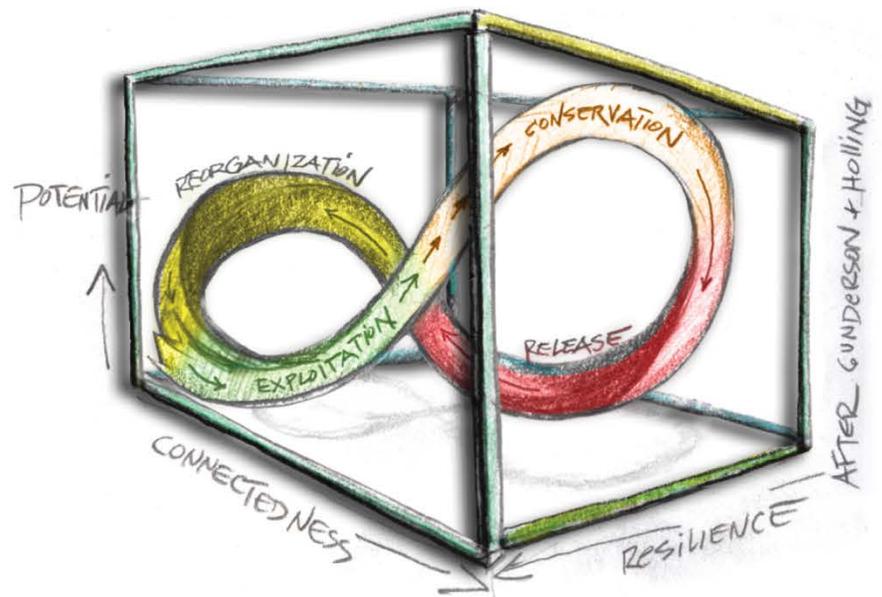


UNDERSTANDING AND BENEFITTING FROM RESILIENCE

Pearl Veenema



An essay contribution to
Gary Hubbell Consulting Conversation 2013

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planning ▲ strategy ▲ philanthropy ▲ coaching

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ABOUT GARY HUBBELL CONSULTING CONVERSATION

Annually, Gary Hubbell Consulting convenes and hosts a small hand-picked group of social sector professionals from throughout North America for three days of intense dialogue and critical thinking. We strive to create a thought-provoking, mind-opening, and stimulating conversation about philanthropy, organizational leadership, and social sector change. This deep exploration of the nature and challenges of the philanthropic environment is intended to engage, inform, and inspire senior leaders to be catalysts for change in their own organizations and communities of influence. With each GHC *Conversation*, we seek to establish the seeds of a continuing and enriching network that nourishes us as individuals and helps each of us change how we converse, inspire, and seek



PARTICIPANT BIO

Pearl Veenema

President, Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation

Pearl is President & CEO of the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation, an organization of 35 employees dedicated to raising philanthropic gifts that support patient care, research and education for one of the most comprehensive health care systems in Canada. Specialized care for the full spectrum of life's journey is provided to a region of 2.3 million people in south-central Ontario by the six hospitals and cancer centre that form Hamilton Health Sciences.

Pearl began her health care career in nursing and has extensive experience in health care administration, public affairs, marketing and as a patient representative. In 1999, she made the transition to development serving as President and Chief Development Officer for the former Orthopaedic and Arthritic Hospital Foundation. In 2001 she was privileged to be part of the staff leadership team that raised \$554 million for University Health Network (UHN) campaign. Before joining Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation in 2007, Pearl was Vice President Advancement for the Toronto General and Western Hospital Foundation.

In 2012, the first comprehensive fundraising textbook written by Canadians for Canadians Excellence in Fundraising in Canada, was published. Pearl was honoured to join 20 colleagues, each of whom authored a chapter. Pearl's contribution focused on the case for support.

A Fellow of the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy (AHP) and a Certified Fund Raising Executive, CFRE International. She has served in many leadership roles, including Chair for the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, CFRE International Board and AHP University-based Programs and Director of the Institute for Healthcare Philanthropy (Madison Institute). Pearl presently serves as Dean, Major Gifts for the Madison Institute.

Pearl was a member of the first AHP Healthcare Philanthropy Standards Council that worked on an industry standards manual which was published in 2012.

Pearl is married to Frank, her husband of 35 years. They are the proud parents of Michael Andrew.

This is Pearl's fifth *GHC Conversation*.



