engineers without borders
ingénieurs sans frontières
Canada

2017
FAILURE
REPORT

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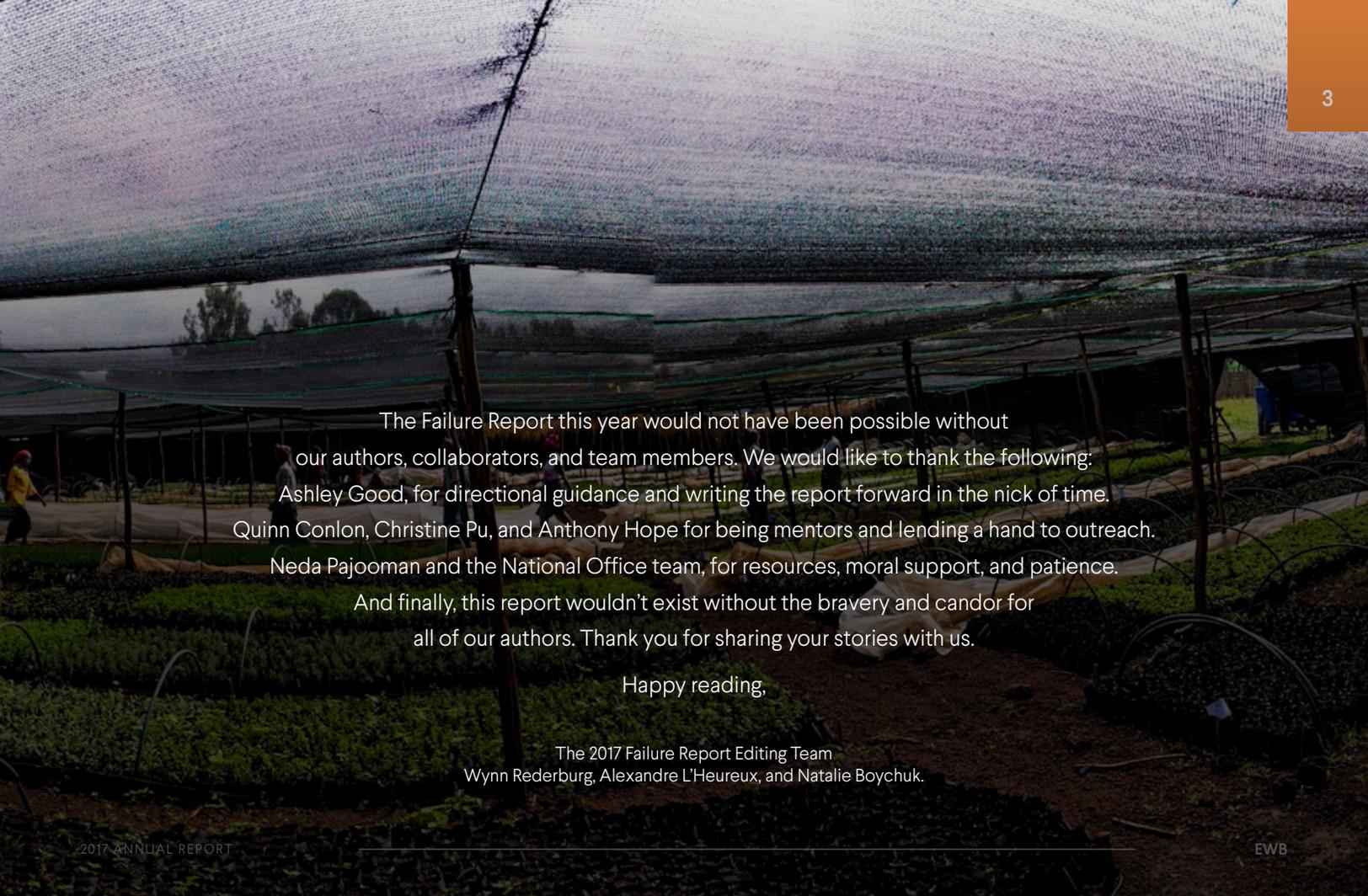
The Failure Report this year would not have been possible without
our authors, collaborators, and team members. We would like to thank the following:
Ashley Good, for directional guidance and writing the report forward in the nick of time.
Quinn Conlon, Christine Pu, and Anthony Hope for being mentors and lending a hand to outreach.
Neda Pajooman and the National Office team, for resources, moral support, and patience.
And finally, this report wouldn't exist without the bravery and candor for
all of our authors. Thank you for sharing your stories with us.

