

Building Organizational Resilience

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Research finds that workers who experience [higher levels of stress on the job](#) are more likely to leave the organization — accounting for an estimated \$300 billion per year in turnover. In an industry already prone to [burnout, mental health and wellness concerns](#) — all of which have been exacerbated by the pandemic — healthcare organizations risk losing workers and revenue to stress.

Resilience is the ability to persevere through stress. Much focus has been placed on personal and team resilience strategies; however, an individual's well-being hinges on addressing a combination of personal, team and organizational resilience. By taking a holistic approach to improving organizational resilience, leaders can address their organizations' unique needs, empowering a change-ready workforce.

Why Organizational Resilience Matters

Organizational resilience goes beyond building inner strength as an individual, a team or a leader. It means building an environment that enables people to maintain transformational growth in the face of change. It impacts:

- **Engagement, performance and retention.** Recent [research from Gallup](#) finds that when stress is high and personal well-being is challenged, employee engagement can remain strong. That engagement becomes the foundation of resilience. As employees develop higher levels of resilience, their dedication to the mission and sense of purpose grow. They are engaged and invested in their role, which helps organizations retain and nurture top talent who provide improved quality care and experience.
- **Patients and their families.** A resilient workforce is better able to engage patients and families in the care journey, leading to better outcomes while also creating positive consumer-centric experiences. Organizations who prioritize resilience, engagement and well-being in today's unprecedented times for patient care can build an environment that helps caregivers continue providing excellent care even when faced with work-related and external stressors.
- **Revenue.** Stress on the job reduces worker productivity and increases the frequency of workplace accidents, leading to higher rates of absenteeism and declining revenue. A resilient workforce is better able to manage stress without letting it negatively impact care interactions. Again, this skill enables the workforce to deliver more consistent high-quality care, reducing the risk of financial penalties and increasing patient loyalty at a time when consumers have more choice about where they receive care.

How Leaders Can Grow Organizational Resilience

Though change is difficult, it presents leaders with an opportunity to forge resilient cultures driven to succeed in the rapidly changing business environments of the future. This proves true for traditional workforces as well as the growing need to [support virtual workers](#) who find themselves operating in a new environment.

Resilience comes by adopting healthy coping mechanisms and behaviors for thriving amid change. Leaders can help their organizations become more resilient with the following tactics:

- **Build the right environment.** Many workers refrain from sharing new ideas because they fear the repercussions of being wrong. This fear stems from a lack of trust, either with leadership or the organization itself, and it can be devastating to morale. [Psychological safety](#)—the belief that it is safe to try something new and fail—ensures workers feel confident to be creative and take different approaches to solving problems without being punished if they do not succeed. By fostering a psychologically safe working environment, leaders enable teams to openly share ideas and work toward a better future.

Systems and processes also impact environment, and they can either help or hinder employees in performing their best work. Irrelevant or outdated systems can make it difficult for employees to find or record important information, while inefficient or unclear processes can cause duplicative work or make tasks take longer to complete. Both create needless internal barriers for employees to overcome, leading to additional stress and, eventually, burnout. To build a better working environment, leaders should consider engaging employees in developing systems and processes that enable them to perform their best work.

- **Ask the right questions.** Leaders and employees can both highly benefit from [intentional,](#)

[regularly scheduled conversations](#) designed to elicit specific, actionable input. Targeted questions that get at the heart of drivers and the resources or skills the workforce needs to be successful will help leaders address both personal and professional needs. For example, ask employees what would make them feel safer on the job, what part of the role they struggle with the most or what job-related changes would improve quality of life.

- **Consistently communicate the purpose behind the change.** Employees respond positively to changes they understand and support. Being transparent about the “why” increases buy-in from stakeholders and the adoption of new behavioral norms from employees. Resilience enables employees to hardwire those new behaviors, reducing the time it takes the organization to adjust.
- **Support employees in nurturing their own resilience on and off the job.** Across all roles, encourage employees to take scheduled breaks, use their personal time off and utilize employee assistance programs. Additionally, leaders should be aware of how current internal practices or processes are impacting resilience. For example, many clinicians are being asked to take on greater administrative responsibility. This can eclipse their preferred role as caregiver, causing low job satisfaction and damaging their resilience. By evaluating systems and processes to ensure clinicians have the support they need to excel in their role as provider, organizations remove a source of stress from the job, enabling clinicians to perform at their best.
- **Understand the workforce.** To create an environment that fosters resilience, organizations must know who their people are and the needs and motivating factors that influence their career decisions. By taking a segmented approach to identify a workforce’s unique traits and motivators, leaders gain valuable insights into personalized ways to support resilience. Leaders should closely monitor and respond to metrics such as employee well-being surveys, tardiness, absences and on-the-job injuries.

Healthcare professionals will continue to experience uncertainty and change. For organizations to thrive, leaders will have to take a holistic approach to building not just individual but organizational resilience.

Key Takeaways

To build resilience in their organizations, leaders must:

Think differently.

Organizational resilience goes beyond building inner strength as an individual, a team or a leader.

Plan differently.

Understand the workforce's unique motivators to build resilience in personalized ways.

Act differently.

Foster an environment that enables people to maintain transformational growth in the face of change.



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