Resilience at Work: Fostering a Future-Ready Workforce

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Abstract

The pandemic has brought many long-term realizations to the forefront. While employee well-being programs and strategies have been implemented to address health threats, a new, hybrid work model meant to address immediate health risks brings with it new considerations: remote work, flexible schedules, and a sudden reliance on collaborative technology. It also reveals where we are most vulnerable: crammed meeting schedules, longer workdays, caretaking of others, financial uncertainty, and isolation.

How we perceive resources is the key to how we respond to such conditions. In doing work, we invest our own resources – time and talent. We also expect our employers to provide additional resources for meeting our work responsibilities and goals – the built environment, tools, and an appropriately supportive culture. Could these resources contribute to employee resilience? What is the role of the workplace in building employee resilience? In the long run, organizations that can meet their employees' resource needs will have healthier, higher performing, and future-ready workforces—whatever stressors may come their way.

Takeaways

How we individually perceive the resources at our disposal impacts how well we recover from adverse events.

If seen as threats or losses, recovery and performance decline. If seen as gains, recovery is easier, and we perform well.

With stress and mental health issues on the rise, we need to leverage external resources more than before.

Workplaces can provide those resources, which range from individual user control adjustments to legible floorplans to policy.

Know what resources are important for your workforce. Address threats first, then continue to build in resource gains.

Employees will leverage resources when needed, bounce back quickly, and be a key part of a future-ready organization.

Being resilient is the ability to withstand, respond to, and rebound from adverse events. Being future-ready implies anticipating problems and preparing to meet them. Learning from how the workforce is changing due to the pandemic is imperative to future-readiness. It's teaching us what conditions stimulate and support our resilience when we're faced with adverse events. If we pay attention, we can build resilience in our workforce so there is less of a price to pay when world events cause major disruptions.

What's the Problem?

Pre-pandemic, the "problem" within the knowledge workforce revolved around achieving peak performance. It's the key to innovation. Why was peak performance for the workforce elusive? It was looking like the culprits were more like stress and subsequent burnout than a lack of collaboration. Fast forward to living through a pandemic – organizations feel even more pressure to innovate, and peak performance appears to be as elusive as ever amongst seismic shifts in the way we do work.

> Burnout was a concern before 2020. The pandemic is depleting much of our resources in the form of illness, grief, loss, anxiety, trauma, and depression. Experts predict it will take months to years for the population to recover.

Many of us have experienced trauma, grief, and illness ourselves during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Why can some employees cope well while others struggle? Is it because they get to work at home? Is it because they have the latest technology? Is it because they can exercise during the day? Perhaps. The answer is straightforward, but not simple. It's all about resources. Let's take a look at the problem—stress, before we get to the solution—resources.

Stressors, Chronic Stress, & Burnout

- Stressor – an episode or event that induces an immediate and intense physical response (acute stress), such as pitching an idea to the CEO or trying to concentrate while being continuously interrupted.

- Chronic Stress – the accumulation of multiple, ongoing stressors over time resulting in health-related symptoms, such as insomnia and stomachaches.

- Burnout – as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) has three components: perpetual exhaustion, alienation from your work or cynicism, and ineffectiveness at your work or low performance.

You can see how continuous exposure to stressors could contribute to chronic stress and burnout. But, once someone is experiencing burnout, they may experience stressors more intensely. In fact, a recent meta-analysis studying the relationship between stress and burnout points out that burnout increases job stressors more than job stressors increase burnout.[1] This means that once someone is experiencing burnout, job stressors become a larger problem. Before the pandemic, preventing burnout in the first place was imperative, as recovery may be more difficult. A large body of evidence indicates stress at work is associated with cardiovascular disease and mental illnesses, which can also add to financial strain in terms of healthcare costs and missed wages.[2]

Post-Pandemic Predictions

During and post-COVID-19, most of us will experience resource threats in some aspect of our lives: illness, grief, heightened anxiety, and increased mental health challenges that could have long-reaching effects. New evidence emerging demonstrates survivors of COVID-19, in comparison to survivors of other health events such as influenza or bone fracture, have a higher risk of being diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder within 14 to 90 days of a COVID-19 diagnosis—with anxiety disorders, insomnia, and dementia topping the list.[3]

What does this mean for organizations? Stress and burnout were concerns for employees before the pandemic. The WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic in early March of 2020. The following month, nearly 70 percent of employees reported living through it as the most stressful time of their career.[4] The cost to individuals and their ability to perform can be significant, which will impact an organization's bottom line.

The Bottom Line to Organizations

Poor work performance, turnover, loss of productivity, and health-related costs also take their toll on the organizations for which these individuals work. The financial impact to organizations, if left unaddressed, has been significant in the past.

