

Adversity Quotient and Resilient HR Culture: A Success Strategy for Organizations

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Abstract: Culture is made up of the values, beliefs, underlying assumptions, attitudes, and behaviors shared by a group of people. Culture is the behavior that results when a group arrives at a set of generally unspoken and unwritten rules for working together. Culture is like personality as in a person, the personality is made up of the values, beliefs, underlying assumptions, interests, experiences, upbringing and habits that create a person's behavior. Organizations culture is made up of all of the life experiences that each employee brings to the workplace. Culture is particularly influenced by the organization's founder, executives, and other managerial staff because of their role in decision making and strategic direction. Adversity Quotient predicts how well one withstand adversity, overcome it, and foresee who will be crushed who will exceed and fall short of their expectations in performance and potential and who gives up and prevails or AQ is simply a measure of how you respond to adversity. This Paper Aims to build employees AQ and explains how to frame a resilient HR culture in organizations as human beings are the key drivers to build success strategies.

Keywords: Adversity Quotient, Culture, Organization, Resilience, Employees, Strategy

1. Introduction

Changing organizational culture is the toughest task companies will ever take on. Organization culture was formed over years of interaction between the participants in the organization. Changing the accepted organizational culture can feel like rolling rocks uphill. Organizational cultures form for a reason perhaps the current culture matches the style and comfort zone of the company founder as culture frequently echoes the prevailing management style. Since managers tend to hire people just like themselves, the established organizational culture is reinforced by new hires. Organizational culture grows over time and people are comfortable with the current culture. For people to consider culture change, usually a significant event must occur. An event that rocks their world such as suffering with bankruptcy, a significant loss of sales and customers, or losing crores of Rupees, might get people's attention. Even then to recognize that the organizational culture is the culprit and to take steps to change it is a tough journey. In no way do I mean to trivialize the difficulty of the experience of organizational culture change by summarizing it in this article, but here are my best ideas about culture change that can help your organization grow and transform. When

people in an organization realize and recognize that their current culture needs to transform to support the organization's success and progress change can occur. But change is not pretty and change is not easy even though organizational culture change is possible and it requires understanding, commitment, and tools. Today, 'business as usual' means rapid change, an influx of new technologies, economic turbulence, uncertainty, and ambiguity. To counter this new normal organizations need employees and leaders who are agile, adaptable, and flexible. In a word turn Resilient. HR and talent management professionals can help by creating resilient organizational cultures. This will require a fundamental shift in thinking, away from squeezing the most productivity from employees and towards enabling employees to take care of their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs, thereby building resilience.

2. Adversity Quotient

Dealing with the difficulties of each day and the difficult people with whom one interacts is an ongoing challenge. Stoltz (1997, 2000) provided theories on adversity quotient of an individual on how to resolve such challenge and strive to overcome it so as not to affect deeply what he/she will

accomplish in his/her work and towards life. He defined AQ as the measure of one's resilience and ability to persevere in the face of constant change, stress and difficulty or AQ is simply a measure of how you respond to adversity. Adversity Quotient predicts how well one withstand adversity, overcome it, and foresee who will be crushed who will exceed and fall short of their expectations in performance and potential and who gives up and prevails. Stoltz (1997) found out that AQ has three forms say firstly, AQ is a new conceptual framework for understanding and enhancing all facets of success. It is build upon a substantial base of familiar research which offers a practical new combination of knowledge which redefines what it takes to succeed. Secondly, AQ is a measure of how one responds to adversity which can be understood and changed and can be calculated and interpreted. Thirdly, AQ is a scientifically grounded set of tools for improving how to respond to adversity resulting to an overall personal and professional effectiveness.

3. C.O.R.E. Dimensions of Adversity Quotient

Adversity quotient encompasses four dimensions which measures the AQ of an individual. They are Control, Ownership, Reach, and Endurance embodied in the acronym C.O.R.E.

C stands for perceived control over adversity. Being able to predict and control events fosters adaptive preparedness. On the other hand the inability to exert influence over adversity breeds apprehension, apathy, and occasionally despairs. Specific perceived control over adversity is a major source of action because people who believe they can attain certain outcomes have the incentive to act.

O stands for the perceived ownership of the outcome of adversity. Some individuals experience strong emotions and discontent when they fail to achieve certain outcomes. Very often the discontentment drives the individual towards taking accountability of their actions and therefore the outcomes. They take steps to circumvent unpleasant events or center their attention on the outcomes of adversity regardless of its origin.

