



## **Resiliency: The Optimal Personal and Organizational Response to Change**

Why do some individuals and teams collapse under pressure, while others are able to survive hardships without wavering? Why do some people crack, while others are able to spring back quickly? The answer in large part is resiliency.

Resiliency is the ability to recover quickly from adversity. It is the capacity to be robust under unexpected changes, failures and trauma. Resiliency can be thought of as an “inoculation” that reduces the impact of stressors such as fear, changing expectations, conflict and disagreements, productivity pressures, overload and unfavorable situations.

Typical strategies for facing business setbacks involve three approaches:

- Eliminating a stressing factor by creating a new environment
- Initiating actions proactively that cushion the negative effects of a loss
- Implementing short-term coping techniques or spot remedies

Resiliency is associated with the second option – a proactive response that builds elasticity or buoyancy to inevitable change. Increasing resilient capacity requires paying attention to the implication of experiences and learning from disappointments and successes. Building hardiness requires a change in viewpoints, habits, responses and actions.

A core characteristic of resilience involves recognizing reality, coupled with core values or purpose. It means having the aptitude to be a solution provider even without the resources we would ordinarily need.

Resiliency begins with truly listening and paying attention to the dynamics or forces that create challenge, and then focusing attention on regenerating energy. It means taking the time to create “white space” that increases the capacity for seeing options and rejuvenating. It means understanding what we need to take care of ourselves, value ourselves and regroup.

Tying this to your business means a purposeful examination of approaches to change, empowerment, communication patterns and skill shifting into unfamiliar territory. It requires continuous learning during which companies can openly share, engage in critical conversations and reflect on means of renewal.

It also means tapping into an effective team approach of imaginative problem solving. Hardiness is enhanced with a strong base of support obtained through networks. There is a focused sense of purpose, a legacy, which requires examination of operating practices and the impact on the human creative spirit.



As a leader, how can you impact the resiliency of the teams that work for you, as well as the company that you support through the choppy waters of highly competitive environments?

First, is to implement supportive dialogue that examines a holistic exploration of the dimensions of what is meaningful in work life to your staff and how their talents and energy are aligned toward business goals.

Second, is the encouragement of collaborative discussion of roles, structure, communication styles and problem solving approaches that can build adaptive capabilities. Assessing resiliency factors can help individuals have a participative role in building strengths to maximize hardiness during challenging times.

Third, utilize a leadership style that places an emphasis on relationships and processes that minimize blame, denial, and control and instead foster inventiveness, creativity and exploration.

If the leader shares a strong sense of values, demonstrates self-reflection, and has a quest for understanding the lessons of business challenges, then the team will be inspired to pull together in support of one another. Collaborating to adjust to the forces of change may be one of the most important strategic decisions you make.

*Excerpts taken from “Resiliency ‘Inoculation’ Protects Against Attacks of Adversity” first published in the Women’s Business Cincinnati. February, 2005.*