1. Guthier, Dormann, and Voelkle, 2020

2. Leka and Jain, 2010

3. Taquet et al., 2020

4. Barnes, 2020

Over 20 years ago, the financial burden of US work-related stress was seen in the following ways:

- 40 percent of job turnover was due to stress.

- Healthcare expenditures were nearly 50 percent greater for workers who reported high levels of stress.

- Job stress was the source of more health complaints than financial or family problems.

- Replacing an average employee cost 120 to 200 percent of the salary of the position affected.[5]

Likewise, the European financial cost of stress at work and related mental health problems in the early 2000s was estimated to be on average between three and four percent of the gross national product.[6]

> The WHO's announcement in 2019 declaring that burnout is an occupational phenomenon illustrates that the state of stress in the workplace has not improved and acknowledges the role of the organization in perpetuating employee distress.[7]

Previous research, however, provides incentive for investing in programs, such as access to mental health resources, to support a resilient workforce. Every US$1 invested in scaling up treatment for depression and anxiety leads to a return of US$4 in better health and ability to work.[8]

Amidst the pandemic, much of the population is experiencing chronic stress, and there is an increasing incidence and risk for burnout if the status quo from before the pandemic prevails.

What might the workforce look like if the entire workplace was considered a resource for mitigating stress rather than a source of causing it?

The Solution: Resources for Resilience

Why resources? Workers invest their own resources: time and talent. They also expect their employers to provide additional resources for meeting their work responsibilities and goals. This idea matters because our assessment of the resources available to us impacts our decisions on how to respond to adverse conditions.

> Resilience is the ability to "bounce back" from adverse conditions. How we perceive resources—our own, as well as those available to us— impacts how we respond to such conditions.

The Relationship Between Resources & Stress

The relationship between resources and stress is based on a person's motivation to protect their current resources from loss and acquire new resources over time. Stress occurs in three specific situations:

1. When resources are lost.

2. When resources are threatened with loss.

3. When there is a failure to gain resources after significant effort is invested.[9]

Lastly, there are also two key principles that apply to resource gain or loss. The first is that resource loss is more noticeable and important to people than resource gain. Therefore, bad memories tend to be more easily remembered than good ones. Second, people must invest resources to gain resources.[10]

> There is no scenario where resource gain occurs without some form of investment from other resources— time, energy, money, etc.

Getting a promotion still requires investing time and energy into one's work. Even scenarios where one gains considerable resources for little resource investment, there still must be some resource investment for the gains to occur. For example, winning the lottery requires spending money, a resource, to purchase the winning ticket. The ticket price, however, brings with it the loss of a resource (money), from which we may never see a resource gain. It is a risky situation that can bring on stress if we are investing more than we can afford to lose.

5. Sauter et al., 1999
6. Leka and Jain, 2020
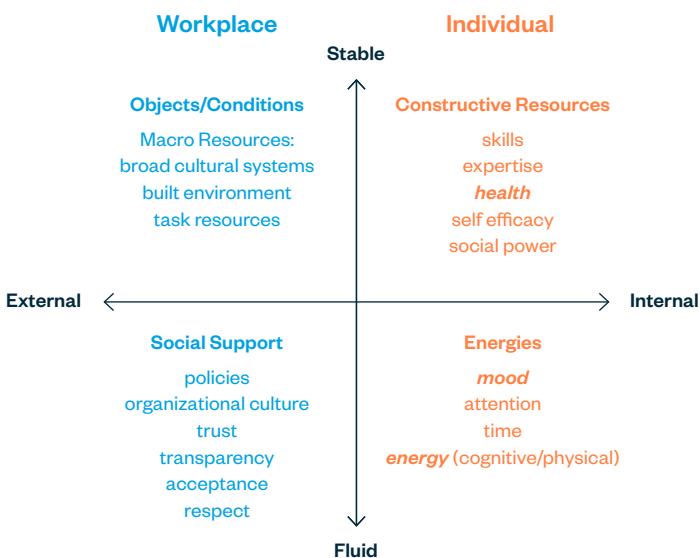7. World Health Organization, 2020
8. Chisholm et al., 2016
9. Hobfoll et al., 2018
10. Hobfoll et al., 2018

Resource Categorizations

With this understanding of conserving and amassing resources for managing stress, resources are defined as "those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by an individual, or serve as a means of attaining said objects, personal characteristics, or energies."[11] Resources vary in two ways: source and stability. Resources can originate internally from individuals themselves or externally within the contextual environment. They also can be more fluid, transient, and easily changed over time or more stable and durable, making them less easily changed over time. When mapped out, there are four basic resource categorizations: objects/conditions, social support, constructive resources, and energies.[12]

