

Resilience in the workplace: Managing morale through difficult times



Today's workplaces are full of challenges that echo the complex and complicated world we live in. With headlines of [layoffs reaching their highest for any February since 2009](#)—including a wave of high-profile tech and media cuts—companies across the board are slashing budgets, altering talent hiring, and significantly reshaping the modern workforce. Amidst all this rapid change, it's become more important than ever to foster resilience in the workplace.

In this blog post, we'll discuss how to nurture resilience at work by:

- Understanding the impact of difficult times
- Exploring strategies for boosting morale
- Comparing how Airbnb and X (formerly Twitter) have approached change at work

It's no surprise that navigating uncertainties at work can significantly impact [employee engagement and morale](#), leading to decreased engagement and productivity.

Recognizing the relationship between morale and organizational performance is important—and helpful for organizations that want to foster resilience in the workplace. There are many strategies, including prioritizing employee well-being and mental health, practicing transparent communication, encouraging collaboration, and celebrating successes that help create a more agile and resilient workplace culture that not only supports individuals but also strengthens collective morale during difficult times.

We'll dig into these strategies later, but first, let's examine how difficult times can impact your workforce in more ways than just financially.

Understanding the impact of difficult times

Layoffs, budget cuts, reorganizations...all of these can have an impact on employee morale. Layoffs often lead to decreased job satisfaction—[reported as a 41% decrease](#), a lack of organizational commitment, and a mix of emotions that can deeply impact job performance including insecurity, sadness, anxiety, and sometimes even "[layoff survivor guilt](#)."

When cost cuts come through, whether due to cutbacks or layoffs, the [ripple effect on company culture](#) and employee morale can be significant. Uncertainty about job security leads to a sense of unease among a workforce, with heightened stress levels in addition to an increase in workload for remaining employees; issues that, when piled on, can generate feelings of overwhelm and burnout.

Team changes, like [restructuring](#) or reorganization, can also disrupt the social fabric of the workplace, affecting camaraderie and trust among colleagues. Employees may feel disoriented or disconnected as they try to adjust to new team dynamics or reporting structures.

Another impact of difficult times is the psychological toll, employees may experience a range of emotions, from frustration and disillusionment to fear and anger, as they deal with the impact of organizational upheaval on their professional (and personal) lives.

Strategies for boosting morale

To foster resilience in the workplace and manage morale across your workforce, there are several strategies you can employ including:

- **Transparent communication:** Clear and consistent communication is a cornerstone of fostering trust and resilience within an organization. By keeping employees informed about changes, challenges, and opportunities, leaders create a culture of openness and accountability. Best practices include providing regular updates, sharing information honestly, encouraging dialogue, and offering context for decisions, ensuring that employees feel valued and informed.
- **Empowering leadership:** Essential for navigating difficult times and inspiring confidence and trust among employees. Strong leaders should delegate responsibility, [foster accountability](#), and proactively seek input from their teams to foster a sense of ownership and commitment. By providing clear direction, support, and leading by example, these [leaders cultivate trust and resilience](#), enabling their teams to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity.
- **Recognizing and celebrating wins:** Whether big or small, wins need celebrations. By acknowledging individual and team achievements, leaders reinforce positive behavior

and boost morale. Recognition at work is more than simply giving teammates a pat on the back for their efforts, it makes employees feel seen and valued, which is critical to being engaged at work.

- **Providing support and resources:** During difficult times and times of change, providing support and resources is crucial for helping employees navigate transitions effectively and boosting resilience in the workplace. Offering [training and development opportunities](#), access to counseling or mental health resources, and establishing mentorship programs are proactive ways to support employees' well-being and professional growth. Additionally, providing flexible work arrangements and regular check-ins can help employees feel supported and empowered to manage personal and professional challenges.

Strategies for boosting morale at work

Enabling transparent communication

Empowering leaders who empower others

Recognizing and celebrating wins

Providing training and support

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Examining real-world examples

One only needs to look to media headlines for examples of organizations that provide support to employees during hard times and foster resilience in the workplace, and those whose actions could use improvement—and sometimes drastic enhancement.

[AirBnB is the perfect study](#) in navigating hard times with both clarity and empathy. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the company had to make changes. The CEO's letter to employees emphasized

the value of all employees, regardless of their status post-layoff, and provided clear information about the situation and next steps, to further create an atmosphere of respect and certainty.

For those employees departing, he delivered options for them to maintain control over their profiles and work samples. And despite the layoffs, efforts were made to preserve a sense of connection at work. Additionally, the CEO transparently explained his decision-making process behind the layoffs to ensure fairness and to provide resources to affected employees. Overall AirBnB's approach to this challenging time is underscored with human-centric communication in navigating challenging business decisions.

As a study in contrast, Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter (now known as X) involved significant workforce reductions and changes to company culture. The workforce reductions happened quickly, with some legal and contractual issues arising in the process. This led to a period of uncertainty for employees. The layoffs affected all levels of the company, including senior executives. Some employees resigned due to the changes, and there were reports of disagreements about how to follow company policies during the transition. Overall, the changes to Twitter's workforce caused a period of adjustment for many employees.

Fostering a sense of community strengthens bonds

Resilience in the workplace hinges on effectively managing morale during hard times. Transparent communication, empowering leadership, recognition of achievements, and provision of support and resources are key strategies essential for fostering and maintaining morale amid challenges like layoffs, budget cuts, and restructuring.

By prioritizing transparency, empowerment, recognition, and support, organizations can cultivate a culture of trust and collaboration, ensuring the well-being and morale of their workforce and emerging stronger in the face of adversity.

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