

Caution: Tough Going Ahead

The right workplace culture can help you conquer hard times. Here are the keys.

By Joanne G. Sujansky

That old expression “When the going gets tough, the tough get going” has increasing relevance. Organizations today face difficult new challenges. It takes resilience to thrive in these demanding times.

Resilience makes it possible for people to shake off frustration and forge ahead. Resilient cultures reinforce a spirit of teamwork. But what exactly is resilience, and how can you tap this powerful resource?

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The Power of Resilience

The Merriam-Webster dictionary says resilience is the “ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.” But there’s more to it than that. When employees rely on resilience to overcome obstacles, they do more than just “recover.” Resilient workers frequently emerge from their experience stronger than before. It’s as if the exercise of resilience helps to build inner strength and develop skills for the future. Resilient employees are typically:

- **flexible**, willing to try new ways to get things done
- **clear-minded**, focused on solving the problem at hand with an eye to achieving long-term goals
- **resourceful**, learning from mistakes and recognizing opportunities
- **optimistic**, not weighed down by problems or conflict
- **humorous**, able to see the lighter side of circumstances and to remain positive.

Building a Resilient Culture

Of course, not everyone’s equally resilient. Some people bounce back from difficulties more easily than others. But, as the leader, you have the capacity to create a culture that

Visualize success.

promotes the qualities of resilience. It takes four strategies to build a resilient culture:

1. Start by stopping. Quit doing the things you did in the past if they didn’t yield the results you need. Focus the team on key priorities that will propel the organization forward.

2. See it in your head. When the going does get tough, people are anxious to know exactly where things are going. Visualize success, share your vision of the future, and you’ll give your team members the guidance they need to pull together.

3. Do more with more. Don’t hold anything back. In tough times, more coaching and communication — not less! — are required. Take the time to share your views, communicate expectations, acknowledge problems, and encourage positive efforts.

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4. Celebrate successes. Sometimes, when you’re facing a major challenge, the light at the end of the tunnel looks tiny. That’s why you have to celebrate any and all successes, however minor. These celebrations encourage people and make that light loom just a little bit larger.

When you instill resilience in your workplace, you’re ensuring that everyone will have the resources, flexibility, and gumption to tackle any challenge and overcome any setback. ■

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