

THE IMPACT OF THE FACTOR “TRUST” ON THE SUCCESS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED VIRTUAL SYSTEM SUPPLIERS

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Abstract

In the last four decades, the industry has changed significantly. While there has been a reduction in the life cycles of both products and technologies, the complexity inherent in industrial production has grown. The process of globalization brings many new challenges. Especially the entire automotive industry is dominated by a few but very large system suppliers. Small and medium-sized suppliers are under pressure to change. Basic strategy changes and new organizational models are required. One possibility is the network-like collaboration of various companies as a virtual system supplier (hereinafter called “VISYSUP”).

The success of these corporate networks depends on many factors. On the basis of the research carried out so far by the author, possible success factors have been identified.

With the “VISYSUP’s House of Success” a descriptive and memorable presentation was chosen. In this model, the success factors are systematized according to the life phases of the VISYSUP.

In order to describe the phenomenon of the VISYSUP and its success factors in a real environment and to obtain insights for further empirical investigations, a company - the BRINK GmbH - was examined more closely in the course of a case study. In this context, experts from the VISYSUP were interviewed.

The focus was placed on the factor “trust”. Using the example of the company network examined, the study shows that “trust” can achieve a positive effect on different levels.

This work presents a novel approach to the development and implementation and assessment of success factors, in particular the factor “trust”, of virtual system suppliers. From this point of view, these are very important factors for the author to undertake further research in this interesting direction.

Key words: *Success Factors, Virtual System Supplier, Virtual Corporation, Trust, Organizational Model, Small and Medium-sized Suppliers*

Introduction

The requirements for companies grow through constant changes in the business environment. Thus, the intensification of competition, the accelerating technical development, the increasing customer demands, but also the change of values in society create a permanent pressure to adapt to the management and design of companies. These react to the mentioned challenges with the dissolution of hierarchies. The result is decentralized, modularly decomposed structures characterized by autonomy, cooperation and indirect leadership. The classical boundaries of the enterprise begin to blur, to change inward as well as outward, partly to dissolve.¹

Schuh, Millarg & Göransson² have identified two trends within the various attempts made at increasing organizational flexibility in companies. The first involves large companies and their segmentation and dissolution. The second begins with independent units, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)^{3,4}, which are drawn together into cross-organizational, cooperative constructs. The structures created as referred to as network organizations or Virtual Corporations.

Meant for a popular audience, this conclusion was featured on the cover of *Business Week*⁵:

“Big, complex companies usually can’t react fast enough. Small, nimble ones may not have the muscle. What’s the answer? A new model that uses technology to link people, assets, and ideas in a temporary organization. After the business is done, it disbands. It’s called the virtual corporation.”

1. From Virtual Corporation to VISYSUP – The Virtual System Supplier

The studies known to the author consider virtual corporations mostly in general about the industry boundaries. Only rarely are individual industries or interest groups considered. One exception is the study of Schwinger⁶, which examined small and medium-sized logistics companies or the work of Hess⁷, who examined virtual corporations in the service

¹ Arnold Picot, Ralf Reichwald, and Rolf T. Wigand, *Die grenzenlose Unternehmung: Information, Organisation und Management ; Lehrbuch zur Unternehmensführung im Informationszeitalter*, 5., aktualisierte Aufl., Lehrbuch (Wiesbaden: Gabler, 2003), p. 2

² Günther Schuh, Kai Millarg, and Åsa Göransson, *Virtuelle Fabrik: Neue Marktchancen durch dynamische Netzwerke* (München: Hanser, 1998), p. 19

³ Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are defined in the EU recommendation 2003/361. The main factors determining whether an enterprise is an SME are: (1) staff headcount and (2) either turnover or balance sheet total.

⁴ European Union, ‘Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the Definition of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises’, *Official Journal of the European Union 2003/361/EC*, notified under document number C(2003) 1422 (2003)

⁵ Mark Morrison, ed., *Business Week Magazine*, N° 3304 (McGraw-Hill, 1993), Front cover of the Business Week

⁶ Doreen Schwinger, ‘Unternehmensnetzwerke und virtuelle Unternehmen als Wettbewerbsstrategie für kleine und mittelgroße Logistikunternehmen der neuen Bundesländer’ (Inauguraldissertation, Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg, 2010)

⁷ Thomas Hess, ‘Planning and control of virtual corporations in the service industry: The prototype VICOPLAN’, edited by Ralph H. Sprague, in *Proceedings of the 35th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences. Abstracts and CD-ROM of full papers : 7-10 January, 2001[sic]*, Big Island, Hawaii (Los Alamitos, Calif: IEEE Computer Society Press, 2002), pp. 303–311

industry. The VISYSUP^{8,9} (Virtual System Supplier) is a virtual corporation. The term was coined by the author and was according to his investigations in science and business, so far nonexistent.