Conservation of Resources Categorization

Workplace   **Individual**

Stable

Objects/Conditions   **Constructive Resources**

Macro Resources: skills
broad cultural systems   expertise
built environment   *health*
task resources   self efficacy
                                    social power

External ←――――――――――――――――――――――→ **Internal**

Social Support   **Energies**

policies   *mood*
organizational culture   attention
trust   time
transparency   *energy* (cognitive/physical)
acceptance
respect

Fluid

Objects & Conditions

Objects are valued because of their physical nature, rarity, cost, or as a status symbol. Examples would include a private office as well as task-specific technology and tools. Conditions, such as relationships, employment, or broader societal structures, are valuable only as much as they are sought and valued by individuals or groups.[13] Both objects and conditions are governed by larger economic and social factors.

Social Support

Social support resources come from others and provide or protect an individual's other resources, but they can also harm an individual depending on the situation.[14] Social support in the workplace can contribute to one's overall social capital and reside in the benefits of social networks. These are influenced by team dynamics and alignment to organizational culture.

Constructive Resources

Constructive resources are internal and bring value because they assist in gaining, changing, protecting, or implementing other resources. They are typically personal traits inherent to a person, such as knowledge, general health, skills, and experiences.[15] Key resources that govern the use of these include self-efficacy, personality traits, and social power.

Energies

Energies are internal and relatively fluid. Energies are not so much about their intrinsic value as resources, but rather their value in helping to acquire other resources. Examples of energies include time and money, information, cognitive and physical states, and even emotions.

11. Hobfoll, 1989
12. ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012
13. Hobfoll, 1989
14. Hobfoll, 1989
15. ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012

Workplace Conditions: Threats, Losses or Gains to Resources?
It's expected that an organization is responsible for providing external conditions that should be considered gains to its employees. Unfortunately, sometimes workplace conditions pose as threats to individual resources. For example, a consistent complaint of open-plan offices has been a lack of speech privacy and poor noise management.[16],[17] During the pandemic, a clear threat to employees' health has been air quality and proximity to others.

To begin, individuals with more resources are more well-positioned to protect themselves from resource loss.[18] The opposite also is true. Individuals with fewer resources are less well-positioned to resist resource loss. Also, there are "resource caravans" where initial resource gain more easily leads to further resource gain, and initial resource loss leads to increased resource loss over time.[19] For these reasons, a lack of resources or threats to an individual's resources lead to defensive attempts to conserve any remaining resources.[20] Addressing threats should, then, first focus on employees that may already be experiencing resource loss.

> After addressing threats, the workplace—the environment, its policies, and its culture—all can serve as resource gains for employees.

We believe the workplace has the potential to mitigate or prevent stress from occurring for employees. Understanding what exactly constitutes "workplace resources" starts with understanding the working ecosystem.

Work from Anywhere Ecosystem Resources

Work from Anywhere is the ecosystem that gives organizations and employees choice in where and when work occurs. Start by looking at the ecosystem as a whole: office, home, and third places. Then, with an emphasis on the office as a hub, optimize spaces there for activities that foster interaction, collaboration, and creativity to drive innovation. Flexible workplaces enable space to change as rapidly as people and organizations require. The office floorplate needs to respond—creating environments that provide physical and virtual connection and adapt for occupancy levels. This approach supports organizational culture and employee well-being, so people can work fluidly between the office, home, and third places.

Workplace resources, then, can be found anywhere we do our work. Since constructive resources and energies reside in ourselves, workplace resources should capture objects and conditions where we work as well as the social support available to us.

Objects and Conditions of the Workplace
Unlike social support, which can vary over time, objects and conditions are longer lasting and less subject to change. While both external and more stable, object resources and condition resources apply differently to work.

First, conditions are about the broader society in which an individual lives and works. For example, financial security, where they live, and cultural systems impact employees' lives. These are a bit more difficult for an organization to influence because different individuals live in different conditions, as well as have different perceptions of those conditions. Employees' communities also offer spaces outside of homes and the worksite—third spaces—where remote work may be done.

> Third spaces where people may work, such as local cafes or public libraries, are becoming more prominent in the Work from Anywhere ecosystem and would contribute to condition resources as well.

Organizations have more control over object resources which includes the built environment where work is performed, and the physical properties of it can either cause stress or mitigate it. Specific design criteria can manage resource threats in the workplace and support resource gains. When leveraged appropriately, they facilitate resource usage for better work performance or facilitate resource gain by replenishing spent personal energies.

