

## RESILIENCE... Oxford's word of the year for 2017?

By Martin Murphy

**The Oxford English dictionary announced after much discussion and research, that the word of the Year for 2016 was *post-truth*.**

It described *post-truth* as an adjective defined as

*'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'.*

The word *post-truth* has been around for decades, but its usage spiked recently as a result of the Brexit referendum and the US elections. These two events combined with other daily news makes us all wonder if our environment, economy and society will survive.

A shifting business world can leave leaders and teams lost in a fog of uncertainty. But every creature alive today has encountered shifting climates, dwindling resources and deceptive predators along its evolutionary path. Each surviving species is a compelling story of adaptability and resilience, which enabled them to succeed where others did not.

An essential first step for leaders is to overcome paralysis and, avoid knee-jerk reactions which ultimately lead to ineffective responses. It means preparing themselves and their teams to become more adaptive, aware, and resilient.

**In fact, with a world heavily influenced by what the military describe as VUCA - volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, I wouldn't be surprised if the Oxford word of the year for 2017 will be: RESILIENCE.**

Resilience is an essential life quality that enables people, teams and communities to recover from repeated setbacks and challenges. Rather than letting failure overcome them and drain their resolve, they find a way to pick themselves up and get back into the game.

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Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make people resilient, among them a positive attitude, optimism and the ability to regulate emotions. Moreover; it's their ability to see failure as a form of useful feedback which enables them to experience *post-traumatic* growth as a result. Even living in such an uncertain world, resilient people are blessed with an outlook that allows them to accept, overcome and soldier on.

Increasingly, in my profession as a leadership and performance coach, I'm asked by leaders how they and their teams can become more resilient.

In response I've partnered up with Metris Leadership and we're running a resilience course in **March**. The course is facilitated by Special Forces soldiers and an Olympic psychologist. I know from my own Special Forces experience and time learning to survive and perform in hostile environments, the mental qualities and learning needed to succeed in those challenging situations; is directly transferable to life and work today.

Learning to strengthen people's capacity for resilience will allow leaders, teams and communities to not only survive, but also seize the extraordinary opportunities that arise during periods of great uncertainty.

Nobody can predict whether we're in for a hard, harder or the hardest of times following recent events and it would be very easy to slip into *learned helplessness* as a result. But what we do know is that people who are prepared and armed with the right mental outlook and bags of resilience, will be the ones who succeed. I'll see you in **Hereford** soon!