

BUILDING RESILIENCE

INTO YOUR CHANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN



BUILDING RESILIENCE INTO YOUR CHANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

Business continuity is top of mind for organizations across the globe, as a wide range of new risks present challenges associated with change and disruption. A company's ability to recover from an impactful event—such as the coronavirus pandemic or a cyberattack—absolutely determines the future of its business.

For many organizations, the coronavirus pandemic exposed gaps in their ability to adapt to change and disruption. Many struggled to implement an all-remote work environment, were thrown by supply chain disruptions, and had a hard time keeping pace in an increasingly complex digital environment. For these organizations, it became clear quickly that they needed to drastically rethink their business continuity approach.

It used to be that the mark of a forward-thinking organization had a carefully crafted business model, detailing milestones in 5- or 10-year increments. In the face of dramatic world changes, those blueprints for the future have been all but tossed out. What has replaced them is something more nebulous: resilience.

Traditionally, resilience is discussed in the context of individuals and refers to one's ability to "bounce back" from a life-changing event. Since [Angela Duckworth published her love letter to grit](https://angeladuckworth.com/grit-book/)¹, resilience has increasingly been used as a cultural and corporate buzzword to refer to a person's ability to persevere through...anything.

When we talk about resilience in this guide, we mean something different. We are speaking of **organizational resilience**.

1. <https://angeladuckworth.com/grit-book/>

[The International Organization for Standardization \(ISO\) defines organizational resilience²](https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:22316:ed-1:v1:en) as “the ability of an organization to absorb and adapt in a changing environment to enable it to deliver its objectives and to survive and prosper.” Interestingly, by this definition, a resilient organization is not simply one that responds well to change. It implies a more fluid state to change, one in which change is constant—even part of the ecosystem—and the organization can evolve *and thrive* with it.

Change isn’t a disruptor; it’s the norm.

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In our increasingly global world, the size and impact of change and disruption are growing. Organizations that demonstrate resilience adapt more quickly to their new reality, instead of grasping to the old ways of doing things. We see results of the latter in the form of the “Great Resignation,” where employees are quitting jobs at companies that refuse to lift return-to-work mandates. Effective business continuity strategy and organizational resilience require an organization to change and adapt as the situation and landscape evolve.

Resilient organizations build the qualities of resilience into the very fabric of the company. These qualities include:

- » Adaptability
- » Innovation
- » Conscious leadership
- » Nimbleness
- » A growth mindset
- » Inclusiveness

A resilient organization takes the responsibility for successfully navigating change upon itself, rather than shifting the responsibility onto its employees. It puts in place the tools, leaders, and communication protocols that enable individuals at *all levels of the organization* to pivot and reset as required not just to survive, but to grow and thrive.

This kind of resilience is achieved by thinking of change management as a core competency. A resilient organization does not just “do change management” when it needs to upgrade its content management system or restructure a department. Change management is part of the organizational culture and environment. When this level of resilience is built into the organizational fabric, the organization discovers that it has the systemic tools it needs to respond to unplanned change and disruption. Because history has proven repeatedly that, while we cannot always see it coming, the one thing we can be sure of is that change *will* happen.

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2. <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:22316:ed-1:v1:en>

In this guide, we speak broadly of two types of change: planned and disruptive.

Planned change refers to change that is predictable, and typically initiated within the organization itself. The change can be anywhere on the scale between small and large.

Examples: someone retiring, implementing a new technology platform, moving office buildings.

Disruptive change is not planned, and it may be initiated outside of the organization.

Examples: the coronavirus pandemic, a fire that closes down a production facility, and an economic crisis.

Disruptors are typically more uncomfortable than planned changes precisely because they cannot be planned and often require immediate—and uncertain—action.

RESILIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT

At its core, change management seeks to instill resilience in an organization's approach to planned change. In the context of change management, we can speak of resilience from two overall perspectives: the individual and the larger entity.

INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE

Traditionally, the word “resilient” has been applied to describe a person who experiences setbacks and recovers without complaint or falter. These people have mastered the art of “bouncing back.” They can “take a lickin’ and keep on tickin’”.

