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Networking Enables Transformation

“Change is the only constant in life,” said the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. But the transformation currently taking place in the automotive industry is by no means an everyday matter. Nor is it something that, at first sight, every business will be able to manage effectively. Many companies in Germany are finding that their highly successful business model and existing value chains are undergoing a fundamental transformation. A large number of new market players, in particular from Asia, and a range of new political requirements, such as those imposed by the US Inflation Reduction Act, are making it difficult for these organizations to maintain and improve their position in Germany. The technological change involved in electric mobility is forcing companies that have had considerable success with internal combustion engines to reinvent themselves, move into new areas of business, develop new products, and identify new customer segments. Digitization is also opening up new opportunities involving the linking of data, which include the battery pass, the calculation of the CO₂ footprint of production, new digital services and more stringent requirements concerning security and data analysis. And, in all of this, the human factor plays a central role. The workforce needs to be brought on board and learn new skills, while every individual employee must be prepared for personal transformation. These disruptive changes are taking place in parallel and tying up considerable financial and human resources.

How can the capacity for change of an individual company, its employees and an entire industry be maintained and increased during this complex process? One solution is networking, which enables small and medium-sized enterprises in particular to benefit from pooling strengths, reducing financial risks, accelerating technological developments, and creating joint training modules.

In Baden-Württemberg, for example, the state’s Information Center for the Transformation of the Automotive Sector is taking this approach by providing a knowledge base for medium-sized automotive industry suppliers and motor vehicle retail, repair and aftermarket trades undergoing the transformation. The aim is to enable them to prepare for strategic decision-making and to implement the decisions with the help of training and consultancy services. As part of the next step, the Cluster Electric Mobility South-West is opening up access to a wide-ranging, specialized network of more than 200 organizations in the field of research and development. In addition, under the leadership of the State Agency for New Mobility Solutions and Automotive Baden-Württemberg, e-mobil BW, and with the involvement of four further partners, the Scale-Up E-Drive transformation hub is currently being established with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action. The hub is the nationwide point of contact for companies working in the field of electric powertrains and allows them to identify potential, take up market opportunities and find suitable partners. By working together, we can make the transformation a success.