

The APS College of  
Organisational Psychologists presents

# *Illuminations*



Special Edition on  
**Resilience in  
Organisations**

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# About *Illuminations*

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*Illuminations* is an initiative of the College of Organisational Psychologists and is aimed at creating awareness of the value and contributions being made by organisational psychologists to organisations and business across Australia and globally. Organisational psychology is the science of people at work. Organisational psychologists analyse organisations and their people, and devise strategies to recruit, motivate, develop, change and inspire.

Organisational psychologists work with organisations, teams and individual employees to improve their performance and increase effectiveness and productivity in the workplace. They strive to enhance people's wellbeing by improving their experience at work. Drawing on a scientific approach based on psychological research and tested strategies, organisational psychologists are able to provide methods produce measurable, replicable and often more cost-effective results.

In the workplace, organisational psychologists can play a number of critical roles generally associated with employee performance, including Organisational Development (OD), Manager, Human Resource (HR) Manager, HR Consultant, Personnel Director, Learning and Development Manager, Trainer, OD Consultant, and Researcher.

Organisational psychology covers a broad range of disciplines including industrial and organisational psychology (I/O psychology), work psychology, occupational psychology, personnel psychology, human resource management and development, ergonomics, human factors, vocational psychology, managerial psychology, coaching, and consumer psychology.

*Illuminations* presents evidence-based articles which showcase some of the work that organisational psychologists in field are engaged in. Through a wide range of articles that include psychological test reviews, research insights, and case studies, *Illuminations* hopes to provide our readers with some practical tools and frameworks to help inform organisational practices around managing human behaviour at work.

## A Note to Our Readers

*Illuminations* is an e-Magazine that is freely available for circulation. The publication does not aim to promote the authors or contributors. As a not-for-profit publication, it relies on the enthusiasm and contributions of organisational psychology practitioners in the field. The views expressed within the articles should be considered the authors' and not necessarily those of the Australian Psychological Society or the College of Organisational Psychologists.

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# Individual Resilience



## Resilience in the Workplace

The need for building the capacity for individuals to be resilient has traditionally been more apparent within industries including health, defence, crisis management and emergency services. However, with work environments that are continually evolving, adapting and responding to the needs of various stakeholders, the value of individual resilience in the wider working population cannot be underestimated. Organisations, management and leaders are now starting to recognise the benefits of a resilient workforce and have witnessed a subsequent increase in the quality and range of program offerings for building resilience. This article explores the concept of resilience among individuals in the workplace, and takes a critical look at the factors that enable resilience and suggests constructive ways for boosting the resilience capacity of individuals at work.

## Understanding Resilience: What is it?

**Resilience involves an interaction between our internal and external environments as we respond to stressor and/or a context.** It is the capacity for individuals to not only to “bounce back”, “survive” or “cope successfully” in response to adversity, uncertainty, change or risk, but to do so “robustly” and recover more “quickly”. It is this capacity for adaptation and use of positive psychological systems to facilitate resilience (i.e., Seligman) which has contributed to the development of programs and for organisations to foster resilience outcomes in its employees.

Resilience is not a static state that is inherent in you nor is it a transient phenomenon. Rather, it is a dynamic process that can be cultivated in most individuals and – importantly – evidence suggests the behaviours, thoughts and actions underpinning resilience can be learnt and developed (e.g., McAllister & McKinnon, 2009; Jackson, Firtko & Edenborough, 2007).

There is no single definition of resilience nor are there clear dimensions of what constitutes resilience. Subsequently it is easy to appreciate how individuals and organisations may not only get lost in the definitions, but also in the knowledge of how individual resilience relates more generally to organisational systems and outcomes.

## Factors Affecting Individual Resilience

So **what affects an individual’s capacity to be resilient?** The literature suggests that resilience is derived from the interaction between internal/ personal characteristics and external/situational factors.

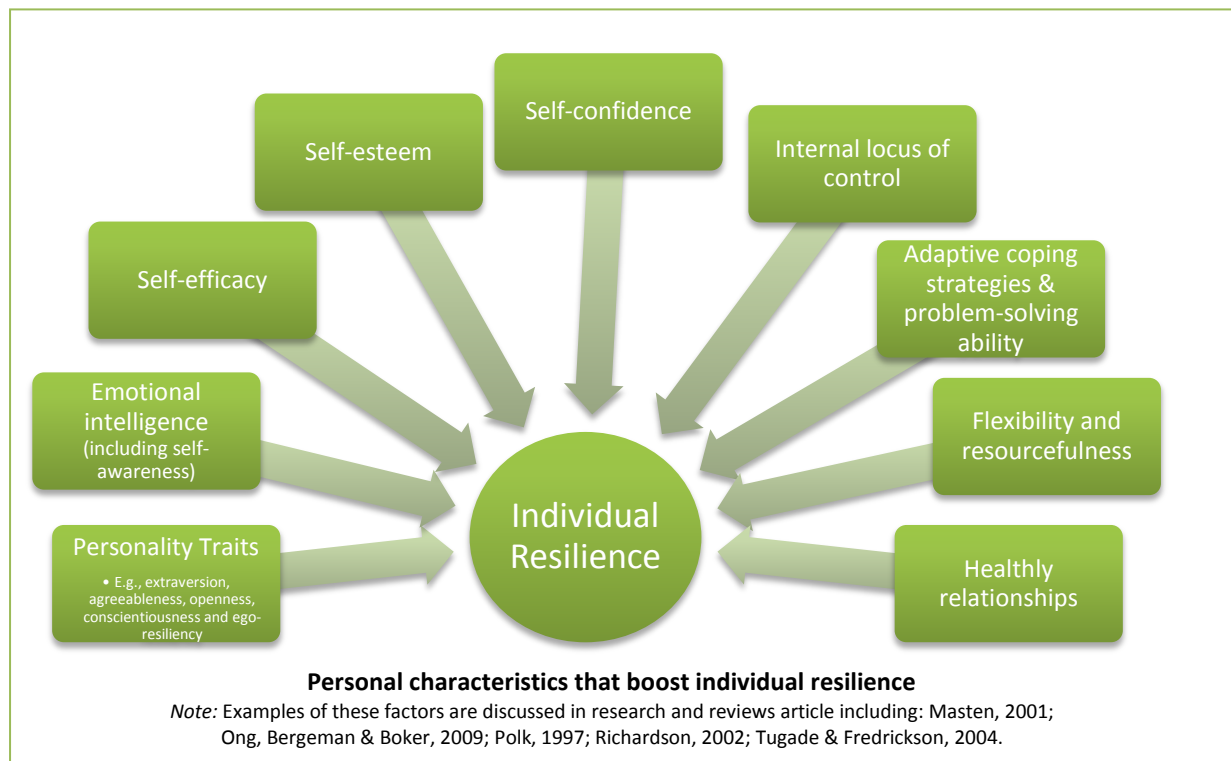
### The Resilience Debate: Is Resilience a Trait, a State or a Process?

