

# Cultivating Resilient Teams in Uncertain Times



Resilience is essential in today's dynamic and unpredictable work environments. While difficult to quantify, its absence is often acutely felt. Leaders aim to cultivate this quality within their teams and themselves. Merely enduring volatile market conditions, rapidly changing technologies, economic uncertainties, and new ways of working is not enough. Successful teams must seek opportunities in change. They must innovate and collaborate effectively and emerge even stronger than they were before. So, if resilience is the new prerequisite for a thriving team, how do you know if your team is resilient enough?

Leaders can begin by asking themselves:

- **Is morale and engagement low?** Are there signs of decreased productivity, lack of enthusiasm, and increased absenteeism?
- **Are we resistant to change?** Do we struggle to adapt to new processes, technologies, or market conditions?
- **Are stress and burnout levels high?** Are our employees seemingly overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands? Do they exhibit signs of emotional, mental, and even physical exhaustion?
- **Do we have high employee turnover?** Are frequent resignations indicating a lack of engagement and support?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, it may be time to act. We engaged our team of talent advisors to identify top tips for building and sustaining resilient teams:

## 1. Encourage a Growth Mindset

View challenges as growth opportunities rather than roadblocks. By reflecting on feedback and results, leaders can adapt their approach and bounce back from setbacks. Create a culture of continuous learning and celebrate progress. When things don't go as planned, create safe spaces to ask your team questions like "What did you learn from this experience?" and "What will we do differently next time?" By modeling adaptability and curiosity, leaders can encourage a growth mindset within their team and inspire them to take risks, innovate, and learn from their mistakes.



*"Leading an organization is unpredictable and at times more difficult than we expect. Leaders need to demonstrate tenacity to navigate challenging times. The past few years have presented significant obstacles. True leaders confront these challenges head-on with resolve and resilience, so organizations can emerge stronger having faced adversity and prevailed over the long-term."*

– Kevin Stoddart, President, KBRS



## 2. Inspire and Lead by Example

Remaining calm and collected during a crisis is the hallmark of a resilient leader. By focusing on solutions rather than problems and maintaining a positive attitude, you can encourage optimism. Articulate a clear vision for the path forward and demonstrate through your own actions your commitment to living by the values you espouse. Show the importance of hard work, dedication, and continuous improvement – both at a personal and organization level.

## 3. Communicate Clear Expectations

Provide teams and individuals with clear expectations about their roles, their impact on the organization, and how their performance will be assessed. Accountability can be both empowering and motivating. This clarity is as important for leaders as it is for the individual contributors within their teams. Anticipate the need to revisit and discuss these expectations over time and adapt as the needs of the organizations evolve and your team faces new challenges.



*“Resilience can be developed and that’s really good news. There are science-backed strategies and practices that can bolster resilience on an individual and organizational level with frameworks to make meaningful changes.”*

– **Janice Tanner Ernst**, Senior HR Consultant, KBRS



## 4. Foster Collaboration and Open Communication

Encourage teamwork and nurture environments that break down silos, bringing employees together to share ideas, resources, and work towards common goals. Collaboration in a supportive environment helps individuals feel valued and connected, reducing stress and isolation. When challenges arise, a collaborative team can pool their strengths and problem-solving skills, making it easier to adapt and overcome obstacles. Shared experiences and diverse perspectives can lead to innovative solutions and a stronger and more resilient organization. Recognize the importance of two-way communications within teams and across organizational levels. Encourage transparency and regular feedback. Create channels for employees to voice suggestions and concerns. Tools like pulse checks and employee engagement surveys can provide valuable insight. You can't effectively create change if you aren't aware of the issues.



*“In our work with our coaching clients, we’ve seen firsthand how fostering a growth mindset in individuals can help transform teams. Goals guide us but it’s important to reflect on the journey, learn from the missteps, and celebrate progress along the way. It’s both motivating and validating.”*

– **Katherine Risley**, Managing Partner and People Strategy Lead, KBRS



## 5. Prioritize Adaptability and Resilience When Hiring

When hiring for any leadership position, from supervisors to C-suite executives, focus on identifying candidates who have demonstrated they can handle pressure, tolerate stress, and create supportive workplaces. Past behaviour is a strong predictor of future performance. Many of the attributes possessed by resilient leaders can be explored through personality assessments to further inform hiring decisions. The results of these assessments can also play an instrumental role in developing successful onboarding strategies for new leaders, ensuring alignment on expectations and nurturing critical relationships.

## 6. Develop Strong Leadership

Take the time to reflect on the needs and development opportunities for your long serving and emerging leaders. Are they capable of inspiring their teams through their actions and words? Do they know how to remain composed during a crisis and rally their team around a shared purpose? Do they possess the self-awareness required to understand how their behaviours and actions will impact others? Consider providing training or coaching people leaders specifically on how to build resilience within themselves and their teams.

## 7. Prepare for Future Needs

Evolving skills requirements, an aging workforce, and shifting business demands all impact workforce planning. This highlights the need for thoughtful succession planning to ensure your organization remains agile and prepared for future challenges. Retaining and developing your

team requires a proactive and strategic approach. This may include communicating clear career pathways, identifying high-potential employees, investing in skill development, engaging in ongoing dialogue about career goals, and creating meaningful development opportunities.

## 8. Don't Underestimate Employee Wellness

Effectively improving employee wellness calls for approaches that are as individualized as the people that comprise the team. Create a workplace culture where employees have access to resources for stress management and to support mental health, such as confidential employee assistance programs. Also, incorporate team-building activities that encourage social connections and wellness education. Recognize the importance of flexibility. Some level of remote work options and flexible hours can help teams balance maintaining their personal wellness while achieving their work goals.

Encouraging leaders to proactively build and sustain resilient teams for long-term success is always important, especially when challenges mount. Staying attuned to the early signs that the resilience of your team may be eroding can provide your cue to act and ensure your team is well-positioned to tackle the challenges ahead.

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