Becoming a Resilient Organization

Strategies for Building Organizational Resilience to Deal with Today's Volatile Environment

With Jeff Russell
Russell Consulting, Inc.

My Street Cred

- Jeffrey Russell, co-director of Russell Consulting, Inc. with his business and life partner Linda.

- We've been helping to build great organizations for the past 35 years

- Our focus is on leadership, strategy, change, and performance management

- Author of nine books – most recently *Fearless Performance Reviews* (McGraw-Hill, 2014).

- My first job out of college was director of youth services for a non-profit community action program. I was also a VISTA volunteer with Great Lakes Intertribal Council.

- I have served on the boards of directors for three non-profits.

- I have been teaching for UWM since 1995.

- I also teach for UW-Madison Continuing Studies, School of Engineering, and the Small Business Development Center.

Webinar Resources

- **Core Handouts**

- **An Engaged Brain!**
  - Try to stay "present" and mindful during this session
  - Lean in . . . Actively pursue insights and new ideas
  - Try to ignore your cat, dog, the wandering child . . .

Our Learning Agenda

- What organizational resilience is and why resilience matters to an organization's longevity.

- The consequences when an organization's resilient capacities are weakened.

- The eight characteristics of resilient organizations.

- Strategies and actions that strengthen each resilience characteristic.

- The work of leaders in building organizational resilience.

The Quetico Wilderness
Ontario, Canada

Why do organizations need resilience today?

What is happening in our world that requires our Centers to be resilient?

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The major advances in civilization are processes which all but wreck the society in which they occur.

— Alfred North Whitehead,
British mathematician and philosopher
(1861 - 1947)

Lake Wakatipu
New Zealand

Personal Reflections on Organizational Resilience

Over the next three minutes:

1. **Identify, intuitively, what it means for an organization to be resilient. When we say that an organization is resilient, what are we saying about this organization?**

2. **Organizational resilience is important to us as parent and child support professionals because . . .**

3. **Organizational resilience is important to our center because . . .**

In Your Small Group

Do a quick "Meet and Greet!", select a group recorder/reporter, and then discuss the three questions:

1. What does it mean for an organization to be resilient?

2. Organizational resilience is important to us as parent and child support professionals because . . .

3. Organizational resilience is important to our center because . . .

You have about 8 minutes!

Resilience . . .

- **What does it mean for an organization to be resilient?**

- **Why is organizational resilience important to us as professionals?**

- **Why is resilience important for our Center?**

Resilience: re-sil-ience, *n*

. . . the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.

. . . the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape — to bounce back — after being subjected to adversity or stress.

Organizational Resilience

- **Organizational resilience is the ability of an organization to adapt and thrive in the face of disruptions and uncertainties.**

- ***The ability to withstand and adapt to disruptive events*, such as significant economic downturns, natural disasters, transformative technological advancements, or fierce competitive pressures, *while maintaining its core functions, integrity, and long-term viability*.**

Without Resilience . . .

- Higher levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout among employees.

- Rigid systems and processes that prevent adaptability and responsiveness to change.

- Unresolved conflict, adversity, and lack of accountability.

- Poor decisions, not finding solutions to problems, and unable to innovate and improvise solutions when faced with novel situations.

- Failure to provide support, guidance, and resources that employees need to succeed.

- Reduced organizational functioning, innovation, and performance – more likely to fail when facing volatility.

With Resilience . . .

- Able to anticipate and respond to opportunities and threats.

- Agile, nimble, accountable, and adaptive in difficult circumstances.

- People feel security and stability and receive emotional support – which leads to higher employee morale, engagement, and retention.

- The organization is learning, growing, and innovating with change.

- Able to make faster and more data-informed decisions.

- Teams and leaders are self-sufficient, empowered, and adaptable.

- Able to adapt to a changing environment and pivot to pursue new opportunities.

- Absorb the shocks they experience and turn them into new strategic opportunities.

Resilient Organizations

1. Have a clear purpose.

- Fierce commitment to a shared purpose.
- People know and are passionate about the value the organization creates in the world.
- A core ideology – a common set of beliefs that galvanize and focus people on who we are, how we engage the world, and how we make a difference in other's lives.
- Purpose lies at the core of the organization's present and whatever its future is.

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

— Proverbs 29:18

Salt Pond Bay Sunset
St. John · U.S. Virgin Islands

Salt Pond Bay, St. John
U.S. Virgin Islands

"If you don't know where you're going . . .
Any road will get you there."
— Lewis Carroll, British Author
b. 1832, d. 1898

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Resilient Organizations

2. **Are Aware and Adaptive.**

- Aware and sensitive to what's going on in the world – and its potential impact.

- Adapts and adjusts its strategy in response to what it is learning.

- Stays true to itself – its vision, values, beliefs, and core ideology.

- Is a *living* organization that responds to changes in its environment.

If the rate of change inside the organization is *less* than the rate of change *outside* the organization, the end is in sight.

◆ Jack Welch, former CEO General Electric

b. 1935, d. 2020

Wild Connemara
Ireland's West Country

It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change.