Understanding and Benefitting from Resilience

Pearl F. Veenema, FAHP

Set the table anywhere in North America with development professionals, volunteers and donors and I envision the conversation to be similar. There are growing economic challenges adversely impacting community health and overall prosperity; daily challenges of managing expectations with a multi- generational workforce; shortage of experienced talent and an exhaustive focus on cost per dollar raised at the expense of innovation and creativity. Also there are increasing expectations to raise more philanthropic dollars to meet day-to-day needs with little time and resources to consider the future. The newer themes are focused on engaging the Diaspora, accessing global philanthropy and investing in social media to keep pace with rapidly advancing technology.

While all of the above is real in every sense of the word, the constant reliance on the familiar ways to address these challenges can be limiting and at times demoralizing.

From a leader’s perspective, developing personal resilience is paramount. From an organizational perspective, it is necessary to build resilience, fostering an organizational culture that flourishes with hope and optimism.

What is resilience?

Two years ago my personal and leadership organizational journey began with an intentional commitment and practice to bring into being a commitment to authentic leadership. We began with the creation of a 2030 Vision



for the Region's health & vitality. Concurrently, this journey of learning and practicing was supported by Gary Hubbell and Ken Hubbell. With their guidance, the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation leadership defined and committed to a leadership framework that would focus our journey on eight competencies as outlined in Table 1.

Our practice encompassed monthly select readings within each competency followed by dialogue where we all shared our interpretations. We continue this practice on a monthly basis. While there is a collective commitment, each individual invests differently and there are varying degrees of "openness" to assimilate the thinking and value to the practice of philanthropy.

The intended benefits of the journey, as summarized by our coaches, were "to make a cultural shift to increase our learning muscles and consistently operationalize new behaviours". We are very intentional about building the architecture, core stories, and culture of a more trusting, resilient organization, defined as one that is able to sustain competitive advantage over time through its capability to do three things simultaneously.

1. Deliver excellent performance against current goals effectively and with innovative thinking and strategies;
2. Adapt to rapid, turbulent changes in our sector and region and
3. Respond to and embrace advancing technologies.

This is incredibly hard work. I am acutely aware that as the leader, bringing this intentional practice into my daily work, relationships and interrelationships will build personal resiliency and that modeling this value-based behaviour will attract those who want to come along.

It is comfortable to focus on the leadership personnel as champions for sustainability and future success assuming that it is only the leadership that has this responsibility. Look deeper into an organization and invite a divergent group to come together to rally around an issue or idea and the results can be profound.

Margaret Mead says "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that that ever has."¹

Derek Mowbray, Founder of The Wellbeing and Performance Group, proposes three components to an optimal corporate resilient organization.

¹ Margaret Mead, http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Margaret_Mead/, accessed February 1, 2013.

The following illustration is an excellent example of the requirements.



Further, he proposes that “Commitment and trust leads to social engagement, that, in turn can produce psychological ‘flow’, a strong psychological contract, and together with other features (engagement, skills, knowledge and experience, effective people management, positive working environment) produces strong resilience against risks and threats.”²

What I like about this model is the interrelationship between the components, which, while presented in a silo fashion, can be further defined and personalized to any organization and individual. It is also easily adapted for addressing community or societal issues.

Developing Organizational Resilience

An important part of organizational resilience is practicing and imagining different futures - much as we have been discussing at Conversation – taking the long view and the diligent application of scenario thinking to expand options or pathways.

As organizations within the social sector look to the strategic initiatives that shape and develop resilience and adaptability, they are likely to focus on the traditional parts:

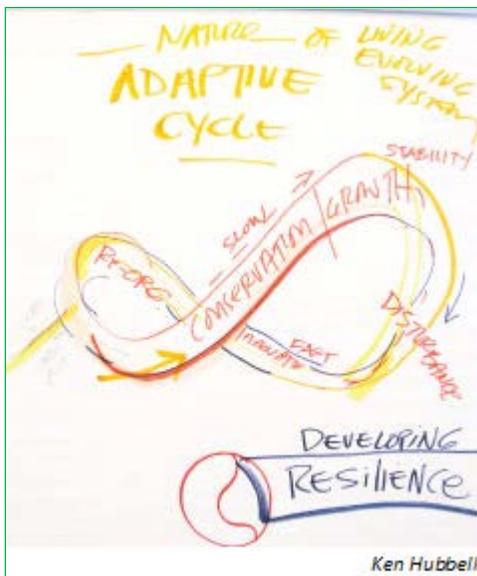
- Technology
- Finances
- Human Resources
- Competitive Analyses
- Environmental Scans
- Case for Support
- Leadership/Governance

² Derek Mowbray, “Corporate Resilience,”

http://www.mas.org.uk/uploads/articles/Corporate_Resilience.pdf, accessed February 1, 2013.

