# THE 4th NATIONAL LADY ACCOUNTANTS CONFERENCE

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## Developing Resilience at the C-Suite Level
## A Public Sector Perspective

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# Presentation Outline

- What is Resilience?
- What Makes a Person Resilient?
- Self Evaluation Strategies
- Change Management
- Responding to a Changing Environment
- Building Resilience in the Public Sector
- General Points for Discussion

# Resilience

- The capacity to rise above difficult circumstances
- Moving forward with optimism and confidence even amidst hardship or difficulty .
- Adapting well in the face of adversity, threat, or stress such as
- workplace problems,
- serious health problems or
- financial difficulties.

# Who is a Resilient Person?

- A person is resilient if they have the ability to cope with extreme stress-provoking circumstances without exhibiting personal stress signs or symptoms.

# What Makes a Person Resilient?

a. **Managing Personal Risk** – identifying the exposures faced and developing appropriate methods of handling such exposures- coping mechanisms.

   **Key Coping Mechanisms in the Public Sector** :-

   i) **Improving competence:** the ability to handle situations effectively, through skills and correct judgement. (Training, both on and off the job)

   ii) **Confidence-** being confident in your ability to respond to crisis.

# What Makes a Person Resilient? Cont..

iii) Develop Problem-Solving Skills - Practicing your problem-solving skills on a regular basis. Never shy away from conflict (Both within and outside the organization)

iv) Keep Working on Your Skills- Focus on practicing your skills while building on your existing strengths. Includes **time-management** and **people management** skills

Resilience may take time to build, so don't get discouraged if you still struggle to cope with problematic events. Everyone can learn to be resilient.

# What Makes a Person Resilient? Cont..

v) Strong Social Networks - Having supportive people around you acts as a protective factor during times of crisis. Networks allows you to share your challenges, get positive feedback, (Family, friends, colleagues) and obtain possible solutions to your problems.

vi) Embracing Change - Flexibility is an essential part of resilience. Resilient people often utilize change as an opportunity to move in a new direction. Highly resilient individuals are able to adapt and thrive in change.

(vii)Setting targets and evaluating them is a great coping mechanism

- Personal performance evaluation entails setting of personal objectives; the implementation of these objectives; tracking progress to ensure there are clear steps being taken towards achieving the objectives; and
- using regular performance reviews to evaluate progress.

# Self-Evaluation Strategies

How do you know that you have achieved ? – You can either wait to be told by others or better still determine it yourself by following some steps:

1. Identify Your Goals

- Identify the goals that you want to accomplish. Keep your eyes on the goals to ensure that you are making progress.
- Start with smaller, immediately actionable goals so that you regularly experience 'small wins'.
- Set a well-defined vision of where you want to be, it will be easier to set objectives. You will be connected and passionate about what you need to achieve.

# Self-Evaluation Strategies cont.

## 2. Setting your Objectives

- Determine the objectives that will help achieve your goals. Break them into small and achievable steps so that you are not overwhelmed.
- Identify obstacles or challenges that may hinder the achievement of the goals and how to overcome them (risk management).
- Set timeframe for each objective - targets
- You can further break the objective to be accomplished in a shorter time frames.

# Self-Evaluation Strategies cont.

## 3. Review Regularly

- Regular reviews are also known as Monitoring and Evaluation. Regular reviews enable you to track the progress towards achieving goals on an ongoing basis.
- Ask for feedback from others/stakeholders - they will value your open and proactive approach.
- External feedback is invaluable for performance reviews - helps you to remain objective and determine how your performance is rated by the stakeholders who are key to you.

# Self-Evaluation Strategies cont.

## 4. Identify your Achievements

- When identifying your achievements; don't just pick the big ones. Start with the small and build up to the bigger, easier to remember successes.
- Consider creating a weekly or daily 'success log' to ensure that you don't miss out on any important achievements.
- Maintain a list of the factors that contributed to the successes to ensure that you repeat them in future tasks, increasing the likelihood of success.
- Celebrate each milestone

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## 5. Identify your Challenges

- Identify what might have gone wrong and your responses in the circumstances.

- Once you have identified what went wrong and how, you can plan to avoid those mistakes being made in the future.

- You will establish positive and proactive steps as a response to your mistakes, as opposed to denying their existence or dwelling on them.

# Change Management -

- How do you adapt to a changing environment?

Change management is the process of preparing and supporting individuals to successfully adopt change in order to achieve personal and organizational success.

# Responding to a Changing Environment cont....

## a) Being a Problem Solver not a Blamer

- In any organization, there will always be problems that arise from changing circumstances.
- You should not be a complainer, but rather than a problem solver.
- Identify the source of the problem and suggest direct actions to deal with it.

# Responding to a Changing Environment

How do you respond to a changing environment?

b) Understanding Change

- Flexibility and willingness to embrace change will make you a more resilient member of your organization
- Always look at changing circumstances and the challenges they present with the attitude of a new employee and take the challenges enthusiastically with a desire to learn and perform well.
- Recognize and be prepared to exploit the possibilities created by the change (COVID-19 pandemic?).
- Welcome change and turn it to own advantage.

