

The Pandemic as Catalyst

Forum Automotive Logistics The Forum Automotive Logistics in February 2020 was the last major event of BVL that took place under normal circumstances and without any of the restrictions that were soon to be imposed in response to the looming pandemic. Back then, it was impossible to imagine that one year later BVL and the German Association of the Automotive Industry (VDA) would have to stage a digital-only event and therefore focus primarily on sharing content online. Over 1,200 participants registered for the Forum, and the number of viewers simultaneously watching the live stream peaked at around 550, with some 1,000 participants logging in during the overall event. The Forum proved extremely popular in the parallel chat sessions as well as in the social media and in other reporting formats – and therefore succeeded in initiating a process that at least resembled networking.

The issue of digitalization was one of the focal points of the event, particularly in terms of the transparency of supply chains, planning methods and automation. A further core topic was sustainability. Simon Motter, Head of Volkswagen Group Logistics, called for the expansion of rail transport and CO₂-neutral maritime transport. The participants in the panel entitled “Fuel Cells – The Future of Logistics?” provided concrete insights into the plans of Bosch and Daimler Truck.

Virtually all the speakers pointed to the way in which the pandemic and the lockdown have acted as catalysts, brutally exposing the vulnerability of value added chains. The key question was what we can learn from the ad-hoc solutions and new coordination processes along the supply chains on the path to a “new form of regular services”, said John Sobeck from ZF Friedrichshafen AG. With regard to transparency in the supply chain, Dr. Arne Flemming from Robert Bosch GmbH emphasised that transparency should not be just top-down but also from the bottom up.

Prof. Marcel Fratzscher, President of the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), rejected the idea of regionalisation as a reaction to supply bottlenecks. “We depend on international supply chains”, said Fratzscher, adding that the goal must now be to increase the resilience of these supply chains, to spread risk and to cooperate with more suppliers in different countries. He called for “more intelligent globalisation” and an investment agreement with the USA. VDA President Hildegard Müller said: “The programme of the Forum shows that we are still working on forward-looking concepts despite the burdens of corona. Digitalization is more important than ever before for our member companies”. She also stressed that the automotive sector is committed to climate protection and is therefore working at full speed on reducing the CO₂ footprint in the supply chain. (ug/as) <https://www.forum-automobillogistik.de/de/start.html>

Responses to New Habits

New normal For one year now, our lives have been shaped by changes to our everyday activities as a result of the pandemic. These changes include the need to maintain physical distance, shopping with shopping trolley only, train travel only with protective masks and greeting others without shaking hands. "Digital" has become the name of the game, as digital shopping, digital concerts, video conferences or webinars make it easy to comply with the new rules, and to protect both ourselves and others from infection.

Many people naturally still don't see these new ways of interacting with each other as "normal". Nevertheless, we are becoming accustomed to new day-to-day customs, where it's ever rarer for us to forget to put on a mask and where people automatically stay further away from each other than was the case just twelve months ago – and where we don't feel nearly as alone during video conferences as we did in the spring of 2020. Moreover, the digital formats have become far more user-friendly within an extremely short space of time.

BVL and its further training entities – namely BVL Seminars and the German Foreign Trade and Commerce Academy (DAV) – and, as is only logical, BVL.digital GmbH have taken advantage of the opportunities presented by the crisis, both in relation to members and non-members. New formats have been "test-driven" for the users of BVL's services, and the response has been exceptional. BVL has often made changes with amazing speed, as was the case with Supply Chain Day in April 2020, which was almost totally converted to ensure digital event formats within the space of just a few weeks, but above all with the International Supply Chain Conference, which BVL transformed from a primarily analogue event to a digital format within ten days in October at the beginning of the second corona wave. (ug) www.bvl.de

Save the Date: October 20 to 22, 2021

International Supply Chain Conference In year two of corona, BVL is looking to implement a two-phase model for the International Supply Chain Conference from October 20-22, 2021. In the first phase, the association is planning the conference as a safe and high-quality digital event. Parallel to these plans, preparations are also underway for an in-person part of the event. The final decision on the specific staging of an analogue network event is expected to be made in early June. Should further developments in terms of infection levels, vaccination and government regulations make a safe in-person format with personal interaction appear possible, then BVL will switch to a hybrid format, with content mainly being presented online while safe environments are created for in-person contacts. "We are convinced that we can also organise a live event within a short time window and thereby provide the logistics community with one of the first platforms for direct networking, interaction and encounters", says Christoph Meyer, Project Manager for the conference. He adds that, if an opportunity arises, BVL intends to grasp it with both hands and create value added for all parties involved in the conference. (ug)

