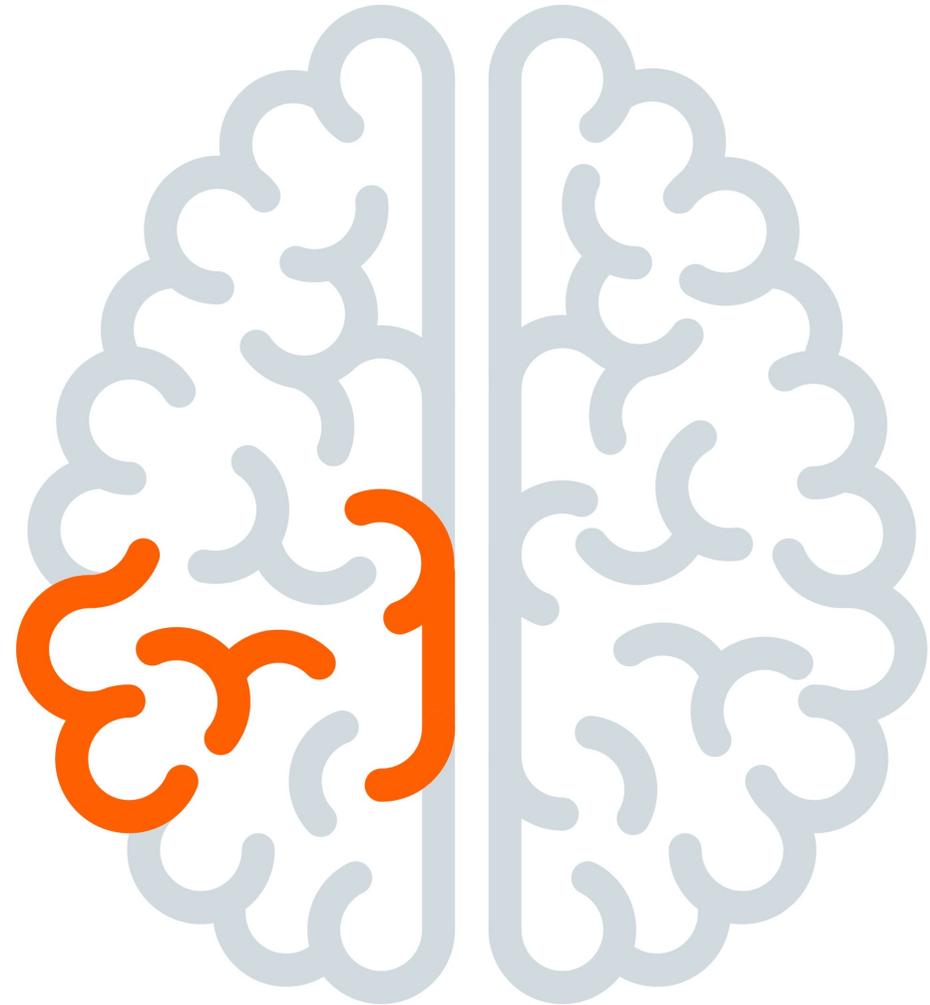# Resilience

One of the seven key behaviours vital
for building stronger business teams

aprais

Introduction to behaviours

Performance evaluations have historically focused on teams' and individuals' specific functions as defined by the scope of work.

This monitoring of scope-specific performance remains crucial. However, it is also important to consider the human behaviours that help build strong relationships and produce good work.

## How behaviours make a difference

Analysis of our extensive database identified seven key behaviours, shown in the graphic opposite. These behaviours help define what sets the best teams apart from the rest.

Each of the core questions in our database has been assigned to one of these behaviours, allowing us deeper insight into team performance.

Unlike scope-specific disciplines, which can differ depending on the team role, behaviours are common to all.

As these seven behaviours are identical for all job functions, we can directly compare teams in a single relationship or against our broader benchmarks.

In this series of reports we outline the behaviours and their increasing or diminishing impact on team relationships.