16. Kim and de Dear, 2013
17. Frontczak et al., 2012
18. Hobfoll et al., 2018
19. Chen, Westman, and Hobfoll, 2015
20. Hobfoll et al., 2018

Workplace & Work Point Design as Resources

For easier understanding, we have designated a number of "workplace design resource categories," which house similar clusters of design criteria affecting an individual's resources. These categories include work point user control, access to colleagues, technology and tools, space variety, ambient qualities, and legibility. Specific design criteria that affect similar resources are categorized together.

User Control
Adjustable surface, chair, task lighting, vertical screens, speech privacy

Accessibility of Coworkers
Proximity to coworkers for access and duration of interaction

Tools & Tech
Task-specific tools and collaborative technology

Space Variety
Work point choice, access to restorative/social/collaborative spaces

Ambient Qualities
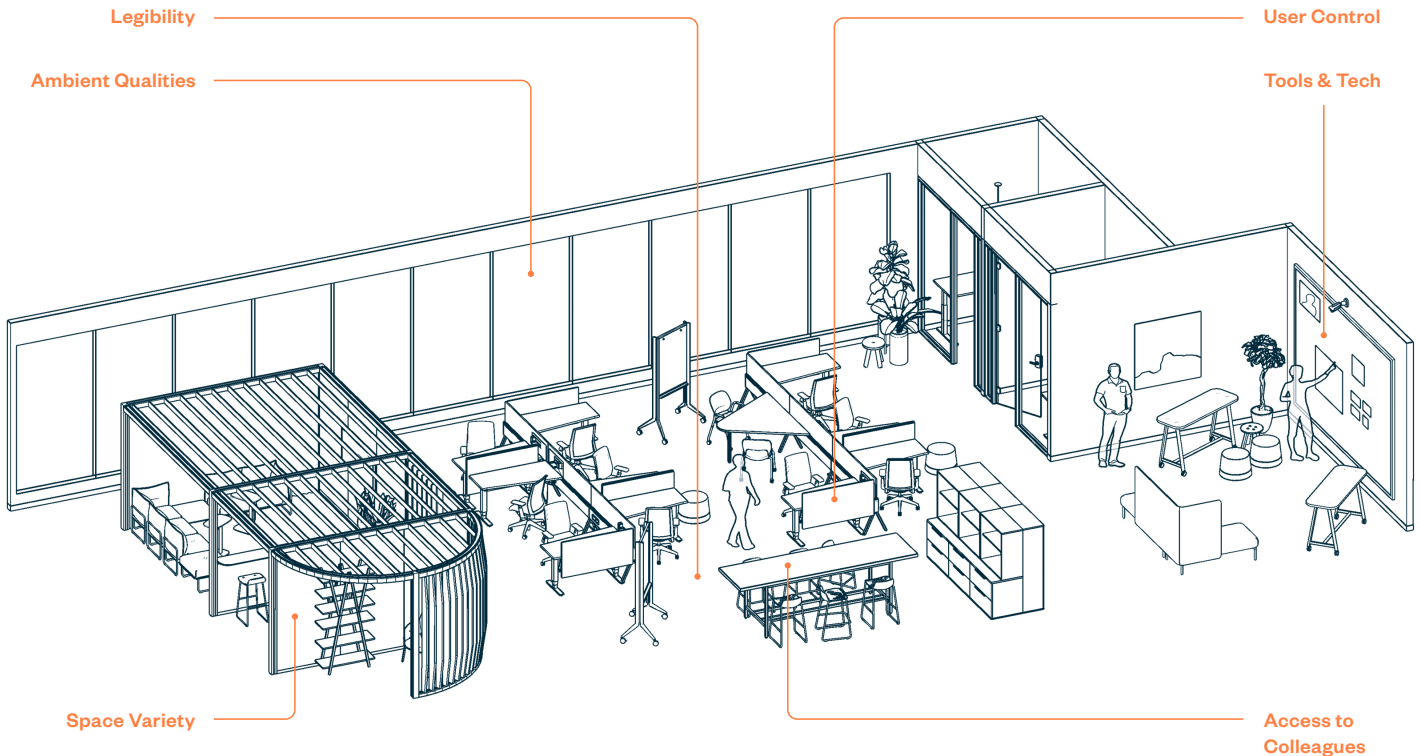Air quality, access to daylight, nature and natural elements, thermal comfort, freedom from noise

Legibility*
Visual access to coworkers, ease of navigation, architectural differentiation
*not applicable to off-site work

Social Support in the Workplace

One potential source of stress at work can come from employees' relationships with one another. Mistrust and tense relationships between coworkers and superiors lead to stress and potential resource losses. Conversely, a supportive culture and relationships can help mitigate stress within individuals—especially if a person experiences psychological safety at work.[21] As a collective resource, policies, norms, behaviors, and relationships at work are relatively more changeable than other resources.