*In reality, it’s been described as a lot more than that! The literature on resilience has generated much debate on the nature of resilience which has been described as a trait, a state, a process, a cycle, as innate, as existing on continuum or a trajectory and being multidimensional.*

*Contemporary literature however suggests a preference towards viewing resilience as a process which can be learned and developed.*

### Individual Factors

Research suggests there are several personal characteristics among individuals that may serve as protective factors and/or promote one’s capacity to be resilient. The diagram on the following page highlights some of these key individual characteristics:



### Situational/ Environmental Factors

We exist in a fast paced and continually evolving environment where individuals are constantly being faced with changes and uncertainty has the potential to affect them. Within the workplace, these changes may manifest themselves in the form of situational risk factors affecting resilience. The different examples of different external or situational risk factors that could impact individuals in the workplace are outlined in the table below:

Individual disruptions	Team disruptions	Organisational disruptions	Other disruptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing jobs</li> <li>• Changing work role</li> <li>• Redundancy</li> <li>• Bully and harassment</li> <li>• Work demands</li> <li>• Work-life balance</li> <li>• Ideological tensions</li> <li>• Conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing team structure &amp; dynamics</li> <li>• Continuous team reorganisation</li> <li>• Employee inexperience</li> <li>• Stakeholder management issues</li> <li>• Resource shortages</li> <li>• Ineffective leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisitions &amp; mergers</li> <li>• Corporate restructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global financial crisis (GFC)</li> <li>• Environmental and natural disasters</li> <li>• Terrorism</li> <li>• Global health crises (Pandemics)</li> </ul>

*Note:* Building resilience among employees often focuses on the negative events, changes and/or stressors within the workplace. However, positive changes such as job promotions and increased role responsibility may also significantly reduce an individual’s capacity to be resilient (Luthans, 2002).

Broadly speaking each of these disruptions has the potential to influence an individual’s physical, cognitive and emotional reserves

## Resilience in Employees: Why Invest in Them?

When not managed appropriately, workplace issues have the potential to impact individuals physically, emotionally and psychologically. More often than not, the organisation also incurs significant costs – both hidden and apparent.

In 2006-2007 work stress claims in Australia resulted in an average of 10.9 weeks of lost time to injury (average for *all claims* was 3.9 LTI) with median payment of \$14,300 per person (average for *all claims* was \$5,800) (Safe Work Australia, 2010, *Compendium of Workers’ Compensations Statistics Australia 2007-2008*). Recent studies have also demonstrated how individual resilience impacts on work related outcomes (see Table below for examples). While it is difficult to draw causal relationships between stressors, levels of resilience and outcomes, it definitely has the potential to contribute to important organisational outcomes.

### The Outcomes of High and Low Resilience on Individuals and Organisations

Outcomes of High Resilience Among Employees	Outcomes of Low Resilience Among Employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptive behaviours such as revising goals in the face of adversity</li> <li>• Positive organisational behaviour</li> <li>• Contributions to a positive organisational climate and/or culture</li> <li>• Higher productivity</li> <li>• Increased innovation</li> <li>• Use of effective and appropriate coping strategies</li> <li>• Greater intention to remain</li> <li>• Increased job satisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased stress claims</li> <li>• Burnout</li> <li>• Low engagement</li> <li>• Decreased productivity</li> <li>• Physical issues (e.g., cardiovascular stress)</li> <li>• Emotional responses such as helplessness, hurt, guilt, and fear</li> <li>• Use of “avoidance” strategies (e.g., substance use, disruptive behaviours)</li> <li>• Retention issues</li> <li>• Family costs</li> </ul>

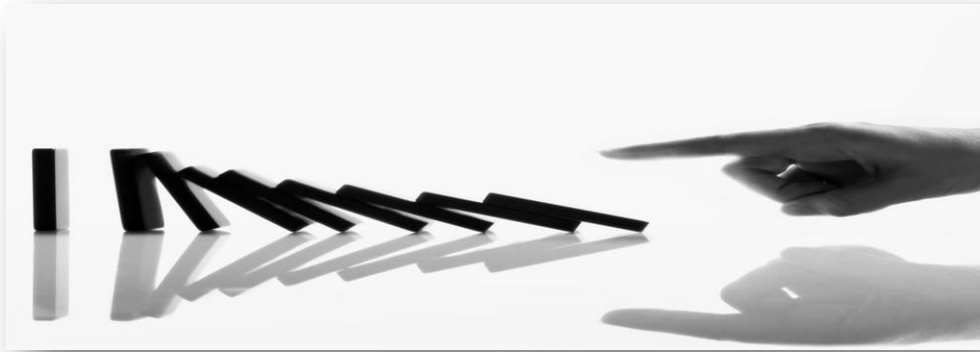
*Note:* Examples of these factors are discussed in research and reviews article including: Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Bonanno, Brewen, La Greca and Kaniasty, 2010; Jackson et al., 2007; Grunberg, Moore, Greenberg & Sikora, 2008; Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006; McDargh, 2003; McAllister & McKinnon, 2009; and Richardson, 2002.

## Building Individual Resilience in the Workplace

Organisations can contribute significantly in managing the well-being of employees while boosting their capacity to overcome adverse events. This is also beneficial for leaders, as leadership becomes more challenging in the presence of heightened emotion and reactivity. Many organisations utilise the resources provided by Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to address the professional and personal needs of employees. EAP programs have evolved to not only consider the breadth of personal issues individuals may experience (e.g., family, substance abuse and gambling issues) but also how organisational factors influence an individual’s work experiences (e.g., psychosocial and organisational stressors).

Historically EAP programs have been *reactive* with interventions that are put in place as a response to potentially adverse events (e.g., natural disasters, workplace crises and organisational change, psychological conflict or trauma). While there is value for such programs in the workplace, there is also a need for more *proactive* resilience programs that prepare and boost the global capacity for individuals to be resilient in the face of change and adversity.

In recent years there has been a shift towards engaging employees in *proactive* programs of resilience training, regardless of industry or occupational position. These programs have sought to foster general well-being and enhance the immediate working experience for employees, while also equipping them with skills and strategies to embrace future challenges, change and uncertainty.



## QUICK STRATEGIES AND SKILLS

When seeking to build individual resilience leaders and managers can contribute in several ways.

### *Ways for leaders to build resilience within employees*

- **Minimising the impact that external or situational factors** may have on individuals and teams.
- **Building trust** and a supportive organisational climate.
- **Role modelling resilience** behaviours to encourage behaviours and standards expected from a team perspective and in oneself.
- **Enforcing policies** that ensure psychological and physical well-being (e.g., annual leave, flexible work practices, EAP, bullying and harassment policies).

### *Ways to build resilience within individuals*

- **Finding positive meaning in stressful situations:** by using positive meanings and emotions, it is possible to regulate negative emotional outcomes associated with adversity.
- Many of the Cognitive Behaviour Theories (CBT) address aspects of thought style, which can influence individual responses to events and also their resilience including:
  - **Changing your thinking** to invest energy in the elements that can be controlled as opposed to those elements outside of one's control
  - **Engaging in analysis and problem solving strategies** to avoid catastrophising, enabling the capacity to stay in the moment and to keep perspective.
- **Life balance:** taking care of oneself by balancing work, home and health.
- **Utilising resources** such as colleagues, managers, EAP or peer support services or the supportive relationships of close family and friends for guidance and support.
- **Setting small and realistic goals** and taking decisive actions to address problems or to challenge beliefs related to any problems.
- **Staying flexible** to the changes and uncertainty.

*Note:* Examples of these factors are discussed in research and reviews article including: Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004; Jackson et al., 2007; Luthans et al., 2006

## The Future of Resilience in the Workplace

Research has proposed that resilience forms a part of a workers' "psychological capital" which helps them adapt to the numerous changes that organisations typically undergo (e.g., Luthans et al., 2006). For organisations to successfully navigate the dynamic context in which they operate, investing on building a resilient workforce offers many benefits. Resilience today is more than just managing adversity. Positive psychology influences have prompted individuals to learn to reframe adversity and challenges as opportunities for learning and development. We are only just beginning to see the value that resilience is capable of adding to building sustainable and productive workplaces.

