



How to Build Cultural Resilience

THREE FINDINGS FROM THE LATEST
WORKHUMAN SURVEY DATA

workhuman*

Why resilience matters

According to Shahram Heshmat, Ph.D.¹, resilience is “the psychological capacity to adapt to stressful circumstances and to bounce back from adverse events.” From weathering the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic to navigating issues of racial and social injustice, 2020 has brought no shortage of stress for organizations across industries. And a recent study from executive search firm Odgers Berndtson² shows only 15% of executives worldwide have confidence in their company’s ability to manage disruption such as pandemics, technological advances, shifting demographics, and climate change.

The question many leaders now face is how to build a path forward. How can you build resilience in your organization to ensure your business thrives for the long haul? Findings from our survey of more than 16,000 full-time workers across the globe confirms companies doubling down on human-centered work practices – those grounded in connection and positivity – are seeing better outcomes related to engagement, retention, and inclusion.

The state of the workplace

Your employees – the humans driving innovation and carrying your business forward – are truly your most valuable asset. And in such uncertain times, many are feeling the weight of this year’s challenges seep into their work lives, with the potential to impact productivity. According to our survey, fielded in May 2020:

- 39% of workers have been worried about their job in the last week.
- 40% of workers have felt stressed during most workdays in the last week.
- 34% of workers have felt lonely during the workday at least once in the last week.

What follows are three practical ways companies can build more cultural resilience, based on our survey findings.

ONE

Make appreciation a part of your DNA.

The pandemic has thrust many of us into new and sometimes uncomfortable ways of working. In the tech industry, many workers have been fully remote and may continue to be for the rest of the year. In healthcare, it’s been “all hands on deck” for many on the front lines of the pandemic. Showing gratitude and appreciation³ is more important than ever to remind people the value they bring to your organization.



Therefore, a key pillar of building resilience is recognition. When employees' survey responses indicate they agree/strongly agree they receive recognition when they do good work, they're more than 2x as likely to:

- Feel deeply connected to their work
- Feel a sense of belonging at work
- Recommend their company to a friend or colleague
- Agree diverse perspectives are valued at their company
- Be deeply motivated by the mission of their company

There's still work to be done in this area. Of those surveyed, only 62% said they receive recognition when they do good work.

Appreciation drives a human-centered culture by providing a rudder for navigating all the change taking place, adding stability and direction.

It ensures employees do not respond to uncertainty by withdrawing, but rather enables them to continue to see the value they bring to the organization despite the challenging circumstances.

TWO

Pay attention to the manager-employee relationship.

Responding to constant disruption this year means the pace of work has only accelerated. As priorities and projects shift, ensuring consistent and timely communication between managers and their direct reports becomes essential. Lest we forget the importance of managers, note the key statistic from Gallup⁴ that states managers account for 70% of variance in employee engagement.

One simple, yet effective, way to nourish this relationship is through a weekly check-in. Of those surveyed, only 60% said they had a check-in during the past week. When employees indicated on the survey they agree/strongly agree their manager checked in with them in the last week:

- 74% said they are deeply motivated by the mission of their company (compared to only 51% when check-ins aren't present).
- 79% said they would recommend their company to a friend (compared to only 55% when check-ins aren't present).
- 81% said they feel a sense of belonging at work (compared to only 58% when check-ins aren't present).

In addition to a weekly check-in, providing employees with timely feedback on their work performance correlates with a host of positive outcomes. When receiving timely feedback, they are more than 2x as likely to:

- Be deeply motivated by the mission of their company
- Greatly enjoy working at their organization
- Agree diverse perspectives are valued at their company
- Recommend their company to a friend

Now is not the time to withhold information or important feedback to improve future performance.

According to Joe Hirsch⁵, managing director at Seneca Partners and author of "The Feedback Fix," "Feedback is not about reports; it's about relationships."

THREE

Celebrate humanity and connection.

Human connection is so important to getting through a global challenge like the COVID-19 pandemic that the World Health Organization⁶ is consciously promoting the idea of "physical distancing" as opposed to "social distancing."

Indeed, social connection is an innate human need and an essential part of the fabric of a resilient organization.

In this survey, workers were asked whether they "celebrate the humanity" of their colleagues. This could take on many forms, such as acknowledging the birth of a child, a new marriage, or completing a course. Employees focused on celebrating the humanity of others are more than 2x as likely to feel grateful, energized, and deeply connected to the work they do. In short, they are more resilient.

Showing appreciation, checking in, and celebrating humanity are three simple yet effective ways to transform your culture and build a more resilient workforce.

Sources

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