In my view, this works well with a tactical approach to organizational development. The strengths of scenario based planning far outweigh the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the above which can be limiting, even when looking out five to ten years. The longer term view offers the “stretch” in thinking to reach beyond a comfortable cycle or zone.

Looking inward at my organization, it is easy to focus on “the now”. The tried and true tools we use to shape philanthropic programs and navigate through crisis involve reorganizations, program retooling and taking incremental safe measures - to rebalance and bring about stability which can provide a false sense of lasting resiliency as the next challenge or crisis will definitely be just around the corner.



A more difficult or courageous step is to shake up thinking, or more eloquently put, “create disturbances” that will challenge new thinking, offer new investments, and have a fine balance between risk and opportunity. I am reminded of a concept that we explored at an earlier Conversation where Ken Hubbell illustrated “the adaptive cycle.” The infinity loop certainly speaks to the constant change.

Intuitively, organizations follow this approach perhaps without realizing that it is a natural way to develop personal and organizational resilience.

At our recent board retreat, staff offered four futures for a generative discussion. The Board decided that they needed to focus on the desired future because the other three will be the default if we are not successful. That logic may be sound. While the scenario exploration was insightful and opened up thinking and perspective, I am left wondering if we would have missed opportunities when to some degree, our position fell into all of the proposed scenarios.

The Resilient Attribute

In doing my research for this essay, I was pleased to find C. Newham's thesis essay, "Personal Resilience for Organisational Resilience."³

The essay included a literature summary. The author offered that there are "four key ways that an organization can support and build on individual levels of resilience":

- "Set resilience attributes as a recruitment criteria
- Harness the concept of some resilient traits being contagious
- These skills and attributes can be learned
- By setting and promoting organizational values ... increase the resilience of the approaches individuals choose to take..."

It begs the question how does one define and assess in an interview context the resilience attribute(s)?

What made more sense to me was his concluding statement "Investing in building a more resilient staff is more about time and effort than finances," because there is a natural tendency to seek quick and unanimous results with tangible evidence into practice. Two years hence, the return on the investment of time and effort spent is uncertain. Is it too early to "give up" as other colleagues are yet to be invited to join and contribute to the dialogue? Perhaps a more realistic expectation is as Parker Palmer offers:

*"I will never be a good teacher for students who insist on remaining wallflowers throughout their careers – that is simply one of my many limits. But perhaps I can develop enough self-understanding to keep inviting the wallflowers onto the floor, holding open the possibility that some of them might hear the music, accept the invitation, and join me in the dance of teaching and learning."*⁴ Parker Palmer

If the vast majority of organizations within the third sector were on simultaneous paths of learning and intentional practice, resiliency could be the force/energy for good.

³ C. Newham, "Personal Resilience for Organisational Resilience," <http://goldordust.wordpress.com/2011/01/31/personal-resilience-for-organisational-resilience/>, accessed February 1, 2013.

⁴ <http://www.action-wheel.com/quotes-about-leadership-by-parker-palmer.html>, accessed February 1, 2013.

Expanding a Sole System

The leader's role is to respectfully shape and steer the conversation to a broader thinking and to compare and contrast the higher levels of achievement that can be attained with an inspired, engaged network of supporters.

What will it take to create a "movement" towards organizational adaptability and resilience within the sector? Is it a total collapse in philanthropic giving? People are investing in causes that are meaningful to them and transformative gifts are plentiful. Will it be survival of the fittest?

It takes purposeful action and courage to continue the conversation internally at the staff level and at all levels. Equally, it is imperative to do so externally. I am reminded of the saying "If it is to be, it is up to me."⁵ As leaders in the profession, it can be our collective call to action.

The outcomes are worth the journey. Healthy and vibrant communities, engaged workforce, committed ambassadors and donors, and resilience to receive, embrace and respond to the ever-changing landscape that is today's world.

⁵ "If it is to be, it is up to me," William H. Johnsen, <http://quotationsbook.com/quote/35768/>, accessed February 2, 2013.