

Future of Business and Finance

Peter Wollmann
Frank Kühn
Michael Kempf *Editors*

Three Pillars of Organization and Leadership in Disruptive Times

Navigating Your Company Successfully
Through the 21st Century Business World

 Springer

Future of Business and Finance

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Michael Kempf
Editors

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Successfully Through
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Frank Kühn has been facilitating projects on transformation, organization, and leadership for over 25 years. His work connects experience, future thinking, and getting into rapid action with people. Some of his recent projects have been building a Business Unit 4.0, helping a bank to transition toward agile working, and developing rapid product development processes. Frank graduated in engineering and received his doctorate in work science. After gaining leadership experience in research and industry, he became a partner at HLP in Frankfurt and ICG Integrated Consulting Group in Berlin and Graz. Today, he is a self-employed consultant and business partner of ICG and is associated with further development and project partners. He has published a wide range of publications and teaches courses at universities.



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Sharon Lalla has worked in industry and higher education for over 30 years. In industry, she learned the importance of leadership, deadlines, project management, effective communication, and team building. In higher education, she adopted a collegial style of leadership balanced with relationship building and shared governance. After being awarded a doctorate in Education Technologies at Pepperdine University, Sharon took a leadership role in the administration of education technologies at New Mexico State University. As a College Assistant Professor, she taught a variety of classes at the undergraduate and graduate level. Currently, Sharon is a New Leadership Academy fellow and Vice President of Instruction at Luna Community College at Las Vegas, New Mexico.



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Peter Wollmann has been program director for global transformations within Zurich Insurance Company (ZIC) and acting as a senior mentor, sparring partner, and catalyst for leaders in new roles and responsibilities and for organizations. His experience is based on a broad career spanning over 38 years in diverse project/program roles with a global scale or line management roles such as leading project portfolio management, strategic business development, and strategic planning and controlling units in ZIC, Deutsche Bank Insurance Group, and Deutscher Herold. Peter has a degree in mathematics and physics from the University of Bonn. He is the author and publisher of a range of books and articles on strategy, leadership, and project and project portfolio management. Finally, he founded and runs a wine business start-up: VinAuthority.

Part I

About this Book and the Three Pillar Model



Why and How the Three-Pillar Model Has Become a Reality

Peter Wollmann, Frank Kühn, and Michael Kempf

Abstract

We have experienced that traditional organizations don't offer reliable structures any longer. New reliability has to be different. An international team of authors, practitioners, and consultants has worked on this issue and defined three basic building blocks: sustainable purpose, travelling organization, and connected resources. These building blocks are based upon many years of experience in transformation projects and facing the current development and future changes. We have summarized them in the "three-pillar model of organization and leadership." The model is exemplified by a practical case and provides the framework for the articles and clusters in this book.

The editors of the book introduce themselves:

Peter Wollmann is now acting as a senior mentor, sparring partner, trusted advisor, and catalyst for leaders in new roles and responsibilities and for organizations. Before he has held over nearly 40 years diverse senior positions in the finance industry and worked in the last few years as program director for

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global transformations within Zurich Insurance Company (ZIC). He is the author and publisher of a range of books and articles on strategy, leadership, and project and project portfolio management.

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Michael Kempf has been an experienced Management Consultant for over 20 years. His career has spanned various jobs in social work, 10 years as a manager (HR and logistics) in industrial and retail companies, and, since 1998, in advising people, leadership teams as well as working teams and organizations. Michael has coauthored numerous publications in the field of leadership and organizational development



Disruptive Times and Need for Action

Peter Wollmann, Frank Kühn, and Michael Kempf

Abstract

In this chapter, the authors explore and discuss key design building blocks for organization and leadership, derived concrete principles, and test their efficacy to get the indispensable ones which make the difference. They derive, analyzing a huge number of cases across industries, enterprises, and institutions as well as existing literature, exactly three of such building blocks with an overwhelming fundamental importance and leadership significance, far more than a purely technical perspective, and call them “pillars”: the sustainable purpose of an organization (bringing new orientation and certainty to the people that are wanted to engage for the joint endeavor), the mind-set of an organization in a permanent state of flux and how to cope with this—called a “travelling organization”—and the capability of connecting the valuable resources such as aims and concepts, strategies and processes, experiences and competencies, balancing and inter-linking peoples’ interests and ideas in a flexible manner towards joint success.

