

Those new mistakes (minority focus)

Minorities fear mistakes for multiple reasons: they seem to represent their category, so if they do something wrong, then the whole category gets blamed; the perfect moment for “attacking” a person is when this person makes a mistake, because the attack seems to be founded on a valid reason (there being a reason for protest).

The answer to all of this is NO. If you have enough work experience, you know that mistakes are made at every level: mistakes that seemed impossible or unconceivable; mistakes that are small, medium, large, and extra-large. And the attitude is a positive one: certain mistakes can only be done once in a lifetime; live and learn,...

Concretely, one looks for measures for compensating the effect of the mistake: erasing with the rubber gum (in the best case scenario), erasing with correction fluid, grabbing a new piece of paper and starting anew... repairing the havoc made by mistakes can take time and effort, however the aim is clear: we always have to look forward, we have to move forward. We have to instruct and direct the person that made the mistake, and address also the root of the problem. Clearly, everyone has both responsibility and accountability.

This text is not promoting making mistakes, and in particular I strongly warn against making big mistakes. However, this text is aiming at promoting attempts: failed attempts are not necessarily mistakes.

Science is built on failed attempts. One needs to have had 100 ideas to have had 20 valuable ones, and so on. Exiting the comfort zone is, well, uncomfortable, and the risk of making mistakes is higher. Some stereotype about minorities is that they play defensive to avoid mistakes or to avoid retaliation. However, playing defensive does not allow to reach spectacular goals: risk taking is necessary in business as well in academia. Clearly, risks have to be evaluated, but one has to accept them as part of the game.

I have learned the positive attitude towards mistakes also thanks to Wikipedia: at first I was scared that something incorrect I may write would be forever accessible in the history of the website. Then I learned to accept the truth: beyond the ever-present possibility of writing something wrong for whatever reason, as a non frequent Wikipedia user it can be that something you write is simply not coherent with the conventional Wikipedia style. Then I made a choice: I simply give my contribution to Wikipedia whenever I have the occasion, knowing that some of my entries will be updated by some more experienced user.

My message to all, and in particular towards young minorities is, with the words of Shakira (properly interpreting “mistakes” as as “attempts” or “small mistakes that are kind of natural and acceptable”):

*I'll keep on making those new mistakes
I'll keep on making them every day*