

Leadership and Management



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6 Things Every Business Leader Can Learn From Pete Carroll's Super Bowl Call

By: Jeff Miller | 💬 **Comments:** 2

Every great leader knows what it's like to make a bad decision.

And right now, no one knows this feeling more than Seattle Seahawks head coach, Pete Carroll.

Carroll has been a magnet for criticism after coming just a yard short of achieving back-to-back Super Bowl wins. The dream of joining the ranks achieved by only seven other teams in NFL history quickly became a nightmare after the Seahawks elected to pass the ball in favor of running. This led to an interception thrown by quarterback Russell Wilson, and ultimately, a gut-wrenching 28-24 defeat to the New England Patriots.

Despite his controversial call, Carroll isn't backtracking on his decision. He's not keeping his head down.

He's doing what great leaders do.

In fact, he's used his failure to paint a picture of success that every leader should follow. And by following his model, you too can fail your way to success.

1. Take responsibility

The first thing Carroll did was what every leader should do in his situation: take responsibility.

"I told those guys, 'That's my fault, totally,'" Carroll said to **NBC** (<http://www.nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000000467556/article/pete-carroll-on-interception-thats-my-fault-totally>).

Carroll didn't throw the interception. Carroll's offensive coordinator may have actually called the play. But Carroll didn't blame anyone.

When you find yourself facing backlash over **a key decision** (</blog/do-you-make-these-3-decision-making-mistakes>), don't blame others. Be frank about what happened. Explain why decisions were made with the information at hand and what caused the failure.

2. Rebuild trust

When a project misses the mark or **a large goal** (<http://www.insperity.com/blog/get-smart-how-to-help-employees-write-more-effective-performance-goals>) is not achieved, be open and sincere about your decisions. Be honest about what happened. Explain why those decisions were made with the information you had and what attributed to the failure.

Take the time to explain what you have personally learned from the experience. Your employees will appreciate your humility. They'll see you as more of a member of the team and less like an unapproachable "boss".

3. Keep your team motivated

Good leaders **keep their team motivated** ([/blog/4-ways-to-continue-to-get-the-most-out-of-high-performers](http://www.insperity.com/blog/4-ways-to-continue-to-get-the-most-out-of-high-performers)) by making certain everyone is focused on the goal.

Whether it's a project or company goal, it's important everyone knows how their individual efforts contribute to the overall success of the company. Employees are motivated when they're aware of their individual expectations and how they can impact the greater good of the company.

- **Draw positives:** It's easy to forget that most people had written off the Seahawks after an unimpressive 3-3 start. Yet they were just a yard away from potentially winning the Super Bowl. A playoff appearance in itself is considered a success for most NFL franchises.

Be sure to point out any positive items that were noticed during the project or initiative. Too often in our culture, when something isn't expected, it's seen as a failure despite the accomplishments.

- **Reward and recognize:** Even when you fall short of total success, it's prudent to recognize and reward the good things that DID happen along the way. Chances are it wasn't an entire failure. Were there some small wins? Did your team try something new or different? This kind of ambition and creative thinking may pay off in the future. By **rewarding your employees** ([/blog/how-to-keep-up-the-good-work-with-an-employee-bonus-program](http://www.insperity.com/blog/how-to-keep-up-the-good-work-with-an-employee-bonus-program)), you're encouraging them to carry this mindset to other projects. It does wonders for employees' confidence and morale when they get rewarded for their efforts – despite not achieving total success. Whether it's a gift card or a pat on the back, every person wants to be recognized for his or her efforts.

4. Make adjustments

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." – Thomas A. Edison

In every success story, mistakes were made to get to that point.

Your path to success will be based on your ability to learn what kept you from achieving your goals the first time. It's on you to **quickly adjust** ([/blog/5-things-that-might-be-missing-from-your-change-management-plan](http://www.insperity.com/blog/5-things-that-might-be-missing-from-your-change-management-plan)) to the new information and implement changes.

Identify what went wrong and right. Find ways to capitalize on those things and build on lessons learned.

5. Keep taking risks

For Carroll, much of his success can be attributed to **risk-taking** ([/blog/4-factors-that-could-make-or-break-your-new-business-idea](http://www.insperity.com/blog/4-factors-that-could-make-or-break-your-new-business-idea)).

One reason the Seahawks were able to sustain a close score in the game is because of gutsy calls and risks taken by Carroll.

Not many people knew who Chris Mathews was. The Seahawks receiver hadn't caught a single pass in his entire NFL career. But Carroll took a chance on Mathews, and it paid off big. Mathews emerged as the team's leading receiver in an impressive debut.

In his final call of the Super Bowl, Carroll would have been touted a genius had the play ended in a touchdown. He took a risk and it didn't work out. Every great leader takes risks.

Weigh the risk-to-reward.

When making big decisions, great leaders should consider the impact if their risks don't pan out. Ask yourself these questions:

- How could it affect customers?
- Could your company afford to take a hit or miss out on additional revenue? (<http://www.insperity.com>)
- How will the marketplace perceive your company?
- What are the benefits if we're successful?

It's up to you to weigh these factors appropriately to the dynamics of your business and where you are in your juncture.

6. Ignore the noise

Following the Super Bowl, Carroll became the hot topic of discussion throughout the media. But instead of going on an apology tour, Carroll has stayed focused and is planning for next season.

As a leader, it's important to tune out objective opinions that have no influence on your goals. At the end of the day, the opinions of your employees and clients are what matters.

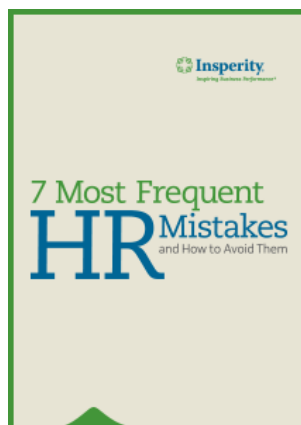
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Pete Schumer

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