

Chapter 7

Success Factors of Future-Viable Organizations in the Post-COVID-19 Era

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 crisis has disrupted societies and will be succeeded by economic and social dynamics. Therefore, organizations need to adapt and seize new opportunities quickly. To learn from the early part of the COVID-19 crisis, 24 leader interviews were conducted and categorized based on the integrative model of leadership behavior. In consequence, eight success factors were derived that foster the future-viability of organizations in times of crisis: the three success factors, (1) providing iterative leadership within uncertainty, (2) promoting absolute customer-loyalty, and (3) providing sustainable public value, foster coordination with internal and external actors and provide meaning. Two factors, (4) promoting a culture of trust and (5) establishing collaborative ecosystems of organizations, promote cooperation and sustain trust. The final three success factors, (6) creating an agile culture, (7) driving digital processes, and (8) ensuring economic agility, enhance agility by activating internal and external resources.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 crisis has disrupted global economies and societies. Besides the pandemic crisis, many other social dynamics can be expected: significant changes are very likely due to the expected climate crisis, further digital change, global migration dynamics, and higher instabilities in the political systems

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-6948-1.ch007

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of many countries. Therefore, the post-COVID-19 era will be characterized by increased social and economic dynamics. To successfully get through the next decades, organizations need to effectively cope with the upcoming challenges and seize resulting opportunities. Organizational leaders should prepare their organizations for this endeavor and steer them through these challenges. Unfortunately, the detailed dynamics of those changes are unpredictable. Therefore, it is essential for organizations and their leaders to continually learn within and from the crises, to successfully manage their present and future.

To learn from the COVID-19 crisis quickly and anticipate success factors for future crises, the authors have interviewed 24 social and organizational leaders and consulted well-grounded leadership theory. Based on the overarching question regarding success factors of future-viable organizations, the leaders were asked to externalize their learnings from the COVID-19 crisis and predict success factors for future-viability and crisis survival. The results of these interviews were categorized based on existing leadership theory: the integrative model of leadership behavior (IMoLB; Behrendt, Matz & Göritz, 2017). This model integrates the results of decades of leadership behavior research (e.g., Burke et al., 2006; DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman & Humphrey, 2011; Yukl, 2012) in a parsimonious model and is based on well-established fundamental psychological theory: the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the Rubicon model (Achtziger & Gollwitzer, 2008), the Ringelmann effect (Ingham, Levinger, Graves & Peckham, 1974), the model of social loafing (Karau & Williams, 1993), the job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), the group identity perspective (Ellemers, De Gilder & Haslam, 2004), and several others (Behrendt et al., 2017).

From the expert interviews and the theoretically derived leadership behaviors, success factors can be delineated that contribute to the future-viability of organizations in times of crisis. As a result, this chapter demarcates essential success factors for future-viable organizations and exemplifies those success factors based on expert experiences within the COVID-19 crisis. The resulting model of success factors of a future-viable organization in the post-COVID-19 era is provided to the scientific and practice community for further development. The model could be challenged in further theoretic refinements, used for the development of theory-based measurements, and tested in corresponding future research.

Integrative Model of Leadership Behavior

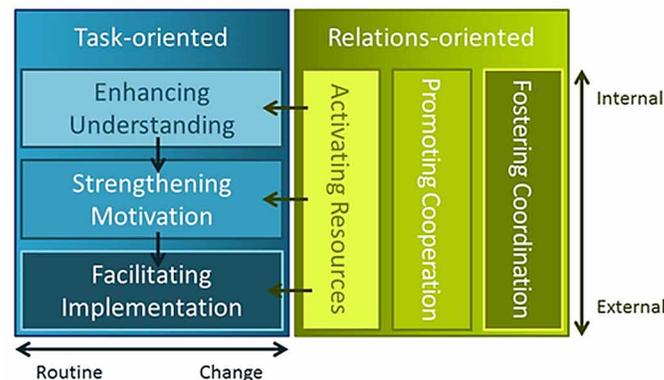
IMoLB builds on extensive previous leadership research (Fleishman, 1953; Halpin & Winer, 1957; House, 1971; Likert, 1961; Misumi & Peterson, 1985; Yukl, 2012). IMoLB integrates previous findings within a theory-based model that is grounded in well-established theories from fundamental psychology. Studies on leadership behavior so far have used primarily expert interviews or questionnaires in favor of practical relevance. This, however, compromised the validity of the studies and associated leadership behavior models (see van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Consequently, the conceptualizations of leadership behavior were based on behaviors attributed to successful leaders. Criticism emerged that the perception of behavior differs from the behavior itself, due to observational errors (e.g., Dinh et al., 2014). Lay observers are, for example, prone to the halo effect (Thorndike, 1920), confirmation biases based on implicit leadership theories (Phillips & Lord, 1986), and the need to answer consistently (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). These errors appear to be systematic, leading many studies to establish high correlations between theoretically different constructs. These methodological flaws, as well as conceptual overlaps, in return hindered the establishment of precise causal models (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Yukl (2012) suggested a comprehensive taxonomy of effective leadership behavior perceptions to integrate existing findings and to provide a structured overview. Yukl's four behavioral meta-categories included

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15 component behaviors and thereby reduced many overlaps. Since this taxonomy was based on the available empirical research, though, it failed to respond to criticism that derived from systematic observation errors. Departing from Yukl's integrative taxonomy (2012), IMoLB tackles this criticism by consulting psychological theories outside of the core leadership literature.