In his study, the author considers only (virtual) system suppliers. In the automotive industry these are also called Tier 1 suppliers. Tier 1 suppliers produce modules and systems delivered directly to the final manufacturer or OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer).

The VISYSUP, or activated network, is distinguished from the latent network. As defined by Borchardt¹⁰, the virtual company draws on dynamic basic components contained within both the latent and activated networks, i.e. the project-specific project network¹¹. This allows for the network and project levels of a virtual company to be distinguished from one another.

The latent network of the VISYSUP is unlike networks found in distribution, production or sales. By pooling both homo- and heterogeneous core competencies through loosely formed links, it is able to interact with cooperative partners as a unified whole. The activated network represents only a portion of the total latent network, which itself bears similarities to a strategic network. However, unlike a strategic network comprised of large companies, the latent network remains invisible to the market.¹²

2.Methods and Methodology

As a research method, a structure-discovering (explorative) approach has initially been selected for this study, as the research area studied has remained underdeveloped thus far. According to Augsburg University¹³, exploratory examinations are primarily conducted with the aim of developing new hypotheses in a relatively unexplored field of investigation or of creating theoretical or conceptual prerequisites in order to be able to formulate initial hypotheses. They are relatively un-standardized and leave much room for the investigator's imagination and ingenuity. At this early stage of the research process, therefore, an explorative research method is essential.

The theoretical basis for the research project on the subject of success factors of VISYSUP's was laid in one of the author earlier works.¹⁴ In this theories and theoretical approaches were used and literature reviews were carried out to identify possible success factors. As a working basis presents this publication, among other things, the proprietary graphical model "VISYSUP's House of Success" (see Figure 2).

⁸ see eg. Norbert G. Brink, 'Success Factors of Virtual System Suppliers in the Automotive Industry', edited by Jana Stávková, in *PEFnet 2017. Proceedings*, European scientific conference of doctoral students (Brno: Mendel University Press, 2017), pp. 22–37

⁹ see eg. Tadeusz Waściński, Katarzyna Anna Wójcik, and Norbert G. Brink, 'Success Factors of Virtual System Suppliers in a Case Study of BRINK GMBH and its Suppliers', edited by Marek Jabłoński, in *Strategic Value Management: A Dynamic Perspective. scheduled publication date: 2018 - October*. Business Issues, Competition and Entrepreneurship (Hauppauge NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2018), Chapter 19

¹⁰ Andreas Borchardt, *Koordinationsinstrumente in virtuellen Unternehmen*, 1. Aufl., Betriebswirtschaftliche Aspekte lose gekoppelter Systeme und Electronic Business (s.l.: DUV Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag, 2006), p. 19

¹¹ see Schuh, Millarg and Göransson, *Virtuelle Fabrik* (above, n. 2), p. 63

¹² Borchardt, *Koordinationsinstrumente in virtuellen Unternehmen* (above, n. 10), p. 20

¹³ Augsburg University, 'Merkblatt zur Anlage empirischer Untersuchungen', 2017, https://www.philso.uni-augsburg.de/lehrstuehle/schulpaed/verwaltung_downloads/studium/Merkblatt_Evaluation1.pdf, accessed 14 February 2018, p. 6

¹⁴ see Brink, 'Success Factors of Virtual System Suppliers in the Automotive Industry' (above, n. 8)

This study examines the impact of the factor “trust” on the success of small and medium-sized Virtual System Suppliers. First, however, the state of science had to be reflected. The therefore used procedure was basically based on a hermeneutic method. According to Erdélyi¹⁵ hermeneutics provides the methodological basis for the analysis of any kind of sources. It is also used in empirical studies, since at the beginning it is necessary to show the current state of research.

In order to describe the phenomenon of the VISYSUP and its success factors in a real environment and to obtain insights for further empirical investigations, a company - the BRINK GmbH - is examined more closely in the course of a case study.

