



MANAGER SERIES

Building Resilient Teams

Resilience, the ability to withstand and recover from adversity is generally thought to be a personal attribute than a workplace issue. However, with recent health crisis, economic uncertainty and greater awareness of psychological safety of employees, many leaders have begun to acknowledge the impact of collective resilience on organizational bottom line and its reputation. Research has shown team resilience can reduce the risk or intensity of psychological harm to employees and protect them against burnout. It is important for leaders to consider that building team resilience is a preventive rather than reactionary strategy; an investment that they make to sustain the health and wellbeing of the organization.

The first step towards building resilient teams is to know how resilient your team is. In order to identify a resilient team, look for the following signs and recognize whether your team members are able to;

-  Have open and honest conversations about their challenges and concerns without the fear of negative consequences.
-  Collaboratively identify and resolve challenges by respecting each other's strengths and limitations.
-  Make a frank assessment of their work and open to internal or external perspective on team performance.
-  Feel safe to be vulnerable with each other and ask for help without being judged or criticized.
-  Take responsibility for the part of their shortcomings and learn from mistakes.
-  Acknowledge the diversity of skills, experience, and opinions and collectively celebrate the success of the team or individuals.
-  Have a deeper awareness of their roles and responsibilities to achieve the team's shared purpose and vision.
-  Feel heard, seen and valued by the organization without feeling as if they were a means to an end.

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Essential habits of leaders that will nurture resilient teams;

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 Keep the lines of communication open: Leader's manner in which they respond to both good and bad news from team members will determine the continuous flow of information. This will assist you to recognize the opportunities and potential dangers to service provision. Actively implementing strategies to seek and request information/feedback from your team will increase their collective confidence and encourage them to be agents of change and innovation.
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 Scan for success and express gratitude: Acknowledge the success of individuals as well as team efforts. Give credit where it's due. Such behaviors from the leadership can be perceived as something to be maintained in view of fostering positive team culture, reducing anxiety and improving higher self-esteem.
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 Create a culture of openness: Create opportunity and systems to listen, de-emphasize hierarchy, give permission and welcome bad news. Develop an attitude that genuinely respect the dignity of each individual team member and avoid behaviors that may cause your team to feel shame and helplessness. Let your team know that it's Ok to disagree with you and offer alternative points of view. As a leader, acknowledge the fact that people's positions nor titles dictate how influential their ideas are.
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 Reduce the vacuum of uncertainty: Uncertainty creates an atmosphere of anxiety and decreases motivation. It can lead your team more likely to ruminate with the unknown and feel that they are kept in the dark. Consequently, your team may attempt to fill the vacuum with misinformed assumptions that would create a toxic environment which will result in poor performance and productivity. Don't hide information, no matter how bad the news is. It is important to communicate a clear plan, processes and their part in the process to improve team morale and participation. Well-developed team goals and vision will reduce unpredictability and unnecessary conflicts.
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 Listen to understand: As a leader you may have a lot of things to think and consider at a given situation. It may be hard to be really present and listen to another without an agenda. A conscious effort to listen, without distractions, purely for comprehension will help the team members to feel heard and valued – improve trust in your leadership. The increased sense of belonging within your team members will assist them to engage in work more meaningfully and actively contribute to the organizational shared purpose and mission. Ask questions with curiosity and provide yourself with the opportunity to build authentic relationships. More importantly, welcome humility into your life to accept that you don't always have to be right or win. Where possible, allow your team to make decisions and take pride in their efforts.

References: <https://hbr.org/2021/03/are-you-really-listening>; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/resilient-leadership/201609/simple-leadership-behavior-also-increases-resilience> <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/3546404>
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