This definition of resilience is theoretically convenient for organizations and institutions of all kinds because it lays the burden of recovery from change, setbacks, and disruptions entirely at the feet of the individual. Failure and success are a matter of character. A person either has the grit and wherewithal to tolerate and move successfully through change, or they do not.

When it comes to individual resilience in the context of an organization, this traditional interpretation is risky. It sets up a paradigm wherein an organization's ability to withstand, recover from, and thrive beyond change depends on the personalities of the individuals affected by that change. That places the organization at risk because it has essentially forfeited control over its own fate. This approach also fails to account for group dynamics, the impact of leadership, or the organization's responsibility in contributing to its own success, not to mention the well-being of its people.

In a New York Times article titled “[The Profound Emptiness of Resilience](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/magazine/the-profound-emptiness-of-resilience.html)”, Parul Sehgal likens “resilient” people in an organization to the mythical phoenix—continually rising from the ashes of disaster—and he asks, “Why rise from the ashes without asking why you had to burn?”

Today’s change management practitioners are evolving their perception of individual resilience to emphasize mindfulness over tolerance and sheer grit. And necessarily so, as more and more workers around the world are, indeed, questioning why they should repeatedly make sacrifices for their employers when evidence is stacking to prove that those sacrifices are not necessary. Should not employers—to adapt Seghal’s metaphor—put out the fire instead?

TOWARD ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

The rapid pace and disruptive nature of change in the modern world demands a shift in focus from individual resilience to organizational resilience. More and more, the interdependence between the organization and its workforce is becoming clear. As these relationships and the perception of resilience continue to evolve, there are fundamental approaches organizations can adopt to build workforce strength and resilience in the face of planned change. As you will see, key themes include communication, transparency, and adaptability.

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BEFORE THE CHANGE

- » Communicate a clear vision ahead of the change, especially why the change is coming.
- » Identify “the who and the how” (i.e., who the change will affect and how it will affect them).
- » Ensure that people understand their role in the change, why it is important, and how they will contribute to the success of the change.
- » Empower people to speak up.

DURING THE CHANGE

- » Reflect transparency through regular progress updates.
- » Respond in a timely manner to concerns expressed.
- » Pivot as necessary to respond to mistakes and challenges; communicate what you learned.
- » Provide any training necessary to prepare for the change.

3. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/magazine/the-profound-emptiness-of-resilience.html>

AFTER THE CHANGE

- » Solicit feedback about the change that took place.
- » Hold lessons-learned sessions that address pain points raised throughout the process.
- » Recognize the efforts of all stakeholders, not just those directly responsible for implementing the change.

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE THROUGH CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Whereas project management oversees the *tasks* involved in the implementation of a planned change, change management is the practice of managing *people* through change. (“People” refers to any affected stakeholder affected by the change, including employees and customers.) In essence, change management is about managing the behaviors and emotions of the people who are involved in any project or disruption that affects a change within the organization.

The ultimate goal of change management is to build a culture of resilience within the organization.

The ultimate goal of change management is to build a culture of resilience within the organization. Employing change management best practices and processes sets the organization up to thrive through change. In time, these change management strategies become reflexive, business as usual. The organization becomes so adept at moving through change and responding to disruptions that it becomes part of the culture. Change is no longer a stressor, but rather an agent for growth.

In the next three chapters, we will explore more deeply the common barriers organizations encounter on the pathway to becoming resilient entities that can pivot and adapt to change and disruption, as well as strategies and exercises that can help to break down those barriers.

EXERCISE:

TEAM RESILIENCY SELF-ASSESSMENT

This exercise can be conducted as a group for a team retreat or a project lessons learned, or it can be performed as an individual self-assessment (individual assessment questions in parentheses). For group assessment, it helps to have a designated moderator to keep the conversation on track, as well as a note-taker.

Explore the following questions. Make note of opportunities for growth and improvement when answering these questions. For group discussions, be sure to document feedback, both complimentary and constructive.

