

# Workplace Enhancement Notes

A Tip Sheet for Organizational Leaders & Managers

Volume 8, Issue 1

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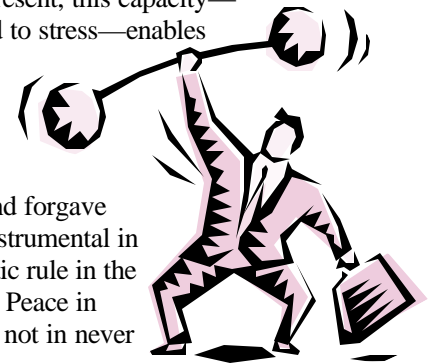
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## Developing Resilience in the Face of Change

**H**ow is it that some people tend to thrive on organizational change while others whither in the face of it? What enables some people to bounce back after a setback in their job or personal life? In our consulting practice, we have seen a number of key personal characteristics that strengthen a person’s capacity to successfully overcome challenge and adversity. When present, this capacity—called resilience by those who study how people respond to stress—enables almost anyone to rise up after setbacks.

Nelson Mandela, the first president of the post-apartheid Republic of South Africa, knows quite a bit about personal resilience. After serving 27 years as a political prisoner in South African jails, he not only befriended and forgave those who imprisoned and even tortured him, but was instrumental in ensuring a peaceful transition from minority to democratic rule in the new South Africa. For this he earned the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1993. “The greatest glory of living,” says Mandela, “lies not in never falling, but in rising after every fall.”



### Characteristics of Resilience

Developing the capacity to rise up successfully in the face of adversity requires an array of interdependent personal characteristics. Our research on this capacity echoes that conducted by authors Daryl Conner and Bonnie Bernard. We have found that there are a variety of personal characteristics and qualities that people can nurture and develop in themselves to strengthen their resilience. These characteristics include:

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## Making Good Decisions

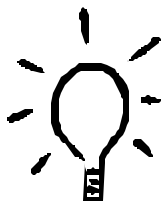
**D**ecision making is the capacity to choose a course of action from among a number of alternatives. When done thoughtfully, it enables you to move in a specific direction with a high level of confidence that you have made the right choice and that the results will strengthen you or your business’ future. Despite the importance of decision making, however, we often find ourselves making choices that solve the wrong problem, don’t attack the causes (which enables the problem to surface again and again), or fail to anticipate likely obstacles to implementation. In addition, we often neglect to evaluate whether we even made the right choice.

Making good decisions requires both good *intuition* and good *processes*. One, intuition, emerges from our right brain, the other, processes, from our left brain. When we have good intuition, it means that we give over to our right brain and heighten our self-awareness such that we *feel* and sense what is true or right based upon our personal history. Intuition is the collective wisdom that emerges from our experience—a wonderful gathering of our past successes and failures. Intuition is especially useful when we don’t have all of the facts, when data is missing, and we have to go with what *feels* right. One develops intuition by

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### Read this Issue to . . .

- Understand how to develop resilience in yourself and others
- Make good decisions
- Learn how to develop consensus

## Developing Resilience, contd.

You become more resilient in the face of adversity by being clear about who you are and what you want to create in your life.

- **Having a clear sense of identity and direction** — having a clear sense of who you are and what you want to create and achieve in your life. Clarity of your identity and personal vision helps give meaning and focus to your life.
- **Being optimistic and positive** — acknowledging the realities of a challenging and complex world, viewing challenges as opportunities, and believing in yourself and your capacities to meet any challenge. This includes having the personal conviction “I have what it takes to get the job done.”
- **Being proactive** — focusing on what you need to do to achieve your goals vs. what others are or are not doing to you. People who are proactive have an *internal* locus of control — they believe that they determine their destiny vs. a destiny defined by others. Proactive people can appropriately separate themselves from negative messages and conditions, learning from them while not being overwhelmed by them.
- **Being organized** — developing personal systems and structures to give your life some measure of stability and continuity, especially during times of personal or professional change and disruption.
- **Being able to solve problems** — demonstrating the capacity to effectively think through and resolve personal and professional problems using the skills of planning, collaboration with others, and critical and creative thinking.
- **Being socially competent** — demonstrating responsiveness, empathy, and caring for others. This quality also involves demonstrating effective communication skills and displaying a sense of humor—an ability to laugh at yourself.
- **Being flexible** — making room in your life for alternative ideas and methods; listening to the perspectives of others; adjusting your personal vision with the realities of life that are often difficult and challenging.
- **Getting connected** — establishing a personal and professional network of relationships and partnerships that give you support, ideas, and honest feedback. Resilient people share ideas, solutions, problems, and frustrations; they focus on discovering areas of common ground and answers to common problems.



*Call Russell Consulting today to learn more about how we can help you enhance your own resilience—and the resilience of your organization*

### How Can You Develop Resilience in Yourself & Others?

Developing your resilience requires you to be critically reflective about your internal competencies and characteristics and then to work hard to develop your resilient capacities. For the past ten years, Russell Consulting has been helping individuals and organizations enhance their resilient capacities. Through personal and organizational assessments—such as the DiSC behavioral profile, leadership assessments, and quality of worklife employee surveys—we enable people and organizations to gain critical insights into the actions that they need to take to enable them to “rise up after every fall.”

Call us today to discuss our ideas and approaches for enhancing your own resilience, the resilience of your staff, or of your entire organization.

***RCI is now online!*** Want to learn more about how *RCI* can help your organization achieve great success? Visit Russell Consulting online today. At our new Website, you can read about our recent projects, our research interests, view past issues of *Workplace Enhancement Notes*, and learn more about how *RCI* can guide your organization towards its quality and financial goals. Direct your Web browser to:

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## Making Good Decisions, contd.

listening to that collective wisdom, by tuning into our sense of what seems to be true.

