Resilience
Personal and Organisational

This research paper is based on twenty five interviews with leaders and two interviews with psychologists. In the main these were based in Scotland, across three different sectors – Public/3rd, Corporate PLCs and Entrepreneurial. Interviews lasted 1-2 hours and followed a standard set of questions; all specific content of the interviews is confidential. Care was taken to achieve balanced representation from each sector, and to ensure that there was an equal percentage of male/female participants. Other diversity areas such as race were not catered for.

The research explores what makes up personal resilience and how it is built and maintained, plus its links to organisational resilience.

The major finding of the research is the concept of the Resilience Engine ©. This illustrates that there are three major component parts to resilience: the first is a set of Internal Resources 2+7+1; the second is an extreme External Goal Focus on an outward-oriented goal which demands creative problem solving; and the third is what **lifetimeswork** is naming the Adaptive Capacity. This Adaptive Capacity is effectively the motor of the Resilience Engine©, and is a set of honed skills that leverages the potential of the Internal Resources to bring persistence and success in achieving the External Goal.

The Definition of Resilience

Resilience is the ability to overcome setbacks and absorb any learning offered by those setbacks, quickly, and at the minimum cost. Resilience includes coping well with high levels of ongoing disruptive change, sustaining energy when under constant pressure, bouncing back easily from setbacks, overcoming adversity, changing ways of working to incorporate learning when old ways are no longer possible, and doing all of this without acting in dysfunctional or harmful ways.

When an individual is displaying all of these elements, they can be described as resilient. Those that are less resilient explain the definition in terms of only their ability to bounce back. Those who have a deeper experience and higher resilience, talk about absorbing the learning from the setback, and thereby changing their ways of living and working. Those who have very high resilience go one step further again, and talk about speed of response, and no or little personal or organisational cost.

There is an even further level of resilience, where a person transforms an extreme challenge into an opportunity and achieves good outcomes from the setback even in the face of extreme loss. Al Siebert, Director of the Resilience Centre in the USA, refers to this as 'Talent for Serendipity', where individuals discover accidental good fortune even within the worst kind of situation. The lifetimeswork research implies that this is an outcome of sustained resilience, and is not itself a separate skill to learn.

The scientific definition of resilience gives us a significantly different angle. The resilience property of a material is the maximum energy that can be stored elastically – it is the ability of the material to absorb energy when deformed elastically and then, when removing the load, to have this energy recovered. This definition challenges us to think about increasing our resilience by absorbing energy and being ready to release that energy whenever required.

Building Resilience

Resilience is built through a number of differing kinds of experience. Lewis Lyell, one of the participants in the research, illustrated the whole challenge of resilience using the following graph.

lifetimeswork Resilience: The Setback Curve
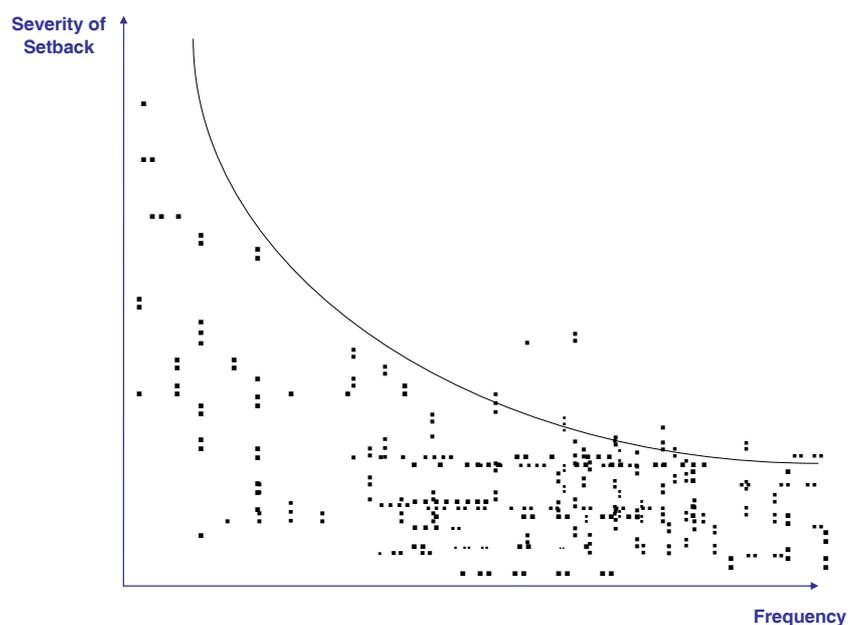
'Resilience is how quickly you bounce back, how often you get a reoccurrence of the same problem.'
David Strang

'It's all dependent on what you have lost'
Lewis Lyell

'In unfamiliar situations, resilience takes time to build'
John Leary Joyce

The dynamics of resilience building is that our experience tends to cluster around the high frequency – low severity setbacks. Workplace relationships, the stress of work capacity or deadlines, normal family relationships; all of these types of challenges we get used to. So we get used to dealing with the same kinds of knocks. This ends up being our comfort zone.

Dealing with severe setbacks such as death, divorce, serious health issues or loss of job is entirely different. These happen infrequently. The hypothesis is that one is far less prepared for this and that our resilience could seriously fail us because of this unpreparedness. This idea certainly played out in many of those interviewed; at least those who had experienced a high severity setback had had their resilience tested. However it wasn't as straightforward as that.

Firstly, some leaders had had a number of severe setbacks – three or four, and within these were highly resilient. However they were not so resilient in their day to day workplace.

Secondly, leaders described that sometimes what apparently was in their comfort zone was often not so comfortable. People were able to cope well, with learning, speed etc, on a normal basis, but when the frequency of the setbacks rose significantly, they didn't manage so well. Volume took over, and they could become overwhelmed.

