

# HumanResources

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PAULA  
MARCONDES  
Consultant, trainer and  
executive coach  
ACT Human & Business  
Development

# Surviving and thriving

Companies need to build a strong defence to keep employees in peak condition.



Survival of the fittest: Companies need to become a lot smarter by providing healthy working environments to help employees maintain good health.

**The dictionary definition** of "resilience" says it has its roots in the Latin word *resilire*, which is to jump back or recoil. It can be defined as the ability to return to the original form, or position after being bent, compressed or stretched.

These two definitions apply to the resilience of materials – as in the fields of physics and engineering – and of individuals – in medicine and psychology, but the term is also used and defined in plenty of other fields such as computer networking,

biology, ecology and social studies. Regardless of the field in which it is used, resilience is in essence about survival.

It is surprising – because of its relevance in today's turbulent environment and the important role it plays when it comes to building successful organisations – that it has taken so long for resilience to crossover from other fields and become common place in the business world.

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resources, resilience will be seen by some as a fashion word or a buzzword overused or used inappropriately.

It is natural the industry will go through a learning curve as it starts to work with this “new” term and better understand its meaning, applications and relevance.

In a September 2011 article by Harvard Business Review, How To Solve The Cost Crisis In Health Care, two Harvard Business School professors, Robert S. Kaplan and Michael E. Porter, agreed healthcare costs are out of control, not only in the United States, but worldwide.

The problem is people are developing chronic diseases in greater numbers, at younger ages, and more often than ever before, and this is happening faster than nations, organisations and individuals are able to make the money to pay the treatment bills.

The Health Promotion Board of Singapore found one in four Singaporeans over 40 years have at least one chronic disease.

Kaplan and Porter argue to control healthcare costs, we need to find a better way to manage these costs by making the unit of measurement the patient rather than the treatments.

Wiser measurement methods will help keep costs under control, but without exploring what are the real causes of this problem it will be impossible to solve.

Interestingly, when it comes to organisations in particular, research shows stress has a greater impact on productivity than lifestyle medical conditions and even chronic medical conditions.

In fact, several research pieces have shown workplace can be linked to coronary heart disease.

Up until the early years of the new millennium, organisations used to approach

the problem by adopting a supply management approach – increased co-pays, higher deductibles and, if all else failed, switching healthcare providers.

Organisations now tend to adopt a demand management approach – they try to minimise the demand for healthcare by promoting health and wellness programmes.

Sending individuals to wellness programmes and expecting them to become wellbeing champions may be somewhat possible in the short term.

However, in the medium to long-term this goal is not sustainable, especially if people are returning to “diseased” working environments perpetuated by old-fashioned management paradigms.

Does the existing management paradigm in your organisation lead to vision, policies and systems that are sustainable and translate into a workplace that fosters wellness, wellbeing and learning?

Refining and aligning organisational cultures is always a complex process, but it need not be a daunting or chaotic one if implemented in a systematic, research-based and human-centred way.

Involve everyone and create awareness by using a results-focused resilience assessment tool to determine the level of resilience and potential risk areas in your organisation at its four layers: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

If at all possible, strategically leverage on on-going skills, team and leadership development initiatives to help build core resilience competencies in areas such as change management, emotional intelligence, time management, innovation and creative thinking, interpersonal effectiveness, problem-solving and decision-making to name a few. **H**