

1. Thomas Edison (1847-1931)

Failures: Edison is famously known for his countless failed attempts (some say over 1,000) at inventing the electric light bulb.

Success: His perseverance and willingness to learn from each failure ultimately led to the successful invention of the practical incandescent light bulb, revolutionizing modern life and industry.

Lesson: Persistence and viewing failure as a steppingstone to success.

2. Walt Disney (1901-1966)

Failures: Disney was fired from a newspaper early in his career for "lacking creativity," and his first animation studio, Laugh-O-Gram Studios, went bankrupt.

Success: He went on to create Disney Studios, which became one of the most successful and influential entertainment companies in the world.

Lesson: Overcoming early career setbacks through innovation and belief in one's vision.

3. Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

Failures: Lincoln faced numerous failures throughout his life, including losing his job, multiple business failures, a nervous breakdown, and numerous electoral defeats.

Success: Despite these setbacks, he became the 16th president of the United States and is celebrated for his leadership during the Civil War and his role in abolishing slavery.

Lesson: Resilience and determination in the face of repeated failures.

4. Henry Ford (1863-1947)

Failures: Before founding the Ford Motor Company, Ford's early businesses failed and left him broke five times.

Success: He revolutionized the automobile industry by creating the assembly line production method, making cars affordable for the average person and significantly changing transportation and industry worldwide.

Lesson: Innovation and learning from previous business failures to revolutionize an industry.

5. Steve Jobs (1955-2011)

Failures: Jobs was ousted from Apple, the company he co-founded, due to a series of internal conflicts and failures in product development.

Success: After being fired, he founded NeXT and acquired Pixar, which eventually became incredibly successful. He was later re-hired by Apple, where he led the company to unprecedented success with products like the iPod, iPhone, and iPad.

Lesson: Using failures as a catalyst for growth and coming back stronger with innovative ideas.

6. Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Failures: Einstein struggled academically early in his life, facing rejection from multiple academic positions and being told he would never amount to much.

Success: He went on to develop the theory of relativity, one of the two pillars of modern physics, and won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921.

Lesson: Embracing curiosity and continuous learning despite early failures and setbacks.

7. Colonel Harland Sanders (1890-1980)

Failures: Sanders faced numerous business failures and rejection of his chicken recipe over 1,000 times before finding success with Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC).

Success: He successfully franchised KFC at the age of 65, and it grew into one of the largest fast-food franchises in the world.

Lesson: Persistence and belief in one's product despite continuous rejection.

8. J.K. Rowling (1965-)

Failures: Before the success of the "Harry Potter" series, Rowling was a single mother on welfare and faced numerous rejections from publishers.

Success: She eventually found a publisher for "Harry Potter," which became one of the best-selling book series in history, leading to global fame and success.

Lesson: Perseverance in the face of repeated rejection and believing in one's creative work.

9. Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890)

Failures: Van Gogh struggled with mental illness and financial instability throughout his life. He only sold one painting during his lifetime.

Success: Posthumously, his work became incredibly influential and is considered some of the greatest in art history, valued in the millions today.

Lesson: Staying true to one's passion and vision even without immediate success or recognition.

10. The Wright Brothers (Orville Wright, 1871-1948, and Wilbur Wright, 1867-1912)

Failures: The Wright brothers faced numerous failed attempts and mechanical breakdowns in their quest to invent a powered flying machine.

Success: Despite these setbacks, they achieved the first successful powered flight in 1903, which paved the way for modern aviation.

Lesson: Innovation through trial and error, and dedication to a groundbreaking vision.

11. Oprah Winfrey (1954-)

Failures: Oprah faced numerous personal and professional setbacks, including being demoted from her job as a news anchor because she was "unfit for television."

Success: She became one of the most successful talk show hosts in history and built a media empire, becoming a billionaire and a significant influencer in media and culture.

Lesson: Transforming personal and professional setbacks into a source of strength and inspiration.