Accountability

Communication

Goals

Trust

Resilience

Functional

Challenge
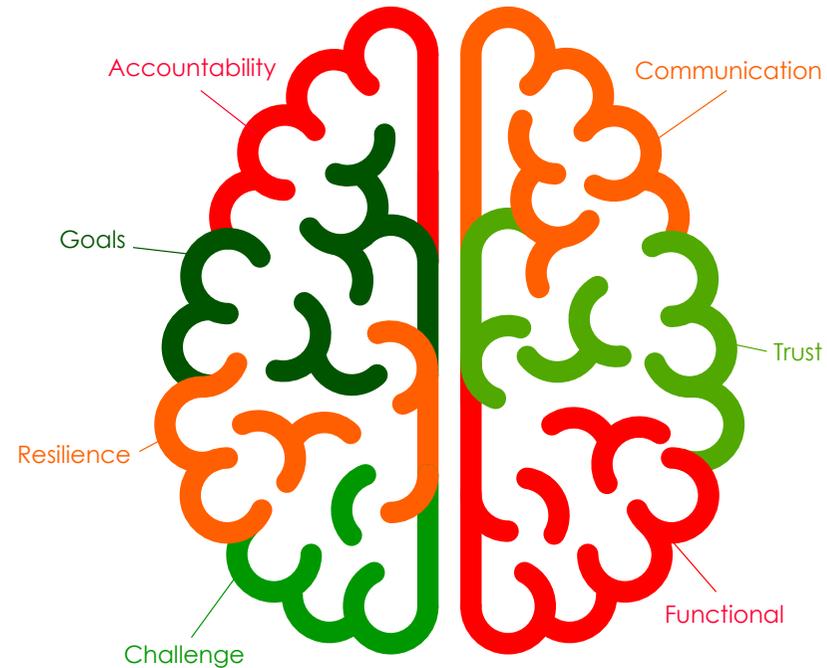
What's in this report

We will focus on resilience.

We explain our definition of this behaviour and how it was derived from our database of more than 24,000 evaluations we've conducted over the past 20 years. We compare the top and bottom performers and assess the impact of resilience on overall performance.

Most importantly, this report suggests ways for both agencies and marketers to improve resilience and, in so doing, build stronger relationships with their business partners.

Resilience

During the current crisis, businesses have worked faster and better than they dreamed possible just a few months ago. Maintaining that sense of possibility will be an enduring source of competitive advantage.[1]

McKinsey. May 2020

In the business world, crises arise daily in all shapes and sizes – from a 'storm in a teacup' local market supply chain event or product scare to a full-on, global disaster like the Covid-19 pandemic or a war. Now more than ever, the resilience needed to respond precisely and rapidly to crises has become a new 'business-critical' requirement for teams.

Crisis? What crisis?

The fundamental demands on teams in times of crisis are the same whether the stimulus is global or local, big or small.

Rapid response to crises has always been a defining trait of the marketing and communications industry and it is true that this resilience is a behaviour that sets the best teams apart from the rest.

Resilient behaviour is demanded of company leadership and across all aspects of business performance, in all functions and at all levels of a client-agency relationship.

To be truly resilient, a business must be able to adapt to disruptions while maintaining continuous business operations and safeguarding people, assets and overall brand equity.

This requires preparation, planning and a resilient mindset among team members.

At an organisation level, one could consider McKinsey's 'six dimensions of resilience' [2] : Institutional, Financial, Operational, Technological, Organisational, Reputational.

At the marketer-agency level it can mean being prepared with tactical responses to competitive threats or anticipating a market reaction.

Mental health

One cannot discuss team resilience without reference to the mental health of its individual members.

Numerous studies point to the mutually enhancing relationship between resilience and positive mental health in the short term[2].

Leaders who expect resilience from their teams need to encourage and support the physical and mental health of individual members.

[1] From surviving to thriving: Reimagining the post-COVID-19 return. McKinsey.
[2] The resilience imperative: Succeeding in uncertain times. McKinsey,
[3] Is higher resilience predictive of lower stress and better mental health among corporate executives?
Cindy A Kermott, Ruth E Johnson, Richa Sood, Sarah M Jenkins, Amit Sood

How resilience has changed

When it comes to client-agency relationships, it is important to understand how resilience has changed relative to other behaviours and to overall relationship scores.