Good processes, on the other hand, involve *left* brain thinking—where we apply our analytical skills to developing and following a thoughtful method for reaching the decision that best fits a specific situation. Whereas the intuitive side of problem solving strives to capture what *feels* right, the *analytical* side focuses on a careful method of analysis based upon data gathering and sorting.

The best approach to problem solving involves *both* sides of our brain in a rich synthesis of the intuitive and the analytical. One must be careful, however, that the analytical doesn't crowd out the intuitive—something too common in most organizations. The challenge is to create an effective analytical process that carves out space for the intuitive.

Here is the problem solving model that we use and teach our clients. In it, we strive to include both halves of our brains:

1. **Select & Define the Problem** — What problem do we need to work on? What is/is not the problem? How extensive is the problem? You should gather data here to help you identify and define the problem that most needs solving and identify its impacts. It's okay, however, to go with your gut. What *feels* like the problem that needs solving now?
2. **Define the Desired Outcome & the Higher Purpose** — When the problem is solved, what will the short-term solution look like? What "higher purpose" or long-term goal will be achieved through addressing this problem? Here you should use your intuition. What *feels* like a good outcome? Part of this step involves describing measures of success. This aspect involves your analytical side. How will success in addressing the problem be measured? What measurable/observable phenomena will be used to gauge the effectiveness of the solution?
3. **List Potential Causes of the Problem** — What factors and forces have caused this problem to exist? What *sustains* this problem? For this step in the problem solving process you should use both analytical tools (such as the cause-effect diagram) and intuitive tools (such as an affinity process). Both approaches help you identify the range of possible causes of a problem.
4. **Identify Potential Roadblocks/Setbacks** — What are the possible forces, factors, events, or constraints that may inhibit progress in addressing the problem? Scanning your environment, both present and future, for potential obstacles to success is more an intuitive than analytical process. You are trying to answer the question: what might prevent success?
5. **Identify the Actions to Address the Causes & Solve the Problem** — What actions, once implemented, are part of the solution to the problem? How will the causes be directly addressed? What actions will you take to *proactively* respond to potential roadblocks and, therefore, protect your plan? Use both your intuitive and analytical side to explore the answers to this step of the process. See the related article on **consensus** in this issue.
6. **Develop an Implementation Timeline & Assign Responsibility for Action** — Who is responsible for taking the specified actions? When will the actions occur? Developing the operational plan is very much an analytical process. At this step you are integrating all of the previous work into an implementation plan that builds in accountability for action and results.
7. **Monitor Progress & Revise the Plan** — Are we seeing the desired results? What actions need to be revised? What new actions should take place? What should we keep doing? Your process isn't complete without a formal and systematic way of monitoring your progress and making improvements to the plan. Your analytical side creates the process, your intuitive side tells you whether you've really accomplished what you wanted to.

### Learn the Tools for Effective Decision Making

Contact Russell Consulting for more information about how we can help enhance your organization's decision making processes. Through our training and consulting services, we can help you create problem solving structures, apply our decision making model, and strengthen both your analytical and intuitive skills.

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The best approach to problem solving combines both the right and left sides of your brain

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"No problem is so large or complex that it can't be run away from."

Charlie Brown

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*Want to enhance your decision making processes and tools?*

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*Call Russell Consulting  
(608) 274-4482*

## The Art of Developing Consensus

**W**hat is consensus? How do you best achieve it and why is it important to a team when reaching a decision?

Everybody talks about consensus, but few people and teams really understand what it means to achieve consensus or how to facilitate a process that enables it to happen.

Over the years in our consulting practice, we have developed a definition that helps teams put their arms around this important concept: consensus is 100% commitment by a group to proceed in a certain direction. Consensus requires that—although the decision may not be the decision that any one person might choose—all participants *act as if it was their personal decision*. Consensus requires that individuals feel at least 70% comfortable with the decision and agree to stand behind the decision 100%.

True consensus is more likely when decision making groups understand and adopt the following core principles to help create an environment that supports and sustains consensus:

- **Equal sharing of information** — All information relevant to making an informed decision has been shared equally among members. No one person has an information advantage over others.
- **No fear** — Participants are open and honest with each other. People have the freedom and opportunity to speak freely about their views and feelings without fear that expressing an opinion will lead to negative consequences.
- **Everyone is heard** — Participants feel that their perspective has been heard and carefully considered by the group or team. *Advocacy* of a perspective is balanced with *inquiry* into other's viewpoints.
- **Respect for diversity and an openness to new ideas** — There are no preconceived notions of what the “right” answer is. People are flexible in their own opinions, they appreciate differences, and make room for ideas that may be contrary to their own.
- **Personal sacrifice** — Participants are willing to sacrifice aspects of their own personal preferences to benefit and strengthen the team.
- **Full support** — Regardless of their initial preferences regarding a decision, all participants agree to support the consensus decision 100% — even when challenged by others.
- **Thoughtfulness & patience** — Participants never rush to achieve consensus. Achieving true consensus takes both time and a thoughtful process. Without either, achieving consensus will be difficult.




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Consensus exists when individuals feel at least 70% comfortable with a decision and they individually agree to stand behind the decision 100%

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*Call Russell Consulting for more information on our training program on the Art of Developing Consensus and other team and organizational development skills*

**Call RCI.** Contact Russell Consulting to explore our strategies for developing consensus on your team. We custom-design our training seminars around our clients' unique needs and circumstances. Call RCI today to explore the ways in which the *Art of Developing Consensus* could help you and your team.



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Linda & Jeff Russell, co-directors of RCI

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