The Destructive Pursuit of Idealized Goals

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Everyone can see things far off but is blind to what is near. – Sophocles

“They should have given up their attempt for the summit a long time ago; why do they keep climbing the mountain?” an experienced mountain climber asked as he witnessed a team of climbers pursue the mountain summit, well after other climbers had abandoned their attempt. Troubled by my firsthand encounter with the disaster that followed, I have spent nearly a decade studying disasters, mishaps, and problems encountered in a variety of organizational settings—high-risk and not high-risk, business and military. I have conducted an extensive analysis of the positive and negative effects of goals, reviewed case studies of goal-setting sessions, spoke with numerous executives and leaders, and executed various studies of my own.

Organizations set and pursue goals with foolish devotion. Despite a nearly universal belief in the power of goals, growing evidence reveals that goals also allow leaders to justify a course of action to its own detriment. Leaders and groups can easily become entranced by goals because they create the vision of a desired future. My research revealed that, under certain conditions, the normally useful process of goal setting also drives failure. Years of study have led me to one simple conclusion about goals: goals work best in conventional situations with few contingencies. Traditional approaches to goal setting break down in the face of the unexpected. When goals replace learning as a primary motivator, the destructive pursuit of goals begins to take form.

This article describes the destructive pursuit of goals and points to three limitations that result from the goal-setting process. I outline six warning signs and five remedies for the destructive pursuit of goals. In a time when leadership advocates challenging goals, an understanding of how to avoid the destructive pursuit of goals becomes essential.

THE DESTRUCTIVE PURSUIT OF GOALS

On a mountain trek in 1996, I went to explore the natural landscape of the Himalayas. What I stumbled upon was a mystery of human nature. As I explored the foothills of Mount Everest, one of the world’s most deadly mountain-climbing disasters began to unfold on the peak itself. In an unwavering pursuit of the summit, teams ignored pre-established turnaround times. As a result, several teams became lost, and others were too weak to continue down the mountain. In the end, eight climbers from four countries pursued the summit to their eventual death. During the days following the incident, my colleagues and I, hiking at much more modest heights, came across survivors of that ill-fated expedition.

My quest to understand the behavior of these mountain climbers led me to discover the potentially destructive effects of goals in more common situations. For example:

- An organization, unable to accept the changing and competitive environment, fudges its books to meet projected earning targets.
- A young executive experiences conflict stemming from her hard-headed stance on
issues and indicates that her approach will be justified in her future role as company president.

- An idealistic, close-knit community begins to justify behaviors in its leadership that it would never accept in other group members, expressing that this behavior will help the group achieve all of its goals.

Existing research offers several explanations for such behaviors, but in the end, each of these explanations falls short. One explanation focuses on how individual ambition drives overly ambitious leaders. The drive to achieve lofty heights and the ambition to make a unique contribution lead individuals to put normal discretion aside. But my research showed that ambition does not always explain the detrimental pursuit of goals. For example, ambitious climbers proved likely to abandon any one attempt at the summit and return another day. The ambition explanation fails to explain why some goal-setting efforts drive success while others result in failure.

Group explanations provide a second account. The group explanations attribute dysfunctional behavior to the irrational decision-making that emerges in group settings. The desire to belong forces group members to agree to a course of action too quickly, and the fear of retaliation or rejection from others precludes questioning the direction. The group explanations enjoy terms such as "risky shift", "groupthink", and "Abilene Paradox", which offer appealing and memorable explanations for dysfunctional behavior. These explanations carry intuitive appeal since nearly everyone recalls experience with the dysfunctional conformity pressures of groups. However, years of research show that highly conforming groups often make more conservative choices as well as riskier ones. Close-knit groups make just as many good decisions as bad. In addition, the kind of goal-driven dysfunction I discovered appeared equally common within individuals, groups, and organizations. The contention that group memberships somehow pressure members to overpursue goals also fails to provide a full explanation.

I also uncovered a third line of reasoning that focuses on a leader's prior experience. Study after study shows how leaders become more committed to a course of action after initial efforts fail. When faced with the prospects of public failure and humiliation, leaders tend to put even more resources into pursuing an existing course of action. Leaders escalate commitment even if the existing course of action is a failing one. Researchers now realize that commitment also escalates when prior experience proves successful. Both prior success and prior failure drive the dysfunctional pursuit of goals.