Leadership is defined as “influencing and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (Yukl, 2012, p. 66). Based on this definition of leadership, IMoLB delineates two meta-categories of leadership behaviors: task-oriented and relations-oriented leadership behavior. Both meta-categories include three leadership behavior categories, each of which is further specified by several distinct leadership behaviors. Figure 1 exhibits the three task-oriented behavior categories—*enhancing understanding*, *strengthening motivation*, and *facilitating implementation*—and the three relations-oriented leadership behavior categories—*fostering coordination*, *promoting cooperation*, and *activating resources*.

Figure 1. Integrative Model of Leadership Behavior (IMoLB)



Task-Oriented Leadership Behaviors

Task-oriented leadership behaviors support the process of accomplishing objectives substantiated by fundamental psychological motivation and action theories. The Rubicon model derived from expectancy-value theories (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987) proposes four phases in a course of action: (1) evaluation, (2) deliberation, (3) planning, and (4) action (Achtziger & Gollwitzer, 2008). Leaders are typically present in Phases 1 to 3. Consequently, IMoLB delineates three task-oriented leadership behavior categories that support the process of accomplishing objectives.

The first task-oriented leadership behavior, *enhancing understanding*, is relevant in the evaluation phase. This phase concerns the evaluation of prior actions and their results (Achtziger & Gollwitzer, 2008). Leadership behaviors are supposed to provide relevant information, facilitate accurate assessment, and thereby enhance well-adjusted future behavior.

The second task-oriented leadership behavior category, *strengthening motivation*, is relevant in the deliberation phase. This phase concerns deliberating alternative objectives and deciding on one (Achtziger & Gollwitzer, 2008). Leadership behaviors are supposed to foster appropriate decisions by deliberating the consequences and the value of possible objectives and by strengthening the motivation to pursue those objectives that are in the shared interest.

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The third task-oriented leadership behavior category, *facilitating implementation*, supports the planning phase. This phase concerns the transformation of objectives into concrete implementation plans, which are finally executed in the action phase. Leadership behaviors are supposed to form appropriate plans, identify opportunities for execution, and thereby promote successful intention realization.

Relations-Oriented Leadership Behaviors

Relations-oriented leadership behaviors influence individuals so they invest their efforts in the process of accomplishing objectives. According to the Ringelmann effect, groups do not exploit the full potential of their combined effort (Ingham et al., 1974) due to insufficient coordination and suboptimal engagement (Ingham et al., 1974; Karau & Williams, 1993). Accordingly, IMoLB postulates appropriate leader behavior to counter this effect by increasing collective coordination and individual engagement (Behrendt et al., 2017). Substantiated by group and engagement research, IMoLB postulates three relations-oriented behavior categories leading to effective follower engagement in the process of accomplishing objectives.

The first relations-oriented behavior category, *fostering coordination*, addresses the loss of coordination in group activities. Leadership behaviors are supposed to synchronize collective efforts and embrace well-adjusted individual contributions. This includes the establishment of explicit procedures and structures of communication, ensuring decisions, and in that aim conveying the leader's competence and certainty in the process.

The second relations-oriented behavior category, *promoting cooperation*, addresses the loss of effort in group activities. Leadership behaviors are supposed to allow every member of the group to contribute their unique competence and to motivate every single member to invest maximum effort. Leadership behaviors focus on encouraging individual contributions, underline their uniqueness and indispensability, encouraging social support, and permitting autonomy in tasks.

The third relations-oriented behavior category, *activating resources*, also address the engagement in groups—in this case, by creating positivity regarding engaged behaviors and ensuing outcomes. These leadership behaviors strengthen a positive group identity and reward valuable contributions. This includes prompting self-efficacy and a positive mindset regarding the group's experiences, accomplishments, and expectations.

IMoLB's Theoretic Value

Overall, IMoLB's contributions represent the integration of previous leadership behavior taxonomies within a more parsimonious framework, the reduction of conceptual redundancies, and the delineation of theory-based relationships between those concepts. Furthermore, it calls for the exact discrimination of actual behavior from perceived behavior by considering lay observers' cognitive biases and by providing a set of concrete observable behaviors in each category. Finally, the integration of established psychological theories accesses a wealth of research results and sparks further theoretic proliferation and hypothesis building rooted in research insights outside of the core leadership literature.

