

Transcription - Resilience and Endurance At Work

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today we have a topic with Fulyana's background in mind. We're going to talk about resilience and endurance at work.

Why this topic came to mind is because one of my mentees, when applying for a job was asked to be resilient. We ended up talking about resilience and endurance at work and that's how it started. In doing that, at the end of this I will give you a reference to a couple of articles on that topic as well, that you might find interesting.

To me, resilience is exciting. Resilience is the ability to face a challenge at work, thinking I can't do it or this is too big, it hasn't been done before, and then doing it and not getting it all right, getting some of it right maybe, or failing totally and then bouncing back and saying, "What have I learned from that? How can I use it going forward? How can I use it to fix what I'm not happy with right now?"

Endurance?

Endurance is a compliment and it's also an asset. But endurance is more about being able to survive under very difficult circumstances and trying to meet some work objectives or deal with many other things or deal with major change by enduring the hardship, if you like, that goes with it and surviving at the end.

That is another skill but I believe that you need endurance and resilience for different things. I think what came to my mind first off, is the conversation that we had with Josh and Krystle Hockley, the triathletes, both of whom have in their period of time leading up to the World Championships that they will attend at the end of this year, had to exhibit both resilience and endurance. Endurance we can understand because it is an endurance type of sport that they do and they do have to endure physical stretching of their abilities in that race time. The resilience comes to the fore when they don't go as well as they should, when they go back to training and when they go to the next race. Resilience would have to be this time of year when they have to get up at 4.30 in the morning and go swimming. You've got to be resilient to do that every day for a week and then the next week do a bike ride and then the next week do running. The endurance and resilience, in that instance, is probably intertwined and I think that perhaps we have difficulty separating them in the work sense because we feel that they often come together or we see them exhibited at the same time under the same sorts of conditions.

In that discussion I referred to, we talked about how, at an interview situation for example, when somebody is trying to assess are you resilient, what are they likely to ask and how would they ask it? I guess the questions will be probing around how do you handle the area that has problems, constant problems, long standing problems, etc. They want to know if you're going to be able to deal with that. The answers would be, if you couch your answer by saying, problems to me, I get challenged and energized by finding solutions to the problems, I find that when I hit problems I'm learning, so I see problems as learning opportunities. Then you've got to give an actual couple of examples of the entire way. That's really important.

It's all very well to know the words that you should say about the typical characteristic that they're looking for. If you can give examples or talk in theory about it because you should have done your research about this organisation if you're being interviewed for it, you would know that that's sort of an organisational issue around it and talk about how you see your level of resilience working in that organisation. When you give the example, you say the action that was taken, that you took at the time, it was a positive action. Not, oh well it wasn't my fault and it was impossible and there was no other answer. Show the positiveness in examples, how you've done things in the past to maintain resilience.

I think it's very, very important to do one thing that a lot of us sometimes forget and that is celebrating success. By celebrating success, it is building up that energy, the confidence and makes you focus back or look back on examples where you did very, very well and that you met your objectives or exceeded them. The other thing is no matter what the challenge is and they always put challenges no matter what we do, is that you determine to meet your goals and just finding another way and another way. Another way that is resilience.

With the endurance side of things I think giving examples of where everybody gave up but you kept going. I think endurance coupled with resilience is a good combination. Not just about, I put my head down and let the wave pass and then it's okay, I don't care, I don't participate. That to me is a waste. Yes you might say I endure that, yes you might endure it but what have you learnt from it, what have you used to make it more exciting for your next chapter?

For my part I look at endurance as being able to survive and resilience as bouncing back. I think that the most important thing that you can do to use one to feed the other, is that if you have endured a project, a work situation and activity where it took longer, it was harder, it had all of these learning opportunities in it, challenges in it, that you weren't expecting, that when you do a review of that, that review becomes the feed that gives you the resilience. I think you need, in a lot of cases, you need the endurance before you feel like you've got the resilience. I think in an interview situation, I think that it's important for you to be very clear about what you see as your definition of those two things so that the people interviewing you have an understanding of what you're talking about, what you think these two terms mean, so that if it's different to their interpretation or different to what they're looking for, they have the opportunity to correct you or to say actually we're talking about this sort of thing. That means you can think on your feet about other situations that might fit into their frame of reference in terms of the words that they're using.

Maybe if I gave you an example of endurance and resilience in real life, office experience. Now in reality as a manager or as a team member, most organizations do a staff feedback, surveys or 360 degrees, where a person will ask people they interact with, their boss, their staff, the people they work for them etc., what do you think and score it? Let's say I received this feedback through the survey that said that said that I'm really really bad at some things in some situations. Obviously you would feel hurt, the first thing. We all like to get good feedback, not bad. The endurance would be the humiliation of everybody knowing that I was marked X which is the lowest score and people think, I'm really shocked about it. So I'm embarrassed, I'm humiliated etc. But I will endure that because I'm resilient and I want to face it. I'm very grateful as much as I hate it. I'm grateful that people told me so I now can fix it. It's

an opportunity for me to become a better leader as much as it hurts. You endured the humiliation but there was an upside. The upside is you learned something about yourself that you didn't know or you maybe didn't realize how damaging it was. You got an opportunity for learning and the bouncing back is, now what am I going to do about it to fix this, not just for the survey but it's really more my image, more my name, more my better skills as a leader. It's long term, so that is resilience.

