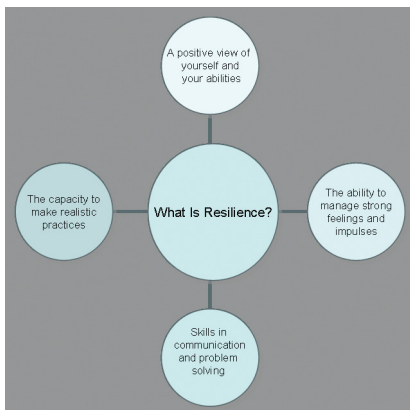


Is Building Resilience Necessary?

Leaders require resilient relationships with their employees especially during an economic downturn. Financial insecurity becomes increasingly common during recession periods, for obvious reasons, and people may feel that they have very little security, either in their personal lives or indeed, in their professional lives. Many people feel as if they are on the verge of a major change for the worse. They take note of the belt tightening efforts in various industries, which often result in layoffs or cut backs on working hours. Even if you are not affected and there is limited evidence that your company is actually taking this type of measure, it is impossible to stop worrying about the possibility.

What, then, is resilience and how can we create resilience in relationships? Why is it useful to take such steps?



Resilience, in the context of relationships, has to do with the development of the ability to withstand concerns and doubts. According to the American Psychological Association, resilience is: “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. It means “bouncing back” from difficult experiences”.

Resilient relationships have many potential benefits for professionals, regardless of a person’s position in the company.

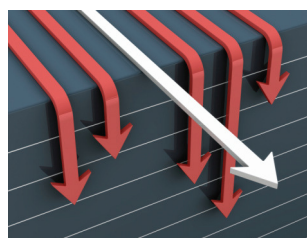
- Building the confidence to communicate clearly and problem solve efficiently, resilience helps workers to stay focused and calm. This is

particularly helpful when deadlines are tight, resources are limited, and tensions are generally high.

- The ability to manage feelings and impulses, facilitated by resilience, can also help individuals to minimise conflict and maximise their self-control in decision making and resource management.
- Maintaining a positive view of abilities and skills also helps individuals to remain enthusiastic and motivated about their work, which in turn tends to lead to higher productivity and levels of efficiency.
- Finally, the capacity to make realistic practices of decisions and activities helps people to remain consistent in their working methods. This is a process that can also avoid conflict and confusion among workers. It can also help to maintain company morale and boost productivity over time.

Monitoring how your employees act under pressure is definitely a necessary process in these difficult economic times, as well. Most companies should take the step to maximise the resilience of their employees and provide specialised counselling in the event that there is evidence or reasonable suspicion that an individual is struggling to cope and maintain their confidence and enthusiasm levels towards their work and with respect to their own ability.

The goal is to develop sufficient resilience to enable employees to cope with potential restructuring of their company, in case such a step is necessary to combat the broader economic situation.



METHODS FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE

Recognition for the importance of resilience has been slow to emerge but already there are many different methods and strategies purportedly designed to build resilience in the workplace.

Some of the most effective methods for developing resilience are also the simplest. One of the first things companies should encourage their employees to do is develop techniques to control their all too natural fight or flight mechanism. Companies can encourage their employees to remain calm by engaging in broadened and rational thinking. Even if there is no likelihood that an employee would have to be made redundant in your company, it is a good idea to have them mentally able to deal with such an eventuality. Being able to see a situation like job loss, for example, as a neutral development, rather than a negative one, is absolutely essential to any effort to remain psychologically strong and resilient in the face of a whole range of similarly difficult situations.

As a general rule, employees should also be encouraged to regularly re-experience positive emotions and reactions. In particular, employers should develop systems to regularly offer praise of their employees’ achievements. Invoking pleasant emotions in this way helps individuals to develop the ability to think resourcefully and broadly, which again, is important in the midst of a difficult economic situation.

WHAT CAN BUSINESS MANAGERS CAN DO TO BUILD RESILIENCE?

Business managers should be aware of how actively they are addressing the need to build resilience. This starts with awareness.

Ask yourself:

- What are the support systems available to your employees?
- Are there training programmes to ensure personal development is not ignored?
- Are employees in your organisation able to be resilient enough to drive forward?
- Outside influences can have a high price on an organisation and its workforce
- What is being done to understand the outside influences and decrease the impact for the organisation?

AN ORGANISATIONAL APPROACH TO RESILIENCE BUILDING

Organisations should take advantage of opportunities to learn about how to reframe their thinking about loss or other negative situations. Learning how to restructure your

thinking from positive to negative, impossible to possible, is yet another great way to minimize the impact of negative conditions or experiences, both upon your professional and upon your personal life.

Companies should develop an inventory of their resources, abilities, and useful connections, and encourage their employees to develop their own inventories and take advantage of the broader company inventory.

The goal of developing an inventory is to literally shift attention away from the idea or possibility of loss, and bring focus onto the resources available to every individual within your company.

THE BUSINESS BENEFITS OF BUILDING RESILIENCE

Hundreds of organisations have enhanced their efficiency, cut their costs, boosted their profits, and empowered employees through resilience building. In one interesting case study, published in 2009 in the Society & Natural Resources journal emphasised the success of building resilience to empower volunteer groups involved in community-based natural resource management (NRM) in Australia, working to improve and restore local environments.

Facing a range of challenges that impact on their capacity to do their work effectively, groups were nonetheless able to achieve good results in their work by developing and applying system dynamics demonstrating resilience, adaptability, and transformability. Open discussion and active collaboration in a supportive environment facilitated the development of strong resilience to concerns about the economic situation and issues to do with resource management and sustainability.

While there appear to be no guaranteed methods for successful resilience boosting, the benefits are clear for most organisations who have tried the approach. For the best results, it may be worthwhile hiring a professional coach to support training and education of your staff. Bottom line, though, you can help your employees feel more comfortable in their own skin, and as a part of your company, by trying out the straightforward steps suggested above. Every company is different but everyone must take that first step to make resilience a priority. ●