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Building the Characteristics of Future Organization: Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract
This study examines 'Future Organizations,' built on 3S capabilities: survive, succeed, and sustain. It aims to identify key characteristics that define future organizations by reviewing nine models from 2000 to 2024: Agile, Ambidextrous, Digital, Innovative, High-Performance, Purpose-Driven, Resilient, Sustainable, and Teal. The results group 40 traits into eight areas: Leadership, Strategy, Structure, Technology, People, Culture, Processes, and External Orientation, emphasizing adaptable structures, people-focused cultures, digital tools, and ethical leadership. While rich in concepts, it lacks empirical validation and sector-specific analysis. Future research should test this framework across industries. The practical takeaway is a diagnostic tool for leaders, consultants, and policymakers to assess readiness and guide transformation. This paper enhances understanding by synthesizing nine models into a unified, evidence-based framework, highlighting organizations prepared for the future.

Keyword: Future Organization; Organizational Characteristics; Organizational Development

1. Introduction

Over the past thirty years, Thailand has faced numerous economic, political, environmental, and public health crises that disrupted business continuity and resilience. The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis led to widespread closures and long-term economic damage (Menkhoff & Suwanaporn, 2007). The 2004 tsunami and 2011 floods resulted in significant losses in tourism, fisheries, manufacturing, and infrastructure (Israngkura, 2005), while political unrest from 2008 to 2010 eroded confidence and investment (Dalpino, 2012). Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic further exposed significant vulnerabilities in business models, labor systems, and supply chains (Ahmad & Saqib, 2022). These shocks, globalization, and tech disruptions threaten the survival and competitiveness of Thai organizations. Data from the Department of Business Development (2024a, 2024b) indicate declining survival rates, with only one-third of businesses established before 2015 still in operation as of 2024. Alarmingly, 25% reported three years of financial losses, indicating systemic issues of fragility. The average lifespan is just 9.8 years, reflecting the global impermanence of organizations (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2021). Many organizations struggle to succeed in a competitive, ever-changing environment characterized by shifting consumer preferences and disruptions. Achieving short-term success does not ensure long-term sustainability, which depends on recognizing the necessary capabilities for thriving in such an unpredictable world. Currently, organizations face cumulative turbulence—such as technological disruption, regulatory changes, demographic shifts, climate risks, and geopolitical instability—that has been building over time, is occurring now, and will likely continue.

To address these challenges, researchers have developed concepts of "future organizations" (future-ready, future-proof, future-fit) that focus on digital transformation, flexible structures, adaptive leadership, and strategic foresight (Weill & Woerner, 2021; Coaffee, 2021). These models suggest that organizations must develop capabilities to withstand shocks, stay competitive, and achieve sustainable long-term performance—the "3S" outcomes. However, despite influential legacy frameworks (e.g., the Congruence Model and the 7S Framework) and a growing set of contemporary, future-oriented models, the literature still lacks an integrated, evidence-based, and testable taxonomy that consolidates overlapping constructs into a coherent, non-redundant set of characteristics, makes the linkages among theories explicit, and enables consistent cross-model comparison with 3S-aligned implications. To address this gap, the sole objective of this study is to identify a consolidated, parsimonious yet comprehensive set of organizational characteristics that define future organizations.

2. Literature Review

Definition of Future Organization

The concept of a "Future Organization" emphasizes the need for companies to adapt to rapid disruption and change. Terms like "future-ready," "future-proof," and "future-oriented" all underscore the need for adaptable skills, innovative cultures, and resilient structures to thrive in unpredictable environments. Woerner, Weill, and Sebastian (2022) describe future organizations as ambidextrous, driving innovation in customer experience and efficiency. These organizations are data-driven, agile, purpose-led, and ecosystem-enabled. The MIT Center for Information Systems Research (Weill & Woerner, 2021) defines them as those that have transformed customer engagement and operations for resilience, scalability, and sustainable value. Lewis, MacGregor, and Swann (2022) expand on the concepts of resilience and sustainability, envisioning future organizations that proactively mitigate risks such as climate change and social unrest. They emphasize the importance of foresight in governance to achieve regenerative outcomes, with a focus on resilience in strategy and culture. Future organizations are defined by adaptability, performance, and value amid uncertainty. They learn, experiment, and evolve across systems, people, culture, and technology to stay relevant and resilient.

The Capabilities of Future Organizations

Recent literature emphasizes that organizations must evolve beyond traditional models to manage complexity and rapid change. The Future Organization concept centers on developing capabilities to adapt, anticipate, respond to disruptions, and sustain relevance, competitiveness, and sustainability. Woerner et al. (2022) suggest that future organizations will succeed by integrating digital innovation with operational agility, replacing legacy systems with modular digital platforms that facilitate quick decisions and a customer-focused approach. Weill and Woerner (2021) note that organizations reorganize to improve speed, capabilities, and decision-making, helping them adapt in volatile environments.