According to Yin¹⁶, the case study is an empirical study that examines a contemporary phenomenon in its real context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear. The case study is complemented by expert interviews. In doing so, the author orients himself to the elaborations of Mieg and Näf¹⁷ with regard to this topic.

Only one factor (“Building trust - both personal and procedural / impersonal”) was selected for this case study. The criteria for the selection was, on the one hand, the intuition of the author, who is also the owner of BRINK GmbH and can be regarded as an expert in this field. On the other hand, Tjaden¹⁸ states in his outstanding study that trust is a highly significant success factor of a strong correlation.

Based on this, 321 companies from different industries such as production, research & development and engineering were examined. The choice of variables was made on the basis of indicators significant for enterprises which are participants in virtual system suppliers.

The research method presented by the author, as well as the proprietary model “VISYSUP's House of Success” (see Figure 2) by Norbert G. Brink, allows for the organization of modern knowledge about the success factors of enterprises participating in the virtual system. This method is an effective tool, for examining the structures and processes of virtual system participants which can be used in future research.

3.Success Factors of Virtual System Suppliers

3.1 The Basics and potential Success Factors

In order to systematize the success factors, Brink¹⁹ also used a phase classification in his paper (see Figure 1). For factors that occur in several phases of life, the group “phase-indifferent success factors” was additionally created.

¹⁵ Andrea Erdélyi, ‘Grundlagen der Hermeneutik’, 2012, https://www.uni-oldenburg.de/fileadmin/user_upload/sonderpaedagogik/download/DOZ/Grundlagen_der_Hermeneutik.pdf, accessed 14 February 2018, p. 9

¹⁶ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3. ed., vol. 5, Applied social research methods series (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2003), pp. 13–14

¹⁷ see Harald A. Mieg and Matthias Näf, *Experteninterviews: in den Umwelt- und Planungswissenschaften.*, Eine Einführung und Anleitung, 2.th ed. (Zürich, 2005), http://www.metropolenforschung.de/download/Mieg_Experteninterviews.pdf, accessed 01 September 2018

¹⁸ Gregor Tjaden, *Erfolgsfaktoren Virtueller Unternehmen: Eine theoretische und empirische Untersuchung*, Gabler Edition Wissenschaft, Schriften zum europäischen Management (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 2003), p. 202

¹⁹ see Norbert G. Brink, *Success Factors of Virtual System Suppliers - A Case Study: Conference Paper*, New Challenges of Economic and Business Development 2018, 10th International Scientific Conference, University of Latvia, p. 5



Figure 1. Different phases of VISYSUP's in chronological order

Source: Author's illustration based on Tjaden²⁰

On the basis of the author's investigations and their evaluations, the following potential success factors of the virtual system supplier could be determined²¹. With Brinks's²² "VISYSUP's House of Success" a descriptive and memorable presentation was chosen. In this model, the success factors are systematized according to the life phases of the VISYSUP. The bricks of the house symbolize the importance of the individual success factors. The phase "Selection of Cooperation Partners" was consciously placed on the ground floor of the house. By making the right decisions in the virtual enterprise's first phase of life, future disappointments and losses can be avoided. The phase-independent success factors were placed in the attic. They are ranked above the all others. They apply to all phases of life of the VISYSUP.

Based on the research results of Tjaden²³, it is known that of the possible success factors given in Figure 2, 15 are highly significant and 13 are significant. Of these, all are positively correlated with the achievement of goals. It can be assumed that these are actually success factors. At the same time Tjaden²⁴ speaks of three of the highly significant success factors of a strong correlation.

These are the following success factors:

- Complementary core competences
- Similar professionalism of the partners
- Building trust (both personal and procedural / impersonal)

It is noticeable that the first two factors come from the selection phase and the factor "building trust" is phase-indifferent.

²⁰ Tjaden, *Erfolgsfaktoren Virtueller Unternehmen* (above, n. 18), p. 56

²¹ Brink, *Success Factors of Virtual System Suppliers - A Case Study: Conference Paper* (above, n. 19), pp. 5–6

