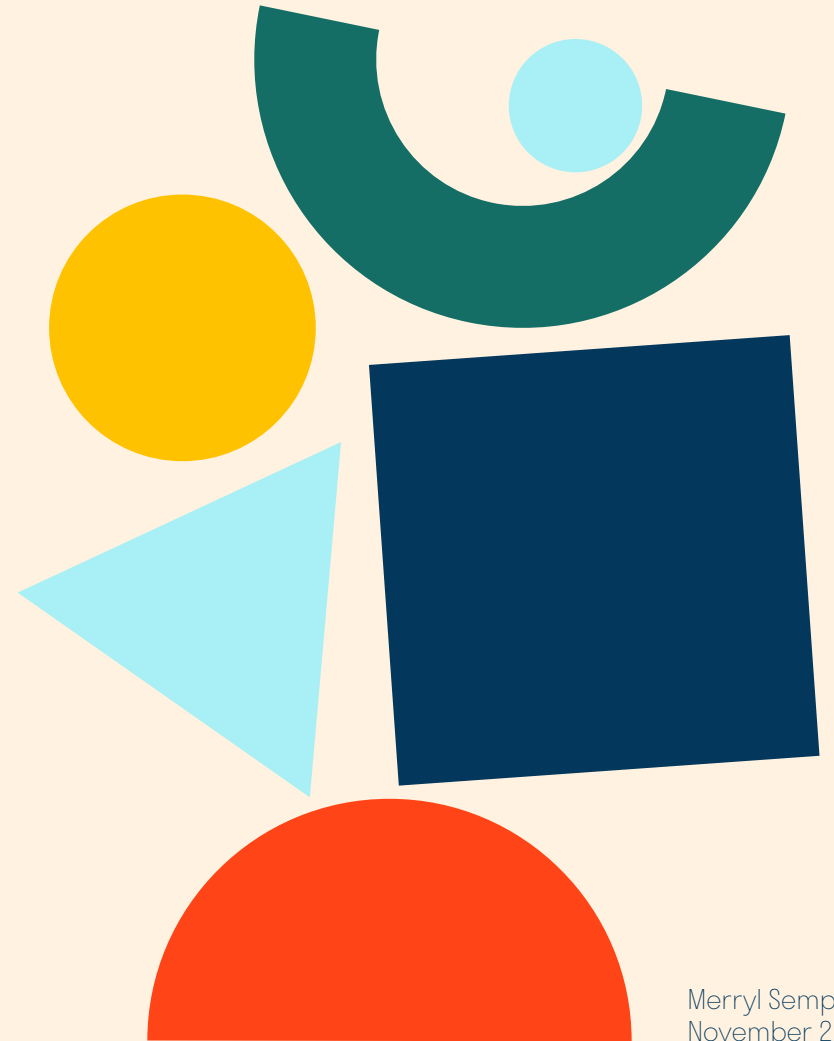


Resilience powers performance

How to energise creativity, collaboration and engagement.



Why resilience matters

The Future of Jobs Report (2018) predicted that the soft skills of creativity, innovation and ideation would be the key skills for the workforce of the future.

Leaders who invest time in understanding how to engage their employees in these soft skills will power up their workforce with passion, optimism and creativity.

The creative industries command workforce agility, creativity and high performance — in short, delivering the best at all times and on demand. A major challenge for industry leaders is how to keep the workforce energised and engaged so it can deliver its best work during periods of unrelenting pressure. Over the decades, research has highlighted the impact of employee engagement on the performance of key business outcomes — recent studies in 2020 confirm this.

1. Gallup found the percentage of 'engaged' workers in the U.S. (those who are highly involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work) dropped to 31% with significant potential performance consequences. Gallup also found that uncertainty and heightened social tensions are major contributors to workforce disengagement.²
2. In Australia, an industry study of the media, marketing and creative industries reported that the workforce is stressed. More than half of the respondents (52%) were working with anxiety or depression.³

Clearly, stress and burnout impact engagement and performance. Stress shows up as anxiety, overwhelm and resistance to change. We see it in a lack of collaboration and team tensions where it results in depletion of vitality and diminished creativity. Ultimately, employees become disengaged from the organisation and performance suffers.