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RESTRUCTURING OF BVL

Grotemeier, Holtkamp and Meyer Form the New Management Team

Head office From April 1, 2021 the management of the nonprofit Bundesvereinigung Logistik (BVL) e.V., BVL Campus and the BVL Service GmbH company will be in the hands of a three-strong team comprising Dr. Christian Grotemeier, Mike J. Holtkamp and Christoph Meyer.

Dr. Christian Grotemeier joined BVL in 2014 as Head of Research and Events. In 2018 the Economics PhD was appointed to the management team and took on the management of the newly founded BVL.digital GmbH company, which is now being integrated in BVL. In his role as Managing Director of BVL e.V., he will focus on the areas of marketing/sales, product development, seminars, digitalization and IT.

Mike J. Holtkamp was recruited on February 15, 2021 as Managing Director at BVL head office. Before he joined BVL, the Business Management graduate (BA) and trained industrial commercial manager was Commercial Director, Finance & Controlling, IT and Personnel at Fuchs Wisura GmbH in Bremen. He succeeds long-time Managing Director Uwe Peters, who – as had long been planned – is leaving BVL in mid-year at his own request. In addition to heading up the association's financial and personnel activities, Holtkamp is also in charge of the Event Organisation and Purchasing units.

Christoph Meyer has been Head of the Research and Events unit of BVL since 2018 and had already been Project Manager for the International Supply Chain Conference for a number of years. He is an Area Studies graduate from Jacobs University, where he also worked as coordinator of the International Logistics Department. In the BVL management team, Meyer is in charge of content, the German Foreign Trade and Commerce Academy and the relationship management activities of the association.

Prof. Thomas Wimmer, who withdrew from the management team in March 2020 after being elected Chairman of the BVL Board, bears overall responsibility in his role at the helm of the association. On the operational front, he still also heads up the press and PR activities, contacts with the association bodies and the projects MX Award, German Award for SCM and the initiative "Die Wirtschaftsmacher".

Wimmer as Chairman of the Executive Board and Uwe Peters as Member of the Executive Board have made up the full-time leadership team of BVL since 2004 and were supported for part of this period by a third Managing Director.

Following the election of Thomas Wimmer to the position of Chairman of the BVL Board, Uwe Peters acted as sole Member of the Executive Board for a transitional period. It was already clear at the time that Peters would be leaving BVL in mid-2021 at his own request. Until then, he will be providing support and advice, in particular to his successor Mike Holtkamp as he "learns the ropes". (ug)

You can find detailed information about the contact persons on the Internet at <https://www.bvl.de/en/contact>

BVL Streamlines its Structures and Exploits Potential for Synergy

Integration Since April 1, 2021 the credo at Bundesvereinigung Logistik has been all about becoming a “one-stop service”. The Board and the management team have decided to streamline the association structures and utilise the available synergies. BVL Seminars, for example, has been part of BVL Campus gGmbH since 2008 but is now being brought back under the umbrella of BVL, while BVL.digital GmbH – founded in 2018 as an incubator for digital services of BVL – will be integrated in BVL following two and a half years of intensive development activities.

BVL.digital and BVL Seminars will continue to operate as brands with their own portfolios. What’s new is that BVL members, customers and business associates will now find all of their familiar contact persons at BVL head office in Bremen. Operational responsibility for both areas lies with Dr. Christian Grotemeier, founding Managing Director of BVL.digital GmbH and now one of the three Managing Directors of BVL appointed as of April 1, 2021.

“BVL.digital has developed a wide range of innovative products and services in recent years which will now be integrated more closely with existing products and services under the umbrella of BVL. The experience of the extremely agile BVL.digital team will be incorporated in the activities of the association as a whole”, says Grotemeier.

