

Insights into individual and workplace resilience



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Resilience is becoming more important for businesses due to the significant impact it can cause. The ability of individuals and organisations to adapt quickly to disruptions, changes, pressures and uncertainties is more necessary than ever given increased global competitiveness, changing market places, skill shortages and reduced employment opportunities.

Resilience is not just about being tough and being able to bounce back from difficult or challenging situations, it is also about reducing the impacts of stress related illnesses and diminished productivity.

The past several years has seen the introduction of many resilience building models and approaches. Many involve training individuals and organisations to help themselves to create the conditions and strategies to overcome challenges.

One important aspect of resilience training is helping employees and organisations to 'reframe' their expectations and ways of thinking more positively.

Furthermore, resilience is relatively easy to measure using the 'before' and 'after' survey approach and/or through focus groups. Resilience surveys that are simple to administer may be sourced on line or from subject matter experts.

There will always be new pressures emerging with modern work and life. Energy reserves in many individuals will start to run low if nothing is done to help ease and better cope with these pressures. Employers who want to retain their top people need to act. Employees who want to retain their jobs and lifestyles also need to help themselves.

Whilst lots of organisations are already implementing resilience strategies to help employees, many others can do more. Organisations offering resilience training should not just focus on work factors but also issues relating to everyday life. Not only can this investment in resilience building demonstrate a duty of care to employees, it can help businesses operate more efficiently. Building resilient teams is critical to business success.

The approaches to building individual resilience tend to focus on the personality attributes of the individual and the social environment. The approaches to organisational resilience tend to focus on the demands of an employee's job, the culture and operating practices of an organisation; the attributes, qualities, behaviours and influence of leaders in the organisation; the external events and the environment in which the organisation operates.

RESEARCH ON INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE

Research on the precursors to individual resilience in the workplace have categorised these into:

1. personality traits and cultural value orientations
2. personal resources
3. personal attitudes and mindsets
4. personal emotions
5. work demands and resources

Research on the outcomes of individual resilience categorise this into four categories:

1. performance
2. mental and physical health
3. work-related attitudes
4. change related attitudes

RESEARCH ON TEAM RESILIENCE

Research on the precursors to team resilience in the workplace have categorised these into:

1. collective and shared emotions
2. effective systems and processes
3. effective work structure and conditions

Research on the outcomes of team resilience categorise this into two categories:

1. team performance
2. team attitude and behaviours

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR BUSINESSES

The following are some basic practical actions businesses can take to help their employees and business operate more resiliently and retain their best people.

- + Conduct a resilience audit and implement an action plan
- + Create a supportive leadership culture
- + Give frequent feedback and have an effective internal communications program

- + Provide on the job mentoring and coaching
- + Offer resilience training and coaching
- + Have a clear, consistent and well understood flexible working policy
- + Include everyone
- + Say 'thank you' to employees

+ A Resilience Questionnaire Snapshot

The questionnaire below provides a simple snapshot of a resilience questionnaire. Such questionnaires usually cover a range of areas about the individual in both the work and normal daily life. A biopsychosocial screening approach is also an ideal framework with which to consider resilience because it relies on the premise of multiple interacting causes and contributing factors.

1 = Never

2-4 are in between

5 = Yes

	1	2	3	4	5
Self-Awareness – I usually know how others perceive me					
Vision – I am determined to achieve my lifetime ambitions					
Determination – I can see my future clearly					
Interaction – I normally feel comfortable in new situations					
Organisation – I plan my next day in advance					
Problem Solving – I enjoy the challenge of unravelling puzzles and solving problems					
Relationships – In general, I like people					
Self-confidence – my most important relationships are my strongest					

Source: www.mas.org.uk/quest/mraq.htm (Retrieved September 2019)

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How resilient leaders...	Less	More
Add Value	Believing they need to solve all the problems	Focusing self and others on shared purpose
Think about problems	Worrying about unresolved problems	Considering which problems can be solved and which need more investigation
Think about the future	Detailed planning	Preparation for new possibilities
Resolve Issues	Needing to have all the answers and pursuing the first convincing 'right' solution	Creating an environment for solutions to emerge for the system to enact. Help support people to ask the right questions in order to find the appropriate solutions.
Stay Energised	Allowing energies to be diverted in many directions for many reasons	Making informed and practical choices about where to put energies and why
Make a Difference	Believing you are the only one that can make a difference as a leader	Empowering others to make their best possible difference
Manage time	Focusing on old "to do" lists or creating new ones each day.	Take time each day to get a sense of what is needed and focus on that. Also taking time throughout the day to pause, reflect and check where the focus of energy needs to be
Achieve good outcomes	Striving for perfection	Supporting effective 'good enough' approaches
Involve themselves	Absorbing the emotion of what is happening and reacting	Observing what is going on and logically choosing how to intervene
Stay well	Grabbing a break when possible; overlooking importance of own well-being or denying own needs	Taking time to nurture own well-being in order to better support others – whether stopping to eat, hydrate, go for a walk, tidy office etc

Source: www.hsj.co.uk/workforce/why-resilience-is-key-to-leadership-in-a-changed-nhs/5037074.article (Retrieved September 2019)

CONCLUSION

Achieving a resilient workforce can make a substantial contribution to the reduction of sickness absence, stress, burnout, psychological presenteeism and staff turnover, and it can improve business performance.

A resilient workforce is better able to cope with change, bounce back from challenges and difficult situations. It is high performing and has an improved confidence and determination to succeed. A resilient workforce is healthier, more effective and productive, and is potentially more innovative than one that is not resilient.

As the detail and intricacies of each organisation is different because people are different, the application of a resilience building strategy may be more effective if it is moulded to the personalities, purpose and structure of the specific organisation. The question for businesses is whether they think they need to make their workplace a healthier place to work in. One consideration point is whether the business is absorbing huge costs of ill health or loss productivity.

Please contact us if you are interested in how mlcoa can assess and improve resilience in your workplace. A specific solution can be offered to suit your organisation.



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