Resilience is the measure of vitality and engagement. Engaged employees have energy. Energised employees are resilient. A resilient workforce is calm under pressure; it embraces challenge; it is optimistic; and it has the vitality to ride the waves of ambiguity and disruption.

Developing strategies to strengthen resilience in the workforce is critical for harnessing high performance and for building engagement that can sustain business growth in a fast-paced industry.

This paper will help readers to understand that:

- workforce vitality and engagement respond to disruption
- vitality and engagement are factors of resilience
- a resilient workforce is key to high performance.

A resilient workforce is highly engaged, energised by optimism and has a passion for creative work.



Four challenges for high performance

These challenges place stress on organisations. As the Gallup report showed, disruption can severely impact engagement.

Clients want everything done yesterday

The world of business and work is undergoing a significant technological revolution; it is putting pressure on workforce capabilities and the capacity to be better, faster and more creative. It is a competitive industry and the workforce needs to pull together to do its best work at all times in often tumultuous periods of market expectations.

Stress is impacting performance

Competing deadlines, heavy workloads and strained resources mean employees are expected to deliver significant creative work under pressure. This requires employees to be self-managing in order to sustain the mental and emotional effort it takes to deliver high performance. Without time and space to be creative and collaborative, mental fatigue and emotional exhaustion set in. Stress drains vitality. Employees get tired, make errors of judgement, impact team efforts and suffer burnout. Quality, brand reputation and attrition are at risk.

Turbulence creates disconnection

Current thinking focuses on achieving high workforce engagement by recruiting the right people to build capability. Along with this is the attitude that leadership sets the direction, works with market forces and then the workforce delivers.

Employees should leave their emotions at the door and just get on with the job. If you can't handle the pace, you're not in the right job.

However, periods of turbulence create disruption, urgency and greater work demands. Stress creates emotional disconnection and mental overload. Employees disengage and feel like they don't belong. Churn and burn is a real cost.

Leaders are also stressed

It's a challenge to be a role model under prolonged duress. It's natural for leaders to feel a loss of control and uncertainty. However, once stress is aroused, cognitive function is impaired. Just when clear judgement and decision-making is most critical, the brain shuts down and negativity takes hold. It's a threat response. This makes it more challenging for leaders to remain calm under pressure and with positive resolve, to better direct people to retain a high level of creativity, productivity and engagement.

A resilient workforce can face challenges with the capacity and vitality to engage when disruption is high. To achieve 'high performance on demand', leaders need to know how to read the vitality of the workforce and address any withdrawals of engagement. They also need to take their own pulse: a resilient workforce needs a resilient leader.

Turbulence creates disconnection.



How resilient is your workforce?

Resilience fuels engagement and productivity

It is an important measure of the health of an organisation in meeting challenges especially given that any change creates disruption to business as usual. These changes can be internal, for example, increased workloads and changes to work practices or team structures. They can also be external such as market forces, digitalisation or major social disruption.

Initially employees experience a stress response as they navigate a 'zone of disruption'. They will feel uncertain, confused and a loss of control. This is a natural response to change. It results in emotional instability, a lack of clarity and an inability to make effective decisions.

Feelings such as frustration and anxiety are rife. If left unattended, this negativity can lead to employee overwhelm and helplessness. Within your organisation it causes confusion, disconnection and disengagement that drains the vitality of the workforce and negatively affects performance and productivity.

Figure 1: Resilience Powers Performance model

A resilient workforce rides the zone of disruption with minimal impact. Responsive leaders who anticipate a zone of disruption can avoid workforce burnout by focusing on helping employees to navigate out of the zone of disruption and into confidence and control.

They can help others to see change as an opportunity for organisational growth and renewal. Responsive leaders will connect more closely with their workforce.

