

TAKING RISKS

“You miss 100% of the shots you never take.” – Wayne Gretzky

Taking risks is an essential part of growth. An individual afraid to contact a business about a job possibility may pass up the opportunity of a lifetime. A group afraid to organize an event because it might not work may be losing out on the biggest fundraiser of the century. Just talk to a stockbroker and you will soon learn that taking risks is an integral part of success.

There are varying degrees of risks, however, and not all of them are appropriate. Someone with a heart condition may risk his life should he choose to undertake a particularly strenuous activity. The key to taking risks involves thinking them through first. In other words, taking calculated risks.

As an organization, you may come across several risky opportunities. Maybe you have already encountered some of the following:

- Organizing a new event that may or may not go over well with the campus community.
- Asking a group leader to resign from a position because you did not feel the job was being done appropriately.
- Requesting donations from big businesses to support your group or event.
- Sponsoring a panel discussion or event on a controversial topic.
- Being asked to co-sponsor an event with another group.

Opportunities appear for us all over the place and at all times. Deciding whether or not to take a chance and pursue these opportunities requires a bit of skill as well as common sense. When approached with such risks, take into consideration the following:

- Don't decide immediately. Take some time to step back from the situation and consider it thoughtfully. Write out the pros and cons. What is the best thing that could happen? What is the worst case scenario?
- Don't decide alone. If your decision will affect the group, your decision-making process should involve the group. Do not assume you know how they would respond – you may be surprised.
- Remember your goals. Will taking this risk allow your group to proceed on the path

towards its goals? Does it coincide with your mission statement?

- Consider the rest. When making decisions that affect your group, do not be selfish. If you have been nominated to serve as President and are deciding whether or not to accept the challenge, do not say “yes” because it will boost your resumé when you know you do not have time for it.
- Hope for a good harvest but continue to sow. If you decide to go ahead and take a chance, do not just sit back and wait for something good or bad to happen. Prepare as much as possible for either outcome and get involved in making results.

There are some influential people who have decided to take risks which turned out extremely well for them, despite some initial adversity (good supporters of the “try and try again” motto). Do you know who these people are?

- Ran for office seven times and lost every time – before becoming one of our most successful presidents.
- Wanted to be in the military but failed the entrance exams three times.
- Ran for president of his freshman class in college (one of thirty-five candidates) and was eliminated on the first ballot.
- Wrote a book that was rejected by every major publishing company in New York, including Random House and Harper & Row, before finally being run in a magazine which led to the publishing of the book.

Stumped? Respectively, these people are Abe Lincoln, Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy and Wilson Rawles (author of *Where the Red Fern Grows*).

The moral of the story: Don't be afraid to try new things or take chances, for that is how organizations and people grow. Just remember to first weigh all of your options to determine if it is worth it!

Reference:

McLaughlin, R.L. *Leadership Skills Made Fun by Using Group Dynamics*. WA: Seclarim, Inc. (WWW)

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