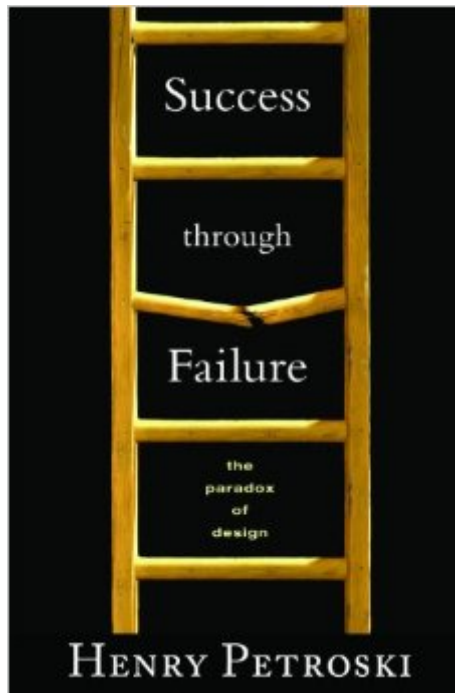


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# Success Through Failure: The Paradox Of Design



## Synopsis

Design pervades our lives. Everything from drafting a PowerPoint presentation to planning a state-of-the-art bridge embodies this universal human activity. But what makes a great design? In this compelling and wide-ranging look at the essence of invention, distinguished engineer and author Henry Petroski argues that, time and again, we have built success on the back of failure--not through easy imitation of success. Success through Failure shows us that making something better--by carefully anticipating and thus averting failure--is what invention and design are all about. Petroski explores the nature of invention and the character of the inventor through an unprecedented range of both everyday and extraordinary examples--illustrated lectures, child-resistant packaging for drugs, national constitutions, medical devices, the world's tallest skyscrapers, long-span bridges, and more. Stressing throughout that there is no surer road to eventual failure than modeling designs solely on past successes, he sheds new light on spectacular failures, from the destruction of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in 1940 and the space shuttle disasters of recent decades, to the collapse of the World Trade Center in 2001. Petroski also looks at the prehistoric and ancient roots of many modern designs. The historical record, especially as embodied in failures, reveals patterns of human social behavior that have implications for large structures like bridges and vast organizations like NASA. Success through Failure--which will fascinate anyone intrigued by design, including engineers, architects, and designers themselves--concludes by speculating on when we can expect the next major bridge failure to occur, and the kind of bridge most likely to be involved.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This is the paradox of design: Things that succeed teach us little beyond the fact that they have been successful; things that fail provide incontrovertible evidence that the limits of design have been exceeded. Emulating success risks failure; studying failure increases our chances of success," page 114. I bought this book because of the title and because I am always trying to find something good in something that is going bad. Eternal optimist. Some people get accused of being "the glass is half full" people. They drive others crazy by always smiling and looking on the bright side of things. On the scale of possibility, I think I am a "glass isn't there" type person. I try to see things that aren't there yet, help others see those things, find hope in hopeless situations, and stay calm when the wheels are falling off because I have come to understand and realize that failure is a necessary ingredient to success, and I am starting to be less afraid of it. Now, a day rarely goes by that I don't feel like quitting--and I think that might be a good thing. If the work isn't hard, maybe it is not the right work. During one of the darkest times of World War II, when someone remarked to Churchill that the state of the country was serious but not hopeless, he responded that the situation was hopeless but not serious. I think Churchill could see things that other people couldn't as well. Success Through Failure is not an educational book. Educators have a tendency to try and avoid failure at all costs. It is almost like we are constantly trying to defend the status quo, or even worse, "create the past." How many times have you heard ideas preceded with this statement, "Back when I was in school..."

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