The leader who looks to energise the workforce and take steps to build resilience in the workplace can harness the power of passion for delivering brilliant work and achieving high performance in a fast-paced environment. The impact over time will be industry recognition in thought leadership.

- Are you building resilience or burnout?
- Is 'churn and burn' impacting high performance?
- Are your employees cautious about change? Are they feeling uncertain and lacking clarity?
- Does your workforce have the conviction to collaborate effectively?
- Is your business thriving on passion and optimism?

The Resilience Powers Performance model gives leaders the framework to create the conditions for a high performance workforce energised by mental clarity, vitality and a close affinity with the organisation's purpose.

Resilience Powers Performance model

Resilience	Workforce vitality	Organisational impact	High performance
●	Optimistic Passionate	Engagement	★★★★★
●	Confident Has Conviction	Collaboration	★★★★☆
●	Cautious Considered	Connection	★★★☆☆
●		Zone of disruption Lack of clarity and lack of control Uncertainty	
●	Anxious Confused	Disconnection	☹️
●	Overwhelmed Helpless	Disengagement	☹️
Burnout		Emotional exhaustion	

The red zone



Level 1: Disengagement

Employees at this level will have experienced extended work-related stress to the point of becoming burnt out. The organisation is losing its vitality.

Areas at risk: Attrition, quality and client relationships

Workforce vitality: Overwhelmed and helpless

Employees are disengaged from what is required of them, or worse, about the direction of the organisation. They feel fatigued, overwhelmed by the relentless, competing priorities, loss of certainty and control, and the changing scope of work. Employees feel unable to perform good work, and that they don't belong and no-one cares about them. They are 'just a resource'. Imposter syndrome is a heavy mental load.

Energy from team efforts is diminished as employees become increasingly demotivated by creative challenges. They detach from the work environment and question whether they want to be there. This 'churn and burn' culture is the death of creativity.



Level 2: Disconnection

Employees are struggling with productivity and creativity. Slippage is occurring in deliverables as employees become disconnected from business drivers.

Areas at risk: Collaboration and creativity

Workforce vitality: Anxious and confused

The workforce is tired and stressed. Employees are agitated, defensive with team members and leadership directives, and may be pushing back on client demands. They are questioning whether their work is good enough. They are feeling frustrated at being pulled off jobs and reallocated. Anxiety increases as they cope with higher productivity demands.

Employees feel there are not enough resources and not enough time. Beliefs such as 'I'm not fast enough' and 'I'm not creative enough' generate mental fatigue. Continued stress causes some employees to over-engage in their work environment with hyperactive, urgent behaviours that drain creativity. Confidence and vitality are fading.

The zone of disruption

The zone of disruption is a period in which employees come to terms with what is expected of them when facing the challenges of change.

Some may momentarily feel uncertainty and quickly move to caution and then confidence. Others may experience anxiety and overwhelm. Without supportive interventions, extended periods of stress can force employees down the pathway to emotional exhaustion and burnout. Business sustainability is at risk.

In this zone, leadership interventions are needed to build resilience in the workforce.



Level 3: Connection

Employees are facing their performance challenges. There is a need for more certainty and a greater level of control over workloads.

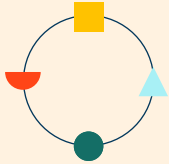
Areas of growth: Capability, collaboration, quality

Workforce vitality: Cautious and considered

At this level, the expectation of 'high performance on demand' is cautiously accepted but motivation and enthusiasm are guarded. Employees need to feel more certain so they demonstrate complacent behaviours and rely on the energy of others to carry them.

They are looking for answers and for what connections exist between resources and people so they feel assured that they have the creative capacity to deliver. They seek reassurances over their deliverables and want to build more trusting relationships.

The green zone



Level 4: Collaboration

Employees are feeling excited by creative challenges, they are demonstrating loyalty to the organisation and are highly motivated as a team to do amazing work for clients.

