

# Navigating Through Uncertainty: Building Resilient Organisation



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*Environment in which the organisations operate today calls for greater and unprecedented performance from human resources. Hence it is vital to put in place strategies to increase the length and breadth of offerings from human resources to ensure a resilient organisation. This creates a need for innovative strategies to mobilise talents towards being competitive. Most organisations have put performance management in place with quantifiable metrics to measure the efficiency and productivity while the present study highlights the importance of goal congruence and responsiveness as strategy to present a better result by developing a robust adaptive capacity.*

## 1. Introduction

Resilience is the capacity to withstand stress and misfortune. Psychologists have long recognised the capabilities of humans to adapt and overcome risk and adversity. Individuals and communities are able to rebuild their lives even after devastating tragedies. Being resilient doesn't mean going through life without experiencing stress and pain. Every individual may feel grief, sadness, and a range of other emotions after adversity and loss, but their ability to overcome the misfortunes and indulge in work makes them march towards success. Similar to individuals, organisation also passes through situations of stress and strain during adverse business cycles, unfavourable contract situations, and in Volatile and ambiguous business situations. However the foresightedness and proactive strategies helps to tide over the adverse environment. Resilient organisations regardless of the misfortunes and uncertainty have the ability of restoring business capabilities.

## 2. Business Continuity and Competitiveness During Uncertainty

Heisenbergs uncertainty principle based on theoretical physics when applied in a social context highlighted the fact that it is impossible to measure the uncertainty in absolute terms however the range of deviations likely to occur can be understood by closely monitoring the parameters that alter the destiny of the firm with passage of time. Absolute precision in measuring one variable would entail absolute imprecision regarding the other, added to it there would exist absolute confusion due to various environmental factors operating simultaneously. Moreover the occurrence of an event is determined by the cognition and perception of stake holders in the organisation and, inversely, that cognition and perception determines the uncertainty. Hence a forward looking strategic initiative that attempts to bring together the cognitive congruence of stakeholders help in combating uncertainty. This would lead to every stakeholder in resilient organisations being highly attentive, alert and aware that breakdown may occur anytime and are trained to seek solutions technically and psychologically to improve the situation across the whole organisation. The organisational mission too should ingrain the spirit of dynamism, self organising at both micro management and macro management level.

## 3. Review of Literature

Resiliency has been defined as a measure of persistence of systems and their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables (Holling, 1973). Somers (2009), proposed a new model for promoting organisational resilience potential, by focusing on setting up organisational structures and process, he also attempted to develop a scale that measured the latent potential in an organisation to spring back after an adversity, this also pointed at the non availability of suitable scale to measure the organisational resilience potential. Stephenson, Vargo and Seville (2010), also created a scale for measuring and comparing organisational resilience based on the factors like resilience ethos, adaptive capacity, situation awareness and management of keystone vulnerabilities. The study identified that organisations operating in the communication sector possessed high level of resiliency, it may be by virtue of the environment in which these organisations operate. Tierney (2003) explained resilience in terms of four contributing factors namely robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness and rapidity. Gibson and Tarrant (2010) explained organisational resiliency using an integrated model which suggested that organisational resilience is an outcome of a robust risk management technique as well as Business Continuity plans with which an organisation operated. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) discussed high reliability as a key characteristic of resilience, reliability can be ensured by incorporating technology applications into the system. Donnellan, Larsen, & Levine, L, (2007) advocated the creation and ensuring effective implementation of a blend of capabilities such as cognitive, emotional, relational, or structural capabilities to survive within a dynamic environment. These reviews highlights the importance of strategic initiatives like creating a BCP, introduction of IT applications to enhance

communication and decision making inputs among the intra and inter organisational stakeholders. as well as the handling the softer part of organisation- the fear and apprehensions and Psychological turmoil the workforce is exposed to.

