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How Adaptive Cultures Thrive Even When Strategy Fails

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About the Author

Dr. Liisa Välikangas (Helsinki, Finland) is Professor of Innovation Management at Helsinki School of Economics. She was invited to the chair in 2007. Her areas of research are innovation, strategy and global change. Previously, she was Managing Director and Research Director of the Woodside Institute?a professional research organization dedicated to advancing innovative management practice and organizational resiliency – which she founded in 2002 with Gary Hamel. She is also a founder and President of Innovation Democracy, Inc., a nonprofit organization committed to supporting innovative entrepreneurship in countries of importance to world stability.

Her research on innovation, strategy and organizing has been published in Harvard Business Review, MIT/Sloan Management Review, the Wall Street Journal, Long Range Planning, and other leading journals. Beyond her research activities, she regularly gives presentations to executive audiences in public and private forums. She works with a number of leading corporations and governmental organizations in the U.S., Europe and Asia in an advisory capacity.

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A "RESILIENT" ORGANIZATION?

It means you are not a prisoner of past performance, good or bad; you don't rely on the right leader alone for success but build the capability to be resilient into the organization. You constantly rehearse the culture of anticipating and responding to change, and you innovate even when you don't yet need to. You don't just survive, you thrive--amidst challenge and opportunity.

This essential guide, written by a renowned expert in global resilience strategy, shows you how to be smart about success and failure. With these field-tested forward-focused tools, you can:

- SURVIVE SHOCKS AND SETBACKS
- TURN THREATS INTO OPPORTUNITIES
- ANTICIPATE CHANGE BEFORE IT HAPPENS
- ENSURE YOUR SUCCESS IS SUSTAINABLE

As a bonus, the book features Postcards from the Resilient Edge, a powerhouse selection of frontline lessons from leading corporations that demonstrate ways you can marshal skill and master luck to take control of your organization's destiny.

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO THE NEW RESILIENCE MOVEMENT

One of the most powerful trends born of the New Recession, resilience has become the operative word for business leaders and entrepreneurs facing an unpredictable market. On the forefront of this movement, global innovator and strategy consultant professor Liisa Välikangas has created a step-by-step system of proven survival strategies you can put into action immediately.

Whether you need to bounce back from a downturn, take the fight to new competitors, or change your game plan at a moment's notice, The Resilient Organization shows you how to rethink your current strategies--and rebuild your company's foundation--using four basic tools . . .

- INNOVATION with high impact and low overhead
- DESIGN that is robust, sustainable, and evolvable
- ADAPTABILITY to changing circumstances
- STRENGTH in the face of adversity

By creating a culture of resilience in your organization, you'll be prepared for any challenge the future might hold. The Resilient Organization's fascinating case studies provide real-world examples of resilience in action: how to recover faster from hardships, how to experiment on new opportunities in a timely manner, how to avoid repeating bad business decisions, and when to scrap old strategiesthat just don't work anymore. Using the timetested principles of resilience, you can find golden opportunities in any situation--whether it's

tough competition, reduced resources, or a roller-coaster market. If you're strategically resilient, you not only survive crises, but you can turn these crises into opportunities.

LIISA VÄLIKANGAS, PH.D., is professor of innovation management at the Aalto University School of Economics (formerly Helsinki School of Economics) in Finland. She is the cofounder and president of Innovation Democracy, a nonprofit global organization dedicated to supporting local innovation and entrepreneurship. Her research on innovation, strategy, and organization has been published in Harvard Business Review, MIT/Sloan Management Review, and The Wall Street Journal. With Gary Hamel, she coauthored the Harvard Business Review article "The Quest for Resilience" and cofounded the Woodside Institute, a research organization dedicated to advancing management innovation. Professor Välikangas currently divides her time between Helsinki and California.

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Most helpful customer reviews

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good Ideas - Food for Thought - Uneven Content By Loves the View

Liisa Vakujabgas presents some interesting ideas. She has a powerful beginning with a list of "Fallen Eagles" (gems of conventional wisdom that have not proven true) and discussions of the importance of resilience, perspectives on organizational decline, a summary of factors contributing to resilience and a discussion of impediments to it. The chart "Dangers and Seductions of Success" on p. 56 was excellent.

After the stellar intro, I felt, the book wound down. Sun Microsystems appeared to be an example of clashing of organizational cultures and I would imagine the 40 interviewees and 300 documents would have a lot to say about structural and inferred power (or lack of it) and communications channels gone awry. How this situation could have been avoided or solved by "treating innovation trauma" through building resilience is not at all clear.