Finally, some leaders' resilience had never failed them, no matter how severe the setback. Exploring more, the **lifetimeswork** research uncovered a kind of tipping point where the underlying characteristics that led to this level of resilience had been built and cemented – to the extent that the individual trusted them - and essentially the individual's resilience became context free. This kind of resilience is that referred to as a 'Talent for Serendipity', where the level of resilience is so high and so constant, that the individual can transform a situation to make good of it, no matter how severe.

The quest became to understand the characteristics of resilience at this kind of level, and find out how to build those characteristics.

lifetimeswork Growth of Resilience
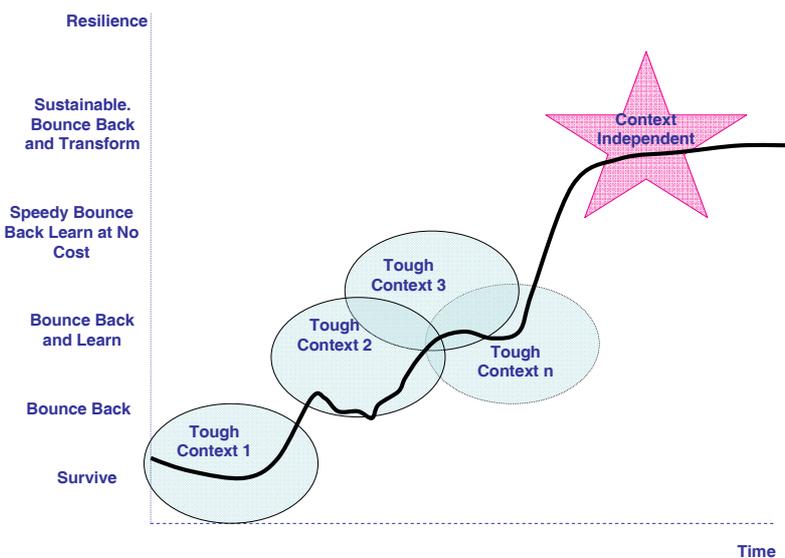
'Resilience is not tolerating pressure, pushing back and changing the situation'
Angela Paterson

'Resilience is an outcome'
John Leary Joyce

'The point of inflection towards resilience is where the personal cost is minimal'
Paul Dickens

The Resilience Engine©

The most significant finding of the research is the concept of the Resilience Engine©. Using the model of the Resilience Engine© helps illustrate how resilience is created and sustained. The engine is made up of an inner source of fuel and an outer force, with a driving motor creating the energy between the two. The inner source of fuel and the outer force are stable, non moveable components. The driving motor moves continuously. The integration of this whole engine, the maintenance and nurturing of it, and the continuous development implied by it, is what makes resilience transformative.
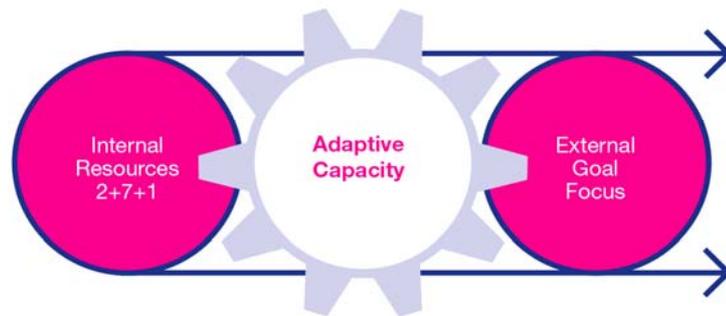
The Resilience Engine© is made up of these three major components:

1. Internal Resources, a specific set of resources. Made up of 2 Beliefs, 7 Attitudes and Self Acceptance: the 2+7+1 formula.

2. External Goal Focus. An extreme, almost ruthless focus on an external goal or set of goals.

3. Adaptive Capacity. A highly sophisticated combination of skills that leverages the Internal Resources and aligns them to the External Goal. This is the motor of the engine, the thing that switches resilience on and keeps it going, the thing that drives the forces through the Resilience Engine© to deliver in a sustainable and steady way against the External Goal.

The key to understanding resilience is to understand each of these component parts, but most importantly, how they integrate. It is in the integration – the smooth running of the engine if you like – where resilience is built and sustained. The components are described below.

The Internal Resources 2+7+1

The lifetimeswork research shows there are 2 Beliefs, 7 Attitudes and 1ability to Self-Accept that form the internal source for an individual's resilience. The combination is quite specific.

The '2'

There are 2 specific beliefs that resilience depends on:

1. A belief in one's purpose in life.

   So knowing that you have a purpose, and what it is. McKinsey's article on Centred Leadership [8] describes this as 'Meaning – the motivation that moves us. It enables people to discover what interests them and to push themselves to the limit'. This belief leads to the highest engagement if connected with the External Goal.

2. A belief is one's own judgement: judgement of other people, and judgement of things and situations.

'There are all sorts of things that I hang onto. Including keeping focussed'
David Cameron

'Focussing on priorities, this builds resilience'
Fiona Mackenzie

The '7'

There are seven attitudes whose combination is critical for the highest level of resilience

1. Takes full responsibility for self, own actions and reactions.
2. Doesn't dwell, forgives when necessary, moves on.
3. Not taking oneself too seriously. Humility and self deprecating humour.
4. Optimistic.
5. Grounded, feet on the ground, pragmatic.
6. High level of independence and independent judgement.
7. Values others and their opinions.

Firstly, those with high resilience take full responsibility for themselves and their actions, and they do not blame anyone or anything else for their reactions or feelings.

The 2nd attitude is about moving on, and not being caught in self-absorption. This does not mean that the individual never feels low or drained, or doesn't analyse a difficult situation or that they don't feel overwhelmed by difficulty: once the person has analysed the situation and learnt from it, they integrate the learning and move on. The key to this is their desire to live outwardly and not be caught in self-absorbing thoughts.