Happy reading,

The 2017 Failure Report Editing Team
Wynn Rederburg, Alexandre L'Heureux, and Natalie Boychuk.

Foreword by Ashley Good

After many years with EWB, both in Ghana and leading organizational learning from National Office, Ashley founded the consulting firm Fail Forward, which supports organizations to learn, innovate and build resilience. Before becoming a full-time failure Ashley worked in Cairo with the United Nations Environment Programme, and as a management consultant in Vancouver.

Humility is a core value of EWB. The annual Failure Report serves to represent and reinforce that value. Now, in the Report's tenth year, we want to reflect on its origins and the journey that has led us to this year's report.

In January 2008, Nick Jimenez was in Toronto preparing to join EWB's Governance and Rural Infrastructure venture in Ghana. Ever-willing to ask the tough questions, during a pre-departure training session Nick asked EWB Co-Founder Parker Mitchell how EWB could claim to strive for humility while often bragging about greatness and hardly talking publicly about mistakes or failures.

After a year of work overseas, Nick rallied a handful of his peers to address this organizational tension between humility and pride—by publicly documenting aspects of their work that failed. He had two goals for doing so: highlight failures and what was learned from them, and even more importantly, generate a dialogue about the challenges inherent in development work.

At the time no one in the sector was talking about their failures. The fail fast, fail often mantra of Silicon Valley was gaining traction but certainly had not spread to non-profit work. The sector was, and is, largely donor-driven and donors would prefer to fund success, which makes risk taking, innovation and the inevitable failures unpalatable.

Tim Brodhead, then CEO of the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, described the situation to me as "the Dance of Deception: where non-profits pretend to have the answer and donors pretend to believe them".

Fortunately, EWB had, and still has, a culture that encourages staff to act on their ideas and creativity. Nick's suggestion to stop the dance and document their stories of failures was met with enthusiasm. Louis Dorval, Sarah Grant, Graham Lettner and Jean-François Soublière all had stories to contribute and Jean-François stepped up to do the required editing and layout. This group of mavericks managed to have the first Failure Report ready for EWB's Annual General Meeting in January 2009. They showed up to that meeting and distributed 100 printed black and white copies—surprising both the board and CEO George Roter.

Admittedly, this group's brazen approach might not go over well at all organizations, but for EWB it worked. The leadership spent some time discussing the risks involved in publicly documenting failures but ultimately decided the opportunity to promote EWB's organizational culture of learning, humility and transparency was too important and outweighed the risk of losing support from funders.

This principled decision turned out to be the right one. In the years since, EWB has not lost a single donor or partner because of the Failure Report and the Report has served the organization well, both establishing the norm of discussing failures and learning early and often, and attracting new talent who appreciate a culture where staff can take smart risks in pursuit of innovation.

It is important to note this report has never been about celebrating or glamourizing failure. EWB strives for systems change and has a vision for a world where everyone's basic needs are met and where everyone can live to their full potential. Failures in pursuit of this vision are not, nor should they ever be, taken lightly.

We hope this report serves as an acknowledgement that systems change is complex and therefore some degree of failure is inevitable. We strive for excellence and would love 100% success in everything we do but – given the complexity of the change – expecting that level of success is unrealistic and drives our learning underground.

What's more, we need to create room for ourselves to try new things and experiment in pursuit of figuring out what might work to shift the system towards our vision. Therefore, the best thing we can do is be willing to take the risk of trying something new and, at the same time, get really good at detecting where our efforts are failing early, analyzing effectively, and applying our learning to continuously improve.

The tangibility, honesty, and emphasis on learning found in this report is to remind us that if and when we fail, we have a responsibility to make our failure as productive as possible: to minimize the consequences and strive to outweigh the costs with the value of what we learn.

But producing a Failure Report does not magically create this culture of innovation and learning. Smart risk taking and productive failure require new language to talk about failure constructively, the skills to deal with it effectively, and organizational infrastructure to reinforce the actions that become the cultural norm.

The Failure Report is one example of infrastructure that reinforces productive failure but there are many others. Blameless post-mortems, processes to give and receive feedback, job descriptions that emphasize learning by doing are just a few other examples.

We love putting this report together every year for the conversations it sparks and its ability to normalize a productive relationship with failure at EWB, and we ask you, the reader, to consider what might work at your organization.

