Building team resilience
by strengthening self-esteem

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The need for resilience

Resilience, defined as the psychological capacity to adapt to stressful circumstances and to bounce back from adverse events, is a highly sought-after personality trait in the modern workplace.

In the dynamically developing units of official statistics the resilience has become the new must-have executive skill.

The constant need to meet the demands, the emphasis on increasing productivity and other external factors require highly committed and motivated employees. In the face of wage restrictions in public administration, non-financial motivation is becoming a challenge faced by contemporary leaders. The most frequent hierarchical organizational structure affects the multiplication of levels of decision-making and motivating.

Since the pace and intensity of contemporary work culture are not likely to change, it's more important than ever to build resilience skills to effectively navigate your worklife.

Great organizations become great because the people inside the organization feel protected. The strong sense of culture creates a sense of belonging. People come to work knowing that their bosses, colleagues and the organization as a whole will look out for them. This results in reciprocal behavior. Individual decisions, efforts and behaviors that support, benefit and protect the long-term interest of the organization as a whole.

One of the principles of resilience is positive relationships. Positive, energizing connections to others are vital to resilience. They provide socioemotional support, a sense of belonging, and people to share experiences and ideas with. They infuse challenging situations with a sense of playfulness and optimism, heightening capacity to learn and perform.

Resilience from disruption is the expected skill in team work, on a par with dealing with challenges, stressors and pressure, regardless of the circumstances. It is also an ability to:

- leave the comfort zone,

- maintain the same energy and positive attitude in action,

- seek new solutions willingly despite the lack of success,

- view a problem from a distance.

The most resilient individuals and teams aren't the ones that don't fail, but rather the ones that fail, learn and thrive because of it. Being challenged — sometimes severely — is part of what activates resilience as a skill set. Finding excitement at work comes from the win, hitting the goal, getting the promotion. But fulfillment, life-

lasting joy – comes from the quality of the relationships we make as we struggle over every obstacle along the way and the feelings we share when we win together.

Conscious and committed leadership

„Nobody gets up in the morning and goes to work with the hope that someone will manage us. We wake up in the morning and go to work hoping that someone will lead us there."

Bob Chapman, president of the Barry-Wehmiller corporation

Factors that lead to resilience include optimism; the ability to stay balanced and manage strong or difficult emotions; a sense of safety and a strong social support system. Leaders should be intimately involved with their organization's efforts to building resilience.

When a person or organization intends to take on the responsibility of being a leader - the responsibility one receives instead of choosing - must think, act and speak in a way that inspires others to follow. This is one of the hardest lesson to learn when we get promoted to a position of leadership – that we are no longer responsible for doing the job, we are now responsible for the people who do the job.

Courage to act comes from above. Our confidence to do what's right is determined by how trusted we feel by our leaders. Great leaders who are able to inspire people give them a sense of purpose or belonging that has little to do with any external incentive or benefit to be gained. Those who truly lead are able to create a following of people who act not because they were swayed, but because they were inspired. For those who are inspired, the motivation to act is deeply personal.

Leaders of organizations who create a working environment better suited for how we are designed do not sacriface excellence or performance simply because they put people first. Quite the contrary. These organizations are among the most stable, innovate and high-performing companies in their industries.

Leaders should be a willingness to listen. If certain conditions are met and the people inside an organization feel safe among each other, they will work together to achieve things none od them could have ever achieved alone. When we know that there are people at work who care about we feel, our stress levels decrease. The feeling of belonging, of shared values and a deep sense of empathy, dramatically enhances trust, cooperation and problem solving.

Empathy—the ability to recognize and share other people's feelings—is the most important instrument in a leader's toolbox. Our increasing dependence on technology (i.e. our smartphones) is creating an environment of instant gratification, lack of person-to-person connection and overall loss in empathy. Yet empathy is crucial in establishing trust and perspective – 2 important things for leaders to possess.

We are drawn to leaders and organizations that are good at communicating what they believe. Their ability to make us feel like we belong, to make us feel special, safe and not alone is part of what gives them the ability to inspire us. Those whom we consider great leaders all have an ability to draw us close and to command our loyalty.