- **Alex Paton**

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# Organisational Resilience in a World of Constant Change

Monsoonal rain, flash floods, cyclones ... the start to 2011 reminds us that the Australian environment is capable of sudden and dramatic change. As if local businesses didn't have enough to handle with everyday changes created through employee turnover, political agendas, organisational restructures and competition, to name but a few. The ability of an organisation to not just 'bounce back' from change but to use these variations in the status quo as opportunities to develop and grow is at the heart of organisational resilience.

To quote Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882) "it is not the strongest or most intelligent that survive, it is the most adaptable to change". Whilst Darwin may have been referring to individual resilience in the survival of the species, the concept remains true for organisations that don't just need to 'survive' constant change, but need to grow and evolve in their own right to become stronger, fitter and more capable of adaptation to any kind of challenge. Indeed, "if organisational resilience is defined as the ability to bounce back, or to recover from challenges in a manner that leaves the organisation more flexible and better able to adapt to future challenges, then organisational resilience is a quality that leaders and managers in all organisations should seek to foster at all times" (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2010). In this way, the development of organisational resilience can be viewed as a deliberate and proactive management initiative to build organisational capacity and capability; something that all businesses should strive to do as a matter of course, rather than merely as a reaction to change.

One of the common misconceptions around organisational resilience is that it is perceived as a sum total of individual capacities to be resilient (Ashmos & Huber, 1987). Organisations are complex social networks which evolve not just as a result of individual orientations and actions but more so through the interactions that individuals have, with each other and the systems and processes within the organisation (Lengick-Hall, Beck & Lengick-Hall, 2010).

"If the organisational culture is one that encourages innovation, learning from failures rather than punishing them, and cooperation and collaboration, thus engendering trust and a psychologically safe environment to take risks, then resilient behaviour would be expected to increase" (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2010 p 343)

## Organisational Resilience: What matters?

The extent to which an organisation is resilient to challenge and change is based on a combination of 'systemic' factors, such as power relationships, authority and culture, and the individual and collective responses of its people.

- **Culture** – research shows that organisations that view problems and challenges constructively and encourage this kind of positive adaptive behaviour are likely to respond better during times of crisis (e.g. Mallack, 1998). Resilient organisations foster a culture of respect and trust to take necessary risks without fear of retribution. Conversely, staff of organisations with 'blame' cultures whereby management punish mistakes and failures are likely to avoid any kind of risk-taking behaviour – even in a crisis situation where snap decisions are often required. Organisations that are truly resilient empower their staff to be proactive and responsive to create readiness for change, no matter how that may manifest itself. For example, a review of lessons learnt from seven major incidents across multiple countries (e.g. Kings Cross underground fire, UK; Auckland power outage, New Zealand; Enschede fireworks explosion, the Netherlands) found that each recommended developing organisational cultures that avoided dependency on authority and promoted the active contribution of individuals' and teams' ideas and efforts (Crichton, Ramsay & Kelly, 2009).

- **Shared mindset** – a shared mindset develops through a strong alignment in organisations between the values, beliefs, strategic vision and the systems and processes that are put in place to embed and reinforce these through the organisation. Organisations that have strong core values and share a common vision and purpose are often better placed to respond more proactively under unfamiliar and unforeseen conditions. The organisation's values and purpose often help employees to make sense of unprecedented by providing a consistent lens through which challenges are reframed. They also provide a shared standard against which decisions are made within the organisation in times of crisis (Coutu, 2002; Lengick-Hall, et al., 2010). The shared mindset sets the stage for organisations to communicate their response strategy quickly and clearly, through the shared language.



- **Balanced bureaucracy** – traditional organisational theory is based on the concept of 'bureaucracy', represented through any large organisation (public or private sector) with a hierarchical authority structure and a clear division of labour. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, modern day organisations typically reflect bureaucratic systems and practices. For example, even today there is the view that the role of management is to control the organisation by ensuring that rules are followed, authority is limited and variation is restricted to preserve consistency and efficiency. The seeming incongruence of traditional bureaucratic structures and practices with features of a resilient organisation is something for managers and HR professionals to consider when evaluating their organisational environment. Particularly during a crisis situation, reduced focus on bureaucratic, 'command and control' structures will enable a more flexible response and recovery process, whilst still operating within a broad policy framework that protects basic corporate governance. Doing so allows the collective resilience capacity of the organisation to be activated for maximum impact (Lengick-Hall, et al., 2010). A 'balanced bureaucracy' approach should be central to resilience planning in the form of a defined and documented crisis management plan, for instance, that permits flexibility for individuals and teams to do what it takes to respond and recover under variable circumstances. Evidence suggests that organisational systems and processes have the capacity to ensure organisational resilience capability by explicitly drawing on individual knowledge, skills and other attributes in a systemic manner (Lengick-Hall & Beck, 2003 & 2009; Lengick-Hall et al., 2010).
- **Leadership** – in line with the 'balanced' approach to bureaucratic structures, leadership during change or crisis should avoid overt 'command and control' practices, even though this may be the natural tendency of leaders when faced with significant threat or uncertainty. Leadership is particularly crucial in shaping the development of an organisation's culture, not just in promoting and reinforcing a particular type of culture in the everyday, but also by creating historical references in how a leader/s responded to a specific crisis or event (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2010). Whilst clarity of roles and responsibilities, including clear decision-making, is important during times of uncertainty due to major change, it is also important that leaders trust those in the organisation with the local knowledge and expertise to recommend solutions. Particularly during times of crisis, decision making should be



delegated to the individual / team that is able to respond most efficiently with accurate situational knowledge, rather than relying on bureaucratic channels that require escalation to senior officials (Chrichton et al., 2009). Supported by a culture of trust and empowerment and a shared understanding of organisational objectives, individuals are likely to make sound and considered decisions based on their expert judgement. The critical role that leadership should play, particularly during crises, is to be visible and accessible to the members of the organisation and the public. Their ability to provide empathy, support and guidance in interpreting the crisis in relation to

the organisation can assist the process of collective sense-making in times of uncertainty (Lengick-Hall, et al., 2010). Communication from leadership can help allay fears and anxieties during crises by helping people understand not only what is happening, but what is being done about it, and how individuals could help and be a part of the recovery process. Leadership should act as enabler for individual actions in times of crisis.

- **Individual capability** – resilient employees have been likened to the television character “MacGyver” who along with a Swiss army knife, resourcefulness and common items that he finds, is able to extricate himself from seemingly insoluble problems and situations” (Lengnick-Hall, et al., 2010: p4). Individuals who have learned how to be resourceful, can improvise and can draw on their own initiative to respond to a novel or different situation are more likely to display resilience and successfully recover from crisis. It is these types of competencies that organisations need to foster among core employees, that when aggregated at the organisational level, make it possible for organisations to effectively absorb uncertainty and confidently respond to challenge.
- **Strategic HRM** – facilitating individual capability for resilience is the strategic role and framework that a human resource management (HRM) system offers. HRM systems and processes “creates messages that are sent to employees and signal what is expected of them, how they should interact with one another, what they should focus on, what they should not focus on, what is rewarded, etc” (Lengick-Hall, et al., 2010: p6). HRM systems have the opportunity for setting a framework within which individuals can exercise and foster their individual capability to be resilient. It has been suggested that the development of strategic HRM policies and programs need to take into account not just overarching HR principles and the strategic direction of the organisation, but also take into account the desired employee contributions that the programs and policies aim to capture (Lepak, Marrone & Takeuchi, 2004; Lengick-Hall, et al., 2010). For example, if collaboration as a behaviour is desired from employees, then the HR policies and programs need to capture and reinforce the message through the systemic guidelines that are laid out for the organisation. Another good example is succession planning for critical roles – does the system enable the identification of individuals who would be



able to step in and step up in times of crisis? The strength, transparency and clarity of the HRM message can go a long way towards enabling individuals within organisations to respond optimally in times of crisis and enhance the organisation's capacity to be resilient and generate productive outcomes, even when faced with adversity (Lengick-Hall, et al., 2010).

