


**Building Resilience in the Post-Pandemic Workplace:**  
*Guidance for Navigating Challenging Interpersonal Dynamics at Work and Responding to Distressed Employees*

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**Overview of Today's Presentation**

1. Current Workplace Trends
2. Proposed Strategies for Building Workplace Resilience
3. Case Study
4. Final Tips




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**Charlotte Current Workplace Trends 2021-2022**

Post-Covid Adjustments:

- Transition from remote to in-person working environment
- Varying degrees of concerns/vulnerabilities among employees regarding the on-going risk of exposure to Covid
- Fear in returning to the on-campus workplace due to Covid
- Rise in requests for Accommodations and Medical Leaves
- Demands of caregiving responsibilities exacerbated by Covid

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### Charlotte Current Workplace Trends 2021-2022

- Telework Angst
  - Some positions allow for more flexibility than others-generating difficult conversations within units about telework policies
- Great resignation or reshuffling leaving some units short-staffed, with remaining employees feeling overwhelmed
- Rise in reports of communication mishaps/breakdowns

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### Strategies for Building Workplace Resilience

1. Prioritize active listening;
2. Embrace a growth mindset, including learning more about the characteristics of effective leaders and supervisors and how to integrate effective leadership and supervision into your work style; and
3. Learn how to identify and focus on shared interests when conflicts emerge.



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### Active Listening



1. PAY ATTENTION.



2. WITHHOLD JUDGEMENT.



3. REFLECT.



4. CLARIFY.



5. SUMMARIZE.



6. SHARE.

Center for Creative Leadership



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### Characteristics of Effective Leadership

<b>MODEL</b> THE WAY 	<b>INSPIRE</b> A SHARED VISION 	<b>CHALLENGE</b> THE PROCESS 	<b>ENABLE</b> OTHERS TO ACT 	<b>ENCOURAGE</b> THE HEART 
CLARIFY VALUES AND SET THE EXAMPLE	ENVISION THE FUTURE AND ENLIST OTHERS	SEARCH FOR OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPERIMENT AND TAKE RISKS	FOSTER COLLABORATION AND STRENGTHEN OTHERS	RECOGNISE CONTRIBUTIONS AND CELEBRATE THE VALUES AND VICTORIES

Citation: Kouzes, James M., and Barry Z. Posner. 2017. *The Leadership Challenge*. 6th ed. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.




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### Characteristics of Effective Leadership

Study found that personal and interpersonal skills ranked higher than technical expertise and strategic leadership. Ranked highest were:

- Keeping an open mind
- Patience
- Flexibility
- “Servant Leadership”

Reference: Rosemary O’Leary, Catharine Gerard, Yujin Choi, and Stephanie Sofer. Draft March 2011. *Collaborative Governance and Leadership: The Perspectives of Senior Executive Service (SES) Members*. Paper prepared for presentation at the 15th Annual International Research Society for Public Management Conference, Dublin, Ireland, April 11-13, 2011.




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### Identifying Shared Interests



Positions = What      *Wants*

Interests = Why      *Needs Values*




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### Practicing Fairness as a Leader



**RELATIONSHIPS**

**PROCESSES**

**DECISIONS**

*People-centered communication that emphasizes teamwork, collaboration, and respect*

*Meaningful and thorough "in-reach"; valuing and giving due consideration of diverse perspectives*

*The substantive outcome is lawful, ethical, timely, unbiased, and evidence-based*




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### Case Study for Discussion

- The Department of Institutional Resilience, which has 10 full-time positions, is entering its busiest season with four positions vacant and a newly-appointed Interim Director. The Interim Director is a candidate for the permanent Director position and is feeling a tremendous amount of pressure to improve the department's turnaround time, despite staffing shortages and the added administrative burden of facilitating recruitment for open positions. The Interim Director is working long hours, reaching out to staff routinely after hours and over the weekend in effort to process delayed departmental projects.
- During a staff meeting to discuss prioritization of pending matters, the Interim Director expresses frustration with the status of one high profile project. The staff member assigned to the project becomes irate, shouts at the Interim Director to "Get real!" and abruptly leaves the staff meeting, slamming the door on the way out.




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Case Study, Continued

- Cary, an Assistant Director in the Department of Institutional Resilience, is concerned about the unprofessional interaction at the last staff meeting and the tensions impacting the office environment. Cary reaches out to HR to express concerns, but is unclear about how best to address the concerns.
- Cary fears retaliation if the Interim Director finds out she shared concerns with HR.
- Cary also expresses concerns about personal mental health issues and the weight of the office dynamics on those personal mental health issues. Cary has disclosed concerns about her mental health with the Interim Director and the need to establish some parameters around her working hours, as the added stress is exacerbating her health concerns. The Interim Director has been compassionate but unresponsive to her requests for more limited work hours, in light of the staffing shortages and the added stress of the office's busiest season quickly approaching.
- Cary also discloses exploring alternative positions, given the current job market. Cary is wary of further pursuing some sort of intervention by HR, if it could adversely impact alternative employment ambitions.



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**To recap:**

- Stretched Interim Director, staffing shortages, and impending busy season;
- Existing staff, either implicitly or explicitly, feeling pressure to work beyond normal work hours and over the weekend;
- Unprofessional conduct at staff meeting in response to Interim Director's management of a project;
- Cary is an Assistant Director who has witnessed these issues and is concerned about retaliation but believes the Department needs some sort of intervention;
- Cary has also disclosed potential disability and/or medical condition exacerbated by the office environment.

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**Questions for Discussion**

**How Might Employee Relations and/or Ombuds Assist?**



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**Potential Legal Issues**

- Fair Labor Standards Act
- American with Disabilities Act
- Family Medical Leave Act
- Policies Setting Expectations for Safe and Respectful Working Environment



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## Campus Resources Available to Supervisors and Employees

- University Ombuds: <https://ombuds.charlotte.edu/>
- Human Resources: <https://hr.charlotte.edu/about-human-resources>
  - Employee Assistance Program (ComPsych): <https://hr.charlotte.edu/employee-relations/compsych-guidance-resources-employee-assistance-program>
  - My Health-Advisory Committee for Employee Health and Wellness: <https://myhealth.charlotte.edu/>
  - Employee Relations (ADA reasonable accommodations/interactive process): <https://hr.charlotte.edu/pims/reasonable-accommodation>
  - Recruitment & Hiring (Temp Program): <https://hr.charlotte.edu/recruitment-and-hiring/temporary>
  - Benefits (FMLA Leave Administration): <https://hr.charlotte.edu/family-medical-leave-act-fmla>
  - Compensation and Position Management (FLSA Compliance Support): <https://hr.charlotte.edu/compensation-and-position-management/performance-management/fair-labor-standards-act-flsa>

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Questions?



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