



Bounce Back: Increasing Workforce Resilience

Working today requires that we be change ready. Markets shift, needs evolve and the competitive landscape is redrawn. Organizations need employees who can adapt, recover and remain productive in the midst of change, transition or uncertainty.

The Current Situation

Once an organization has announced a restructuring, merger or new line of business, how do you ensure employees can absorb high levels of ambiguity, cope with change and stay focused on business? Today, change initiatives are a common fact of organizational life. However, the challenge of successfully implementing change remains. Change needs to be planned, carefully managed, monitored and measured.

Why It Matters

The stakes are hardly inconsequential. From the moment you announce news of change, you run the risk that workforce performance will suffer. Employees living with uncertainty for extended periods of time will at the least, experience confusion and anxiety that may impede productivity. They may fear for the future security of their own jobs and may disengage. With its workforce distracted, the organization as a whole faces a cascading set of threats. Falling productivity imperils critical business functions, compromising customer service and satisfaction. Business performance can plummet.

What To Do About It

Uncertainty and stress are inevitable parts of change, but a major disruption in business continuity isn't. Resiliency is a trait individuals can develop and strengthen. Here are six key steps you can take to ensure that your people survive change and bounce back quickly.

1. *Ensure that executive leadership is fully engaged.* Major change requires major leadership. Top management can sponsor change actively and visibly by impressing upon the entire organization the necessity for change and the benefits to be realized.
2. *Formulate a comprehensive, well-structured change management plan.* No plan, no quick bounce back. It's as simple as that. The proposed changes have to be introduced with forethought, appropriate supports have to be marshalled and resiliency has to be cultivated.
3. *Communicate clearly and consistently.* There's nothing more damaging than an unfounded rumor and nothing more inevitable when the organization's leadership remains tight lipped about what's in store and why. The organization needs to be clear about its messaging and have mechanisms in place to ensure that everyone in authority works from the same playbook.
4. *Comprehensively engage front-line managers.* Front-line managers are at the leading edge of any change event. Give them direction and training specifically related to the change event. Their role is to identify team challenges and apply resilience-building key practices during one-on-one conversations with immediate reports.
5. *Provide tools, resources and coaching.* Simple, actionable change management tools and resources can make a profound contribution to managing change successfully and sustainably. As a follow-up to reinforce sustainability, coach-facilitated group meetings should be held to ensure that managers and employees are putting their change management skills into practice and implementing change effectively.
6. *Conduct pulse surveys.* What you don't know can definitely hurt you. You need to keep abreast of what's happening on the ground and, if appropriate, adjust your strategy to ensure that your change event remains entirely under your control. Pulse surveys targeting employee morale and productivity will provide you with crucial insight on how employees are adapting and whether your initiative is still on track. What are people thinking and feeling? Have you been communicating with them effectively? Is the training you're providing working? Are productivity levels being maintained?



The sooner your people can adapt and bounce back after change is announced, the better you can compete.

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In today's increasingly fluid business environment, organizations everywhere are under pressure to adopt significant change with greater frequency. Those companies that can manage change best enjoy a clear competitive advantage. The sooner your people can adapt and bounce back, the better you can compete. The more completely you can maintain the continuity of your operations, the stronger your performance and the more secure your competitive position. Taking an organized, carefully conceived approach to managing change is more important than ever.

About Lee Hecht Harrison

Lee Hecht Harrison (www.lhh.com) is the global talent mobility leader. We connect people to jobs through innovative career transition services and help individuals improve performance through career and leadership development. LHH assists organizations in supporting restructuring efforts, developing leaders at all levels, engaging and retaining critical talent, and maintaining productivity through change – helping organizations increase profitability by maximizing their return on investment in developing people, while assisting individuals to achieve their full potential.

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