Building resilience – individual, team and organisational perspectives

Jill Flint-Taylor, Rusando Ltd
Alex Davda, Ashridge Business School

with Alanna McKenzie, Stabilisation Unit (SU)
Sheelagh Stewart UNDP (former Head of SU)
Michael Pearn, Pearn Consulting LLC
Overview

Resilience – factoring in the work situation at 3 levels

Beginning with the individual perspective
Moving on to look at the individual + team
Individual + team + organisation
What is personal resilience?

• “An outcome of successful adaption to adversity” (Zautra, Hall and Murray, 2010).

• “Effective coping and adaptation although faced with loss, hardship or adversity” (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).

• “People’s ability to cope with and find meaning in stressful life events” (Richardson, 2002).

• “Positive adaptation in any kind of dynamic system that comes under challenge or threat” (Masten and Obradovic, 2008).

• “The phenomenon that some individuals have relatively good outcome despite suffering risk experiences that would be expected to bring about serious sequelae” (Rutter, 2007).

• “The capacity to continue to move forward in the face of difficulty” (Bonnano, 2004)
What is personal resilience?

- Resilience researchers also debate whether resilience should be described as:
  - An outcome?
  - A process?
  - A set of individual characteristics?

- In attempting to clarify this some researchers use the term “resilience” to differentiate the “process” from the “personal characteristics” which they call “resiliency”.

- For example, Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990) avoid the use of internal attribution models required for a strict trait approach. Instead, the authors propose a more open process model of resilience, in which adaptation to stress is conceived of as a dynamic process involving both internal capabilities and external resources.
A working definition:

“Resilience is being able to bounce back from setbacks and to keep going in the face of tough demands and difficult circumstances, including the enduring strength that builds from copng well with challenging or stressful events”.

Process + Outcome + Individual Characteristics

Cooper, Flint-Taylor & Pearn (2013)
Key Individual Characteristics: Hardiness & Mental Toughness

**Hardiness** (three key components)

- **Control, Commitment and Challenge**
- Acts as a resistance resource that can mitigate the adverse effect of stressful life events (Kobasa, 1979; Kobasa, Maddi & Khan, 1982).

**Mental toughness**

- Extension of the hardiness model to include confidence
- **Confidence in Abilities and Interpersonal Confidence**
- Represents a constellation of positive psychological variables that help to buffer the harmful effects of stress (Clough et al, 2002).
Key Individual Characteristics: Personality

Hardiness/Mental Toughness and FFM

- Consistent link between hardiness and mental toughness and dimensions of the five factor model of personality - especially low neuroticism and high extraversion. (Parkes and Rendall, 1988; Maddi, 2002; Horsburgh, Schermer, Veselka & Vernon, 2008).

Personality, Resilience and Positive Emotions.

- Looked at reactions to September 11th 2001 and found that low levels of neuroticism, high levels of extraversion and high levels of openness to experience led to positive affect and were all associated with resilient outcomes. (Tugade and Fredrickson 2005).
Key Individual Characteristics: Personality

Carver & Connor-Smith (2010) conducted a review on personality and coping and highlighted that personality influences the frequency of exposure to stressors, the type of stressors experienced and appraisals of stressors.

- **Neuroticism** has been found to predict exposure to interpersonal stress and tendencies to appraise events as highly threatening and coping resources as low (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995; Grant & Langan-Fox, 2007; Gunthert, Cohen & Armeli, 1999; Penley & Tomaka, 2002; Suls & Martin, 1995).

- **Conscientiousness** has been found to predict low stress exposure (Lee-Baggley, Preece & DeLongis. 2005; Vollrath, 2001).

- **Agreeableness** has been linked to low interpersonal conflict and lower social stress (Asendorpf, 1998).

- **Extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to experience** together have all been found to relate to perceiving events as challenges rather than threats and to positive appraisals of coping resources (Penley & Tomaka, 2002; Vollrath, 2001).

- **High neuroticism and low conscientiousness** have been found to predict high stress exposure and threat appraisals and **low neuroticism plus high extraversion or high conscientiousness** have been found to predict low stress exposure and threat appraisals (Grant & Langan-Fox, 2006; Vollrath & Torgensen, 2000).
Organising individual characteristics for development

Luthans and Youssef (2007) make the case for a trait-state continuum of individual characteristics that spans from:

• Pure positive traits

• Trait-like constructs

• State-like psychological resources

• Positive states
Measuring personal resilience

- Personality (FFM)

- Mental toughness (MTQ48) & Hardiness (Dispositional Hardiness Scale)

- The Ashridge Resilience Questionnaire (measure the presence of individual characteristics in relation to a recent stressful or pressured situation)

- Situational Judgement Method (to be discussed)
Resilient Attitude Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resilient Attitude Scores</th>
<th>Emotional Control</th>
<th>Self Belief</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Adapting to Change</th>
<th>Awareness of Others</th>
<th>Balancing Alternatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding Personal Resilience in High Performers in the NSPCC
Helpful ways of managing pressure

- Strong self-belief and confidence
- Adapting flexibly to changes
- Having a good support network
- Emotional management
- Maintaining a balance between work and life
- Identifying goals and a purpose
Unhelpful ways of managing pressure
Case study: Stabilisation Unit

Jill Flint-Taylor, Rusando Ltd
Alanna McKenzie, Stabilisation Unit
Sheelagh Stewart, UNDP (former Head of the SU)
What is stabilisation?