Over the past 10 years, we have seen steady increases in the average evaluation scores given by marketer and agency of each other.

With this in mind, we wondered how each of the seven behaviours has changed over the same 10-year period.

The chart below shows the change in average behaviour scores of all teams (marketer and agency). Positive changes are evident, albeit to different degrees, for each of the behaviours.

Resilience began the decade with one of the lowest scores (74) among all the behaviours. By 2021, this score had jumped 9% to 80.

This jump is second only to the challenge behaviour, which showed the highest increase at 11% over the decade.

Simply put, marketers and agencies have become more resilient over the decade.

Change in average behaviour scores 2011–2021

■ 2011 ■ 2021

Source: 24,000 Aprais evaluations
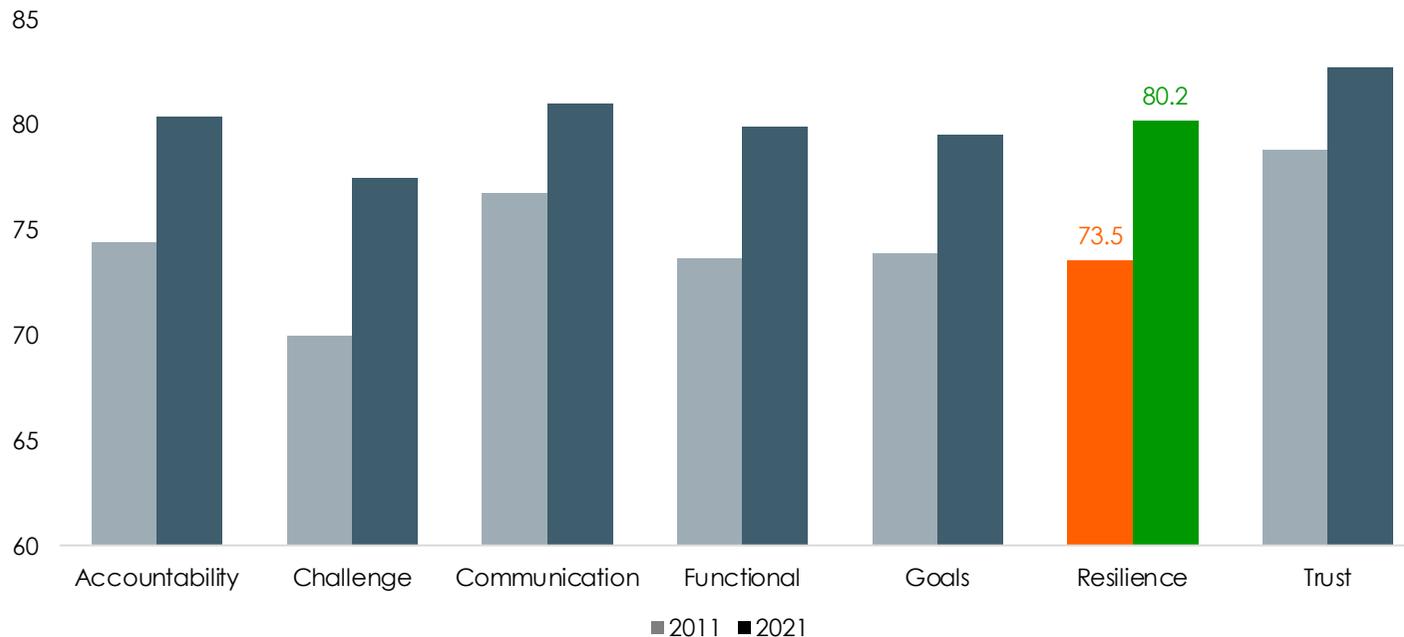
The best versus the rest

By identifying the clients and agencies with the top 10% scores in our database, and comparing their profiles with those of the bottom 10%, we can pinpoint where they differ and define the strengths of the top performers. The charts below reveal the different profiles (top 10% versus bottom 10%).

