

How to Develop Adaptive Resilience in an Organisation

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Overview

- Background
 - Research details
- What is Resilience?
- Factors that promote:
 - organizational resilience
 - individual resilience



Context

- Christchurch, New Zealand (population 400,000)
- A magnitude 6.3 earthquake in February 2011
 - 185 deaths
 - Infrastructure damage
 - ❖ 52% of urban sealed roads
 - ❖ 124 kilometres of water supply mains
 - ❖ about a third of the total sewerage
 - 10,000 houses needed demolition



Source: <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/files/images/chch-earthquake-2011-6.jpg>



Research

- Initiated a series of research projects starting October, 2011
- October, 2012 – present: Detailed Study
 - Three-year research project funded by Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment (MBIE) on infrastructure resilience
 - Cross-disciplinary research team



Methodology

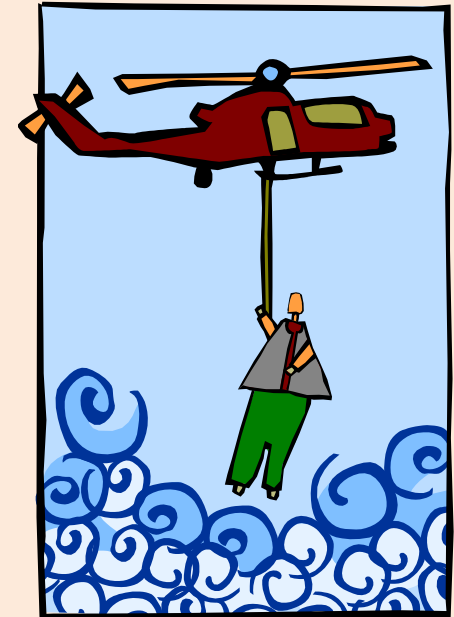
- 11 infrastructure organisations in Christchurch involved in the disaster
- 200 in-depth interviews of senior managers
- Data analysis using Nvivo, Leximancer, open coding, research memos and constant comparative analysis





What is Resilience?

- Ability to survive and thrive in a disruptive environment
 - Our focus on thriving
 - “Bounce Forward”
- Resilience is contextual and relational
- Resilience is not a trait or an organisational characteristic
 - More appropriate to view it as a process or an adaptive capacity





What makes Organisations Resilient?



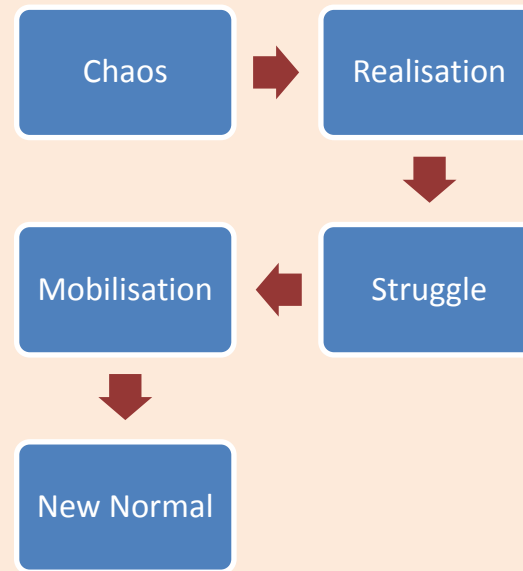
Empathetic Leadership

- Accessible to front-line staff
 - Top management – visible
 - Middle management - accessible
- Highly communicative
 - Needs to be authentic, frequent, honest, no sense of hiding or covering up any problems
 - Many companies learnt to use new ways of communicating with staff:
 - ❖ social media, cell phones, radios, satellite phones
- Positive and appreciative actions
 - Time off, bonus, gift, card
- Valuing and prioritising people
 - This has to come from the top to be really successful
 - ❖ Actions and words, led by example



