



INNOVATE

THE
COLLECTIVE
HEARTBEAT

THE
FOUNDATION
FOR ORGANIZATIONAL
RESILIENCE

BY SUSAN BENDER PHELPS

I help my clients create a collective heartbeat, to become internally stronger and more resilient, so they can meet and overcome challenges, and seize opportunities as they arise,” says Sandra Suran, founder and Lead Consultant of The Suran Group www.TheSuranGroup.com, a U.S. management consultancy that facilitates sustainable change and organization unity. Since 1990, clients have been coming to her when they believe something needs fixing. The difference is: the “fix” sticks. And that’s the game changer.

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her new book, *The DNA of the Resilient Organization*, Sandra unpacks her philosophy and methods to show us how to achieve our vision despite obstacles whether we’re a plucky start-up or major corporation.

The managers at a rapidly growing hi-tech company, called Sandra in because they were getting a huge percentage of returns. Customers were screaming about problems. The C-Suite wanted them to work on increasing sales to impress their funders. They thought increased sales would also make up for the returns.

“Simply increasing sales is almost never the answer,” says Sandra as she shakes her head. “In most cases, they’re seeing a symptom of a deeper, more pervasive, yet less visible problem. This is where my background as a CPA/auditor for a wide variety of industries and situations gives me an edge,” she adds. “I know how to look deeper and across siloed departments to see how they interconnect, whether they do or don’t and how effective they are when they do.”

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In this case, the quality assurance department had no idea that customers were unhappy or why. Customer service was taking the returns, but they weren't gathering useful information that could help anyone else understand what the real problem was with the product.

"Increasing sales alone, might give them an immediate result, but it wouldn't fix the problem – in fact, the problem could worsen or resurface in other areas. Correctly assessing the problem is the beginning."

"The process of developing and implementing solutions using the building blocks of a resilient organization enables a new DNA to permeate everything and make it possible for sustainable change to take hold," explains Sandra. "You want to build strength in the abilities of the organization, through designing effective infrastructure – processes that connect and systems that are integrated. Next, everyone should know what their job is and how other people's jobs interconnect. This goes for people, departments, and divisions," she asserts.

"You want to have a unifying strategic vision that makes it possible for everyone in the organization to see and understand what they're working towards and how their department connects to it. Then, you build a high level of trust through transparency, clear communication, and human development programs that enable everyone to be aware of the abilities of the organization to perform. This allows everyone to effectively link in different ways at different times as needed. All of these elements are built over time, as each challenge is addressed. These constant, connected improvements keep the collective heartbeat of the organization beating strong," adds Sandra with a triumphant look in her eye.

In the case of her hi-tech client, the managers asked Sandra to go deeper to help them figure out what was wrong and how to fix it. She helped them gather information from multiple departments to understand the interconnected problem and develop solutions. They were inspired and motivated. The result would be increased customer satisfaction and a new process that would work far into the future. A stronger company with a resilient DNA would have emerged, but the C-Suite nixed the recommended changes and went for increased sales. They were wrong; within a year the once high-flying company folded.