The escalation explanation failed to provide a complete answer. Moreover, what constitutes prior success and failure remains open to interpretation. Correct interpretations of past experience as either successes or failures are particularly difficult to distinguish in hindsight. In addition, few efforts can be considered total failures or total successes without resulting unintended consequences.

Each explanation provided insight, but each in itself remained incomplete. My pursuit of a more compelling answer took me down another path. I began to look at how goals shape the identity of leaders and their followers. I now believe the climbers and other groups I studied pursued goals to their own detriment because of an inherent limitation in the goal-setting process itself. The destructive pursuit of goals emerges from idealized futures.

**Future Perfect**

In study after study, I consistently found how closely leaders identify with their goals, as if achieving the goal is the leader's primary source of social status. Close identification with future goals serves a useful purpose for leaders: an appeal to followers with a vision of a desired future. From charges of "set clear objectives" and "identify strategic direction" to "increase shareholder value and improve net profit margins", the language of goals assumes an almost religious status in organizations. Goals forge a shared identity among group members and catalyze com-
mon direction. Goals help leaders gain capital with followers. Sometimes the goal becomes the very identity of the group. When goal setters identify too closely with the future goal, the normally functional process of goal setting goes awry. The group looks to the goal for its sole source of identity.

The process of goal idealization applies to goal setting this way: the more a person, group, or organization relies on a future, as-yet-unachieved goal as a source of identity, the more likely the pursuit of the goal will become unreasonable. The investment of resources in achieving an idealized goal at the expense of immediate demands increases the likelihood that the goal setter will risk its own demise in favor of achieving the goal. The goal becomes the sole identity, and abandoning the goal becomes as unthinkable as abandoning oneself.

This doesn’t imply that all goal-directed behavior results in idealized goal pursuit or that all goal-seeking behavior leads to demise. In most circumstances just the opposite is true: goals result in achieving success. The advantages of setting goals get lost, however, because psychological, social, and contextual factors make abandoning the goal unthinkable once the goal-setting process has begun. Justifying the pursuit of goals becomes more important than achieving the goal. The quest to understand the mountain climbers and other goal-pursuing enthusiasts brought me to understand goal setting as a process consistent with what philosophers have called farsightedness.

Farsightedness

After years of war with Greece, the citizens of Troy delightfully looked over the city’s fortress walls to see that the Greeks no longer held them under siege. Indeed, the Greeks left behind a gift. Thinking they had achieved victory, and ignoring all warnings and omens, the leaders of Troy accepted the Greeks’ wooden horse within their walls. By believing they had achieved victory, the Trojans fell prey to the farsightedness of idealized goals. Thinking they had won the long-fought war, the Trojans failed to notice that within the belly of the premature victory lay severe consequences. The Trojans put faith in a desired outcome rather than face the hard realities of the present.

The fall of Troy and other tragedies of ancient Greece led Sophocles to believe that “everyone can see things far off but is blind to what is near”. This “farsightedness” captured what I saw in the disaster on Mount Everest. The goal of reaching the summit promised an idealistic, far-off utopia worth striving for, but blinded the climbers, literally and figuratively, to the difficult realities of the present. Regardless of the setting, I saw the same mechanisms at work: pursuit of an idealized goal. The Everest disaster represents a broader but seldom-discussed problem in the study of organizations: the limits of goals.

The Limits of Goals

The mounting losses and eventual bankruptcy of WorldCom illustrate the limits of goals and the goal-setting process. The multi-billion-dollar telecommunication provider set out to prove that industry growth projections were too conservative. At first, this strategy paid off. The profits climbed past competitors to the pleasure of starry-eyed investors. Once the fast-growing cellular market became saturated and profits continued to climb, the stellar performance also caught the attention of security regulators. Few in the organization wanted to re-evaluate projected earnings. Rather than adjust projections to changing market conditions, the organization began to justify booking noncash items as profits. In the end, the organization overstated $7 billion, resulting in bankruptcy. Members of the WorldCom board, once thought off limits to shareholder suits, agreed to pay hefty fines from their own pockets for failing in their oversight duties.

Goals are difficult to abandon. The WorldCom debacle reveals how goals can both limit critical thinking and offer a guide for
action in undesirable directions. By focusing attention to a distant, often idealized future goal, goals inspire directed action. The inspiration of what can be achieved, rather than the difficulties of how to achieve it, diverts attention from the resources, sacrifices, and consequences that will result when pursuing the goal. At WorldCom, focusing on a goal at the expense of the internal accounting process allowed the organization to rationalize changes in the competitive environment. As WorldCom demonstrates, goals become difficult to abandon once a compelling direction for their pursuit has begun.