There is a valuable interface between BVL.digital and BVL Seminars. The digitalization of the logistics sector will necessitate the intensive further education and re-training of many employees. It seems like a good idea to integrate the topics of qualification and digital conferences in the same concept and to develop new formats that are a fit for the new working situation.

The BVL Board and the management team are convinced that both members and customers will benefit from the even closer interlinking of BVL services and the committed cooperation of the full-time expert teams. Cooperation between the relevant actors is already excellent, and the integration concept will strengthen this cooperation and simplify communication processes. (ug) www.bvl.de/en

Making the Association Fit for Future

Members’ Meeting Key decisions for the future of BVL are on the agenda of the Members’ Meeting on May 3, 2021. The declared aim of Board and management is to lead the association out of the corona crisis with the support of the members.

BVL suffered economic losses in the corona year 2020, and it is unlikely that the association will regain its former financial status in either 2021 or 2022. In the 43rd year of its existence, therefore, BVL is forced to “re-invent” itself in some key areas. In this spirit, the management team and the Board have developed and launched a restructuring project. This project encompasses not only costs and revenues but also a future-focused content and organisational strategy. With energy and self-confidence, BVL is on the road to new services, new work models and sustainability, a wider range of digital products and more streamlined organisational routines.

The successful strategy of the association geared towards funding its work not just through membership fees but also from the revenue from high-quality in-person events has become unsustainable during the last twelve months. BVL was able to cover the deficit for 2020 totalling around 2.02 million euros from its reserves. If we do not take appropriate action, further losses of 1.2 million euros are forecast for 2021 and around

675,000 euros for 2022. “We succeeded in withstanding the biggest previous shock, namely the Lehman crisis of 2008/2009, and we will also come through the period of event bans in 2020/2021 – if we all work together”, says Prof. Thomas Wimmer, Chairman of the BVL Board.

Cost-cutting measures have already been in full swing since November 2020. The savings in personnel and material costs have, however, not been anywhere enough to offset the deficits without greatly impacting the performance capability of BVL. As a result, the cost reduction programme will be flanked by changes on the revenue side, and the Board will propose membership fee adjustments from January 1, 2022 as well as a one-off contribution for 2021 to the Members’ Meeting. “There is no alternative to the economies, the necessary changes in the revenue mix, systematic digital transformation and a forward-looking strategy. We are therefore asking all members to actively and constructively support the path that we have laid out”, Wimmer stresses.

Corona has changed the working environment – and BVL is also responding to these changes. The valuable face-to-face meetings will be supplemented by brief, topic-specific “deep dives”, which will be available online and therefore obviate the need for travel. Webinars are being added to the service portfolio, and the BVL-Connect app should help to play a key role in promoting networking. Moreover, member companies will in future be able to register a higher number of contact persons with the association. All of the above measures will ensure that BVL will still boast the highest number of contacts of any supply chain network for management executives – in Germany and beyond.

Members with voting rights received the invitation to the Members’ Meeting – which will be staged as an in-person event for legal reasons – back at the end of March. In line with the Articles of Association of BVL, members can assign their voting rights in writing to another association member who is present at the Members’ Meeting. In view of the current corona situation, the Board urgently advises members to exercise their voting rights by proxy and not to travel in person to the event venue for health protection reasons. (ug)

Amendments to the Articles of Association and other Resolutions

Amendments to the Articles of Association are necessary as BVL has suffered financially in the corona year 2020 – and is unlikely to regain its former financial status in either 2021 or 2022.

Facts and figures: BVL was able to offset the deficit for the year 2020 totalling around 2.02 million euros from its reserves – but this wiped out 34 percent of the association’s total assets. Failing appropriate action, further losses of 1.2 million euros are forecast for 2021, followed by a loss of around 675,000 euros in 2022.

Cutting costs: cost reduction measures have already been in full swing since November 2020, after it became necessary to reorganise the International Supply Chain Conference in October as a purely digital event – resulting in a dramatic financial loss despite the partnership-based solutions developed with many exhibitors and sponsors. This followed on the heels of significantly reduced revenues from other events and at our BVL Seminars unit. The savings in the area of personnel and material costs (such as short-time work, voluntary salary waivers, the decision not to fill vacant positions ...) have not been nearly enough to offset the deficits without severely limiting the performance capability of BVL and therefore seriously impacting future prospects.

