



Vitality

An EFAP Article for Human Resource and Occupational Health Professionals, Program Administrators, Supervisors, and Key Personnel



Optimizing Resiliency: Getting the Most from Your Team

Resilience is the capacity for personal growth and the capability to withstand both expected and unexpected stressors and catastrophic challenges to one's comprehensive well-being. In today's pandemic climate, we need teams that can respond to challenges quickly and efficiently. Resilient teams are as important to businesses as resilient individuals. While individual resilience comes with self-work, team resiliency is cultivated by the group's leadership.

There is a method to building resilient teams within a wide variety of industries. In a survey of almost 2,000 NCAA coaches, plus hundreds of team leaders from a variety of industries, on the topic of resilient teams, the Harvard Business Review found¹ that these teams all seem to have these four things in common:

- They believe in their capability as a group.
- They have a shared vision of teamwork.
- They adjust to changing circumstances together rapidly and creatively.
- They nurture a sense of trust and safety, also called team psychological safety.²

Resilient teams are needed more than ever right now. But how do you build and motivate such a team? Just like a muscle, resiliency can grow with practice. This article explores both ways of creating a resilient team and knowing when your team has reached peak resiliency.



What does building a resilient team mean, and what do resilient teams do?

Building a resilient team could mean carefully curating a group of highly resilient individuals. More often than not, it's about looking at the team you have now, taking inventory of their resilient qualities, and empowering them further with resilience-building habits and team togetherness—even when working remotely. To help you determine how resilient your team is, the following list includes common traits found within resilient teams:

- **They believe in their capability as a group.**

Team members collectively believe that they can complete tasks, effect change, and overcome obstacles.

- **They adjust to changing circumstances together, quickly and creatively.**

Teams that can improvise and develop new ideas or ways of handling adversity are some of the most compelling to watch in action. Improvising is the process of accepting the reality of a situation and adjusting how you approach and deal with the situation. The ability to improvise as a team is made much easier when group members have a familiarity with each other's intellectual backgrounds, skill sets and knowledge bases, allowing them to call upon the right expertise at the right time.

- **They nurture a sense of trust and safety.**

There's no team without trust. Team resilience increases when members feel a sense of safety when they take risks, such as offering unusual or creative ideas. Trust in this context is often referred to as team psychological safety.

- **They think in terms of teamwork.**

While resilient teams consist of people with diverse talents³, everyone is on the same page regarding specific fundamental issues and core organization objectives. Team members should be on the same page about their roles, responsibilities, and how they interact with one another during adversity. Groups can enhance their teamwork mentality through transparent communications, and regular briefings, where challenges can be raised and worked through, along with group coaching sessions—all of which can be done remotely by video conference.

- **They focus on finding the right solutions.**

Having self-confidence is key, but an overinflated ego, on the other hand, can get in the way. One's confidence in their idea or solution should never come before or overshadow

what's best for the team. When the group's mindset is about getting it right, the idea's origin becomes less important than the responsibility of executing the best possible solution(s).

What are common organizational roadblocks that require resilient teams, and what are the benefits of creating one?

Having an understanding of the attributes of a resilient team, it's natural that they should have an increased chance of overcoming common obstacles including but not limited to:

- Complex and high-stakes situations.
- High-consequence work.
- Unclear team roles or ambiguous company direction due to newness or restructuring.
- Red-tape and setbacks.
- Difficult clients and stakeholders.
- Failure to achieve key performance indicators (KPIs) or other goals.

Challenges are inevitable in any organization, no matter the size and how established it is; to maintain a high-performance level, organizations need to have resilient teams. The benefits of a resilient team are especially noticeable in high-stakes work environments and include:

Quick adaptation.

The team will be adaptive to change and will implement new ways of working to meet new realities—having an adaptive group would be invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Less supervision is required.

The team can work with less supervision, making a noticeable difference for managers with remote employees during the pandemic.

Shorter recovery times.

When disappointment strikes, the time it takes to shake off feelings of failure and return to the drawing board says a lot about how resilient they are.

Maximum motivation.

Not every day is a great day. Resilient teams tend to know how to keep each other energized and focused.

It increases emotional intelligence.

Part of what helps a resilient team function well despite challenges, is the group's individuals know themselves and the temperaments of those around them.

A diversity of ideas.

People on resilient teams accept ideas that aren't necessarily their own (their decisions aren't ego-driven), especially if they see it's the best decision for the whole of the team, the organization and its objectives.

Six tips for getting the most from your team, even in virtual environments.

Resilience is essential during challenging times. Consider these tips for developing a more robust and informed team who are better prepared to handle difficult days ahead.

