Personal and Organisational Resilience

being innovative in

challenging times

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Learning Questions for this session

- What is **resilience** for you?

- A systems and **complexity** thinking frame: How does it help us to be more resilient?

- How does personal resilience helps us to be more **innovative** in unpredictable environments?

- How can we **design** our organisation to be more resilient and innovative?

- What are the **leadership** strategies for sustainable innovation?

Resilient as an adjective

- **spirited** - displaying animation, vigor, or liveliness
- **bouncy**, **springy**, **lively**, **live**
- **elastic** - capable of resuming original shape after stretching or compression

Systems and complexity thinking: How does it help us to understand ourselves and organisations?

A system is a discernible whole, which is organised to function as a whole. It can be distinguished from its surrounding environment is relatively independent from it. (Dostal)

Complex Systems

A group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent elements forming a complex whole.

Examples of complex systems:

-Human cells, the human body

-Telecommunication systems

-Social systems, including the organisation

Frame for thinking about complexity*

Teaching

Learning

Complicated

Predictable
Linear
Static
Expertise/Answers
Command and Control

Example: Ferrari motorcar

Complex

Unpredictable
Non-Linear
Evolving
Working with Questions
Self-organising

Example: A rainforest

* Adapted from The Cynefin Framework

The system's ability to survive and thrive hyper change environments is what make it resilient:

- system as a living organism

- ability to learn and grow

- adaptive capacity

Adaptive capacity is the capacity of a system to adapt if the environment where the system exists is changing. It is applied to e.g., ecological systems and human social systems.

In knowledge economy and turbulent times...

Learning is the only way for the individual, team and the organisation to survive

Principle of the 'primacy of the whole'

Recognizing complexity in your organisation means

1) knowing that **everything** is interconnected, and

2) that you are never going to figure out that **interconnectedness**.

(Senge, 2005:2)

What is personal resiliency and how does that help me in uncertain environments?

A person who is resilient

- Copes well with high levels of ongoing **disruptive change**

- Sustain **good health** while under pressure

- Bounce back **easily** from setbacks

- **Overcome** adversities

- **Change** to new way of working & living easily when old is defunct

- Not acting **dysfunctional** or harmful

Source: 'The Resiliency Advantage' by Al Siebert

Action plans for being more resilient

- Be synergistic (i.e. combine rather than separate)

- Be more curious about others and the world

- Challenge yourself to explore more, trying new ways of doing things

- Cultivate a learning spirit, learning strategy and actions

- Be in mild state of disequilibrium (if you are too sure, you are not growing and stagnating)

- Let go of what is not of value or interest

- Move on to next experience

- Strengthen your paradoxical abilities (selfish unselfishness, cooperative non-conformity etc.)

"We are most resilient when we scan new circumstances with curiosity, not knowing in advance what we will do, but confident that we will interact in ways that lead to things working well"

Source: 'The Resiliency Advantage' by Al Siebert

What does it mean for me as a leader?

Firstly: Be resilient yourself

- Practice what you preach

Secondly: Give away what you most want

- Support others to be resilient
- Create environment in which resiliency can thrive

How can we design our organisation to be more resilient and innovative?

Principles for resilience and innovation

Frame the system

A focus on the person(al)

Design for personal entrepreneurship

Connect via the network

A cohesive community

Learning Leadership

Principles for resilience and innovation

Frame the system

Look from 'inside' the system to better see the whole system, and act from this perspective, rather than outside/analysis perspective

Talent in knowledge economy is paramount, so a focus on the personal fuel the 'organisational mind'. Encourage personal mastery.

A focus on the person(al)

Design for personal entrepreneurship

A balance between flexibility and responsibility is result of autonomous agents who is constantly on 'edge of becoming'.

Principles for resilience and innovation

Enhancing the network capabilities of the organisation, with permeable boundaries, and focus on self-organisation helps organisation to respond faster to environment

Connect via the network

A cohesive community

A community which builds social cohesion through positive interaction, is more sustainable

The ability of individuals and organisation to consciously make work environment a learning environment is key competitive advantage

Learning Leadership

What are some leadership strategies for sustainable innovation?

Leadership strategies

- Create environments & **experiments** which helps patterns to emerge
  - Act, sense, reflect, learn, adapt and act

- Increase **interaction** and communication
  - Complex domains requires more interactive communication

- Encourage **dissent** and diversity
  - Dissent and formal debate encourage well-forged patterns and ideas

Adapted from 'A leader's framework for decision making', HBR Nov 2007, D. Snowdon, M Boone

Leadership strategies

– Manage **starting** conditions

- Outcomes are unpredictable in complexity, so create environment for good things to emerge

– Monitor for **emergence**

- Stay alert to emerging patterns, which might not fit pre-conceived ideas

– Set **barriers**

- Barriers help system to self-regulate within boundaries

– Stimulate **attractors**/positive patterns

- Small stimuli & probes resonates and form structure and coherence as it gains momentum

Adapted from 'A leader's framework for decision making',
HBR Nov 2007, D. Snowdon, M Boone

Suggested further reading:

- A leader's framework for decision making, D. Snowdon, M Boone.Nov 2007. Harvard Business Review

- Managing Complexity - Harold Linstone, 1999

- The new dynamics of strategy: Sense-making in a complex and complicated world – C.F. Kurtz, D.J. Snowden, 2003

- The New Knowledge Management: Complexity, Learning and Sustainable Innovation.. McElroy, M.W. 2003. Burlington: Butterworth-Heineman

- Teams and learning: the agenda has changed. Clutterbuck. 2003. Journal: Development and Learning in Organizations. Vol. 17. No. 2. pp: 10-12

- The resiliency Advantage. Al Siebert. 2005

- A guide to managing knowledge: Cultivating communities of practice. Wenger, E. McDermott RA, Snyder W. 2002.

- The fifth Discipline – Peter M Senge,1990

- The Unbounded Mind : Breaking the Chains of Traditional Business Thinking - Ian I. Mitroff and Harold A. Linstone

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