Goals can be used to justify action. Second, goals allow leaders to take chances, justify risky behavior, and avoid normal accountability. At WorldCom, leaders throughout the organization – including those responsible for compliance, like the chief financial officer and the external auditors – overlooked obvious accounting problems. The goal to continually outperform the competition became so ingrained in the culture that the management could easily justify violating reporting standards. WorldCom illustrates how goals establish acceptable behavior in an organization. Goals help define the culture, which, in turn, allows the organization to justify behavior that would normally be considered unacceptable.

Goals have unintended consequences. Third, even well-intentioned goals carry unintended consequences. Organizations achieve some goals at the expense of others. WorldCom achieved short-term profits at the expense of long-term survival. Mountain climbing provides a disturbing example of the unintended consequences of goal pursuit. As occurred on Everest, most climbers die working their way down the mountain, not getting up. It appears that reaching the summit often comes at the expense of making it back down the mountain successfully.

Growing evidence, in cases like WorldCom and also in controlled laboratory experiments, supports this claim: under some circumstances, stringent and demanding goals may actually encourage unethical behavior, stifle learning, and hasten failure. The desire for lofty future achievement justifies risky behavior. Even as organizations achieve their goals, the unintended consequences of success are seldom considered. Idealized goals, despite their many benefits, often lead to destructive pursuits. Recognizing the warning signs provides the first step in overcoming the destructive pursuit of idealized goals.

**WARNING SIGNS**

**Narrowly Defined Goal**

*Priority is given, almost exclusively, to one course of action.* One cross-functional team I learned about in the textile industry was charged with reducing lost time due to on-the-job injuries. The committee established the general but ambitious goal of zero tolerance for safety violations. In the end, the committee lost sight of the original intent to increase safety in favor of a more narrowly defined goal, reducing incidents. Under pressure from the committee, line managers and workers simply stopped reporting accidents even though they were occurring with the same frequency as before. It appeared that safety increased, when in reality reporting decreased. Although the committee went about achieving its goal with the best intentions, the narrow goal ensured its failure.

A similar situation occurred with a medical equipment sales force that became transfixed with sales figures. With pressure to increase sales, the sales force ignored the consuming processes of customer service, innovation, and communication. In the end, repeat customer business suffered, ultimately resulting in decreased sales. One of the culprits of these failed attempts at goal setting clearly is a faulty compensation system, but the real culprit is the limited focus of the goal itself. Similar situations occurred in organizations where the reward for success
was simply personal and not monetary. For example, the mountain climbers I studied were seldom motivated by anything more than personal challenge or the admiration of peers. Yet, too many times mountain climbers defined their goals narrowly—like achieving the summit of the mountain with little consideration for getting back down. Defining a goal too narrowly, such as limiting accident reports or increasing sales, comes with unintended consequences that run contrary to the larger goals of creating a safe work environment and increasing income.

Idealized Future

A romanticized picture is created of what the world will look like after the goal is achieved. Corporate mergers often promise desirable benefits such as improved operations, lower costs, or strategic synergy. In the end, few mergers live up to the compelling future promised by their champions. The AOL–Time Warner merger promised an integration of AOL’s fast growing Internet delivery system with Time Warner’s content development expertise. What began as the largest corporate merger in history became one of the biggest losers in years. The promise of continued double-digit growth never materialized, once-promising careers fell to ruins, and AOL became embroiled in an accounting scandal similar to WorldCom’s.

Goal-Driven Justification

Current actions are justified in terms of the future achievement of goals. Let’s return to the safety committee for a moment. Imagine how difficult it must have been for line managers to report accidents to the committee in an environment where reported accidents were considered the hallmark of an unsafe work environment. What manager would want to be accused of not supporting a safe work environment? But that’s exactly what committee members accused line managers of doing if they questioned the policy. The goal of creating a safer work environment resulted in a culture that justified overlooking accidents. Reporting accidents appeared to be a violation of the culture of safety. Even more disturbing, workers invoked the goal of creating a safe work environment as justification for not reporting actual incidents. Not reporting accidents resulted not in a safer workplace but a workplace more fearful of reporting accidents.

