IRISH MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE | CORK UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Organisational Resilience Survey

The survey conducted by the Irish Management Institute in conjunction with Cork University Business School, University College Cork, examined the views of Irish business leaders relating to their organisation's resilience during and as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey responses were collected during May-June 2021.

ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE CAN BE DEFINED AS...

> *"...a company's capacity to absorb stress, recover critical functionality, and thrive in altered circumstances."*

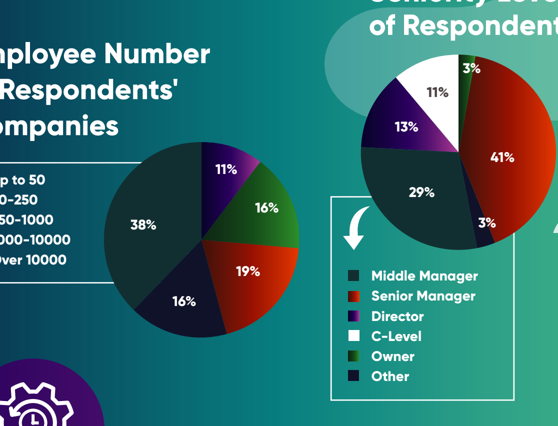
TOP 3 Participating Sectors

PUBLIC SECTOR 28%

FINANCIAL SERVICES 16%

PHARMACEUTICAL, LIFE SCIENCES OR MEDICAL DEVICES 7%

RESPONDENTS BY SECTOR



Employee Number in Respondents' Companies

Seniority Level of Respondents

Agile Response to Crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic tested organisations' resilience. Our findings show that through the pandemic, organisations were able to adapt and demonstrate agility through their people.

86% of leaders felt their organisation responded 'well' or 'very well' to the pandemic

2% Just 2% of leaders felt that their organisations responded 'badly' or 'very badly'

Respondents told us...

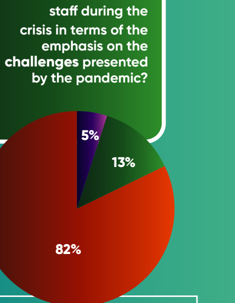
> "We used the burning platform that we were faced with to do new things; it allowed us to launch new products that we wouldn't have had the chance to do as quickly as before."

> "Big change can happen quickly during a crisis, we focused on 'being human' more as this was a human crisis."

Communication Practices Navigated

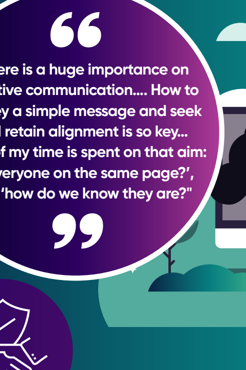
Communication practices were navigated successfully by most organisations throughout the pandemic. However, we found that there is scope for improvement among leaders in their communication skills: both in terms of how they communicate and the information they communicate to their workforce.

How well did your organisation handle communications with staff during the crisis, in terms of amount (volume, frequency) of communication?



OPPORTUNITIES

How well did your organisation handle communications with staff during the crisis, in terms of emphasis on the **opportunities** presented by the pandemic?



CHALLENGES

How well did your organisation handle communications with staff during the crisis in terms of the emphasis on the **challenges** presented by the pandemic?

Respondents told us...

> "There is a huge importance on effective communication.... How to convey a simple message and seek and retain alignment is so key... Most of my time is spent on that aim: 'Is everyone on the same page?', and 'how do we know they are?"

Trust Gains Between Leaders and Staff

Higher levels of trust between senior managers and staff has been a key outcome of the pandemic for many organisations. Gains were higher in the Public sector than in the other sectors surveyed. The successful shift to remote working was highlighted as a key area by respondents which enabled trust to be built between leaders and staff.

Respondents told us...

> "Staff can be trusted more to overcome obstacles to deliver. The office is useful for collaboration, support, maintaining culture and a sense of unity/common purpose, it is not needed for supervision purposes."

How would you describe the level of trust between staff and senior managers?

Pre-pandemic: 76% rated the level of trust as high

3% increase

At time of survey: 79% rated the level of trust as high

Increases in trust were greatest in the public sector (+8%pts) compared to the private sector (+1%pt).

x8 Increase in the level of trust in the public sector compared with the private sector.

Leadership Evolves

Leaders surveyed largely felt that the practice of leadership improved within their organisation during the pandemic. However, this feeling was not unanimous across all organisations.

77% of respondents felt that the practice of leadership in their organisation improved during the pandemic.

Of these respondents, **5%** felt that there was a significant improvement in the practice of leadership.

23% felt the practice of leadership weakened or experienced no real improvement.

Respondents told us...

> "I learned many significant lessons about my own leadership: Awareness of my own style, insecurities and strengths; learning when to motivate and drive forward and when to slow down and extend empathy; the importance of clarity even when we don't have certainty"

Optimistic Future Outlook

Leaders are largely optimistic about the future, with lessons learnt and resilience built in many organisations. While many organisations feel that they have built up levels of resilience to varying degrees throughout the pandemic, a sizeable number feel that their organisation is ill-equipped at present to manage any further challenges due to wellbeing deficits among staff.

86% of leaders are hopeful about their organisation's future, with **14%** expressing some degree of worry about the future of their organisation.

Having come through the crisis, how well are you set up to handle any further challenges?

Respondents told us...

> "The challenges of change and how people react when in that environment of the 'unknown'... our people really delivered when 'backs were to the wall', this gives great confidence as we look to the future"

> "Individuals with mental health challenges became way more prevalent in the business over the course of the year...Resilience is key as are teamwork and support in the form of 'time out from day job' even if it's a virtual coffee, it's hugely beneficial."

Methodology

The study, conducted by the Irish Management Institute in conjunction with Cork University Business Schoo,l University College Cork, examines the views of Irish business leaders relating to their organisations' resilience before and during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The survey was open to respondents for a three-week period from 14th May - 11th June 2021.

The survey was sent via email using Microsoft Forms to 5,775 potential respondents. 392 responses were received (6.79% response rate) and included in the analysis.

The survey was designed and analysed by Dr Colm Foster of IMI and Prof Matthias Beck of Cork University Business School, Ms Sarah Greeley of Cork University Business School assisted in the analysis of the survey. This infographic presents a summary of key insights prepared by Dr Elizabeth Breslin of IMI.

Source

Reeves, M., and Whitaker, K. 2020. 'A Guide to Building a More Resilient Business': Harvard Business Review.