

# Why Victims Can't Invent Anything

**First, get past the fear of failure and unknown markets. Then stop complaining and blaze your own trail to innovation and profit.**

By G. Michael Maddock and Raphael Louis Vitón  
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Consider this tale: Two salespeople for a leading athletic shoe company are sent over to a developing world soon-to-be superpower country in the early 1980s. After a week of working to find leads, each salesperson reports back to corporate.

The first salesperson says, "Prospects could not be worse. Nobody wears athletic shoes over here."

The second salesperson sees things differently. "This is unbelievable! Everybody here needs our shoes!"

**Question: Which report would have come back from you?**

The answer is a simple way to determine whether you have what it takes to be a successful [innovator](#). You are either a Creator ("What an amazing opportunity—everyone needs what we have; we just need to figure out how to reach them") or a Victim ("What a terrible situation").

Now you're probably thinking you are almost always a Creator—never, or rarely, a Victim. Well, here's how you know you are a Victim: You complain about anything. That's right. The sure sign you are playing Victim is complaining.

Here's why this should matter to you: In the world of innovation, there are only two kinds of people, Victims and Creators. Creators focus on finding solutions, welcoming the bumps along the way because they know overcoming hurdles will ultimately lead to a better solution. (More on that in a minute.)

Meanwhile, for Victims, small problems—not to mention the inevitable big ones—lead to an unlikely addiction that keeps great ideas from happening.

## **Victims are Excuse Addicts**

Perhaps you have uttered some of these words: "The budget is too small." "The deadline is too tight." "The competition is too tough." "My boss is a tool." "My boss is an ignorant tool." "My legal won't approve it." "R&D won't make it in time." "My team is too small." "We don't have any big ideas." "We have too many ideas." Any of these sound familiar? Of course they do, because everyone developing new products and services has the same challenges. So why are your competitors—down the street and down the hall—besting you when it comes to new product development? Put simply, they have learned [failure](#) is a positive part of being a Creator and complaining is just the drug of choice for the Victim. (And we want to acknowledge that *The Power of TED*, a book by David Emerald, got us to start calling these people Victims.)

## **Failure is the Oxygen of Innovation**

We are not being overly dramatic here. Failing is as much a part of creating as heavy breathing is a part of running. The trick is to understand that the Creator sees every small failure as a big opportunity to modify the product or experience. They view every problem as an opportunity to come up with some creative workaround. For example:

- "R&D can't make it? I'll try to open innovation models and see if someone else can develop for us."
- "Budget is too small? I'll have online thought leaders expose it to their followers (for free) and take advantage of the viral lift."
- "This approach has never worked in the past? Well, gee. Maybe times have changed—and if they haven't, let's try a different way of attacking the problem."

Creators see the obstacles as springboards for new thinking, not as an excuse to throw up their hands and give up.

## **What is the Outcome You Want?**

Okay, fine, you say. But what do you do if you have a victim mentality—if only once in a while—or manage people who do? Our suggestion is to ask this simple question when you (or the folks you are in charge of) confront an obstacle that makes you think about quitting: "What is the outcome you want?"

This simple question can magically turn a victim into a creator. This phrase is the beacon that allows you to navigate through political, budgetary, and scheduling waters.

Once you are clear on the destination, it becomes a lot easier to steer a course around obstacles and shoals.

If you manage a person who is constantly pointing to excuses when asked why the pipeline is slow or low, ask, "What's the outcome you want?" If that person can't create ideas to get there, he or she might just be too addicted to victimhood to innovate. And if you as a boss find yourself doing more complaining than creating, perhaps it's time to ask yourself the same question—and do something about it.

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## Learning Intent: The Key to Effective Challenging

*"Constructive Challengers spark improvement or development of some kind. They coax, cajole, and entice you to move in the directions of your heart's desires. This kind of Challenger is a teacher who challenges your pet notions, your view of the status quo...They see you as a Creator, and they encourage your learning, growth, and development."*

### From Chapter 8 ("The Empowerment Dynamic") of *The Power of TED\**

Of the three shifts in roles between the Dreaded Drama Triangle (DDT and TED\* (\*The Empowerment Dynamic), the Persecutor to Challenger shift continues to be the most...well, challenging! (The other two shifts are **Victim to Creator** and **Rescuer to Coach**.)

"Shift happens" at two levels. The first level occurs *intrapersonally*, which means within oneself. At this level we focus on how we see ourselves and how we deal with our life experiences. A **Creator** is able to meet their life experience - especially those people, conditions, or circumstances that they must face - not as a **Persecutor**, but as a **Challenger**.

No matter what situation we find ourselves, we can choose our response (remember the reference to Victor Frankl in *The Power of TED\**).

