

PRAESTA

Overcoming Mistakes

How do you handle a risk to your confidence or reputation following a decision or action that has not worked out as you had hoped?

Might your default style be to stick by your initial judgement, whatever the warning bells? Might you find yourself so uneasy that it's hard to think about possible routes forward? Or might you examine so many options that you can't make a landing?

The reality for all leaders in public and corporate life is that their judgements and behaviours are scrutinised intently. There can be a temptation to stick with a position for fear of looking weak. The awareness of being watched can make it hard to stand back and review the situation objectively.

Leaders have told us that on such occasions they feel a personal responsibility to:

- Acknowledge mistakes early,
- Take a dispassionate view of new evidence
- Grip difficult issues in the moment and not keep putting them off,
- Be mindful of their own default behaviours and ready to seek help when they feel stuck.

Where mistakes have happened and reputations have been damaged, we observe that leaders who cope best:

- Draw on a support network to help them keep things in perspective,
- Make time with their teams to reflect and learn, and chart a way forward,
- Develop a personal and team narrative that enables the learning to be acknowledged, and discourages endless recriminations,
- Remind themselves of the values and behaviours that they wish to be judged by
- Keep everyone focussed on outcomes and why they matter.

Leaders are forever needing to adapt their approach in the light of events. The learning can be painful when it challenges their way of looking at the world, yet it strengthens their resilience to future setbacks, provided they feel they have stayed true to their guiding values.