Leaders want to feel safe too. No matter what place we occupy in the pecking order, every single one of us wants to feel like we are valued by the others in the group.

Case study of the idea of Optimists' Gala

Ability of a group of people to do remarkable things hinges on how well those people pull together as a team.

The idea of working with a team in the form of meetings named the Optimists' Gala was created at Regional Statistical Office in Gdańsk in 2011 as a result of the experience of few months of work in the Department of the Organization. The team consisted of several people of different ages with different working experience. The need to build relationships was an effect of a closer look into how each team member works individually and how they work together as a team. Its original step was to do whatever is possible to promote the good things that are happening. The main purpose was to create the environment and work culture that brings out the best from people.

The Optimists' Gala is a ceremonial meeting organized within the department once a year. Calling the team the Optimists was intentional and was going to increase self-esteem among the team members through a positive look at themselves as an individual both in the team and in the organization. The first meeting concerned the presentation of own successes chosen by the team members, the subsequent meetings were intended to have time to consider the areas of ours own competence, the value system and motivation to work. We started with working out the values that we wanted to be maintained in teamwork, determining the roles and functions we perform in the team, our strengths and weaknesses and tried to determine the direction of development to which we would like to get together. During annual meetings we could see that the successes of individual people and our commitment had contributed to the success of the entire team and how important is to celebrate being together. We wanted to feel that we and the work we do are appreciated by others, especially in our team.

Progress of work to implement the current tasks, threats and remedial actions we discuss during working meetings, while an annual gala is an opportunity to build and strengthen self-esteem and to strengthen our principles of cooperation in a teamwork, in particular:

- being an Optimist is a choice,

- focusing on relationships,

- raising awareness of own value in the team and in the organization,

- growing together,

- sharing knowledge and passsion,

- getting inspired & inspiring,

- looking into the future, accepting value added to our work.

The joy of leadership comes from seeing someone on our team achieve more than they thought they were capable of. When we see our team come together to solve the impossible problem. When the team forms deeps bonds of trust and would do anything to help each other out. The deep sense of joy come from the work we do, that feeling of contribution to something bigger than ourselves, that feeling that we are values and valuable.

This kind of culture is posssible in any organization of any size. Real, live human interaction is how we feel a part of something, develop trust and have the capacity to feel for others. The trust we need to feel that our

colleagues would watch our backs and help us grow, to really feel we belong, takes time and energy. When a leader is able to personally know everyone in the group, the responsibility for their care becomes personal. The leader starts to see those for whom they are responsible as if they were their own family. Likewise, those in the group start to express ownership of their leader.

Fortunately, there are many ways team leaders can actively foster a shared identity and shared understanding and break down the barriers to cooperation and information exchange. One powerful approach is to ensure that each subgroup feels valued for its contributions toward the team's overall goals.

Teams need the right mix and number of members, optimally designed tasks and processes, and norms that discourage destructive behavior and promote positive dynamics. High-performing teams include members with a balance of skills. Every individual doesn't have to possess superlative technical and social skills, but the team overall needs a healthy dose of both. Teams can reduce the potential for dysfunction by establishing clear norms—rules that spell out a small number of things members must always do. And in teams whose membership is fluid, explicitly reiterating norms at regular intervals is key.

The responsibility of leaders is to teach their people the rules, train them to gain competency and build their confidence. At that point, leadership must step back and trust that their people know what they are doing and will do what needs to be done. There are many ways to motivate people to do things, but loyalty comes from the ability to inspire people.

The role of a leader is not to come up with all the great ideas. The role of a leader is to create an environment in which great ideas can happen.

The Optimists' idea is still working. If you have the right People with you, they will give you the courage to keep going.

"The best way to find out if it will work is to do it."

Simon Sinek

Notes

Leaders Eat Last *by Simon Sinek*

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Together is Better: A Little Book of Inspiration *by Simon Sinek.*

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Remarks

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