

# Why should organisations be paying attention to developing resilience?

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Of course many things contribute to organisational success but having staff who are able to remain confident, positive, productive and motivated in difficult circumstances is becoming more and more relevant in the current climate.

At a strategic level organisations can look more broadly at approaches that seek to reduce adverse circumstances. Here I would say that ethical cultures that engender trust and reciprocity are very important, coupled with what we recognise as 'authentic leadership'.

At a wider level it is also about ensuring that staff have the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary for the business together with available support networks for dealing with organisational problems.

Clearly the current economic uncertainties, pressures and turbulence make working life difficult. In my consulting practice I found I was having frequent conversations with people about just how tough it is at work, not just because of the climate but also due to the nature of working practices. Rapid change, uncertainty, overload, long hours, constant electronic communication, and organisational culture were all contributing to the problem. So it made sense to see if there were ways of helping people become more resilient, and as a result helping their organisations to be more adaptive and successful.

I looked at much of the recent research on the subject of resilience and drew what seemed most helpful from it. Two things however struck me about what I found. The first was that the material was produced by experts on the subject often located in the field of cognitive psychology and focused on trauma, although some are working in the organisational context. It seemed to me that there was an opportunity to add to this what we know about learning and development. The second was that there seemed to be an emphasis in some places on 'bouncing back' from adversity. I was more interested in finding ways to build capacity to deal with pressure, in a preventive way. In doing so the aim is to enable people to remain motivated, productive and positive in the face of adversity. Most people believe they are fairly resilient so this programme builds that capacity for self-efficacy and seeks to maintain it in the long term. It is not therefore aiming to be a 'quick fix'.

Roffey Park has developed a new programme – Developing Resilience at Work. The core of the programme lasts two days and this is then followed through individual coaching. The reason for this is that while the required skills themselves are not that complex and can be acquired by most people, they do require investment of time and effort. Broadly they are to do with understanding that how we think affects how we feel and what we subsequently do. Without the follow up support the danger is that people will try to implement what they have learned and give up if they are struggling to make improvements.

During the two days people learn about the key capabilities for resilience. These include emotional competencies, problem solving capabilities, self-belief, realistic optimism, flexibility, interpersonal skills, building good support networks and having a sense of purpose and perspective.



This is followed by developing two sets of skills. The first set is to do with self awareness, we all find some things more difficult than others and respond to different pressures in different ways. At this stage we are aiming to help people be more aware of the areas they need to concentrate on for themselves.

The second set of skills are to do with building the capacity for resilience and here people can concentrate on those areas likely to be most useful to them. The skills include developing realistic and accurate thinking, problem solving, modifying core beliefs and values if necessary, building inner strengths, and dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity.

We also look at what is needed to look after ourselves in times of adversity and then build an individual plan that forms the basis for the follow up support.

The learning environment is designed to be supportive and challenging. The programme covers demonstration of techniques, group discussion, together with opportunities to practice the skills and receive feedback. The programme is delivered to small groups to enable enough individual attention. People learn from the tutors as well as with and from each other.

The new programme is ideal for managers, professionals and developers who want to enhance their capacity to remain resilient, engaged and productive during sustained periods of pressure. This pressure may come from change, turbulence or uncertainty or it may result from taking on additional responsibilities, for example following promotion.

Much in the current climate cannot be controlled and adverse events will occur. When they do, having resilient staff who can recover quickly from setbacks becomes a major asset for organisations.

**Developing Resilience will be running at Roffey Park from 15-16 December. To find out more or book a place:**

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