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We are living in special times with opportunities and threats brought about by an epochal transformation with new political and social developments, significant scientific progress, disruptive technologies, new ways of communication and virtual cooperation, and new concepts for energy, mobility, and environmental protection. Enterprises and private individuals cannot avoid being highly impacted, and there is a feeling that, tomorrow, nothing will ever be the same again, but nobody knows what the “new” will look like in detail. It is more than likely that the old traditional state and different shades of new states will exist in parallel for some time—similar to the situation at the end of the nineteenth/beginning of the twentieth century—and, likewise, disruptions; personal, systemic, and political catastrophes; or breakthroughs might be around in a different guise.

The significant uncertainty, the lack of orientation, and increasing number of additional players and factors to cope with need a strong leadership response, especially in the case of enterprises, social organizations, and public institutions. This response has to be technically simple but intellectually sophisticated in diverse facets—and the response, interpreted and well specified, has to have the potential to give sustainable orientation and to lead to successful action. It goes without saying that it is a tremendous challenge but one which must be attempted.

We already touched upon some of the challenges in our book *Leading International Projects* (Dignen and Wollmann 2016) and continued the discussion on our experiences with change projects and transformative concepts. Our exchange seemed so fundamental to us that we have focused on it in our next step.

We decided to explore the epochal transformation described above inclusive of the various gaps between diverse organization design concepts from classical to agile, and we were confident to have good preconditions in spite of the dimensions of this task. The cooperation of people from different geographies, nationalities, careers, industries, and professions over nearly 2 years had created a desire to continue working together.

It was—certainly—helpful that the exchange on “what’s next” took place in Tuscany, where the joint endeavor had started years ago, and was nurtured by an environment far from each contributor’s business routine, easily connecting intellectual, sensual, and emotional perspectives and supporting every kind of lateral thinking. Those environmental—non-ritualized—preconditions have become very rare in daily business life and are thus highly appreciated if something new has to be developed.

Ultimately, it is our strong belief that if you have a challenging topic of major interest and coverage of a burning issue and if you blend amazing and different people with ambition and curiosity, experience, and creativity in such an environment, you always will have an amazing and sustainable outcome. One advantage is that various perspectives from different industries, enterprises, and institutions, different personal experiences, and different personalities produce a lot more than merely a pure compendium of articles and arguments: meta-insights and solid support to help the reader to find their own leadership way in a competent manner. Figure 1 gives a rough impression of how our topic developed.

Our Connected Journey

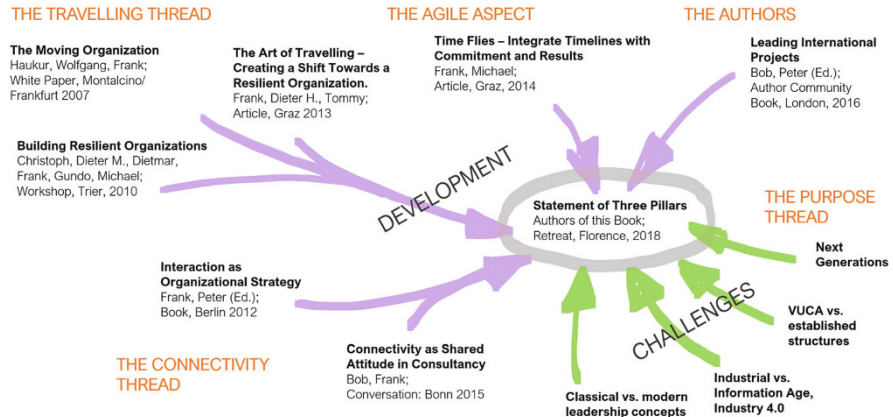


Fig. 1 Focus of the book developing from various roots (authors’ own figure)

The severe and demanding issue for the book has already been touched upon from a broad bundle of perspectives above, covering political, sociological, technological, cultural, organizational, and especially leadership aspects. Let’s go now a bit more into detail.

