

PERSONAL RESILIENCE – ONE CEO'S STORY

Wayne Johnson is the CEO of ContainerCo, a leading Kiwi supplier of shipping containers, and has held executive roles across multiple industries over many years. He discusses his personal resilience in navigating leadership roles.

Many CEOs report feeling like they're navigating challenges alone. Have you ever felt this way, and if so, how do you manage it?

There are definitely times where you have to navigate challenges that make you feel a little isolated and alone. It has always been important to me to have one or two confidants that I'm able to have open and honest conversations with, people whose opinion and guidance I value. It's always beneficial if these people are outside of the business and industry that I am working in, it provides a level of clarity and perspective as well as encouragement. Most times I have felt alone it has been a temporary situation, one that is resolved and things revert back to normal.

What kind of support systems do you rely on to help guide decision-making and maintain perspective? Over time my experience has provided a different perspective – as I've progressed through my career it has become increasingly important to me to have a strong network of people outside my working environment. I have worked with a mentor and friend from HSNZ, Carina Hull, for over 15 years, there is a mutual trust that allows me to share thoughts, feelings and ideas without judgement. We discuss and throw

around ideas which has led me to better decision-making and better outcomes than if I'd pursued a path on my own.

Having strong support at home from my wife, is a huge support for me, she always provides a good sounding board and is a calming influence, her support provides me with a high degree of confidence.

A strong friendship base is also critical for me – these keep me grounded.

I find that industry/peer groups and forums provide minimal support, there always seems to me to be different agendas at play. Industry groups, given the competition factor, always make it more challenging to be open.

How do you foster a culture within ContainerCo that supports not just business success, but also the wellbeing and resilience of your leadership team and employees?

I think it is critical to engage with every member of the leadership team and through the business, make them feel like individuals as well as team members. I work hard at acknowledging their individual contribution to the success of the team and wider organisation. I don't always get it right and when I don't it is important for me and the team member that I take accountability for that. Across the business we are implementing programmes to support

culture and personal health and wellbeing.

For my leadership team I like to lead from the front and ensure they feel like I'm not asking them to do things that I wouldn't be prepared to do myself.

We try to inject a bit of fun and celebrate successes, individual and team.

As a CEO, how do you personally stay resilient in the face of uncertainty, stress and challenges?

I have a role to play in the business, it is important to keep a clear perspective on what is my role and the decisions that I make and who I am as a person. I try to keep a level of empathy in all that I do. Outside of work having a number of different interests helps keep me fresh, I think it is unhealthy for me and my team to focus on work and nothing but work. The challenge for me is to ensure I don't take things too personally and focus on the things that I can affect.

For my own wellbeing I try and keep active, making sure I eat well and maintain a level of activity that keeps me relatively fit. I try to sleep well and ensure that I take some time out to prevent any burnout. I have to give credit to my wife, she is the one who ensures I am doing the right things for both my physical and mental wellbeing.



What advice would you give to other CEOs or aspiring leaders who might be feeling isolated?

A role doesn't define you, my advice would be to focus on the things in your control, don't worry or get too tied up in things that are outside your area of influence. In your career you will have a number of roles, none are more important than the role you have in your family or your friendship group, get clarity on what are really the drivers of your own happiness.

In business wins and losses happen, celebrate the wins and then refocus, acknowledge and learn from the losses and move on – focus on what's ahead of you rather than what has been. Get one or two people around you, outside of your organisation, who you trust that you can talk to, bounce ideas off and share frustrations with. ■

As told to Rawinia Dolan, from HSNZ.

THE HIDDEN LAYERS OF RESILIENCE – WHAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW

Carina Hull explains how resilience is ultimately an inside job, shaped by our mindset, thoughts, and behaviours.

Building resilience is a multifaceted process that goes beyond simply 'bouncing back' from adversity. While many people know resilience is about overcoming challenges, there are several lesser-known aspects that can make a big difference in how resilience is built and sustained. Here are some important things that people might not know about building resilience:

1. Resilience is a skill, not a trait:

- What people don't know: Many people believe that resilience is an inherent trait – that some individuals are just born more resilient than others. When really, resilience is a skill that can be learned and developed over time.
- Why it matters: This means that everyone, regardless of their personality can cultivate resilience through intentional practice, mindset shifts, and strategies.

2. Resilience and thinking styles are interconnected:

- What people don't know: Resilience is heavily influenced by the way individuals think. The Human Synergistics Life Styles Inventory tool categorises thinking styles into Constructive, Passive/Defensive, and Aggressive/Defensive styles. These thinking patterns directly impact how a person approaches challenges, stress, and change.
- Why it matters: People with Constructive styles tend to be more resilient because their

thinking patterns focus on personal growth, collaboration, and positive engagement. Those with Defensive styles may struggle, as these thinking styles often lead to avoidance of challenges or reliance on external validation, making it harder to adapt and recover from setbacks.

3. Resilience is about changing behaviour, not just 'bouncing back':

- What people don't know: Resilience isn't just about going back to 'normal' after a setback; it's about developing new behaviours and thought patterns that enable you to thrive in the face of adversity.
- Why it matters: With feedback, individuals can recognise which Defensive styles (such as Approval or Power) may be undermining their resilience. Focusing on Constructive styles can foster growth, adaptability, and perseverance.

4. Resilience is not about avoiding stress:

- What people don't know: A common misconception is that resilient people don't experience stress or anxiety, which isn't always possible. Resilience is about how you think about and respond to stress, not actively working to avoid it.
- Why it matters: Resilient individuals focus on building coping strategies, and developing thinking patterns to help navigate challenges.

5. Building resilience involves

embracing vulnerability:

- What people don't know: Resilience often requires vulnerability. People may think that 'strong' individuals never show weakness or need help, but the opposite is true. Being able to acknowledge weaknesses, ask for help and express emotions are key components of resilience.
- Why it matters: Embracing vulnerability allows individuals to process emotions and gain perspective. Being open about our struggles helps build deeper connections, develop coping strategies and better identify triggers in the future.

6. Resilience is linked to self-compassion, not just toughness:

- What people don't know: Resilience is often associated with toughness, being self-critical or harsh.
- Why it matters: Being compassionate with yourself after setbacks allows us to avoid burnout and maintain mental well-being. It's easier to recover from adversity when you accept that mistakes and challenges are part of the human experience.

7. Resilience can be strengthened by helping others:

- What people don't know: Helping others can strengthen your own resilience. When you offer support, it can give you a sense of purpose and boost your own coping mechanisms. This is sometimes referred to as 'resilience through giving'.

- Why it matters: Engaging in acts of kindness and helping others can improve our own mental health and increase feelings of connectedness, which in turn reinforces the ability to cope with our own difficulties.

The LSI from Human Synergistics provides invaluable insight into an individual's thinking styles and behaviour, highlighting areas that may limit resilience and offering opportunities for change.

Resilience is ultimately an inside job, shaped by our mindset, thoughts, and behaviours. Practicing resilience is about mining your strengths, aligning to what intrinsically matters most to you, being vulnerable and practicing a growth-orientated approach. Are you ready to reflect on your mindset and fine tune your resilience potential? ■



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