Stress & Resilience Institute

LEADING THROUGH CHANGE & UNCERTAINTY:
YOUR CHECKLIST FOR TEAM & ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE AND AGILITY

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Now, more than ever, organizations must navigate disruptive change. Unprecedented growth, department and organizational reorganization, the future of work challenges, and the ongoing global pandemic are just some of the stressors leaders and organizations face. As a result, organizations, teams, and leaders will need to develop resilience at all levels in order to promote agility, innovation, and thriving.

Research has begun to identify more clearly what it takes for teams and organizations to cope, and even flourish, when they experience change and uncertainty. [1]

These strategies will help you think about what to do before, during and after a crisis to promote resilience: [2]

BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
Anticipate challenges and plan contingencies	Make real-time adjustments quickly if something isn't working	Debrief – what went well; what do you need to improve?
Know team members' capacity levels (is a particular division operating beyond capacity such that it will impact its ability to help/respond effectively)	Recognize when a team member needs help	Address any friction points that may have emerged between team members
Address known vulnerabilities (e.g., distrust among team members; lack of resources/expertise)	Provide transparency and ongoing status updates	Communicate appreciation to team members (from both leaders and peers)
Establish a process for regular communication about a developing problem	Continue constructive routines like regular meetings	Thank external resources for their help and support
Identify back-ups for people in key roles	Tap into resources outside the team or organization to get others' insight/knowledge	
	Reclarify roles and goals for teams that are required to meet remotely or in a hybrid format; disruptive events may create new and competing tasks for teams	
	Keep it personal – don't forget about personal interaction and check in's	

9 ADDITIONAL IDEAS TO BUILD TEAM & ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

These TNT's (Tiny Noticeable Things) can help leaders and others in your organization to start moving toward team and organizational resilience: [3]

- Huddle up - get on the same page about the work that has happened and who takes responsibility for what as transitions happen.

- Debrief (even a short 15-minute team-based conversation can reduce burnout by promoting transparency, trust, and support) [4]

- How often are you presented with ideas for improvement? What do you do when you get these ideas? Are you concerned that you don't get enough ideas regularly from enough people?

- Transparency is part of engagement – involve your team as much as possible in day-to-day decision-making and updates

- For hybrid teams, have a common understanding about how the team will communicate; a lot can get lost in translation when two team members talk face-to-face then fail to debrief the rest of the group

- Be accessible and approachable

- Prioritize well-being on your team and across your organization. Burned out employees will have a hard time being engaged in the ways you need your organization to rise to the occasion during times of challenge.

- Who is the person, or who are the people, in your organization responsible for keeping track of changes and developments in your industry (e.g., with clients, competitors, community, macro issues)? How often do you meet with this person/these people?

- **Collaborate with your clients about resiliency best practices as they are managing similarly complex challenges in their own organizations**

While these TNTs may seem easy to implement, building a resilient organization requires a very intentional process, and it's more than simple routines and procedures. It involves creating the type of positive culture that can be leveraged to more effectively deal with both the everyday and the more major challenges and adversities that are becoming more common in the workplace.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE DIAGNOSTIC

In order for organizations to maintain resilience and agility, they must pay attention to the indicators that build resilience at the organizational level. Research reveals 10 such indicators with the first five (highlighted in RED) being regarded as the most potent: [5]

Please rate each indicator for your organization, based on the following scale: [6]

1. Significant Weakness
2. Somewhat Weak
3. Neutral
4. Somewhat Strong
5. Significant Strength

INDICATOR	SCORE
1. **Leadership:** Our organization has leaders who people trust and want to follow at every level	
2. **Engagement:** Our people work together as a connected team and are committed to working on a problem until it is resolved	
3. **Situational Awareness:** We proactively monitor our industry to have an early warning of emerging issues	
4. **Effective Partnerships:** We build strong trusting relationships both internally and externally	
5. **Innovation:** We foster an innovation mindset and have creative problem solvers in our organization; we quickly fix and update processes that don't work	
6. **Decision Making:** Our organization can make tough decisions quickly and effectively	
7. **Prioritize Teamwork:** Teamwork is a skill that is developed and practiced and collaborative behavior is rewarded	
8. **Sufficient Resources:** Our organization maintains sufficient people and resources to cope with unexpected change	
9. **Effective Planning:** We have planned for how we will continue to deliver our core functions during times of adversity	
10. **Testing Plans:** We practice and test plans at regular intervals to identify weaknesses and vulnerabilities	

NEXT STEPS:

What did the Organizational Resilience Diagnostic reveal? Take a look at each indicator individually – which did you score as a 1 or a 2? These represent areas of opportunity for your organization and need to be addressed sooner rather than later.

Are your teams positioned to respond to change in a resilient way before, during and after they happen? We can help!

BUY THE BOOK: Paula's book about building thriving and high-performing teams and preventing burnout is on sale now. You can buy a copy at https://stressandresilience.com/burnout-book/.

WORKSHOPS & CONSULTING: We have experience helping leaders and organizations identify weak spots and create plans to mitigate gaps. Please contact Paula directly at paula@stressandresilience.com

TO LEARN MORE: You can learn more about the Stress & Resilience Institute at www.stressandresilience.com or follow us on LinkedIn at https://www.linkedin.com/in/pauladavislaack/.

[1] Bernard Walker et al. *Building Adaptive Resilience: High-Performing Today, Agile Tomorrow, Thriving in the Future* (2014), which you can download here: https://resorgs.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Resilient_Organisations_Building_Adaptive_Resilience_print_version.pdf

[2] George M. Alliger, Christopher P. Cerasoli, Scott I. Tannenbaum, & William B. Vessey (2015). *Team Resilience: How Teams Flourish Under Pressure.* 44 Organizational Dynamics 176-184.

[3] This is a combination of my own ideas and those found in Heidi K. Gardner & Ivan Matviak (March 5, 2020). *Coronavirus Could Force Teams to Work Remotely* on hbr.com, and in a short white paper titled, *Shut Happens – Resilient Organizations*, which you can download at: https://www.resorgs.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Resilient_Organisations_Shut_Happens_online_version.pdf

[4] Jingqiu Chen, Peter A. Bamberger, Yifan Song, & Dana R. Vashdi (2018). *The Effects of Team Reflexivity on Psychological Well-Being in Manufacturing Teams.* 103(4) Journal of Applied Psychology 443-462. See also Christina N. Lacerenza et al. (2018). *Team Development Interventions: Evidence-Based Approaches for Improving Teamwork.* 73(4) American Psychologist 517-531.

[5] Erica Seville. *Resilient Organizations: How to Survive, Thrive and Create Opportunities Through Crisis and Change.* London, UK: Kogan Page Limited (2017).

[6] The Scale is adapted from the Organizational Resilience Tool developed by an organization called Resilient Organizations (www.resorgs.org.nz). See also Id. at 20-22.

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