Lewis et al. (2022) highlight that Future Organizations embed flexibility and foresight into their strategies. They view disruption not just as a risk, but also as an opportunity, utilizing scenario planning, adaptive governance, and risk management. Coaffee (2021) states that future organizations build anticipatory capabilities through early-warning systems, redundancy, and layered responses to maintain continuity during disruptions like pandemics, cyber incidents, and shocks. Lorange and Mugnaini (2023) argue that Future Organizations rely on leaders who continually learn and develop skills. These leaders embrace ambiguity and diverse perspectives, helping organizations adapt to change. Building on these perspectives, a key insight is that future organizations possess three interconnected capabilities that allow them to survive, compete, and grow in uncertain environments. These are: (1) Survive — the ability

to withstand shocks and maintain operational continuity during disruptions, including foresight, scenario planning, system redundancy, and agility in crises (Coaffee, 2021; Lewis et al., 2022). (2) Succeed — the capacity to compete effectively and create value through digital transformation, customer-centric strategies, product innovation, agile processes, and talent mobilization (Woerner et al., 2022). (3) Sustain — achieving long-term growth and resilience by focusing on strategy, ongoing knowledge sharing, scalable models, cohesive leadership, and maintaining stakeholder trust (Lorange & Mugnaini, 2023).

The 3S framework is grounded in complementary theories and different time horizons. Survive reflects resilience and continuity logic (shock absorption, redundancy, quick reconfiguration). Succeed aligns with competitive advantage and dynamic capabilities, including ambidexterity, which balances exploration and exploitation to achieve both near-term and long-term performance. Sustain is based on stakeholder/legitimacy and long-term value principles (purpose, stewardship, socio-technical fit). These distinct yet related domains justify the 3S framework. This research uses 3S as the central organizing principle because it clearly aligns with different time horizons—immediate continuity (Survive), medium-term performance (Succeed), and long-term viability (Sustain). It integrates multiple theories efficiently without redundancy and facilitates testable hypotheses at each S level. Consequently, 3S directs our analysis at the organizational level, without the need to assign specific traits to each S in this study.

Framework for Classifying Organizational Characteristics

Organizational characteristics are understood through management frameworks. Nadler and Tushman (1980) introduced the Congruence Model, which emphasizes the alignment of work, people, structure, and culture to improve performance. Similarly, Peters and Waterman (1984) proposed the 7S Framework, which focuses on strategy, structure, systems, shared values, style, staff, and skills, aiming to achieve internal harmony. While these models offer valuable insights, they often focus either on internal organizational alignment or on specific operational elements.

In contrast, the framework proposed by de Waal (2007) provides a more comprehensive and integrated approach by combining key organizational dimensions from Kotter and Heskett (1992) and Scott Morton (2003). de Waal's model includes the following eight categories: (1) Leadership – leaders' behaviors and skills guiding the organization; (2) Strategy – the organization's vision and competitive stance; (3) Technology – use of digital tools to support operations; (4) Structure – organization of roles, hierarchies, and responsibilities; (5) People – skills, competencies, and duties of members; (6) Culture – shared values, beliefs, and norms influencing behavior; (7) Process – systems and workflows enhancing efficiency and decision-making; (8) External Orientation – organization's interactions with stakeholders, including customers, competitors, regulators, and partners.

Related theories such as the 7S Framework (Peters & Waterman) and the Congruence Model (Nadler & Tushman, 1980), along with de Waal's eight dimensions, all address organizational characteristics. For this study, we use de Waal's eight dimensions as the primary classification because they provide comprehensive coverage and serve as an integrated perspective across traditional frameworks. In practice, the elements of 7S (Strategy, Structure, Systems, Staff, Skills, Style, Shared Values) and the core parts of the Congruence Model (work, people, structure, culture, environment) naturally correspond to de Waal's dimensions—Strategy, Structure, Technology, People, Culture, Process, and External Orientation—allowing for consistent coding and comparison across models. Choosing this approach simplifies the analysis while maintaining scope and helps unify overlapping items into a concise set of 40 characteristics. For example, 7S 'Systems' matches de Waal's Process/Technology; 'Style' and

'Shared Values' relate to Culture; 'Staff/Skills' align with People; and Congruence's work–people–structure–culture–environment correspond respectively to Process, People, Structure, Culture, and External Orientation.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize knowledge on Future Organizations. SLR systematically gathers, analyzes, and synthesizes previous research to minimize bias (Pati & Lorusso, 2018). To ensure methodological rigor, this study follows the eight-step process proposed by Xiao and Watson (2019):

(1) Developing the research problem based on key traits of future organizations. The study aims to identify these traits. In a complex world, organizations need to be resilient, sustainable, and competitive. The literature highlights terms like "future-ready," "future-proof," and "future-fit," all emphasizing adaptability, performance, and long-term value. This research compares various future-oriented models to find a concise yet comprehensive set of characteristics that define future-ready organizations. Research Question (RQ): RQ1: Which organizational traits consistently define "future-ready organizations" across the literature?