It could also be that you're actually looking for another position, a better position, a career move, in that you endure the training period, the learning of the skills, the upskilling, all of those things. Then you decide you're ready to move to the next level of an organization or the next level of your career. You apply and you have your interview and you think you've done particularly well and you present yourself as well as you could. You miss out. How many times do you miss out before your resilience gets to a point where you think it's not worth it, I'm not going to do it? You know yourself, if you look at your own pattern of behavior, you will know what sort of endurance and what sort of resilience you have and if they're not at a level that you think they need to be for your career, then there are things that you need to work on, because every organization, whether they say it or not, is going to expect those qualities in their leaders. The importance is being able to face things that, within an organization, are totally unexpected. Sometimes you are in a position where you can predict and so prepare. Resilience is when something kind of comes out of left field, a big change in an organization, new management, takeover or the organization you worked with for years is being sold. What does that mean to you? For some some people it was a big shock, they worked in an organization as an apprentice of sorts or a trainee or whatever you want to call it and they've been there about 10-15 years. You love it, didn't see yourself working anywhere else, so the resilience is what do you do about that and how do you use the information and the time to face that challenge, bounce back and do better and do what Kim was talking about.

You're talking about go somewhere where it's the next step up, a new experience in itself. It's an area that we haven't talked about before and I think that what we're hearing now, what we're talking about, is exploring a whole range of issues that are about you personally, and about you determining what your values are, what your strengths are and what areas you need to develop. I think these areas, this endurance and resilience area, is very hard to measure unless you start to think about specific examples. You think about specific activities, whether it's in the workplace or not, I don't think matters, but I think it's an opportunity for you to actually write down, to do two columns on a bit of paper and say endurance, what have I done that exhibits endurance, whether it's at work or somewhere else and then resilience, what have I done that has shown my resilience in a situation. If I looked at that for myself endurance wise, there's lots of things that I could talk about in a work sense, but I'll talk about something outside of work. As you know, as you've heard in the past, I'm very interested in floral art, in flower arranging and I think my endurance in that sense comes about with particular competitions. Sydney's Easter Show is the prime example where it's two weeks, it's essentially eight hours, four hours of travel and four hours of putting designs together every second day for two weeks, so that's endurance. That's a physical and mental preparation activity and follow up and post-mortem that I need to survive and it's hard and it's taxing, but there is a goal within it and there's enjoyment during the day. So endurance doesn't have to be not enjoyable, you can be enjoying the activity as well as it needing endurance. The resilience part of it is that despite the outcome or regardless of the outcome almost, that even though this is a competition and I'm looking for recognition and the prize at the end of the day,

my resilience is that I do keep coming back every year. I do it every year regardless of the outcome, if I don't get the judging results that I want and I don't get the accolades that I would like, I'm resilient enough to know that I have to learn from that experience and I've got to come back and try again.

My point about this is that there also comes an end point where resilience is not so much exhausted as you can't see the value in being resilient any longer. You have to also draw the line and say this is the end point, this is the stop point of this activity, and that I'm not going to do it anymore, not so much because I am not resilient, but because the return is not there. That's another whole area where you need to make some decisions and know yourself in that situation. That's very important because it's a judgment call. It's not really about I can't do it anymore because I'm not resilient, I'm making a decision that this is enough, I've exhausted this matter enough and it's time to take a different action. It's about the activity more so than about your quality. I think it's important for you to do those lists, get those examples clear in your head because also, at that point, if you look at your resilience list and you can see where, in those activities, you will have drawn the line, you will have said no, I'm not going to do this anymore.

If I go back to that example, I've come to a point where I'm saying to myself I'm not going to do the Easter Show next year. I can't say that I'm going to get any more return out of it than I have in the past 10 years. For 10 years it's given me return on the endurance and the resilience and it's not that I'm not resilient enough to go back and do it again next year, but I can't say that there's going to be any benefit from me in exhibiting that resilience and so I draw the line and say no more.

Another couple of things to look at, I suppose, key people in the media that you know, not current, it doesn't have to be current, it can be anything from ancient history to now, about people, how they went from endurance to resilience. Maybe they grew up in poverty, changing world perception of things, hunger etc etc. Look for someone you can relate to and then you could use that to say how would I react in those situations, what would I have done, and how would I have got to that point this person got to. The two articles I was referring to that might be good reading is the Harvard Business Review article which also leads to another article. (Links are on the webpage for this podcast).

I think you have probably endured enough of our ramblings for this activity and will show your resilience by returning for the next podcast, so for today I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.