Public Expectation

Failure to accomplish the goal would be met by public perception of failure. The AOL–Time Warner merger occurred under considerable fanfare. Press conferences were held, gifts were given to local museums in the name of top executives, and appealing claims were made about media integration across television, film, and the Internet. Consumers, investors, and advertisers all salivated at the potential. Once the profit targets and the strategies to reach them became public, the newly formed organization seemed to thrive under the pressure. Expectations increased. As Internet users gravitated towards forms of high Internet access like cable and DSL connections, however, the promise of a fully integrated media provider lost connection with its stakeholders. Advertising, the main source of revenue for the organization, began to fall. The newly formed organization failed to meet the expectations it set for itself.

Association of the Goal with Destiny

Achieving the goal is conceived in terms of “rightfulness” and “destiny”. A surprising example of narrowly defined goals occurred among the board of directors of a not-for-profit organization. The board became so dogmatic about its own mission that it began to criticize other charitable organizations that it saw as competitors for limited corporate funding. The board even went so far as to call one approach to disaster relief unethical because it placed a higher priority on different aspects of the relief efforts.
Viewing achievement of a goal as a matter of destiny may run high among organizations founded on a particular belief system. One group I read about sought comfort in the belief that they would be saved from world destruction by aliens who would swoop down to earth and rescue them. Many members of the group continued to focus on this goal and even became more adamant about being rescued when the day of rescue came and went without incident. The group’s firm belief in their own destiny, and the fulfilment of a goal that was to serve as evidence, blinded them to the near term.

Face-Saving Behavior

If initial steps to achieve the goal are met with resistance or failure, the pursuit is again justified in terms of its future achievement. Psychologists have shown how gamblers, investors, and organizations continue to throw good money at bad investments. Once an organization establishes a goal, it makes more sense to continue in the same direction than to adjust course. The rationalization may change, but the same actions seem to be taken. Face-saving behavior describes the need to explain an existing course of action rather than amend it. Face-saving behavior might include changing the rationale for a belief, as it did in the case of the closely knit group of believers waiting for the alien ship. Once the ship failed to materialize, the group engaged in face-saving behavior by suggesting the ship had the wrong address, stepping up recruiting efforts to add to their membership and courting the press to explain their cause.

The Problem with Goals

The idealization of goals occurs when most or all of these warning signs exist. The presence of these factors warns that identity has fused with the pursuit of idealized goals and that these idealized goals have begun to serve as the basis for justifying action. These warning signs carry the flavor of “groupthink,” the word used to describe the pressure for consensus in groups that leads to poor decision-making. Everest and the other events I described, however, arise from a different problem: an idealized view of the future justified by goals. Remedies to this problem come in rethinking the nature of goals in organizations and supplementing the goal-setting process with learning.

REMEDIES

The research and development efforts of pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc. often result in blockbuster drugs like Viagra. To be sure, Pfizer’s goals—like ending diabetes—are not trivial. To accomplish its lofty goals, Pfizer spends nearly $8 billion annually on research programs that yield only a handful of new products each decade. Basing its identity on a future goal makes an organization like Pfizer a good candidate for the destructive pursuit of idealized goals. Even though they appear particularly vulnerable to the destructive pursuit of goals, firms like Pfizer develop mechanisms, both formal and informal, to deal with setbacks, failures, and the unintended consequences of pursuing goals. My research revealed five remedies for overcoming the destructive pursuit of goals.

Learning from Experience

Develop multiple strategies for achieving goals, assess impact, and update with new strategies, especially under novel situations. Successful achievement of goals requires learning, especially in the face of a new or complex problem. Research and development teams, like those at Pfizer, face unique situations where no known course of action exists. When situations require a novel approach, setting goals often results in disaster. Instead, project teams focus on learning from experience. When teams learn from experience they develop multiple strategies for achieving a goal, anticipate contingencies, and acquire new skills.

Learning involves an iterative process. In contrast, pursuing goals requires an uncom-
mon effort in the face of a one-time event. Learning requires testing short-term assumptions about how to achieve a goal. Unlike goal pursuit, which requires putting prior experience to work on a known problem, learning involves adaptation to novel situations. Simply generating new ways to pursue a goal, a common strategy advocated by goal-setting strategists, falls short. The challenge of learning from experience lies in testing and updating multiple strategies before pursuing a single, narrowly defined goal with full gusto.