By reviewing the literature, the study identified nine organizational models that frequently appear in discussions about future readiness. These models are: Agile, Ambidextrous, Digital, Innovative, High-Performance, Purpose-Driven, Resilient, Sustainable, and Teal organizations. These models are described in the literature as responses to 21st-century challenges. For example, the Agile model is considered essential for organizational responsiveness and adaptability in volatile conditions (Holbeche, 2019; Miceli, Hagen, Riccardi, Sotti & Settembre-Blundo, 2021), while the Ambidextrous model is known for its ability to balance innovation and efficiency simultaneously (Sia, Weill & Zhang, 2021; Kafetzopoulos, 2021). The digital organization stands out for integrating digital capabilities across operations and leadership, enabling speed, scale, and a customer-centric focus (Kiron, Kane, Palmer, Phillips, & Buckley, 2016). In contrast, the innovative model emphasizes continuous transformation and learning-oriented cultures (Lam, 2010; Applegate, Harreld & Welch, 2009).

High-Performance Organizations (HPOs) are recognized for maintaining excellence amid disruption (de Waal & Linthorst, 2020), and purpose-driven organizations are characterized as trust-based, mission-aligned entities well-positioned to lead through crises (Qin, DiStaso, Fitzsimmons, Heffron & Men, 2022). The resilient model is defined by its capacity to anticipate, absorb, and adapt to shocks while transforming (Denyer, 2017; Koronis & Ponis, 2018). The sustainable model, however, redefines long-term success by embedding environmental and social responsibility into its strategic core (Adams, 2014; Miceli et al., 2021). Finally, the Teal model offers a radically human-centered framework that emphasizes self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose (Laloux, 2014).

Following the description of each model, the selection of nine models is justified using an event-linked, periodization logic rather than a generic "future-oriented" label. Across four periods—Productivity (1987–1999), Digital (2000–2010), Sustainability (2010–2019), and Polycrisis & AI (2020–present)—the following nine models recur in the literature as salient organizational responses: High-Performance, Ambidextrous, Agile, Digital, Innovative, Purpose-Driven, Sustainable, Resilient, and Teal. The choices are grounded in how often these models are linked to real events, not merely in forward-looking rhetoric. In the Productivity Era, adopting ISO 9001 and the Baldrige framework made performance measurable and practices repeatable (de Waal, 2007; Peters & Waterman, 1984).

Strategy research focused on unique resources and reconfiguration, fostering agility and resilience (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 2001; Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). The internet showed that organizational "fit" must be adaptable (Scott Morton, 2003). The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis highlighted the limits of efficiency without renewal, emphasizing the Importance of Ambidextrous designs (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013, 2021). In the Digital Era, the Agile Manifesto (2001) promoted shorter plans, incremental work, and continuous feedback; Agile practices expanded from teams to organizations (Van Waardenburg & Van Vliet, 2013; Dikert, Paasivaara & Lassenius, 2016; Walter, 2021). Cloud and platform architectures reduced experimentation costs and supported product operating models, shaping the modern Digital organization (Weill & Woerner, 2017; Woerner, Weill & Sebastian, 2022).

Socio-technical alignment—connecting architecture and data to operating models—became essential (Hinkelmann et al., 2016; Worley & Lawler, 2010). Mobile ecosystems sped up release cycles and learning loops (Scott Morton, 2003; Kiron et al., 2016), and post-crisis capital discipline strengthened "build–measure–learn," making continuous innovative delivery a standard practice (Kiron et al., 2016; Woerner, Weill & Sebastian, 2022). In the sustainability era, stakeholder expectations and governance standards have made sustainability and purpose central to strategy, metrics, and oversight (Adams, 2014; Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017). Research links purpose to governance, performance, and legitimacy, with European legal changes enabling purpose in corporate structures (Hollensbe, Wookey, Hickey, George, & Nichols, 2014). Digital transformation includes privacy-by-design and data governance (Kiron et al., 2016; Sia et al., 2021). Growing interest in self-management and wholeness brings Teal into focus (Laloux, 2014). Dynamic capabilities tie digital and innovative models to sensing, seizing, and transforming amid uncertainty (Teece, Peteraf & Leih, 2016).