The 3rd attitude is not taking oneself too seriously. A combination of humility and humour, it is prevalent in those most resilient and ensures that ego does not get in the way of the External Goal. Resilient people have a full sense of self, but also a clear sense that they are not that important. For example for any chief executive they understand that it's just their watch; someone else will come along and be different. This attitude is clearly related to Self Acceptance, the '1' of the 2+7+1 formula. Self deprecating humour facilitates both humility and becoming lighter in the face of any challenge.

The remaining 4 resilience attitudes make for an interesting paradox – they are 2 pairs of countering mindsets:

- A both optimistic *and* pragmatic person will believe in the possibility of creating options and solutions *and* will also consider and cater for all barriers
- The extremely independent person who values *other* people's inputs will achieve a fully counterbalancing set of arguments in any situation.

Al Siebert refers to these as 'paradoxical abilities'. He in fact lists several of them, and implies that to increase resilience one should seek to develop this much more within oneself, so extending to aspects like introvertism/ extrovertism, serious/playful, hardworking/lazy, impulsive/thorough etc. lifetimeswork did not find that the list is endless, but instead the two counterbalancing sets above are very specific.

A final word on Valuing others. The resilience literature refers often to the need for empathy. The lifetimeswork research did not find this per se. Instead the differentiating attitude found was Valuing others and their opinions. For an individual to understand fully someone else's perspective does indeed require empathy. As such, the research did not substantiate that a resilient individual is wholly empathetic; a more fully comprehensive set of research questions may at another time explore this in more depth.

The '1'

This refers to Self Acceptance. John Leary Joyce, a psychologist and Director of the Academy of Executive Coaching refers to four levels of mental states: Self-Hatred where there is no resilience; Self-Doubt where there is an inner critical voice that is destructive; Self Belief, and finally Self-Esteem where there is true compassion. It is the findings of this research that leaders who are resilient do not necessarily have Self Esteem, but what John Leary Joyce would describe as Self Belief, and lifetimeswork describes as Self Acceptance. They know themselves deeply, and they accept themselves - all strengths, all gremlins, all blind spots.

The Internal Resources versus Confidence

The combination '2+7+1' makes for an unexpected situation which lifetimeswork came across many times in the leaders interviewed: the combination didn't mean defacto confidence.

In fact many of the leaders described their confidence as shaky. For example in their own ability within their organisation to compete. Or that they believed in their own judgement, but were not at all confident about how to influence others of the value of that judgement.

'I can't make others change. I can change me'
Linda Urquhart

'In business there is an issue of taking responsibility; blame can be placed elsewhere easily'
Soraya Fenton

'I don't like self-absorption'
Judy Wagner

' Optimists are not afraid to frame the world as it actually is – they are confident that they can manage its challenges and move their teams quickly to action'
McKinsey's article on Centred Leadership [8]

'I accept myself. I don't feel the need to prove myself'
Anon

This is the reason for using the term Self Acceptance and not Self Belief, the latter of which is so often interchanged with the word confidence. The overall message is heartening for others who perceive they have to have Self-Esteem to be resilient. The lifetimeswork outputs invalidate this perception.

The Internal Resources and 'Secure Bases'

George Kohlrieser, in his work on leadership, refers to the fundamental nature of 'Secure Bases' [4] that provide the foundation for establishing high self-esteem and success. Secure bases take many forms: people, goals and things such as beliefs/religion/objects, to which we bond in a special way. Kohlrieser's work illustrates that although we are hard-wired to look for danger; secure bases enable us to see the positive side of events. The memory of secure bases give meaning to what we are experiencing.

This notion of secure bases, and particularly being loved by family and friends, is confirmed as important in the resilience literature. [9, 10, 13]. The lifetimeswork research confirms the need for multiple, strong secure bases:

- o The Internal Resources provide a sense of purpose, offer security in one's own judgement and provide self acceptance.
- o The External Goal gives light to this inner purpose.
- o Family and friends offer a valued Perspective because they are loved and trusted.
- o Family and friends play a key part in helping individuals accept themselves.

The External Goal Focus

The second component of the Resilience Engine© is an extreme focus on an outwardly facing goal. Total outcome focus. If this goal is linked to an individual's inner purpose the bond is extremely strong.

Goals cited included social outcomes, family welfare and wellbeing, and certain visions for how to improve organisations or communities. The key for this to play a part of the Resilience Engine© is that there is a continued and almost ruthless focus on the goal. This focus is so clear that the individual will do anything – including generating all creative options available to them and their contacts – to solve any problems in the way of succeeding in their goal.

Problem solving is highlighted as a key feature in the resilience literature, especially in relation to children. The lifetimeswork research found that problem solving in itself is not found to be core for leaders' resilience. What is important is that problem solving leads to a higher success in achieving the External Goal. That, in itself, demands lateral, creative thinking.

The real mindset here is the openness to solutions coming from unexpected places, and keeping a wide compass map. This mindset is enhanced via the Adaptive Capacity.

The Adaptive Capacity

The third component of the Resilience Engine© is an individual's Adaptive Capacity. This is a sophisticated mix of skills that connect the Internal Resources and External Goal Focus in continuous motion, and helps move the individual towards their External Goal congruently. It is the moving part of the Resilience Engine©.

The Adaptive Capacity is made up of three components. Firstly, Perspective – the ability to grasp context. The second is Supporting Oneself so that the individual is refreshed continuously. The last component is a Pacing Cycle – an advanced skill where an individual continuously manages their load accordingly to their capacity.