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PRESENT INTERVIEW STUDY

The present study investigates the question of how IMoLB can help understand and categorize organizational success factors of future-viability in the post-COVID-19 era.

24 Expert Interviews With Organizational and Social Leaders

To investigate success factors for future-viability in an explorative approach, the authors decided to interview a variety of organizational and social leaders. The leaders were asked to explicate their learnings from early in the COVID-19 crisis and how organizations were able to successfully adapt within the present crisis and what can be derived from the current situation to predict success factors of future crisis-viability and survival.

The Research Sample of Interviewers and Interviewees

The interview team consists of five professional psychologists and pedagogues: Dr. Peter Behrendt, Annette Bohland, Frank Domonell, Veronika Matzner, and Elke Mowat. They professionally accompany organizations in change and development processes and possess altogether over 80 years of professional experience. The interview team selects five interviewees each from their professional network, deliberately selecting representatives from a diverse set of organizations predominantly in southwest Germany, ranging from a youth leader in a social movement to clerical leaders, governmental representatives, organizational entrepreneurs, industrial managers, and research professors. A total of 24 leaders were interviewed. As organizational and social leaders, they possess practical, procedural, and interpretative knowledge in their field. In addition to their functional expertise, they have practical insights into their organizations, gain access to strategic decisions, and bear high levels of responsibility.

Interview Methodology

The interviews examined the research topic in an explorative, open-minded way to explicate the expert's practical learnings from adaptation early in the COVID-19 crisis and their predictions for the future-viability of organizations in times of crisis. The one-to-one interviews were conducted in July 2020 in person, by telephone, or by virtual videocalls. They lasted 30 to 60 minutes. The interviews were semi-standardized with a set of ten predefined questions, which served as the starting point. Exemplary questions were:

- “What have you learned within the COVID-19 crisis, and maybe also in previous crises, regarding future-viability of organizations?”
- “If you were to mandate a study to measure the future-viability of a company, which verification criteria would you mandate?”
- “If you were minister of economy and could spend €10 billion, according to which criteria would you determine which companies to secure?”
- “How will society determine ten years from now which organizations or economies to hold, promote, or preserve?”

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- “What do you see as glaring examples of a lack of future-viability and why? Where is future-viability being faked—what criteria are being overlooked or overplayed?”
- “If you were to set up a new company, what would it look like? What criteria would you focus on to make it future-viable?”

Interviewers were asked to actively listen and ask deepening questions to elicit explanations and concretizations of the initial interviewees’ statements. To not influence the answers, the interviewers were prohibited from sharing their own ideas, opinions, and views. Interviewee statements were directly protocolled by the interviewers.

Methodology of Analysis and Categorization

As the first step of analysis and based upon the 24 interview protocols, every expert statement regarding potential success factors was extracted and noted with key words on cards. As a second step, these cards were sorted according to their content and categorized based on IMoLB’s theoretic categories by the main author. As a second step, the whole interview team reviewed the extracted content for completeness and the created structure for consistency and comprehensibility. In this step, the interviewers ensured that no interview statements regarding success factors were overlooked. Finally, the created model was presented to another group of eight organizational and social leaders as well as to a group of a dozen organizational consultants, discussed, and again reviewed for completeness, consistency, and comprehensibility. These consecutive reviews did result in slight adaptations especially in wording, balancing, and precision of the created categories.

SUCCESS FACTORS OF FUTURE-VIABLE ORGANIZATIONS IN THE POST-COVID-19 ERA**Behaviors 1-3: Task-Oriented Leadership**

Based on IMoLB, the tasks of the members of crisis-hit organizations are threefold (Behrendt et al., 2017):

1. quickly enhance understanding of the changing environment and the resulting effects on the organization,
2. strengthen the motivation in the organization to quickly adapt to these changes,
3. facilitate bold implementation of first adaptation ideas,

and assure that the organization swiftly learns from these implementation experiments in iterative cycles by repeating Steps 1 to 3. Organizations can adapt their understanding, motivational aspiration, and implementation activities to the crisis-driven change, step-by-step. By these iterative cycles, the organization will develop new routines that are adapted to the changed situation.