1. Where possible, consider the workday a 24-hour clock.

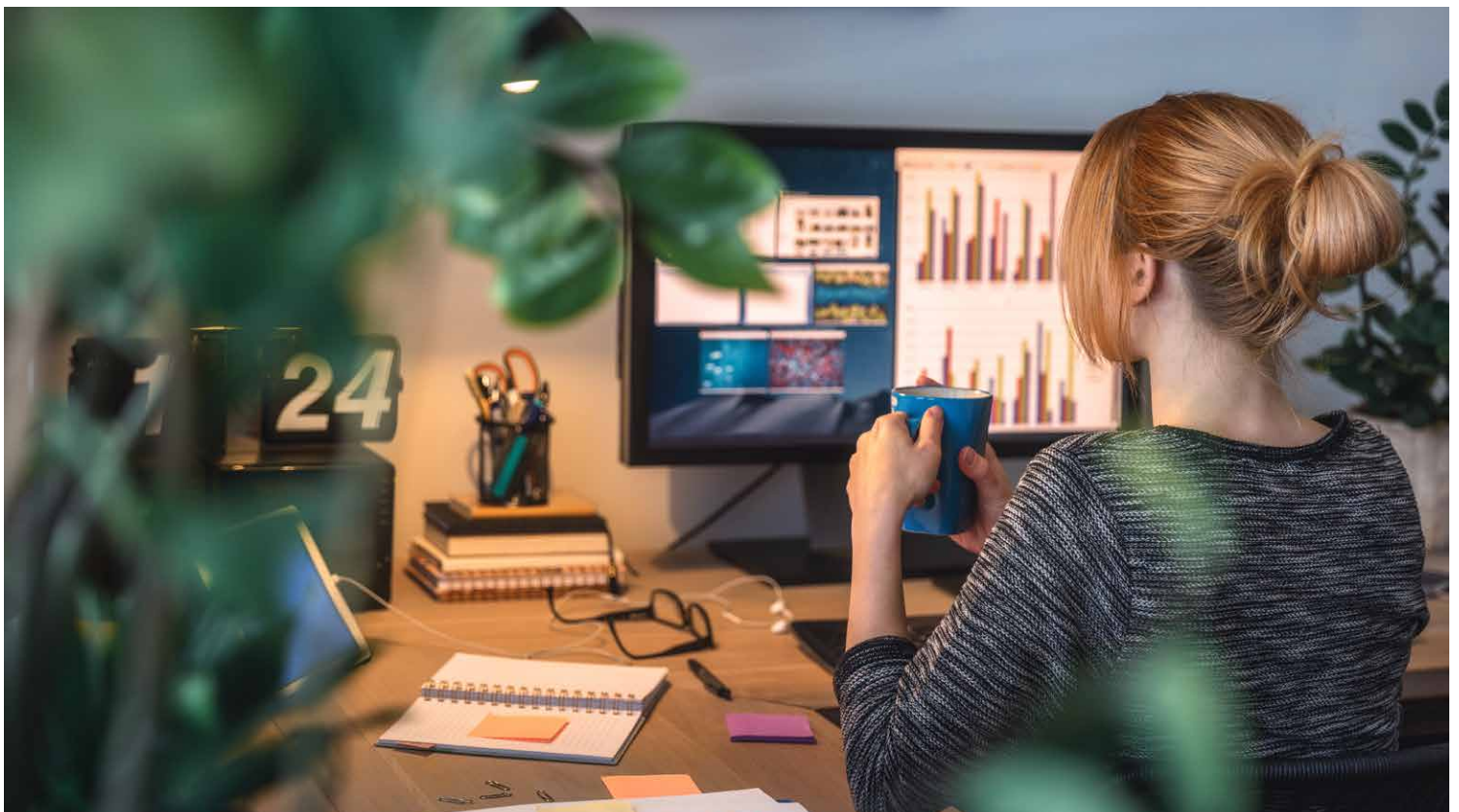
This helps team members work remotely at the times that suit them best. As long as the team works as one and serves its customers seamlessly, the team remains in alignment.

2. Think about overlapping skills. Knowing where skills overlap, should help resolve issues where more than one or two experts are needed.

3. Have a backup plan: This allows team members to delegate their responsibilities to take time off.

4. Provide access to information: Making information readily available to everyone is essential, and emphasizes that keeping vital details of projects private could hurt the team in the end.

5. Prepare your team for adversity: Ensure your team understands that it is acceptable to talk openly about challenges during in-person or virtual team meetings. There should be no consequences for discussing hurdles on a global, regional, or local level because it keeps everyone informed and allows for compassion and problem-solving as a group.



Keeping your team focused, driven, and working cohesively, even when they're working from home

When researchers measured employees' total motivation, they saw that those forced to work from home were the least motivated.⁴ However, other studies illustrated that some people are just as productive or more productive⁵ when properly motivated and supported when switching to remote work due to the pandemic.

Few of us work entirely independently, and how our teams persevere matters just as much as how individually resilient we are. So how can a manager keep a group together cohesively,⁶ so that resilience can flow through naturally?

1. Define goals and values because what you need of your current team's dynamics will depend on where you want to go in both the short term and long term.
2. Offer group training and development.
3. Encourage team-building exercises.
4. Increase communications without increasing distractions associated with too many needless phone calls and meetings.
5. Build trust through open group communication.
6. Where possible, celebrate success together, try mail-out gifts, special restaurant meals delivered to each team member's home, or experiential presents like a virtual at-home cooking class.

The pandemic has created a need for teams to be resilient, allowing them to bounce back faster than ever before. It

doesn't take a group of super-humans to overcome the challenges of today's world. It takes flexibility, a willingness to learn, and excellent leadership to rise above our new everyday adversities, including work-from-home scenarios.

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