

## The importance of resiliency to your career

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Why do some people suffer extreme adversity in their professional career and not stumble? And others never come out of the negative state of mind after some setbacks? Why is resiliency important to our career? And why it is especially more relevant than ever?

Resiliency in brief is the ability to bounce back from extraordinary hardship and adversity. It is a sign of strong willpower and positive attitude.

Looking back the history, you will find that many great men and women faced enormous obstacles in their life yet they overcame the challenges and became a better, wiser and stronger person. Nelson Mandela, Hellen Keller, Abraham Lincoln, all of these people encountered unbelievable hardship yet they were never resentful towards these dark moments in their lives, in quite contrary, they credit their adversity as the building blocks to their future success.

Greg Werner once said, "The road to your championship will not be a smooth, wide and easily travelled freeway. No, great accomplishments are never realized without first having to endure steep climbs, hard falls and sharp turns. The key to your success is perseverance and focus. Keep your focus on that which you desire to accomplish, your championship, and continually discover ways to, and ways not to, achieve your goals. Fall down and/or get knocked down 10 times and get back up 11..., and in so doing learn, grow and move closer to your championship."

The same principle applies to our professional life. The recent global economic crisis certainly has made many organisations and people feel vulnerable. This is when possessing quality such as resiliency will actually carry people through this difficult time.

Think back your own career, did you have setbacks? How did you deal with it? Did you feel angry and unfairly treated? Did you blame yourself or? Did you spend a great deal of time in analyzing the situation and were trapped in that negative state of mind for months or years? OR did you move on quickly and put all your energy in moving towards the new direction and your new goals? Most of us have a huge reluctance to change. We would like to preserve the status quo and stay within our comfort zone. But the world is changing fast. The current climate is the time when people who are successful move ahead because they grasp opportunities and are more adaptable to change.

Dr. Spencer Johnson wrote in his international best selling book "Who Moved My Cheese" that "The quicker you let go of your old cheese. The sooner you find new cheese."

Reading through many great books written by the world's best leaders, you will find that when they personally face setbacks in their career and personal life, one consistent quality they possess is the resiliency. Being resilient means being confident and have a faith in yourself and your ability to re-built and reach new goals again and again.

The resiliency topic is very close to my heart, as I personally had to overcome a few adversities and put resiliency into practice throughout my life. I was born in a remote village outside Shanghai, China. I had an under-privileged childhood but I cherish that memory very much as I would have never become the positive and grateful person I am today without those experiences. My condition was not as bad as what you have seen from the Slumdog Millionaire, but pretty harsh still. For instance, I never owned a toy in my entire childhood, and I had to study under an oil lamp until age of 7. My wonderful mother worked 16 hours a day every day and she only made A\$4 per month to raise a family of four.

My parents had to work very long hours, so from age of 3 or 4 years old, I had to become self-reliant, it is not unusual of me walking around and fetching things for myself in the public without adult supervision. I started Year 1 at age of 4 and would walk a long journey to and from school everyday by myself no matter how harsh the weather conditions were. Missing meals are just norm. In summer holidays, from age of 6, I would pack myself a bag and travel several hours on buses to go to visit my aunty in a different city on my own. Human beings can adapt to change very quickly if we have got no other choices left and if we have got no fear. Children are fearless. Human beings only become resistant to change if we start to become fearful or start to over-analyze the situations like the mice "Hem" and "Haw" in the "Who Moved My Cheese" book.

I was told early on by my parents that education and resiliency is the only two things I needed in order to have a better life outside my hometown. When I graduated from one of the top universities in China at 17 years of age, life became a lot more enjoyable. I was offered best jobs in best companies who paid me 6 times more than my parents combined wage, I started to lead a very comfortable lifestyle, I could have chosen to stay in that comfort zone forever. But I wanted to learn more about the world and other culture. So at 21, knowing nobody and with little money, I left a well-paid managerial job in Shanghai and moved to Australia to study my MBA degree. I worked several labour jobs to support myself and was elected as the International Student Representative upon graduation. Interestingly, the keynote speech I made at graduation ceremony was "Overcoming Adversity through Resiliency".

Like many overseas professionals, I faced great challenges with my initial job search in Australia. After graduating from my MBA degree, it took me a year to find a job, and I had to take a few steps back in my career and took on a telephone sales role at Dell in 1999 despite the fact I had already had four years management experience in China and two highly regarded degrees. However, I didn't feel resentful or unfairly treated. I stayed positive and resilient which eventually saw myself bridge the cultural gap and progressed rapidly in IT sector. In less than 2 years, Dell promoted me to the Head of a business unit for Asia Pacific. Since then, I held several senior executive and management positions within a few leading technology companies.

Looking back, I wasn't a natural sales person and didn't love the job, but I threw myself into the job with enthusiasm nevertheless and consistently became a top performer. I also constantly reminded myself all the positive things being a sales person like getting to know the customers and competitors first hand etc. I also shared my long-term career goal with my manager and my General Manager from Day 1. I proactively asked what development areas I needed to focus on and sought out mentor. I ended up working for a senior director voluntarily for 6 months and took on a-year long accent correction course. I didn't know when I would be given a more suitable role but I never once doubted myself.

Working as a company director while raising two young children was another challenge I faced in my career. Especially given the fact that I and my husband, who also worked in a full-time corporate role, had limited family support locally as all grandparents lived inter-city or overseas. I again used similar approach, I reinforced my career goal and my personal value, I proactively sought out mentors and any help I could find, I identified the areas I could no longer contribute due to family commitment but compensated it with the new skillsets I have acquired. Early this year, I gave up my lucrative corporate career to pursue my long-term passion in coaching. With an aim to assist individuals and organizations to reach their greatest potential, I since embarked on a very exciting and rewarding venture.

**So how can you build up the quality of resilience?**

1. Accept the reality and move on
2. Create a long-term vision and stay focused on working towards that
3. Be proactive - seek out mentor, coach, ask for advice, read great books
4. Believe in yourself even when nobody else does, be self-reliant
5. Find a meaning in everything you do even in a job you dislike, look hard enough, you will always find something positive
6. Be open-minded and adaptable, let go of old beliefs
7. Surround yourself with positive and supportive people and network

The most important thing is to recognise that change is a way of life and start to learn to enjoy change, treat every change as an opportunity not an obstacle. \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\* **Yu Dan Shi** is the founder of **SuccessWe International** – an innovative coaching and training organisation specialising in personal development, career management, developing human potential, and building Passionate and High-Performance individuals, teams and organisations. Before founding SuccessWe, Yu Dan had a successful 15-year corporate career in marketing, sales, and general management in both Australia and Asia. She held senior executive positions within several Fortune 500 companies. Yu Dan was the ANZ Chief Marketing Officer for Lenovo, as well as a Dell executive for Asia Pacific and Japan. Yu Dan has an MBA degree and trained with the Institute of Executive Coaching. Yu Dan also chairs Australia Computer Association Women's Board in NSW. Since 2001, Yu Dan has coached hundreds of professionals, business owners, executives and teams. Yu Dan is fluent in both English and Chinese.