

# A WEEK IN *Learning*

## HAPPY NEW YEAR - READY, SET, REFLECT!

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The challenges of 2020 have been well documented. We've had to deal with a pandemic. We've seen a renewed focus on social justice. We've been witness to a presidential election like no other. Now - as we head into the new year, we find ourselves faced with new issues - and opportunities. As I considered what to share in this edition of our weekly learning article, one question kept popping up:

*“What have we learned from our experiences last year that might help as we move forward?”*

Learning happens when we reflect. Things occur - and we must choose how to respond. 2020 gave us a lot to reflect on. How will we respond? To help in my search for an answer, I enlisted two of my L&D colleagues; Anton Ray and Libby Johnson. As we considered the question, we surfaced three big learnings from 2020: adaptability, operational excellence, and resilience. Below are our thoughts on these topics.

### ADAPTABILITY

2020 taught us that we are an extremely adaptable organization. Adaptability involves responding to changes in the environment so that successful operations can continue. Adaptable organizations survive **and** thrive. Not surprisingly, adaptable organizations are made up of adaptable people. So, what - specifically - makes an organization adaptable? Here are a few elements:

- **Simple Rules** - work is reduced to essential elements that have proven to be successful and easy to understand. At Goodwill, donation and production operations in the back of a retail store are consistent across all locations.
- **Interaction** - communication happens often - and everywhere. Every week during the most critical weeks of the summer, we received timely and helpful email updates from our CEO, Tim O'Neal.
- **Self-Organization** - team members identify and react quickly to new circumstances. When in-person services were not allowed - or limited due to the pandemic, our Mission Team was able to convert critical curriculum so that it could be delivered virtually.

Recognizing our adaptable nature is a big competitive advantage for our Goodwill. As new challenges and opportunities arise, we can leverage this organizational skill to our advantage - increasing our business output and - more importantly - our community impact.



“The greatest glory in living lies not in never failing, but in rising every time we fall”

- Confucius

## OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE - Libby Johnson, Manager, L&D

A recent [Forbes article](#) ranked the nation's best employers based on their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The article ranked 25 companies and shared how their response strategies made a difference for their employees and their customers. The list is dominated by organizations with vast workforces and profits to match. Companies like Verizon, Target, AT&T, Wal-Mart, Starbucks, PepsiCo, Cigna, Apple, and JP Morgan are all celebrated. Combing through the article, I noticed clear and recurring themes to these companies' COVID successful response:

1. Early adoption of a mask protocol.
2. Contact tracing within their workforce.
3. Implementation of a sanitization process for customers and team.
4. A cohesive COVID leave of absence policy.
5. Protocols to keep interruption of their service to the public to a minimum.

I expect these points don't strike you as groundbreaking; we've had them at our Goodwill for the bulk of the year. Now stop and think about that for a moment. Our own Goodwill (a humble non-profit with about 3,500 people in its workforce) responded to a pandemic as strongly and soundly **as any titan of American industry**. What's more, we did all this while helping our community connect to employment and community resources, collecting a record number of donations and breaking retail sales records. If you ask what I've learned in 2020, I will tell you -without a trace of hyperbole- that an organization capable of this can achieve **anything**.

## RESILIENCE - Anton Ray, Director, L&D

Looking back, history will not likely shine upon 2020 with great favor. More likely, history will recall an era of face-masks, social distancing, peaceful demonstrations, violent protests and wildfires along our Western coast. Through it all, when I think of how Goodwill performed during such an uncertain time, I can't help but feel a sense of pride. Pride in our collective ability to adapt, thankful for the strength that supported us through hard times and impressed with the level of grace with which we pulled it all off.

Where does this come from? How is it that under such challenging circumstances we were able to keep our heads up and push forward with dignity? This is a question that I can't fully answer, but one that I can, in part, explain with one word: resiliency.

What is resilience? Resilience is not a trait that you either have or don't have. It includes behaviors, thoughts, and actions that **can be learned and developed**; I like to think of it as a mindset for success and happiness. Looking back, each of us can recall a time when we felt pain, sadness and even failure. Accepting these things and bouncing back is resilience. Getting back up after a loss is resilience. Reframing failures as opportunities to learn and grow is resilience.

Each day, we have an opportunity to decide how we will react to life's hurdles and surprises. Regardless how history paints 2020, I will always look back at it as a time when I saw and experienced great resiliency from those around me.

Here's to a great 2021 - with learning and development for all!