For the world of enterprises, it is some sort of “common—at least often shared—knowledge” that the “old business world” is going to die as a consequence of an epochal transformation based on new technologies, especially concerning data management, communication styles and platforms, global cooperation with a cut in value chains, politics, trade, changes to tax and customs regulations, etc. “Old world” means in the perspective of organizations—only to take some buzz words—top-down decisions, Taylorism, command and control, hierarchical and departmental silos, micromanagement, short-term thinking, focus on career and position, etc.

All of this will vanish, or at least change significantly, in the new digital and data-oriented world as a consequence of one of the biggest paradigm shifts for business in the last two centuries. And it is obvious that things are already changing for enterprises. The impact of huge enterprises from places like Silicon Valley such as Apple, Google, Amazon, Uber, and also of upcoming start-ups and the respective demands and decisions of customers have obviously changed daily life.

That can all be regarded as challenges from outside that bump up against organizational conditions and ideas of further development. It can be described by some key observations which are perfectly expressed in the song “Everything at Once” by Lenka which was used to launch a new Windows version some years ago and which covers the current situation in organization design for companies quite well. Lenka sings about the ambition to be everything at once, and we observe that:

- Companies want to be like a fleet of start-ups but at the same time be a big strong organization controlled by a sustainable financial and organizational background.
- Units want to start from scratch with zero “contaminated” history but with the service of an established organization and with collected professional experience and expertise.
- Enterprises want to have an explorative “learning from our mistakes” culture but run a traditional performance management system with fixed objectives to keep results consistently stable.
- Organizations want to be agile and flexible but at the same time predictable (e.g., in terms of budgets, profits, etc.) over a long period.
- Enterprises want to offer customers individual treatment but use quite inflexible algorithms for customer interaction, denying that mathematical models have to be optimized to fit to reality and not the other way around.

To summarize, companies would love to have a combined new and old world, only based on the advantages (which increases the range of different interests and opinions of the key stakeholders of an enterprise tremendously).

So, to repeat the reference to Lenka’s song: the interesting observation and hypothesis is that an organization today wants to be everything at the same time. We will challenge this exciting hypothesis in all our cases. Assuming the hypothesis is right, this means that issues such as ambiguity and ambidexterity are not coincidental. For leaders, this means to continuously travelling with their teams through multi-polar fields of tensions and having to make decisions, step by step, milestone by milestone. This must not be arbitrary but needs fast management and decision-making processes and rules that are intertwined with the company’s purpose.

As one might expect, such a situation is a good starting point for a collection of business and management literature and presentations to support leaders and experts. In such books, a lot of reasonable theory and concepts have been drafted—and also instructions in the form: “The 10 tools you have to use for success.”

From our perspective, there are four main deficits recognizable:

- Firstly, current practice is far away from the proposed theories and concepts (Fig. 2), especially in the context of organizational design and culture.
- Secondly, the existing concepts and their practices—e.g., between classical organization design and agile organization design—show significant gaps which are not covered so far all, neither theoretically nor in practice.
- Thirdly, and connected to the first two reasons, there are not so many concretely applicable ideas for the transition of the organization to the future state. Instead, we have to understand that, as each situation is more or less unique, significant work has to be done to apply concepts in an ideally tailored way and to discuss how such tailoring might work.
- Fourthly—and a bit connected with the second point—we frequently experience that the different parts of large organizations are in very different maturity and cultural states, whereas one part is a modern mature network organization, another part is in the pioneer or start-up phase and the third in the phase of systemizing achieving a functional orgchart the first time. So, concepts fitting for

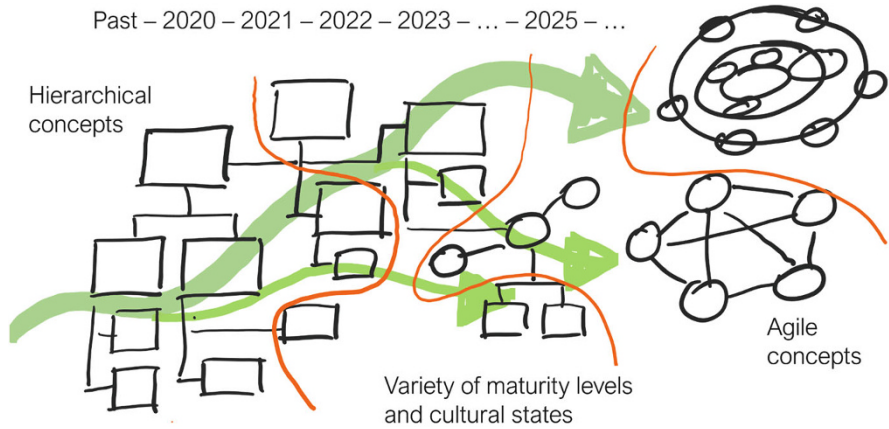


Fig. 2 What is our shared understanding of past, present, and future; of organization, development, and maturity; of gaps, contradictions in our pictures of organization, and transformation? (authors’ own figure)