This analysis shows that although there is very little difference in the behaviour scores of the top-performing clients and agencies, the difference among the bottom 10% is more telling.
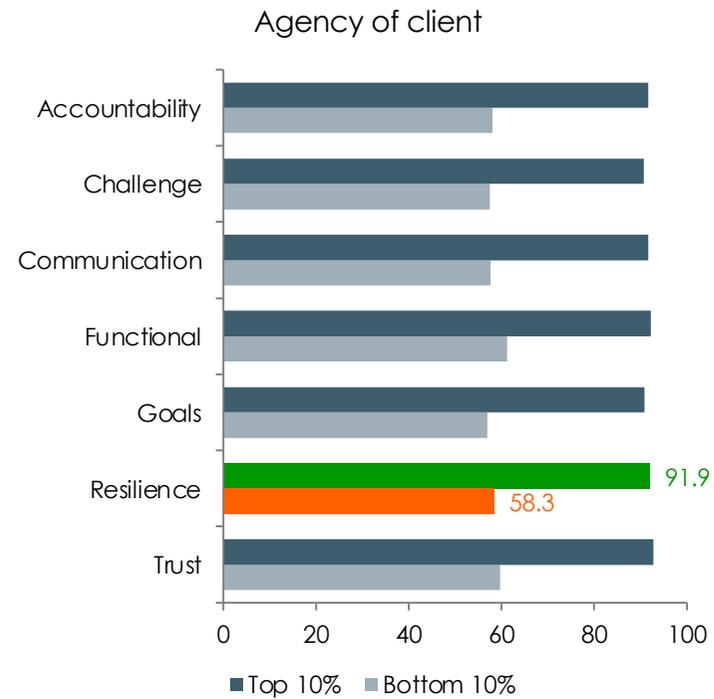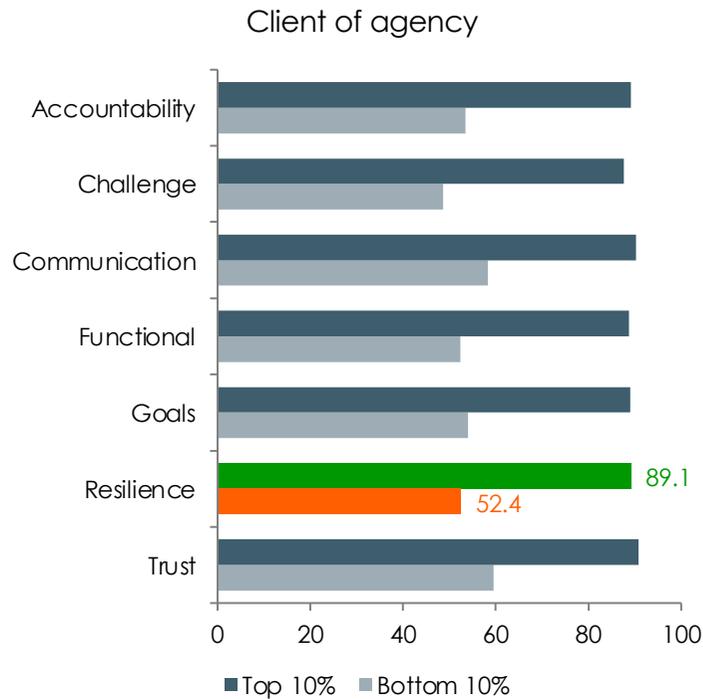
The client score of their agencies, at 52, is among the lowest of all the behaviours' scores.

Mind the gap

The gap between the two scores indicates the potential for poor performers to improve.

Weaker agencies and marketers should be aiming to close the gap in resilience with their top-performing peers. In the case of agencies there is a 37-point gap. This represents one of the greatest opportunities to improve among the behaviours.

For clients there is a gap of 34 points, which is also significant when compared with other client behaviours.

Client of agency

Behaviour	Score
Accountability	
Challenge	
Communication	
Functional	
Goals	
Resilience	89.1 (Top), 52.4 (Bottom)
Trust	

■ Top 10% ■ Bottom 10%

Agency of client

Behaviour	Score
Accountability	
Challenge	
Communication	
Functional	
Goals	
Resilience	91.9 (Top), 58.3 (Bottom)
Trust	

■ Top 10% ■ Bottom 10%

Source: 24,000 Aprais evaluations

Just how important is resilience?