Empathetic Leadership

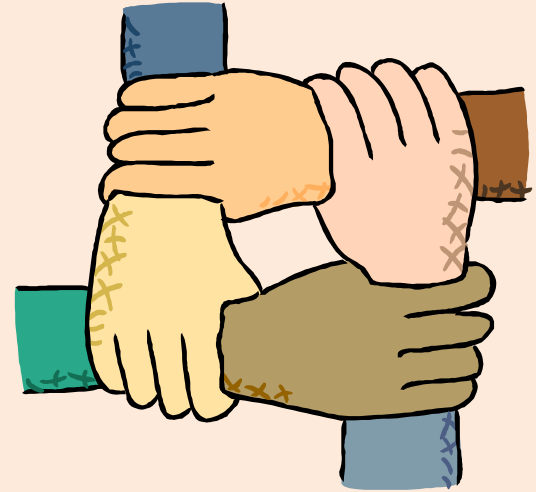
- Adaptive and willing to learn
 - Humility
 - Self-awareness
 - Self and staff well-being
- Sensitive to the evolving context
 - Not getting caught up in the moment
- Empowering middle management
- Leadership in the middle is crucial
 - Accessible, sensitive to emotions, caring, communicative





Collaboration

- External collaboration makes an organisation more resilient
 - Positive relationships and cooperation:
 - ❖ learning, logistical support, joint initiatives, better information
 - Dysfunctional external relations:
 - ❖ missed opportunities, roadblocks to progress, logistical shortages, interpersonal clashes, and lack of information
- Internal teamwork promotes both individual and organisational resilience





Learning Culture

- Prior experience
 - Increased resilience, if they learnt the right lessons
- The following increase resilience:
 - Openness to learning and feedback
 - Self-reflection
 - Admitting mistakes
 - Considering other options
 - Willing to take risks
 - Not blaming others
 - Teamwork



Staff Engagement and Wellbeing

- Family-friendly practices
 - Most organisations were aware and supportive
 - Primary tangible needs were easy to identify and address, but that wasn't enough
 - Some organisations saw family life as a factor in individual resilience
 - Other organisations didn't feel this was their responsibility
- Communication is critical
 - Constant, ongoing, with active listening to monitor changing needs
- Workload management
 - Limit working hours,
 - Provide flexibility for staff to deal with home-front crises,
 - Ensure staff use their holidays



