

DEVELOPING AN AGILE WORK CULTURE

# 5 Ways to Build Organizational Resilience

*Proactively building organizational resilience is good for business, especially with the rapid pace of change.*

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## Susan Roberts

ENTREPRENEUR LEADERSHIP NETWORK WRITER

*Chief Executive Officer, The 1182 Group*

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Leaders today have a problem. New products and services are being created and adopted at dramatically faster rates. In measuring how quickly innovations reached 50 million users, we see a dramatic difference. Electricity took 46 years to reach 50 million customers after being installed in a small section of a New York City park. Telephones needed 50 years. TVs took 22 years, and cell phones took only 12 years. While Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies are revolutionizing multiple sectors, urbanization, globalization, emerging middle classes worldwide and social media's influence add to the barrage of change that businesses have never experienced. It's challenging our ability as humans to make sense of the change and develop an appropriate action plan. We're at risk of becoming the frog in boiling water.

While change has always been constant, it was slow enough to be absorbed into the planning processes and the business's overall business culture and strategy. Not anymore. Today strategy executives with vast organizational resources at their command stay up at night worrying about five college students creating a product that can displace them overnight. Leaders fear that they aren't innovating in the right way, at the right pace, or with the right partners. Employees worry that they may no longer be relevant when the next organizational changes and corporate direction occur. More and more, those leaders are calling for their employees to be more innovative as well. This quest for a more resilient posture that allows an organization and its employees to thrive amid the radically changing environment will require more [resilience](#) for their [innovation](#) efforts to succeed.

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At the risk of overusing the frog analogy — none of us want to be boiled in water. Yet

dealing with constant change, change on a grand scale, or continuous change initiatives can leave people feeling less willing to engage in change. People exposed to ubiquitous change are wearing out like an old [tennis ball](#) that's lost its bounce. This mindset fatigue affects other critical employee thought and [behavior](#) patterns in areas of work engagement and innovation, which can erode a company's competitive advantage, make change initiatives more likely to fail, and cause high employee turnover. Inoculating your business against change fatigue requires a healthy dose of resiliency.

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Research bears this out. In fact, a recent survey of employees of large tech companies found a strong relationship between resilience, work engagement and innovative behaviors and suggested that a company's competitive advantage directly relates to employees' resiliency. According to scholars, individuals with high change acceptance readiness are likely to have high levels of resiliency. Furthermore, resilient individuals also show increased engagement, energy, curiosity — which align with the characteristics of innovative work behaviors. Those innovative work behaviors — including accepting change, leading change, and noticing problems and opportunities — drive employees to more readily create and adopt new processes, policies and products.

**What does this mean for you?**

If you're a leader, you're going to need to build your employees' resilience and innovative work behaviors. If you're a strategist, you're going to have to plan on the rapid, multifaceted change that causes pivots at an alarming rate. If you're an individual contributor, it means that landing that next job, gig or contract could depend not only on your skillset or degree but also your ability to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing environment. What may surprise you is how much control you have over becoming that go-to person in many work environments. It's a lot more about mindset and behaviors than finding the perfect job. Being resilient may be on the list of essential traits, and innovative work behaviors and engagement might factor into your interview questions. Resilient, innovative, engaged employees adapt to the organization's needs while taking on new skills for themselves. Enhancing [organizational resilience](#) boosts an organization's capacity to adapt to change.

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Here are five ways to build resilience in your organization.

**1. Focus on the positive**

Researchers have found that it takes three positive experiences to balance out each negative experience. So seek out and emphasize the positive experiences you, your [team](#) and your organization have. Celebrations can be simple. Showcase the birth of a team member's baby. Create a background screen of accomplishments. Send an organization-wide e-mail acknowledging the hard work of a team — even if the hard work means they have to find a different solution than the one they were pursuing.

**2. Take one bite at a time**

Handling multiple changes simultaneously can feel overwhelming, yet it seems necessary on a more and more frequent basis. Keep in mind, when NASA put a man on the moon, it took 10 years. They developed all sorts of technology, letting each team focus on their area of expertise. So, manage your change by addressing the long-term goal and the critical path one step at a time.

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### 3. Create virtual time

If you're anything like my team, coffee keeps you running from early in the morning to late in the afternoon as you move from meeting to meeting. Set limits on meeting length to allow for five minutes of uncommitted at the end of each hour. Then make sure meetings end promptly. Give people time to get up, move around and refill their mugs. You'll be surprised how much you'll buoy spirits with this simple [time management](#) trick.

### 4. Host a happy hour

Getting together with coworkers shouldn't be left to chance. Everyone is too busy. Let your employees know that their membership in your team is essential. Make it virtual if your team isn't all in the same office, and emcee a trivia game — you may learn that you have enough aspiring singers on your team to form a quartet.

### 5. Provide air support

Perhaps this one should have been first because it's vital. If you're asking your team to change, you have to demonstrate your support for those who rush forward on your behalf in a concrete manner. Remember that change is hard. Be vocal in your encouragement and appreciation of your change agents. Take the time to coach your team members who are asking questions to make sense of it all. Acknowledge the risk and challenge of tackling change head on. Get excited about the attempts, not just the

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