



Building Resiliency in Life Sciences Organizations

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INTRODUCTION

Background: The life sciences are increasingly characterized by organizational change:

- Private equity funds buying and selling biopharma and life science companies at unprecedented rates
- Ongoing innovation of new products and services
- AI-enabled tools entering the market

When life science organizations struggle to implement organizational change with multiple overlapping, conflicting initiatives, there is an increased likelihood of poor outcomes:

- Employee uncertainty, resistance, fatigue
- Employee burnout and turnover
- Uneven adoption of new technology
- Impaired productivity and effectiveness

Given that change will inevitably continue to impact life sciences, there is utility in increasing organizations' change management skills, including resilience, evolution, adaptation, performance, and sustainment.

Objective: To synthesize change management foundational theories fundamental to building resilient and adaptive organizations within life sciences so organizations can implement change thoughtfully, efficiently, and effectively. We focus on:

1. Concepts of building resiliency
2. System-level forces undermining resiliency
3. Evidence-based strategies to address challenges associated with organizational change

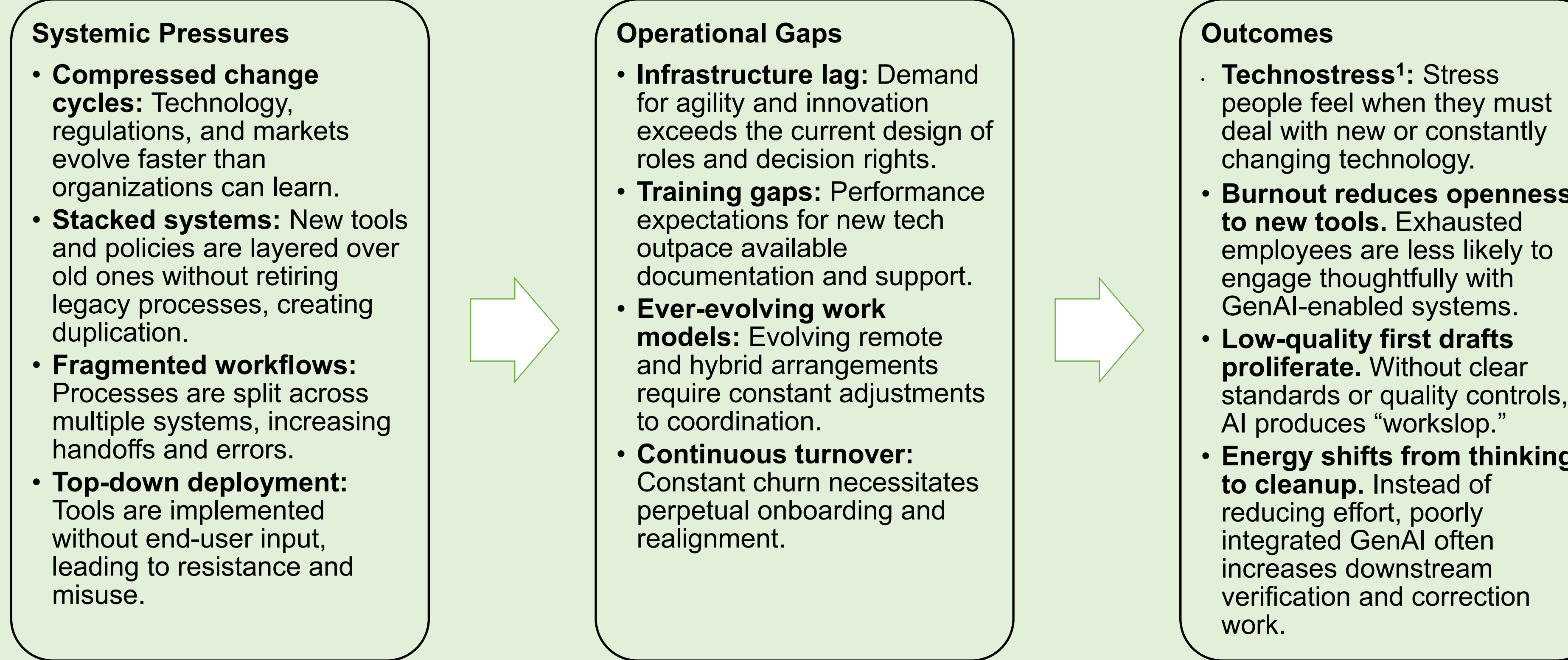
Methods: Conceptual review of change management foundational theories.

