



Building Resiliency

For more than 30 years, Learning Dynamics has been a leader in helping clients deal with change. In fact, our change management programs are cited as among the best. But typically, the changes we prepared our clients for in the past were contained within their existing culture and practices. They were controllable changes like budgets, staffing, and schedules, or even larger ones like mergers and acquisitions. But when compared with the changes companies face today and for the last several months, those controllable changes in the past were mere murmurs.

The race to see who survives or thrives the onslaught of the enormous changes in today's marketplace is uniquely different from what we dealt with before. When, in our history, have we seen employees refusing to return to work because they are sincerely worried about infections in the workplace? When have we seen entire companies needing to alter virtually all of their workplace to abide by regulations set outside their own leadership arena? When have we seen a complete reversal of ensuring contact among and between employees and customers?

Clearly, the changes we face today will require unique solutions. The important catch words being applied now to meet the challenges companies face are agility and resiliency.

Virtually all the key researchers and thinkers in the realm of change management arrive at the same place when asked, "What is the secret for employees dealing with significant change?" Their collective answer is that those companies will survive, even thrive, when enough of their employees are resilient and agile. They can and

will move quickly yet carefully, think outside the traditional boxes of the past, experiment with new ideas and, the whole time, keep their eye on the ball of company culture and goals.

Resiliency skills are a dynamic set of behaviors and thought processes that strike a balance between dealing with a difficult reality and finding new ways to be successful within it. As the lockdown from the pandemic was instituted, we began to see solid examples of resiliency and agility. One of the earliest and most evident examples came from the restaurant and food service industries. Quickly shifting to take-out and mobile service models, those companies found a nearly immediate way to stay in business, demonstrate their devotion to their customers, and keep basic revenues flowing.

Perhaps the most powerful examples of resiliency in action come from the medical community. Covid-19 is a reality they cannot change, at least thus far, but how they might deal with it is entirely within their control. How many nurses have training in setting up tents in the hospital parking lot to establish drive-through testing sites? Yet that's what they did, because it was necessary for them to remain true to the promises they have made to society for years. The myriad of other changes and creations they've devised to remain functionally viable is remarkable.

So, what does this resilient skillset look like? First of all, the way it looks has tremendous variation. In many ways, it represents the very essence of problem solving. Rather than spending too much time or resources on removing the "problem," like dealing with lockdown orders from the state,

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companies have found new ways to function.

In our Change Management programs we often use a set of ten personal resiliency keys. They are:

1. Trust Yourself
2. Be Flexible
3. Have a Strong Sense of Purpose or Mission
4. Be Open to Learning
5. Develop a Sense of Optimism
6. Persevere
7. Utilize a Strong Support System
8. Know Yourself
9. Be Willing to Face Uncertainty
10. Take Care of Yourself

Surely, this is not an exhaustive list. Yet the items above do remain as viable targets for employees

to adopt during times of significant change. Most importantly, the list represents attributes and qualities that are managed by each individual, rather than mandates from above. They remind us that the concepts of resilience and agility reside within each employee.

For managers and leaders, resiliency lies in both their own ability to apply these resiliency keys as well as in encouraging and supporting their staff to adopt them as well. For some managers, the simple act of involving all employees to generate ideas and solutions to the challenges the company faces represents a significant shift in problem solving. The key in the application of agility and resiliency is to recognize that the unique situations the company faces will very likely be met with brand new solutions, and those solutions can come from all employees.

