



## Pushing through the discomfort

By Cynthia J. Young

When you experience a failure at work that you are responsible for, how do you push through the discomfort while maintaining your cool and still being there for your team?

Recently, a task at work didn't go as planned. It was unexpected because the process had changed since it was last done four years prior. This was the first time I had to do this task; the last person who had to do it retired in March. I was the person who had the task squarely on their shoulders, and now I had to suck it up and figure out what to do next. An option was contacting the retiree and asking them what they did before. After being in the position for almost five months, the better and more realistic option was to do the research and work through the problem.

The worry was still there. More than worrying about how to solve the problem was the worry about letting the customers down, letting my boss down and even letting my team down. I pride myself on my ability to get things done on time and done well. It's what I expect of myself, but was not knowing everything right then necessary to worry about? Not at all.

I worked through my problem. I had to learn a new process that I didn't realize was new until I tried to execute the old process. It was a challenge, but once it was resolved, it was easier to understand, and the team ended with a quality product delivered to the customers.

Did I let my boss, my customers or my team down because of this? No. It was a "me" problem and not a process problem. In other words, I had made an internal "mountain out of a molehill."

So what can you do to make yourself a better manager if you run up against this challenge?

**Lead by example.** Leadership by example is something every manager needs to embrace. Consider how you would advise your team and what would be acceptable. Realize you are

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putting unnecessary pressure on yourself.

**Review the old process.** Define the problem and start by researching what had been done before. It gives a baseline for the process and will help guide you as you revise your steps to support the new process you need to follow.

**Document the new process and your steps.** Once you get the words on paper or on your computer, step away from them. Take a few minutes to refresh your coffee or get a few steps in. Bounce ideas off your team. Review your document. Revise if needed.

**Share what you've learned.** You

don't have to tell anyone about the stress you felt or the worry you had, but you need to share what you learned through the process. By doing this, you show your team humility and willingness to share your process. Who knows? They may be in your position one day and as their manager, you want to set your team up for success and for their next position.

**Remember to breathe.** Not all problems need to be solved in that very moment. Take a breath or two (or three) but slow down.

Everyone processes problems and problem-solves in their own time. Expecting perfection of yourself is unrealistic and your manager does not expect perfection from you. They expect excellent customer support, respect for your team and a solid understanding of how to do your best while asking for help when needed. ❖

*Cynthia J. Young, DBA, is founder and CEO of CJ Young Consulting, LLC, and the lead for certification and training with Leidos in Virginia Beach, Virginia. She retired as a Surface Warfare Officer with 23 years in the U.S. Navy and holds professional certifications as a PMP, LSSMBB and CMQ/OE. She is an IISE member. Contact her at [cjyoung@cjyoungconsulting.com](mailto:cjyoung@cjyoungconsulting.com).*

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