

Why do some people bounce back easily after setbacks, whilst others find themselves weary and carrying a high cost to keep battling through? In this article Jenny Campbell shares her interesting research on resilience, done as part of the **lifetimeswork** Insight series. Jenny interviewed 25 leaders across different sectors to understand how they managed their own resilience and how this linked to the resilience of their organisation. Jenny would welcome any of your own resilience stories to help her shape the main findings; her contact details are at the end of the article.

Resilience

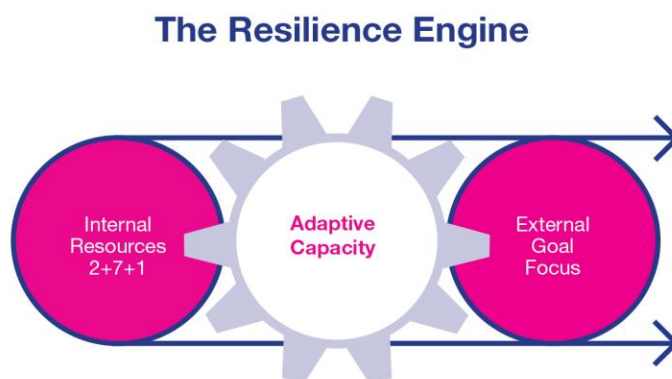
By Jenny Campbell

The Definition of Resilience

Resilience is the ability to overcome setbacks and absorb any learning offered by those setbacks, quickly, and at the minimum cost. There are increasing levels of resilience: those that describe their ability to bounce back; those which describe this plus absorbing the learning from the setback and thereby changing their ways of living and working; those which describe this learning, and on top, their speed of response and minimum cost. There is an even further level of resilience, where a person transforms an extreme challenge into an opportunity and achieves good outcomes from the setback even in the face of extreme loss. Altogether, these insights give rise to a very powerful definition of Resilience: $R = (\text{Bounce back} * \text{Speed}) + \text{Energy Recovered} + \text{Learning} + \text{Application to other contexts}$. The research set out to find out how to build resilience to this kind of level.

The Resilience Engine©

The most significant finding of recent research is the concept of the Resilience Engine©. Using the model of the Resilience Engine© helps illustrate how resilience is created and sustained. The engine is made up of an inner source of fuel and an outer force, with a driving motor creating the energy between the two. The inner source of fuel and the outer force are stable, non-moveable components. The driving motor moves continuously. The integration of this whole engine, the maintenance and nurturing of it, and the continuous development implied by it, is what makes resilience transformative.



The Internal Resources '2+7+1'

The first component is a set of specific Internal Resources - 2 Beliefs, 7 Attitudes and 1 ability to Self-Accept that form the internal source for an individual's resilience.

The '2'

1. A belief in one's purpose in life – so knowing that you have a purpose, and what it is. This belief leads to the highest engagement if connected with the External Goal.
2. A belief is one's own judgement: judgement of other people, and judgement of things and situations.

The '7'

There are seven attitudes whose combination is critical for the highest level of resilience

1. Takes full responsibility for self, own actions and reactions
2. Doesn't dwell, forgives when necessary, moves on

3. Not taking oneself too seriously. Humility and self-deprecating humour.
4. Optimistic
5. Grounded, feet on the ground, pragmatic
6. High level of independence and independent judgement
7. Values others and their opinions

The 4 latter attitudes make for an interesting paradox – they are 2 pairs of countering mindsets: a both optimistic *and* pragmatic person will believe in the possibility of creating options and solutions *and* will also consider and cater for all barriers. Plus the extremely independent person who values *other* people's inputs will achieve a fully counterbalancing set of arguments in any situation.

The '1'

This refers to Self Acceptance. It is the findings of this research that leaders who are resilient do not necessarily have Self Esteem, but Self Acceptance. They know themselves deeply, and they accept themselves - all strengths, all gremlins, all blind spots.

Self Confidence and Control

The combination '2+7+1' makes for an unexpected situation which **lifetimeswork** came across many times in the leaders interviewed: the combination didn't mean defacto confidence.

Also, the relationship between resilience and being in control is complex: an initial state of being in control is useful to resilience, but individuals have to give up the need for control where the challenge is too big – instead they need to concentrate on feeling comfortable with ambiguity.

External Goal Focus

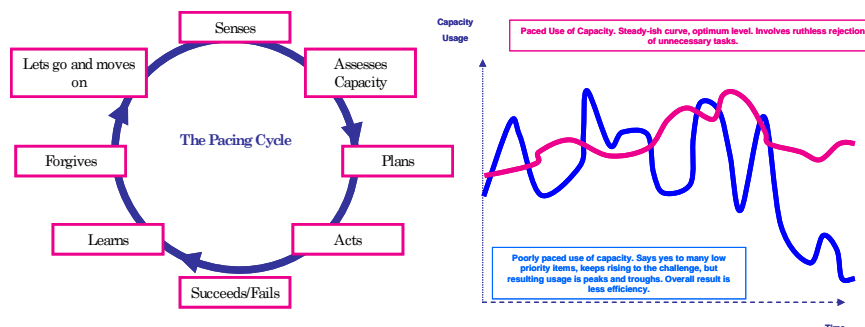
The second component of the Resilience Engine© is an extreme focus on an outwardly facing goal. If this goal is linked to an individual's inner purpose the bond is extremely strong. The key for this to play a part of the Resilience Engine© is that there is a continued and almost ruthless focus on the goal. This focus is so clear that the individual will do anything – including generating somehow all creative options available to them – to solve any problems along the way.