Areas of growth: Creativity, agility, client relationships

Workforce vitality: Confidence, conviction and commitment

It is the beginning of an upward spiral of emotional buoyancy and engagement, which re-energises the passion for delivering brilliant work. At this level, employees feel 'good at their job' and are confident that resources are at hand. Team efforts are leveraged to deliver amazing work and brand reputation is beginning to shine.

They feel collectively capable of overcoming any hurdles to full delivery. Their collaborative efforts extend to the client and the focus is on co-design in partnership. The employees' vitality and conviction ensures that the organisation can be responsive to market needs.



Level 5: Engagement

Employees' passion for quality and creativity and their internal agility ensures brand reputation for delivering leading edge thinking.

Areas of growth: Thought leadership

Workforce vitality: Optimistic and passionate

At this level, employees demonstrate the hallmarks of a resilient workforce. They are highly engaged; they operate like a team of masters and artisans; and they have industry recognition as thought leaders. They ride the waves of ambiguity in business with optimism and passion. Collaboration and creativity energise the organisation and deliver high performance on demand.

There are strong levels of support and trust in the organisation. The resilience of the workforce powers performance, delivers brilliant work and ensures business sustainability.

Power up performance

This model highlights three significant factors for building a resilient workforce and achieving high performance.

When combined, these factors energise your workforce and underpin high levels of engagement.

Clarity in uncertainty

Anticipate the zone of disruption. Leaders who understand that change disrupts clear thinking invest time in setting a clear and credible direction, with regular communication and visible organisation. They build a climate of psychological safety, levels of certainty and control.

Vitality in the face of challenge

Anticipate that turbulence creates emotional disturbance and stress. Leaders who understand that stress depletes vitality invest time in building acceptance, caution and confidence.

Affinity with the workforce

Anticipate that disruption to business-as-usual creates separation. Leaders who understand that people are inspired by connection to the organisation invest time in developing a values-driven culture. There is a leadership focus on collaboration, inclusion and team resilience.

Buoyancy

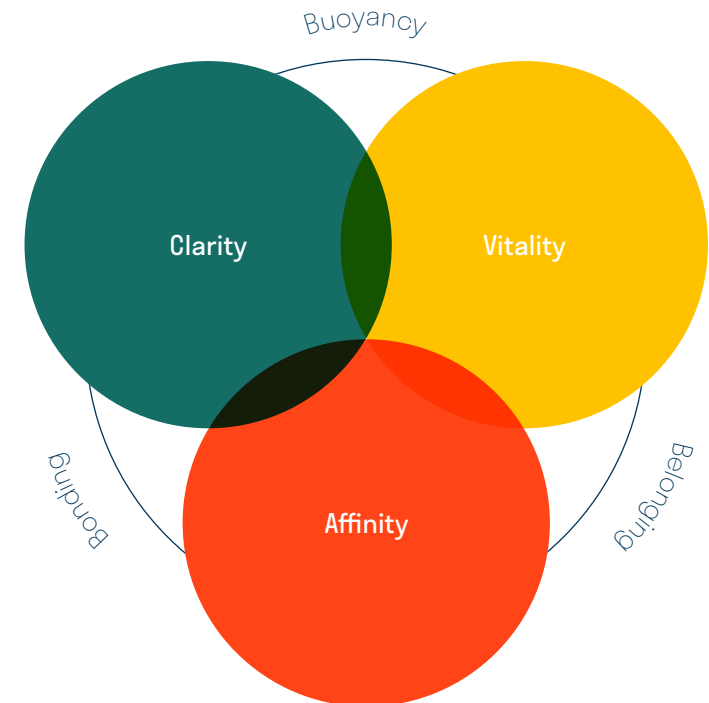
When Clarity and Vitality are at work, employees experience emotional buoyancy that supports them in riding the waves of ambiguity. Such buoyancy generates the health and well-being of the organisation. There is a leadership focus on trust, respect, acknowledgement and positivity.