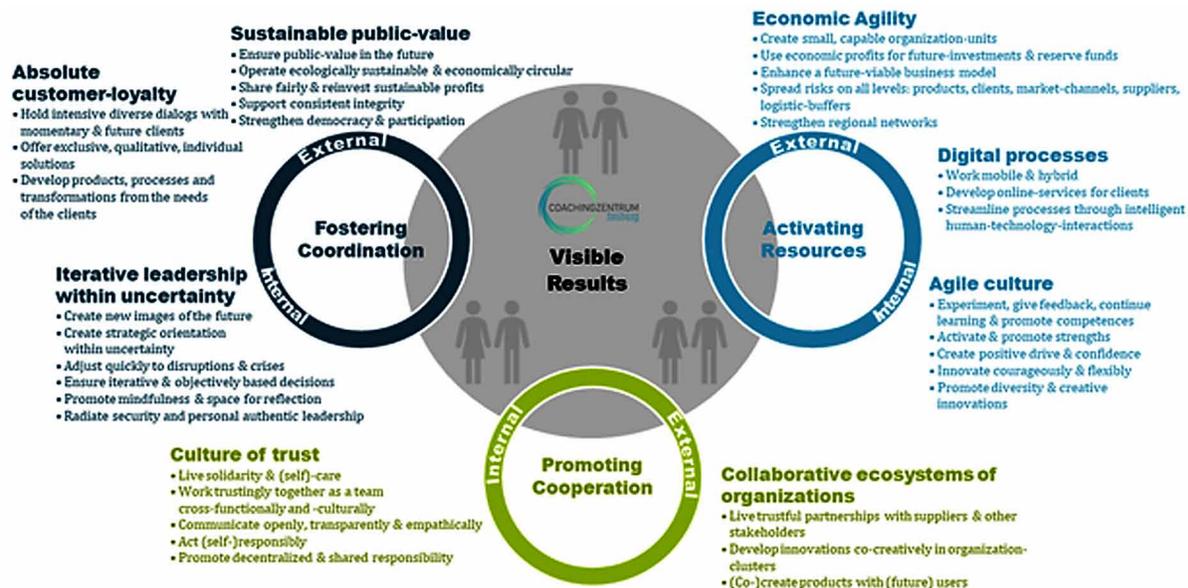
According to the IMoLB, the task-oriented behaviors directly contribute to the accomplishment of objectives, whereas the relations-oriented leadership behaviors indirectly support this process by providing followers’ engagement. In that aim, relations-oriented leadership behaviors focus more on the interaction style, rather than the content.

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Behaviors 4–6: Relations-Oriented Leadership

Based on IMoLB, three relations-oriented leadership behavior categories ensure that individuals invest their efforts in this process of shared goal accomplishment and organizational crisis adaptation (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Relations-oriented leadership behavior and resulting success factors of future-viability



Behavior 4: Fostering Coordination ...

(I) ... of Internal Actors by "Providing Iterative Leadership Within Uncertainty"

Especially in times of crisis and uncertainty, it is important to sustain the coordination of internal actors by providing the organization with a sense of meaning and general direction while adjusting quickly to the changed situation. The quick adjustments need organizational decision competence as well as crisis teams that allow fast, sound, and objectively based decisions to ensure effective coordination. These decisions should be adjustable within quick iteration cycles whenever new situations or learnings emerge. These iterative feedback-cycles are particularly important in times of uncertainty regarding the current situation, future, and possible outcomes of actions taken (Theodoridis & Priporas, 2013). Especially in emotionally straining situations, leaders should guide with a role model of serenity to limit the stress level and protect the organization's ability to act and reflect themselves objectively. Promoting mindfulness and creating space for deep reflection supports that aim. Leadership strategies can foster effective coordination by creating clarity of roles and simplifying the complexity of the critical changes (Pulakos, Kantrowitz & Schneider, 2019). As the interviewed experts confirm, reducing complexity helps to maintain orientation, especially in times of change and uncertainty: in the current COVID-19 crisis, informing employees at an early stage and to keep them informed was one of the most central reported

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tasks of management—even if the management was yet not fully aware of all objectives and next steps to be taken. To provide sound general direction in fast-changing situations, leaders will need the ability to anticipate futures significantly deviant to conventional extrapolation: This capability to understand and apply anticipations of completely changed futures is called *futures literacy* (Miller, 2018).

Summing up, the success factor *providing iterative leadership within uncertainty* includes the following organizational capabilities: (a) creating new images of the future, (b) creating strategic orientation within uncertainty, (c) adjusting quickly to disruptions and crisis, (d) ensuring iterative and objectively based decisions, (e) promoting mindfulness and space for reflection, and (f) radiating security and personal authentic leadership.

(II) ... With External Proximal Actors by “Promoting Absolute Customer-Loyalty”

Good coordination with external actors is especially threatened in times of crisis. Crises often reduce available resources, complicate access to services, and quickly change the critical needs of customers. This is especially true for the national shutdowns during the COVID-19 crisis. In these times of reduced budgets, customers check which products and services are disposable and which providers are to be kept despite hindrances. During the COVID-19 crisis, many customers even continued payments while they were not able to receive services to support their preferred organizations and suppliers or deliberately spent money at their preferred restaurants and shops to ensure their survival. Accordingly, Well-established customer loyalty has been shown to be crucial for business profitability and competitiveness (Buchanan & Gillies, 1990). Furthermore, the loyalty is of particular importance in times of crisis, because it increases the commitment and investment in the relationship (see Salo, Tähtinen & Ulkuniemi, 2009). Almost every expert interviewee working in organizations with customer contact has validated this argument. Therefore, organizations are more crisis-viable who have bonded best with their customers by providing individual services or exclusive products with a quality the customers value most. To achieve strong customer loyalty, products, services, processes, and their continued transformation should be developed consequently from the customer-perspective and really address their needs (Kim, Beckman & Agogino, 2018; Coelho & Henseler, 2012; Salomo, Steinhoff & Trommsdorff, 2003). In that aim, regular, intense dialogs with momentary and potential future customers are critical to observe, identify, and understand shifting or emerging needs—not only but especially in times of crisis and social dynamics. The close communication and appropriate adaptations ensure good coordination with customer needs—representing one of the most important external actors for most organizations.