Take, for example, one military battle in the Crimean War. The commanding officer had no prior combat experience. In fact, only one of the commanding officers had experience, 20 years earlier and in a remarkably different terrain. After what seems to have been a miscommunication from the general’s field officer, the inexperienced commander ordered a cavalry charge. The commander drew on the lore that the cavalry had lost no artillery guns in recent history and assumed the same would be true for his charge. The commander demonstrated exceedingly high confidence in his ability by relying on the accumulated past experience of the military to meet a goal. But success required more than experience and goals. The commander failed to take a realistic look at the capability of the troops; this unbridled confidence in setting a high goal resulted in the worst casualties of the war.

**Recovering**

*Develop mechanisms to adjust to setbacks, mistakes, and errors.* U.S. President John F. Kennedy’s goal to “put a man on the moon and bring him back safely before the decade was out and before the Russians” eventually became a source of national identity and pride: the first man on the moon. On its face, the statement seems ripe to induce the destructive pursuit of idealized goals. Yet, on second reading the goal reveals a clever amendment that makes it remarkably resilient. The statement considered the need for recovery while pursuing the goal: getting the astronaut back safely. Contrast the Kennedy goal to the mountain climbers who defined their goal as getting up the mountain with little regard for the effort involved in getting back down.

Successful project teams, like those at Pfizer, know they will experience minor setbacks before they even begin to pursue a cure for diabetes. Adjusting to changes, wrong turns, and unintended consequences is the hallmark of recovering from these setbacks. Some goals, like those articulated by Kennedy, are built on the logic of recovery. A formidable example of thinking in terms of recovery comes from airline pilots. Those pilots who were most likely to anticipate and be open to learning in the face of unexpected events proved the highest performers during simulated in-flight emergencies. In the context of goals, “think recovery” contains realistic statements that

- recognize the unintended consequences of achieving the goal;
- provide a strategy and justification for retreat from the goal;
- identify multiple goals with multiple benefits;
- project costs of continuing the pursuit after setbacks.

**Fostering Trust**

*Develop a culture safe for surfacing problems.* Remember the textile manufacturing committee charged with increasing safety? The actions of the committee members resulted in an overall decrease in trust among committee members, line managers, and eventually other employees. The drive to complete the goal of limited reported injuries came at the expense of identifying the real causes of errors and mistakes. Recovery can occur only when team members trust each other enough to talk about errors and problems.

Experiencing an environment of trust where learning can take place becomes imperative for achieving goals. Years of research with leaders in high-risk environ-
ments like airline cockpits, offshore oil rigs, and emergency rooms revealed that trust reduces errors in the long run because individuals can surface problems and address them. For example, some airline cockpit crews set a tone of trust through inclusiveness and invited comments from crew members during preflight inspection. These crews demonstrated a superior ability to recover from problems during a flight.

**Minding the Gap**

*Attend to discrepancies between present reality and ideal expectations.* The London Underground system’s pervasive warnings to “mind the gap” remind travelers of the distance between the moving train and the railway platform. Distracted passengers can easily become trapped between the station’s platform and the allure of a fast-moving train. Like the promise of a fast-moving transport, the hasty achievement of goals can lure people into ignoring the gap between where they currently stand and what they hope to achieve.

Minding the gap between the current and the idealized state grounds the goal in realistic expectations. The nature of goal setting suggests a rational process to achieve an idealized future. Successful teams resist the need to rationalize setbacks in terms of future rewards. Instead, these teams learn from setbacks and reconfigure goals based on new information. If AOL–Time Warner had minded the gap during the merger, they would have given more consideration to the difficulty of merging cultures, the lack of business integration, the costs incurred, and competition among top management.

**Cultivating Dual Loyalties**

*Balance multiple roles and loyalties to different cultures.* Internal auditors recognized a debacle when WorldCom’s upper management ignored accounting irregularities. Auditors tenaciously pursued the case, despite warnings from their superiors to stop the investigation. By continuing their efforts to uncover the irregularities, the team of accountants demonstrated loyalty to the company for which they worked while also remaining loyal to professional standards. While others in the organization recklessly pursued goals, these auditors followed their loyalty to a set of goals other than those mandated by the organization.

