Module 6:
Human Resources & Communications



Checking in on Emotional Resilience





Create routines that support your mental wellness and emotional resilience.



Think about personal support practices as business support practices.



The goal: make better choices for your business from a place of executive function and not fear.

First and foremost, YOU are your greatest asset!

Planning for Your People

Human Resource Strategies and Resources

HR? What HR?

Many small businesses operate without a dedicated HR department.

54%

of small businesses handle employment matters themselves

- SHRM-Society for Human Resource Management

70%

of businesses with 5-49 employees add HR onto the workload of employees with little to no experience in workforce issues

- ADP's Ad Hoc Human Resource Management Study

<50%

of small-business owners are very confident about the way their companies handle HR

- Paychex Survey

Your People Are Valuable

Adapting your HR benefits and policies can directly support your employees' physical and mental well-being.

This significantly increases your organization's **overall resilience** and even contributes to financial stability.



Adapted HR benefits and policies:

- Supports employees' physical and mental well-being
- Increases resilience
- Increases financial stability

source



Health Impacts & Healthcare Costs

Climate change is bringing about new and intensified health challenges, which have cost implications.



Financial & Housing Support

Climate-related disruptions can create financial strains for employees. HR can play a crucial role in offering aid/resources.



Workforce Adaptations

How can employers meet these new challenges, and how can they ensure that the needs of their employees are still met?

Health Impacts & Rising Healthcare Costs



Physical Health Risks:
Increased heat-related illnesses, respiratory, and cardiovascular issues.

Mental Health Needs:
Rise in climate anxiety, especially in younger employees.

Solutions

- ➔ Enhance employee health insurance to cover new climate-related health costs.
- ➔ Boost awareness of mental health services and access to telehealth care.
- ➔ Offer flex time for disaster recovery

➔ **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)** are often a low-cost benefit and can be mobilized quickly for crisis management and support. They offer mental health and other recovery resources not just to employees, but also to their household members.

Financial & Housing Support for Employees



Financial Stress:
Rising cooling costs, relocation needs, and higher out-of-pocket medical expenses.

Increased Disparities: Low-wage workers and vulnerable communities face disproportionate climate risks.

Solutions

- ➔ Establish hardship funds or loan programs
- ➔ Create flexible spending accounts for climate-resilience purchases
- ➔ Facilitate access to free community resources
- ➔ Be considerate of varying employee situations.

Workplace Adaptations & Flexibility



Workplace Disruptions:
Extreme heat, poor air quality, and severe weather can create unsafe working conditions, limit employee access to worksites, and disrupt daily operations.

Solutions

- ➔ Shift schedules to avoid extreme heat or hazardous conditions
- ➔ Temporarily re-assign physically demanding or outdoor work.

Communications: PR, Crisis, Storytelling

It's not enough to just do the work of adapting and preparing; you also need to **communicate** what you're doing, both inside and outside your business.

Why Public Relations?

When things go wrong, especially during a climate-related event, your public image matters!

Reality of these images:
1-2 months

Time in the media:
8+ months

The narrative around your town or business in the aftermath of a crisis can linger for a very long time.





Controlling the Narrative

The extended **media cycle** can significantly impact your reputation, your customer relationships, and even your financial stability for **months to come**.

This is why having a PR strategy is essential. It's about managing that long-term narrative and **proactively shaping the story**, rather than just reacting to whatever the media puts out.

Storytelling

It’s important to remember that your PR strategy shouldn't *just* be about damage control. It's about building lasting relationships with your stakeholders, maintaining a positive reputation, and communicating your ongoing resilience efforts.

How can you integrate your climate resilience into your regular communications and messaging?

What story do you want to tell?

3 Key Tenets of Crisis Communications

Prompt

In a crisis, timely communication is crucial.

Accurate

Misinformation or vague messages can create panic and distrust. Stick to the facts, and be transparent about what you know and don't know.

Confident

Combined with honesty, your confidence can help reassure your employees, customers, and community.



Tailored for these connected but unique audiences:

Internal:
Employees

External:
Customers

External:
Community

Crisis Communications 5 W's

Who

- Who are the different audiences that will need to be alerted?
- Who is on your crisis management team?
- Who will speak on behalf of the organization?

What

- What happened? What needs to happen now? Stick to facts.
- Avoid speculation or rumors.

When

- When will you release new information? Set a clear schedule.
- What needs to happen a week, a month, a year, etc. after the crisis?

Where

- Where will you release new information?
- Leverage the platforms you already use.

Why

- Focus on key messages and why this information is important.
- Remember, it's okay to not have all the answers.
- Transparency about what you don't know can often build more trust than pretending to have all the solutions.

Let's practice.
Crisis Communications



Example Scenario: Power Outage Disrupting Supply Chains

A severe storm causes a multi-day regional power outage. Several small manufacturers and food businesses are facing potential inventory loss. Local and distant customers are asking if businesses will reopen soon.

You are one of the local manufacturers or businesses dealing with this situation.

How will you communicate with:

- Employees?
- Customers?
- Community?

What is the core message you need to convey to each group? Remember, the message for your staff is going to be different from the one for a distant customer.

How will you convey the message to each audience? What channels will you use? Social media, news release, phone tree, etc.?

Creating Your Climate Resilience Action Plan

Climate Resilience Action Plan Steps



0

Asset Inventory

List the assets that can contribute to your financial well-being or the success of your business.

