

# Boost Your Organization's Resilience

Use this approach to prepare for whatever the future brings.

*By Jill J. Johnson*

**A** time of stress and disruption is the perfect opportunity to put your “long game” into play. The “long game” is your resilience strategy. Here are ways to plan your next steps while harnessing your inner strength.

## Take an inventory.

Focus on what you have, not on what you've lost. You still have your skills and knowledge. These are valuable. Is there a way to use your talents that you haven't considered? If you're wise about how you frame it, this could be the new foundation for the long-term future.

## Cut costs.

If you have an eye on being resilient for the future, you will want to conserve cash. Review all credit cards for any automatic payments and ask if you really still need them. Don't just focus on the monthly charge. Convert those monthly charges to their equivalent cost for a full year. The annualized number is what you should consider. Can you pay more important bills if you let them go?

The same thing holds true for your cash expenses. Can you ask employees to shorten hours or take a modest short-term pay cut so you don't need to lay people off? Ask vendors to lower their costs. Review your phone bills to see if there are savings by switching carriers. The same goes for insurance and utility bills.

## Access resources.

State and national nonprofit associations can be valuable partners to you. The value they offer in access to information, peer networking, and education can optimize your resilience. Don't forget the great value of partnering with universities and colleges. Look for changes to government programs or new funding alternatives that become available to see if you now qualify. You might have more options available to you than you realize. But beware of falling prey to charlatans

who are offering to “solve” all your problems for a small (or not so small) fee. Vet them carefully.

## Strengthen connections.

Keep in touch with your supporters even more than usual – and even if they're not donating right now. Focus your energies on what you can do for them. Think about how communication you employ right now can play out over the long term.

## Use your network.

Explore the power of partnership and collaboration through the community you have built. You can often find a tribe of like-minded people online. Your nonprofit associations are also full of people in the same situation as you. Coming together to brainstorm ideas for new approaches and to share news about resources is a powerful way to focus your energies on recovering from a tough situation. Set up a regular call with your peers or allies. It might be each night at a designated time or on a weekly basis. Focus your conversations on problem-solving and forward thinking.

## Be realistic.

You hate to consider closing your organization. But, if things get too tough, you might have to shift to a temporary hiatus or scale your operations and employment back to a more modest level. This doesn't mean you're closed. You would just be focusing on a temporary, pragmatic solution. This could take away some of the financial pressure. Don't let your pride get in the way of taking advantage of a temporary opportunity to get some cash coming in your door. While this can be difficult, it may give you the breathing room you need.

## Focus your mindset.

Make the decision that you will survive whatever happens, through your own grit, determination, and effort. Find music, activities, and people that will support your positive mindset. Determine to keep focusing on solutions. Give yourself some grace. Be compassionate with yourself just as you would to a dear friend you care about. Find healthy ways to cope with stress and help your employees do the same. Take care of yourself and those around you physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

“Beware of falling prey to charlatans.”



## Remember the past as you look to the future.

Over the decades, nonprofit leaders have weathered recessions, natural disasters, terrorist events, and strategic failures. They made choices each day that were laser-focused on their short-term survival and their intention to achieve long-term success. They leveraged unexpected opportunities into cash flow, connections, and tactics to survive and thrive. You can do the same! 

*Jill J. Johnson is the president and founder of Johnson Consulting Services (jcs-usa.com). She is a highly accomplished speaker, an award-winning management consultant, and author of the best-selling book Compounding Your Confidence.*

## Weather Any Storm

Storms will come and go. The organizations and leaders who rebound are those with resilience and forethought. Here are more ways to put your resilience strategies into practice (NonprofitWorld.org):

**Restructuring Contracts in Stressful Times** (Vol. 28, No. 3)

**How to Cut Overhead Costs** (Vol. 30, No. 4)

**Counteract Stress to Make the Best Decisions** (Vol. 28, No. 1)

**Looking for a Win-Win Partnership? Look to the University!** (Vol. 18, No. 4)

**Operating Reserves: Not Just for Disaster Recovery** (Vol. 31, No. 2)

**Raising Funds in an Uncertain Economy** (Vol. 27, No. 2)

**The Overwhelmed Office: Six Fixes for the Stressed-Out, Productivity-Challenged Workplace** (Vol. 28, No. 4)

**Embrace Mindfulness as a Leadership Practice** (Vol. 36, No. 2)

**25 Ways to Cut Costs** (Vol. 26, No. 2)

**Dealing with Viruses & Other Disruptions** (Vol. 38, No. 2)

**Need a CPA at Little Or No Cost?** (Vol. 28, No. 2)

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**What's Your Alliance IQ?** (Vol. 27, No. 5)

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