

Stories about **LEADERSHIP**

A STORY ABOUT RESILIENCE



The email from the CFO arrives at 7:03 a.m. Of course, at 7:03, not at 7:00, not at 7:15. A calmness that seems like perfect timing.

"I need an update at 9 a.m. What's your rescue plan?"

I read the sentence three times, even though it has no ambiguity. The pilot is wobbling. Not a bit. Correct.

On Monday we had an interface error that caused data to be duplicated. On Tuesday, training in one region was cancelled because the service provider pulled out at short notice. Last night, Priya reported that morale within the local team was souring. And today – CFO update.

I'm sitting at the kitchen table, laptop open, coffee getting cold, still dark outside. My mind immediately tries to revert to its old mode: faster, longer, alone. Part of me wants to run straight to the basement of my abilities and drag some miracle back from there.

For a long time, resilience was a word to me synonymous with "persevering." A proud word. Perhaps too harsh. I've persevered enough in recent years to know that perseverance is not the same as staying healthy. And it's certainly not the same as leading.

Two weeks ago in a coaching session – it was one of the rare sparring sessions where I didn't start by talking about numbers – the coach said something that I initially thought was banal:

"Resilience is not toughness. Resilience is the ability to become capable of acting again under pressure."

"How can I become capable of taking action?" I had asked.
She had simply replied: "By ceasing to be alone."

That sentence is in my head today like a signpost.

I text Jonas: "War room at 8. I need you." He replies almost immediately: "We already have so many calls." "I know," I type. "But if we don't combine them now, we'll lose two weeks." A brief hesitation. Then: "Okay. I'm in."

Priya. HR. Operations. Two workstream leads. 8:00 to 10:00. I deliberately set the meeting for two hours. No longer. Any longer would be an invitation to talk rather than decide.

In the invitation location, I don't write "Status call", but rather: "**Goal: A viable rescue plan within 120 minutes.**"

At 7:55 a.m., I sit alone in the virtual space, look at the clock, feel that shallow trembling in my stomach when I know that responsibility is about to roll towards me. I take a deep breath.

Then the tiles come in, one by one. Some with a tired look, some with that impatient "let's get this done quickly." I start without a warm-up.

"I'll be frank," I begin. "I'm under pressure right now. You are too. And that's precisely why we're consolidating our efforts. We'll work in a structured way. For two hours. After that, we'll know what we're doing – and what we're consciously choosing not to do."

Silence. Then Priya nods. Jonas leans forward. HR Lead audibly exhales. You know what I'm talking about.

I'm sharing a board with three columns:
Sofort fixen – Workaround – Stop.

"We'll include everything that's currently blocking us," I say. "And then we'll sort it out. Not according to preference, but according to pilot criticality."

Jonas begins: "Interface error in Region 1. Must be fixed today."

Priya: "The mood in Region 2 is turning sour because of a lack of training. We need a replacement this week."

Operations: "One process step is not yet harmonized. If we go live, we'll fall flat on our faces."

We fill in the columns. Ten minutes, just collecting. Then we sort. And I'm consciously doing one thing differently than before: I don't decide everything myself. I let the leads prioritize and justify their topics. I just ask questions, keep things focused, and stop them from going off-topic.

"What is the fastest fix for Region 1?" "Who can handle the training internally?" "What happens if we bring forward process X and postpone Y to Q2?"

The energy in the room is changing. From "oh God" to "okay, that's how it's done." I see how the ability to act arises: not through fewer problems, but through order.

After 50 minutes we have a first picture:

Region 1 will start as planned; interface fixes will be completed by Friday.

We are postponing Region 2 by two weeks because otherwise the training will go wrong.

Workaround for process harmonization: a temporary manual step, documented and clearly communicated.

We're stopping two nice-to-haves to free up capacity.

My stomach is protesting in one spot: Move it? That'll cause trouble.

But resilience also means accepting reality as reality.

At 9:15 a.m., we assess the risks. Not to downplay them, but to manage them. And we assign responsibilities who don't think about it "later," but start today.

The plan is finalized by 9:40 a.m. No wonder. But it's viable.

I'm on an executive call at 9:55 a.m. The CFO is there, the sponsor, and two board members. I notice my pulse quickening. That's normal. I exhale once before I speak.

"We've restructured the pilot plan," I say. "Region 1 remains, Region 2 is postponed by two weeks. Interfaces will be finalized by Friday. Training will be handled internally. We're putting two topics on hold until Q2."

"How sure are you that this will hold up?" asks the CFO.

I would have been tempted in the past to promise security in order to gain peace of mind. Not today.

"Not one hundred percent," I say. "But enough, because we are focused, responsible people are on board, and we don't ignore risks, but manage them. We act instead of hoping."

A brief silence. Then he nods. "Okay. Do it."

When the call ends, I lean back. The problems haven't gone away. But I'm back on my feet. Able to act.

Resilience today wasn't about "just grit your teeth and get through it." Resilience was about "opening your eyes and working together."

Takeaway inspiration

Resilience

Resilience in leadership means not becoming isolated under pressure, but rather acting more decisively and collaboratively. Effectiveness arises when you pool resources, prioritize, and activate support, instead of isolating yourself in a crisis.

In the next crisis, consciously do the opposite of retreat: bring 2-3 key people into a brief war room and together prioritize "Immediate action – Workaround – Stop". The ability to act is the best form of resilience.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS ABOUT RESILIENCE FOR YOU

1. Where am I currently trying to bear a crisis alone?
2. What signals tell me that I need to get out of this spiral?
3. Who do I need on board now so that we can become stable together?



Feel free to contact me anytime::

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