



What does *resilience* mean to you?

Resilience is one of those words that everyone is using right now. *Julie Aldridge*, the AMA's Executive Director, considers what is meant by 'resilience' and how it might apply to you, your role and your organisation

Resilience requires the capacity to adapt to a constantly changing environment, without losing sight of your core purpose. Here we explore some key characteristics of resilient organisations and starting points for discussions with your team.

1. VISION-LED

A vision or purpose that is engaging, relevant, meaningful and compelling to those around you is key to the longevity of your organisation. People need to feel inspired by what we seek to achieve and feel strongly about wanting to get involved.

How to apply this to your organisation

- Does your organisation have a clear and inspiring vision and purpose?
- Is that vision shared and does it motivate people to get involved – staff, artists, funders, current and potential audiences?
- Do you regularly reflect and review how you're delivering on this?

How to apply this to you

- What difference does your organisation make to audiences and visitors?
- What are the key stories and messages you need to tell well to engage audiences, funders, sponsors, donors?
- Are you seen as irrelevant to some? How can you set about changing in order to engage them?

2. FLEXIBLE, AGILE, AND OPEN TO CHANGE

Dictionary definitions of 'resilience' talk about being able to 'recoil or spring back into shape after bending, stretching or being compressed', or being 'able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions'.

The world around us is changing constantly. Being able to flex and adapt to external change without losing sight of your vision and core purpose, is an essential part of becoming a resilient organisation. However, flexibility can be required in positive as well as challenging situations, for example a major opportunity such as an event being far more popular than anticipated, can require just as much flexibility.

A resilient organisational culture therefore includes being open to change, positively seeking new opportunities, not waiting until what you're doing is no longer relevant to the public, or no longer viable financially, but initiating as well as responding to change.

How to apply this to your organisation

- Do staff have clear roles with enough flexibility to initiate and respond to opportunities?
- Is experimentation actively encouraged?
- Is failure welcome as a positive part of learning?
- How are people encouraged to share ideas and opportunities?

How to apply this to you

- Could you carry out simple experiments to spark improvements?
- Who might you collaborate with internally or externally to initiate new ideas and respond to opportunities?
- How might you help others across the organisation to test and review ideas?

3. EXTERNALLY FOCUSED – INSIGHT INFORMS DECISIONS AND SPARKS CREATIVITY

Technology, funding and audience expectations are continuously changing – to remain relevant we need to regularly explore and talk about the world outside our own organisations. It's so easy to get into a routine and to forget about spotting when we might need to try something new in order to have a greater impact.

How to apply this to your organisation

- Is insight being gathered and used effectively to inform short-term, medium-term and long-term plans?
- What might need to change internally to improve how this happens?

How to apply this to you

- How might you improve how you initiate, gather and analyse insight? And then how you share it?
- What might you learn from current and potential audiences?

4. A VIABLE AND FEASIBLE BUSINESS MODEL

You might be future-focused and innovative but if you don't have the resources to bring ideas to life this will undoubtedly lead to frustration and prevent effective implementation. Predictable income streams enable financial security but they also provide the flexibility needed to grow and invest in the future.

How to apply this to your organisation

- Is income predictable, sufficient and scalable?
- Are *all* of your income sources actively supporting your vision? If not, can you adapt them to better deliver on your core purpose?
- Do you have areas of activity that produce low income (or lose income) *and* are not on vision? If so, why?
- Do you have the essential assets, people and skills needed to deliver on your ambitions?

How to apply this to you

- Who might act as a mentor to ask questions to inspire your future ideas and developments?
- How might you share what you're learning and finding with others – both internally and externally? (**Hint:** the AMA membership would love to hear from you.)

FURTHER READING

If you're interested in exploring how you might help drive future resilience for your organisation in more depth, the following resources should prove a valuable starting point:

- Read Mark Robinson's study about *Making Adaptive Resilience Real* culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Making-adaptive-resilience-real.pdf
- Find out how experimentation and working in an agile way is benefiting the fellows on the AMA's Digital Marketing Academy academy.culturehive.co.uk/discovermore/
- Explore a range of case studies from across the arts and cultural sector from organisations exploring how to innovate and improve their business model culturehive.co.uk/tags/business-model



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