What makes organisations resilient is not a simple question to answer. However the elements discussed above to provide a good starting point for organisations that are looking to build resilience capacity. It is important however, not to adopt a tick in the box approach towards the recommendations here. These elements need to be embedded into the daily practices of an organisation if they are to have any impact on overall resilience. Resilience at the organisational level is not something that can be built quickly and requires significant commitment and coordination across any business. If an organisation's capacity to respond with resilience is to develop, it needs to be instilled, embedded and routinely practiced to become a genuine and inherent feature of the organisation.

### Reflection – Building organisational resilience following the Queensland floods

*The Queensland floods of January 2011 devastated many homes and businesses. If to be resilient is to learn from experience, so as to improve capability to respond for next time, all organisations should evaluate their preparedness to respond to such a significant force of nature.*



*Here are some ideas to start with:*

- Carry out a practical risk audit which takes into consideration risks not just inherent in your organisation but also the impact of dependent risk (i.e. risks that are transferred to your organisation through other organisations that you are dependent on for functioning effectively and optimally).
- Have a backup plan for crucial infrastructure – whether it be an alternative location that you can operate your business from, a plan to obtain power generators or an alternative host for your website server.
- Be clear about who in your organisation would need to play a role in the response, and the kind of role you'd need them to play. Who would be called upon if these people were unavailable? What are the core competencies each of these roles would need to have? Do they already possess these or is training required?
- Consider the extent your business is currently governed by 'command and control'. Are staff empowered to make decisions based on their best judgement, or do they look to management before deviating from procedural response?
- Document your crisis management plan ... but also be prepared for your plan to fail. Anticipate that things may go wrong and be alert to things that you do not know. Train staff so that they are prepared for things going wrong and can anticipate and quickly recover.

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# The Military as a Resilient Organisation

The “ANZAC spirit” is often invoked by both public figures and everyday Australians when parts of our society – and our national sporting teams - are challenged by adversity. ANZAC refers to the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps which was formed in 1915 and first saw service at Gallipoli. The seven-month campaign in the Dardanelles ended in military defeat for the Allied forces, but it has been celebrated in both Australia and New Zealand as perhaps the earliest test of nationhood for the sister countries. The ensuing campaigns on the Western Front and in Palestine were also arduous and dangerous and they cemented the emerging legend of the Anzacs. Stories of courage, endurance, physical and emotional toughness, and mateship were characteristic themes. Many of these qualities are synonymous with contemporary conceptions of resilience. Certainly the opening quote above succinctly and tellingly evokes how resilient the majority of combatants have been.

*What humans will stand is astonishing.*

Corporal Arthur Thomas, 1<sup>st</sup> Division, Australian Imperial Force, commenting on the intense artillery barrage during the battle of Pozieres, July 1916

Subsequent generations of Anzacs have reported how the perceived imperative of living up to the Anzac tradition has been key to readiness, commitment, and coping with the stressors of operational service. Within the Australian Defence Force (ADF), this influence has been colloquially referred to as the “Anzac-spirit monkey.” This is illustrated well by the following quote from a military medic caught up in the middle of the Kibeho massacre in Rwanda in 1995.

*I looked at the others and tried to summon up all of my personal strength and discipline to force these negative thoughts out of my mind. I needed to focus on our ability as Australians to get out of this situation. I struggled to get some control of myself. After a couple of minutes I got it together again and started feeling much better. I could not afford any negative thoughts. I was an Australian soldier, a sergeant and a medic, and I still had a job to do. My mates around me might have to depend on me. There was no way I was going to let them down, or myself. I thought back to the Anzacs and the defiant spirit they had shown, and then thought of all the great things Australian soldiers had done all over the world. I was proud to be Australian, and no matter what was happening I knew I could not afford to let it stop me doing my job.*

Sergeant Terry Pickard, *Combat medic: An Australian's eyewitness account of the Kibeho massacre*, 2008

## Promoting Resilience in Military Members

The Technical Cooperation Program (TTCP) – a five-nation, military scientific collaborative forum - has defined psychological resilience as “the sum-total of psychological processes that permit individuals to maintain or return to previous levels of functioning and well-being in response to adversity.” Other definitions of resilience emphasise ‘bouncing back to normal’ in the face of stressful situations via effective adaptation. Some definitions extend the concept of resilience to one of ‘thriving’ where individuals actually improve their functioning and capabilities because of increased adaptive capacity. Adaptive capacity is defined as the extent to which individuals can modify their behaviour so that they are less vulnerable to change and threat.

Two other fundamental aspects linked to the concept of resilience are perception and control. The most influential model of stress - the transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) – is increasingly used in the study and the training of resilience. The transactional model suggests that the human stress response is *not* directly tied to the stressors that people experience. More often, it is mediated by a person’s perceptions of her or his capability to cope with the threat or challenge. The Lazarus and Folkman model implicitly recognised that a person's *appraisal* of the stressor usually determined the degree to which the event or circumstances was experienced as stressful. Appraisal was theorised to be a two-stage process. The first or *primary appraisal* involves deciding whether the circumstances or event is threatening, challenging, or beneficial. This question decided, *secondary appraisal* involves the person deciding whether he or she is able to cope with the threat or challenge identified in the primary appraisal. This sense of coping may be tied to experience, skills, resources and a sense of efficacy or control.



Lazarus and Folkman (1984) used a broad definition of control “in which we speak of control over one’s self and one’s emotions, as well as control over environmental conditions, to understand how people can feel challenged even under the bleakest conditions” (p. 36). They pointed out that challenge could also be defined as controlling oneself in the face of adversity, and even transcending adversity” (p. 36). It is easy to comprehend why their transactional model has fitted so well with emergent resilience constructs.

Research has identified a number of factors that contribute to resilience at the level of the individual (e.g., see Reich, Zautra, & Hall, 2010). These factors include physical fitness, a supportive social network, having strong and positive role models, spirituality, effective leadership, a well-developed moral system, work team cohesion, ego strength, self-efficacy, ‘realistic optimism,’ and ‘cognitive flexibility.’ Realistic optimists are people who can see the negative in their circumstances but do not dwell on it or over-generalise the threats they face. Cognitive flexibility refers to the ability to reframe negative events and to generate creative options to deal with adversity.

At least two broad lessons can be drawn from the preceding list of ‘resilience enablers.’ The first is that resilient people can usually draw on the support of others. The military has long recognised and emphasised the social dimensions of military performance. Concepts such as morale, cohesion, esprit de corps (vertical cohesion), and in-extremis leadership evolved from military experience over centuries. It is now considered axiomatic that the majority of military personnel are primarily motivated to persevere in the face of adversity by their identification with their immediate work team and their proximal leader.

A second lesson drawn from the resilience enablers listed above is that people can be trained to be more resilient. In 2006, the ADF commenced formal resilience training during initial military training (see Cohn, Hodson & Crane, 2010, for an overview). The program included components devoted to team building, sustaining motivation and cognitive behavioural techniques. A six-month evaluation of the program with Army recruits was associated with a 51 per cent reduction in the number of referrals for psychological support, a 30

per cent decrease in the overall discharge rate from initial training, and a 33 per cent decrease in discharges on psychological grounds. The training is to be extended so that military personnel routinely undertake resilience training across their career and prior to deployment. The program has attracted the interest of other military organisations and has been adopted, modified, and trialled overseas (see Adler, Bliese, & Castro, 2011).

