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Whether it's an entrepreneur who finally succeeds in the marketplace after numerous failed attempts or bankruptcies, a scientist who generates the breakthrough compound for a life-saving medication after years of failed drug trials, or a basketball player who overcomes a severe injury and a shooting slump to advance their team in a big tournament, resilience is often identified as one of the factors that helps individuals get ahead. But few of us work entirely alone, and how our teams persevere matters just as much as how individually resilient we are.

But how do teams build resiliency? We surveyed almost 2,000 NCAA coaches to get their perspective on how they build resilient teams and worked with hundreds of team leaders and members in a wide variety of wide variety of industries to find out how teams become more resilient, and why it matters. We discovered that resilient teams — different from resilient people — have four things in common.

They believe they can effectively complete tasks together. Beyond each individual having confidence in their ability to be successful, team members collectively believe that they can effectively complete tasks. Consider the 2017 New England Patriots, who trailed by 18 points at halftime of Super Bowl LI but dug deep and clawed back to win their fifth title. When asked about the remarkable comeback, Bill Belichick, the football team's head coach, said, "We were confident that we could still make the plays that we needed to make to win." But these kinds of teams also manage their confidence. Too much confidence, and team members become complacent and don't look for signs that adversity is ahead. Too little confidence, and they may not take important risks.

They share a common mental model of teamwork. All team members must be on the same page about their roles, responsibilities, and the ways they interact with one another during adversity. This is their mental model of teamwork, and it helps them coordinate effectively, predict one another's behavior, and make decisions collectively on the fly. These mental models have to be both accurate (Are we doing the right thing at the right time?) and shared (Do we all agree on what we're supposed to do?) in order to be effective. Having one or the other is not enough, as team members might agree on what actions to take but end up taking the wrong set of actions; or, team members might know the right thing to do but let their disagreements cause a delay in responding. Neither scenario is good for teams facing adversity. When team members share an accurate understanding of what needs to be done and how their roles — and the roles of others — fit into the big picture, they are well positioned to respond to adversity effectively, and without hesitation.

A good example is the incredible "Miracle on the Hudson" emergency landing of U.S. Airways Flight 1549 by pilot Sully Sullenberger and his crew in 2009. Once adversity struck, Sullenberger's team immediately leapt into action. They knew what to do and didn't stop to talk about it — there was no time for that. The entire event unfolded in three and a half minutes. "We were able to collaborate wordlessly," Sullenberger said. "Everything you do, you double-check and back each other up. It's finely choreographed — it's a thing of beauty when it's done well." The mental model of Sully's crew saved lives that day.

They are able to improvise. Teams must be able to improvise and develop new ideas or ways of handling adversity. Improvisation is really about the deliberate process of adjusting to changing circumstances in real time. To do so effectively, teams need to be able to access existing knowledge from past experiences and creatively reconfigure it to develop new and novel ideas when facing a setback. Resilient teams are intimately familiar with one another's knowledge, skills, and abilities so that they can draw upon the right expertise at just the right time.

Think about the rapid, creative response of the Apollo 13 mission operations team when one of the spacecraft's oxygen tanks exploded 205,000 miles above the Earth. Using miscellaneous objects on the shuttle, the operations team collectively employed their knowledge and experience to create a novel apparatus that would remove carbon dioxide from the lunar module, thereby enabling the crew to breathe long enough to return home. This NASA team's ingenuity was credited with the safe return of the flight crew and earned them the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

They trust one another and feel safe. Finally, team resilience is enhanced when members share the belief that it is safe to take interpersonal risks in their team, such as offering unusual or creative ideas without fear of being criticized or singled out by fellow team members. This is often referred to as team psychological safety. Studies have shown that team members often discuss only ideas that are already commonly known, rather than unique ideas, because they fear being ostracized or rejected for offering novel information. On resilient teams, members respect one another's thoughts and trust that they will not be ridiculed or rejected for speaking up. This feeling of safety enables members to openly and honestly voice their ideas and opinions, which leads to a greater diversity of perspectives at a time when such diversity is badly needed.

A good example is the rescue efforts of the team charged with saving the members of the Thai soccer team that was trapped in a deep, flooded cave in 2018. The multinational rescue team overcame extreme conditions, and the loss of a former Thai Navy SEAL, to save the boys. The team members drew upon their collective expertise to generate as many solutions as possible, which included drilling down from the top of the cave and even pumping enough water out of the cave to possibly enable the boys to walk to safety. In novel situations such as these, input is needed from everyone, and so team members need to feel that their ideas will be taken seriously, no matter how unconventional they may be. Master Sgt. Derek Anderson of the United States Air Force presented the final plan, which would be modified by suggestions from Thai Navy SEALs prior to execution.

The plan involved providing the boys with a sedative and tightly packing them onto stretchers, which would then be pulled under water to the rescue base. Because the team culture was one that encouraged — and even demanded — creative idea generation, the team not only was open to hearing this novel plan but also collaborated to improve it.

Building a Resilient Team

Team leaders and managers can increase their teams' resiliency by making sure they are working to develop these four attributes. In our research we identified three key moments to do this: before adversity strikes, during an adverse event, and after adversity has subsided.

Before adversity strikes. Leaders should build team confidence, clarify how team members' roles fit together, strengthen improvisation ability, and develop a culture of safety. This can be done through activities such as: establishing clear goals and processes, empowering teams with hypothetical training exercises and opportunities to master difficult challenges, training and cross-training, providing a general framework for crisis response that can be applied to a variety of different situations, emphasizing the strengths and advantages of diverse teams, teaching them to leverage

their diverse expertise to generate novel solutions, repeatedly and passionately discussing the culture of mutual trust and respect within the team, emphasizing inclusivity and speaking and acting appreciatively, and immediately and publicly reprimanding any disrespectful comments likely to deteriorate the team's shared feeling of safety.

During an adverse event. Leaders should remind their teams of their resiliency. They should also provide teams with as much relevant information as possible, help them set a direction, coach members and boost their confidence as they move forward with a strategy, and reframe challenges as opportunities to learn and reflect.

After an adverse event. Leaders should provide a forum for careful reflection and debriefing. These after-action reviews should focus on a balance of successes and failures. Leaders should encourage their team members to speak up and raise any relevant concerns they have about the adversity. They should also recognize and show appreciation for those who do. Leaders should span boundaries by coordinating activities and relationships between their teams and other parts of their organization. Leaders will also need to be good buffers against outside pressure and be skilled at acquiring resources, so their teams are adequately prepared for future adversity.

Resilient teams are just as important to businesses as resilient individuals, but while individual resilience is built independently, team resiliency must be carefully cultivated by leadership. Our work with many team leaders and members demonstrates that the actions we describe here should help to make sure team resilience is a widespread team attribute, rather than a scarce one. It's hard work, but the payoff is organizations and teams that are built to last.

Bradley Kirkman is the General (Ret.) H. Hugh Shelton Distinguished Professor of Leadership and Department Head in the Poole College of Management at North Carolina State University.

Adam C. Stoverink is an Assistant Professor of Management in the Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas.

Sal Mistry is an Assistant Professor in the Lerner College of Business at the University of Delaware.

Benson Rosen is Professor Emeritus at the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