#### **4. Focus Areas for Managing Uncertainty**

Organisations need to focus at all level of management to ensure awareness and smooth transition within the organisation. At the strategic level, creating a bounded decentralization, with appropriate methods to swap information interactively to avoid divergence of actions, which could be ensured by embedding IT applications into the system. The top management could implement ERP into the system to synchronise the communication system among the various stakeholders, which is vital for the success of any effort that leads to organisational resilience, furthermore it could also facilitate deployment of adequate resources during emergency unlike the practices followed during the routine process. Subsequently setting SOPs and Business Continuity plans (BCP) in place, Networking and shared group activities to enhance linkages within the organisation could add to the progress during uncertainty. Organisations need to focus on increasing the absorptive capacity among the stakeholders through the policies. Greater weightage for group performance appraisal with lesser advantage for individual performances especially on matter impacting the entire organisation can set direction for decentralised decision making in the organisation. Hence it is of utmost importance to have a strong crisis leader to inspire the organisation towards strategic and psychological readiness who can ensure smooth transition and minimise the wilderness of a change initiatives during adversity. Performance management techniques that favour greater group rewards during uncertain events and individual rewards for routine activities can drive greater success during challenges.

At the Managerial level focus can be set by increasing the integrative and collaborative mechanisms between the departments and forward thinking, rather than mere micro management. Pulling positivity among all the stakeholders towards a unique direction can ensure growth during adversity. They could focus on offering support to develop clarity of thought that allow employee to move forward with confidence. During implementation multiple focus groups can be formed to drive change faster through the organisation rather than one leader initiating the change process. Addressing the psychological fear and leaving room for moderate stress enables workforce to perform better rather than creating high stressful environment that would rebound to dejection. Familiarising SOPs in the organisation through simulation games create a habit among employees to challenge adverse scenarios. It is also important to create a culture of psychological urge to succeed and grow to tide over uncertainty at a group level rather than at individual level. Greater autonomy through subdivision of tasks also contributes a lot however careful integration of the activity to reflect the big picture shall boost confidence. Boosting up the ability to look forward with imperfect solution through creativity and cognitive skills can generate a pool of options during adversity. It offers a challenge to stakeholders to try out their ideas and enjoy small wins that get them going. Carefully monitored pessimistic conversation from top to down in hierarchy can bring together the entire workforce to tide over any difficult situations, and networking among managers, who have managed uncertainty can mould managers to take up adversity.

#### **5. Initiatives at the Bottom Level through Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement programmes during crisis situations, could be ensured by promoting robust quality circle (Shoaf, Genaidy, Karwowski, & Huang, 2004), consisting of members who are continuously trained and empowered to identify early warning signals at the micro level and deliberating the impact of their own work for organisations resilience. Individuals need to be acknowledged for identifying the deficient and positive areas to build on during the discussions, giving due importance to break all diversity issues at work place. These initiatives enhances the quality of worklife of workforce even during a crisis situation. Employees should be encouraged with games on generating creative solutions for favourable and adverse situations that may face, and the awareness that diversity helps in generating better solutions can break down barriers between social groups and departments, during employee engagement programmes, done on a routine basis. Confidence on accessibility to adequate resources during crisis could help employees move forward, through conscious knowledge management and succession planning. Priorities should be made clear to the employees through various games or stories to bring in goal and culture congruence among employees, these unification can ensure goal achievement with minimum stress and strain.

#### **6. Findings**

The findings of the study pointed that necessary initiatives need to be adopted at the top level as well as at the functional level. Embedding ERP and other IT applications into the system, coupled with Business continuity plans could help in swift revival during any adversity. However organisation need to adopt tools for measuring organisation's resilience, and the major component identified in the scale contributing to organisational resilience was the strategic vision and adaptive capacity, hence organisation needs to focus on their strategic visioning and creating an aptitude of adaptive ability among the workforce. Somers (2009), added that it was not useful to measure the resiliency after the uncertain disaster has happened and argued the need to be proactive by measuring the latent potential of organisation to meet the challenges and take necessary steps to strengthen weaker areas. Studies identified that top management need to commit itself to imbibing a culture of resilience among employees by incorporating it in their strategic vision. Hence smart implementation of resiliency initiatives through employee engagement practices among workforce can help organisation leverage the uncertainty faced by the organisation

## 7. Conclusion

Strategic employee engagement practices among workforce backed by a vigorous Business continuity plan and implementation of ERP into the system can help organisation leverage the uncertainty faced by the organisation. Reviews indicated that there is a need to focus on a more reliable tool for measuring organisational resilience, hence future research could focus on developing a tool that can help in establishing industry benchmarks which the organisation can develop themselves based on the environment in which they operate.

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