The increasing focus on resilience training in military forces around the globe appears to be driven by a cultural shift away from trying to 'fix' personnel who break under the stress of operational service to better equipping personnel with the skills and support that collectively will function as 'mental armour' against operational threats. The fundamental lesson for personnel to assimilate about resilience is that they should expect to cope with most operational stressors, and if they are adversely affected by them, they will recover. Such an expectation was once customary.

*A Nip (Japanese) Lieutenant paid me a visit at about half past nine, came into my tent, I was in bed but awake, and saw him come in, he came in close to my bed, and was just going to pick up my rifle which I had close to me, when I flew out and grabbed him by the throat, and struggled on the ground with him, and choked him unconscious, during the fight he tried to get me with a hand grenade, but I was lucky enough to see it and throw it away before it exploded ... I am o.k. except of course that I got rather a big fright, my nerves haven't been the best since, but I guess I will come good in time.*

*Private Clement Johnson, 2/3 Machine Gun Battalion, letter home from northern New Guinea, dated 21 June 1945*

Whilst training under the guise of psychological resilience is relatively new, the need for military personnel to be hardy is certainly not. A mature and rigorous selection process exists for entry into the ADF. All applicants proceed through a selection centre that includes medical, psychological and character assessments. Those applying to be officers, pilots, and various technical/specialist streams complete additional ability and aptitude tests and may be appraised by a selection panel. An important goal of the selection process is to screen out those applicants who are unlikely to cope with the challenges of initial military training.

### **Promoting Resilience in the Military Organisation**

Selection and resilience training are targeted at the individual. Organisational resilience, however, is postulated to be more than the sum of the resilience of its members. From a systems perspective, Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) suggested that, "resilience is the capability of a system to maintain its function and structure in the face of internal and external changes and to degrade gracefully when it must." These authors open their first chapter with a statement that "unexpected events often audit our resilience." It is no surprise that such 'audits' in the military context can be quite brutal.

Interestingly, given the importance of control in individual resilience, Weick and Sutcliffe perceive the essence of organisational resilience as being a form of control. They argue that the fundamental characteristic of a resilient organisation is that it does not lose control of what it does; rather, it is able to rebound and continue doing what it is there to do. The authors suggest that this kind of organisational resilience comprises three abilities:

1. The ability to absorb strain and preserve functioning despite the presence of adversity (which might be internal or external to the organisation);
2. The ability to recover or bounce back from untoward events - as the system becomes better able to absorb a surprise and stretch rather than collapse; and
3. The ability to learn and grow from previous episodes of resilient action.



In a similar vein, Denhardt and Denhardt (2010) have postulated five characteristics of resilient organisations:

1. Inbuilt redundancy, which allows an organisation to survive even if one or more components fail;
2. Robustness, founded on the capability, motivation and health of its members;
3. Flexibility, which refers to a willingness to adopt new approaches when appropriate;
4. Reliability, in terms of structures, systems and resource management; and
5. A positive culture that effectively promotes values such as courage, initiative, integrity, loyalty, trust and teamwork.

Given its role, to protect Australia and its interests, the military as an organisation must be able to adapt efficiently to uncertainty, change, threat, and harm in order to maintain capability and performance. Very generally, how does the military organisation, specifically the ADF, measure up to the characteristics posited above?

**Redundancy** in a modern military organisation is expensive, particularly with the escalating costs of equipment. Nevertheless, the military builds redundancy where it can, particularly in its people through training, professional development and the fostering of initiative.

*The army is always training you to take over and if necessary do the next job... So when it came to the time when Gordon Sharp was done (killed) I just went into automatic mode and did what I have to do and that's the way it happens. There is no big secret in this; it is a service thing that you were trained to do and it is like a doctor in triage. If a situation arises he has got a couple of choices, he will then take the choice that is going to do best for his patient. And that is the same as anyone in the services, you are trained to do a job and you just get on doing that job and you have got a couple of choices and you have to pick the right one, because if you pick the wrong one the patient is going to die.*

SGT Robert Buick, 6 RAR, regarding the battle of Long Tan, Vietnam, *The Australians at War*, Film Archive No.2181

**Robustness.** Each service in the ADF has physical fitness standards to foster physical robustness, along with extensive, intrinsic health and mental health capabilities, and supporting policies such as heat stress and fatigue management. Training in occupational health and safety is routine.

**Flexibility.** Despite the conventional Hollywood image of the military as rigid and mired in outmoded customs, one of the doctrinal principles of military operations has long been 'flexibility' – defined as the ability to change readily to meet new circumstances, comprising agility, responsiveness, resilience, acuity and adaptability. The current Australian Army change management initiative is known as 'the Adaptive Army.' Australian Service personnel on operations have earned a reputation for their ability and willingness to adapt to difficult and changing circumstances, as illustrated by the following quote.

*In the absence of equipment in Tobruk, the Australians continued to make do with what they had, rather in the manner of many of their forebears, who for generations had scratched out a living in the Australian scrub. So, just as the boys of the Bush Artillery continued to work wonders with abandoned Italian guns that they would find, shine and haul to the front lines, others were developing new applications for everyday things, all the better to help the general war effort with... Shaving mirrors... became periscopes... In spots where the ground was so rocky that you couldn't even build a decent protective wall, it was found that when you took bags of rotten Italian flour and mixed the stuff with sea water, the result was that it hardened into something capable of stopping a shell, let alone a mere bullet... Somehow or other, these Australians were capable of making a wigwam for a goose's bridle out of shoelaces and old rope if the need arose.*

Peter FitzSimons, *Tobruk*, 2006

**Reliability.** With respect to the characteristic of reliability, the military melds the aforementioned flexibility with a degree of uniformity in many of its organisational attributes; including excellence in training, the promotion of core values, and a rank structure that supports clear command and control processes.

**Positive culture.** The ADF understands the importance of its culture and has recognised the need to measure the effectiveness of its leadership and management practices through the systematic use of psychological climate surveys within units (see Goyne, 2010). As noted in the introduction to this article, the popular profile of the Anzac spirit in our nation’s iconography, supported by the growing community engagement with formal Anzac day events, suggests that the ADF has effectively promoted cultural attributes that enhance its operational effectiveness and find resonance within the broader society.

Denhardt and Denhardt (2010) listed seven streams of practical behaviour that contribute to developing resilience. These are summarised in the table, along with some examples of the military approach to these practical behaviours.

Practical behaviour	Definition	Military examples
Community	A shared sense of purpose and identity	Strong corporate culture Strong connections to society Numerous symbols/icons Clear role and mission
Competence	The capacity and skills to meet demands	Extensive and rigorous training, both individual and collective
Connections	Relationships and linkages that expand capacity and flexibility	Integrated training exercises State of the art communications equipment, e.g., intra-section radio communications
Commitment	Trust and goodwill	Meaningful tasks Values that emphasise, amongst others, teamwork, loyalty and morale Transparent corporate responsibility – duty of care – for its members’ wellbeing
Communication	Strong communication to make sense and derive order	Defined leadership structure Internal single-Service newspapers Extensive public relations activities
Coordination	Good timing to ensure alignment	Formal appreciation procedures Internal communications systems and specialists Expertise in planning and supply
Consideration	Attention to the human factor	Human factors and human resources specialists Internal research programs

## Conclusion

It has been said that resilience is tested by unexpected events. The deployment of ADF personnel and capability in support of our nation and our neighbours in recent months (flood, cyclone, bushfire and earthquake) has demonstrated a flexible and resilient organisation comprised of capable and resilient people.

The ADF and its allies have embraced the concept of resilience over the past decade and have invested significant effort in training resilience at the individual level. The ADF is also conducting significant research

into resilience. For example, the Longitudinal ADF Study Evaluating Resilience (Project LASER) is following the mental health status and motivation of new recruits through their first years of Service when workforce attrition is normally at its highest (Barton & Johnson, 2007). A recent field study of personnel who coped well with exposure to gruesome events during deployment in the MEAO identified individual and organisational factors that appeared to underpin resilience. These factors included cognitive reframing, reducing physiological arousal, strong social support, and supportive leadership (Cohn, Hodson & Crane, 2010).

