

# Entangling Organizational Success and Survival in Complex Polycentric Systems

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**Abstract:** The broadest way to characterize organizational resilience verges on the tautological: an organization is resilient if it survives. Survival means existing resources are sufficient for the organization to continue to exist. But as formally constituted fonts of collective action, organizations exist to realize shared human intent within an uncertain world. This makes an organization's purpose inextricable from resilience in practice, because purpose greatly defines an organization's size, internal processes, and the extent of competition it faces for members and consumers. Within the complex polycentric adaptive systems that are human societies, an organization's resilience is entangled with its success in achieving its purpose, for sufficient failure to realize a purpose, or abandonment of purpose altogether will lead to an organization losing the people and resources that are integral to its survival. This analysis explores common definitions of organizational resilience and success and interrogates these definitions as a function of purpose, shedding new light on what it means to survive collectively in an uncertain competitive landscape.