

Session 7

DEVELOPING RESILIENCE: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCES OF SELF EFFICACY AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT ON ENHANCING A POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF CHANGE.

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The challenge managers have struggled with for decades is how to increase positive and reduce negative behaviour when organisational initiatives bring about change to workloads and the workplace environment. Managers are frequently expected to also lead and encourage staff to cooperate and move forward in support of change. From past experience, all managers will acknowledge that individuals present diverse responses when affected by change, leaving some with a sense of disempowerment that pre-disposes negative behaviour. Building a positive workplace culture of empowerment is dependent on the extent to which individuals have developed an effective level of personal resilience. Resilience grows through developing the ability to rebound from adversity in a positive manner, and to have the ability to identify, assess, and resolve problems. Individuals who have developed an effective level of resilience tend to approach and adapt to change in an increasingly positive manner. The result of this is that they are able to develop a stronger sense of coping and/or managing themselves (empowerment) through change rather than focussing only on the increased complexity or volume of tasks. Therefore, one positive option to increase desired responses towards change initiatives is to develop an environment where individuals can build effective levels of resilience.

The first step to growing levels of individual resilience, is to gain an understanding of intra-personal beliefs upon which each of us act. For example, the perceptual construction of self-efficacy and the psychological contract are two major influences on how we behave. Self-perceptions of efficacy are based on judgements of value and ability in comparison with others. These judgements are influenced by the content of the personally constructed 'psychological contract'. The psychological contract is developed and held within the mind as an unspoken understanding regarding expectations within the relationship between self and other(s), e.g. the organisation, the manager, the colleague. While it is not possible within the limitations of this session to explore social and psychological processes to great depth, it is possible to introduce these concepts and gain an understanding of how they strongly influence an individual's behaviour in response to change, and to support the growth of resilience within your work environment.

Presenters Biography

Barbara May has worked in the education and science sectors for 24 years, including 12 years in tertiary management positions. Barbara completed her MBus (First Class Hons) in 2008 as a mature student. However, realising that ongoing success is greatly enhanced by utilising accumulated experiential knowledge she now focuses on managing and leading professional staff through the development of a culture of resilience – individual confidence and group effectiveness.

Barbara has experienced numerous organisational restructures and concludes there is no one right way to implement change. This experience highlighted that resilience developed through skills and knowledge emerges as a major contributing factor that increases an individual's ability to adjust and remain productive. It is from this background that Barbara will be offering some suggestions on developing a workplace culture of resilience in an effort to minimise negative perceptions inherently bestowed upon organisational change initiatives.