The term 'Adaptive Capacity' was coined by Bennis and Thomas in 'Crucibles of Leadership'[1]. Their definition was related to grasping context and hardiness. Grasping context or Perspective remains in the lifetimeswork definition of Adaptive Capacity since it moves, grows and adapts. lifetimeswork has explored the underlying aspects of hardiness that results in perseverance and toughness and found them to fit more clearly either within Internal Resources or External Goal focus of the Resilience Engine©.

There were many other essentials of resilience uncovered in the research that moved and grew and adapted, and therefore formed part of the motor of the Resilience Engine©. All of these have been included within lifetimeswork's definition of Adaptive Capacity used in this paper.

'Secure bases serve as anchors in our lives. The stronger our secure bases, the greater our resilience in dealing with adverse circumstances.' George Kohlrieser [4]

'You have to be open to being counter intuitive' Lewis Lyell

'Other aspects include innovation, creativity. This in survival mode is the first thing to go' Heather Jack

Perspective

Perspective is the ability to step back from a situation in order to better see and understand; in Bennis and Thomas' language [1], the ability to grasp context. This implies an ability to weigh up a welter of factors, ranging from how very different groups of people will interpret a gesture, to being able to put a situation in perspective. Perspective is at the heart of resilience. Without this individuals become disconnected from the constituents in their world; for leaders this would be disastrous.

Perspective is sought in several different ways:

Many leaders ask for the views of others, often several others, and this in turn allows them to see more angles on the situation. A particular example of this came up during one of my interviews, where the leader being interviewed had noticed a very resilient individual in their organisation who, although young and somewhat inexperienced, naturally would seek to *exactly* balance his own views of a situation with that of others. So whilst being able to believe wholly in his own stance, he also could believe wholly in the stance of others. In creating this balanced perspective he gave himself far more options for action than if he had followed his initial judgement. Two consequences arose: firstly, his final actions were more appropriate to the context of the situation, and secondly, he built his own resilience.

Most leaders interviewed relied on their partner and close family and friends – their 'Secure Bases' [4] - for perspective; one lesson in the aforementioned example is not to limit the people you seek perspective from, instead aim to wholly counter balance your views.

The most highly resilient people interviewed will ask others for input, but their perspective is widened principally by an internal skill: becoming slightly detached *immediately* from any situation arising in front of them. The resilience literature[10] confirms this notion, stating that building early insight and understanding relates to greater resilience. Highly resilient people use a third eye on the situation and on themselves, in order to analyse what is going on. This whilst remaining present and connected to the unfolding situation and those around them. This ability to self-detach and analyse, whilst continuing to feel and react to those feelings, is sophisticated. lifetimeswork met two individuals who did this naturally, but other highly resilient leaders who had learnt this.

Those that display inconsistent resilience find the demand to achieve *immediate* perspective is difficult. Those that actively seek immediate perspective bolster their resilience enormously.

One last aspect about perspective is that is it a constant pursuit for those that are highly resilient. So they are very active in this domain.

Support Oneself

This is the step on from knowing and accepting oneself. It's actively supporting oneself. This is done through whatever means the individual needs to refresh themselves on a daily or weekly basis.

Interestingly the 'what' of the refreshment is much more straightforward than sorting out one's complete health and wellbeing as much of the resilience literature implies is necessary. Their wide-sweeping presumption that because a lack of resilience can bring about ill health and disturbs an individual's wellbeing, that solving it must require complete health and wellbeing to be achieved. The lifetimeswork findings are that this is not necessary.

The leaders interviewed knew how to refresh their own energies. The real difficulty is doing this without fail, always. Those that have the highest resilience do this without fail: in fact the refreshing activity – whether being with family/friends, reading, holidaying, walking, running, listening to music – is never questioned, it just happens. Those that don't do this are less resilient.

Supporting oneself is difficult for people who do not know or accept themselves. It is also sacrificed when someone's priorities are less clear – those that are highly resilient know their external goal, and will keep 'goal-fit' in order to achieve it.

This is another element of Adaptive Capacity which is pursued actively and regularly; most resilient leaders have strategies in place to ensure that their refreshing activities take place regularly, no matter what.

'My role helps others reframe difficult situations and give them confidence'
Fiona Mackenzie

'There is a spectrum of right and wrong'
Kathy O'Neill

'Actively managing energy levels is crucial to leaders. Self –awareness lets you deliberately incorporate restorative elements into your day.'
McKinsey's Article on Centred Leadership [8]

'You have to look after yourself on behalf of the team so no-one else has to carry you'
Tom Ward

Pacing

This is the most sophisticated of the skills within Adaptive Capacity. A rich learning cycle is embedded within it, and feeds the individual's ability to pace themselves. Pacing allows the individual to anticipate the challenges coming up, and plan to act on these challenges in a timely manner that completely embraces the individual's capacity at that time. Thereafter the individual acts, succeeds or fails, learns, lets go elements of failure, and goes back to the sensing of the next set of challenges.

Adaptive Capacity: Pacing
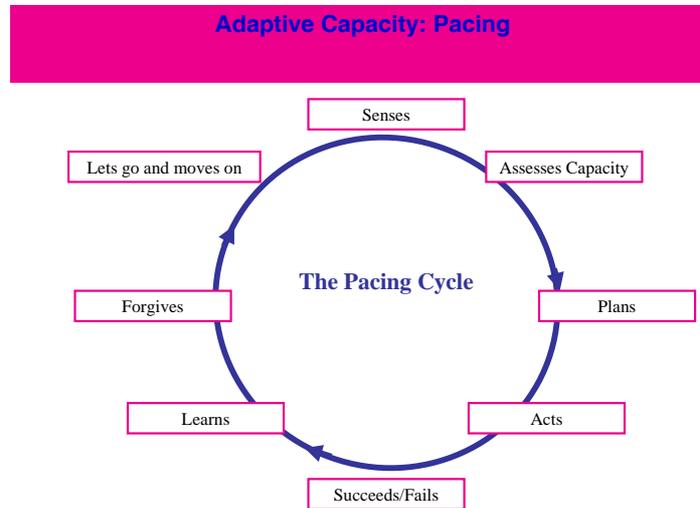
Here are some key aspects of the pacing cycle.