RESULTS: CORE CONCEPTS OF STRATEGIES TO BUILD RESILIENCY

Resilience is a system capacity. Individual coping skills matter, but resilience becomes sustainable when teams create safety and clarity, and organizations design structures that make healthy, adaptive work possible.

Individual	<p>Self-awareness and stress literacy: Ability to recognize early signs of overload, name stressors, understand personal triggers, and use recovery strategies</p> <p>Growth mindset: Values learning and improvement over perfection</p> <p>Self-efficacy: Belief and confidence in one's own motivation and performance</p>
Team	<p>Psychological Safety: A shared belief that it is safe to speak up, take interpersonal risks, and make mistakes without fear of being punished, humiliated, or ostracized.</p> <p>Shared purpose: Mission-aligned and mission-centered</p> <p>Clarify roles, priorities, and decision rights: Defining who owns what, how decisions are made, and what matters most</p> <p>Build mutual support and adaptive capacity: Creating regular check-ins, after-action reviews, cross-training, backup plans, and shared problem-solving routines</p>
Organizational	<p>Align values, structures, and processes: Ensuring policies, workflows, incentives, staffing, and leadership behaviors support the organization's stated mission and values</p> <p>Invest in leadership and management capability: Training leaders to manage conflict, communicate clearly, prioritize, support staff, make decisions, and guide change</p> <p>Design for change readiness: Building systems for feedback, learning, rapid adaptation, resource allocation, and continuous improvement</p> <p>Monitor and reduce systemic strain: Tracking workload, turnover, burnout risk, bottlenecks, staffing gaps, and process failures, then acting on the data</p>

RESULTS: SYSTEM-LEVEL FORCES UNDERMINING RESILIENCY



RESULTS: SELECTED EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES

Challenge	Evidence-Based Strategies to Address the Challenges
Leadership Turnover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed change goals into systems, not individuals; align governance and metrics • Develop succession plans that include change responsibilities • Build distributed leadership and ownership
Resistance to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer transparent, honest communication • Provide training, support, and engagement opportunities • Address concerns directly and create channels for feedback
Unclear Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create explicit role charters and accountability maps • Establish governance structures (steering committees, sustainment teams) • Align performance evaluations with change expectations
Lack of Enforcement & Follow-Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate desired behaviors into performance management • Set up dashboards, audits, and routine check-ins • Use rewards, recognition, and consequences consistently
Insufficient Integration into Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update procedures, IT systems, workflows, and decision rights • Ensure systems make the new way easier than old routines • Align budgeting, hiring, training with change
Competing Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize and sequence initiatives thoughtfully • Communicate clear relative importance • Reduce/eliminate low-value initiatives
Lack of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate dedicated resources, support, and training • Reduce competing demands temporarily • Provide coaching and technical assistance
Lack of Support from Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build change champion networks • Train supervisors in supportive leadership behaviors • Establish cross-functional teams and peer learning groups
Lack of Engagement & Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate the “why” and show progress • Recognize contributions and foster psychological ownership • Provide frequent, transparent updates and opportunities for questions
Cultural Misalignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify misaligned norms and explicitly address them • Use role modelling, stories, and recognition to reinforce new norm • Align culture-building practices (rituals, language, symbols)

CONCLUSIONS

Leaders can improve resiliency to change by embedding change into formal structures rather than relying only on individual champions; providing effective communication; involving employees meaningfully in shaping change; pairing psychological safety with accountability; and aligning incentives and feedback to consistently enforce expectations.

Organizations build resilience when adaptability/resiliency is institutionalized through clear ownership of change initiatives, decentralized decision rights, integrated workflows and technologies, disciplined prioritization, sufficient resourcing, and routines that normalize experimentation and learning.

Life Sciences organizations must treat change management not as an ad-hoc response to disruption, but as a core leadership and operational capability -- intentionally designed, consistently practiced, and embedded in how work gets done.

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1. A term first coined by psychotherapist Craig Brod in the 1980s, technostress is the stress people feel when they must deal with new or constantly changing technology, such as feeling overwhelmed by too much information or by having to learn new tools all the time. Factors such as work overload, complexity, and uncertainty—key contributors to technostress—can diminish technology-enabled performance unless counteracted by organizational supports, including training and autonomy.