On behalf of the whole team, I invite you to enjoy and learn with us through the stories documented here. We hope this tenth edition of the EWB Failure Report continues to deliver on Nick's goal and helps us all participate in more honest dialogues about our challenges, failures and learning.

EWB

A Failure to Foresee a Failure
By: Allie Young

Allie joined EWB in second year after wanting to join since high school. She got involved by helping to plan our Youth Conference in 2015 then becoming co-director of Member Learning for 2015-2016. Last year she was VP Operations for the chapter then became President after deciding to come back to study Global Development for one more year. Allie says joining EWB was by far the best decision she made in university.

I tend to have an "act like it's fine until it's not fine" mentality about a lot of things in life – always choosing to be optimistic until reality rears its ugly head. That was the general feeling about fair trade this year when the club's application was rejected for a second time. Fair Trade Western had to come crawling back to EWB like a wounded animal. We had not predicted this, but I should have been prepared.

Fair Trade at Western had been coming off a triumphant few years, having gotten our certification as a fair trade campus and growing the portfolio into an unstoppable force to be reckoned with. Fair Trade had gotten so big within EWB, we thought it was time to let it go out on its own. Just like kids grow up and go off to university, our little fair trade baby needed to be given space to grow. We dreamed of Fair Trade becoming a ratified club (a title EWB Western doesn't have) and making huge impact on campus. We dreamed of fair trade t-shirts and products in the bookstore, and more fair trade food options for students.

These big ideas came with a big what if – what if our new Fair Trade club's application doesn't get approved? As the incoming president, I pushed this problem to the back of my mind and the application was submitted. I chose to be optimistic, turning my attention towards other things. We crossed off fair trade from our list of portfolios and accepted the seemingly inevitable that fair trade would no longer be synonymous with EWB. We restructured the entire chapter around this loss and had no alternative plan with fair trade in it.

And then the application was rejected the first time, on the basis that the new club "overlapped with existing clubs". But there was nothing to fear, we'd submit an appeal and get approved the second time. I went along with this enthusiastically, with a slight feeling of dread, but no real inclination to act, assemble a team, or prepare for the worst.

When the application was rejected a second time, it was almost September. Things were ramping up for a new year of EWB and we faced the new challenge of reintegrating fair trade, recruiting new directors and carrying on with the broken momentum of a failed new club. It was a setback for the portfolio, but a wake up call for me. I realized my relentless optimism, something I pride myself on, had been damaging for the team. I came up with no plan B and fair trade suffered because of it, their team shrinking in size and having a hard time reorganizing. This was a failure that could have been prevented with a solid back-up plan, and I should have been the person to draft that plan.

The experience prepared me for other setbacks in the year, and taught me how to adapt my team to challenges. But it also taught me to be my own devil's advocate. The challenging questions I often aim at my chapter needed to be aimed at myself, like "what if this fails?" and "what's the alternative?". It is dangerous to be complacent in the face of failure, and better to show up to the ring with both your optimism and your back-up plan.

Preserving the Spirit of Community
By: Alain Chelala

Alain (centre) is the most recent president of the McGill University Chapter (2017-2018) and previously led the chapter's member learning program as co-director (2016-2017).

The goal of the member learning group at Engineers Without Borders' (EWB) McGill chapter is not only to create a discussion and sharing space around subjects related to international development, but also to strengthen the chapter's community spirit by inviting our members to come together and get to know each other during these weekly meetings.

Supported by a co-director of learning, our strategy was clear: double the attendance at our meetings to be able to organize a large scale event at the end of the semester in Montreal. Even if we had the support of the chapter's executive members, we made mistakes, had to deal with setbacks, and failed at some points, but this helped us learn lessons about planning and team spirit.

The failure

For the fall semester, we decided to follow the theme of the Sustainable Development Goals for our workshops. Videos and presentations about these goals, the UN, the approach undertaken by EWB on this matter and the importance of advocacy were planned. However, against all odds, our results were mediocre: 10 – 15 people participated in our sessions on average, few were engaged, and we only became alarmed the day only 5 members showed up at a meeting, including myself. This situation shook my confidence and determination, and, at first, I put the blame on the lack of support and seriousness of the rest of the team.

The causes of the failure

After thinking about it, we realized that this poor performance was mainly caused by our individualism, our disorganization, and a certain nonchalance. Because of our pride, we did not ask for enough help, particularly from our Support Manager. We were dependent on the fact that the rest of the chapter automatically supported our workshops, but we didn't meet them halfway to understand what they expected from our meetings. Consequently, our activities were not attractive to everybody.

