

Resilience and the Business World

A case for it...

International Resilience Institute Sydney

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How does Emotional Resilience (ER) relate to a manager's performance, to staff motivation, and to staff retention?

Is there some evidence that ER-based programs can be used successfully to help organisations reach higher levels of performance?

The Business Case for Emotional Resilience

The current business context is placing growing pressures on business leaders to respond to rapid change, find a competitive edge in a globalised economy and perform at higher standards with greater expectations from boards, shareholders and an educated consumer.

Furthermore, businesses and business leaders also are expected to find, keep and motivate a talented workforce with a good mix of performance enhancements strategies, financial remunerations and a greater sense of belonging to the organisational culture. – sound familiar?

In a recent study, when asked “What are the top issues you face at work?” leaders identified that:

- 76% are on the people or relational side
- however only 24% on finance or technical side.

Among these 135 respondents, a massive 89% identified that **emotional hardiness training such ER and Emotional Intelligence (EQ)** as “highly important” or “essential” to meeting their organisations challenges.

This business context makes the introductory questions more and more relevant to the world of Resilience Practitioners and business in general.

We all know that organisations are made up of **people, processes and property**. For a long time the common wisdom for business strength and growth was to invest in

processes and property. Thankfully the past decade has witnessed a shift in this common wisdom; with studies supporting that investing in training (and people development within the organisation) not only saves money but also is more effective than shopping around for new talent.

A recent UK study has found that programs like Emotional Resilience training is emerging as a critical factor for sustaining high performance in this ever changing globalised economy; **with 50% of the 1,189 companies survived finding that training staff made them more likely to stay. 30% reported a dramatic increase in staff motivation and 50% suggested it in turn saved them money by minimising turnover and associated recruitment costs.**

Emotional Resilience

Emotional Resilience is a relatively new concept, but it refers to thinking strategies and behaviour responses that are not innate, but learnt. There has been much debate about the terms used to define Emotional Resilience; however, they often hold the same essence.

This paper defines Emotional Resilience as the ability to adapt to a changing environment and not allowing hard knocks to keep you down!

Emotional Resilience is fundamentally about:

- **How accurately one interprets the world around them (thinking styles); and**
- **How well one can adapt and modify their own behaviour in different situations (behavioural flexibility).**

The study of ER has lead psychologists to believe that we literally cannot and do not make decisions without utilising emotion.

The leading neurologist Antonio Damsio found that patients who had brain damage in their 'emotional centres' are unable to weigh choices and evaluate options. His theory is that emotions themselves are the key to thinking as they tell our cognition what is reasonable, credible, and desirable.

Damsio's work begs the question - Is ER something we are born with? The answer in short is no! **Resilience is not innate; it is something that can be learnt. Furthermore, our emotional resilience increases as we continuously apply resilient thinking and behaviours in our everyday life.**

Emotional Strength and Sales Professionals

Research into the success of different sales professionals has found salespeople who are positive, happy, and who perceive the best in situations, combined with low levels of anger, negativity and the like consistently obtain the highest performance levels within organisations.

Sales agents for L'Oreal who had been selected on emotional competencies significantly outsold those not chosen in the parameters of the same emotional competencies. On an annual basis those selected on the grounds of emotional hardiness sold **\$91,370** more than other sales people. This gave L'Oreal a net revenue increase of **\$2,558,360**.

In a pioneering project in emotional hardship training, American Express put a group of Financial Advisers through three-day emotional awareness training. In the following year, the participants in the program exceeded untrained colleagues by **2%**.

MetLife in one year recruited sales professionals on a basis of optimism – those selected in this process outsold other MetLife salespeople by **37%** on average.

American Management Association Study

Over a period of three year the American Management Association undertook a study of the benefits of emotional hardship training in the workplace. This study found some very interesting outcomes from the perspective of managers and team members

- Trainees become more imaginative about how to bridge the gap between their needs and those of their company and co-workers. They are no longer overcome with panic, anger, and detachment.
- They feel more self-confident, as they think through all the changes that are taking place. They no longer feel inadequate and vulnerable.

- They feel more energetic and enthusiastic on a day-to-day basis. They have fewer headaches, upset stomachs, aches and pains, and don't have trouble getting out of bed anymore.
- They feel more involved in the events going on around them, and think they can really make a difference. They don't think of themselves as victims being preyed upon by those in power.
- They have a sense of a better future for themselves, rather than thinking it is only other people that can get what they want in life.
- They procrastinate and avoid less, and do less stress-related eating and drinking.
- As they come to feel less overwhelmed and powerless, they cut corners and disregard rules less.
- They feel more flexible, and open to whatever happens. It is less likely that they get stuck in old beliefs about how the world works, as they become more open to possibilities and how they can actually improve their lives.

Source: Maddi, Salvatore M. & Khoshaba, Deborah. Resilience at Work. Amacom Books, 2005

Conclusion

Measuring the effectiveness of emotional resilience training within organisations is a challenging one – a number of unquantifiable factors come to play. The final word belongs to Daniel Pink and Richard Leider.

“In era of increasing mobility and fierce competition for talent, attracting and retaining star employees is an urgent need. As trend-watcher Daniel Pink says, “Companies need good people more than good people need companies.”

*The primary reason people leave a job is **relationship** based. One of the key factors is the quality of the relationship between the employee and their supervisor manager.*

As leadership guru Richard Leider says, “People don’t leave companies – they leave leaders.”