In the AT&T example, it's hard to believe that the "ODD team" members weren't concerned about taking credit for their ideas and selflessly planted them in "empty suits", a term freighted with attitude. The CFO's statement, that AT&T's strategy was sound because everyone else was using it, defines an attitude too. The problems appear to be clashes of attitudes and values and most likely personalities too. Vakujabagas defines the issues but doesn't demonstrate how reslience might have improved the company's future.

Was the short chapter on having a corporate Jester was serious? While humor is important in any endeavor, is she really advocating a position for this?

I think Howard Dean Campaign's successful fund raising had more to do with technology, a good organization and Dean's "space" in the political spectrum than resilience. It had all the characteristics of the traditional "open" organization, close to its environment and quickly integrating feedback. If the campaign were a good example of resilience, wouldn't it have had a response for the 24/7 cablecasting of the tape that put Dr. Dean in a bad light? Wouldn't it have rolled with the punches with a statement, counter tape, or "new news" that could have won Dean's neighbor state? The campaign was successful in creating lists, raising money and recruiting volunteers, but its purpose was to win an election.

At the end there is a good discussion of the role of research, defining the issues such as those of theory and practicality.

While the book was off to an excellent start, its promise was not fulfilled. There are some good charts and insight, but the examples (most of the book) do not demonstrate the concept.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Timely and thought-provoking By J. Moldenhauer-Salazar I like three things about this book.

First, it's timely. The world in general but the business world in particular is fraught with uncertainty and crisis. This acute sense of uncertainty is what prompted the author and Gary Hamel to explore the concepts of innovation and resilience so deeply in the first place, generating the various articles and research that make up the foundation of "The Resilient Organization." I can't think of a better topic for organizational leaders and scholars than how to adapt when corporate strategies fail.

Second, I like that it's a book meant to speak to both leaders *and* scholars. It's clearly work that sits upon academic literature, and literature with which the author is facile. But it's also meant to give real-world examples (e.g. "are Tweets resilient?") and practical questions for someone within an organization to consider. There are too few popular-press business books that try to bridge the wealth of academic research with the wealth of real-world industry.

Finally, I really enjoy that at the book's heart, it is an embrace of experimentation and questioning. Dr. Valikangas spends time actively musing, challenging assumptions, and encouraging the reader to try out new ways of behaving within organizations that can create a culture of resilience. She doesn't have the answers; She has a deep well of questions. The book beautifully shares these questions in a way meant to unravel old paradigms that have historically created such un-resilient organizations.

In short: If you're an organizational scholar and/or deep thinker sitting within a company, this is a wonderful book. It's thoughtful, and thought-provoking.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Sustainable, yes. Resilient, no.

By Jan Husdal

What does it mean to be a resilient organization? After reading this book, frankly, I don't feel that I have come closer to an answer. While this undoubtedly is an excellent academic discourse on resilience that embraces all possible facets of the subject matter, drawing on an impressive and wide body of knowledge, it doesn't provide a clear direction.

After reading Ted Goranson's book on The Agile Virtual Enterprise: Cases, Metrics, Tools I knew quite well what constitutes an agile enterprise; after reading Liisa Välikangas book on The Resilient Organization I don't know equally well what constitutes a resilient organization. The book starts off well and keeps the reader engaged, but somewhere in the middle I got lost in all the sidetracks, text boxes, examples and different perspectives and related terms that Välikangas brings to the table, there was just too much of it.

I know what kind of organization she wants to create, an organization that is innovative, robust, adaptable and strong, an organization that is engaged, competitive and strives for success, and maybe she is right that when an organization is all this it will also be resilient...or maybe it is vice versa, that being resilient implies the above. Maybe it's just me, but that is not how I view resilience.

That said, for anyone interested in a deep-dive into what business strategies that promote the aforementioned attributes, this book is highly recommended reading. It is perhaps a book much more suited for rethinking organizational strategy than for creating organizational resilience; at least that's what I think. As that kind of book it does an excellent job.

Perhaps the best way to describe Välikangas view of resilience is to take Porter's "competitive advantage" from Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance and add "sustainable" in front, thus creating "sustainable competitive advantage". That is in my opinion what the whole book is about, not resilience. And that is definitely something that companies need, if they are to survive in the long term.

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