In addition, most of the work was done at the last minute. Our main weakness was the advertisement: we used little creativity to announce and share our events, and we used exclusively social media, only a few days before our workshops. I acknowledge that completing this task alone was a mistake.

Lessons learned

In order to maintain the chapter's community spirit, knowing how to collaborate with its members and become aware of the resources it has to offer is essential. Why work alone when the chapter has numerous members with diverse roles who could easily take care of tasks we have a hard time completing? It is by connecting with the rest of the team that more people invest themselves, that everybody gains motivation, and that performance increases.

Checkmate? Not so fast...
By Dilara Omeroglu, VP Communications,
Concordia Chapter

Dilara has been with Engineers Without Borders for two years now as VP Communications. She worked with the Youth Engagement program, participated in Day in Action, held a Sustainability Conference with over 500 people, and organised a chess tournament! Dilara's grateful to be a part of the EWB family, and look forward to learning more.

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We, procrastination-loving students at the Concordia Chapter, play chess a lot. Actually, for a while, we played chess so often that our Engineers Without Borders office almost became a chess club. If we spent so much time playing chess, why not make our organization benefit from it? That's how we got the idea for a chess tournament fundraiser.

As an avid chess player, nothing satisfies me more than entering a room full of focused people, where the only sound is that of the moving pieces. There is a certain beauty to knowing that no game is identical, even though they all occur at the same time, in the same room. This is how we decided to gather a whole chess community together … that is 400 people. Ambitious? Certainly, but still doable. To accomplish this goal, we collaborated with the McGill Chapter and we immediately started planning the tournament.

We started with the basics, which is booking the room and renting all the necessary materials. Booking the room ended up being very tedious, between strict rules and unexpected renovations. We ended up with a very pretty room, but at a steeper price than expected. In a nutshell, we ended up spending our entire budget on renting a room and buying prizes for the winners.

Next, we prepared Facebook ads and emails to convince people to spend an entire Saturday playing chess with us. At first, I had no doubt that people would eagerly pay and come to us.

Was I wrong! It is only now that I realize that chess players only come out when there are significant amounts of money or important titles to be won. They would have no use for our books and simple chess games! Furthermore, we started advertising too late, that is a week before the event. Remember we intended to bring together 400 people to the tournament? Unfortunately, only 25 people showed up.

In the meantime, communication with McGill was interrupted and our collaboration was more individual work, which lead to another problem: although we love playing chess, no one in our team had ever organized a tournament. We called the Fédération québécoise des échecs (FQE) to the rescue. We were relieved as they assured us of their presence in the tournament to organize the games (Swiss system), as well as tally up the points. As the event neared, the FQE stopped replying to us. Total panic: I had no choice but to change the system of the tournament: instead of a Swiss tournament, we had a round robin.

Our chapter still managed to raise $250, and the players were satisfied. This tournament, with all its weaknesses, still managed to bring together the members of our chapter, and taught us many important lessons! We intend to repeat our Échecs contre la pauvreté tournament, but this time it will be more carefully organized.

The Night Without Borders

By Thomas Goudreault, Sherbrooke University

At Sherbrooke University, the EWB chapter recruits students from various departments to come together around shared core values, like a commitment to doing good for the whole. EWB—SU aims to foster a deeper understanding of sustainable development in the Sherbrooke community by holding unique events, such as the Night Without Borders, as well as high school outreach activities and panel discussions on current events.

For 8 years running, the Sherbrooke University chapter of Engineers Without Borders has organized the Night Without Borders, an annual event themed around various aspects of sustainable development. This year, the chapter invited representatives from local businesses and student groups to speak about their projects and actions in the Sherbrooke community. The overall goal of the event was to create opportunities for collaboration and to grow the community's shared knowledge on sustainable development.

Over the past few years, the event has been drawing fewer and fewer participants. This year, to address the problem, the chapter opted for new strategies, including increased advertising through social media, local radio stations and the student newspaper. Yet, despite the group's well-intentioned efforts, participation did not significantly go up from previous years.