²² *Ibid.*, p. 6

²³ Tjaden, *Erfolgsfaktoren Virtueller Unternehmen* (above, n. 18), p. 202

²⁴ *Ibid.*

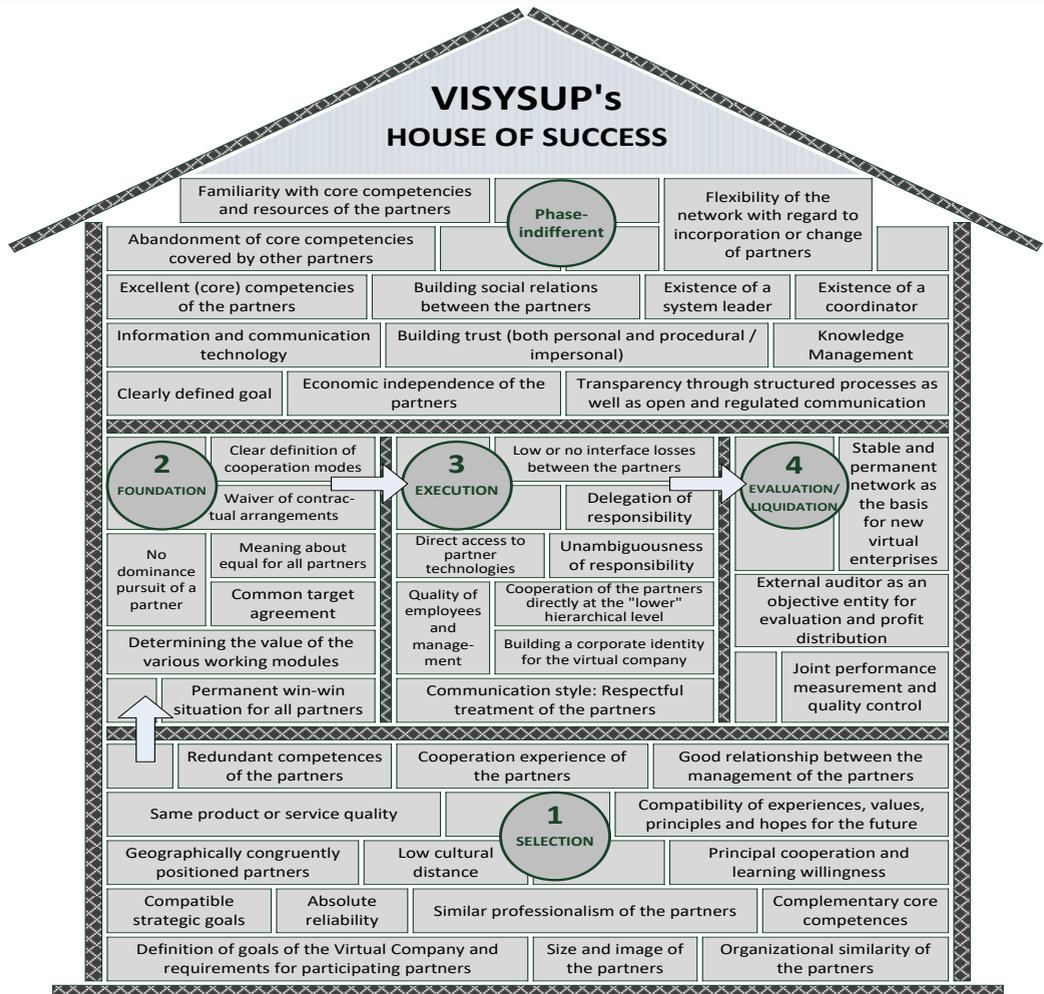


Figure 2. VISYSUP's House of Success

Source: Author's own illustration

3.2 Trust as a success factor

The term trust is generally associated with a positive rating and considered as an important part of social life. Confidence is not limited to the interpersonal sphere, but also occurs in the context of political and economic relations.²⁵

According to Luhmann²⁶, trust is a risky advance that can serve to reduce complexity. The donor of trust transfers control of events or resources to the recipient of trust. In doing so, the giver entrusts the taker with something that the latter can use to damage (breach of trust) or for the benefit (reward of trust) of the trust-giver.²⁷ Confidence increases the

²⁵ Hermann Joachim Pieper, *Vertrauen in Wertschöpfungspartnerschaften: Eine Analyse aus Sicht der Neuen Institutionenökonomie*, Gabler Edition Wissenschaft, Unternehmensführung & Controlling (Wiesbaden, s.l.: Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 2000), p. 1

²⁶ Niklas Luhmann, *Vertrauen: Ein Mechanismus der Reduktion sozialer Komplexität*, 5. Aufl., vol. 2185, UTB (Konstanz, Stuttgart: UVK-Verl.-Ges; UTB, 2014), <http://www.utb-studi-e-book.de/9783838540047>, pp. 27–28

²⁷ Picot, Reichwald and Wigand, *Die grenzenlose Unternehmung* (above, n. 1), p. 124

willingness to accept the perceived level of uncertainty and, with this reduction in complexity, enables action in the first place.²⁸

Furthermore, according to Luhmann²⁹, one can recognize a relationship to the time factor with the topic of trust. Those who show confidence anticipate the future. According to Luhmann³⁰ trust is only given if the trusting expectation is decisive in a decision – otherwise it is mere hope.