The real mindset here is the openness to solutions coming from unexpected places, and keeping a wide compass map. This mindset is enhanced via the Adaptive Capacity.

The Adaptive Capacity

The third component of the Resilience Engine© is an individual's Adaptive Capacity. This is a sophisticated mix of skills that connect the Internal Resources and External Goal Focus in continuous motion, and helps move the individual towards their goal(s) congruently. It is the moving part of the Resilience Engine©. The Adaptive Capacity is made up of three components:

1. Firstly, Perspective – the ability to grasp context. Being able to step back from a situation in order to better see and understand. This implies an ability to weigh up a welter of factors, ranging from how very different groups of people will interpret a gesture, to being able to put a situation in perspective.
2. The second is Supporting Oneself so that the individual is refreshed continuously.
3. The last component is a Pacing Cycle – an advanced skill where an individual manages their load accordingly to their capacity on a continuous basis. The components of the Pacing Cycle are shown below. Most significantly it results in a steady state use of energy rather than high peaks and troughs. Dependencies are ruthless prioritisation and saying no often.



Organisational Resilience

There was general agreement across the leaders interviewed that organisational resilience relies extremely heavily on the personal resilience of the Senior Management Team of the organisation. There are a further 6 elements necessary for organisational resilience:

1. Consistency. Of culture, of communication, of message, of values, of style of decision making, of trust.
2. A consensus, inclusive and collaborative culture.
3. A learning culture within linked communities within the organisation, and as a whole organisation.
4. There has to be an emotional contract between the organisation and the employee, linking the individual to the organisational aims.
5. An organisation had to explicitly deal with challenges to resilience such as stress and workload. Prioritisation has to be ruthless.
6. Don't hide difficulties or ambiguity from staff.

The Bottom Line of Resilience

1. Resilience is important to leaders. Those that have the highest resilience work hard at nurturing and sustaining it.
2. Resilience relies on complete Self Acceptance. It does not rely on Self Esteem or Self Liking.
3. Resilience relies on a number of deep beliefs and deep attitudes, the 2+7 of the Internal Resources 2+7+1 formula. If not present innately, building these takes profound inner work.
4. Resilience relies on connection with an External Goal that is compelling and meaningful.
5. The most challenging aspect for building and sustaining resilience is an individual's Adaptive Capacity. Experience and time is required to build Adaptive Capacity, and it requires continual support.
6. The output of the Pacing Cycle, part of the Adaptive Capacity, is a steady use of one's own capacity and energy, even in the face of challenge and setback. This involves ruthless rejection of unnecessary tasks, and this in turn relies on extreme clarity of the External Goal.
7. Resilience is not the same as confidence; indeed many leaders quote a lack of confidence despite very high resilience.
8. Resilience requires a sophisticated relationship with the need to be in control. Resilience is built by becoming more in control – of those things that are within one's control. But it also requires a complete letting go of control for those things outside one's control. This may sound extremely obvious, but the understanding of what lies beyond one's control has to be developed.
9. Resilience, even at the highest level, needs to be sustained. At the highest level this means effecting a big change.
10. Women rate their own resilience lower than men. There are 3 common reasons for this: a capacity versus expectation issue; a lack of self-acceptance; and finally the belief that they are fixers of any problem - this gets in the way of full development of all 3 components of the Resilience Engine©.
11. Each sector has a particular pattern around resilience. The Public sector is most complex, with both the highest and lowest resilience ratings. The Corporate sector has the most consistent ratings, but top ratings remain illusive. The Entrepreneurial sector has the lowest average rating, with two fundamental reasons – a lack of time for reflective learning and a prevalence of DIY thinking.
12. Organisational resilience depends heavily on the individual resilience of its key leaders and the resilience of its Senior Management Team as a unit.
13. Organisational resilience relies on a further six factors, including a collaborative, inclusive style and openness of culture.
14. There are 10 major reasons for breakdown of the Resilience Engine©. The 3 most common are
 - o The '2' beliefs are not assimilated wholly.

- individuals' expectations of themselves are out of kilter with their individual capacity.
- a DIY approach is preferred.

Further Information

The full Resilience Insight Series includes

- More on The Resilience Engine® and its component parts.
- Sustaining Resilience.
- 10 Reasons for Resilience Engine breakdown.
- Sector and Gender differences.
- 10 Implications for Coaches.

To obtain a copy of the full Resilience Insight Series, or to discuss more about your own and your organisation's resilience capabilities, please contact Jenny Campbell, Director **lifetimeswork** at jenny.campbell@lifetimeswork.com 0131 332 7512.

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