

# FIVE STEPS TO BUILDING A RESILIENT TEAM

Hands up anyone who doesn't work in a team? Just as I thought, the airspace above your heads is clear. Teamwork is an essential ingredient in successful organisations, indeed in any sphere of life. A friend of ours is a writer and we were discussing this point at dinner recently. She claimed to work alone, but a little bit of digging and we found that she relies on research associates, works closely with an editor and publicist, and relies heavily on a close network for moral support when the going is tough.

Resilience is about the ability to 'bounce back' in the face of change and challenge, and is usually applied to individuals. What about teams? As a manager or team leader, how do you go about building a resilient team? Based on my own experience over 20 years of leading teams, and from talking to the hundreds of people I've coached, I've come up with some basic building blocks of team resilience.

## 1. Build mutual trust

Trust is a delicate thing. It's more easily lost than won. So start off well. Help people get to know each other, through meetings, working together and teambuilding events. Personality profile workshops like our Executive Central's Operating Style (ECOS) workshop, if well facilitated, help people participate and self-disclose. They also help people understand and utilise the diversity in the team more readily. The thing to remember is, you are the leader and you have to take the initiative here. If you don't share something of yourself, nobody else will.

And how will you know trust exists? What will success look like? People will readily ask for help when they need it, admit to mistakes and skill gaps, and be prepared to disagree. They will also be proactive in helping each other, be prepared to be vulnerable and actually look forward to coming to work.

## 2. Build mutual accountability

This is about building a team who can keep each other on task. This is a great team attribute, because you want to build leadership within the team. It releases you from leading from the front all the time.

What will this look like? Well, they'll have high performance standards that they expect of each other, they'll be clear on roles and responsibilities, and they'll engage in discretionary risk management. This is about alerting each other and you when there is a potential derailment of process. And how does a manager build this, you ask? You need to clarify roles and responsibilities from the get-go, set agreed performance standards, and use team tools like shared Gantt charts, shared communication platforms or the old whiteboard so that everyone knows what everyone's doing.

## 3. Build commitment.

Now before people can be committed to anything they need to know what that anything is. So you need to share strategy, goals and objectives, and if you can build into the process some consultation and input that's usually important as well. You need to give people a reason to care, and that generally comes from giving them something meaningful to do, something to be proud of at the end of the week.

When your team is committed to each other and to team objectives, passion becomes a driver towards excellence and people engage in discretionary effort to go above and beyond. Of course this means that people take ownership of the team goals and they start holding you to account as team leader. And this is a good thing.

## 4. Build the team.

This starts from the beginning, in having the right people on the bus – a good team with the right skills and experience. An effective and well-functioning team is built on trust, accountability and commitment, but it's not all about the work. It's also about how well people get on. Ensuring regular communication, participation and networking is part of your role as leader.

Make sure there is time for people to relax and enjoy each other's company, in a variety of contexts. Don't make it all about drinks at the bar. In an age of diversity, not everyone wants to do that, and let's face it, alcohol is only a short term social lubricant. Get people to work on a volunteering project together, outside of the work environment, or take them on a fun run.

Basically, any activities where there is shared passion or interest are great for building shared experiences – which are the building blocks of quality interpersonal relationships.

## 5. Build your own resilience.

That's right, you can put into place all the resilient team strategies you like, but if you personally are an overworked, uncommunicative stress-ball on a short fuse, that's going to be their takeaway learning.

*'Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying.'*

- Emerson

Building resilience requires attention to work-life balance, developing optimistic mindsets so that you can see the opportunity in challenge, taking time out, staying connected to people at work and at home, finding your own meaning in what you do. Check out what my colleague Reyna has written about personal resilience in ***Bouncing back: what's resilience all about?***

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