We have also analysed the impact of each behaviour on the overall evaluation – in other words, the priority for improvement.

This helps teams identify which behaviours to focus on for maximum impact.

Based on a correlation analysis across our database, the tables opposite show the behaviours ranked in terms of how they influence the overall relationship scores for the best (top 10%) and the worst (bottom 10%) performers.

In most cases, and not surprisingly, the fundamental ability to do the job (functional) ranks as the most influential behaviour.

For the agency evaluation of a client, resilience is the third most influential behaviour for bottom performers. Among top-performing marketers, however, trust overtakes resilience in order of potency in the relationship as scored by their agency.

For the clients' scores of agencies, resilience is considered an even more critical behaviour, ranking second among the poorer-performing agencies and third among the top performers.

This is not surprising given that speed and flexibility, both qualities of resilience, are often demanded by clients of their service providers, including agencies.

Agency scores client

Rank	Bottom 10	Top 10
1	Communication	Functional
2	Functional	Communication
3	Resilience	Trust
4	Trust	Resilience
5	Accountability	Accountability
6	Goals	Goals
7	Challenge	Challenge

Client scores agency

Rank	Bottom 10	Top 10
1	Functional	Functional
2	Resilience	Accountability
3	Challenge	Resilience
4	Accountability	Goals
5	Goals	Trust
6	Trust	Communication
7	Communication	Challenge

Source: 24,000 Aprais evaluations

How to improve your resilience scores

The root of any team evaluation is the questions that are asked. Assembling and phrasing these questions in collaboration with our clients is both an art and a science.

By analysing the impact specific questions have on evaluation scores, we can identify actions that can be taken to improve aspects of a business relationship.

The lists below indicate what agencies and marketers can do to improve their resilience.

What agencies should do

1. Be engaged and passionate. Contactable and responsive. Show commitment to your client's business.

2. Demonstrate initiative to anticipate clients' needs and manage their expectations.

3. Be prepared to evolve plans rapidly in response to a changing market.

4. Accumulate learnings, share them with all stakeholders and readily apply them to the business.

5. Constantly review internal processes to ensure the agency is optimised for the times.

6. Efficiently manage agency resources to ensure sufficient depth and quality of staff to work with the client team.

What marketers should do

1. Promote agency participation in planning discussions internally and with other agencies.

2. Provide regular and timely information about the market, business and sales situation.

3. Provide thorough, timely and accurate responses to agency requests.

4. Help to prioritise and focus agency resources.

5. Swiftly and clearly communicate any changes to project scope.

6. Update the agency on team changes regularly and effectively.

7. Manage internal approval procedures effectively, including early senior management buy-in and direction.

In conclusion

Along with the other behaviours we have identified, resilience is an important aspect for teams to acknowledge and to improve.

Resilience has become a new 'business-critical' requirement for teams and for businesses as a whole. It is a competitive advantage.

Resilience requires proactive planning and preparation to enable teams to pivot with market demands.

There is a significant opportunity for poor-performing marketers and agencies to close the gap on their better-performing peers by improving their levels of resilience.

Our data shows that clear improvements in resilience scores are possible just 18 months from the introduction of a formalised, objective and regular evaluation process with Aprais.

Resilience

Rating of resilience vs Months

— Client scores agency
— Agency scores client

Source: 24,000 Aprais evaluations

This series

This report is one of a series focusing on team behaviours.

Each report focuses on one of the seven behaviours we measure:

1. Accountability

2. Challenge

3. Communication

4. Functional

5. Goals

6. Resilience

7. Trust

About Aprais

We are the global pioneers in building stronger business relationships.

Since we established the category 20+ years ago we have advised the world's leading marketers and agencies on more than 24,000 relationships, across 92 countries, in 13 languages.

This has enabled us to build a large bank of data that allows companies to accurately compare their business relationships with those of their peers.

Contact and follow us

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Request a free consultation for
your organisation: aprais@aprais.com

Learn more: www.aprais.com

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