For one, the publicity used did not adequately support the goal of the event, which is to raise awareness about sustainable development. More specifically, the ads only focused on scheduling details, without highlighting the content of the event. As a result, the target audience didn't know what the activities were about or whether they might be interested in attending. Since the event's primary goal is to raise awareness, the chapter decided that future strategies would focus on reaching out to potential participants and convincing them to attend, regardless of their level of knowledge about the topic at hand. This approach should contribute to increasing the number of participants,

as well as the impact on the community, by relying on specific advertising tactics designed to draw attention to the proposed activities, highlight invited speakers and guests, and grab interest through engaging and hard-hitting facts.

Furthermore, as in previous years, lessons from the past were ignored, even though a Failure Report had been produced. For instance, several weeks into the semester, no one had officially been appointed to organize the 2017 Night Without Borders, leaving this important task unattended until much too late. As a result, less effort went into organizing the event from the very start, which made it difficult to meet deadlines and forced the organizers to postpone the Night by two weeks. In the future, it will be essential to map out an efficient schedule for each task, appoint an event organizer and select an event date before the start of the semester.

Another recommendation involves partnering with other groups that work on sustainable development, whether they do so directly or indirectly. This could greatly facilitate and improve both the organizational process and the event itself. Indeed, the shared allocation of responsibilities would increase organizational efficiency, since each group would be responsible for one workshop or conference. It would also widen the array of activities offered, while fostering a greater sense of ownership for the event among the various groups. The Night Without Borders would then become an event centered on cooperation and unity, and as such, a living embodiment of the values it aims to promote.

The Importance of Valuing Community Relationships

By: The Calgary Professional Chapter

The EWB Calgary Chapter is one of 39 across the country. Many chapters are based out of universities and colleges, but ours is made up of professionals from across our city. We support EWB Canada through fundraising, fellowships, and awareness, and create change in our community by nurturing a generation of leaders who go on to change global systems.

World Fair Trade Day is an annual event celebrated internationally that Fair Trade Calgary considers a milestone in its programming. For World Fair Trade Day 2017, Fair Trade Calgary's focus had been to obtain "Fair Trade Town" status for Calgary, which would distinguish Calgary as a leader and demonstrate the city's commitment towards fair trade, ethics and sustainability.

To achieve the designation, we are required to meet certain metrics; for example, we require for at least 59 community organizations to support the "Fair Trade Town" designation and at least 67 restaurants and cafes offering at least two fair trade categories of products, among other things. The municipal government also must pass two resolutions to support the "Fair Trade Town" designation and to procure Fairtrade coffee, tea and sugar for all administrative City of Calgary meetings.

Progress on the campaign metrics has been slow; particularly restaurants and cafes have not been as responsive as we had hoped. Our initial goal had been to achieve designation in 2017. This goal came from a drive to realize this achievement during Canada's 150th year. In early 2017, the Fair Trade Calgary committee of volunteers discussed an approach to push the support of restaurants and cafes. The committee also introduced the concept of a restaurant focused World Fair Trade Day event.

Our idea was to ask restaurants to offer a creative dish incorporating a fair trade ingredient at their restaurant the week leading up to World Fair Trade Day. A dedicated sub-team of volunteers worked on engaging with restaurants by email to chefs and restaurant managers, through social media, in flyers, and in person.

We targeted restaurants that were involved in other food-related challenges, such as YYC Hot Chocolate Week, YYC Taco Week, YYC Pizza Week, The Big Taste, and centered around active community neighborhoods.

The effort was labour-intensive and required hours of dedicated volunteer time. With a small team of five volunteers, it was a significant use of their time with disappointing results. In the end, only The Coup opted to offer a chocolate dessert at their restaurant that uses Camino Fairtrade chocolate the week leading up to World Fair Trade Day.

We learned a number of lessons that we will implement next time we begin a campaign: firstly, it is critical simplify the event and remember the original mandate of World Fair Trade Day, which is to celebrate the successes in the fair trade movement and to showcase the small-scale producers and the contributions they make to healthy and sustainable communities around the world. We also learned that it is more effective to gear the event to creating stronger relationships with community groups and similar-valued not-for-profits in Calgary, rather than focusing on businesses that have little awareness of fair trade and no clear reason for supporting or promoting this event. By appreciating the community groups and businesses that are already supporting the values of fair trade, they become bigger champions within Calgary to help push the fair trade message within their respective networks and further, we don't spend our time knocking on the wrong doors.

On the Barrier of Language
By: Ross Edwards

I was an EWB Junior Fellow from McMaster University. From May to August 2017, I worked with FarmDrive, a microfinance startup in Nairobi, Kenya that has created a mobile phone app that allows smallholder farmers to connect with financial services.