**If we can ask and answer the question "what has this person, condition, or circumstance come into my life to teach me?" or "what is this situation challenging me to learn or develop?" then we are making the intrapersonal shift happen from Persecutor to Challenger.**

Rather than persecuting us (which is how the **Victim** would see it), our life experience is challenging us to learn, grow, and develop in some way or another. It is all about learning and growth.

The second level in which shift happens is *interpersonally*, which occurs in a relationship with one or more people. Here the focus is on how we see and interact with others. First and foremost, a Creator sees the other as a Creator in their own right and approaches them with the respect and compassion that co-creators have toward one another. The Challenger Challenge is this: How can we take a stand, advocate for a position, delegate an assignment, set a boundary, issue a command or directive, or challenge an assumption or behavior or opinion in a way that *increases the potential that we will be received and perceived as a Challenger, rather than a Persecutor?*

**The answer to becoming a conscious, constructive Challenger lies in the clarity and communication of intent.**

Clarity of intent comes from stopping and considering what Diana Cawood, a consultant from British Columbia, calls our "Intention Mindset." One is the Looking Good Intent. Here the real underlying intention is to look good, often at the other's expense; to be right or the hero or the winner or seen as smart; to be critical or to communicate judgment and/or blame; or to control - any of which inherently belittles the other. A challenge of any kind that is communicated from this intent will almost invariably set us up to be received and perceived as a Persecutor.

The second mindset is the Learning Intent, which is the way of the conscious Constructive Challenger. Here the focus is on learning and growth, increasing the capacity and capability of the other, maintaining integrity, with no hidden agendas; the communication is done with respect and compassion. What gets communicated may involve a difficult conversation or "tough love," but it is still done with the view of the other as also being a Creator (whether they know it or not - or are acting like it or not).

The other ingredient for being an effective Challenger is the direct communication of the intent of the challenge - in whatever form the challenge takes. It is one thing to say: "You were a real jerk in that meeting!" (a comment that will certainly land as a Persecutor). It is quite another thing to say, "My experience of your outburst limited the effectiveness of what you wanted to say. Let's explore other options on how to deal with such conflict in the future because I want you to be seen as a the constructive and contributing member of the team that you normally are." In this statement, *what* is being challenged is clear as well as why you are challenging the other.

In the end, how the other receives and perceives your challenge is up to them. However, if you consciously think through the challenge by being clear about your "learning intent" and then clearly communicating both the challenge and the intention behind it, you will drastically increase the probably that the other will see you as a Challenger rather than a Persecutor.

If we are to create environments of empowerment in our relationships, our families, our organizations - in our world - we need conscious and intentional Challengers who know how to encourage, mentor and cajole Creators around them to learn, grow, and develop. In order to grow our capacity to be a conscious, constructive Challenger to others interpersonally, we must also model and practice the discipline of making shift happen intrapersonally and to welcome the challengers that show up in our own lives. So, take the Challenger Challenge as a way to continue your own commitment to live your life as a Creator and to support those around you to do the same!

## **Putting it Into Practice**

It's time to take a "fearless moral inventory," as they say in 12-Step programs. Think back over the past year and identify at least five individuals who have responded to something you said or did in a way that indicated that they perceived and received you as a Persecutor. (If you need a clue, if anyone reacted defensively, angrily, and/or withdrew from you, these are all good indicators that you showed up as a Persecutor to them.)

Write each of the incidents down by describing the situation and who was involved. What did you say and/or do? Now comes the really important point to reflect on: was what you said or did coming from a "Looking Good" or a "Learning" intention? If your response is that it was about "Looking Good," how would you do the interaction differently if you could have a "do over"? If your response is that it was actually a Learning Intent - even though you were still perceived and received as a Persecutor - is there a way you could have approached the interaction in a way that may have resulted in a different response?

# VICTIMIZATION AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

By David Emerald

“Think of a time when you felt you were being victimized.” I often find that participants in my seminars struggle to think of a time when they were (or are) in the victim role. Perhaps this should come as no surprise, because none of us want to see ourselves as a powerless victim. Despite our desire to deny that we may be a victim at times, I have come to regard victimization as an inescapable part of the human experience.

How we respond to victimization, however, has everything to do with whether we live primarily from a victim or a creator orientation. The victim orientation, or mindset, is embodied in the problem-focused actions of the victim, persecutor and rescuer roles. Dr. Steven Karpman was the first to identify these key roles in what he referred to as the Drama Triangle.

A creator orientation, or mindset, is embodied in the outcome-guided actions of a creator, challenger or coach. This is what I define as The Empowerment Dynamic (TED\*), an alternative mindset and escape from the roles of the drama triangle. Empowerment emerges in how we deal with victimization when it occurs.