R stands for reach, which look at the perceived scope of the adversity i.e. how far the adversity gets into the areas of one's life. The greater the perception of the scope of adversity, the more handicapped such persons will feel. They tend to adopt pessimistic outlooks, experience agitation, sleeplessness, bitterness, helplessness, make poor decisions and become socially and professionally isolated. The ability to manage the 'reach' of adversity, the ability to quarantine adversity benefits all individuals regardless of occupations.

E stands for endurance, which is linked to the perceived duration of the adversity. Attribution theory indicates that there is a big difference between people who attribute adversity to something temporary versus something more permanent or enduring. Applying this theory people who see their ability as the cause of failure (stable cause) are less likely to continue than people who attribute failure to their effort (a temporary cause). An element of endurance is also the sense of hope that 'this too shall pass'. Hope is a confidence grounded in a realistic appraisal of the challenges in one's environment and one's capabilities for navigating around them. Currently

C.O.R.E. is used to measure AQ of an individual with the Adversity Response Profile.

4. Review of Literature

Further studies of *Stoltz (2000)*, described how one can cope with adversity in their professional and private lives. He found out that there are three components of human capacity that is required capacity existing capacity and accessed capacity. Required capacity is the amount of capacity that is demanded from a person as they encounter greater adversity in their jobs and lives. Existing capacity is what people have when they begin a job, when they are hired. It consists of their experience, aptitudes, knowledge, talents everything. Accessed capacity is what a person taps what they actually use. Most people according to him actually access tap and use between 5% and 25% of their existing capacity.

Since adversity quotient is learned, studies of *Dweck (1997)* showed that one's response to adversity is formed through the influence of parents, teachers, peers, and other key people during childhood. Additional result of the studies reveal that response to adversity can be interrupted and permanently changed so one can rewire one's brain for success. Thus discovering, measuring and applying AQ in one's area allow us to understand how and why some people consistently exceed the predictions and expectations of those around them. Those who cannot overcome adversity will suffer on all fronts while those with sufficiently high AQ's are likely to continue until they succeed. They will acquire benefits in all areas of their lives. Adversity has three levels of involvements that are say societal adversity, workplace adversity and individual adversity (*Stoltz, 2000*). Today the world is facing global economic crisis which affected society including the educational system. The schools are no longer a safe haven for children. Cases of drug addiction, early pregnancy, and broken family are the common societal adversity in schools. The workplace adversity now demands reengineering, restructuring, rightsizing, downsizing, revitalizing and decentralization. Workers are faced with constant change that calls to upgrade knowledge and skills. Individual adversity is the accumulated burden one carries due to societal and workplace adversities. The accumulated effects of large scale adversities are sometimes inspiring for many but to others the danger of losing hope. Changes begin at the individual and control is instigated to make a difference. A study of *Schmidt (1999)* compared the adversity response scores of leaders in education to leaders in business and industry. Her study transferred the concepts related to adversity responses of business leaders to the educational realm and provides the leaders with information and support to make changes in the current system. Areas of research investigated and discussed were hardiness, resiliency, learned helplessness, self efficacy, attribution theory and the individual responses to challenges and how these areas of study relate to leadership effectiveness. A total of seventy six education leaders and one hundred fifty eight business leaders were the respondents. She utilized the ex- post facto, descriptive study using a quantitative approach to data collection. The Adversity Response Profile (ARP), a self-rating questionnaire developed by Stoltz in 1997 was used to measure the individual's style of responding to adverse situations. Findings revealed that business and industry leaders scored high on ARP and can be interpreted that the business

and industry leaders respond more effectively to adverse conditions than their education leader's counterparts. Furthermore, it indicated that business and industry leaders are honed to address adversity for they react positively and are more hardy and resilient leaders. The research made by Williams (2003) showed that students attained higher achievement score in schools with higher AQ principals. This study examines the relationship between a principal's responses to adversity and student achievement, the relationship between principal and teacher's response to adversity and principal's perceptions of adversity in education. The research emphasized the importance of the principal in influencing student achievement through the management of meaning within school culture, nurturing of a collaborative work environment with teachers and the fostering of a resilient school culture (Deal, 2000, Sergiovanni, Moore, 1989 & Horne, 1997). A principal's adversity response plays a crucial role in the development of successful school climates and student achievement (Rosenholtz, 1989, Stoltz, 2000). Williams analyzed his works through the ex post facto non- experimental research design and the respondents were asked to complete an Adversity Quotient measure of Stoltz, 1997. His study involved seventeen 17 principals and 79 teachers from the Flagstaff Unified School District of Arizona. The AQ scores were compared to standardized student achievement data. The principals were also interviewed to gather additional qualitative data.