Organizational Culture as a Resource

At the highest level, is an individual's appreciation for and alignment with their organization's culture. Employees tend to be very perceptive of their organization's culture, and attuned to the company's values, whether they are openly stated or not. People are well aware of patterns of basic organizational assumptions and values, and they seek employment from organizations that have cultures they mesh well with.[22]

When aligned, an organization's values and outcomes increase trust and effort among employees, leading to better performance for individuals and the organization. When misaligned, employees disconnect psychologically, and engagement can drop. For example, in June 2020, the US saw a drop in engaged employees and an increase in those not engaged, while actively disengaged employees remained steady. This drop was likely due to organizations' lack of clarity around diversity, equity, and inclusion in the wake of societal unrest following the death of George Floyd, compounded by the pandemic, its resulting unemployment, and attempts to re-open some businesses.[23] This illustrates how conditions can influence how we see available resources. As such, an individual's perceptions about their organization—in terms of culture and trust in its decision-making—is very important to their potential for resource gains and losses.

Of course, also extremely important in the workplace is an employee's relationships with coworkers, including their superiors and supervisors. Social support resources, like trust and respect from coworkers, are very important to positive performance outcomes. Therefore, organizations should facilitate norms that encourage trustworthiness and respect among all levels of coworkers in addition to discouraging toxic behaviors. Examples may include executives regularly communicating with employees, and having their offices in easily accessible, highly visible locations. Research also suggests employees perceiving their leaders as competent and selfless leads directly to increased psychological safety and improved team performance.[24]

Policies as Resources

Policies and procedures can be resources to the individual for mitigating stressors as well. Many organizations are wrestling with policies over flexible scheduling and availability of remote work. Giving employees decision-making ability over their schedules and mobility can provide employees the discretion to manage both work and personal life needs. For example, with flexible schedules and mobility scheduling, personal responsibilities such as healthcare appointments or caring for children or aging parents would allow employees to work around those other needs. Otherwise, they'd spend less time on their tasks and would need to use personal time off. If these kinds of policies are in place for all, those with disabilities could also benefit, since these are among the most frequent accommodations provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act.[25]

In general, organizations should think broadly about the ways in which social support resources apply to and affect individuals, as well as their entire workforce. Adapting policies, procedures, and norms to employees' best interests is ultimately in the best interest of the organization as well.

Resources Matter

Before the pandemic, we started a research program around stress in the workplace. We wanted to test these various resources to see how much they can influence stress and performance. With many more of us experiencing increases in stress and being thrust into unexpected working arrangements because of the pandemic, these issues have only become more important. Are the workplace resources at our disposal related to our stress and work performance, whether we're working entirely off-site, entirely on-site, or in some combination of the two? The short answer is yes.

We developed the following model for studying the role of resources in providing resilience (or a buffer for stress) and improving performance. Then, we conducted a study in July 2020 with US knowledge workers.
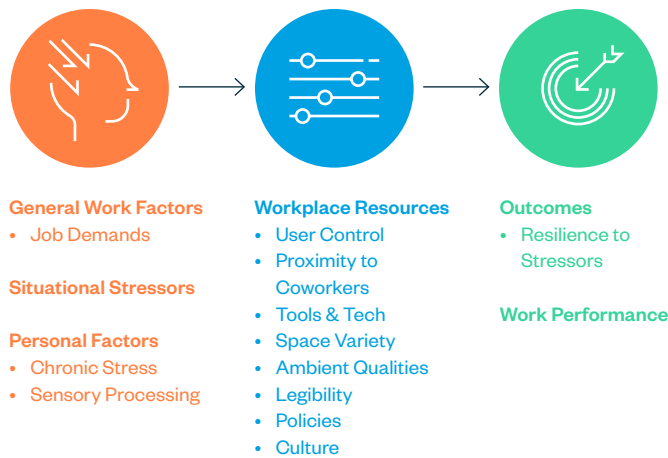
21. Edmondson, 1999
22. Schein, 1990
23. Harter, 2020
24. Mao et al., 2019
25. Wong et al., 2021

Workplace Resilience Model

General Work Factors
• Job Demands

Situational Stressors

Personal Factors
• Chronic Stress
• Sensory Processing

Workplace Resources
• User Control
• Proximity to Coworkers
• Tools & Tech
• Space Variety
• Ambient Qualities
• Legibility
• Policies
• Culture

Outcomes
• Resilience to Stressors

Work Performance

These **on-site** workplace factors are most influential and account for **19%** of performance

Ambient Qualities   **Legibility**   **Culture**

These **remote** work factors are most influential and account for **23%** of performance

User Control   **Ambient Qualities**   **Accessibility of Coworkers**

Perceived Workplace Resources, Stress, & Performance
Our findings demonstrate a clear connection between each workplace resource category and experience of chronic stress, with each category being directly and independently related to chronic stress. The more chronic stress experienced by employees, the more these resources were perceived as gains. Resources become more important as stress increases on the order of one to three percent per category.[26] Modest, but significant.

