

OE, 1 employee at a time

Organizational effectiveness initiatives tend to be big solutions to big problems: A modernist legacy of imposing our will on systems instead of individuals. However, as we become firmly enveloped in a post-modern world, where the increasing complexity of organizations increasingly resists “big change,” the return on these initiatives — spotty to begin with — wanes.

What if we reversed the telescope? If organizations are the sum of their individuals, could we drive organizational effectiveness through individual effectiveness? Could many small solutions to many individual problems overcome the inertia of complexity? Could these accumulate to create a sustainable, critical mass of positive change that would result in organizational effectiveness from the other direction? To be clear,



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ORGANIZATIONAL
EFFECTIVENESS

I’m not referring to just-in-case skill building, the go-to solution of yore — rather, I’m suggesting we individually look inward toward our destructive and ultimately self-destructive thinking and resulting behaviours.

Andrew Soren’s resilience presentation to SCN revealed exactly that. Soren is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania’s renowned positive psychology program, home base for the resilience movement. He demonstrated that resilience research has shown that many small improvements in characteristics such as emotional regulation, impulse control, optimism, flexible thinking, empathy and self-efficacy resulted in individuals and their organizations being much better at handling adversity, and change in general.

Soren positioned “resilience” not as the modernist myth of the superhero — resolute, solo and stoic — but, rather, as everyday individuals in a complex and interconnected world that acknowledge and confront adversity, do so together, and

move forward by muddling through. The science of resilience has shown it’s not about “invincible and invulnerable,” it’s about the “ordinary magic” of learning to use intrinsic coping tools that we, as individuals, have at hand.

Soren showed that “bottom up” resilience is teachable and it results in sustainable improvements in attitudes and behaviours (including engagement), greater performance and increases in well-being. Taken as a whole, that’s organizational effectiveness “by any other name.”

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