

The renewal imperative

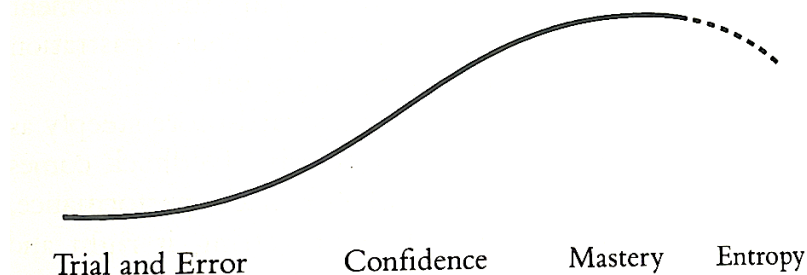
'People often move from one life-career situation to another that is only superficially different', writes **John R. O'Neil**, a well-known consultant to top business executives. The actors in the new situation may change, but the roles and relationships are comfortable and familiar – and, in the end, limiting. Meaningful renewal of your life-career requires stretching and the use of new parts of yourself. Incremental change can bring renewal for you, but if the increments are too small to make an impact, you won't succeed.

Understanding and drawing on the cycle of renewal improves your chances of success.

The cycle of renewal

The cycle has four stages, the first three of which build to being high performing, i.e. living in a Mastery way. If another cycle is not commenced before Mastery starts to decline, Entropy sets in again. In this stage, energy declines, learning slows, and stagnation sets in.

The graphic schematically shows the four stages moving from left to right over time. The curve represents your performance and satisfaction with your life and career.



Trial and Error stage. The choices and changes of successful renewal cannot be rushed. In this stage, you'll feel a mixture of confusion and frustration caused by the unfamiliar environment. Because of this, the cycle should begin with self-reflection and stepping back to view yourself objectively to gain a clearer view of

your values, hopes and realities. Balancing decisive action with observation and introspection is vital to the deep learning necessary to win in the long run.

Confidence stage. The curve rises as you steadily replace the unknown with the known. Signals from important others in your life, promotions and positive feedback say you are on track. The most excellent motivator is the excitement of learning, that uplifting feeling when frustration gives way to fascination as you figure things out.

Mastery stage. Mastery is the stage of sustained, enhanced performance and strong feelings that you are getting it right and can carry on doing more. It's more than a sense of power; instead, it's feeling harmony with your experience.

Entropy stage. Near the top of the curve, the upward slope levels off as you approach peak performance. Learning slows, and you may lean back and allow yourself to coast without much effort. Ironically, this time has been well-earned and often publicly recognised. You revel in what you have achieved. But herein lies the danger. The peak of the curve is where your energy dissipates, and learning slows to a crawl. Stagnation begins. It's time to start at the beginning.

Conclusion

Self-observation and learning are essential to the process of renewal. Thinking, "I am doing OK, so why should I bother?" is flawed. Don't make the mistake of resting on your laurels; feeling too comfortable could be a trap.

Reference

✓ [Paradox of Success](#) by John R., O'Neil 1993 McGraw Hill