1

Understand Exposure

Evaluate business assets and their exposure to climate-related hazards.

2

Assess Vulnerability and Risk

Identify the business assets most vulnerable and at-risk to climate-related hazards.

3

Investigate Options

List strategies to reduce the greatest climate-related risks to vulnerable assets.

4

Prioritize and Plan

Design an implementation plan for the strategies that are most likely to reduce vulnerability and risk.



5

Take Action

Implement and communicate the plan with employees (if applicable). Monitor. Iterate.

Climate Resilience Action Plan Steps

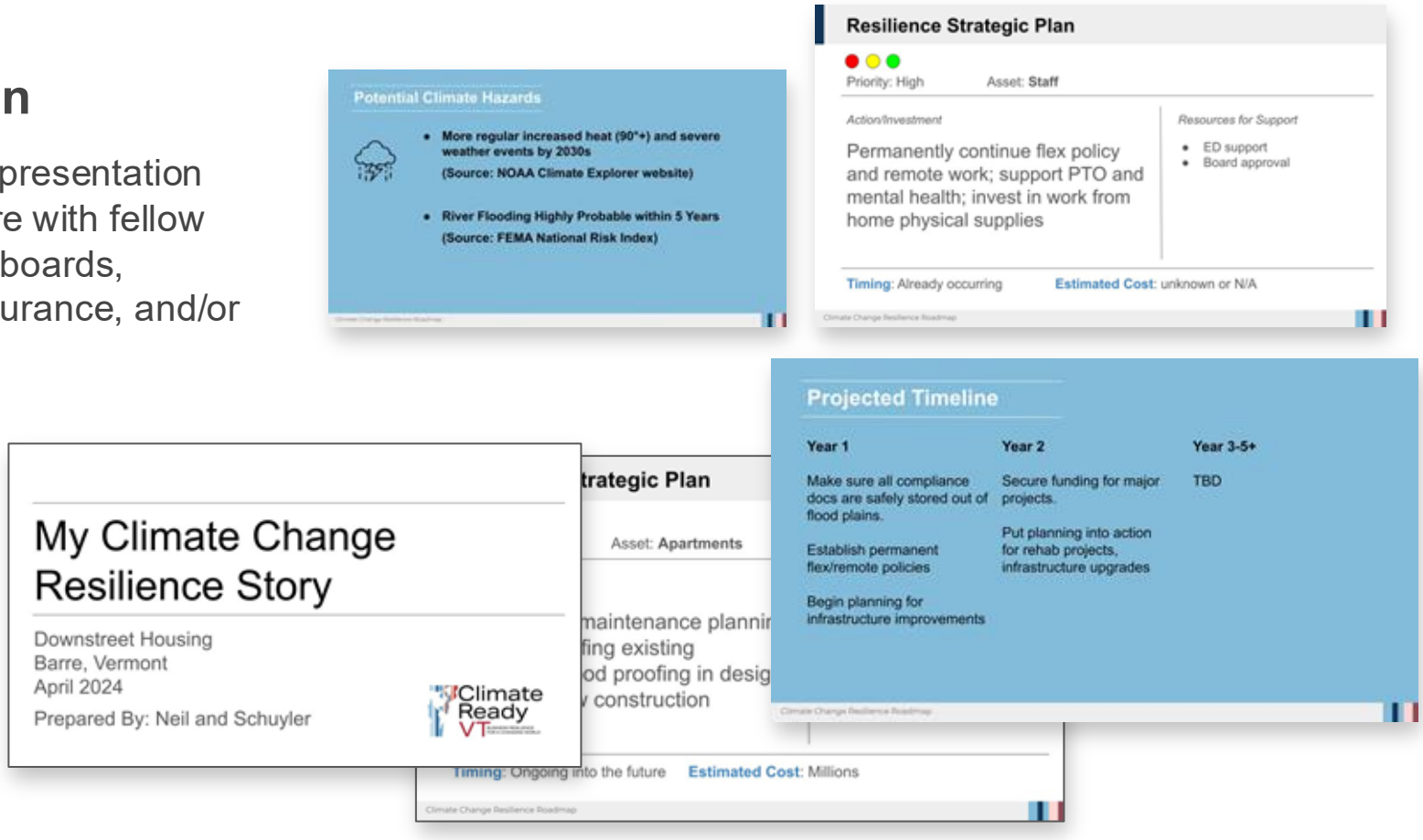
- A spreadsheet is powerful — it gives us **facts, patterns, and comparisons.** But facts alone rarely change decisions.

- Storytelling turns numbers into **something we can picture, feel, and respond to.**

- What helps people act is **understanding what the data means for real people, real places, and real futures.** This is especially important when decisions involve trade-offs, limited resources, or uncertain risks.

Your Plan

A summary presentation deck to share with fellow employees, boards, bankers, insurance, and/or investors.





Let’s reflect.

Who is your audience?

- ➔ **Who is going to help create this story?**
- ➔ **Who is my audience(s) for presenting “My Climate Change Resilience Story”?**
- ➔ **Why do they need to know your story?**
- ➔ **What actions do you want them to take after hearing your story?**
- ➔ **When will you share your story?**

Now it’s time to put it all together in your own Climate Resilience Action Plan!

- Download the My Climate Resilience Action Plan (Slide Deck Template) to get started!
- Use the Climate Resilience Action Plan (Spreadsheet) as a tool, if helpful.