- » **Do we explore new ways of doing things?**
How so, or why not? (Do I look for new ways of doing things? How so, or why not?)
- » **When there is a hiccup, how do we react?**
What methods do we employ to examine what happened and adapt our approach accordingly? Or don't we...and why not?
(How do I react and process mistakes that I make? Do I examine what happened and adapt my approach to similar situations? Or do I go on as if nothing happened? Why?)
- » **Do we have a healthy discussion when there is a difference of opinion? If so, what methods have proven successful in encouraging such discussions? If not, why?** (In what ways do I try to understand opinions that are different from mine? Or, if I don't try to understand opinions that are different from mine, why is that?)
- » **What methods do we employ to ensure that all teammates feel that their opinions are valued and that their voice is heard? If we have no such methods, why not?** (Do I feel that my team listens to me and values my contributions? If so, what cues help me to feel this way, and how does feeling listened to and valued make me feel? Do I reflect this back to my teammates? If not, why? What cues am I receiving that make me feel not listened to and not valued? What might I be able to do to positively affect the situation?)
- » **When do my teammates feel that they contribute to the best of their ability to project work? How can that be replicated across all projects?** (When do I feel like I am contributing to project work to the best of my ability? What do I need in order to replicate that across all of my projects?)
- » **Does everyone feel comfortable admitting to mistakes and/or uncertainty? Why, or why not?**
(Do I feel comfortable admitting my mistakes and asking questions? If not, why?)
- » **How comfortable does our team feel asking each other for feedback? Explore why the team does or does not feel comfortable asking for feedback.** (Do I proactively seek feedback from my teammates? Why or why not?)
- » **How do we deliver feedback? What do we do to ensure feedback is constructive?** (How do I provide feedback to my teammates? How do I know whether the feedback I provide is constructive?)
- » **How do we cope as a team through stressful times? What strategies did we employ, and were they successful or not?** (What strategies help me to handle stress? What strategies can I employ to help my teammates during times of stress?)

SOLVING FOR COMMON BARRIERS TO ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

“Resilience” has become something of a buzzword over the past decade or so. Many organizations say they are resilient and may even have implemented some of the best practices that can lead to organizational resilience. Still, they stumble over the same roadblocks that impede the agile, nimble approach to the workplace needed to achieve true resilience.

A resilient organization needs a resilient workforce. It needs to give its people permission to adapt, flex, pivot, and “fail quickly.” The people must be empowered to learn in the moment and adapt accordingly so that the organization as a whole can do the same. Resilient employees get frustrated with organizations that say they are resilient but actually are not.

This chapter explores common pain points that organizations often encounter on the path to resilience and suggests ways to solve them.

BARRIER 1: NOT PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Many organizations struggle with change because they fail to put their people at the front of their planning efforts. They redesign processes or select and implement technology without speaking first to the people who the change is “for.” They think of addressing the people affected and their needs as the last step in the process.

Effective change management takes a people-first approach.

And it is easy to see why. Managing people can be difficult. Unlike a machine, people cannot be controlled. And when it comes to change, people’s reactions can be difficult to predict. They may immediately see the value in the change and welcome it. Or they may feel angry, or even threatened, that they are being asked to learn something new.

But putting off the “people side” of change puts the organization at a disadvantage. Addressing the people affected by the change up-front helps to mitigate potential issues early on and allows them the opportunity to participate in the change. It also allows them time to react, recover, and adapt to the idea of change.

Change management is about managing the people side of change. The goal is to set up the people involved for a successful adoption of planned change. Effective change management takes a people-first approach.

Questions to Get Yourself into a People-First Mindset

For every project and initiative, get in the habit of formally evaluating the following:

- » Who will be affected by the change?
- » How will they be affected by the change?
- » What challenges or pain points does the change address? Whose challenges or pain points are they? How do we know?
- » What are the best avenues to communicate with those who will be affected by the change?
- » What can the organization do to help people through the change process before, during, and after the change takes place?
- » What parts of the change process can people “own” for themselves?
- » At every step along the way, what assumptions are we making? How are we going to validate (or invalidate) our assumptions?

Empower your employees by giving them a voice in the change that is taking place. Getting feedback directly from the people who are experiencing the change helps to test assumptions the planning team has made. As projects move forward, employee resilience should continuously be gauged. The organization should have a plan for mitigating scope creep and be ready to pivot as necessary to feedback.