5. Organizational Culture

The visual and verbal components of an organization's culture are noticeable every day at work. Whether you are walking through a work area, sitting in an office, attending a meeting, or eating in the lunchroom, the organization's culture surrounds employees and permeates their working life. Culture is represented in an organization in the form of language, decision making, symbols, stories and legends, and daily work practices. Company's bulletin board content, the company's newsletter, the interaction of employees in meetings and the way in which people collaborate, speak volumes about the firms HR culture. It is possible to change existing organization culture developed by employees which seems unsupportive of reaching organizations goals or of the environment the firm wants to provide to its employees, culture change is a tough, but achievable option.



Figure 1: Indicates the Organizational Wheel

Source: <http://www.bridgespan.org/Publications-and-Tools/Organizational-Effectiveness.aspx>

When employees know where they fit into the growth and success of the company they work for it as the result is high engagement and shared purpose. A Culture Development team would be responsible for facilitating this alignment while enabling the growth of both the organization and its employees. This team acts in an organizational development capacity but with a focus squarely on serving employees as a strategy for driving engagement.

6. Basic functions of a Culture Development department might include:

a) Talent acquisition

For culture driven organizations, culture fit is a top priority when hiring new employees. It's important to have someone on the job passionate about the company culture and willing to explore unique and innovative ways to scrutinize talent.

b) Leadership development

If Culture Development is responsible for enabling growth, someone needs to design the progression curriculum so employees have a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to grow within the organization.

c) Personal development

The Firms like Zappos employs a full-time life coach to help employees achieve their goals and Infusionsoft has a "Dream Manager." The idea is to have someone on staff to help employees achieve personal goals which communicates that the employees goals have value to the organization as a whole.

d) Environment and facilities

While the work environment is not the determining factor in whether or not a company has a great culture its environment can play a significant factor. It makes sense that if Culture Development is in service to the employee as a customer, the team would be responsible for creating a positive work-space experience that incorporates the company values.

e) Culture Evangelism

No culture development team would be complete without someone to document the culture, communicate what the team is doing and how these initiatives fit into the larger strategy for the company.

7. Tips to Change the Weak Organizational Culture

It is more difficult to change the culture of an existing organization than to create a culture in a brand new organization. When an organizational culture is already established, people must unlearn the old values, assumptions, and behaviors before they can learn the new ones.

Some of the most important elements for creating organizational cultural change are:

a) Executive support

Executives in the organization must support the cultural change, and in ways beyond verbal support. They must show behavioral support for the cultural change. Executives must lead the change by changing their own behaviors. It is extremely important for executives to consistently support the change.

b) Training

Culture change depends on behavior change. Members of the organization must clearly understand what is expected of them and must know how to actually do the new behaviors once they have been defined. Training can be very useful in both communicating expectations and teaching new behaviors.

c) Create value and belief statements

Use employee focus groups by department, to put the mission, vision, and values into words that state their impact on each employee's job. It gives all employees a common understanding of the desired culture that actually reflects the actions they must commit to on their jobs.

d) Practice effective communication

Keeping all employees informed about the organizational culture change process ensures commitment and success. Telling employees what is expected of them is critical for effective organizational culture change.

e) Review organizational structure

Changing the physical structure of the company to align it with the desired organizational culture may be necessary. For example, in a small company, four distinct business units competing for product, customers, and internal support resources, may not support the creation of an effective organizational culture. These units are unlikely to align to support the overall success of the business.

f) Redesign your approach to rewards and recognition

Firms need to change the reward system to encourage the behaviors vital to the desired organizational culture.

g) Review all work systems

Like employee promotions, pay practices, performance management, and employee selection to make sure they are aligned with the desired culture.

For example, a firm cannot just reward individual performance if the requirements of its organizational culture specify team work. An executive's total bonus cannot reward the accomplishment of his department's goals without recognizing the importance of him playing well with others on the executive team to accomplish your organizational goals. So, one can change their organizational culture to support the

accomplishment of their business goals. Changing the organizational culture requires time, commitment, planning and proper execution, but definitely it can be done.

8. Conclusion

The various steps HR professionals can take to introduce resilience into their organizations cultures are firstly obtain senior management support to build a safe and secure work community at work place and encourage all employees right from the CEO to embrace the following tips to increase energy and productivity by monitoring their moods, to systematically train their attention and do first things first and jot down their work load by prioritizing according to time and urgency most of all the employees should be recruited based on their AQ levels they possess and gradually train and strengthen their AQ levels to increase their resiliency added to it as technology, process and culture changes employees must follow this **success mantra** that is **Learn, Unlearn and Relearn**.

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