It is tough at the top, and tough all the way up. Things go wrong. There are bad apples in every barrel. People inside and outside the organization let you down. There are sudden changes in the economy and in the law. And that is where resilience is really tested.

We have increasingly to work with people who are not like us. People from a different culture or age group or gender. We have to get used to new working arrangements. Moreover, the resilient leader has to be ahead of the game and help to bring about that change, not just follow the trend.

Management can be remorseless. The daily grind can weaken people to the point that they seriously underperform. The resilient manager can deal with the stresses and setbacks better than his/her less resilient colleagues and keep going in the toughest times.

A. A GRIM PLACE TO WORK

For over 10 years the Sunday Times has produced an annual list of the ‘100 Best Companies to Work For’. Alongside the list are examples of policies and practices that survey-based data have shown to lead to employee satisfaction.

The methodology looks at various broad topics/issues: First, perceptions of the type and quality of leadership employees experience. Second, their personal levels of well-being, stress and health at work. Third, their attitudes to, beliefs about, and experience of their immediate
boss/manager/supervisor. Fourth, how they feel about their team, their colleagues and their immediate peers. Fifth, their attitude to the deal or, more prosaically, to their pay and conditions, benefits and remuneration. Sixth, payback to the local community and society in general: to what extent the company is a good corporate citizen. Seventh, general feelings towards the employing organization. Eighth, personal growth, or the extent to which they feel challenged by their job, helping them to upgrade and use their skills base.

Inevitably, the public sector does better at some things (fair deal, payback) than others (leadership, well-being). Small companies seem to do better than big ones. Flat organizations do better than tall. And many pay serious attention to the exercise, believing that it can lead to seriously good PR and indeed may attract a better quality of employee in the future.

But what about data or attitudes to absenteeism, bullying, CEOs’ outrageous salaries, harassment, nepotism or union involvement? How about a name and shame worst companies to work for? Would this be little more than a licence for angry, alienated, failing employees to criticize their organization anonymously. Every organization has its share of disillusioned, passive-aggressive resisters. They are blockers of change, heart-sinking colleagues, super-snipers of supervisors.

They won’t go when offered good voluntary retirement packages and they sour and poison the workplace for others, particularly new recruits. Frequently, their negativity has developed over time, for these people are often the products of poorly managed companies, lazy or incompetent managers. They did not start off their journey this way. Certainly, they would not have been hired had any of this negativity been detected. But they became disaffected after what happened to them and others around them.

It is clearly not only the ‘nyet mindset’, sour employees who believe they work for the worst company in the