Summing up, the success factor *promoting absolute customer-loyalty* includes the following organizational capabilities: (a) holding intensive diverse dialogs with momentary and future clients; (b) developing products, processes, and transformations from the needs of the clients; and (c) offering according exclusive, qualitative, and individual solutions.

(III) ... With External Actors by “Providing Sustainable Public Value”

In the post-COVID-19 era, another external actor becomes more important to coordinate with: During the financial crisis and the COVID-19 crisis, as well as in the expected climate crisis, the public state becomes a more powerful and important actor. Although, this contradicts the so far predominating neo-liberal economic principle of non-intervening states. It became the state’s role to decide which crisis-hit organizations to save financially and which organizations to support, allow, or impair for sustainable changes in our economies. In the financial crisis, state support was not combined with any other ex-

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Expectations than the economic survival of the organizations that were too big to fail. But lately, stronger demands emerged, calling out for a transition to an economic system that serves the “common good,” and that motivates organizations to act more sustainably and socially (Felber, 2019). Now, several state governments consider integrating principles of the “Economy for the Common Good” in order to develop new laws (Felber, 2019), and the European Union, for example, adopted a “Circular Economy Action Plan” (European Commission, 2018) to make production more sustainable and less wasteful. The goal of combining economic growth with sustainability secured the open support by various political and economic actors (e.g., OECD, World Economic Forum, advocacy associations, and leading corporations; Corvellec, Böhm, Stowell & Valenzuela, 2020). Accordingly, during the tax evasion scandal “CumEx affair”, a public citizens movement was the main force pushing forward the persecution of criminal organizational leaders, calling for more democratic participation (CumEx Haltet die Steuerräuber, 2020). Also early in the COVID-19 crisis, public opinion and media questioned the financial support of organizations that were scandal-hit, have just dumped massive bonus payments to managers and dividends to shareholders, or those that undermined states’ functioning by shifting revenues to offshore tax shelters. Consequently, some states like France and Germany already combined the significant financial support with concrete expectations towards the organizations or tailored the support to organizations of “systemic relevance.” The climate crisis will likely strengthen that tendency because it enforces the need for systemic economic changes. In consequence, the crisis-viability of organizations increases by adding measurable and sustainable public value (Kaufman, 2010). This public value needs to be adapted to and coordinated with shifting social priorities in times of crisis. Furthermore, in times of increasing sensitivity to organizational scandals of well-marketed organization, this public value should also be validated by neutral ethical reviews or consistent certification processes. Overall, this factor was the one most often referenced by the interviewed leaders as a new emerging success factor for future-viability.

Summing up, the success factor *providing sustainable public value* includes the following organizational capabilities: (a) ensuring public-value in the future, (b) operating ecologically sustainable and economically circular, (c) sharing fairly and reinvest sustainable profits, (d) supporting consistent integrity, (e) strengthening democracy and participation.

Behavior 5: Promoting Cooperation ...

(IV) ... of Internal Actors by “Promoting a Culture of Trust”

Sustaining internal cooperation provides specific challenges in times of crisis, as they generate significant change and diverse personal threats. To swiftly learn and adapt, it is important to disseminate new information within the organization quickly. Trust in this information, as well as trust among employees, is an essential condition for organizational learning (Hoe, 2007). At the same time, it is important that individuals trust new adapted guidelines and implement them quickly while providing open, constructive feedback. Furthermore, organizations need to rely on the cooperation of all members in the best interest of all and the provision of solidarity where needed to cope with threats and change. Accordingly, perceived supervisor–subordinate solidarity leads to higher motivation and job satisfaction among employees (MacDonald, Kelly & Christen, 2014). Open and empathetic communication promotes that solidarity (Kelly & MacDonald, 2014). In critical times, missing trust cannot be replaced by the same level of control as it is possible in established routine processes, due to higher transaction costs of control (Jäckel, 2018). The interviewed leaders reported this experience early in the COVID-19 crisis, when many employees