• Preventing, reducing, stopping conflict
• Protecting people and their livelihoods
• Preparing for peace (promoting the political process, protecting key institutions)

Locations of operation include:
Afghanistan, Pakistan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Palestine, Kosovo
The situation: workplace pressures

• **Sources of workplace pressure:**
  – **ASSET Model:** Resources & Communication, Control, Workload/Work Life Balance (Work Demands), Job Security & Change, Work Relationships, Job Conditions (Robertson & Cooper, 2011)
  – **HSE Management Standards:** Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role, Change

• **Typical workplace pressures on SU deployments:**
  – Work demands for civilians can seem impossible – serving the military machine – the pace is phenomenal and often beyond the control of any one individual or even of the team
  – Change is constant – military change every six months; leave pattern of 6 and 2
  – Never enough resources; communications often don’t work
  – Training has improved, but still just a short time to prepare for the environment
  – And as for general conditions ...
The individual: personal resilience

Those deployed by the SU are typically described as:

- Optimistic
- Action-oriented, like to “do” (sometimes the failure to reflect has been an issue)
- Pride themselves on being able to manage anything that is thrown at them
- Have and share an extremely clear mission and strong sense of purpose
Individual + team

- Those on deployment typically take the extreme conditions in their stride
- It’s the normal workplace stressors that really get to them, in particular the behaviour of colleagues:
  - Being badly managed
  - Grumpiness, rudeness, lack of team spirit, cynicism, people who don’t pull their weight
- Emotional Intelligence is the critical factor:
  - People who don’t get on and who tend to come home early are often described as “arrogant” “too intellectual”...
  - Selection procedures need to emphasise:
    - Self-awareness, self-regulation, managing risks to yourself and others
    - Interpersonal awareness and impact on colleagues/the team
Case study method

• Analysis: Behavioural Event Interviews, Expert Panel and review of deployment records
• Development of SU competency framework
  – Managing yourself and self-reliance
  – Delivering results
  – Communicating and influencing
  – Developing and managing collaborative relationships
  – Leadership and management
  – Decision making
• Linking competencies to research on resilience, leadership impact, well-being and performance (Robertson & Flint-Taylor, 2013)
• Design, implementation and evaluation of Situational Judgement Exercise and Behavioural Description (Competency) Interview for the SU selection process
Team resilience and the sources of pressure

• When the sources of pressure are well managed, well-being and performance benefit (Donald et al 2005, Wright & Cropanzano 2004)

• People higher on psychological well-being:
  – show greater flexibility and originality
  – see change as less threatening
  – respond better to unfavourable feedback
  – make more positive judgements about others
  – fall sick less often

• Therefore, high levels of well-being help the team as a whole to bounce back and thrive under pressure

• And this “Team resilience” benefits performance
Team resilience – early days

• Team resilience:
  – Team optimism, team resilience and team efficacy (“team level positive psychological capacities”), as distinct predictors of team outcomes, e.g. cohesion, cooperation, coordination, conflict and team satisfaction (West, Patera & Carsten, 2009)
  – Antecedents of team resilience (Blatt, 2009)
  – “Inoculating” effect of high levels of psychological wellbeing across the team – avoiding burn-out and ensuring sustainable levels of high performance under pressure
  – Leaders’ impact: recent research linking leadership style with wellbeing and performance in the team (Flint-Taylor & Robertson, 2007; Robertson & Flint-Taylor, 2009)
  – Much more research is needed to define team resilience and establish the added value of this construct.
Individual + team + organisation

Jill Flint-Taylor, Rusando Ltd
Michael Pearn, Pearn Consulting LLC
Individual + team + organisation

• Organisational resilience – includes disaster recovery systems etc.
• Our focus – the people in the organisation
• From individual to organisation
  – **For individuals**: managing personal resilience and impact on others
  – **For managers**: managing personal resilience + sources of pressure for the team (including own impact)
  – **For leadership teams**: managing personal resilience + sources of pressure across the organisation (including combined impact of the leadership team)
Aligning personal resilience development with wider organisational objectives

Eight scenarios for organisations – resilience development as:

1. General performance enhancer
2. Remedy or response to stress or unusual circumstances
3. Accelerator of team development and/or integration
4. Enabler for the transformation of an underperforming organization
5. Core capability in organizations that routinely face demanding and stressful conditions
6. Core culture builder in start-ups
7. Essential component of leadership development, especially in difficult and challenging times that is the norm today
8. Supporting organizational transformation and culture change.

(Cooper, Flint-Taylor & Pearn, 2013)
Developing team and organisational resilience by managing the sources of pressure

• The standard approach:
  – Audit the sources of workplace pressure across teams and organisations
  – Develop action plans to address risks to well-being and performance

• Recent developments:
  – Help leaders to assess and manage their impact on well-being and performance (Flint-Taylor & Robertson 2007)
  – Factor employee well-being into selection procedures (Flint-Taylor & Robertson 2013)
  – Explore and evaluate the construct of Team Resilience
Building resilience in organisations

Individual
- Personal resilience development programmes;
  Challenge + support for individual employees

Team
- Leadership impact & personal resilience development for managers;
  Analyse current sources of workplace pressure in the team;
  Implement improvement plans

Organisation
- Audit & address common well-being risks, improve combined impact of leadership team/s;
  Incorporate resilience & well-being into selection;
  Align resilience development with organisational objectives
Dr Jill Flint-Taylor, Rusando Ltd.
+ 44 7973 255848
jill@rusando.com
rusando.com

Alex Davda, Ashridge
+44 1442 841099
alex.davda@ashridge.org.uk