The expectations associated with the trust relationship form a contract-like basis and outline a framework for action. But the actors remain free in their decision about their own actions, due to the lack of sanction possibilities.³¹

Closely related to the control function is the possibility of cost and time savings through the use of trust. Abandoning contracts largely eliminates the cost of contract design and assurance. This is associated with a time savings, as the preparation of contracts is also time-consuming.³²

The cost savings through trust can be explained by the transaction cost theory³³ and the principal-agent model³⁴. In terms of transaction costs, the effect of trust is reflected in a reduction of initiation, settlement and control costs (external transaction costs). At the same time, trust has a positive effect on internal transaction costs such as coordination, planning and control costs. In the sense of principal-agent theory, trust can reduce costs by reducing monitoring and agreement costs.³⁵

Trust enables a better communication flow between the partners and is a prerequisite for efficient problem solving within the group. This aspect is especially important in virtual structures.³⁶ However, the described positive results of trust are also countered by negative consequences.³⁶ Thus, the giver of trust initially assumes a heightened risk, because he could be harmed by opportunistic action of the recipient of trust. According to Ripperger³⁷ is trust important for the transformation process from rigid hierarchies to more flexible forms of enterprise, and thus a constitutive feature of network organizations and virtual enterprises.

3.3 Importance of trust in the VISYSUP

Trust is of great importance in the emergence of the network and plays a central role in communication, cooperation and coordination.³⁸ A network actor must be able to trust that

²⁸ Roland Winkler, 'Vertrauen in Virtuellen Unternehmungen' (Bakkalaureatsarbeit, Karl-Franzens Universität Graz, 2004), p. 4

²⁹ Luhmann, *Vertrauen* (above, n. 25), p. 10

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28

³¹ Winkler, 'Vertrauen in Virtuellen Unternehmungen' (above, n. 27), p. 4

³² *Ibid.*, p. 5

³³ Picot, Reichwald and Wigand, *Die grenzenlose Unternehmung* (above, n. 1), 49 ff.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 55 ff.

³⁵ Sören Fischer, *Virtuelle Unternehmen im interkulturellen Austausch: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen von Kooperation in Netzwerken*, DUV Wirtschaftswissenschaft, Entscheidungs- und Organisationstheorie (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 2001), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-90409-6>, p. 111

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 110–111

³⁷ Tanja Ripperger, *Ökonomik des Vertrauens: Analyse eines Organisationsprinzips*, 2. Aufl., Studienausg., Nachdr., vol. 101, Die Einheit der Gesellschaftswissenschaften (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), p. 2

³⁸ see Hans W Bierhoff, 'Vertrauen in Führungs- und Kooperationsbeziehungen', edited by Alfred Kieser, Gerhard Reber, and Rolf Wunderer, in *Handwörterbuch der Führung*. Bd. 10, Enzyklopädie der Betriebswirtschaftslehre (Stuttgart: Schäffer-Poeschel, 1995), pp. 2148–2158, pp. 2148–2158

commitments made by the other partners of the VISYSUP will be complied with. This trust does not only apply directly to people, but to the entire virtual enterprise.³⁹

According to Winkler⁴⁰, trust makes it possible to reduce the volume of contractual arrangements, thereby reducing the costs of coordination and control. Also, this can achieve time advantages. The partners of the VISYSUP have to agree on short but precise rules of the game. Compliance with these rules requires a culture of mutual trust between the actors. Collaboration without contracts is possible if one can rely on the partners and they do not behave opportunistically. Winkler⁴¹ goes on to say that trust is an important factor in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of a network. The presence of trust can be an expression of a valuable business relationship because building trust requires resources and time.

4. Case Study of BRINK GmbH

4.1 The Company

BRINK GmbH was founded in 2004 by two shareholders as a sales and consulting company. The majority shareholder has also been the company's CEO since that time and is also the author of this paper. Very quickly, the business focused on the production and sales of both metal and plastic technical components as well as mechanical assemblies and systems. It never engaged in the production of the parts itself, but left that to European production partners.