Belonging

When Vitality and Affinity are at work, employees have a sense of belonging. They take great pride in collectively living the values because it's a culture worth belonging to. There is a leadership focus on linking strategy to culture and core values.

Bonding

When Clarity and Affinity are at work, employees bond with the organisation. Employees are engaged because they understand why the organisation exists and strongly support what it provides and how it delivers. There is a leadership focus on creating meaningful work worth doing.



Conclusion

Global social and financial disruption has created significant levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

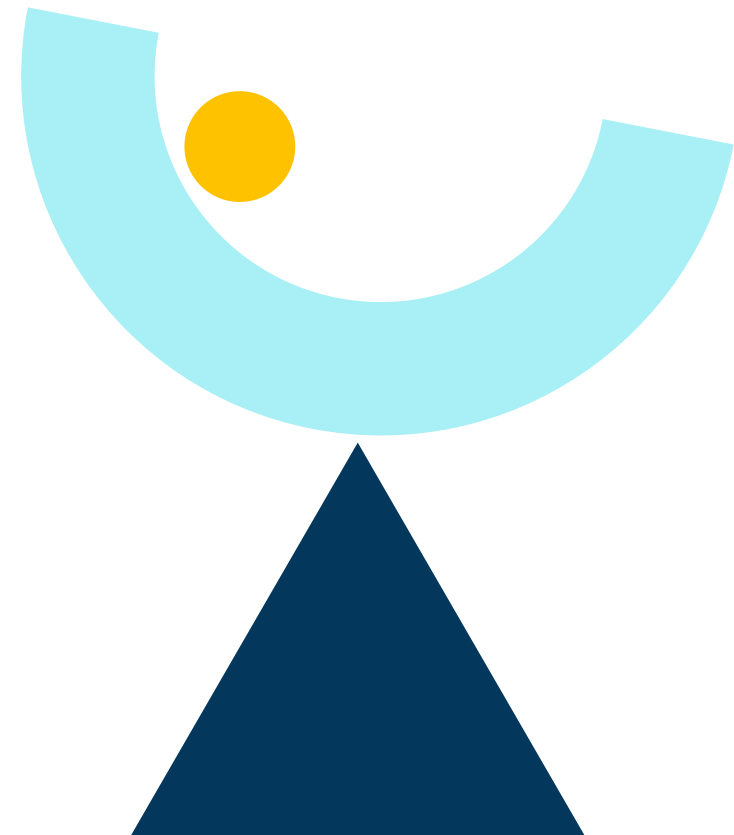
This has resulted in unprecedented levels of low workforce engagement. Stress is depleting creativity, impacting performance and business sustainability is at risk.

With engagement levels falling and stress on the rise, leaders need to pay attention to the factors that build a resilient workforce. Effective leaders anticipate that disruption causes emotional disturbance, lack of clarity creates confusion and uncertainty and results in levels of disconnection and disengagement.

Leadership interventions that clearly communicate direction regularly, provide structure, acknowledgement of contribution and uphold cultural values support employees to move through uncertainty to clarity, build emotional vitality and strengthen cultural affinity.

Build resilience in the workplace and your organisation will thrive on the challenge of high performance.

Leadership in turbulent times needs to build resilience to power performance.



Next steps

I am passionate about building resilience in the workplace at all levels.

Resilient Leaders

My programs develop leaders who are calm under pressure and have a positive impact in the workplace.

Through targeted coaching and facilitation, I help leaders to build the skills of mental and emotional resilience and to engage in closer, more trusting relationships.

Resilient Teams

My workshops focus on team work to improve performance, collaboration and creativity.

Team members learn to pay attention to when workload demands drain vitality and creativity. They learn to build the skills of resilience for improved creativity and high performance.

My programs and services:

- build resilience at all levels in the workplace
- add value to leadership, performance and change
- align with organisational strategies of change to deliver measureable improvements in performance, vitality and engagement

Endnotes

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Contact me to learn how
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resilience in the workplace



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