

MAKING A BIG MISTAKE AT WORK – WHAT’S NEXT?

1. Everyone makes mistakes -- that's part of being human. But recovering from a major mistake at work can take some finesse if you want to keep your job.
 - a. Don't just look to do damage control
 - b. Think about how to turn major mistakes into positive experiences
2. Employees are often embarrassed by failure that they believe will lead to a loss of standing in their company. They suffer dual pain:
 - a. Self recrimination
 - b. Fear/Threat of punishment from employer
3. The type of mistake should be differentiated:
 - a. Careless mistakes should be weeded out.
 - b. However, failure when experimenting with something new should be rewarded by the employer, not punished: Look for lessons learned/teaching points.
4. Mistakes happen — there's no getting around it. But how you deal with your mistakes is what really counts. If done seriously and sincerely, you'll only have to do it once. (See Tips)

8 Tips to Recover From a Major Error on the Job

Take responsibility – Own it. Nobody wants to hear a litany of excuses. Taking responsibility makes you appear strong and in control. Making excuses makes you look weak and inept.

Analyze the failure – Take the time to figure out what really went wrong — and devise a plan for how you're going to keep whatever happened from happening again. You're in a much better position if you can assure the powers-that-be that you've got the situation under control.

Avoid beating yourself up – This one mistake, no matter how major it was, doesn't mean you're incompetent. Or that your career is over. It simply means you made a mistake. Negative self-talk is only going to make you feel worse, so stop reading yourself the riot act in your head.

Keep it in perspective – Try the 5 Test: Ask yourself, "How much will this mistake matter within my company in 5 days? In 5 weeks? In 5 months? In 5 years?" Avoid thinking of this as a life-or-death situation. Failure on the job is a *temporary* setback.

Talk it over with someone you trust – Get your frustrations, anger and fears out in the open by talking with a trusted person OUTSIDE your organization.

Give it time – Give yourself sufficient time to recover and regroup from the experience, but don't let it drag on too long. Be positive, even if you have to fake it.

Consider training – If the mistake or failed project was the result of lack of a specific skill or technical expertise, seek out training. Workshops, seminars, audiotapes, books, and online learning are all great ways to improve your skills fast – and boost your confidence.

Get over it – Think of the mistake or failure as an education, and learn from it. Then move on. Dwell on failure, and it will paralyze you.