This includes every area of the business, from quote generation and the provision of expert advice in the development stage of the customer project, through the creation of prototypes, to the timely delivery to the customers of flawless serial products. This made the company more successful year by year. The customer profits as well in that the BRINK GmbH is able to offer the best service and extremely competitive conditions to its customers. Whether the customer is looking for a simple lathed component or a complex welded assembly, the BRINK GmbH always follow their own motto: "We are precision!"⁴²

BRINK GmbH is not just an automotive supplier, but also supplies other industries such as electrical engineering and electronics, furniture, mechanical engineering, medical and rehabilitation technology, metal and plastic processing, sports and wellness equipment, technical building equipment, and other industries.

The system supplier BRINK GmbH is a focal company (central company in a strategic network) in a company network consisting of independent companies. BRINK GmbH plays a coordinating and leading role in a joint (project) business. In doing so, the company is in direct contact with the customer and thus gives the virtual company a "face". The organizational and scheduling coordination between the different participants of the VISYSUP is also the responsibility of the BRINK GmbH.

4.2 BRINK GmbH and its suppliers

³⁹ see Karl Ritsch, *Wissensorientierte Gestaltung von Wertschöpfungsnetzwerken*, Zugl.: Graz, Techn.-Univ., Diss., 2004, vol. 3, Grazer Schriftenreihe Knowledge Management (Aachen: Shaker, 2005), p. 98

⁴⁰ following Winkler, 'Vertrauen in Virtuellen Unternehmungen' (above, n. 27), p. 21

⁴¹ following Ibid.

⁴² Norbert G. Brink, *BRINK: We are precision*, Technical parts - Assemblies - Systems (Berlin, 2016), accessed 2016

The list of suppliers in 2017 was divided according to the size of the enterprise (Eurostat 2016)^{43,44}. Companies were divided into four types: micro (12 companies); small (101 companies); medium (31 companies) and large (3 companies). BRINK GmbH is also a small company. With very large companies, there are very few business relationships.

The results of figure 2 (**Error! Reference source not found.**) have been used to assess the success factors of virtual systems suppliers such as, in this case, the duration of cooperation.

As Table 1 shows, BRINK GmbH cooperated with 147 partner companies in 2017. Of these, 19 companies were completely new partners. But there were also 20 companies which had worked together with BRINK GmbH for 10 years and more. 174 companies no longer work with BRINK GmbH. They had started to cooperate within the last 14 years, but this cooperation came to an end within this period.

When the collaboration has ended, then it has done so in more than 80% of cases within the first 3 years of collaboration.

Based on these results, it is reasonable to suppose that long time of cooperation is an indication of trust between the partners.

Table 1. Duration of cooperation of BRINK GmbH with the virtual suppliers

Duration of cooperation	"ongoing"	"cancelled"
up to 1 year	19	88
greater than 1 year and less than 2 years	14	36
greater than 2 year and less than 3 years	25	21
greater than 3 year and less than 4 years	14	7
greater than 4 year and less than 5 years	12	8
greater than 5 year and less than 6 years	13	6
greater than 6 year and less than 7 years	9	5
greater than 7 year and less than 8 years	11	1
greater than 8 year and less than 9 years	3	0
greater than 9 year and less than 10 years	7	2
greater than 10 year and less than 11 years	6	0
greater than 11 year and less than 12 years	5	0
greater than 12 year and less than 13 years	2	0
greater than 13 year and less than 14 years	7	0
Total in 2017	147	174

Source: Company data of BRINK GmbH

4.3 Expert Interview

Interlocutors were long-standing employees of BRINK GmbH as well as the CEO. The Head of Sales and Order Center has been working for the company for more than 13 years and has helped to build it up. The Technical Manager, who is also responsible for the producing network partners, initially worked as a freelancer for BRINK GmbH for 6 years. For 4 years now he is a permanent employee based in Verona (Italy). The company's CEO had a dual function in the interview. As the founder of BRINK GmbH and the main designer of the company, he is now regarded as a proven expert in the field of virtual corporations. On the other hand, as the author of this paper he leads the interview. In doing

⁴³ (a) Micro enterprises: fewer than 10 persons employed; (b) Small enterprises: 10 to 49 persons; (c) Medium-sized enterprises: 50 to 249 persons; (d) Large enterprises: 250 or more persons employed.