BARRIER 2: GETTING STUCK IN A FIXED MINDSET

People and organizations with a fixed mindset believe that change is risky and should be avoided when possible. They think every person has inherent abilities and limitations that they cannot significantly change. They see mistakes as signs of failure.

Organizations with a fixed mindset typically view people as expendable. Any individual in the organization can be replaced by a new individual, so there is no significant value in investing in people. Also, because they see talent as innate, they do not see the value in creating learning experiences for employees.

In contrast, hallmarks of a growth mindset include:

- » Cultivating positive energy in change
- » Persistence when confronted by obstacles
- » Embracing mistakes as opportunities to learn

Organizations with a growth mindset foster a learning-centric atmosphere that encourages skills growth and innovation. They encourage employees to contribute and innovate, and they take meaningful lessons from failure and mistakes.

People and organizations with a growth mindset typically adapt better to change and disruption. They perceive them as growth opportunities. They have instilled a culture of adaptability that allows them to pivot and adjust as required by their new reality.

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Strategies for Cultivating a Growth Mindset

Companies can encourage a growth mindset by doing the following:

- » Evaluate performance based on skills improvement instead of performance metrics
- » Reference failures as learning opportunities and communicate the value of lessons learned
- » Create a psychologically safe environment where employees are empowered to speak up, contribute, and challenge the status quo
- » Cultivate an environment that encourages employees to identify reskilling and upskilling opportunities from their vantage point
- » Provide reskilling and upskilling training opportunities (in-house or external), especially focusing on those needs identified by employees, as these represent the intersection of organizational need and individual interest
- » Support mentoring and coaching relationships among staff to promote skills expansion and cross-organization learning

CONSIDER DEVELOPING A MISTAKE RITUAL

Many athletes—and some organizations—have something called a [mistake ritual](#)⁴ to help them move on from a mistake. It is typically a physical gesture they use after a bad play that **a) acknowledges the mistake** and **b) shows they have moved past it**.

Examples:

Mimicking the gesture of flushing a toilet. This shows that the mistake has been flushed away.

Sweeping a finger over your forehead (as if to wipe off sweat) and flicking. This shows that the anxiety caused by the mistake has been wiped off and cast aside.

4. <https://www.competitivedge.com/the-mistake-ritual-updated-2020/>

ORGANIZATIONAL SILOS

Silos fundamentally impede organizational resilience because they cause breakdowns in internal communication and cooperation. They often breed toxic work cultures and derail teams from achieving company objectives. Several factors can be responsible for siloing behaviors within an organization, from inadequate communication tools to competition for resources.

Optimizing resilience throughout an organization requires collaboration across departments and job functions. Changes made in one area may impact another. When departments, teams, or individuals work in isolation from each other, relationships and dependencies among them can be easily missed. A department may follow all the change management best practices for its own people or product, but could still inflict widespread damage by failing to see how the change could impact another area of the organization.

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Strategies for Breaking Down Organizational Silos

- » Work with leaders across the organization to
 - » Create a unified vision for cross-departmental collaboration
 - » Set common goals that map to achieving that vision
- » Encourage cross-silo collaboration and discussion
- » Assign liaisons to facilitate cross-departmental efforts
- » Leverage technology and collaboration tools to enable transparency and communication across the organization
- » Organize cross-department training, development, and team-building activities to increase familiarity and improve lines of communication
- » Incentivize cross-department collaboration
- » As with any initiative, monitor progress continuously; make adjustments as necessary

EXERCISE:

ASSESSING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S RESILIENCE

Consider the following questions about your organization.

