On the Power of “Yet” in the Workplace

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This short piece is designed to give students an idea of what the Instructor is thinking about in terms of the topic of “yet”—both format and content. Please do not copy (plagiarize) the wording including the title. A particularly good reference is that of Dweck (2014) listed on the last page of this document in the list of references. Please make sure you have the correct number of words requested by the Instructor.
Abstract

The power of “yet” or “not yet” is based on the premise that we are all on a learning journey, and that just because a person has not accomplished a task “yet,” does not mean that they cannot or should not try and certainly that they should not give up. A person’s “yet” is coming, but their “yet” is not yet here. It is a type of hope that is instilled in persons to not give up.

(This is an abbreviated Abstract; please make sure your Abstract is 100-150 words)
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A young executive made some bad decisions that cost the young firm, IBM, several million dollars. He was summoned to CEO Tom Watson Jr.’s office fully expecting to be dismissed. As he entered the office, the young executive said, “I suppose after that set of mistakes you will want to fire me.” Watson was said to have replied, “Not at all, young man, we have just spent a couple of million dollars educating you.”

—Thomas Watson (quoted in Schein, 2010, p. 244)

“I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”
—Thomas Edison (quoted in Elkhorne, 1967, p. 52)

Words have power and may be the most impressive force available to humanity (Zahed, 2015). They have the power to break and destroy healthy environments, as well as relationships. Words cannot change reality, but they can change how people perceive reality. Words create filters through which individuals view the world around them (Schafer, 2010). Thomas Watson perceived the young man’s mistake as a learning experience and Thomas Edison viewed his experiments not as disappointments but as a gaining further knowledge.

How events are presented or framed can have a significant impact on behavior. Frames help people to make sense of an issue—they “organize everyday reality” (Tuchman 1978, p.193). For example, unsurprisingly, hamburgers labeled as having 75% lean beef were perceived more favorably than burgers said to contain 25% fat, even though both statements are mathematically equivalent (Levin & Gaeth, 1988). In another setting, managers indicated a desire to invest more money in a course of action that was reported to have a 70 percent chance of profit than in one said to have a 30 percent chance of loss (Bateman & Zeithaml, 1989). Even electric shock can have significantly different and less stressful effects when individuals were asked to think of the shocks as interesting new physiological sensations, as opposed to painful stimuli (Holmes &
Virtually all behavior can be cast in a negative or a tolerable or justifiable light (Langer, 1989) and framing is a key process used to do so.

More recently, Dweck (2014) suggests in her TED Talk framing failure and unacceptable performance as “not yet” happening:

“I heard about a high school in Chicago where students had to pass a certain number of courses to graduate, and if they didn’t pass a course, they got the grade “Not Yet.” And I thought that was fantastic; because if you get a failing grade, you think, I’m nothing, I’m nowhere. But if you get the grade ‘Not Yet’ you understand that you’re on a learning curve. It gives you a path into the future.”

The addition of “yet” implies that soon with practice the students will succeed. It fosters a “growth mindset,” or an understanding that abilities can be developed, rather than a “fixed mindset,” where skills and knowledge are thought of as static. Dweck (2014) explained that framing low grades, mistakes, or failure as an opportunity to improve, instead of a final outcome, results in greater confidence and creates greater persistence as individuals see success in the future.
References