# Responding to Changing Environment cont....

## c) Keep Learning and Build your Skills

- Adapting to change requires the effective use of your acquired skills.
- In some cases, it will require the use of other skills - skills not yet acquired
- In a fast-changing work environment, skills also become obsolete. (Look at Digital advances)
- To successfully manage change , it is important to build as many skills as you can before their use becomes essential for organizational survival. Be ahead of your time.

# Resilience in the C-Suite in the Public Sector

**The nature of public sector work environment**

- Being in the C-Suite in the public sector is fast-paced. It always feels like there are a million things to do; contrary to what many of us outside the public sector believe.

- Phones ringing, urgent emails popping up, paperwork for your colleagues and staff, meetings coming up, and many other requirements are made on your time.

- Public Sector leaders sometimes feel like they need a clone of themselves just to be able to manage their workload.

- It's no surprise then that they're stressed out most of the time.

# Coping Strategies for the C-Suite in the Public Sector

Resilience assumes there are problems and challenges (not a smooth way), requiring a thick-skinned response to the challenges in the public sector context.

Let me share some of the coping strategies for the public sector working environment;

a) Team cohesion

- A resilient team consists of people with shared sense of purpose and connectedness (cohesion). Interaction and reinforcement of team effort is paramount.

- Team cohesion can be built through team social activities and regular informal team catch-ups.

- Provide clear roles for the employees and reinforce the links between their work and the objectives of the organization.
- Teams that understand how their work contributes to the overall organizational objectives can see the value of their work.

b) Effective Communication

- Ensure that employees are informed, engaged and involved. Effective communication builds positive relationships which contribute to resilience in the public sector. An effective and efficient communication system, coupled with an intranet helps

c) Personal Skills

- Personal skills such as problem- solving skills and autonomy are essential for resilience in the C-suite of the public sector.

- Prompt others to think critically and reflectively to develop alternative approaches to workplace problems
- Prompt thinking helps people to develop and learn, becoming ready to adapt to the new situations that they face.

## d) Work–Life Balance

- Encourage a balanced approach to work. Ensure work is undertaken in a safe, healthy and productive manner over time.
- A balance of effort and recovery (including time for rest and exercise) is important for maintenance of resilience at the c-suite

# General Points for Discussion

How to Generate Energy in a Team – building a winning team:

Communicate constantly:

- Communication is a key factor in team cohesion. Communicating new developments in the organization makes employees feel involved and valued and promoting "one shared vision" for the organization
- Invite others' opinions on particular subjects

Take an interest

- Take an interest in the personal and professional development of your team in order to increase their sense of importance and help to reinforce the fact that the organization is the best place for them to work.

Celebrate the wins

- Recognize and celebrate good effort by individuals or the team as a whole.
- The energy and positive buzz that is created when something goes well is infectious and has a significant effect on the work and emotional state of the team.

# Purposeful Communication

- Listening – Important communication strategies don't actually involve talking but rather, listening.
- Create a communication-friendly culture - Effective communication requires the creation of a receptive space. Try to create a relaxed and approachable environment for your conversations.
- Keep workplace communication constant - Establish a constant flow of communication on your team.
- Platform for anonymous feedback - The option for anonymous feedback is crucial for effective workplace communication. This includes whistleblowing.

# Stakeholder Collaboration

- Creating networks and stakeholder collaboration can strengthen individual performance and achieve network synergies and in turn create resilience
- For successful collaboration between you and your stakeholders, you need to:
  - ✓ determine the key stakeholders,
  - ✓ identify their roles in your organization,
  - ✓ develop a concept for your engagement with key elements after developing the engagement plan

# Partnership With Critical Stakeholders

- Sometimes the issues we encounter in our work environment are so challenging that we need partners to work together
- These involve voluntary undertakings by different partners operating under their own principles but focusing on a common vision and willing to take risks.(MOUs)
- In the public sector, there are certain issues that no individual institution can accomplish alone but through partnerships with other stakeholders. Special taskforces are formed for the purpose helping to build the much required resilience while ensuring performance is achieved.

# Ambition to Aspire for Higher Performance

- This is the strong wish or desire for achievement. This can be considered as your goal or vision.
- For one to be resilient, you must have an ambition and the desire for higher performance
- You should always look for tactics of improving the way things are done
- This includes the way you utilize the available resources (both human capital and financial resources) efficiently and effectively

# Continuous Learning – Improvement of Personal Skills

- This is the concept of always expanding your knowledge to gain new skills and expertise.
- It is also about encouraging and providing others with the tools that facilitate their learning
- At the individual level, it is about expanding and upgrading your skills to increase your knowledge.
- It forms part of your personal and professional development in an effort to reach your full potential.

# Continuous Learning – Cont..

- Continuous learning helps you to:
  - ✓ Remain relevant – keep up-to-date with trends and your skill set
  - ✓ Prepare for the unexpected -  adapt to the changing environment
  - ✓ Upgrade your profile – grow your career and keep on improving
  - ✓ Improve your Confidence – ensure you are ready to take new challenges
  - ✓ Develop new skills – this will help you find innovative ways of solving problems

# Interactive Session