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Constants along the Path of Change

In evolution, the species that are successful are those that can respond particularly well to changing conditions of living. So far, these changes in the history of our planet have been caused by natural events such as meteorite impacts or volcanic eruptions. In the case of climate change, the situation is somewhat different; it was and is significantly influenced by ourselves. The biggest task of our generation is to stop this process. This is where the term sustainability often comes into play. This notion that is somewhat overused today always consists of three main criteria, namely the ecological, economic and social aspects.

In the weeks of the corona lockdown, many people stayed at home. The industrial production and goods and freight traffic reduced massively. As a consequence, the air quality in many metropolitan areas improved and the declining demand for fuel even temporarily led to a negative crude oil price. The positive effects on the environment are contrasted by the negative social and economic effects. As anyone could notice easily, the lockdown met only one of the three sustainability criteria. For the efforts of the needed restart, the Federal Government of Germany adopted an economic stimulus package on an unprecedented level, which is intended to pave the way for the entire economy into a more sustainable future. It is without doubt that in the transport sector with a fossil fuel price of around 1 euro/l, electric vehicles are commercially difficult. The increase in subsidy for e-vehicles is therefore the right answer. The ecologically and economically sensible sector coupling can be seen partly in the

recently adopted national hydrogen strategy. Green hydrogen, as an energy carrier of the future, can be used directly in fuel cells and combustion engines and also forms the basis for synthetic fuels. With the latter, the existing fleet of more than one billion vehicles worldwide can be effectively included in the herculean task of climate protection. However, looking at the time available for reaction, the regulatory framework should be revised in such a way that all possible levers can be used to immediately reduce emissions.

From the perspective of a supplier in a transformation phase, it is even more important not to lose sight of the constants along the path of change and to use the own core competencies specifically for the development of new products. Contrary to popular belief, these are often not coupled to a particular type of powertrain: Thermal management, for example, is at least as important for an electric vehicle as for a car with combustion engine. Short charging times and long battery life are just two more of many important factors along battery electric vehicles. The requirements for fuel cell air intake filtration are even higher than for a modern combustion engine. In contrast, necessary cross-functional roles such as supplier management, quality or manufacturing competencies can also be transferred to new powertrain types. A pooling of competences is necessary in order to develop solutions for the mobility of tomorrow. This is the only way to make an important and sustainable contribution to climate protection, not only in transportation but also across all sectors.