Firstly the individual is alert to what might affect them, and especially what might affect their goal-focus. This is a very, very active element of a highly resilient person. They have sensing mechanisms – both in themselves and via others – to sense what challenges are ahead. They are in a ready and relaxed state of anticipation. Interestingly, this requires a mid-level percentage of their energy; they seem to operate around the 60-65% capacity at this point.

Once identified, a challenge is assessed against the individual's capacity for successfully dealing with it. No self delusion is involved in this; this is a true mapping of capacity. Included in this understanding of capacity is the individual's ability to stretch. Resilient people do not shy away from the difficulty of working at full capacity; they understand it may take close to 90-100% capacity utilisation to successfully transform the challenge. Capacity assessment is done using both optimism and pragmatism, and demands this stretch. However, the fundamental aim behind this assessment is to achieve a steady state increase in energy rather than high peaks and troughs. It results in ruthless prioritisation and saying no often.

lifetimeswork Pacing

It's the long game that resilient individuals want to win. The resulting energy or capacity usage is more efficient. The opposite, where pacing is not adopted seriously, results in inefficient use of energy.
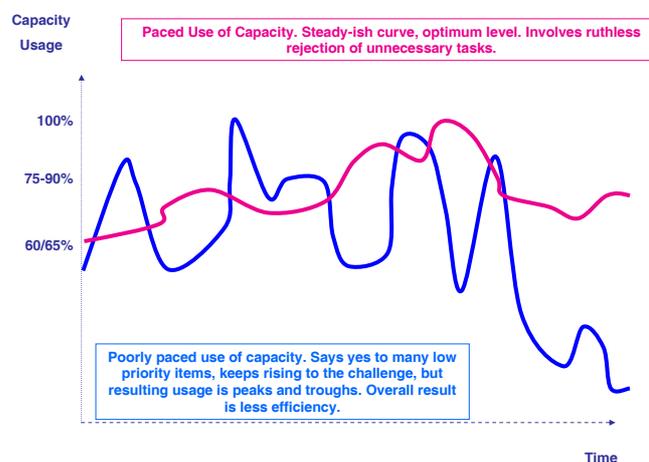
'I'm noticing much more'
Ros Borland

'There are no-go areas. I'm like a concrete bridge: it can take the strain but not too many trucks over at the same time please!'
Pamela Lyell

'The impact of lack of resilience is ineffectiveness'
Heather Jack

'It's linked to energy; you need to maximise this. People who aren't resilient are too tired – hunger has worn off and success has taken its toll; people have lost their spark.'
Charlie Dawson

Adaptive Capacity Summary

Overall the Adaptive Capacity is a steadily moving motor that requires continuous oiling of its wheels. When it works well, it works easily.

This whole area is the most inaccessible for those who are less resilient. One can work on Internal Resources, and External Goal Focus; they are more easily understood and can be released or built if desired. The Adaptive Capacity is slower to build; it takes experience and time to understand how to pace oneself with all of the implications around that. It also takes experience to know what one's capacity is for stretch. And it takes making significant changes to increase one's capacity.

Resilience Engine© Breakdowns – 10 Reasons

A test of the model of the Resilience Engine© has been to check the reasons quoted for when an individual's resilience has failed them. The model stands up to this test. It can be used to summarise the main danger areas:

Internal Resources – 4 of the Breakdown Reasons

1. The person's self-acceptance – the '1' – of **2+7+1** is incomplete or variable.

    In some instances this is shaky; in extreme cases the individual's true self is actually denied. Most commonly lifetimeswork came across denial of certain elements, or a skewing of certain elements:

    o   Not accepting a true intellectualism because the individual felt they were not bright enough.
    o   Being afraid to nurture compassion in fear of losing an inner authority that drives their success.
    o   Very commonly, needing to be liked in order to like self. The lifetimeswork output shows that liking oneself is actually not very material to resilience. What is relevant is accepting oneself.
    o   Lastly, and again extremely common, an impatience with self – for not succeeding to meet one's own ambitions or expectations. This can include physical, intellectual and/or emotional expectations.

    The link between the '1' and one of the '7' attitudes, namely, Taking full responsibility for self, became evident here. Resilient people work at accepting themselves and especially in the area of accepting their own limitations.

    Individuals in a state of non-acceptance of self are likely to be trying to be who they are not. 'I should/I ought to' statements emanate. This stance is ill conceived and drains energy from the individual. To quote John Leary Joyce again, 'change occurs when we become who we are and not when we try to become what we're not'.

'Change occurs when we become who we are and not when we try to become what we're not'
John Leary Joyce

2.   The '2' beliefs of having an inner purpose and believing in one's own judgement, are not assimilated wholly into the individual.

One of the three most cited breakdown reasons. Not being very clear on one's own stance, or aiming to please others more than oneself, or even doubting the right to hold a judgement, all lead to boundaries being dishonoured. This is not about a particular situation or event or topic where uncertainty can arise. It's deeper than that, it's more endemic. It's about having to rely on others for validation.

So for example, dealing with conflict may be very difficult because conflict outcomes include the risk of displeasing others. If driven by the need to please others, individuals choose to self-sacrifice and in doing so may ignore their own boundaries of what's good for them.

In less antagonistic situations, **lifetimeswork** found that individuals who were less clear of their own judgement sought for approval from others. In doing so they became vulnerable to others. If empathetic, these others would provide a real support. If not empathetic, the individual could be walked over and their boundaries broken.

