



JIM HARSHAW, JR.

Clarity of Action. Peace of Mind.

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #413

Samuel West

Dr. Samuel West is a man on a mission. As a clinical psychologist specializing in cognitive behavioral therapy, he has always been passionate about the psychology of happiness, especially in relation to work. But it wasn't until mid-career that he decided to take a break from consulting and dive deeper into his research.

For five years, Samuel taught courses on positive psychology, creativity, and organizational science at Lund University. His doctoral thesis in organizational psychology focused on how workplace playfulness, experimentation, and exploration could boost innovation. It was during this time that the idea for the Museum of Failure was born.

But the road to success was not an easy one. In fact, Samuel's initial idea for the museum was met with resistance from his ex-business partner, leading to a series of challenges that led to his personal bankruptcy. Undeterred, Samuel continued to pursue his vision, pouring his heart and soul into creating a space where failure could be honored and learned from.

Since founding the Museum of Failure, Samuel has become the leading expert in helping teams and organizations understand the crucial role of failure in innovation and progress. He continues to inspire and educate people around the world about the importance of embracing failure as a necessary part of growth and success. Through his work, Samuel is changing the way we think about failure and, in turn, changing the world.

Top Quotes From This Episode

"You are some of your experiences, but to let failure define you is not productive."

"Having a playful approach does make us more skilled, and it practices creative problem solving, while also taking risks and learning from them."

"Failure is essential to progress, and there's no way you can have any kind of progress or innovation without failure."

Show Notes

This episode touches on the following key topics and ideas:

- **How Museum of Failure Started (2:43):** Samuel expresses his dissatisfaction with the overwhelming focus on success stories and the lack of attention given to failure and its learning potential.
- **Highlighted Exhibits (4:47):** Some notable exhibits at the Museum of Failure:
 - [UroClub](#), a golf club-shaped device designed for discreet urination on the golf course.
 - [Rejuvenique](#), a face mask that delivers electrical shocks to the face for allegedly anti-aging benefits.
 - [Sound Burger](#), a portable vinyl record player.
- **Purpose of the Museum of Failure (9:57):** Museum of Failure aims to change our perception of failure. It promotes the understanding that failure is an essential part of progress and innovation.
- **How Validation Works (11:16):** Witnessing the failures of renowned companies can inspire individuals to take meaningful risks.
- **Why is it so difficult for us to talk about failure? (13:24):** Talking about failure is difficult because of the negative view society has of it, but it's important to have open conversations about it to reduce the negative view and help people learn from their mistakes.
- **Personal Bankruptcy (20:11):** Samuel reflects on how the experience of bankruptcy, although painful and uncomfortable, was not as devastating as he had imagined it to be, and that people tend to overestimate the negative impact of failure.
- **Why exploration, experimentation, and playfulness are important in the workplace (24:05):** Creating a culture of psychological safety in teams and work groups encourages vulnerability and learning from failures.

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Other Episodes Referenced

[#101 The Failure Museum: Failure's Role in Innovation with Curator Dr. Samuel West](#)

[#246 & #247 Interview with Tim Ferriss: Secret \(or Not-So-Secret\) Routines, Experiments, and Absurd Questions from a World-Class Performer](#)

Guest Website and Social

Samuel West

[Website](#) | [Museum of Failure](#)