Many of the organisational factors that contribute to resilience have long-existed, born out of the 'brutal audits' of past conflicts and challenges when the concept of resilience was implicitly understood at best. What organisational psychologists can offer high-reliability organisations like the military is a better understanding of how traditions and developing practices contribute to resilience at individual, team and organisational levels. Organisational psychologists also have the potential to discern how to 'fine-tune' system processes in order to optimise resilience, which in turn will contribute to the enhancement of capability, operational effectiveness, and the preservation of personnel under stressful conditions.

- **Stanton Bongers, Warwick Graco and Peter Murphy**

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# Understanding Organisational Resilience through Employee Engagement

Change is the one constant in organisational life today. Virtually all organisations are buffeted with the forces of globalisation, shifts in the economy, and an ever-changing workforce. Therefore, why are some organisations resilient when others are not? Organisational Resilience involves the ability to adapt creatively and constructively to change so as to endure and recover from challenges in a manner that leaves the organisation more flexible and better able to adapt to future challenges. Accordingly then, organisational resilience is a quality that organisational leaders should seek to foster at *all* times (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2009).

*Nature has a funny way of breaking what does not bend*

## Measuring Organisational Resilience through Employee Engagement

Aon Hewitt is the pioneering leader in measuring, benchmarking and integrating engagement research with practical application in over 50 markets, 5,000 organisations, and 60 industries. Such research enables them to identify the “Best Employers”. Employee engagement is used as a key performance metric to measure the resilience and sustainability of an organisation. Engagement is defined as the emotional and intellectual involvement that motivates employees to do their best work and contribute to their organisation's success.

### Engagement is Measured Using Three Constructs

- Say**
  - Given the opportunity, I tell others the great things about working here
  - I would not hesitate to recommend this organisation to a friend seeking employment
- Stay**
  - It would take a lot to get me to leave this organisation
  - I rarely think about leaving this organisation to work somewhere else
- Strive**
  - This organisation inspires me to do my best work every day
  - This organisation motivates me to contribute more than is normally required to complete my work

### Engagement is Benchmarked



## What Differentiates Resilient Organisations?

### 1. Leadership Commitment

Through the good and bad times, leaders consistently exhibit behaviours and make decisions that clearly signal people as their greatest asset. They also play a pivotal role in defining and championing the organisation's values.

### 2. A Compelling Promise to Employees

Resilient organisations are clear about their brand, their underlying employment “deal” and consistently execute on their promise. Their brand emphasises a commitment to engaging employees (e.g., through caring,

recognition, career advancement). Employees report feeling valued and that the reward system is transparent, clearly articulated and aligned with their contributions.

### 3. A Connection the Company and Strategy

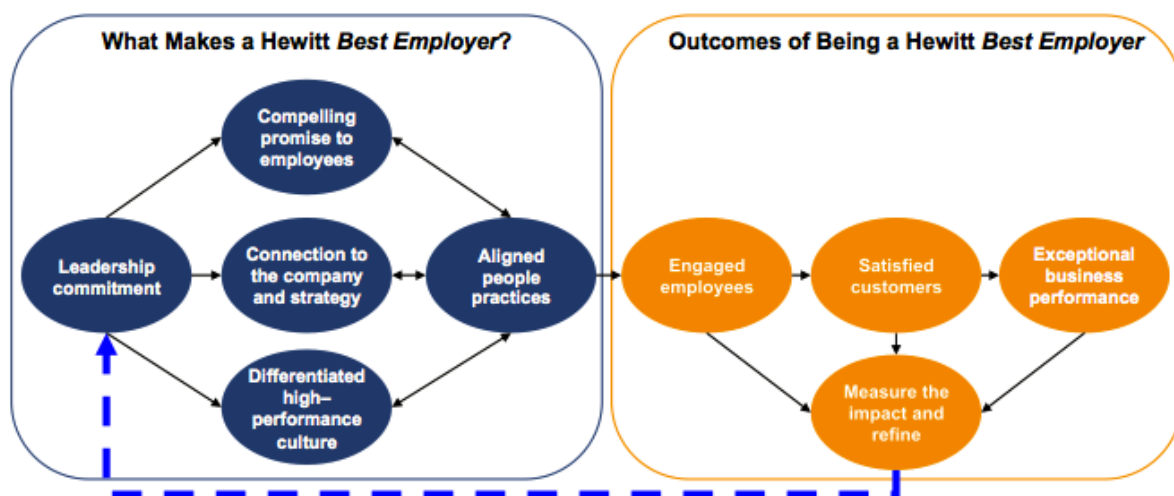
Leaders create a compelling picture of the future and enroll employees in that future while linking the employee with the company strategy and goals. It has been found that people do not unify because of hygiene factors (e.g. pay) but rather around a goal.

### 4. A Differentiated High-Performance Culture

Leaders inspire a passion for outstanding achievement among their people. These companies set aggressive goals and hold employees accountable for achieving them. They have a sustained focus on empowerment; this focus motivates employees to contribute discretionary effort that significantly impacts the bottom line. Furthermore, learning and development is taken very seriously. Employees are provided the support they need to grow and innovate.

### 5. Aligned People Practices

The alignment of people practices with organisational strategy is core. Resilient organisations ensure that the efforts and investments put into HR programs directly support the company goals. They also work to ensure that their people practices are integrated with one another, giving employees a consistent employee experience that reflects the culture of the organisation. All key practices – recruitment, development, performance management, and reward practices – operate in harmony to drive employee engagement.



## What Differentiates Resilient Organisations during Acute Organisational Turbulence?

*Best Employer* research was conducted during a number of turbulent periods such as the September 11 terrorist attacks, the 2003 SARS rampage through Asia, the 2005 tsunami in Asia and the 2007 Global Financial Crises.

Resilient organisations demonstrate remarkable consistency during both stable and difficult times. For example, during the GFC, none of the resilient organisations reduced their workforces, compared to 33% of the rest. In fact, many of these CEOs took direct actions to retain talent by making other cost concessions and continue to reap the benefits of these decisions through increased productivity and profits to date.

Resilient organisations face the same external factors as other organisations. However, they understand that maintaining an environment that is focused on the value of its people investment allows them to sustain their strong position and prosper – or to be positioned to prosper when the economy improves.

Recent analysis revealed three areas where resilient organisations are differentiated:

- 1. Relentless execution of programs**
- 2. Persistent empowerment of managers**
- 3. Highly efficient HR functions**

Resilient organisations succeed through their sustained commitment to capture the hearts and minds of their employees and ensure that company goals and employee aspirations are aligned. This does not fluctuate with economic cycles. These companies provide consistent support and development to their people. It is through sustained effort that resilient organisations achieve a high-performance culture, which becomes a differentiator for them in attracting and retaining key talent. If anything, challenges for resilient organisations, represent an opportunity to renew their focus on the employee relationship and build a sense of loyalty that will endure beyond the current turbulence.