I was about three and half months in my placement in Nairobi, Kenya when I had to meet up with some friends on the other side of the city. I called an Uber and waited out at the front of our apartment, thinking about everything we had been working on at FarmDrive for the past few weeks. I watched on my phone as the Uber driver missed his turn and started driving in the opposite direction. Frustrated, I tried calling him. "Hey there! You just missed the turn, you were supposed to go left at Ngong road," I said. In broken English, he apologized and promised he will be there shortly. Moments later, he arrived at the front of our apartment. He apologized a second time, but I told him not to worry. He was an older man, probably in his mid-fifties, wearing a large jacket and a hat (it's winter in Kenya after all). I made small talk, humouring him with a few words in Swahili but mostly speaking in English. He seemed to understand, but didn't seem to be into the conversation.

Then, a couple of moments later, he explained that it was his first week on the job and that he had just moved to Nairobi from a small town in the country near Mount Kenya. I made attempts to talk about it more with him, but he seemed lost by what I was saying. We ended up spending most of the rest of the ride listening to the sound of Nairobi traffic.

Many months before, while in Canada, I made a promise to myself that I would attempt to be conversational in Swahili in order to facilitate personal connections with co-workers, friends, and clients. My pursuit of this endeavour was a complete failure and its consequences were clear. It was not so much that I was not able to make connections. Rather, it was that I willingly formed a barrier between myself and people I didn't know very well, like the person I bought breakfast from every morning or the farmer I chatted with briefly during field visits for FarmDrive.

This shortcoming reflects a key aspect of the white saviour complex that is often shoved to the side when thinking about development.

It is incredulous to think that people like me work for several months in a foreign country with the intention of changing things for the better, without even having a grasp of the primary mode of communication used by the most underserved part of the population. As a result, residents of another country must accommodate our form of communication, often at the expense of their own. It comes down to my own choice to believe that it was more worthwhile to stress over the work we were doing than it was to stress over understanding our clients to their full potential, which ironically had negative impacts on our overall results.

This became clear to me near the end of my placement on a trip into the rural farming communities that surrounded Nairobi. We were supposed to be taking surveys to improve the efficacy of FarmDrive's mobile app, but our questions (like the rest of our platform) was in English.

Often, we'd receive blank or confused looks, followed by a short answer in English. It wasn't that our clients weren't understanding us, but our medium of communication made it difficult for them to fully express their ideas. Yes, we got the answers we were looking for. However, we had very little means of knowing if they knew who we were, why we were there, and how to use FarmDrive for their business. Further, paramount to the success of our project, would they share the app with their friends? These questions - the ones we didn't ask - were the ones I was less confident about. And the confused text messages we received from farmers through our mobile platform asking, "how do I apply for a loan?" or, "can you send me messages in Swahili?" seemed to validate my suspicion that key components of our service were not reaching all of our clients, simply because they didn't understand our choice of words. Ultimately, language is not so often a barrier as a large, billowing cloud.

You can enter it and some things will be visible, but the rest will be cloaked in fog. We were equally caught in the cloud; it is nearly impossible to get meaningful feedback and improve your product when you can't fully understand your customers.

Going back to my Uber driver, we could imagine a different outcome from that day. Perhaps, by speaking to him in Kiswahili, he would have opened up and I would have been able to communicate to him that I have an appreciation for the local culture. Perhaps we could have talked until we'd found a mutual friend or he would have given me his perspective on the elections. But of course, we'll never know.

I'm hoping that my failure can act as an example for the importance of language as the Engineers Without Borders organization moves forward. By having an open dialogue, we can make possible a future of foreign development where volunteers who acquaint themselves with the local language are the norm and not a novelty. So, tuko tayari kusoma?

Fearing Risk
By: The EWB Community Team

The Engineers Without Borders Community Team works to build and foster a resilient, adaptive, and healthy community of people and engagement structures to fuel the EWB vision. Our community members work towards impact aligned with EWB's vision and mission, provide a stellar talent pipeline for EWB, and help sustain our organization as the heart of EWB.

