

Critical Success Factors for the Future Workplace of Digital Natives

Masterarbeit

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades „Master of Science (M. Sc.)“ im
Studiengang Wirtschaftswissenschaft
der Wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Leibniz Universität Hannover

vorgelegt von

Name: Russell

████████████████████

Vorname: Jan-Alexander

█

████████████████████

Prüfer: Prof. Dr. Michael H. Breitner

Hannover, den 30.09.2020

Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES	III
LIST OF TABLES	IV
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	V
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 FUNDAMENTALS	3
2.1 FUTURE WORKPLACE.....	3
2.2 GENERATIONAL THEORY	4
2.3 DIGITAL NATIVES	7
2.4 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS.....	9
3 RESEARCH DESIGN	11
4 CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH/ STATUS QUO	12
4.1 METHODOLOGY	12
4.2 LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE RESEARCH TOPIC	13
5 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	26
5.1 METHODOLOGY	26
5.2 OPERATIONALIZATION OF INTERVIEWS	30
5.3 RESULTS.....	32
5.4 INTERIM CONCLUSION	42
6 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH	46
6.1 METHODOLOGY	46
6.2 SURVEY DESIGN.....	48
6.3 RESULTS.....	51
7 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS	57
8 LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH	65
8.1 METHOD CRITICISM	65
8.2 CRITICISM OF CONTENT	66
9 RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION	67
10 CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK	69
REFERENCES	VI
APPENDIX	XIII
EHRENWÖRTLICHE ERKLÄRUNG	LXXXV

1 Introduction

“Young workers expect a very different workplace than the one where their parents worked.” (Twenge & Campbell, 2008, p. 865)

Technological progress has a great influence on many areas of life. This has also fundamentally changed the way to work over the last decades. As a consequence of the constant changing and improving technologies, analogical products have been replaced by their digital counterparts. These changes give rise to a new world of living and working that is in a state of constant flux (Bengler, 2016).

Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic is leading to drastic and immediate changes in the working world. Quick solutions have to be found to reduce contacts. However, it is also important that these solutions are accepted by both, employees and companies. Moreover, companies are forced to expand their remote working capabilities. This is especially true for companies whose employees are academics with office jobs (Schade, 2020).

These reasons represent the relevance of changes in the working environment. This study aims to reveal these requirements and to highlight the changes that have emerged due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The question that companies have to ask themselves is whether these changes will be accepted by the academic digital natives. Furthermore, the question arises whether workplace requirements have emerged that companies have probably been dismissed.

In addition, generations are changing. The generation of digital natives is affected by different circumstances than previous generations. In particular, digital natives grow up under the influence of the digital world. Each generation has its own events and experiences that they share within their generation (Duchscher & Cowin, 2004). Examples of such events include the reunification of Germany and the Cold War. For this reason, the change of the needs between generations is remarkable.

For a structured analysis the following research questions are answered within this thesis:

RQ1: Which are the requirements digital natives ask for from companies for their job choice?

RQ2: Which are the requirements that have changed in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic?

There is a large number of scientific papers about digital natives and generational theory. Likewise, many international scientists have dealt with individual requirements of digital natives. Most of these studies are older than a decade. In addition, the current Covid-19 pandemic will probably change these requirements in the short term as well as in the long term. Consequently, the relevance of this study approaches two different areas: On the one hand, this work represents an important scientific contribution. On the other hand, the results can be used by companies to advertise for new employees among the digital natives regarding the times of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This study is divided into ten chapters. First, in chapter 2, the terms future workplace, generational theory, digital natives and critical success factors are defined and explained. Then, in chapter 3, the research design is presented and explained.

In chapter 4, first of all, the methodology is explained and then, with the help of a Webster and Watson (2002) analysis, an extensive literature analysis is carried out to identify the most important critical success factors. These results are used to conduct an expert survey in chapter 5. Following this, six experts are interviewed about their practical experiences. The results of the literature analysis are subsequently compared with the results of the expert interviews. Consequently, the critical success factors are adjusted. These critical success factors are then examined in chapter 6 using a quantitative survey. The results are analyzed and written down in this chapter. According to the information obtained, all critical success factors are evaluated. Furthermore, chapter 7 takes up again and answers the research questions. The most important critical success factors are discussed as well as their change due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, the limitations in terms of content and methodology are presented and recommendation for action for companies is given.

10 Conclusion and Outlook

It is shown that even within one generation, the requirements for work places of the digital natives are changing, especially for academics and future university graduates. Due to the results of the literature analysis a distinction was made between factors of the visible and invisible dimension. The main difference between the two dimensions is that different ways of communication are needed. It is very difficult for digital natives to see the factors of the invisible dimension from outside the company. The factors of the visible dimension can be evaluated by digital natives from outside.

Concerning research question number one the most important requirement of digital natives for their workplace regarding the invisible dimension is the working climate. The working climate cannot be seen by digital natives from outside the company. This makes it difficult for the applicant to assess the working climate. For this reason, companies should integrate people from the future team of the applicant during job interviews. If applicants can get to know possible future colleagues, the decision whether they fit into the team or not is easier to be made.

In the visible dimension, the most important critical success factors are the corporate culture, flexible working hours, a crisis-resistant employer and an unlimited employment contract.

The Corporate culture is important to digital natives because they want to identify themselves with the company. Especially through the internet, applicants can quickly find out what the corporate culture of the company is like. The next important critical success factor is flexible working hours. This requirement is particularly important because digital natives want to organise their time in a self-determined way. Furthermore, it is important for them to be able to take breaks from work during their time at work, to take care of private matters or to do sports. A crisis-resistant employer is important for digital natives so that they do not have to be afraid of losing their jobs. It is important for the digital natives that they do not have to be afraid of losing their jobs. This is also confirmed by the last of the most important critical success factors which is an unlimited employment contract.

As concerns the second research question, the analysis of requirements, that have changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, shows three important factors: the digital recruiting process, a crisis-resistant employer and location-independent working. These factors include digital recruiting process, crisis-resistant employer and location-independent working.

In particular, the requirement of a crisis-resistant employer, which used to play a minor role before the pandemic, is now among the most important critical success factors. This change can be explained by the fact that in times of insecurity people attach greater importance to security in certain areas, such as their job, to ensure financial security for themselves.

The critical success factor of the digital recruiting process is not one of the most important requirements of the digital natives during the Covid-19 pandemic, but it has become much more important compared to pre-pandemic times. The reason for this is that applicants attach importance to reducing personal contacts.

The critical success factor location-independent working has also taken on a much higher significance for digital natives. There are various reasons for this. Some digital natives belong to the Covid-19 risk group and therefore have to avoid personal contacts as best as possible. Furthermore, many digital natives who do not belong to the risk group also try to reduce their contacts in order to protect others. Moreover, families whose children cannot go to school are dependent on the possibility to work from home.

No significant change could be demonstrated in the differentiation between women and men and between the occupational groups employees and students. The only significant change occurred among students concerning the factor crisis-resistant employer which resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic. This means that crisis-resistant employers are more important than before the Covid-19 pandemic, especially for students who do not yet have a permanent job and therefore have a lot of uncertainty.

It would be interesting to see how requirements by digital natives on the workplace will change again once the Covid-19 pandemic has ended (e.g. when a vaccine has been found and strict home office would no longer be necessary) or the 'Covid-19 situation' has at least become a 'normal' situation.