The consequence of boundary violation is a loss of internal self belief especially around belief in one's own judgement. The irony is that the individual seeks to increase their own sense of self-belief by reliance on others, but what they achieve can be the opposite.

3.   Independence, one of the '7' attitudes, is weak.

This leads to an imbalance of Perspective and an inability to decide, impacting the External Goal Focus.

4.   Humility, one of the '7' attitudes, is weak. Instead there is arrogance.

This is a setup to fail situation. As Heifetz and Linsky say in 'A Survival Guide for Leaders' [1], 'A grandiose sense of self-importance often leads to self-deception. In particular you tend to forget the creative role that doubt places. The absence of doubt leads you to see only that which confirms your own competence, which will virtually guarantee disastrous missteps.'

External Goal Focus – 1 of the Breakdown Reasons

5.   Where there is little connection to a compelling and meaningful goal or set of goals.

So for example, there were participants who were extremely resilient in the face of extreme difficulties, because they had meaningful goals in each situation. Faced with divorce, it was to rediscover themselves. In the face of loss of a parent, it was to understand more about the value of life and how to live their own life more meaningfully.

But the same participants found it difficult to remain resilient in work, despite the pettiness of the challenges. Career aims were somewhat detached from their true self, and organisational goals were not connected to their core values. These individuals lacked a motivation for remaining resilient in work, and therefore lost energy and were in fact drained by it.

Adaptive Capacity – 5 of the Breakdown Reasons

6.   Expectations of self are out of kilter with individual's capacity.

This is one of the three most commonly cited resilience breakdowns. The implications of ignoring the limitations of one's own capacity are stress and ill health, with knock on consequences of poor decision making and poor performance.

The Pacing Cycle is sophisticated and flexible – and the most difficult part of it is to assess one's own capacity. Individuals have surprised themselves of how well they have coped under pressure; at the same time, most leaders overestimate what they can handle by themselves.

The whole outcome of the Pacing Cycle is for steady capacity usage. This takes real self-knowledge, real self-acceptance, a real understanding of the needs of the challenges coming up, and an ability to extend one's capacity within an event through oneself *and* through others.

7.   Rejects self reflection so prevents deep learning.

Very few leaders interviewed suffered from not learning, but there were learning blind spots where individual self reflection was painful or embarrassing. Those that truly learn will learn about anything and anyone in order to achieve the best outcomes related to their external goal.

8.   Doesn't support themselves; does not allow for refresh.

The easiest element of Adaptive Capacity to let slip. This fundamentally comes from not having experienced the Pacing Cycle and its power, and therefore not understanding the need for steady energy usage. Implications are that challenges are met full-on with a high massive drive of energy. The knock on consequences is tiredness which weakens the problem solving element of External Goal Focus and the Perspective and Learning elements of Adaptive Capacity.

9.   A Do-It-Yourself approach dominates an individual's style.

The last of the three most cited breakdown reasons. Help from friends/family/colleagues and indeed acquaintances is denied, rejected or often not requested. This compromises Perspective, and the Pacing Cycle.

10.   Having to succeed, not accepting failure, and thereby not learning how better to do it better.

This often seems to be driven by a belief that success is necessary at all times, so admission of mistakes is difficult. This in turn means that sharing mistakes with others so that one can more fully understand their source and how to avoid repetition is not done.

Resilience and Control

This merits a separate discussion since needing to be in control is both a friend and foe of resilience.

During a difficult challenge, individuals feel a strong need to feel more in control. Being in control helps leaders stand back which in turn helps to problem solve and manage energy usage.

There is however a certain point during the building of resilience where needing to be in control is self-defeating. Certain situations are outwith an individual's control. Accepting this can be very difficult for people; they do not understand how their normal rules of managing challenge no longer work. The best that can be done is to achieve the best possible outcome on what can be controlled, and let go and accept the rest. Letting go of the need to control is a sophisticated skill. There are three observed ways used to manage this:

The first, and easiest, is that leaders did not fundamentally need to be in control. They could both lead and be led equally, and were quite natural in both modes.

The next was a learned skill, where leaders could let go under certain conditions. Their experience had taught them that there was no other way, and their efforts were spent in building resilience within people affected by the challenge, rather than controlling the challenge itself. Many leaders struggled with this, and especially when faced with a crisis.

The last point of needing to let go of control was at the point where resilience was extremely high and letting go of control easy, but in order to sustain this level, their comfort zone had to be extended significantly. A *big or extremely different* change was necessary. The principal change cited was to become a part of something much bigger than their current domain, where they would facilitate a change, but the change was defined and shaped by many others. This would be the ultimate in letting go of control – success would be in the leaders' ability to enable the release of connections and opportunities, but with no real say in how the movement would develop. This latter challenge of letting go of control was cited by a number of very highly resilient people as being daunting.

'Self awareness is key. It's taken a long time to understand that. It's the core of a personal state of resilience.'
Heather Jack

'There are no mistakes, only opportunities. Resilient people always reframe mistakes.'
John Leary Joyce

'I've learned to accept unpredictable events'
Soraya Fenton

'I've had to relinquish control. I'm not frightened of the future; you just have to trust yourself'
Ros Borland

'Highly ego-resilient individuals are characteristically able to modify their level of control, either up or down, as may be appropriate to the context.'
Letzring et al[11]

'The desire for (over) control can make you an agent of the organisation's wish to avoid contentious issues'
Heifetz and Linsky[1]

Sustaining Resilience

The question of the need to actively sustain resilience was raised during the research. Some Leaders felt their own resilience had dropped, because they weren't stepping outside their comfort zones often enough. The consequences were that their resilience was not as robust.