- » What feedback avenues do we provide to our employees (e.g., annual surveys, pulse surveys, town halls, suggestion boxes)?
 - » How do we evaluate employee feedback?
 - » Do we implement changes based on employee feedback? Why, or why not?
 - » Do we follow up with employees to ensure we understand the root cause of their concerns? Why, or why not?
 - » Do we circle back with employees to assess the effectiveness of our solutions? Why, or why not?
- » What feedback avenues do we provide our customers (e.g., online surveys, customer service hotline, chat platform)?
 - » How do our customers perceive us?
 - » Do we explore new ideas based on customer feedback? Why, or why not?
 - » How do we follow up with our customers to ensure we truly understood their feedback? Or if we don't, why not?
- » When assessing job candidates, do we consider individuals who do not have direct prior experience, but have demonstrated potential and an appetite for learning? If so, what other qualities/parameters do we consider? If not, why not?
- » Do we allocate time and resources to our staff for innovation and learning? How so, or why not?
- » How do we encourage management to provide growth opportunities to their teams?
 - » Do we allocate time during the workweek for managers to invest in managing their teams?
 - » If we don't do these things, why not?
- » What do we do to encourage employees to seek learning and growth opportunities?
- » When it comes to feedback and performance reviews, how do we reward innovative thinking and willingness to reskill and upskill (even when it does not produce quantifiable results)?
- » What kind of energy does planned change evoke in our organization or on our team? How can you tell?
- » Are we typically among the top half in our industry to adopt new technologies or processes? If not, what holds us back?

Choose one (or more) of the questions you answered "no" to. Explore the following questions:

- » What might we gain from doing this?
- » What small steps would feel comfortable to move the needle toward a growth mindset for this item?

CASE STUDIES IN RESILIENCE



LEGO: A LEGACY OF RESILIENCE

Founded in Denmark in 1932, [The LEGO Group](https://www.lego.com/) ([“LEGO”](https://www.lego.com/))⁵ supplies ample fodder for a master class on resilience. What the following summary demonstrates is not a company that never makes a mistake. In fact, LEGO failed badly—nearly catastrophically. But from its inception, the company has demonstrated the key elements of leadership that cultivate organizational resilience, including vision, innovation, a growth mindset, adaptability, and conscious leadership.

Innovation, Vision

Founded by Ole Kirk Kristiansen, Lego originally sold wooden toys. When the plastics industry came of age in World War II, Kristiansen came up with the idea for plastic bricks. At the time, the idea of making toys from plastics was novel; many even thought it was ill-conceived. [He told his skeptical sons](#)⁶, “Can’t you see that if we do this right, we can sell these bricks all over the world?” In 1946, he ordered his first plastic molding machine. And the rest is history.

Vision

In 1957, Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen assumed the helm of the LEGO Group. He set a clear vision for the company: “Our products must exist on children’s own terms. ...What the future LEGO products do in the heads of tomorrow’s children is important.”

5. <https://www.lego.com/>

6. <https://www.lego.com/en-us/aboutus/lego-group/the-lego-group-history/>

Growth Mindset, Adaptability

In 1960, a fire destroyed the company's wooden toy warehouse. Instead of becoming mired in catastrophic thinking or sentimentality, the company looked to the future. It realized that the original wooden toys were a thing of the past and chose to interpret this as an opportunity to stop producing them.

Problem Solving, Vision

By the mid-1960s, the LEGO factory was hosting 20,000 visitors a year, who were coming to see their exhibit of LEGO models. In 1968, unable to cope with the volume of visitors—and envisioning opportunity—the company built the first LEGOLAND® family park in Billund, Denmark. In 2019, [revenue from LEGOLAND parks worldwide](#)⁷ reached approximately \$820 million. (As a side note, in 2020, that number plummeted to approximately \$279 million, affected like many others by the coronavirus.)

Rebounding from Failure, Conscious Leadership, People-First

Fast forward to 2003. LEGO's future looks bleak. The company was \$800 million in debt and on the verge of bankruptcy. A new CEO was brought on named Jorgen Vig Knudstorp. By 2005, the company began to climb out of debt. In 2021, the company reported a net profit of DKK 13.3 billion (roughly \$1.85 billion).

In interviews with [Google Zeitgeist \(2011\)](#)⁸ and [Meet the Boss \(2014\)](#)⁹, Knudstorp attributes the root of LEGO's near-demise to the company losing sight of its "essence" (i.e., the plastic building blocks). He believes this was the result of an overly aggressive expansion play. Similarly, in [an interview with Bloomberg](#)¹⁰, LEGO's President Soren Torp Laursen (2004-2016) admitted that by the early 2000s, LEGO had stopped listening to its customers.