When goals act as the sole regulator of behavior, organizations are likely to pursue goals to their own detriment. Maintaining loyalties to multiple groups or ideals balances the pressure to pursue goals at all costs. Examples of dual loyalty include:
- WorldCom auditors’ adherence to generally accepted accounting principles despite pressures from management to overlook discrepancies,
- Pfizer research scientists’ exposure of drug complications prior to commercial rollout,
- Mountain climbers’ abandonment of a climb to return another day,
- Military officers’ maintenance of rules of engagement despite the unruliness of war.

**Utopia**

Applying these five remedies runs counter to conventional wisdom on goals. Goals often harbor a kind of utopian vision of the future. Future problems become overlooked for the farsighted hope of achieving an idealized goal, as one former WorldCom executive demonstrates. He said, “I knew it was wrong, and I knew it was against the law, but I thought we were going to get through it in a short period of time”.

Constantinos Cavafy, in the poem *Ithaca*, exhorts weary sailors to forget about their fears, boredom, and loneliness by envisioning the ports of Ithaca, a real yet fantastical island that offers purity of mind and richness of thing. For the sailors, Ithaca represents the goal of their trip, the justification for their troubles. The destination justifies the goal. Such utopias, like idealized goals, offer security in their comprehensive and idealized vision.
CONCLUSION

Events such as Everest and the WorldCom scandal open our eyes to the limitations of goals. One of the Everest survivors retrospectively voiced these limits when he said, "You can over-pursue goals. You can become obsessed with goals". Goals provide the impetus to accomplish new heights, explore vast terrain, and seek new challenges, but the unbridled pursuit of idealized goals often leads to obsessive destruction. While leaders quickly extol the virtues of goals, they often fall blind to their unintended consequences. In a time when leaders extol setting and pursuing high goals, the unintended consequences of these actions deserve greater attention. Cultivating the positive effects of goals rather than falling prey to their destructive pursuit provides an alternative direction.

Exhibit 1

Mechanisms at Work in the Destructive Pursuit of Goals

The destructive pursuit of goals occurs through the interaction of psychological, social, and environmental mechanisms. When this complex mix of factors comes together, the normally helpful process of goal setting and pursuit becomes dysfunctional. Researchers working across diverse fields including management, history, economics, psychology, and sociology have described fundamental human mechanisms at play as organizations pursue goals to their own detriment.

1. Sociologist Max Weber (1922) described the concept of theodicy, where individuals rely on theology to rationalize current suffering with the promise of future redemption.

2. Social psychologist Leon Festinger and his co-workers (1956) displayed how members of a doomsday cult managed cognitive dissonance, or extreme internal psychological conflicts. The cult dealt with its failure to be rescued from world destruction by developing various justifications for failure of achieving the goal and became more committed to its achievement after its initial failure.

3. Psychologist David McClelland (1953) described how achievement-oriented leaders set moderate and practical goals rather than extraordinary ones and then, modify performance on the basis of results from their pursuit.

4. Sociologist Robert K. Merton (1957) identified the phenomenon displacement of goals, where adherence to means (pursuing goals) becomes an end (the goal) unto itself.

5. Psychologist Irving Janis (1972) illustrated the process of groupthink in public-policy decisions. Groupthink describes how a group can pressure individual members to abandon critical thinking in order to pursue a commonly shared vision.

6. Psychologist Barry Staw and co-workers (1976) noticed that, once an individual is committed to a course of action, commitment escalates, especially when prior efforts have failed. Later research showed that escalation of commitment also occurs in groups and organizations.

7. Historian Barbara Tuckman (1984), in her comparative analysis of historic and contemporary wars, revealed how different forces within an organization push policy makers to believe in achieving fantastical, ill-conceived, or utopian goals. She described the justification for war in the face of idealized goals as the march of folly.


9. Strategy professor Henry Mintzberg (1994) announced that strategic planning limits an organization’s ability to respond to changing internal and external demands.
10. Goal-setting advocates (2000) reveal the *paradox of success*, where escalation of commitment to a course of action (see point 6 above) also occurs when groups and organizations experience prior success. This suggests that both past success and past failure can lead to continued commitment to goals.


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His research has or will appear in 30 publications, including best paper in Human Relations, for his analysis of the 1996 Mt. Everest climbing disaster. His paper was one of three recognized by the journal Academy of Management Learning and Education. The Organizational Behavior Teaching Society named Kayes with the “New Educator” award for his promise in furthering management education. He consults worldwide on issues of leadership, teams, and learning.

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