



## Case Study

# Resilience Strengths to Face Change Again

**Situation:** Preparation for adverse effects of an industry cycle prompted a search for specific resilient change capabilities a long-tenured company can count on again

# Case Study – Using resilience strengths to face change again



## 1. Challenge – Respond strategically to an industry cycle using existing strengths

A cyclical change in the industry meant the Vice-President of Human Resources would be asked to reconfigure people resources. The large manufacturing firm had a long history of reinvention whilst retaining its legacy business. Now, newer employees would be required to respond to cost reduction and consolidation, too. The VP wanted to

- Characterize specific collective strengths related to change capabilities in eight business units and
- Be deliberate about reinforcing and using them.

## 3. Results – Employee voice heard, strengths made visible and what to reinforce understood

### Employee-Built Strengths

1. Real-time adjustment of the work to the situation
2. Making do with what's available
3. Persistence
4. Problem solving rather than blame
5. Ownership of what needs to be done
6. Confidence in possibility
7. Employees intend to stay 3-5 years (84%)
8. Co-workers trust one another
9. 87% of respondents offered written comments – 22% describing the historical continuity of the firm. A theme of balancing workload and "more with less" stress also emerged.
10. The business segment expected to score quite low scored above average on four of seven key aggregate measures.

## 2. Strategy - Engage, learn and act

The VP engaged his HR staff in each unit. "We'll learn more about our flexibility and strengths. Like the captain of a top performing sports team who says that resiliency is why they beat the competition, we believe this is why we're outperforming our own competition." Local leaders forwarded a message from him to unit staff, adding their own request, inviting participation in a 10-minute online survey.

- 60% of targeted staff participated in an Organizational Resilience Capacity Assessment.

## 4. Outcomes – Recognized strengths, change capability reinforced and continuity expected

The VP of HR received a specific list of employee-built strengths he and his team could identify, amplify and use deliberately as a change advantage. A first step was to report those back to HR staff, managers and to respondents, referencing the company's history of adaptability and encouraging those stories.

Adversity did face the company as reflected in a 10-year stock price low and role consolidations across units to cut costs. A large acquisition was to be considered. The VP noted, "It's helpful to talk about what we do well when we have to continually change."



## Challenge

A cyclical change in the industry required the Vice-President of Human Resources at a large manufacturing firm to reconfigure people resources. The firm had a long history of reinvention whilst retaining its legacy business. Now, newer employees would be required to respond to cost reduction and consolidation, too. The VP wanted to identify specific collective strengths related to change capabilities in eight business units and be deliberate about reinforcing and using them.

## Strategy

The VP engaged his HR staff in each unit. “We’ll learn more about our flexibility and strengths. Like the captain of a top performing sports team who says that resiliency is why they beat the competition, we believe this is why we’re outperforming our own competition.” Local leaders forwarded a message from him to unit staff, adding their own request, inviting participation in a 10-minute online survey. 60% of targeted staff participated in the Organizational Resilience Capacity Assessment.

## Results

Specific resilience capabilities were identified as strengths. These included the real-time adjustment of work to match the actual situation, making do with what’s available, sticking with something until it’s done right, problem solving rather than blame, ownership of what needs to be done and finding possibility in most situations. As an example of investment, most respondents (87%) added comments to the survey. Most employees (84%) intended to stay. Trust in co-workers was expressed as a high average score (5 out of 6).

## Outcomes

Having received a specific readout of employee-built strengths, the VP and HR teams could advertise, amplify and deliberately use them as a change advantage. A first step was to report these back to managers and respondents, referencing the company’s history of adaptability and encouraging stories about these attributes. Messages about resilience strengths began to accompany notices about role consolidations, early retirements and a large acquisition. The VP affirmed the value of deliberately setting the expectation that “we know how to navigate this change, too”.