7 Ways to Stay Resilient in Uncertain Times

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When I reflect on 2020, I think of the uncertainty we all felt — pandemics, politics, war, inflation and recession. Historical events were piling up, and navigating them at the helm of a business was challenging to say the least. Problems changed at a faster pace. The market was insecure. No one knew what tomorrow might bring or if we would have to make tough decisions. The future looked so bleak.

As we navigate another wave of uncertainty, I feel more prepared to handle it. Still, I empathize with younger leaders experiencing the tight roller coaster of ups and downs that I did only a few years prior.

As leaders, we might prefer to focus internally on our business, but in today's uncertain world, we need to look outside much more than usual. With no way of fully controlling outside influences, continuous resilience is the only way to keep up. Leaders who embody this attitude in their everyday work, company, leadership, team, and, most importantly, themselves have a better chance to succeed.

Here are seven ways to be continuously resilient.

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1. Embrace change

Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from challenges and adapt to unexpected circumstances. To build it, you must

anticipate and embrace change. Founding a startup already comes with constant change. As a company goes from 50 to 100 to 500 people, it will change, and so will the way to manage it. There will be competition, lawsuits, a lack of funding, too much funding, expansions, technology, highs, and lows. Add in multiple global events, and the change only increases. Embrace it — don't resist change or get upset about it. As a four-time founder, I'm ready for any change, making adapting to it more accessible.

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2. Focus on what matters

Problems come up so fast these days that after solving the top problems, new ones creep in right behind them. Targeting priorities in such a constant flow of change can feel like a game of Whack-A-Mole. A flow of prioritization and reprioritization ensures you always tackle the things that matter, even when they're constantly changing. To stay successful today, companies must continually iterate around their top priorities and reevaluate that list with care, thought and intention while ensuring they work hard on the right things.

3. Empower people with the instruments of change

Leaders who empower their teams to make decisions in real-time give them greater flexibility to adapt in the face of constant change. If everyone on my team said, "Let's wait and discuss with Mario what he thinks our priorities are," before every decision, they might end up waiting two weeks just to get on my calendar. That pace doesn't work. If I enable my team with all the correct data and the framework I use to determine

priorities, they can understand what I would do if I was there and make the right decisions themselves. Communicate priorities, objectives and values loud and clear so everyone can act confidently despite constant change.

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4. Show your team they matter, too

Keeping up with team mental health and wellness is critical during uncertain times. I remember when some of our people came to me wondering if a company kickoff was too expensive now that we've grown from 50 to 500 team members.

I reminded them of our first company objective – happy people with a healthy and diverse culture. This is the framework that would determine our priorities. With so much uncertainty, people's happiness can be hanging on by a thread, so I gave the company my full support and told them it was necessary. Nurture team happiness and a commitment to employee health and wellbeing because prioritizing employees makes them want to keep overcoming hurdles for the company's health.

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5. Take no ownership over stress

Letting go of stress lets us embrace change easier. Cultivate a sense of calm. Sure, water is leaking into my house, and I got a bad deal on the ugliest rental car, but while I could complain about these inconveniences, I never let them stress me out. I was at a hotel when this guy started screaming at the front desk attendant demanding a room upgrade because his room had ants. I had to hold in my laughter. It served him no purpose in getting stressed about it except maybe aging

faster. A week down the line, none of it would matter. Instead of taking on stress when things bother us, practice resilience and try letting them go.

6. Allow mistakes

Let people make mistakes and learn from them. We can get the tactical, day-to-day efforts right or wrong, and it still trends in the same direction. A client once became aggressive with me, and I lost my cool.

After I left, I realized I probably said the wrong thing. I emailed the client and called an all-hands meeting to explain to everyone how I screwed up. I told them we'd get another chance to win the next one. Six months later, that client spent a few million dollars with us and became one of our top ten customers because we owned up to our mistake and were persistent in rectifying that relationship.

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7. Seek out the advice of great leaders

I advise any founder to find leaders they respect and admire to be an advisor. If no one comes to mind, come to me. I'm happy to mentor young leaders because I know how valuable this kind of guidance was for me over these past few years.

One of my mentors, John Chambers, our board member, investor and friend, recently repeated the same line to me as he said back in early 2020: "This is the moment when successful companies break away, and the others fall to pieces." In uncertain times, reaching out to mentors for their experience and new insights can be the advantage companies need.

Uncertainty is the word we use to describe how continuous change makes us feel. It makes us feel weird and not entirely in control. To drive forward in the face of uncertainty, we need continuous reprioritization to tackle what matters most. The more we work through change and uncertainty, the stronger we become to tackle the next. Just take a deep breath, relax and deliver your best each day.

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