Similarly, our findings also demonstrate clear links between each workplace resource category and individual performance. The more employees perceived these resources as gains, the better they performed—on the order of five to 18 percent per category.[27] It's clear that all workplace resources are important to both managing chronic stress and performing well. We then looked at all the factors in the model to better understand how they may interact to influence performance.

When accounting for all the pieces in the model: workplace resources, job demands (fulfilling and constraining), chronic stress, and sensory processing sensitivity, we were able to detect the most important resources for building resilience (mitigating stress) and improving performance.[28]

• While on-site, ambient qualities, legibility, and culture are the most important resources affecting resilience. Gaining these types of resources mitigates stress, improving performance by 19 percent. On the other hand, when these resources are lacking, performance decreases by 19 percent.

• While off-site, user control, ambient qualities, and access to colleagues are the most important resources for resilience and mitigating stress, improving (or decreasing, if lacking) performance by 23 percent.

Perceived Resources in Different Work Contexts
Our findings also echo what most of us experienced in terms of what it has been like to work off-site and on-site.[29]

Remote-Only: Big Gains, But Threats Too
Remote-only workers had largest gains in user control and policy resources when compared to workers that worked only on-site or a combination of on- and off-site. Remote-only workers, however, also experienced the presence of threats— particularly in their lack of proximity to colleagues for appropriate access to and time with them for coordinated work.

Also, remote-only workers were asked to respond to a hypothetical scenario. If they were to return to their workplace, and it remained exactly as it was prior to the pandemic, how would they perceive those workplace conditions in terms of resources? There were drops in resource gains in terms of their health and safety while

26. Johnson, 2020
27. Johnson, 2020
28. Johnson, 2020
29. Johnson, 2020

near colleagues. Ambient qualities also presented a threat, which wasn't surprising since they included air quality.

On-Site Only: Minimal Gains, But No Threats

Looking at workers that were only on-site, they had the smallest gains to resources, if any at all. On average, these workers were neutral on space variety and policy, not viewing these as threats or gains to their personal resources.

Hybrid: A Happy Medium

Workers that had worked both remotely and on-site had more gains than on-site only workers, as well as no threats. Workers that experienced both remote and on-site work seemed to get the best of both worlds—minimizing exposure to colleagues when not necessary and capitalizing on coordinated work, tools and technology, and culture when on-site.

As we emerge from the pandemic, it will be interesting to see how these perceived resources may change.

At-Risk Populations

When investigating stress in the workplace, it makes sense to pay close attention to employees that may have a higher risk of experiencing stress. We know that people experience the same built environment differently. This is partly due to sensory processing sensitivity, a hyper-sensitivity to stimuli and stress that is one of the key variables in the model.

Those with high sensory processing sensitivity often are more empathetic—a desired trait for managers—and account for 31 percent of the general population. Our findings show that the sensory processing sensitivity relationship with frequency of health-related stress symptoms is quite large at 30 percent.[30]