⁴⁴ Eurostat, 'Glossary: Enterprise Size', 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Enterprise_size, accessed 06 February 2018

so, he tries to be as neutral as possible in order not to steer the qualitative results in any direction.

The interview was conducted on the basis of a guideline. However, each interviewed person was given ample opportunity to provide information on the topic.

First, the research question was discussed: “Impact of the factor trust on the success of small and medium-sized Virtual System Suppliers”. That the author assumes a positive influence was initially not revealed.

All participants agreed that the structure of the Virtual Corporation can achieve a high degree of flexibility and diversity. There is a lot of trust in long-standing partner companies. In particular, it highlighted the fact that these partners, with whom the company has been working for many years, are much more predictable than those who have only recently become acquainted. Working together with these partners is very straightforward. The interviewees confirmed the conclusions from the table 1. Trust among each other also depends on the duration of the cooperation.

A not very clear picture emerged in the question of whether one has more confidence in people or companies (system trust). Here, obviously, there is a connection to the size of the partner's business. If the partner company is very small, there is either personal trust (or not) in the few people involved. If the company is bigger, then acting people take a back seat and system trust seems to be in the foreground. The interviewees agreed that the straightforward procedure saves time and costs.

But the conversation participants also saw disadvantages. Especially with new partners in the network, the trust placed in them has been disappointed several times. Despite obvious detailed information provided by the BRINK GmbH there were misunderstandings and even false information and refusal to work on the part of the partners. The relationship to new partners is often burdened by the fact that different backgrounds and know-how exist. The interlocutors showed this quite self-critical. Obviously, one often deals with new partners in a blue-eyed way, without knowing their exact background and questioning their competences. As a result, BRINK GmbH has also incurred financial damage in the past.

Nevertheless, in order to avoid such negative effects for the future, the interviewees do not want to build large contracts. However, the interviewees try to avoid such risks through rules of the game within the BRINK GmbH and to the potential new partner. This measure aims to build greater trust between the partners already at the beginning of a partnership.

Conclusions

The research presented based on a case study and expert interview, has made it possible to recognize and obtain a broad, though not exhaustive, description of the examine success factor trust for virtual system suppliers. The stages of assessing one of the many potential success factors of the virtual corporation were shown and discussed in detail. The research method applied allowed additional conclusions to be drawn and set the direction for further research.

Due to the numerous previous research studies of the author all significant potential success factors were known. In the “VISYSUP's House of Success” they are clearly illustrated depending on the life phases of the VISYSUP. Earlier research results suggested that the success of a virtual system supplier could depend significantly on the trust factor.

Through the analysis of numerous literature based on a hermeneutic method as well as the conducted case study including an expert interview, a positive effect of building trust (both personal and procedural / impersonal) could be found and confirmed.

In the work, the research results presented indicate the areas of activity for enterprises in which the success factors of virtual system suppliers provide arguments for the appropriateness of selecting these areas. In addition, attention should be paid to the fact that BRINK GmbH is constantly working on the development of cooperation with virtual suppliers. For this reason, it was necessary to investigate the issue and carry out further analyses to indicate the important factors contributing to the success of virtual system suppliers.

Theoretically, it would also be possible to apply and analyze all factors, but here we have limited the research to the above-mentioned factor “trust”. The holistic theoretical and practical analysis contained in this study is the assessment of the ex-ante condition in relation to the current state giving it a measurable, pictorial and neutral dimension.

The following pragmatic conclusions arise from the theoretical and practical analyses carried out in the work:

- a small number of studies on the success factors of virtual system suppliers point to the clear need for further research in this segment;
- the model of graphic development should be continuous improvement;
- the small number of studies in the literature on the subject, which would cover far-reaching internal issues regarding success factors for virtual systems suppliers, creates the possibility of filling a certain gap;
- on the basis of a case study, it is possible to see how virtual success factors are determined and how this goal is achieved;
- despite the strong rivalry between virtual enterprises in many industries, BRINK GmbH has managed to strengthen its market share, which is undoubtedly an important element in improving its competitive position.

This work brings an original contribution to the field of theoretical and practical issues in the area of success factors for virtual system suppliers. Above all, it presents a novel approach to the development and implementation and assessment of success factors of virtual system suppliers. From this point of view, these are very important factors for the author to undertake further research in this interesting direction.

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