

Confucius Say: In the Face of Adversity, Quote a Phrase

It's October, and many of us are deep into projects that couldn't be postponed or otherwise avoided.

Project supervision from golf course to golf course is much like our greens—they all look the same on top but underneath, well, they can be as different as night and day.

What I'm talking about here is, what do you actually say to "The Man" when he walks up and you're standing knee deep in a pile of goo that is supposed to be the new first tee?

Some of us report to an owner, others to a general manager; there are greens committees, golf advisory committees, commissioners, directors, grounds and green chairpeople, trustees, and last, but certainly not least, our friends the golfers themselves.

Now, we all know that not every project goes exactly as planned. Sometimes the plan is actually composed in doing the job, and then there are the ones that require consultants, permits, blueprints, contractors, construction schedules, etc. The job may be big or small, easy or complicated, but they all have at least this one thing in common—IT NEVER HAPPENS THE WAY IT IS SUPPOSED TO.

Now say we have a situation. The project is flaming and your boss (see the list above) comes on site. What do you say?

I'm not talking about excuses. Everyone knows that not a single blade of grass has ever died as the result of the heavy hand of a golf course superintendent. Part of the job profile includes the ability to think on one's feet, and "compose" reasonable agronomic causes for most effects, and if all else fails, there is the old standby the "act of God." What I'm talking about here is, what do you actually say to "The Man" when he walks up and you're standing knee deep in a pile of goo that is supposed to be the new first tee?

What are the first words out of your mouth?

Having had some experience in these matters, I've found that a catchy little quote can do a lot to defuse a potentially job-threatening explosion.

Remember, there are two benefits of failure: First, if you do fail, you learn what doesn't work; and second, the failure gives you an opportunity to try a new approach.

Roger Von Oech, creativity expert

Guys with Von in their name must know what they're talking about. Or how about this:

Striving for excellence motivates you; striving for perfection is demoralizing.

Harriet Beraiker

Not quite right, how about these:

If there were nothing wrong in the world, there wouldn't be anything for us to do.

George Bernard Shaw
playwright and critic

In flood time you can see how some trees bend, and because they bend, even their twigs are safe, while stubborn trees are torn up roots and all.

Sophocles (496-406 BCE)
dramatist

Here's a good one for Monday morning quarterbacks:

It's not the same to talk of bulls as to be in the bullring.

Spanish proverb

In calm waters every ship has a good captain.

Swedish proverb

Hot heads and cold hearts never solved anything.

Billy Graham
clergyman

Opportunity's favorite disguise is trouble.

Frank Tyger

Here are a couple of gems:

Diamonds are nothing more than chunks of coal that stuck to their jobs.

Malcolm Forbes (1919-1990)
publisher

The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.

Confucius (551-479 BCE)
philosopher

It even happens to the best of them:

Don't find fault. Find a remedy.

Henry Ford (1863-1947)
founder Ford Motor Co.

An expert is a man who has made all the mistakes which can be made in a very narrow field.

Niels Bohr (1885-1962)
physicist and Nobel laureate

Nothing fails like success because we don't learn from it. We only learn from failure.

Kenneth Boulding (1910-1993)
economist and writer

Success is 99 percent failure.

Soichiro Honda
founder Honda Motor Corp.

Probably the most appropriate quote at this point would be:

The great art of writing is knowing when to stop.

Josh Billings (1818-1885)
writer

Too late. 

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