*The Power of TED\* (\*The Empowerment Dynamic)* explores a distinction between victimization and victimhood. Victimization is any situation in which a “dream or desire” is denied or thwarted – any situation. Victimization can be caused by people, by conditions (such as a health condition), or circumstances (such as a natural disaster). Victimhood, on the other hand, is a self-identity and a way of being in the living of one’s life. TED\* (\*The Empowerment Dynamic) serves as a challenger to victimhood, while acknowledging the reality of victimization as part of the human condition.

There is a very wide range of victimization that occurs in the world and in our lives. Think of this range along a scale of 1 to 10, which I call the Victim Rating Scale. At the high end of the range (9-10) is extreme victimization. Those who are victimized by war or oppression or by natural disasters certainly experience the high end of the scale. There are many whose daily lives are bound up in such extreme conditions.



THE  
POWER  
OF TED\*

At the other end of the scale (1-2) are experiences of “mundane victimization.” A driver cuts in front of you on the road; you come down with a nasty cold; a storm ruins your plans for a family outing; a co-worker is late in getting information to you for a report you are writing – all are examples.

A few months ago, I had such an experience. I had traveled from my home in the U.S. Pacific Northwest to the East Coast, and its time-zone difference of three hours. The next morning I was scheduled to give an important presentation and I knew I needed a good night’s sleep to be at my best. In an attempt to adjust to the time difference, I went to bed about 10:00 PM (while my body was asking: “Why are you trying to go to sleep? It’s only 7:00 o’clock!”).

After hours of tossing and turning, I finally fell asleep about 1:00 AM. At fifteen minutes later I was awakened by a couple of obviously intoxicated men coming into the room next door who were talking loudly – and then one of them tried to open the door that connected our two rooms. I was now wide awake, again, and I certainly felt victimized!

In the “scheme of the Universe,” my victimization was of the mundane sort. But I was frustrated and angry that my “dream/desire” of a good’s night sleep was being thwarted. In the darkness of my room, I realized I faced a choice: to react out of the victim orientation or to focus on how to respond appropriately to my victimization from a creator orientation. I must admit that I fantasized about reacting by banging on the door between the rooms, or shouting, or knocking on their door and reading them the riot act. I also realized that any such persecuting reactions had a high probability of engaging the Dreaded Drama Triangle and escalating the situation.

Instead, I chose to focus on the outcome that I wanted, which was quiet and the chance of falling back asleep. I set an intention of giving the guys next door 15 minutes before taking the action of calling the front desk and asking them to handle the disturbance. As it turned out, about 10 minutes later they left and, as far as I know, never returned.

I had been a victim of their disturbance. Most of us do not want to think of ourselves as victims. We believe the label “victim” is only reserved for those circumstances that hit 9-10 on the Victim Rating Scale. However, we may

consciously or unconsciously go through our day as a victim on the 1-3 end of the scale, not realizing the toll it is taking on our energy and life perspective as we react to what is going on around us or happening to us.

As a creator, when we experience victimization we remember that we have the capacity to choose our response – even in the event of extreme victimization. In the story in *The Power of TED\**, the character Sophia recounts Victor Frankl's revelation, during his internment in Nazi concentration camps, that "everything can be taken from a (person) but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." This is truly the statement of a creator in the face of the most extreme of circumstances. While the range of choices available to him were slim, indeed, he realized he was still "at choice" on how to respond to his harsh human experience.

As human beings we will always have experiences of victimization. For some in our world, the cases may be of the extreme variety, which call for our compassion and active support whenever we can. However, for most of us – most of the time – it will be the everyday, mundane victimization (a 1-3 on the Victim Rating Scale) that happens at work, at home, in our communities.

Any time you experience anger, frustration, sadness or any other emotion that is reactive in nature, the changes are great that you are experiencing victimization. The following process is designed to help respond to the situation as a creator and to increase your capacity for being "at choice" when victimization occurs. (You might bring to your mind right now an experience of victimization to use in reading through the process.)

First, describe the experience of victimization. Who or what is the persecutor in the situation (remember, it can be a person, condition, or circumstance)?

Next, rate your experience of victimization on the Victim Rating Scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being more mundane/everyday and 10 the most extreme. An important note: If your safety or security is threatened (i.e. a 9 or 10 on the Victim Rating Scale), it may be vital to do what you must to reach a safe place or state of being in the situation before using with this process.

Next, identify the “dream or desire” that is being denied or thwarted. What is it that you want that the current situation is – or seems to be – standing in the way of or preventing?

With that outcome (dream/desire) in mind, and while acknowledging the current reality you are experiencing, what choice(s) might you have for taking a baby step in the direction of the outcome?

And finally, commit to – and take – the first baby step!

Victimization is an inevitable part of the human experience. When victimization occurs, remember that you can always be “at choice” in how you respond in the long run. The choice is between focusing on avoiding a problem or creating an outcome. To do so, it is important to discern the “dream or desire” that is being denied or thwarted and to focus on identifying the choice(s) available to move toward that which you want to create. To the creator in you!