the one part do not fit necessarily for the other parts. In general, a gap between the classical theory of organization design (mostly driven top-down) and the theory of agile organizations (nearly exclusively driven bottom-up) has to be urgently closed.

This all underlines that the current book is about one of the most important, challenging, and urgent leadership challenges for organizations facing developments that are more complex and ambiguous than they have been for decades: a situation where nobody can exactly know what the—even near—future will bring although many people with a great deal of confidence pretend to do so (and even publish recipes and solutions to remedy the situation).

In contrast to this, none of our author and editor team believed that they have any absolute truth, but rather a strong belief that most of the challenges are solvable with a well-selected group of reasonable people who are able to discuss—honestly and calmly—all the aspects and commit to going on a journey of exploration where directions and destinations might change in order to get the best result.

In this context, we explored and discussed key design building blocks (“pillars”), derived concrete principles, and tested their efficacy to get the indispensable ones which make the difference. It was quite striking that—when analyzing the huge number of cases across industries, enterprises, and institutions as well as existing literature—not many fundamental design building blocks for leadership remained consistently relevant: we found exactly three with an overwhelming fundamental importance and leadership significance, far more than a purely technical perspective, and called them “pillars.”

- The sustainable purpose of an organization (bringing new orientation and certainty to the people that we want to engage for our joint endeavor)
- The mind-set of an organization in a permanent state of flux and how to cope with this—we will call it a “travelling organization”
- The capability of connecting our valuable resources such as aims and concepts, strategies and processes, experiences and competencies, balancing and interlinking peoples’ interests and ideas in a flexible manner towards joint success

We will describe and define these pillars in detail below.

As we all—also the authors—are looking for meaningful orientation, especially under volatile conditions, the concepts developed have already been quickly tested in practice, and their application in the authors’ practice has already turned out to be very helpful during the finishing of the book. Our business life became more effective, and we succeeded in coping with complex situations faster.

So, we are confident that the book will be also helpful for our readers. It is especially thought as an inspiration for:

- Leaders who are prepared to radically rethink and redesign their enterprises and its journey in the light of the epochal transformation in which it finds itself, in order to create a true shift in performance and value by giving a sustainable purpose, forming organizations and teams that are ready for an explorative journey, and introducing connectivity as a pillar for organization and leadership.
- Program and project heads and teams who are expected to consistently make the necessary transformations in this environment, bringing the three aforementioned pillars to life and revitalizing them on an ongoing basis. They have to be encouraged to act as travelers and connectors, following their committed purpose, facing organizational conditions that are characterized by barriers, bottlenecks, and belief in classical structures such as top-down settings.
- Consultants and trainers who support individuals, teams, and organizations to build up the required mental and methodical capabilities.
- Advanced students and academics who want to develop their understanding of modern creative organizational strategies.

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Three Pillars of Organization and Leadership

Peter Wollmann, Frank Kühn, and Michael Kempf

Abstract

In this chapter, the identified and explored unchanging building blocks or—how the authors name them—pillars for “good organization, leadership, management, and governance” are described in detail.

We strongly assume that in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) businesses, enterprises need to be organized and managed in a dynamic way, committed to a clear direction and belief, developing and connecting the valuable resources they need to create impact and value. And facing this VUCA world, they must neither wait nor take long-term decisions but have to take next steps, again and again: experimenting, prototyping, and piloting their ideas and approaches so as to find the right development path.

As mentioned above, following our key idea was to identify and explore something like the unchanging building blocks or—how we name them—pillars for “good organization, leadership, management, and governance” in the described new business world, and for the transition to the future, we found exactly three pillars. To be competent in building on them will become a key success factor in the future.

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