This is strongly linked to John Leary Joyce's teaching that we are hard-wired to make patterns, Gestalts, to make sense, so we are satisfied and complete. These patterns offer effectively a comfort zone. All individuals, even if high risk takers and superb learners, will find a natural limit for pushing their comfort zone beyond which takes a huge effort. One way Joyce encourages learning is to change by doing something completely different. He for example has recently taken up tango dancing to do just that!

Effort is required to sustain resilience. When the resilience level is highest, the effort is considerable: it necessitates either letting go of control or undertaking an extremely new or different form of activity to extend learning.

Sector Differences

The 25 Leaders interviewed were fairly evenly spread across three sectors: Public/3rd Sector; Corporate and Entrepreneurial. There are some interesting patterns:

Firstly overall the **Public/3rd sector** showed the most complexity:

o   The average of the self ratings of resilience was the lowest across the three sectors at 5.5/10, but the spread was the highest.
o   There were two areas of concentration of self ratings: the highest number of leaders across all 3 sectors who rated their resilience as 10/10; plus the highest number of leaders who rated their resilience as the lowest. Two chunks on the extreme, with very little in between.
o   The External Goal Focus provided much of the reason for the very high levels of resilience within the sector; the drain at the lowest levels seemed to be related to Internal Resources, and particularly the '2' of the 2+7+1 formula, being undermined.

The **Corporate sector** showed the highest homogeneity:

o   85% of the leaders interviewed rated themselves with the same level of resiliency.
o   This level was 8.5/10, a high level of resiliency.
o   Fundamentally this rating was due to the variety and complexity of challenges faced within a large corporation, but also reflected that ultimate risk taking is not part of the normal scene, and therefore transformative resiliency remains illusive.

The **Entrepreneurial** sector showed

o   A more typical bell curve around self-rating.
o   An average rating being at 7.8/10 (Note that perhaps the sample, which is small, is not representative sufficiently of this sector, since one might imagine their rating to be higher).
o   There were two reasons that were consistently pulling away from Entrepreneur's resilience.

   o   The first is that there was less time for self reflection. This had knock-on consequences on the '1' of 2+7+1, Self Acceptance. Plus it affected Adaptive Capacity in terms of Pacing: Entrepreneurs suffer from expectations being much higher than their capacity.
   o   The second, and most common reason cited amongst Entrepreneurs for a diminishing of resilience was the Do-It-Yourself approach; Entrepreneurs like to be in control, they don't easily ask for help and they find it tough to admit to being wrong.

'I think my resilience is going down; I take less risks'
Lewis Lyell

Gender Differences

The average difference in self-ratings of resilience between men and women was around 20% with women rating their resilience to be lower than those of the men: 43% of the female leaders rated their own resilience as above the 8/10 level, whilst 63% of the men did. Those women citing a lower rating talked about resilience wobbling or failing them many times. There were three reasons that seemed to be common:

1. This set of women had the highest discrepancy between the expectations they had of themselves versus their own capacity. Expectations were extremely high, and often unrealistic, around standards, volume of things taken on, and the variety of responsibilities.
2. A number of the women within this set need to be liked, stemming from incomplete Self Acceptance. This is perhaps linked to the above point on unrealistic expectations versus capacity.
3. Many of this set of women hold a belief that they have to be the fixers of any problem – so many elements of the Resilience Engine© remain undeveloped
   - Ruthless sticking to the External Goals proves difficult: there are so many competing needs.
   - Individuals' Adaptive Capacity is underdeveloped, particularly Supporting Oneself and Pacing oneself.
   - There is an underlying and opposing belief that they are less important than others, and this means their own Internal Resources are weakened.

Organisational Resilience

The **lifetimeswork** research explored in the main personal resilience, but also made preliminary links to organisational resilience. The following findings should be considered therefore as an early hypothesis of what drives organisational resilience.

There was general agreement across the leaders interviewed that organisational resilience relies extremely heavily on the personal resilience of the Senior Management Team of the organisation. There were a few dissenting voices, but in general this was strongly supported. The resilience research [1,7] shows there are clear parallels between the elements of the Resilience Engine© and organisational resilience in the areas of Pacing and of Adaptability/Flexibility.

Further to individual resilience, particularly that of the leaders of the organisation, the participants of the interviews stated that there are a further 6 elements necessary for organisational resilience:

1. Consistency. Of culture, of communication, of message, of values, of style of decision making, of trust. Galford and Drapeau in The Enemies of Trust [1] propose that consistency of trust within an organisation not only is important to organisational effectiveness, but paramount in a time of crisis.

2. A consensus, inclusive and collaborative culture. Command and control does not build a resilient organisation.

3. A learning culture within linked communities and across the organisation. This has to be supported specifically via both formal and informal means.

4. There has to be an emotional contract between the organisation and the employee, linking the individual to the organisational aims. If this is not refreshed or cared for, motivation for risk taking and high performance is lost.

5. An organisation had to explicitly deal with challenges to resilience such as stress and workload. Prioritisation has to be ruthless. Space to adapt and change has to be given to individuals and teams. The Senior Management Team has to have the space to think in order to achieve resilience in themselves individually and as a unit.

6. Lastly, learning from the Entrepreneurs especially but echoed elsewhere, don't hide difficulties or ambiguity from staff. If these are hidden, the organisation has no chance to build true resilience.

'Resilience in leaders filters down in an organisation'
Linda Urquhart

'Personal resilience oils the wheels of the organisation. It releases the potential of the organisation'
Mairead Ferguson

'The link between personal and organisational resilience is profound where the organisational ambition is the same as the individual drivers for those who work in it'
David Cameron

'Consistency is key'
Anon

'The heart of any healthy group lies in the intensity of the bonding between people and the organisation's goals'
George Kohlrieser [4]

One last word on organisational resilience. Research has clearly shown the need for a systematic approach to engendering compassion. Dutton et al [1] found that 'A Leader's ability to enable a compassionate response directly affects the organisation's ability to maintain high performance in difficult times': the compassionate leader provides a context for meaning – creating an environment where people can freely express how they feel, and a context for action – creating an environment in which those who experience pain can find ways to alleviate their own and others' suffering.

