clear organisational vision for creativity

- Processes/mechanisms to support new ideas

- Active sharing of ideas

(Amabile 2013)

Leadership plays a vital role

[In policing,] organizational and individual outcomes are commonly attributed, at least in part, to leadership or its absence. An examination of instances in which organizations have experienced some level of "failure" in the form of corruption, misconduct, inefficacy, or ineptitude can often be partially linked to the level, quality, and style of leadership.

(Schafer, 2010)

Leaders must accept failure and uncertainty…

An acceptance of *Intelligent Failure* is required: *failures that are most effective at fostering learning*

Leaders must…

- <u>Publicly</u> support people who intelligently fail

- Ensure failure is not career limiting

- Publicise intelligent failure

Key characteristics of *Intelligent Failure*

- A consequence of actions that are well-planned.
- Outcomes are uncertain.
- Scale or potential impact is relatively modest.
- Dealt with promptly and efficiently
- Context is familiar enough that there is an opportunity for learning

(Sitkin, 1992, p. 243)

Plus…
- Underlying assumptions are explicitly declared
- Assumptions can be tested at specific checkpoints and identified in advance

(McGrath, 2010)

Principles for practical application

- Decide what success and failure would look like before you launch initiative

- Convert assumptions into knowledge

- Be quick about it – fail fast

- Contain the downside risk – fail cheaply

- Limit uncertainty

- Build a culture that celebrates intelligent failure

- Codify and share what you learn

(McGrath, 2011)

Vicarious Failure is also important

If *productive failure* is a design where students have an opportunity to learn from their own failed solutions, then *vicarious failure* is a design where students have an opportunity to learn from the failed solutions of their peers.

(Kapur, 2015, p.57)

As are Trial & Error and Experimentation

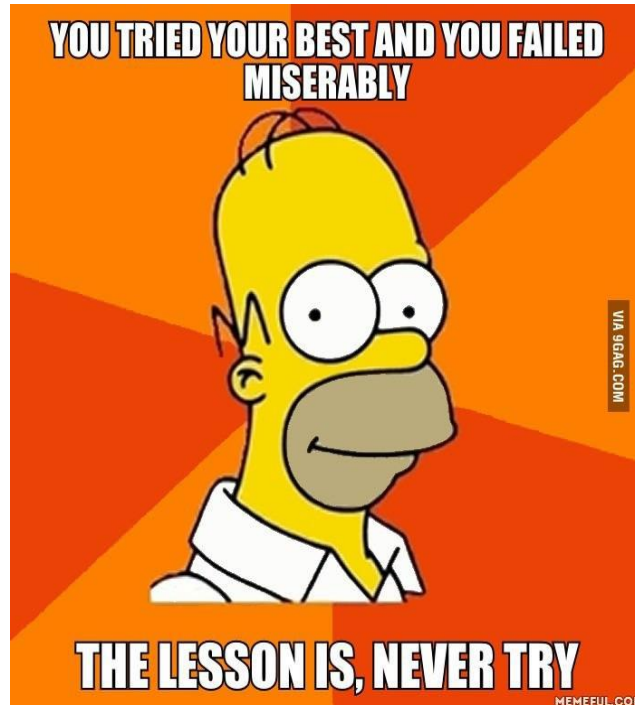*Sometimes failure leads to unexpected outcomes or breakthroughs*

- Research in one area leads to a discovery in another
- An open search brings about a discovery
- A solution is reached by an unexpected path
- A solution is found to a problem that only emerges later

Experimentation Checklist

Purpose	• Does the experiment focus on a specific management action under consideration? • What do people hope to learn from the experiment?
Buy-In	• What specific changes would be made on the basis of the results? • How will the organization ensure that the results aren't ignored? • How does the experiment fit into the organization's overall learning agenda and strategic priorities?
Feasibility	• Does the experiment have a testable prediction? • What is the required sample size? • Can the organization feasibly conduct the experiment at the test locations for the required duration?
Reliability	• What measures will be used to account for systemic bias, whether it's conscious or unconscious? • Do the characteristics of the control group match those of the test group? • Can the experiment be conducted in either a "blind" fashion (where the participant does not know if they are part of the test or control group) or "double-blind" fashion (where neither the participant nor the experimenter know who is in the test or control group)? • Have any remaining biases been eliminated through statistical analyses or other techniques? • Would others conducting the same test obtain similar results?
Value	• Has the organization considered a targeted rollout—that is, one that takes into account a proposed initiative's effect on different customers, markets, and segments—to concentrate investments in areas where the potential payback is highest? • Has the organization implemented only the components of an initiative with the highest return on investment? • Does the organization have a better understanding of what variables are causing what effects?

(Thomke and Manzi, 2014)

How we approach things comes down to our mindset…

What are mindsets?

- **Growth Mindset**
  - Intelligence, abilities and talents are malleable and can be developed
- **Fixed Mindset**
  - Intelligence, abilities and talents are fixed, immutable traits

(Dweck, 2006)

Organisational Mindsets

An organisation's mindset is the belief that it and its workforce have about the nature of talent and ability…

- *"Culture of genius"*
  - Talent is worshipped
  - Employees either have it or they don't, when it comes to skills and learning capabilities

- *"Culture of development"*
  - People can grow and improve with effort, good strategies, and good mentoring
  - Culture-of-development organizations foster growth mindset, actively seeking to stretch their employees and promote new skills

Dweck and Associates

Impact of a "culture of development"

culture of development mindset versus culture of genius mindset

Employees have higher levels of...	trust
	ownership
	commitment
	loyalty
and lower levels of...	unethical behavior
Employees believe the company fosters more...	innovation
	collaboration
	risk-taking
Supervisors view employees as more...	innovative
	collaborative
	committed to learning and growth
and having more...	managerial potential

HBR, Dweck & Senn-Delaney

Empowerment is crucial

Both **structural** and **psychological** empowerment are important when taking the step from failure to innovation

Structural Empowerment

- **Power** and **decision-making** are shared with a team

- People empowered to make decisions… *within the scope of their job*

- Participative decision-making and an open flow of information between all levels of an organisation

Psychological Empowerment

- The beliefs that people hold about their job and employer

- People are encouraged to…
    - Identify with the **purpose** and **values** of the organisation
    - Develop their **self-belief** in their competence to carry out the job and their ability to impact on organisational outcomes
    - Have **individual autonomy** over how the work is completed

Deliterate Practice is required

"an iterative and ongoing process of practice involving conscious engagement with the chosen topic or task"

(Knell, 2018)

- Recognise that mistakes happen
- Learn from those mistakes
- Make incremental improvement

But beware the *Creativity Conundrum*

How do you get people to do what they **are meant to** while also being creative and coming up with new ideas and innovations?

Conclusions and Implications

Implications for policing

Policing organisations and leaders must…

- Understand the link between failure and innovation

- Recognise that failure is unavoidable

- Minimise the human impacts of failure by providing appropriate leadership and supports

- Support a culture of innovation which allows for *Intelligent Failure*

- Adopt the key practices of *Intelligent Failure*

Implications for policing

Policing organisations and leaders must…

- Adopt key supporting practices
  - Trial & Error and experimentation
  - Growth Mindsets and a Culture of Development
  - Deliberate Practice
- Allow for learning and Vicarious Failure
- Support empowerment and new approaches to leadership
- Manage the *Creativity Conundrum*

Thank you!

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