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suddenly had to be working in the home office—far away from potential control of their peers and supervisors. Within those conditions, individuals at all levels need to be trusted to concertedly develop the needed adaptations, create and share knowledge (Jäckel, 2018) without waiting for long bureaucratic decisions in distant headquarters. Trust needs to be so high that, where necessary, individuals are even empowered to deviate from pre-crisis guidelines that no longer apply and to experiment without fear (Pulakos et al., 2019; Boes, Kämpf, Lühr & Ziegler, 2018). To adapt quickly to the changing situations and customer concerns early in the COVID-19 crisis, employees needed decision-making freedom, which furthermore promoted the willingness to learn and change, according to the interviewed leaders. New, more decentralized, and less hierarchic organization structures are currently promoted to increase organizational agility (see Robertson, 2015, “Holacracy”; Laloux, 2014, “Teal Organization”; and Romme, 1995, “Sociocracy”). Therein, the decentralization principals and the shared responsibility address the delineated needs for individual freedom, responsibility, and mutual ownership.

Summing up, the success factor *promoting a culture of trust* includes the following organizational capabilities: (a) living solidarity and (self)-care; (b) working trustingly together as a team cross-functionally and cross-culturally; (c) communicating openly, transparently, and empathically; (d) acting (self-) responsibly; and (e) promoting decentralized and shared responsibility.

(V) ... of External Actors by “Establishing Collaborative Ecosystems of Organizations”

The disruptions in times of crisis also threaten external cooperation, as many partner organizations need to reduce their spending, readjust their focus, and therefore rearrange their external relationships. Rearranging external relationships can change dysfunctional ecosystems in a both corrective and preventive fashion (Bernandez & Mead, 2009) to overcome past or future crises. The stronger the bond with important cooperation partners, such as suppliers and customer organizations, the more likely these partners keep their loyalty to the organization throughout disruptions. *Boundary spanning* described the establishment and sustainment of cooperation with team-external partners and was established as one of the most successful leadership behaviors (Burke et al., 2006). Accordingly, the interviewed leaders stated that organizations should promote network thinking instead of competitive thinking to increase their future-viability. Accordingly, business ecosystems prove to be more resilient to economic downturns (Bernandez & Mead, 2009). These ecosystems are often the result of common goals, such as shared individual, organizational, or public benefits (Bernandez & Mead, 2009). Hence, high personal trust to the deciders in the partner organizations facilitates the development of strong partnerships by means of successful co-creation and cooperation (Alrubaiee & Al-Nazer, 2010; Schumacher, 2006). In that vein, shared experience in solving previous crises can strengthen the partnership bond (Nätti, Rahkolin & Saraniemi, 2014). Many successful organizations like Google, Facebook, and Amazon include not only suppliers in the process of product and service creation but also the users themselves.

Summing up, the success factor *establishing collaborative ecosystems of organizations* includes the following organizational capabilities: (a) living trustful partnerships with suppliers and other stakeholders, (b) developing innovations co-creatively in organization-clusters, and (c) (co-)creating products with (future) users.

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Behavior 6: Activating Resources ...

(VI) ... of Internal Actors by "Creating an Agile Culture"

Organizations should activate all available resources to react quickly and flexibly to crises (Grewal & Tansuhaj, 2001). Especially in threatening situations, quick reactions need courage from organizational members and leaders. Besides quick reactions, organizations need to gradually adjust to the new circumstances, risks, and opportunities (Fowler & Highsmith, 2001). As reported by one interviewed leader, at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the entire company revenue collapsed because personal events were no longer allowed or desired by customers. Despite that disruption, the flexibility and creativity of the team helped them to create new offerings within a very short timeframe and to keep the business running. In that aim of innovative exploration, it is important that organizations foster quick experimentation, feedback, and ensuing learning (Fowler & Highsmith, 2001; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008). To allow for quick parallel adaptation at many locations within the organization, a high decision leeway for individuals and teams as well as a creative innovation spirit are essential (Kramer & Amabile, 2011). Relentlessly managing organizational performance in real-time is essential to ensure high performance in rapidly changing business environments (Mueller-Hanson & Pulakos, 2018). To keep the experimentation-learning-cycles ongoing despite natural setbacks, organization members need to sustain positive drive and confidence (Bandura, 1977). A leader's talent and strengths focus on activating a "productive organization energy" for that manner (Bruch & Ghoshal, 2013). To preserve the organization from one-sided decisions, a diversity of perspectives, experiences, and competencies is valuable. To integrate those diverse perspectives into better solutions, high competence in conflict resolution and facilitation of controversial decisions is beneficial (Council of Industry and Higher Education, 2011).

Summing up, the success factor *creating an agile culture* includes the following organizational capabilities: (a) experimenting, giving feedback, continuing learning and promoting competences, (b) acting courageously, flexibly and quickly, (c) creating positive drive and confidence, (d) activating and promoting strengths, (e) promoting diversity and conflict resolution skills, (f) creating leeway for decisions, (g) promoting creative innovations.

