

'Valley of death' can give your future new life

The issue: Changing your behavior.



Doyle

The scenario: My boss tells me he is satisfied with my individual performance, but wants me to improve my teamwork. That's not something I'm naturally good at, but I like the company and want to grow with it. How do I learn to be less individualistic and more team oriented?

Coach: Kelley Doyle.

It's called the "valley of death." The phrase originates from the field of science and technology as a place where innovations navigate or die on the way to commercial production. The same holds true for human engineering and innovation. To make personal improvements that have lasting behavioral change, you will traverse the valley of death.

What exactly is the valley of death of personal development and how do you

press on when you feel like you are failing?

A few years ago, I took golf lessons to improve my game. Up to that point I was essentially self taught. The golf pro had me break bad habits and learn good ones. He warned "your golf game is going to get worse before it gets better." Did it ever. I knew if I could keep consistent and practice, my game would improve. I couldn't stomach how lousy I played and dropped what

the pro taught me. My golf returned to its former, mediocre game. The span of time between learning new skills and returning to old ones was in the valley of death.

Let's relate this to work. A coaching client, "Karen," is a vice president at a large corporation. Her 360 feedback showed she was strong in driving results and strategic thinking. It also showed she needed to improve inspiring trust and collaboration. For Karen to develop herself, we identified the behaviors of that skill set and built a development plan to grow in those areas.

In the valley of behavioral change, Karen will experience discomfort, confusion and frustration. It's new terrain. The behaviors of her desired skill set are not natural for her, requiring focused attention until they become second nature. She may see a temporary drop in her performance during this period of adjustment. Karen's success depends on whether she presses through the valley of death or turns back. If she presses on, she'll reach the

next level of her personal growth, and with it the possibility of professional advancement.

The valley is dark and difficult. If you take this journey of personal growth, be sure to take provisions.

- A plan. Know where you are starting, where you want to arrive and a basic understanding of how to get there.
- Support. Ask people you trust to encourage you when the going gets tough.
- Nourishment. Maintain personal balance – feed yourself physically, mentally and spiritually. Do it often and before you feel depleted.

Don't fear the valley of death. The term conveys an absence of life but is in fact life-giving for those determined to reach the other side.

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