

Building a Resilient Organisation

The principles leaders need to build a resilient organisation that will thrive through adversity.

Organisational resilience can be viewed through three stages: coping, adaptation and anticipation.



Purpose equals strategic resilience

Embedding your purpose within the mindset of your organisation is key to being resilient. Purpose gives people a clear, strategic view of how their work fits into the overall mission, meaning they can make decisions that naturally align with others in the organisation. This clarity of purpose allows for continuous quality improvement in the good times, and speedy agility in the times when resilience is required.



Crisis management

Being able to mobilise a strong, cohesive team at short notice is imperative when a crisis hits. Potential members of a crisis management team should be identified and communicated to before a crisis, where a central co-ordinator can then identify gaps in the capabilities of the team (from expertise to practical supports). Semi-annual meetings, if only to reconvene any identify any communication or people gaps, will allow for more rapid deployment when a real-world situation arises.



Prepare for the expected, financially

Single catastrophes, by their nature, are rarely predictable. Their financial effects, however, can be. The shock of the current crisis has brought into sharp relief the lack of financial sustainability of organisations across the world, from SMEs to the largest corporations. Building financial buffers during stable economic periods is a key element for organisational resiliency.



Mapping the risk landscape

Every organisation has their own specific set of challenges, each with their own associated risks. Traditionally, companies tend to focus on the supply side of their operations when scanning for potential risk factors. Increasingly, however, they also need to pay attention to the customer side as demand volatility can be an important factor that can affect a company's operations and ultimately its revenue. While you'll call your suppliers first in a crisis, it'll be your customers you'll call most.



Model resilience

Nobody notices resilience until it's needed, and then it becomes what everyone gravitates towards. When a crisis hits, leaders should visibly model the behaviours they want to see in their people. Calm and brave actions delivered with clarity will build the resilience in others, allowing them to get on with their work despite any surrounding tumult.



Cultivate a growth mindset culture

Creating a love of learning, questioning culture in your organisation is key to building resilience. Develop it and nurture people's growth mindset to build a resilient organisation at every level. When a crisis hits such as COVID-19, being open to new opportunities will lead to the creation of new innovations. Leaders must create forums where people can ask open questions and contribute ideas.

Anticipation

Before the unexpected event; proactive action



Coping

Taking actions during the unexpected event



Adaptation

After the unexpected event; reactive action

Accept the reality with humility

It is important for leaders to accept realities when faced with them and not succumb to denial. By the leader being aware and accepting the disruptions and the vulnerabilities which the organisation faces, they can tailor their responses and take decisive action. By acting with humility, they will allow for the necessary mistakes they and others will make before landing on the right solutions.



Share the experience

The relief when a crisis is alleviated can lead to it becoming compartmentalised as something that has happened in the past, rather than something that can have great bearing on the future. Leaders should share, both peer-to-peer and throughout the organisation, their experience during a crisis and what they learnt. This process of reflection reinforces key lessons and also prepares the organisation's future leaders.



Focus on people

Resilience does not reside in a spreadsheet, or in the walls of your headquarters, it lives in the people of your organisation. Focus on activities that build resilience in your organisation's individuals, such as utilising mindfulness techniques, taking detachment breaks and developing mental agility. By developing individual resilience, you will give them the psychological capacity to adapt their behaviours and mindset as situations change.



Continuous innovation

Continuous innovation is critical for adapting to disruptive forces and ensuring organisational longevity. Leaders have a central role in creating a culture which promotes innovation within the organisation. By creating a culture of continuous innovation, people will more readily adapt to new and shifting circumstances.

Your suppliers are your first responders

In the public sphere when catastrophe strikes, we call the first responders – the fire brigade, the ambulance, the police. When our organisations are buffeted by gales, it will be our suppliers we call first. Building long-lasting, sustainable relationships with your supply chain will pay off in the short, medium and long run.



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