



Agility and resilience determine success in uncertain times

How agile is your business? What about your approaches to pursuing excellence in internal performance? With winds of change, too much rigidity can lead to fracture, and not all fractures can be repaired.

Distractions are inevitable. The best-laid plans will sometimes experience an ambush, an unexpected event that pushes efforts off the intended course. When things do not go as planned, how adaptable and quick to respond you are will be your primary competitive advantage. You need agility for resilience.

Agility is the ability to move or respond with ease and speed. The best-performing athletes demonstrate this with their extraordinary, swift moves in sports like soccer, basketball, tennis or hockey. When facing a new reality, in order to remain of value, companies and their internal continuous improvement teams that pivot as if it was preplanned are agile.

Resilience is observed in those who adapt successfully when experiencing threats of or actual hardships, tragic events, trauma, or other significant sources of per-

sonal or work-related stress. Early 2020 has provided an abundance of stressors to many of us, personally and professionally. Relationships and businesses have failed; others have grown stronger or adapted to stay relevant or provide new value.

In May, Rattan Pan-Asian Bistro reopened following the lifting of the Houston area's stay-at-home orders. As I waited at the cash register to pay for a take-out order, I noticed some new items displayed that were not previously on the menu: gloves, masks, paper towels, toilet paper, disinfectant spray and hand sanitizer.

My order was over \$50, and I was provided with a pack of 10 masks as a surprise "thank you" gift. This business stood out with creative ways to offer unanticipated value and, of course, attempt to recoup lost revenue. Your business has customers, as do your safety improvement efforts. How are you demonstrating to them your ability to adapt and overcome?

Disruptions to safety communication and training are an issue that continues to manifest itself in conversations between

organizations — from the early days of COVID-19 through efforts to return to work. Companies demonstrate their continuing dedication to the pursuit of safety excellence by quickly finding creative ways to conduct still-necessary safety trainings, briefings and meetings. Safety management systems and the leaders of your committees and teams must be open to responding and thinking differently while not being hindered with unnecessary bureaucracy.

COVID-19 caught many of us by surprise. Agile safety leaders quickly inserted themselves into strategic discussions regarding business continuity planning. How was the pursuit of safety excellence to remain a focus while scaling down and then scaling back up operations? Ground was never lost for these leaders, despite the fact that the way things were always done was quickly thrown out the window. The new and hopefully temporary abnormal has brought challenges that the current workforce has never experienced. Resilient and imaginative leaders promptly adapted and successfully overcame them.

When I was 16, my father taught me something that would become the mantra for my work ethic: "Shawn, no one will ever owe you a job. You have to show and demonstrate new value every day." How companies and individuals spend their resources is a matter of priorities and perceived value. To remain of value to the consumers and customers of your products, services and internal performance improvement efforts, you must remain agile and resilient. Look for ways to demonstrate this as often as possible. Trust me: If you don't, others will.

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