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From: Andrew Clancy  
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**Why a Loss can Lead to Victory**

Ask a panel of executives to name three defining moments in their careers and it is very likely that at least one of the three moments will involve failure rather than success. Disappointment, rejection and defeat are never easy to accept. Granted, it is in the refusal to accept them that the seed of success is watered and germinates. Success, for all of its shining glory, contains little from which anyone can learn. This lesson is one that the media continually speculates is lost to each new generation of workers to enter the workplace. The road to adulthood, formerly lined with the lows of being cut from the team, failing a test and watching dejectedly while someone else celebrated, has seen its bumps smoothed out to an extent. Most people are familiar with tales of participation awards, controlled scoring in children's athletics and increasingly lenient testing methods. Unfortunately, the speedy path of this straight road still terminates in the same place: the brick wall of the real world, the working world.

Author Ralph Heath is one person who couldn't be happier that corporate life is still filled with difficulty. His new release [Celebrating Failure: The Power of Taking Risks, Making Mistakes and Thinking Big](#) is a compact study of why human beings need the experiences that are often their most distressing moments. As the founder of ad agency Ovation Marketing, Heath's personal experiences with failure provide some of the most important content in [Celebrating Failure](#). It is always comforting when reading a particular business title to know that the author is willing to divulge personal stories to support his or her point. This act humanizes the author and prevents his or her words from reeking of arrogance. Heath's ups-and-downs during his time as head of Ovation are the key to his credibility. Executives will quickly come to trust his advice because they will see the mistakes from which his lessons were learned.

Heath's tenure with Ovation provided another hidden benefit; it made him an excellent writer. While the less discerning eye may gloss from one business



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book to the next, executives who appreciate sound advice delivered in memorable words will greatly enjoy [Celebrating Failure](#). It's obvious that the hours Heath spent constructing the perfect piece of copy to fit a particular product gave him a keen sense of how to convey a message. Each chapter of the book unfolds in a short narrative, with Heath often using moments from the expanse of his life as the vehicle to illustrate an important bit of wisdom. In one instance, he tells readers about the decision-making process used by a group of his cycling friends before they select the route for a Sunday bike ride. While this may seem trite fodder for a business book, the tale opens the portal to an enlightening discussion of control and how executives wield it. One of the main complaints executives have when reading a business book is that the author was unable to hold their attention. Heath deserves praise for understanding the power of story as a means to capture attention and the necessity of brevity in maintaining attention. [Celebrating Failure](#) features short tales that readers can quickly read and ponder over for hours afterward.

Failure comes in many shades and [Celebrating Failure](#) does its best to touch on a veritable rainbow of examples. Heath takes readers through the finer points of management, communication, leadership and innovation. The chapters on communication are relevant to business leaders, particularly those whose employees frequently deal with the public. Some of the best stories are the ones in which Heath describes an experience he had as a customer, and then rewrites the script to demonstrate how the interaction should have occurred. For anyone who has ever spent the moments after a meeting thinking, "What I should have said was ..." [Celebrating Failure](#) may contain a few examples that will help inspire improved forethought.

Failure is not an easy subject to broach with business leaders. Heath is taking a bit of a risk in tackling the subject because it implies that those who read his book are willing to admit that they, in fact, fail from time to time. For those executives who may be somewhat skittish about allowing the cracks in their armor to appear, [Celebrating Failure](#) is a great tutor. It provides the much-needed reminder that achievement is forged in the fires of failure. If one can stand the heat, the result, like [Celebrating Failure](#) itself, is pretty impressive.

[Celebrating Failure](#) by Ralph Heath is published by Career Press. It is under consideration by Soundview Executive Book Summaries.

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