

Resilience

The Breakfast of Champions

By Valerie Atkin

The economic conditions of the last 18 months have wreaked havoc on all industries but the furniture industry has been uniquely impacted.

Facilities managers are looking for every way possible to shrink their real estate footprint and remaining space is increasingly being reallocated from 'me' to 'we' spaces.

The downturn, fewer new facilities and a shift in how space is used has created a perfect storm for the furniture industry that has challenged dealers to an unprecedented degree.

And even when the economy recovers, the furniture industry will be forever changed. What will determine the survivors and thrivers in this new world?

Resilience is one essential skill.

re-sil-i-ence /ri-'zil-yən(t)s/ An ability to recover from or adjust to misfortune or change, constant competence under stress.

Even Darwin agreed. He never argued for "survival of the fittest." What he actually said was, "It is not the strongest of the species, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."

That's the definition of resilience—being adaptable to change. But defining resilience isn't nearly as important as determining where it comes from and discovering how to get more of it. Let's start there.

Where does it come from?

We can debate the nature vs. nurture argument but without question, some level of resilience is due to genetics and how you grew up.

For those lucky enough to be raised by parents or caregivers who had an abiding belief that misfortune is temporary and were equipped with the skills and strength to deal with setbacks, resilience was built in. Fortunately for the rest of us, it can be developed.

How can I get more?

1. Focus Forward

First and foremost, be clear about what can be controlled and what cannot. Resilient individuals are realistic and know that while there isn't much over which they have total control, there is much that can be influenced.

Channeling energy only on those areas is crucial. Wasting time thinking, talking, or brooding about what is beyond your control (which includes the behavior of others and the past) depletes resilience.

Some say the average person spends upwards of 75% of their time on what cannot be controlled or influenced. Resilience is strengthened by focusing forward.

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2. Increase Your Wellness Set Point

Just as we have a metabolic set point, we also have a ‘wellness’ set point. Certainly, we have good days and bad days but generally, our sense of well being is relatively static and represents a critical ingredient in our resilience recipe.

You can boost your wellness set point very quickly.

For the next two weeks, keep a pad of paper or journal by your bed. Immediately before turning the light off write down three things from the day for which you are grateful.

We aren’t talking world peace here. A sunny morning, a child’s hug, a productive meeting that ended on time, dedicated employees who give their best to the dealership, customers who continue to value your relationship—all these are potential gratitude candidates.

As you are going to sleep, think only of what you have written (not what is left undone from today or what awaits you tomorrow).

After about two weeks, you’ll find yourself noticing more of what you are grateful for throughout your day.

If you want a booster shot, consider asking others, “What’s the best thing that happened to you in the last 24 hours?”

3. Build a Support Team

Resilience isn’t being in denial or “making lemonade out of lemons.” It doesn’t mean you ignore feelings. Nor does it mean you can’t ask others for support. In fact, being willing to reach out is a key component of being resilient.

There are two ways to do this. First, think about whom you rely upon. Charlie Plumb was a pilot during the Vietnam War who was shot down and held captive for nearly six years. Afterwards, he became a motivational speaker with a message that stressed the importance of support and gratitude.

One night before a speech, he was approached by a gentleman who asked, “You’re Charlie Plumb aren’t you? Didn’t you fly off the Kitty Hawk and get shot down?” Charlie responded affirmatively and asked how this gentleman knew him. “I packed your chute. Guess it worked.”

Charlie was stunned. He assured his fellow veteran it had indeed worked and then a life-changing thought struck him: The man now in front of him had been in the bowels of a ship doing a job that saved his life and he had never even thought of him.

Who packs your chute?

There are many who back you up. Who are those employees who have been with you through thick and thin? Consider telling them how much you appreciate it.

Second, think about the people you would turn to if your life came unglued tomorrow. Call them today and tell them you were reading an article about support teams and you thought of them. Say thanks in advance.

4. Rejuvenate

None of us would intentionally drive our car until it ran out of gas. It would be inconvenient and it’s bad for the engine. So why do we drive ourselves until we end up running out of gas? It’s also bad for the engine!

What have you done to rejuvenate lately? At a fundamental level, rejuvenation is eating, sleeping, exercising, and breathing well. Tending the machine.

It is generally agreed that less than seven hours of sleep a night is unhealthy and it’s proven that four or more nights with less than five hours sleep makes you functionally intoxicated.

We won’t waste space here lecturing about diet and exercise but if you’ve ever left a car in the garage for a prolonged period of time without changing the oil or running the engine, you get the picture.

Which leaves breathing. Most of us are shallow breathers. Remind yourself to take two deep, abdominal breaths at the top of each hour and you’ll be amazed how much more focused you become.

Finally, take a break. Make lists of what you enjoy doing which takes 5-10 minutes, 30-60 minutes, and half a day, and then take at least two of those “self-care” breaks a week. Building up to five is the goal.

Consider taking a Wednesday afternoon off. No one notices you are gone and it’s a great way to finish the week strong. If thinking about rejuvenation makes you feel selfish, remember putting our own mask on first helps you better assist others in more venues than an airplane.

5. Create a Resilient Organization

Typically, an organization is no more resilient than its leaders. They are the models. If you hesitate to build resilience for yourself, do it for them and go along for the ride.

Resilient employees are more engaged and therefore more productive. Not sure how to help? Ask them. Don’t assume all salespeople enjoy X, while installers prefer Y, and designers, Z.

We’re all different. Some find a couple hours off relaxing, others need to be on a massage table or playing golf.

We’ll go into more detail about increasing employee resilience and engagement in a future issue. For now, turn off your Blackberry for a few hours tonight and consider how you and your organization can benefit from becoming more resilient.

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