Under Knudstorp's helm, the company refocused its efforts from expansion-for-the-sake-of-expansion to a more deliberate strategy that focused on customer feedback. Customers wanted increased digitization, so LEGO gave them robust online communities and platform games (e.g., LEGO Star Wars for Wii and Xbox). Customers wanted role-playing games, so LEGO gave them such options as LEGO Friends and LEGO Dungeons.

In March of 2022, [The LEGO Group announced](#)¹¹: "Revenue for the year [2021] grew 27 percent versus 2020...and consumer sales grew 22 percent, outpacing the toy industry and driving market share growth globally and in largest markets."

7. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/663963/merlin-entertainments-legoland-parks-revenue/>

8. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6cClpRLAY0>

9. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-CiwT2ZTKc>

10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLVslZQbZI>

11. <https://www.lego.com/en-us/aboutus/news/2022/march/2021-annual-results>



MICROSOFT: RESILIENCE THROUGH DISRUPTION

Innovation, Adaptability, Flexibility

With 180,000+ employees in over 100 countries around the world, the coronavirus pandemic presented Microsoft with a particularly complex logistical challenge. After requiring employees to work remotely due to the pandemic, Microsoft's next goal was to set a timeline for employees to return to work. But the company realized quickly that it was in uncharted territory and could not predict exactly what the future would hold. Instead, it decided to take a deliberately flexible approach.

[Microsoft outlined six stages to hybrid work¹²](#): 1. Closed, 2. Mandatory work from home, 3. Work from home strongly encouraged, 4. Soft open, 5. Open with restrictions, and 6. Open. The stages are not tied to specific timeframes and deadlines. Instead, every Microsoft campus is anchored to one of those six stages and can be re-anchored as necessary. This allows each campus to react nimbly as local health conditions or government guidance dictate. Microsoft campuses are assigned to one of the six stages based on a readiness assessment and examination of data-driven criteria—such as government regulations and local health trends—and each stage has prescribed policies associated with it.

People-First, Conscious Leadership

Microsoft employs a “listening system,” which includes regular employee surveys and polls, to navigate what they call the Hybrid Paradox and the Great Reshuffle (see sidebars). While other companies continue to enforce return-to-work mandates, Microsoft has accepted that hybrid work is here to stay indefinitely. In fact, the company calls it the “next great disruption” to the world of work.

THE GREAT RESHUFFLE

[According to LinkedIn¹³](#), the world is experiencing a talent migration unlike anything previously imagined. Dubbed “the Great Reshuffle”, people en masse are rethinking not just *how* we work, but more fundamentally *why* we work. Contributing to the phenomenon, companies across the globe are re-evaluating the skills they require to meet the evolving needs of the times.

12. <https://blogs.microsoft.com/blog/2021/03/22/the-philosophy-and-practice-of-our-hybrid-workplace/>

13. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/29-big-ideas-change-our-world-2022-linkedin-news/>

In May of 2021, Microsoft outlined key updates to its operating models and approach to people, workspaces, and processes that it would need to focus on to accommodate the new hybrid reality:

» People

- » As the tie that binds in today's global workplace, implementation of world-class technologies is essential to enable synchronous and asynchronous work.
- » Creating opportunities for continuous learning *and* knowledge sharing through personalized training and credentialing are key to innovation and engagement.
- » Employee well-being is more important than ever and must be central to every move forward.

» Places

- » Microsoft's approach prioritizes employee safety. This includes an app that lets employees self-attest to their health and well-being and enables employers to monitor and control occupancy.
- » The company is re-engineering its physical spaces to optimize mixed-reality scenarios using smart cameras, state-of-the-art audio, and integration of social cues (emojis and reactions).

THE HYBRID PARADOX

According to Microsoft's research¹⁵, a clear majority of its employees want more flexible remote work options, but they also say that they want more in-person collaboration post-pandemic. The company's Chairman and CEO, Satya Nadella, calls this the Hybrid Paradox.

» Processes

- » Microsoft anticipates that processes will change in every area of the business and identifies security as the top priority.

Microsoft punctuated the announcements surrounding their approach to the new world of work with the following statement¹⁴: "We will continue to evolve our approach to flexibility over time as we learn more." This disclaimer recognizes that the hybrid approach is a work in progress, and it sets an expectation that additional changes may lie ahead.