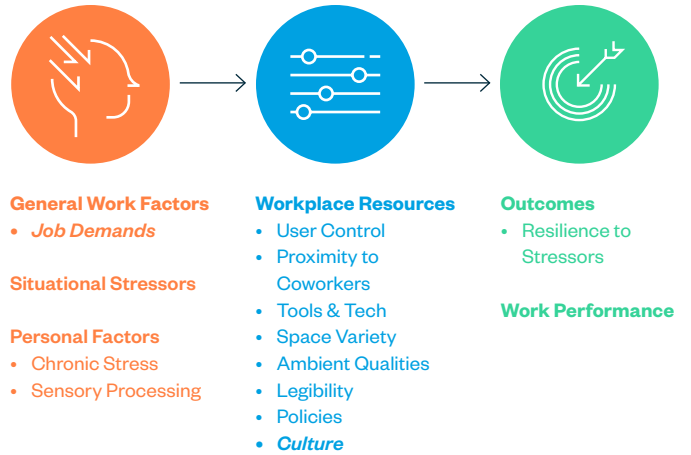

| Low 29% | Moderate 40% | High 31% |
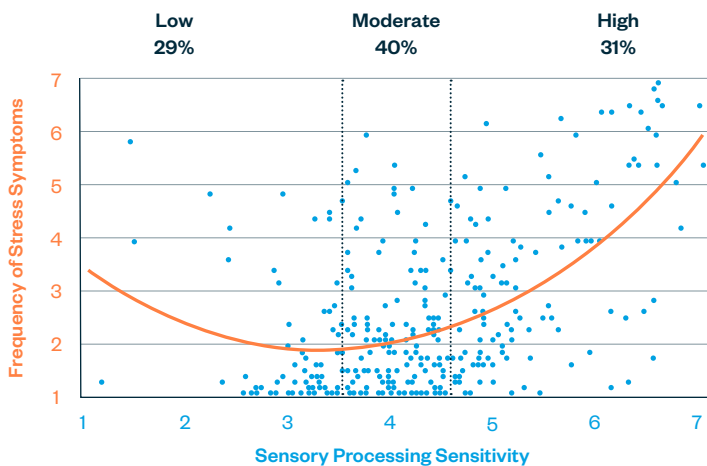
For the portion of the workforce that has higher sensory processing sensitivity, workplace resources have a larger impact on building resilience and facilitating their individual performance.[31]

Most Influential Factors for On-site Performance

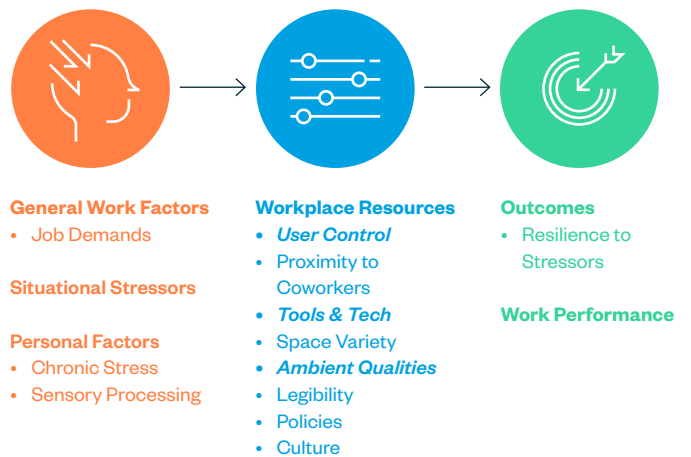**Results for At-Risk US Knowledge Workers**
While on site, fulfilling job demands and culture resources are most important for mitigating stress, improving (or decreasing, if lacking) performance by *33 percent*.

General Work Factors
• *Job Demands*

Situational Stressors

Personal Factors
• Chronic Stress
• Sensory Processing

Workplace Resources
• User Control
• Proximity to Coworkers
• Tools & Tech
• Space Variety
• Ambient Qualities
• Legibility
• Policies
• *Culture*

Outcomes
• Resilience to Stressors

Work Performance

Most Influential Factors for Off-site Performance

Results for At-Risk US Knowledge Workers
While off-site, user control, ambient qualities, and tools & technology are most important for mitigating stress and improving performance (or decreasing, if lacking) by *37 percent*.

General Work Factors
• Job Demands

Situational Stressors

Personal Factors
• Chronic Stress
• Sensory Processing

Workplace Resources
• *User Control*
• Proximity to Coworkers
• *Tools & Tech*
• Space Variety
• *Ambient Qualities*
• Legibility
• Policies
• Culture

Outcomes
• Resilience to Stressors

Work Performance

The Impact of the Pandemic on Younger Generations

One population cohort that may be particularly vulnerable to resource threats in the workplace post-COVID-19 is Generation Z. Gen Z is experiencing a significant disruption at a critical time in their development. Schooling, particularly at the higher education level, and transitioning into the workforce now look radically different for members of Gen Z. Graduating from college and smoothly joining the

30. Johnson, 2020
31. Haworth, 2019

workplace was a reasonable expectation for many Gen Zers before the pandemic.[32] Due to COVID-19 however, these expectations have dramatically changed, causing stress levels among members of Gen Z to skyrocket. Other issues brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as social isolation and missing important public milestones that mark growing up (such as prom, graduation, etc.), are also driving a serious mental health crisis in young people today.[33, 34] As a result of these challenges, Gen Zers may be more sensitive to potential workplace stressors that affect their well-being.

Including the Neurodivergent
Lastly, people with high sensory processing sensitivity share a similar hyper-sensitive response to stimuli as many of those with the sensory processing integration challenges often associated with a range of neurodivergent conditions, such as autism, ADHD, anxiety, and PTSD.[35, 36,37] Neurodivergent employees also can benefit from addressing resources for workers with high sensory processing sensitivity, without needing to disclose their medical condition(s).

