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A Navy SEAL's 15 Pillars of Resilient Teams

Resilient organizations last long and navigate change better than anyone else. Here are 15 reasons why.



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One of our SEAL brothers was shot 27 times before proceeding to dispose of the four attackers surrounding him. He then walked himself to the medevac helicopter. Resilient teams are made up of resilient people. It doesn't

get more resilient than that

As the Navy SEAL Ethos says, "We train for war and fight to win. I stand ready to bring the full spectrum of combat power to bear in order to achieve my mission and the goals established by my country. The execution of my duties will be swift and violent when required yet guided by the very principles that I serve to defend ... I am never out of the fight."

Navy SEAL training is designed to create warfighters who anticipate, prepare for, adapt to, and bounce back from change better than anyone else on the battlefield. Why? Because resilient organizations require resilient team members who thrive in adversity.

Resiliency is quickly becoming another one of the many business buzzwords, but there is a reason for that. And while resiliency may seem like an obvious trait for a company to pursue, it seems to be easier said than done. It's more important than long-term planning, because as we all know, the best-laid business plans come into conflict -- especially when navigating the inevitable obstacles that require organizational improvements or major transformations.

Resilient organizations have sound leadership at all levels and strong [cultures founded on trust](#), accountability, and agility. They have a foundation of meaningful core values that all members of the team believe deeply in and a sense of team unity beyond what you find in many organizations. They also have a tendency to show consistent and better-than-average profitability year after year.

Business organizations with a desire to grow, remain competitive, adapt to emerging technologies, and find new ways to manage multi-generational work forces must all discover new ways of building resiliency into the culture.

My experience as a business leader and research of other organizations has helped me identify **15 fundamental pillars** that all resilient organizations are founded on.

1. They have a focused sense of urgency and [anticipate change well](#). They believe a little bit of paranoia is a good thing. They are always looking to the horizon for opportunity and threats. Complacency does not exist.
2. They see beyond what other organizations would see as limitations and have an anything-is-possible mindset.
3. They actively weave accountability into the fabric of the culture. And it starts at the top.
4. They delegate leadership responsibility and authority down the chain of command. They give decision making capability to frontline troops and provide the resources for rapid execution.
5. They don't waste time on activities that can't be measured. They invest in the strongest areas of the business and improve or eliminate the weak areas.
6. They exist in a constant state of transformation and reset goals every few years. Every time they do, they set a clear time-bound vision and communicate it regularly. Information is disseminated quickly, and they involve as many people as possible in mission planning.
7. Once they have the vision and mission well defined, they stay the course as long as market conditions and data support it. If not, they adjust.
8. They embody a people-first approach. People, then customers, then shareholders ... in that order.
9. Resilient teams attract, empower, and retain courageous people willing to do bold things.

10. They bounce back from adversity stronger than before. They tackle challenges head-on and always take the fight to the enemy.
11. They think and act horizontally. They actively break down vertical and horizontal silos and approach work and communication cross-functionally.
12. They self-correct quickly and adapt before problems become unmanageable.
13. Resilient organizations are made up of lifelong learners. They encourage transparent feedback and use that data to constantly improve the business. They give everyone a voice.
14. They never allow nor reward mediocrity. Performance expectations are clearly defined, and they always recognize and reward above-and-beyond behavior.
15. Resilient teams define excellence as the constant pursuit of perfection. They are never satisfied with the status quo.

Resilient organizations last long and navigate change better than anyone else. They are well-prepared, disciplined, have courageous teams who embrace change, and a culture founded on trust and accountability. They have aligned leaders who show courage in the face of unimaginable obstacles and gain participation and buy-in from all levels of the organization. They thrive in adversity and are never out of the fight.

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