Growing our revenues: in response to these developments, the Board and the management have supplemented the cost reduction programme with changes to our

revenue model, and we will propose the following new measures to the Members' Meeting:

- An increase in membership fee effective from January 1, 2022; in the case of professionals, for example, the fee would rise from 140 euros to 190 euros a year
- Introduction of the option to decide on a capped contribution for the current year as an extraordinary instrument
- To make use of this option for 2021 and levy a contribution of, for example, 50 euros for professionals in addition to the membership fee they have already paid

The annexes to your personal invitation also outline in detail the membership fees for the other member categories.

Development of membership fees: during the last 20 years, BVL has been extremely restrained when it comes to increasing membership fees. The adjustments in 2005 and 2014 were more about staggering the fee structure in order to reduce the burden on younger members and smaller companies, with the result that the average amount paid per member remained more or less the same. During these years, BVL – which sees itself as an “association of decision-makers” – was able to finance the significant expansion of its service portfolio with the revenues from the International Supply Chain Conference and other event formats. (ug)

<https://www.bvl.de/en/association/membership/ordinary-member-meeting>

Commentary by Prof. Dr.-Ing. Thomas Wimmer, Chairman of the BVL Board

Personal Thoughts

BVL has been in existence for 43 years – and has never rested on its laurels. The association has regularly initiated new concepts and ideas in the form of content, events and services driven by highly committed personnel across a broad range of topics, delving deep into the subject matter and integrating as many specialist areas as possible.

Shared responsibility is part and parcel of any vibrant association. Those at the helm should not seek to maximise their own benefits or status but should pass on the baton of responsibility to others and make way for new ideas and expertise. This is something that the members active on an honorary basis on the Board, on the advisory boards and in the Chapters have been putting into practice in exemplary fashion. “The association” regularly re-defines itself when the old guard hands over responsibility to a new team – while remaining on board and sharing its expertise as “friends of BVL”.

The Board has also restructured the management team for the association and the BVL subsidiaries, with Mike J. Holtkamp, Christian Grotemeier and Christoph Meyer taking on the role of Managing Directors. Uwe Peters and I are re-defining the focal points of our work. Uwe – as long-planned and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude – outside BVL, while I myself will concentrate on my duties as Chairman of the BVL Board. The average age of the management has fallen from 61 to 43 years of age. A new generation is now

taking up the challenge of furthering tried-and-tested concepts and developing new ideas – with a great deal of commitment, foresight and enthusiasm for “our” BVL.

BVL members are younger on average than they were ten years ago. During the same period, the share of female members has increased and the membership has become more international. This is a strong foundation on which to build a successful future for our knowledge and expert network – a network that is always up to speed with the latest economic and technological developments and always listens to the needs and interests of its members. Let us work together on this journey into the future.

International Reports

8th German-Russian Logistics Forum

Under the motto #LogisticsConnects, the BVL Chapter Russia together with the Logistics Alliance Germany successfully held the 8th German-Russian Logistics Forum as a hybrid event on April 13th. 200+ participants, including 80 on site in Moscow, learned in the keynote speeches and the high-level panel discussion that given the dynamic developments in the framework conditions for transport solutions between Germany and Russia, the expansion of existing and the development of new Logistics corridors and chains is of great importance. The German North Sea and Baltic Sea ports have seen significant increases in traffic to and from Russia in recent years. They are intensively developing inexpensive and more environmentally friendly transport alternatives. The digitization is gaining in importance for all actors and requires even more cross-border cooperation for sustainable transport chains and logistics systems of the future. After the forum was only held online last year, this time the subsequent evening reception traditionally provided the opportunity for extensive networking to exchange ideas and develop common ideas for optimizing logistics. Further partners of the forum were the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the ports of Hamburg and Mukran, Bremino and the LUNO group. Traditionally, we hold our forum parallel to TransRussia, which took place for the 25th time this year. 13,000+ specialists came to find out about new logistics offers and supply chain solutions from 215 exhibitors from 22 countries exhibited, including Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Hungary, Germany, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Mongolia ... 50 companies took part for the first time. Reunion with many colleagues, business partners and friends after long months of abstinence - Great feeling!

Imprint

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