

## How to increase staff resilience and optimism in 2017 | Inside Small Business

*Paul Findlay*

It's a seasonal reality that many Australian workers end the year short-fused with their resilience falling and pessimism rising. Constant and relentless change challenges the resilience of workers. They can get worn down and cynical or counter-productive in the face of restructuring and organisational redesign.

With low resilience comes poor attitude, infectious negativity and absenteeism. It's common for disengaged workers to return to work in the new year actively looking for a new job.

Leaders can do a lot to counter this new year drift by using positive psychology to boost the resilience and self-management of their people.

If you can improve the lives of your people and get them more engaged, you'll improve performance. When people are happy, positive and resilient, businesses are healthy, stable and profitable.

Optimism, Resilience and Gratitude are three of the seven fundamental areas of life – along with Attitude, Now (mindfulness), Energy and Strengths – that make up a two-day, scientifically based workplace-psychology program called ORANGES, created at Camp Quality by then CEO Simon Rountree, that turned Camp Quality around from near bankruptcy and the threat of losing its charity licence into one of Australia's most trusted charities.

Here is how, and why, managers can successfully implement these fundamentals and revive the enthusiasm and commitment of staff while maintaining or elevating levels of employee retention.

### Optimism – stay motivated

Optimism matters because it enables us to think differently, keep things in perspective and see obstacles as something that can be overcome. People with a pessimistic mindset see issues and barriers, while optimistic people identify paths, possibilities and opportunity. In short, negative people “come with problems, positive people come with problems and solutions.”

If organisations give people the skills to think flexibly and stay motivated, it can improve their problem solving.

ORANGES has several tools it trains people to use – including a questioning technique called the 3Ps where people learn to put things back in perspective by looking at the significance of a situation on their entire life (pervasiveness), how long the stressful issue will last (permanence) and their own personal responsibility (personal).



### Resilience – bounce back

Increasing the duration and intensity of our peaks of resilience helps us to bounce back from adversity and develop the capacity to withstand and adapt to life's challenges.

We can help people change the way they feel to create an upward spiral of positive emotion and manage negative emotions by understanding how the brain, body and emotions are linked.

This is enormously important in situations where people get a lot of negativity in their work – the constant knocks or unpleasant experiences confronting customer-facing employees or emergency workers.

During the ORANGES course, people develop a strong awareness of their own resilience, and learn how to build their resilience through planning. They learn to understand their natural ups and downs and to move through the down times recognising that's exactly what they are – down times – and bounce back to their more natural levels more quickly.

### Gratitude – thank your colleagues

Understanding the impact of gratitude is another key to building workplace resilience. You can boost staff happiness by expressing gratitude and appreciation. It's one of the most powerful tools to increase positive emotions and keep people energised and healthy.

It's also a powerful antidote to negative emotion and depression. When you give someone gratitude they feel good but you feel even better. Importantly it should not only be the responsibility of the boss to give gratitude. They are not aware of every action in the workplace that is deserving of praise or thanks so it's powerful when appreciation comes from your peers.

People go the extra mile when they are both committed and valued, when gratitude is expressed to people for their efforts they will naturally feel motivated to do more, and should gratitude be shown again, the person becomes more intrinsically happy, and positive about their role and knowing that they are contributing to something bigger than themselves.

In the ORANGES program, people learn when and how to give gratitude, learn to understand the impacts it has on their own mindset and how to discover opportunities to improve the lives of people around them by showing the appreciation that is often unrecognised.

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