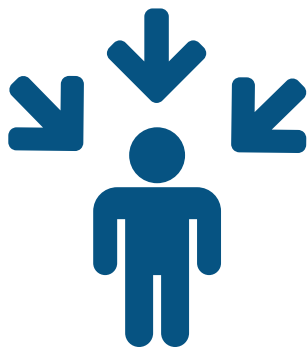# Managing through change – Resilience and mental toughness

A short guide by Virtual College

Introduction

There is no doubt that the past few years have proven to be a turbulent time for all sectors across the UK. Issues surrounding funding and various pieces of government legislation have meant that many employees have spent a significant amount of time being concerned about their job security and dealing with change in their working environments. Those who have managed to avoid redundancy are – needless to say – much more stretched as resources diminish and they're forced to take on more responsibility.

Whilst all sectors will no doubt be planning to increase their resources once again when they are able to, a more achievable and immediately beneficial change to make could be to aim for a resilient and mentally tough work force.

What is mental toughness?

According to Dr Peter Clough, a professor at Manchester Metropolitan University: "Mental Toughness describes the capacity of an individual to deal effectively with stressors, pressures and challenges, and perform to the best of their ability, irrespective of the circumstances in which they find themselves."

Mental toughness and resilient attitudes in the workplace can be developed – these traits are not something an employee either has or doesn't have. Mastering these principles is said to improve performance, leadership, and general wellbeing both at work and in life.

While taking a course on mental toughness, individual will look at what causes one person to thrive and another to succumb in the same set of circumstances. It will also aim to identify a person's specific strengths and weaknesses in these areas.

Developing mental toughness also shows businesses what they can do to better support individuals given their various strengths and weaknesses. Organisations will also see whether they are in a position to develop employees' resilience to stressors, pressures, challenges and change.
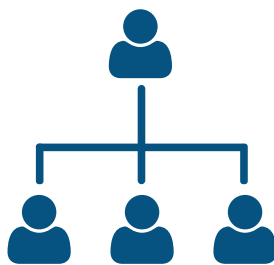
How can developing resilience and mental toughness in employees benefit a business?

By implementing the principles of mental toughness in the workplace - through a mixture of training, leadership and a shift in company culture, businesses are better able to understand their employees, what makes them tick, and how to get the best out of them.

TRAINING   +   **LEADERSHIP**   +   **SHIFT IN COMPANY CULTURE**
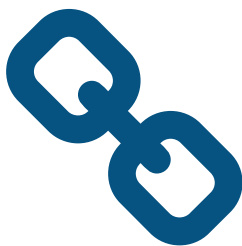
Performance under pressure

Organisations will be able to develop mental strategies in order to help employees perform under pressure, maintaining stamina as well as a good sense of clarity and logic, whatever the situation. This will assist them when it comes to problem solving and productivity under pressure, among other benefits. Furthermore, they should be able to help managers get the very best from the staff they are in charge of.

Recruitment

Recruitment can also be impacted in a positive way, with businesses gaining a better understanding of what they need to look for in staff, in line with mental toughness criteria.

Resilience to setbacks

Furthermore, employees with a strong grasp of mental toughness principles should be able to look at setbacks, adversity and change as challenges, so instead of drowning under the pressure, or feeling helpless, they will strive to turn the situation around. An employee with this mentality is clearly a valuable asset to any company.

This is achieved through adversity bounce-back techniques, as well as tools and exercises, which are designed to improve resilience skills. Businesses are able to develop better and more effective responses to pressure by way of key personal development strategies and tactics.

Motivation and morale

When any organisation hits tough times, morale is often the first thing to go, which inevitably leads to a serious dip in motivation.

One of the concepts behind mental toughness is that those who have mastered it will manage to sustain motivation even in difficult circumstances, and even boost the morale of others around them. In tough times, someone who not only has a good level of morale themselves, but also boosts that of other, more disillusioned staff members, can make or break an office.

Self care

The importance of self-care is another focus of these principles, helping employees to manage a good work-life balance, look after themselves before focussing on other things, and understanding why it is important to do so.

Flexibility, confidence and control in uncertain situations

Employees with good levels of mental toughness should exhibit increased flexibility and confidence, and – in line with this – should also have a stronger sense of being in control when placed in uncertain situations. This is particularly relevant to those managing workforces during times of change, as employees who can deal with an evolving and uncertain working environment are going to be much more helpful than those who panic when confronted with change, or whose morale will plummet.
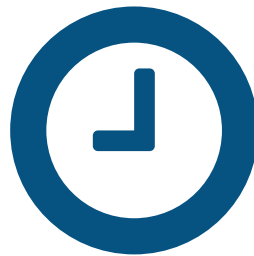
How to introduce mental toughness and resilience to your business

If a large dose of mental toughness and resilience is exactly what your business needs, there are plenty of books and online resources to help you do just that.

Implementing these principles in your organisation will require a holistic strategy that includes training for both managers and staff, time spent developing strategies for various staff members, and a shift in the mentality of the company as a whole.

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www.virtual-college.co.uk

info@virtual-college.co.uk • 01943 605976

Virtual College
Marsel House, Stephensons Way, Ilkley, West Yorkshire, LS29 8DD, England

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