(VII) ... of Internal and External Actors by "Driving Digital Processes"

It is critical for organizations to sustain their access to activated internal and external resources in times of disruptive crises. Today, digital processes are key to ensure internal and external actors easy access to the processes and offerings of an organization (Gergs, 2019; Kauffeld, 2019). Digital offerings and change communication can multiply the accessibility, especially when markets completely shift into the Internet. As reported by the interviewed leaders, digital processes were critical to sustaining operation during times of the COVID-19 shutdowns and quarantine, accelerating the growth in e-commerce and digitalization (Pantelimon, Georgescu & Podesaru, 2020). Furthermore, virtual collaboration also creates new opportunities for employee work-life balance and organizational efficiencies (Kauffeld & Maier, 2020). Several interviewed leaders predicted that private life and work would be further integrated when employees no longer appear at the office at a certain time but schedule their working hours and locations completely freely around the world. Finally, the digitalization of processes should create intelligent human-machine interfaces that create efficiencies by automating laborious subprocesses.

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Summing up, the success factor *driving digital processes* includes the following organizational capabilities: (a) working mobile and hybrid, (b) developing online services for clients, and (c) streamlining processes through intelligent human–technology interactions.

(VIII) ... of External Resources by “Ensuring Economic Agility”

Organizations need to secure their access to financial and other external resources in times of crisis. In today’s competitive business environment, even more in times of crisis, organizations need latitude to flexibly react to unpredicted disruptions (Pulakos et al., 2019). Therefore, interviewed leaders reported that organizations were more vulnerable if they did not possess any savings and leeway in their margins to digest unexpected missing inflows or invest in critical changes early in the COVID-19 crisis. As disruptions accelerate change, it is vital for organizations to also adjust their business models to the changing conditions and markets (Wadin & Ode, 2019). Organizations are more vulnerable if their business model was already becoming outdated before the crisis and also if their opportunity and risk are completely bound to one product, one customer, one supplier, or one supply path (Rumelt, 1982; Mak & Shen, 2012). According to the interviewed leaders, risk diversification through different business segments should be systematically established. In times of crisis, single-supplier, just-in-time-production is directly hit, even by small disruptions in the plan execution. In consequence, organizations should disperse their risk and include buffers. The COVID-19 crisis has shown that complex, global supply networks are more vulnerable than local networks with direct supply on the spot. Therefore, interviewed leaders have suggested that organizations should strengthen their regional networks. To conclude, huge, centralized organizations are less capable of reacting to changes flexibly, as they need to find solutions that fit for many diverse players. On the contrary, decentralized organizations were suggested to increase the organization’s capability to quickly adjust to emerging and diverging local needs (see Treiblmaier, 2018).

Summing up, the success factor *ensuring economic agility* includes the following organizational capabilities: (a) creating small, capable organization units; (b) using economic profits for future-investments and reserve funds; (c) enhancing a future-viable business model; (d) spreading risks on all levels, including products, clients, market channels, suppliers, and logistic buffers; and (e) strengthening regional networks.

DISCUSSION

The proposed eight success factors are inspired by the learnings from 24 interviewed leaders and were categorized and sophisticated based upon the integrative model of leadership behavior (IMoLB). The theoretic model IMoLB conveys sound theoretic validity as it delivers the delineated model with a high generality, external consistency with empiric findings, internal consistency, testability, and parsimony (Behrendt et al., 2017). This is underlined by the broad literature cited that supports the suggested success factors.

At the same time, the resulting success factor structure is of exploratory nature. The researchers have interviewed 24 practical experts of the professional networks of five interviewers. The selection could not claim generality for all other potentially interviewed experts. The qualitative analyses are built on the subjective interpretation of the analyzers. The review and refinement of the first model draft by all five interviewers and two groups of practical expert controls for that individual subjectivity. Nevertheless, the derived success factors include these experts’ and the analyzers’ subjectivity. Therefore, the high

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variability of the experts' backgrounds is of particular importance, ranging from science, economics, religion, politics, and state organizations to youth movements. Merging these backgrounds, the findings should be applicable to many branches.

Furthermore, the reported learnings from early in the COVID-19 crisis are provisional. Empirical tests might uncover neglected additions or even contradict these experts' perceptions. Additionally, nobody can provide certainty that these learnings from early in the COVID-19 crisis really sustain later in the COVID-19 crisis and even transmit to future crises.

These concerns are alleviated by the high validity of IMoLB as an underlying theoretic basis. Nevertheless, these limitations should be thoroughly addressed in future research and considered in practical application. Summing up, the provided model of success factors summarizes early learnings from a wide variety of South-German practical experts within a sound theoretic structure.

SCIENTIFIC IMPLICATIONS

The proposed success factor model of organizational future-viability provides the first theory draft a scientific basis for future studies. The first draft will need further theoretic refinement and scientific testing. It should be examined in additional qualitative interview studies as well as in empirical tests.

