

## **Business Resiliency and Organizational Development**

By Irene Rozansky

If you are a business resiliency professional, in one way or another, you are responsible for ensuring your organization is ready, willing and able to perform at peak level during a critical event. You already know that getting your organization ready is not a one-shot deal. It doesn't happen with a test or exercise, not even if you conduct several of these each year. Training and organization development are part of the continuous learning and adjustment activities that must go on relentlessly.

But, what does this really mean? "Training" happens when an expert works with learners to transfer to them certain areas of knowledge or skills to improve the learners' current or near-future jobs. Organization "development" is a broad, on-going, multi-faceted set of activities to bring the whole organization up to another threshold of performance, often to perform some new role in the future. Training is but one facet of development. Therefore, the strategy for each enterprise-wide resiliency program should be based on organization development theory, and not merely on "training".

The benefits for treating the education of staff as part of a broad-based development program are many. Your program should achieve most, if not all, of the following:

- Greater understanding of individual and group roles before, during and after a critical incident
- Identification and development of leaders for the resiliency program, response and recovery
- Increased motivation among the teams and team members
- Improved productivity and efficiencies in processes by teams and individuals
- Improved daily and recovery operations
- Increased individual potential (success breeds success)
- Increased positive behavioral changes
- Successful planning, response and recovery!

Before designing your development program, you'll need to take into account the ways grownups learn and organizations develop. Adult learning results from stimulation of the senses; materials presented must stimulate as many of the senses as possible to increase the likelihood of mastery, especially since in some people, one sense is used more than others to learn or recall information. Adults are very different from each other; be it age, cultural background, education level, or other differences. Adult learners are practical and are concerned about how they spend their time; they loathe wasting time on "lessons" that will not be useful to them on the job. They are concerned about the immediate applicability of learning.

Adult learners have well-formed expectations which include receiving specific feedback and rewards for learning. Following closely on this point, adults are relevancy-oriented, and therefore must be convinced that the new information you provide them is of value to them; that it will contribute to their own development and work success. Furthermore, adults are autonomous and self-directed. They need to be free to direct themselves, and to learn at their own speed. Lastly, because they have accumulated a lifetime of broad rich experiences and knowledge, adult learners need to connect new ideas to their own knowledge/experience base.

In this ever-changing world, organizations and individuals develop best by constantly re-addressing and fine-tuning the specialized skills that are necessary to keep the organization ahead of the curve, or at least on even keel within a particular industry. In this regard, the resiliency development program should contain activities that promote the four critical elements that ensure learning: motivation, reinforcement, retention, and transference.

What activities can be included in an organizational resiliency development program? Every activity that is part of the program should be viewed as a potential training or development event. The following list is a sample of the types of activities that may be used to promote development: kick-off meetings, regularly scheduled and ad hoc team meetings, plan review sessions, rehearsals, exercises, tests, simulations, feedback sessions, general awareness sessions, internal or external seminars on particular resiliency topics, planning workshops, business impact meetings or interviews, risk assessment meetings or interviews, reporting on program progress to a management group, new hire orientation sessions, mentoring, coaching, performance appraisals, management development, on-the-job training, and dissemination of newsletters, podcasts, articles, DVDs, videos, etc.

The key to successful resiliency development program is to plan for it, just as you plan for resiliency. It is part of your project or program plan. One should never allow development to become helter-skelter in nature (non-planned), which of course invites de-motivation, confusion, inconsistency and loss of budget. Only organizations that understand the values of training and development will protect this area from the fiscal chopping block in tough economic times. Business success, including responding to, and recovering from a critical incident, are based on skilled staffed. It is up to you to get your organization ready, willing and able. Best of luck to you!!

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