The Future-Ready Workforce

In short, addressing environmental and social support needs of those with high sensory processing sensitivity—nearly 1/3 of the general population—also meets the needs of the rest of the population. "Although it is beneficial to foster positive environments to enable highly sensitive individuals to thrive, when seemingly small (or even great) changes are made via interventions, policies, and awareness it's likely to promote the greater good for all."[38]

> Crafting a resilient workplace for highly sensitive employees stands to benefit the broader workforce.

A Word about Culture
The way an organization perceives various resources and places value on them often depends on the organizational culture type and any sub-team cultures. Some cultures are more impacted by the presence or absence of resources when it comes to supporting performance and mitigating stress.

The Collaborate culture spends a lot time working together on internal, long-term development to create lasting results. It makes sense for them to depend heavily on the use of

collaborative technology, as well as spaces to socialize, restore, and build team camaraderie.

The Compete culture likes to do things now and meet their goals quickly. They place the most importance on having a legible floor plan and the ability to easily see their coworkers. They don't want to waste time trying to discern the intended use of awkward spaces or looking for their coworkers when coordinated efforts are needed.

The Control culture is all about long-term development and doing things right. Some of their most valued resources are choice in individual workpoints and access to AV conferencing technology. They require vertical screens and panels to block views and the ability to have confidential conversations, but they also want to quickly see and have access to their coworkers.

The Create culture wants to do new things. Their focus is on rapid development of ideas that can lead to innovation. Over any other culture type, the Create culture places the most value on resources to support performance. They value access to collaboration spaces, being able to see their each other, legible navigational cues, and the ability to adjust aspects of their workspace. To mitigate stress, the Create culture also values thermal comfort and access to coworkers as well as nature and natural elements.

Built Environment: More Than a Wellness Room
Whether on-site or at home, ambient qualities, user control, and technology and tools contribute to resilience. This goes beyond specific spaces dedicated to wellness. Workers rely on these resources more so as stressors arise.

- Freedom from noise; thermal comfort; and access to clean air, daylight, nature, and natural elements deter distraction and give breaks as needed.

- Visual access to coworkers, clear navigational cues, and easily identifying the intended activity for a space allow for less friction in the workday.

- Work-point adjustments, such as ergonomic seating and use of panels to display ideas and block distracting views, support exact needs on-site and at home, too.

- Task-specific tools and collaborative technology that connect coworkers and facilitate coordinated work ease the challenge of not being together.

32. Leeb et al., 2020
33. Carey, 2021
34. Acevedo et al., 2018

35. Harrison et al., 2019
36. Panagiotidi, Overton, and Stafford, 2020
37. Jagiellowicz, Zarinafsar, and Acevedo, 2020

38. Jagiellowicz, Zarinafsar, and Acevedo, 2020

Social Support & Social Capital: Walk the Talk

Culture is best experienced on-site. The built environment communicates organizational values through design and is experienced in the presence of colleagues. Make extra effort—time and intention—to align the remote experience with the values of the on-site experience. Frequent, non-task-related touchpoints help, especially for newer employees and those seeking mentorship.[39] All modes of collaboration are important: inform, think, connect, and do.[40] Technology-enabled group spaces on-site and proper collaborative technology while working remotely allows for better coordinated efforts, regardless of purpose and location.

> Being future-ready means ready to take on anything that comes your way. It requires removing resource threats and investing in resource gains for your employees—regardless of where they do their work.

Investments here, coupled with appropriate and fulfilling job demands, could offset the costs of lower performance, higher healthcare expenditure, and attrition. Most importantly, when the next major crisis hits, your workforce will be more resilient and ready to take on what comes their way.

39. Johnson and Haworth, 2020
40. Burrows, Scott, and Johnson, 2020

Contributors

Beck Johnson holds a B.S. in Scientific and Technical Communication and an M.A. in Communication. With 15+ years of experience in social science research methodologies. As a former Research Specialist at Haworth, she conducted primary and secondary research addressing workplace issues—creating insights to support Haworth's vision as an industry knowledge leader. While at Haworth, she worked to build knowledge of leading workplace issues and related social science and provide credible communication to clients and their teams at various stages of the design process.

Aaron Haworth holds a B.S. in History with a minor in Political Science from the Grand Valley State University Honors College, where he also served on the board of the Grand Valley Journal of History. As a Research Associate at Haworth, he conducts research addressing issues focused on the well-being and empowerment of humans in the workplace..

Kristin Reddick is a Design Research Consultant on Haworth's research team. She is a certified Interior Designer and Design Consultant who focuses her research on culture, workplace performance, and well-being. Kristin believes that learning about people, making connections, and having empathy can translate into more thoughtful design outcomes. She enjoys gaining insights through research and using lessons learned to develop design concepts and best practices that create and support effective workplaces.

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