

FINDING YOUR FEET IN TURBULENT TIMES

Building Resilient Teams and Team Leaders

Resilience refers to the constructive response to disruption and to the ambiguity that often comes along with it. The disruption can be a positive or a negative influence. For example, a merger, someone new joining the team, having a child, and receiving a promotion are all events that call on our resilience.

Our experience working with groups has led us to develop this resilience framework.

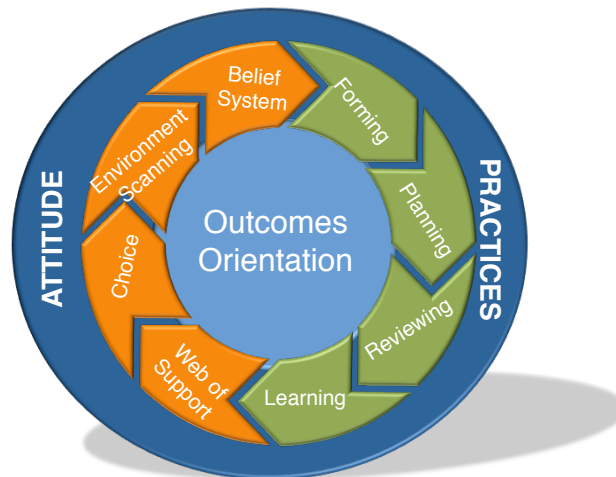


Because we are constantly buffeted by disruption at work, it helps to think of resilience as something that occurs along a continuum. On our best days, we find the balance that enables us to respond in ways that are appropriate to the circumstances. This is true for individuals, teams, and even organizations.

When we are less resilient than we would like to be, we can get caught up in unthinking adherence to tools and techniques. This condition makes us and our team brittle and subject to easily shattering as the disruption intensifies. We call this state of over-reliance on externalities “over-boundedness”.

Similarly, we can find ourselves and our team lost in process and unable to get traction on the work we need to do. We feel blown around by all the changes, drifting and without focus. We refer to this excessive concern with process as “under-boundedness”.

Zooming in on the balance point of our continuum, we can see the different elements that contribute to creating balance, or resilience in our teams.

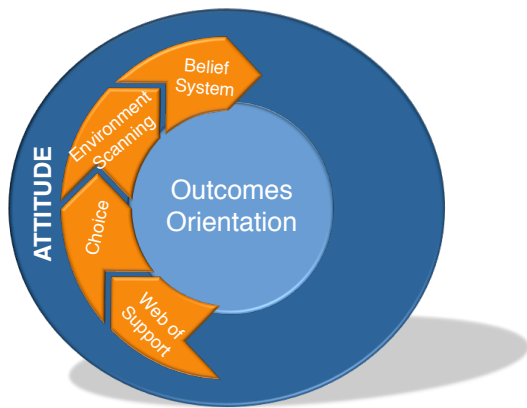


All these elements are part of a **sphere of excellence**. The sphere of excellence represents what the team is trying to create for itself and what will help it navigate the turbulence it faces. The different pieces of the framework provide the map.

The primary focus of the team is an **orientation toward outcomes**. Outcomes describe what will be different as a result of the team’s success. Outcomes are the *result* of the work of the team, the *impact* the team has had. This makes outcomes different from, though connected to, any goals the team may have.

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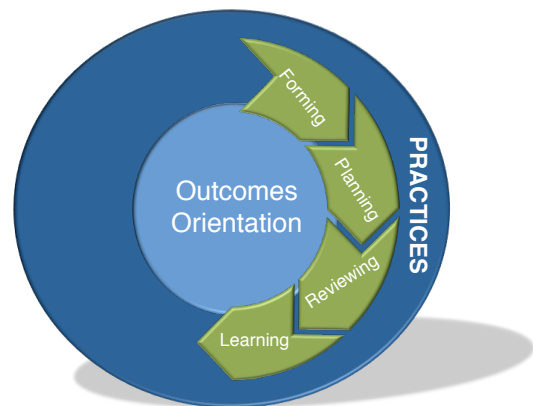


Beyond an outcomes orientation, the team needs to have the right **attitude** or perspective on its work. Its identity (Who are we?) and purpose (What are we here to do?) are bedrock components that underpin a **belief system**. Being tuned into the world around us, constantly **scanning the environment**, helps keep the team on track. The most effective teams are aware that they **always have choice** and so do not slip into a victim mentality. Knowing how to maximize alliances, partnerships, and networks builds a **web of support** that can be called on in times of need.

A cautionary note: too much attention to these attitudinal elements at the expense of doing the work can result in under-boundedness.

The other side of the equation in the System of Resilience is the **practices**. **Forming** the team means making sure we have the right people on board with a direction and task that are clearly defined and the requisite authority to carry out their responsibilities. Knowing who has to do what by when involves **planning**. The best teams build time for reflection into their regular operation. This makes it possible to periodically **review progress** and to **learn together** as a way to build capacity and improve capabilities.

While all these practices are beneficial to performance, relying on them too heavily leads to over-boundedness.



For resilience to become a sustainable part of the culture, the attitude and practices need to be embedded at multiple levels of the organization. Our experience points to these leverage points: developing team leaders, building teams, and working systemically across organizations, increasing the capacity for thriving in uncertain environments.

It is no longer sufficient to focus only on execution. The ability to adapt and be fluid is central to success today. One way to do this is by creating a teaming culture. Our framework creates a language and provides tools that makes this possible.

We would be delighted to continue this conversation with you.

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