

# 4 Fears That Keep Us from Innovating

Leaders are often telling me they wish they were more innovative. More often though, they tell me they wish their teams were more innovative. Both of these conversations typically move toward a question like: “What are some tools or techniques to help people be more innovative and creative?”

While there are certainly tools and techniques that we can learn and use to help, rarely is that the first (or biggest) barrier to people innovating.

In fact, the biggest barrier is between the ears of the people involved. The biggest barrier is usually fear.

In fact, here are four fears, all of which can literally block us from looking for innovations, suggesting the ones we see or taking action on the ideas that have already surfaced.

## **Fear of Failure/Mistakes**

If you are honest, you have felt this fear at some point in your life (maybe today). Innovating or trying something new is inherently risky; we simply don't know what will happen, and whether the idea will work. If the fear of failure is high, we will be immobilized and willing to live things the way they are because they are known. In order to help yourself or other get past this fear we must lower the risk of trying, create safety in mistakes, and perhaps take smaller steps — to further minimize the fear of failure. (Elsewhere in this issue there are more thoughts about how mistakes can be your friend.)

## **Fear of Success**

If you are wondering if I made this up, I didn't. The official name is *achievemephoria*. It might seem weird to fear success; after all isn't that what we all say we want? If you have a fear of success you are so comfortable where things are that you don't want to change, even if you don't like your current situation. (This doesn't sound like the working world at all does it?) To minimize this, help people see others who have succeeded after some innovation (change) and how they were pleased with the result. Time spent helping people build their confidence will help here too!

## **Fear of Resistance**

When an innovation is suggested, there will be resistance. How do I know? Because it is a human response. There is no reason to be afraid that there might be resistance, because there will be. The opportunity here is to think about resistance as natural, and perhaps as a way to hone or improve the innovation in question. Don't think of resistance as a negative, but as a reality and a chance to move closer to turning an innovation into reality.

## **Fear of “No”**

We've all suggested something and gotten a response of “no.” Let's say you would like to eat lunch with someone, so you ask someone to join you. If they say “no” you will eat alone, just like if you hadn't asked right? The “no” didn't really change anything did it? Related to innovation, if we ask, you might get a no, but we also

might get a yes! Not only that, sometimes we didn't even need to ask in the first place.

Fear is a bigger factor in the lack of innovation than you probably realize. Keep this in mind for yourself, and those you lead.

*Remarkable Principle:* The biggest barrier to innovation may be a fear. Understand the fear and you have taken the first step toward overcoming it.

*Note:* If you are leader and want to be more effective, consider our *From Manager to Remarkable Leader* workshop experience. The next session is June 21-22 in Dallas, TX. For more information on that or other sessions, go to [RemarkableLeadership.com](https://RemarkableLeadership.com)