What makes EWB unique is our community. It's the Community Team's mission to create an environment that cultivates our members and community. This year our team learned how striving to invest in people can result in a focus on risk and fear instead of opportunity and possibility. EWB had an exciting 2017, especially with the process of relaunching and rebranding as an organization. While this is an important and energizing milestone in our history, it is also a change with significant risk. Throughout this year, the Community Team has navigated apprehension and fear about this change, and the risk of failure that it brings to the organization. During the rebrand and relaunch process, we have too often let this fear allow us to focus exclusively on risk, and not on opportunity. While addressing risk is an important part of this project, it isn't the only thing needed. By focusing on internally mitigating risk, we failed to bring community leaders into the design and engagement processes early enough and we therefore missed an important opportunity to focus on the new ideas and possibility that could come from organizational change.

Why did this happen?

Our focus on risk was the result of feelings of fear – the fear of not wanting to disappoint members, to harm the momentum of chapters, or to perpetuate confusion about a complicated process and changing timelines. By being fiercely committed to the success and health of our community, we found ourselves making more decisions than we should have on chapters' behalf, and trying to manage all the potential risks as an internal team.

This prevented us from thinking about the new opportunities to represent ourselves to new audiences, attract new support, and associate ourselves with a brand that fits our work.

This framing around risk was a failure. We should have instead framed the rebrand around a broad and collaborative conversation about being bold and seizing opportunity. We did a disservice to the success of our chapters and the success of the relaunch by not facilitating a more open conversation about the opportunity of the rebrand along with the risks.

How do we learn from this moving forward?

Over the summer our team started noticing the influence of risk and fear in our decision making, and began asking tough questions about why we were feeling that way. We decided to work to overcome this failure by reminding ourselves of EWB's core values, especially 'Courageously Commit' and 'Dream Big, Work Hard'. We regularly remind ourselves what the values are and why it is important for us to trust the EWB community and the process, and to act in spite of fear not because of it.

From this experience, we've learnt the importance of recognizing where and when fear (fear of failure and the unknown) is sabotaging a project, and preventing a team from reconnecting with, their ultimate goal. Moving forward, we will act to seize opportunity in balance with managing risk. The effect of acting because of fear or risk was what held us back, and this is what we will strive not to repeat.

Do good without looking at who or how, right?

By: The Failure Institute

The Failure Institute is the research arm of Fuckup Nights, a global movement in 251 cities around the world where stories of failed businesses and projects are shared. An increasing number of documented cases of failure led us to form around a mission and responsibility to share studies and publications with a disruptive style, which has always characterized us.

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A researcher, a think tank and 50 questions that gave rise to one of our biggest failures of the year. We are the Failure Institute, and here's the story of our latest fuckup. But let's begin with a proper introduction.

The Failure Institute is the first think tank in the world to study business failure. This has been made possible thanks to the global movement Fuckup Nights, in which entrepreneurs come together to publicly share stories of business failure. The movement, born in Mexico in 2012, now has a presence in 252 cities and 77 countries. At the Failure Institute, our mission is to help support well-informed decision-making in business, public policy, civil society, and academia through the study of failure.

Our story begins when we published our first research; this was around 2014 and we had investigated along with the EGADE Business School the most common causes of business failure in Mexico (full report here). Due to the success and the new approaches of our first research, we started receiving emails from researchers all over the world who were interested in working with us. So we started talking with each of them trying to help everyone in every way possible because we were so excited and happy to have such a great response from researchers interested on studying failure..

Among those emails, we received a request from a researcher who was working on his PhD thesis and he wanted us to help him spread his survey among our contacts. It made sense to us because his project was aligned with our vision and it was a way to support the study of business failure and gather valuable data for us too. However, we didn't want to interfere with his research methodology, so he worked on the survey and we helped him with the dissemination.

Days went by and we didn't get any answers... days turned into weeks and weeks into months and the survey wasn't getting enough answers. It was at that moment that we realized that the survey was very long, quite confusing and that people who had accessed it and started to answer left it unfinished.

The objective was to obtain 100 answers in a two-month communication effort from our side. The strategy was to share the link and the information through our social media networks. After a very time-consuming campaign, we managed to obtain 10 answers. During our post-mortem meeting with the researcher we explained to him that the survey hadn't worked out and that we needed to stop. This was a hard but important lesson for us.

After our survey fuckup, we realized that it wasn't efficient or effective to help every researcher that approached us because everyone has different needs and ideas. As a result, we determined that our best way to respond to this growing community was through the creation of our Researcher's Network where we could offer them what was in our hands to give.

Today, we have 60+ researchers in our network and all of them can access our database of business failures. (They only need to ask). We provide virtual and face-to-face spaces to promote failure research and also to share methodologies and best practices and to help the world improve, one failure at a time.