The Bottom Line of Resilience

1. Resilience is important to leaders. Those that have the highest resilience work hard at nurturing and sustaining it.

2. Resilience relies on complete Self Acceptance. It does not rely on Self Esteem or Self Liking.

3. Resilience relies on a number of deep beliefs and deep attitudes, the 2+7 of the Internal Resources 2+7+1 formula. If not present innately, building these takes profound inner work.

4. Resilience relies on connection with an External Goal that is compelling and meaningful.

5. The most challenging aspect for building and sustaining resilience is an individual's Adaptive Capacity. Experience and time is required to build Adaptive Capacity, and it requires continual support.

6. The output of the Pacing Cycle, part of the Adaptive Capacity, is a steady use of one's own capacity and energy, even in the face of challenge and setback. This involves ruthless rejection of unnecessary tasks, and this in turn relies on extreme clarity of the External Goal.

7. Resilience is not the same as confidence; indeed many leaders quote a lack of confidence despite very high resilience.

8. Resilience requires a sophisticated relationship with the need to be in control. Resilience is built by becoming more in control – of those things that are within one's control. But it also requires a complete letting go of control for those things outside of one's control. This may sound extremely obvious, but the understanding of what lies outwith one's control has to be developed.

9. Resilience, even at the highest level, needs to be sustained. At the highest level this means effecting a big change.

10. Women rate their own resilience lower than men. There are 3 common reasons for this: a capacity versus expectation issue; a lack of self-acceptance; and finally the belief that they are fixers of any problem - this gets in the way of full development of all 3 components of the Resilience Engine©.

11. Each sector has a particular pattern around resilience. The Public sector is most complex, with both the highest and lowest resilience ratings. The Corporate sector has the most consistent ratings, but top ratings remain illusive. The Entrepreneurial sector has the lowest average rating, with two fundamental reasons – a lack of time for reflective learning and a prevalence of DIY thinking.

12. Organisational resilience depends heavily on the individual resilience of its key leaders and the resilience of its Senior Management Team as a unit.

13. Organisational resilience relies on a further six factors, including a collaborative, inclusive style and openness of culture.

14. There are 10 major reasons for breakdown of the Resilience Engine©. The 3 most common are

    o The '2' beliefs are not assimilated wholly
    o That individuals' expectations of themselves are out of kilter with their individual capacity
    o That a DIY approach is preferred

'Our children need more resilience: there are so many choices and therefore the risk of more disappointment; there's more risk and responsibility to get things right'
John Leary Joyce

10 Implications for Coaches

1. Mirroring the learning of organisational resilience, working explicitly on resilience will help build and sustain clients' resilience.

2. Act early. Early insight and understanding relate to great resilience.

3. Overall, coaches may find that some of the payoff associated with the work to build and sustain the Resilience Engine© may not be understood until the client experiences a severe setback. Any meaningful case studies that can be used by the coach to avoid this situation would be useful.

4. Helping to build any false sense of confidence will contradict the building of resilience; confidence must be based on absolute reality.

5. Coaches may find that they are not that welcomed by Entrepreneurs who don't have so much time to reflect. Fast and non-indulgent means for self reflection that is extremely outcome focussed need to be devised for this set of leaders to find resilience coaching useful.

6. Coaches working on resilience should pay particular attention to women leaders' challenges and be prepared to work at a deep attitudinal level.

7. Normal coaching for individual leaders can bring the following forms of help to building and sustaining resilience

   o Offer Perspective.

   o Help uncover and support clients self acceptance. Building on the notion of 'Secure Bases' [4] is critical to this.

   o Help build clients understanding of others to build both the appropriate attitudes and skills of getting perspective.

   o Help clients bolster their learning capabilities.

8. Advanced coaching for individual leaders can help

   o Challenge the sticking points for full Self Acceptance.

   o Challenge arrogance.

   o Build the 2 Beliefs and 7 Attitudes of the Resilience Engine's© Internal Resources 2+7+1, and the elimination of limiting self-beliefs.

   o Build Adaptive Capacity components. Pacing is the most sophisticated and challenging; deep learning based on evidence is required for the client to assimilate their own capacity. Coaches might have to strongly challenge clients to accept the limitations of their own capacity.

   o Challenge clients to follow meaningful goals for themselves.

   o Challenge clients' tendency to place refreshment of self as a low priority.

   o Help clients with a high level of resilience to step way outside their comfort zone to sustain their resilience.

9. Advanced coaching skills for resilience include withstanding and being present to client negativity, disappointment and unstable emotions. Clients will only accept this level of exposure when there is full trust placed in the coach.

10. Coaching for organisational resilience requires advanced coaching skills at both an individual and team level. One of the most difficult challenges in this for a coach is enabling command & control style organisations to see how this style will not build resilience in the organisation.

'Coaching can be very beneficial – it helps you get perspective, it can help you make sense when you're overwhelmed'
Kathy O'Neill

'Organisational Design makes a difference; it can help create a culture of autonomy and empowerment.'
Heather Jack

'You have to be able to withstand the client's disappointment'
John Leary Joyce

'Reassurance is ineffective'
John Leary Joyce

'You get what you work for; you get what you push for'
Lewis Lyell

'Coaching matters for more serious setbacks, you need to get perspective'
Lewis Lyell

'The data suggest that early insight may relate to greater resilience through new understanding about the struggle. This helps externalise rather than internalise the problem.'
C.S.Clauss-Ehlers et al [10]

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