



Too Busy to Keep Up? Develop Resilience.

Resilient (ri'zilyənt): able to recoil or spring back into shape after bending, stretching, or being compressed; able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.

Wow. Talk about the perfect description for leading an organization in the current business environment!

Today's business leaders need an increasingly diverse and sophisticated array of skills, traits and aptitudes. And with virtually every industry getting stretched, compressed, turned upside-down, inside out, and every which way but loose, I can't think of any trait more important than resiliency.

These days, change comes at us so quickly and from so many different directions, that it seems we operate in a perpetual state of not quite keeping up. Keeping employees focused, aligned, inspired and engaged requires a resolute leader who can quickly bounce back from adverse circumstances not just once, but over and over again.

What does resiliency look like in terms of specific behaviors? According to Daryl Conner (author of one of my all-time favorite books on change, **Managing at the Speed of Change**, 1992, Villard Books) resilient leaders are:

Positive

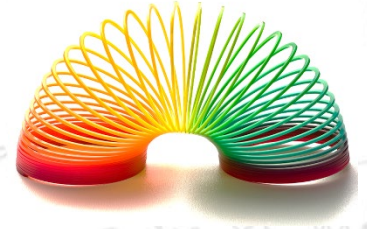


Resilient leaders see the glass as half full rather than half empty. They see opportunity where others see problems, and view change as a positive rather than a negative. When setbacks occur, they look for the lessons to be learned rather than berating themselves or others for failing to

achieve the goal. When faced with adversity they remain focused on winning at all times and keep everyone else in the organization focused in that direction as well.

Flexible

Resiliency includes a special pliability when responding to uncertainty. When new opportunities present themselves or current approaches need to be adjusted, resilient leaders can make a decision even if it runs counter to previous thoughts. They seek alternative ways to view or define problems, and don't allow themselves to get constrained by the thoughts or approaches of others. They tap into the best of existing ideas and information while also generating novel, untested ideas. They think expansively, combining ideas in unique ways and making connections between disparate ideas. Most of all, they demonstrate an ability to test, and if necessary, change deeply held beliefs and assumptions about issues. How? By asking "what if" questions and not getting trapped in old ways of thinking simply because they worked in the past.



Organized

When chaos abounds, resilient leaders develop structured approaches to managing ambiguity. They use frameworks to constantly sort and process information. They formulate clear decision criteria while considering implications and consequences in order to choose the most effective options. They get clear on what needs to happen and develop systems or processes for getting things done in a timely manner. They think through steps and actions before jumping in. Once into action, they monitor results through follow-up systems and checking in with others.

Proactive



Rather than letting change dictate their course of action, resilient leaders engage it head-on. They start by seeking information about new work situations and developing alternative plans

and back-up scenarios for important activities. Then they target important areas for innovation and develop solutions that address meaningful work issues and opportunities. Resilient leaders ask questions of others before making final decisions and ensure commitment and understand of those decisions. They demonstrate decisiveness by taking timely action to address an issue, prevent a problem from arising, or solve a problem. They make explicit the key operating and financial performance measures and goals and hold individuals and the organization accountable for achieving those results. When necessary, they take action beyond their job requirements in order to achieve the new objectives.

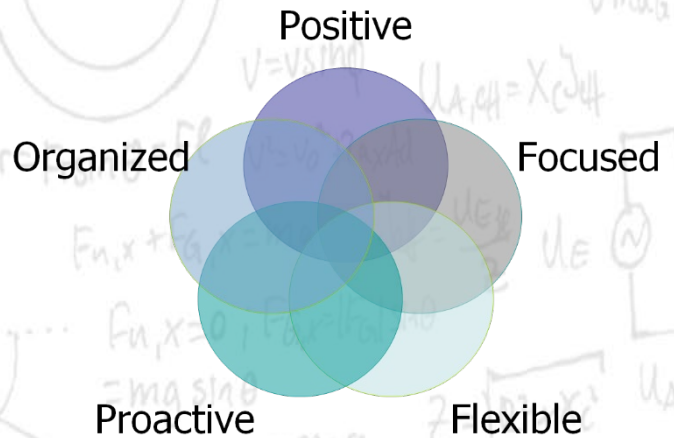
Focused

In the face of unexpected setbacks and disruptive change, resilient leaders do two very important things: they maintain a clear vision of what they want to achieve (winning) and they continually communicate to employees how the organization will still win.



Resilient leaders get others interested by engaging their imaginations, generating intrigue in the subject, and asking questions that stimulate new thoughts. They have a knack for sorting through large amounts of information and opposing points of view to settle on a decision. They follow through on commitments, and keep others informed when promises cannot be made. They participate in establishing individual and team goals, and then communicate repeatedly how accomplishing those goals will enable the organization to achieve its vision of winning. Most important, they get the

right things done without constantly pursuing other options that may or may not align to the objectives.



Today's leaders face more stressors than ever: Increased competition from inside and outside our industries; shrinking margins and increasing costs; constant innovation via new products, services, pricing structures and methods/channels of delivery; loss of control over the company's brand and message due to social networking tools and technologies. It's no wonder that the need to become more resilient is more evident than at any time in history!

Some leaders have an innate talent for demonstrating resiliency. Others need to work at it. Either way, if we don't have the knack for bouncing back quickly, we may well bounce our organizations right out of the game.

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