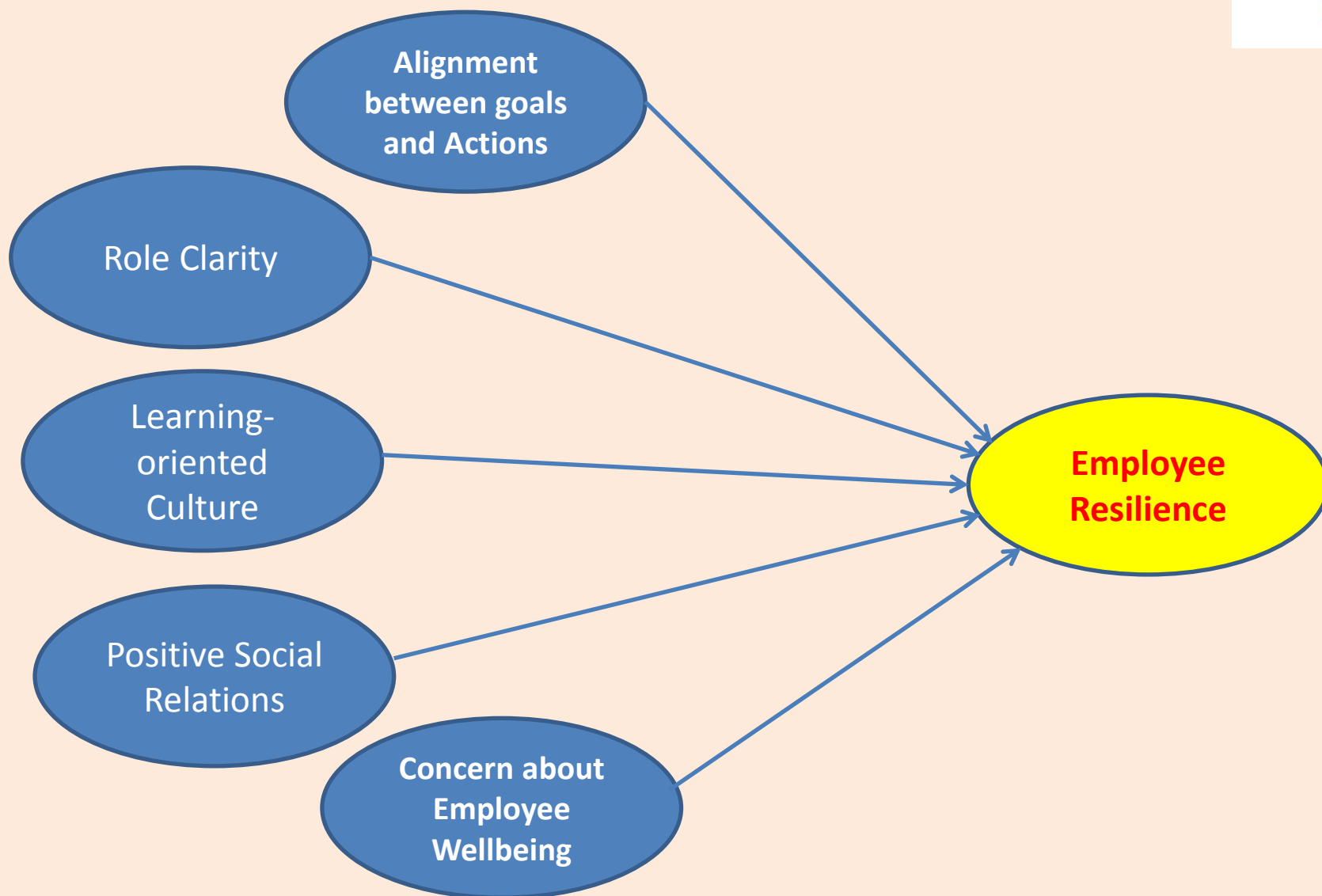
Staff Engagement and Wellbeing

- Wellness seminars and training programmes are very useful
 - Only useful if the staff feel supported or appreciated by their organisation in tangible personal ways
- Customised human resource practices as opposed to 'one size fits all' approach





Quantitative Surveys of Employees





Case study: Focus groups with line- mgmt

- Finance sector org, headquarters outside Canterbury
 - Performance issues in Canterbury
 - Workshops run 2013 & 2014
- Context
 - Relocation of main office, branches
 - Changes in customer base as residents relocate
 - Continually changing circumstances



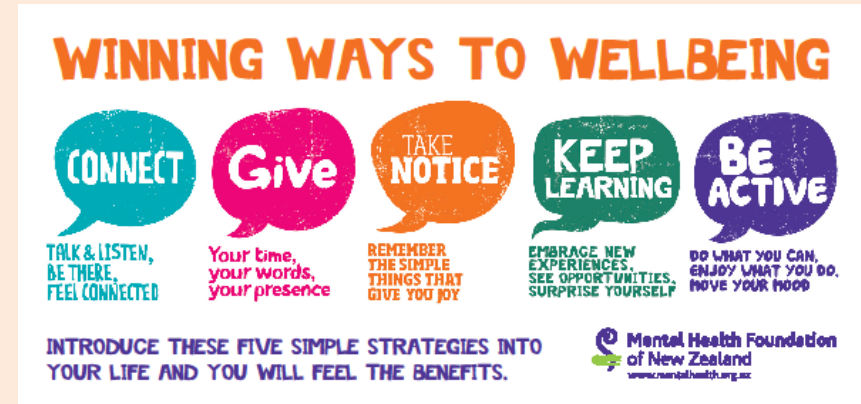
Three Themes

- Theme 1: Organisational Support
 - Organisation very supportive immediately after event(s)
 - ❖ Water, showers, washing machines, "Earthquake leave", EAP counselling
 - A premature move to pre-quake targets & BAU
 - ❖ Lack of understanding by organisational members from other regions of the local situation and the on-going challenges
- Theme 2: Lack of Resources
 - Initial goodwill running out
 - Increased emotional labour, extra-role demands, lack of training
- Theme 3: Commitment
 - Strong commitment to team and customers



Wellbeing Intervention

- Workshops after wellbeing intervention (2014)
 - Following initial workshops in 2013, a strong focus on (5 ways to) wellbeing
- Follow up workshops:
 - Coping with the 'new normal'
 - Lack of resources still a challenge, but better recognition of efforts & focus on wellbeing



Thanks to the Research Team

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- Kate van Heugten
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- Sanna Malinen
- Joana Kuntz
- Kätharina Naswall
- John Vargo & Erica Seville (Resilient Organisations)



- <http://www.resorgs.org.nz/Current-Research/leading-and-managing-resilient-organisations.html>
- <http://www.psyc.canterbury.ac.nz/research/empres/index.shtml>