14. <https://blogs.microsoft.com/blog/2020/10/09/embracing-a-flexible-workplace/>

15. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work>

BUILD RESILIENCE THROUGH CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Just as project management is a full-time job, so is change management. While project and change management are complementary functions, they are not the same and serve distinct needs. Project management focuses on the timely delivery of a project within both budget and scope. Change management emphasizes the people involved and ensures that their needs are accounted for throughout the course of the project.

Change management seeks to build resilience in an organization as a reflex. Meaning, resilience is not a check-box item on a to-do list, but rather it is a discipline that becomes woven into the fabric of an organization. This allows organizations to pivot seamlessly between routine (when there is no change) and improvisation (when there is change or disruption) modes, as required by circumstance.

Ok, but how? The following are practical strategies for building organizational resilience.

1. MODEL RESILIENCE THROUGH LEADERSHIP

[Research from Prosci](#)¹⁶ indicates that the most important contributor to a successful response to organizational change is effective sponsorship from executive leadership. Employees need to see support and enthusiasm for the change coming from the top.

Key elements of effective sponsorship from leaders include:

- » Actively and visibly participating in the change
- » Regularly and directly communicating with employees
- » Getting other key leaders involved

Many leaders struggle to communicate effectively, especially during a planned change or disruption. Developing a leadership communication plan takes the guesswork out of communicating through change.

Considerations for effective communication from leadership include:

- » **Cadence of the communication**
How often do people want or need to hear from leadership?
- » **Consistency of messaging**
Are all members of leadership communicating the same information?
- » **Transparency of communication**
Are we clearly explaining why the change is happening (including business drivers), and when? What benefits and disruptions can people expect to experience?
- » **Channels of communication**
What is (are) the most appropriate mode(s) of communication (e.g., all-staff meeting, email, discussion boards) for the message?
- » **Source of communication**
From whom should people be hearing the message?

Developing a leadership communication plan takes the guesswork out of communicating through change.

16. <https://www.prosci.com/solutions/solutions-for-organizations>

2. CHECK-IN WITH YOUR PEOPLE REGULARLY AND RESPOND TO WHAT YOU SEE AND HEAR

Like the workplace, people's lives are in flux. A person may seem energetic and engaged one day, and sluggish and disengaged the next.

Organizations across the globe are falling victim to the so-called Great Resignation because they are failing to adapt to what are becoming increasingly obvious trends (e.g., demand for flexible schedules, remote work). More and more, the workplace requires a human-centric approach to change management. That means checking in with the humans and "reading the room."

3. CULTIVATE A PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To encourage open and honest responses, change managers must establish trust with the people they are shepherding through the change. Key elements to creating a psychologically safe environment include:

- » **Listening and seeking to understand.**
This lets people know that their feedback, opinions, and expertise are important to you.
- » **Responding to feedback.**
This lets people know that they have been heard. Note: Responses do not need to be in the form of an iron-clad answer. Acknowledgment of feedback—perhaps with follow-up questions—also tells people that they are being listened to.
- » **Communicating changes that have been implemented based on feedback, and explaining why other suggested changes are not being implemented.**
This lets people know that you valued their contribution.
- » **Following up post-feedback.**
This lets people know that you care whether their concerns have been adequately addressed.

4. PROMOTE A LEARNER-CENTRIC CULTURE

To keep up with today's monumental pace of change and disruption, organizations need to develop employees in the moment. This means integrating development opportunities into the natural course of work (vs. a training event that pulls someone away from their job for a week).

Learner-centric organizations create learning opportunities of all kinds to cultivate curiosity and growth. They embrace innovation, flexibility, and adaptivity, which are key elements for resilience during change. Allowing employees access to learning opportunities lets them know that you are invested in their success—that you are willing to *invest in* their success. This in turn makes them feel valued and improves morale. Creating learning opportunities also allows organizations to address any skills and competency gaps they may be experiencing.