- **Ariane Florent**

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#### **About Aon Hewitt**

Aon Hewitt is the global leader in human resource consulting and outsourcing solutions. The company partners with organisations to solve their most complex benefits, talent and related financial challenges, and improve business performance. Aon Hewitt designs, implements, communicates and administers a wide range of human capital, retirement, investment management, health care, compensation and talent management strategies. With more than 29,000 professionals in 90 countries, Aon Hewitt makes the world a better place to work for clients and their employees. For more information on Aon Hewitt, please visit [www.aonhewitt.com](http://www.aonhewitt.com)

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# Increasing Organisational Resilience : Programs for Building Resilience

The Global financial crisis (GFC) struck during the 2008 -2009 financial year. It has been estimated that the value of companies wiped out during the GFC was \$14.5 trillion dollars (BBC, Bloomberg, UPI, globalissues.org, Feb 2009). While some companies went bankrupt during the GFC others survived and even thrived. For example Lehman Brothers went bankrupt with a debt of \$US613 billion. General Motors Corporation also filed for bankruptcy with a debt of \$US172.8 billion, more than twice its assets didn't survive the GFC . BHP Billiton and Qantas on the otherhand sustained the GFC and have thrived in the billion a year ago and Qantas reporting four-fold increase in first-half net profit to \$AUS241 million compared with \$AUS58 million a year earlier.months following. BHP reporting a record net profit \$US10.52 billion in its first half from \$US6.14.

*Organisational resilience is defined as 'the ability to bounce back, or to recover from challenges in a manner that leaves the organisation more flexible and better able to adapt to future challenges'.*

*Denhardt & Denhardt (p. 333 2010)*

Why do some companies survive and even thrive through adversity while others crumble? Resilience practitioners would argue that 'resilience' may determine an organisations ability to thrive through adversity.

Hamel and Valikangas (2003) outline four key challenges that organisations must address in order to become resilient:

- **The Cognitive Challenge:** A company must become entirely free of denial, nostalgia, and arrogance. It must be deeply conscious of what's changing and perpetually willing to consider how those changes are likely to affect its current success.
- **The Strategic Challenge:** Resilience requires alternatives as well as awareness-the ability to create a plethora of new options as compelling alternatives to dying strategies.
- **The Political Challenge:** An organization must be able to divert resources from yesterday's products and programs to tomorrow's. This doesn't mean funding flights of fancy; it means building an ability to support a broad portfolio of breakout experiments with the necessary capital and talent.
- **The Ideological Challenge:** Few organizations question the doctrine of optimization. But optimizing a business model that is slowly becoming irrelevant can't secure a company's future. If renewal is to become continuous and opportunity-driven, rather than episodic and crisis-driven, companies will need to embrace a creed that extends beyond operational excellence and flawless execution.



**How do organisations become resilient, how do they overcome everyday challenges?**

**Through learning new skills, increasing self awareness and ascertaining strategies companies can grow their resilience to help overcome challenging situations. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century being resilient is no longer an option for organisations; it's a pre requisite for long term survival.**

## Selecting a Resilience Program: Key Considerations

Resilience programs can go a long way towards enhancing an organisation's capacity to be resilient. However, organisations need to ensure they select the right type of program from the desired purpose and outcome. Some of these critical considerations are outlined below. While this is not an exhaustive list, it may initiate a conversation point of some of the different aspects that need to be considered.

- Is the resilience program being targeted at the individual, group or organisational level?
- At what employee level is the program required i.e. no direct reports, supervisor, team leader, management, director etc?
- Why is resilience required (i.e. Increasing stress tolerance, strategic resilience, coping with change, emotional resilience, overcoming natural disasters)?
- Length of program i.e. day, week, month, year
- Time commitment required by participants
- Will the workshop(s) be offered during work time or after work?
- What are the desired outcomes?
- What is the allocated budget? There are several programs available in the market – some which offer comprehensive, end to end solutions which may be quite expensive, while others offer shorter, more affordable options which are not necessarily as comprehensive.
- Do you require a customised or off-the-shelf solution?
- Should the program be on a one-on-one basis or in a group?
- Should the program be on-site or off-site?
- What return on investment can be expected?
- What theoretical approach will suit the individual, team or organisational culture?
- What related products or services are available from the provider that may help sustain the impact of the programs further (e.g. – assessments, leadership development, culture and strategy interventions, etc)? Sometimes you may find that the core issue that you are hoping to address through the resilience program is actually beyond the scope of what such a program can realistically establish.

*“Practice of everyday resilience in responding to those thousands of daily stresses and disjuncture’s that may best equip organizations to also handle catastrophic and unexpected challenges to their health and survival” - Denhardt & Denhardt (p. 334 2010).*

## Resilience Programs: A Brief Snapshot

Presented over the next few pages is some information about how two different organisations, the Resilience Institute and Right Management assist individuals, teams and organisations to increase resilience to overcome everyday challenges through new skill development and awareness. This summary provides the reader with information about two different types of approaches to building resilience, including the program structure, benefits and outcomes.

Please note this summary is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, it is designed to introduce some of the varied offerings around resilience programs within the market. Your choice of programs should be supported by a critical consideration of what is being offered by a program and what your organisational needs are. Both the programs showcased in this issue have robust theoretical underpinnings. However, they still adopt unique approaches that are better suited to some organisations than others. Exploring “fitness for purpose” using the prompts in the box above would be a good process for critically evaluating and making a realistic decision around which program is likely to offer the benefits that your organisation is looking for.



## The Resilience Institute

[www.resiliencei.com](http://www.resiliencei.com)

### **Program Objective:**

Build resilience, engagement and sustainable high performance of leaders, teams and staff.

### **Program Elements:**

- **Strategic Resilience** – working with an executive team, we seek to build resilience as a strategic competence through a multi-year intervention. This program is based on understanding the current level of personal and systemic resilience, development of a resilience plan for change and assisting the executive team to implement this change.
- **Resilient Leadership** – targeted at Executives and Leaders and aims to build the health, happiness and sustainable leadership performance of an organisations leaders. This can be a standalone intervention, however, is more commonly part of a broader strategic resilience intervention.
- **Practical Resilience Program** – this practical program is targeted at the middle management and staff of an organisation and aims to build their health, happiness and performance.
- **Resilience Diagnostic** - a ‘world first’ human performance assessment tool that provides an individual and organisational assessment of resilience. The tool maps individuals and teams against our Resilience Model and Death Spiral using the Resilience Institute proprietary survey instrument. Typically incorporated in broader programs.
- **HealthCheck Assessment** - proprietary Resilience Institute internet-based survey covers health, stress, lifestyle, nutrition, fatigue and readiness for change. Typically incorporated in broader programs.
- **Resilient!360** – typically targeted at leaders, this is an internet-based, confidential 360o tool that assesses the Resilience Institute defined resilience competencies. The purpose of the assessment is to facilitate greater self-awareness and provide a platform for learning. The tool assesses and maps the following competencies:
  - Stress Mastery
  - Physical Vitality
  - Performance Mindset
  - Leadership & Influence
  - Spirit in Action
- **Workshops & Keynotes** – The Resilience Institute also customises shorter workshops and large-group keynotes for conferences and one-off events.

### **Theoretical Basis/Background**

Evidenced-based model based on latest academic (medical & psychology) and business research. The IP has been developed over the last 15 years by drawing on latest research as well as the Resilience Institute’s own empirical data having worked with over 8000 executives, leaders and staff. The model is summarised on the right.

### **Length of Program**

1hour to 5 days per group – spread over 6 months to 3 years

### **Benefits**

- Integral approach incorporating body, heart, mind and spirit
- Evidence-based
- Builds staff engagement and team cohesion
- Builds sustainable high performance
- Builds resilient leadership
- Enable organisational and behaviour change
- Improve a negative organisational climate

### **Return on Investment**

ROI is estimated at 3-10 times investment based on previous studies. Detailed case studies are available on request from The Resilience Institute.

### **More Information**

For more information on the programs and services offered by the Resilience Institute, and how they may apply to your organisation, please contact Stuart Taylor, Managing Director of the Resilience Institute Australia on +61 3 9509 2881 or via email on [stuart.taylor@resiliencei.com](mailto:stuart.taylor@resiliencei.com).

