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5 Ways to Build Resilience in the Workplace

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Business leaders are taught to always think three steps ahead. But what happens when a global pandemic breaks out and organizations can no longer act proactively? This is where resiliency plays a crucial role.

Companies today operate in a landscape that values proactiveness. Whether it's forecasting regulations around data privacy or projecting how technologies will shape an industry, businesses are built around the idea of knowing and preparing for what will come next. When COVID-19 hit, however, the world found itself in the midst of an unprecedented situation. Executives and employees alike were left looking for answers.

It's a state that no businesses wants to find themselves in. Fortunately, there are things leaders do to guide their organization onwards in moments like these. One is investing in employees' resiliency and wellbeing.

In today's constantly shifting landscape, resilience is an anchor that can help leaders ease pressure, maintain productivity and enhance the performance and quality of their organization. Resilience also helps leaders make decisions and demonstrate their investment in their workforce's.

The benefits go beyond reputation, though. Those that invest in the resilience of their employees have much to gain. The potential economic return on investment (ROI) for businesses that invested in workplace health initiatives was [\\$5.19 for every \\$1 spent](#).

So how can companies foster a more resilient workplace culture? First, by disbanding the misconceptions around resiliency.

Resilience Myths

There is an inherent fallacy in the way people view resilience, believing it to be a trait rather than a skill. Thus, people operate under the false mantra that “you either have it or you don’t.”

The truth is that resiliency is much like a muscle — over time it grows stronger through effective leadership. That’s not to say a workforce constantly exposed to adversity will eventually become more resilient. Rather, leadership needs to create a culture where hardships can also be seen as an opportunity to evolve both the individual and the organization.

Resilience can also be misinterpreted as overconfidence. People who are resilient are often seen as tough, self-reliant, and unaffected by the same stresses and negative emotions others might face. This can lead others to believe that resilient individuals don’t need any help. Not only does this stifle collaboration, but it can have a negative effect on the mental wellbeing of resilient individuals.

It’s important that leadership understands how these misconceptions can be detrimental to their organization. Furthermore, leadership has to realize that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to building resilience in the workplace. Rather, it requires a robust strategy.

A Five-Pronged Approach

Resilience can manifest across five different areas: professional, physical, psychological, social and financial. Therefore, to truly create a culture around employees’ well-being, leaders must address each area of resilience individually. Here’s how:

1. Professional

Enhancing professional resilience and wellbeing starts at the top. Leaders have to be actively pursuing new opportunities for the organization, all while maintaining the agility needed to pivot in a moment’s notice. This will require a certain level of innovation to see new ideas through to execution, so leaders should constantly be surveying their surroundings (as well as their employees) to see how they can evolve the organization.

Now is a good time for leaders to be monitoring their own performance, as well as those that they lead. By giving and receiving constructive feedback, leaders can find new ways to collaborate effectively while also setting up boundaries that promote a better work-life balance.

2. Physical

As more people work from home, it’s important to emphasize the need for physical resilience. This can come in the form of adopting new habits, such as going for a walk during the day or some simple breathing exercises. While leaders will want to do their best not to overstep, there is no harm in encouraging employees to adopt these small, healthier lifestyle choices.

3. Psychological

COVID-19 has been incredibly stressful on everyone. By helping employees find ways to manage their stress, organizations can play an active role in building up their workforce’s psychological resilience.

Ask your team: where are you investing your energy? Employees should feel like they have strong boundaries in place that allow them to shift their focus from their job to their lives. Leaders can also encourage employees to pursue mindful activities, such as meditation, as way to reflect and take pride in themselves during this time.

4. Social

It may seem a daunting task to develop social resilience in the age of social distancing. However, there are still ways leadership can help employees have meaningful interactions with each other during this time.

One way to do this is with digital coffee or lunch meetings throughout the day. Another is by having virtual shout outs or encouraging managers to set up one-on-one time with employees to catch up. The goal is to show an interest in the individual and remind them that they’re more than just an employee.

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5. Financial

Certainly, at the top of the CFO's priority list is developing financial resilience. This goes beyond a company's bottom-line, however.

Many employees have been met with shorter work hours or decreased salaries, with some having been furloughed for the unforeseeable future. During this time, it's important that companies help employees adjust by offering budgeting and finance resources that will assist them during this time.

Certainly, the question on many people's mind is when this will all be over. Unfortunately, we don't know. By building resiliency in the workplace, however, leaders can create an environment that benefits employees today as we work towards a better tomorrow.

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