— Charles Darwin

British naturalist

c. 1809-1882

Resilient Organizations

3. **Build Community.**

  ■ **People feel welcome – part of a larger community.**

  ■ **People have a sense of belonging.**

  ■ **People feel connected and integrated into a larger, meaningful whole.**

  ■ **When there is a sense of community and belonging, people tend to work harder, innovate, and contribute to ensure that this community endures.**

Resilient Organizations

4. **Have a Deep Commitment to Learning.**

- ■ Cultural norms encourage new ideas, learning, innovation, reducing complexity, and continuously improving as an organization.
- ■ Learning is THE pathway to sustainability.
- ■ Learning enables the discovery of new ways of working and creating value in a time of change.

Success is not final. Failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that makes the difference.

— Winston Churchill
British politician
b. 1874, d. 1965

Lustrafjord
Norway

Resilient Organizations

5. **Value the Sharing of Diverse Information, Knowledge, and Insights.**

- ◼ Information and knowledge is only helpful to the extent that it is widely shared.

- ◼ Breaking down organizational barriers – horizontally and vertically – enables the free-flow of information.

- ◼ People at the organization's center and at the top have information to share. Equally important, so do those at the edges/fringes who have operational knowledge critical to informed decision making.

Resilient Organizations

6. Trust their People.

- **Building organizational capacity involves building the capacity of people at every level – and then trusting their decisions and actions.**

- **Investing in peoples' capacities leads to higher morale, engagement, and job satisfaction.**

- **Higher degrees of ownership lead to more innovation, creative problem solving, and initiative – all of which leads to higher service quality and customer satisfaction.**

You may be deceived if you trust too much, but you will live in torment if you do not trust enough.

— Dr. Frank Crane

Lucas Point, Monterey

Resilient Organizations

7. **Celebrate and Reward What Matters Most.**

- **What organizations reward – what the organization values and cares about most – is what people then value and care about.**

- **Fairness and equity in how recognition, celebrations, and rewards are distributed matters. If things aren't fair or equitable, the sense of community and ownership erode.**

- **Innovation, quality, creativity, and thoughtful risk taking need to be celebrated!**

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Resilient Organizations

8. **Are Good Stewards.**

- ■ **Every resource is precious: people, financial resources, community partners, equipment, tools, etc.**

- ■ **Resources are never taken for granted.**

- ■ **Every investment is carefully considered and wisely managed.**

- ■ **When organizations squander good people, strong partnerships, and financial reserves, there is a loss of engagement, trust, talent, and capacity. And when these are lost . . .**

Personal Reflection

1. Of the eight dimensions of organizational resilience, where is your center strongest? Which elements of organizational resilience will help carry you through the challenges ahead?

2. Where does your center need to invest and grow the most? Which elements of organizational resilience might limit your ability to deal with the challenges ahead?

Poll

Which THREE of the following dimensions does your Center need to focus on most?

1. Have a Clear Purpose.
2. Are Aware and Adaptive.
3. Build Community.
4. Have a Deep Commitment to Learning.
5. Value the Sharing of Diverse Information, Knowledge, and Insights.
6. Trust their People.
7. Celebrate and Reward What Matters Most.
8. Are Good Stewards.

Developing Organizational Resilience

For your assigned resilience dimension:

1. **Designate a recorder/reporter for your group.**

2. **Identify three or four ideas or strategies that Centers might implement to strengthen/grow this organizational resilience dimension.**

You have about 8 minutes!

Developing Resilience

1. Have a Clear Purpose.

2. Are Aware and Adaptive.

3. Build Community.

4. Have a Deep Commitment to Learning.

5. Value the Sharing of Diverse Information, Knowledge, and Insights.

6. Trust their People.

7. Celebrate and Reward What Matters Most.

8. Are Good Stewards.

Insights for Leading Resilient Organizations

1. **Maintaining the status quo is death. (don't strive for stability, instead create dynamic systems/processes that deal with the NOW)**

2. **The future is unknowable. (focus less on planning and more on creating and discovering the path as you go)**

3. **Organizations are dynamic systems. (allow your Center to grow, evolve, and change as it needs to)**

Insights for Leading Resilient Organizations

4. **Chaos is not the absence of order.** (look for the underlying patterns and structures that reveal themselves and build on these)

5. **Organizations are self-organizing systems that focus on information.** (gather, share, explore, and understand everything that's happening . . . organize around this information)

6. **People should focus less on formal plans and more on emerging issues, challenges, aspirations.** (plans help shape our work, but we should focus on emerging issues and respond in ways that are aligned with the vision)

Insights for Leading Resilient Organizations

7. **Complex learning leads to future success.** (challenge the assumptions and thinking patterns that leaders and employees use to enable your Center to develop new assumptions and mental models that are a better fit to your current challenges)

8. **Informal networks and "political" behavior are the wellspring of new ideas and directions.** (actively encourage people to be good "influencers" when they have innovative ideas about what we should be doing and how we should do it)

When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us."
— Helen Keller
American author, activist
b. 1880, d. 1968

Thanks for Your Participation!

Best of luck in strengthening your Center's resilience during this age of uncertainty.

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