## Right Management

[www.right.com](http://www.right.com)

### **Program Objective:**

- How to effectively recognise and manage stress
- Provides range of strategies to help improve resilience
- Improves wellbeing and productivity
- Helps build supportive and collaborative relationships within teams
- Builds a personal and team resilience action plan

### **Program Elements:**

There are two programs offered:

- **Building Resilience – a one day workshop** for managers of individuals or teams in organisation
  - How to effectively recognise and manage stress both in self and others
  - Provides a wide range of strategies to help improve resilience
  - How to improve and manage overall wellbeing and productivity
  - Practical strategies for building supportive and collaborative relationships within teams
- **Stress and Resilience – a half day program** for individuals or teams in organisations
  - How to effectively recognise and manage stress
  - Provides range of strategies to help improve resilience

Both these programs may be customised to address specific organisational issues like helping employees adapt to major changes and/or be customised to suit different target audiences (all staff, teams, leaders, etc). The programs could also be complemented and supported by other solutions offered by Right Management.

### **Theoretical Basis/Background**

The Building Resilience programs have been developed by drawing on contemporary research both from psychology and business. The Personal Resilience Model has been based on the fundamental personality constructs that underpin our responses to myriad situations. The program activities build upon a wide range of cognitive and behavioural strategies which are well validated and robust. The programs also incorporate an action learning framework which encourages sustained impact. In addition, the programs are backed by Right Management's global research and frameworks and their considerable expertise in working with organisations in other capability areas including Talent Assessment, Leader Development, Organisational Effectiveness, Employee Engagement and Workforce Transition and Outplacement

### **Length of Program**

1. Building Resilience – a one day workshop
2. Stress and Resilience – a half day program

### **Benefits**

- Self reflection activities to assess current level of resilience, understanding the causes and origins of stress, recognising and managing the symptoms of stress in self and others
- Introduction to a Personal Resilience Model
- Practical strategies to improve each component of the Personal Resilience Model in self and others.
- Building a personal and team resilience action plan
- Building Resilience will encourage managers to proactively recognize and manage stress while implementing practical strategies to help boost their own and their team's capacity to be resilient
- Building Resilience benefits employees and managers. This solution can be used independently or in conjunction with other programs.
- Stress and Resilience half day is best used within specific organizations going through change

### **Return on Investment**

The benefits of this program, as part of an overall process to align and engage managers and employees, will show in increased retention, employee engagement, increased productivity and other positive business results.

### **More Information**

For more information on the programs and services offered by Right Management, and how they may apply to your organisation, please contact Tim Corcoran, Managing Principle of Right Management, Australia at +61 3 8554 2200 or via email on [tim.corcoran@right.com](mailto:tim.corcoran@right.com).

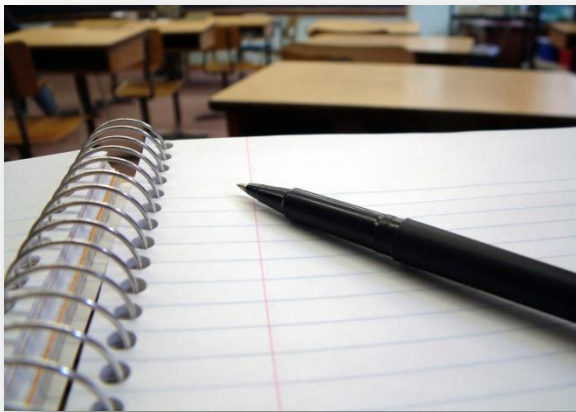
Thank you to Stuart Taylor, Managing Director of the Resilience Institute Australia and Tim Corcoran, Managing Principle of Right Management, Australia for providing information about the resilience programs their organisations offer.

- **Kim Pluess**

*Kim is a registered Psychologist who is currently completing her Postgraduate Diploma in Organisational Development at Macquarie University. Kim works at Peter Berry Consultancy as a Consulting Psychologist. She works closely with the Hogan inventories regarding interpretation and feedback of the inventories, facilitating research project and providing advice, interpretation and analysis on Employee Opinion Surveys, 360 Degree Feedback and Customer Surveys. Kim also worked in the Recruitment Industry where her role included candidate management and, conducting continuous improvement surveys, scheduling and management of interviews, reference checking, business development and client management.*

## Reflections on Practice: *Psych in the City*

Watching the Queensland Government navigate it's way through the recent floods it was interesting to observe how many times the much feted, Premier Anna Bligh used the term 'resilient' to describe her fellow Queenslanders. It was as if saying it made it so.



The interesting thing about resilience is that it is possible for many people to improve their response to a situation when they believe they have the resources to respond to it effectively. What we're really talking about here is Self-Efficacy. It is a concept that has been around in psychology for a long time. Bandura back in 1977 first proposed a self-efficacy theory which he defined in the following way; 'perceived self-efficacy is concerned with people's beliefs in their ability to influence events that affect their lives. This core belief is the foundation of human motivation, performance accomplishments, and emotional well-being' (Bandura, 1997, 2006). Furthermore he suggested that 'the stronger the perceived

self-efficacy, the more active the coping efforts' (Bandura & Adams, 1977).

In this way other psychological constructs, such as Locus of Control, are also implicated. Locus of Control is characterised as either external or internal and loosely translates to a world view of 'the world controls me' or 'I have control over the world'. We know that in terms of personal resilience a high level of perceived self-efficacy and an internal locus of control will serve us well in 'bouncing back' as we will think we can cope, take active steps to recover and experience recovery more quickly than others without these attributes.

The interesting thing about natural disasters is that they are tangible evidence of the world controlling us...they therefore have the capacity to make us all feel helpless and unable to take proactive steps to defend ourselves. Watching both Christchurch and Japan recover from the devastation of the recent earthquakes provides evidence of this. Due to the prevalence of quite significant and frequent aftershocks, it is difficult for individuals to resume their 'in control' mode as the threat remains ever-present and there are constant reminders of the control that nature has in these events. There is therefore greater potential for events of this type to unravel even the most resilient of individuals. However, by emphasising our ability to cope, the strength of our own natural resources and our capacity to take appropriate steps to recover we will have the best chance of doing so.

In working closely with the CFA through the Black Saturday bushfires to support Members' well being and recovery, great care was taken not to derail any of the positive, natural, adaptive mechanisms that individuals rely on at times of crisis. The best and latest research, much of it coming out of Hurricane Katrina in the USA, indicates that most individuals will recover with minimal assistance and that only a small percentage will require additional assistance and support in the long term as they recover from more serious psychological issues such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Telling people that they are likely to experience a set of dire responses is not therefore particularly helpful and may in fact derail their natural coping mechanisms.

The more acutely people can come to understand the delicate flower that is human resilience, whether it be at an individual, organisational or even societal level, the more skillful we can be in our practice to nurture it rather than to trample. Is this flower cultivatable? It absolutely is, and the articles in this edition of *Illuminations* offer us an exciting opportunity to extend this understanding and to know how to help to cultivate resilience in ourselves, our teams and our organisations.

- **Susan Crawford**

*Susan works as a Senior Consultant at the FBG Group and is an experienced educator, organisational psychologist and consultant with broad experience across all business sectors. She brings with her a wealth of experience relating to organisational surveys, training and facilitation, team building, conflict resolution, executive coaching and career planning. Having worked in organisational development for many years, Susan has been focused on the provision of a range of consultancy services aimed at making workplaces happier, healthier places to be. She believes that one of the key ways of achieving this is by developing leaders, particularly in the areas of effective people management and building positive workplace cultures.*

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- The *Illuminations* Editorial Team