First, the scientific community needs to develop valid measurements to allow rigorous empirical studies. These measures should validly determine internal and external actor coordination, cooperation, and activation. Consequently, the measurements should comprise multi-perspective survey scales, including the perspective of internal leaders and employees as well as external customers, suppliers, and other relevant stakeholders. Additionally, scientific video-based observation measures using scientifically trained observers could complement subjective survey scales of internal and external coordination, cooperation, and activation. The ensuing measure validation should include content validation by experts as well as item validation and factor structure examination. Thereby, the model's theoretic validity will be further enhanced.

As a second step, the developed measures should be used to study the success factors' criterion validity. As a first indicator, studies should examine how success factors can explain the varying organizational success early in the COVID-19 crisis, post hoc. Furthermore, studies should test how success factors predict organizational success and survival in the future, during the COVID-19 crisis and thereafter. These studies should include the assessment of potential moderator and mediator variables to better understand the factors' effect and mode of value creation.

Finally, experimental field studies should scrutinize the causal effects of the most promising factors based on a systematic practical variation of single success factors in different organizations (see the next section).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

If scientific tests confirm the proposed model of success factors of future-viability, then their implementation in daily organizational life should be further concretized. In that aim, practical researchers should identify best practice case studies for diverse industries. Therefore, the developed measurements could identify and confirm organizational excellence accordingly.

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Based on these practical implementation examples, organizational leaders could improve the future-viability of their organization. In that aim, IMoLB suggests the following iterative adaptation cycle.

1. **Diagnoses for enhanced understanding:** Leaders should use the developed scientific measurements to find a solid diagnosis of their organizational strengths and potential for improvements. If available, leaders should use leader, employee, customer, and other stakeholder perspectives to receive broad feedback. A thorough analysis of this feedback should provide a clear picture of the general future-viability and the organizational preparedness for expected crises in each of the success factors.
2. **Strategic deliberation to clarify strategy and strengthen motivation:** Based on the strengths and improvement potential discovered in Step 1, leaders should deliberate on the most critical success factor for their own organization's success. The importance of single success factors probably depends on industrial, social, and other moderating factors. Additionally, leaders should weigh the convertibility of each success factor in their organization. As organizational change is complicated and strenuous, leaders should focus the organization on the improvement of a single critical and leverageable factor. The results from Steps 1 and 2 should be communicated to and validated with the organization to strengthen the motivation.
3. **Implementation:** Based on the deliberation in Phase 2, leaders should implement improvements of the chosen success factor to increase adaptation and improve the organization's preparedness for future crises. As outlined, the success factors can be implemented according to leadership behavior. Leadership behavior is embedded in and influenced by the organization's behavioral culture as well as the organizational processes, structures, and material resources. To enhance behavior, culture, processes, structures, and resources, leaders should leverage the identified best practice case studies as leading examples (see above). In that aim, comprehensive organizational change programs, accompanied by systematic training and development programs, are most promising to initiate sustainable organizational change. To close the iterative cycle, the diagnostic measurements could provide leaders with sound feedback on progress and steer iterative program adaptation. If successfully implemented, the improvements can provide organization members with a shared sense of meaning and thereby strengthen organizational identity.

CONCLUSION

Summing up, the proposed chapter provides organizational leaders and consultants with a theory-based framework for preparing their organizations for the expected crises of the post-COVID-19 era. A sound crisis-viability, quick adaptations, and seizure of opportunities will be critical for the successful survival of organizations. Because of the associated unpredictability of these dynamics, leaders need to prepare their organizations, so they can quickly react and learn in the face of future crises. The framework demarcates eight concrete success factors for crisis-viable organizations based on learnings in the COVID-19 crisis: (I) "providing iterative leadership within uncertainty," (II) "promoting absolute customer-loyalty," (III) "providing sustainable public value," (IV) promoting a culture of trust," (V) "establishing collaborative ecosystems of organizations," (VI) "creating an agile culture," (VII) driving digital processes," and (VIII) "ensuring economic agility." These success factors are provided to the practical and scientific community as a first draft for practical adaptation and learning, as well as for further theoretic refine-

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ment, development, and scientific testing. If these success factors could explain organizational success early in the COVID-19 crisis and eventually predict future success in the upcoming decades, the model would provide essential value to organizations and their societies.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Crisis: Disruptive social situations that completely change the boundary conditions of organizational functioning and success creation and therefore threaten organizational survival and consequently force organizations to adapt quickly.

Future-Viability: The capability of an organization to create sustainable success and survive in the future, despite increasing economic and social challenges. As the post-COVID-19 era is expected to be characterized by further crises, future-viability in this era includes an organization’s capability to adapt to resulting disruptions quickly.

Leadership: Leadership is defined as “influencing and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (Yukl, 2012).

Success Factor: Organizational factors that enhance an organization’s success and accordingly predict organizational survival and adaptation in the times of crisis of the post-COVID-19 era.