5. EMPOWER YOUR EMPLOYEES TO MANAGE THEIR WORKLOAD

During planned change or disruption, a necessary burden is placed on people (e.g., learning a new technology or adapting to a new process). But people have limits to what they can take on. Monitor for the people side of scope creep by letting them know that it is ok to prioritize tasks and allow them to have a voice in that prioritization.

6. APPLY AGILE PRINCIPLES TO CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Today's work environment requires a blend of strategic planning and adaptable design. The five-year plan of the past has been largely replaced by the concept of working toward a strategic vision in discrete, iterative steps. This allows an organization to pivot and adapt when change and disruption inevitably come along the way.

The success of any project depends on stakeholder adoption. After all, if the end result is not accepted and used, it is useless. Agile methodology emphasizes a virtuous cycle of stakeholder feedback from project inception through post-launch. Using the iterative development approach, stakeholder feedback can be implemented as the project progresses.

7. PRACTICE CONSCIOUS LEADERSHIP

The [Conscious Leadership Group](https://conscious.is/exercises-guides/locating-yourself-above-below?utm_campaign=22feb20)¹⁷ recognizes two states of leadership:

1. Acceptance and Trust

Marked by a responsive, curious approach to teamwork. These leaders embrace growth and learning. Behaviors include:

- » Looking for learning lessons and growth opportunities in challenge and failure
- » Considering different perspectives
- » Taking responsibility for mistakes
- » Appreciating and recognizing the contributions of others

2. Resistance and Threat

Tending toward a reactive and defensive approach to teamwork. These leaders can get bogged down in internal conflict and drama. Behaviors include:

- » Responding defensively to challenges and failure
- » Fixating on their own perspective
- » Blaming others for mistakes
- » Finding fault with others

Any leader may flip-flop between the two states. Conscious leaders evaluate where they fall at any given time and strive to achieve a state of Acceptance and Trust when they find themselves slipping into a Resistance and Threat mindset.

17. https://conscious.is/exercises-guides/locating-yourself-above-below?utm_campaign=22feb20

[illegible]

Download and print the [*Conscious Leadership Group's* graphic titled "Locating Yourself: Above or Below?"](#)¹⁸ Allow time for everyone to review on their own to evaluate their mindset and approach to project work and team dynamics. Then convene as a group to discuss. This exercise can be useful to surface underlying issues that can be explored and addressed to build group and, by extension, organizational resilience.

18. <https://u.pcloud.link/publink/show?code=udhrtalK>

CONCLUSION

Too commonly, organizations approach change with fear, uncertainty, and even defensiveness. What we have discussed in this guide is a new, more resilient approach to change: one that emphasizes organizational resilience. There is vast potential for organizations that can thrive in the face of change and disruption and that embrace an adaptive mindset and behaviors to effectively ‘normalize’ change.

In Chapter 1, we discussed the concept of individual resilience versus organizational resilience. Companies that place the responsibility for resilience on individuals rely on the personality and character traits of their employees to adapt to planned and disruptive change in the workplace. Companies that cultivate organizational resilience through change management build agility and nimbleness into the corporate culture, ensuring the company is poised to adapt to change before it even occurs.

Organizational resilience is a state of being that is constantly in flux.

In Chapter 2, we examined common barriers that prevent organizations from becoming resilient. These include failing to put people at the forefront of change management, a fixed mindset versus a growth mindset, and organizational silos. We also explored strategies for organizations to break free of these barriers to put people first, develop a growth mindset, and break down organizational silos.

In Chapter 3, we considered the critical role that change management plays in building organizational resilience. We focused especially on the key role executive leadership plays in cultivating a healthy and resilient approach to change through conscious leadership. Cultures of resilience are fostered through communication, creating psychologically safe spaces, promoting learning and growth, and empowering employees as appropriate.

And finally, in Chapter 4 we looked at specific examples of organizations that have built resilience into the fabric of their cultures, allowing them to respond adaptively to small- and large-scale change.

Organizational resilience is not necessarily a measurable thing or a specific destination. Rather, it is a state of being that is constantly in flux, responding to whatever the current state of affairs requires. Because change—especially the human response to change—cannot be predicted. But with effective change management, leaders can direct and coordinate change, even when solutions cannot be specified, to achieve organizational resilience.



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