In the Polycrisis & AI Era, overlapping shocks like pandemics, supply chain failures, geopolitical tensions, and climate extremes—along with advances in AI—have pushed operational limits and revealed gaps (World Bank, 2022; Hitt, Arregle, & Holmes, 2021; Miceli et al., 2021). Evidence shows firms with platform-based processes, strong data infrastructure, and disciplined finances recover faster and adapt better (Ahmad & Saqib, 2022; Woerner, Weill, & Sebastian, 2022). Resilience now includes preparedness, adaptability, recovery, renewal—often with agility, digitalization, and sustainability (Denyer, 2017; Hillmann & Guenther, 2021; Akgün & Keskin, 2014). Industry case studies suggest being "future-ready" depends on integrated platforms, data, AI, and governance, with routines supporting rapid testing and deployment (Sia et al., 2021; Woerner, Weill & Sebastian, 2022). Rising sustainability expectations boost transparency and accountability, strengthening sustainable strategies in capital allocation (Adams, 2014; Lewis et al., 2022).

The review found no clear evidence that other candidates, such as Learning Organization or Holacracy, are consistently linked to these event patterns beyond the nine models. Such alternatives often overlap with existing concepts or lack stable connections across sources. Therefore, the nine models provide a concise, comprehensive framework that spans different eras, covers key themes, and aligns with organizational development.

(2) Developing the review protocol, including criteria for inclusion/exclusion and database selection. A review protocol was developed prior to data collection to ensure a rigorous and reproducible process. It specified specific inclusion and exclusion criteria guiding the literature search and selection. Articles published between 2000 and 2024, in English, and in peer-reviewed journals ranked Q1 or Q2 on the Scimago Journal & Country Rank were included. Only articles addressing organizational traits or capabilities linked to the nine future-oriented models were retained. Exclusion criteria included books, editorials, non-peer-reviewed materials, and non-English works.

(3) Searching literature via keywords on platforms like Google Scholar, chosen for its extensive social sciences coverage and easy access, as noted by Martín-Martín, Orduna-Malea, Thelwall, & Delgado-López-Cózar (2019). Only peer-reviewed articles from eligible journals were included after filtering. Search strings used terms like "Agile organization," "Agile enterprise," and "Agile company" to apply to nine models.

(4) Screening studies by titles and abstracts and removing duplicates. After the initial search, a multi-step screening process was used. Duplicate records were eliminated, and then articles were screened based on titles and abstracts. Only studies that explicitly addressed organizational characteristics and met the specified criteria were selected for full-text review. The process focused on evenly covering all nine models, but it did not achieve an even representation.

(5) Assessing quality based on journal credibility and research design. Quality assessment ensured that credible, well-founded studies informed the findings. Articles were evaluated according to the journal's reputation (Q1 or Q2), the clarity of the research design, and relevance. Conceptual papers with clear frameworks grounded in prior literature were included.

(6) Extracting data related to future organizations. Data extraction used a structured template for descriptive and analytical content. Each article was reviewed, recording data points on organizational model, methodology, key traits, and their links to the 3S framework: Survive, Success, and Sustain—crucial capabilities for future organizations.

(7) Analyzing and synthesizing patterns across studies using thematic coding. The data were analyzed using thematic coding based on de Waal's (2007) eight dimensions: Leadership, Strategy, Technology, Structure, People, Culture, Process, and External Orientation. Codes were generated inductively from the article language, refined across studies, and grouped into broader categories. This framework ensured rigor and clarity across nine models.

Through the SLR and thematic coding process, a larger set of candidate themes initially emerged. These were systematically consolidated using three criteria: (i) redundancy removal, where conceptually overlapping items were merged, (ii) cross-model recurrence to retain only characteristics supported by multiple models, and (iii) theoretical grounding to exclude idiosyncratic or weakly justified items. This consolidation resulted in a balanced structure of five characteristics per dimension, yielding a parsimonious yet comprehensive set of 40 characteristics.

(8) Reporting results through the classification of nine models and their integration into an eight-dimensional framework under the Survive–Succeed–Sustain perspective. The final results offer a unified framework that combines nine models into 40 characteristics across eight dimensions. It shows how different organizational logics share principles such as adaptability, inclusiveness, learning, and digital readiness, serving as both a theoretical and practical guide for transformation.

4. Research Results

These results meet the stated objective and research question by producing a comprehensive set of 40 characteristics. Additional findings reveal how these characteristics are represented across nine current models. This study, based on 206 studies and nine models, identified 40 key traits for future organizations, grouped into eight categories supporting the 3S framework: Survive, Succeed, and Sustain.

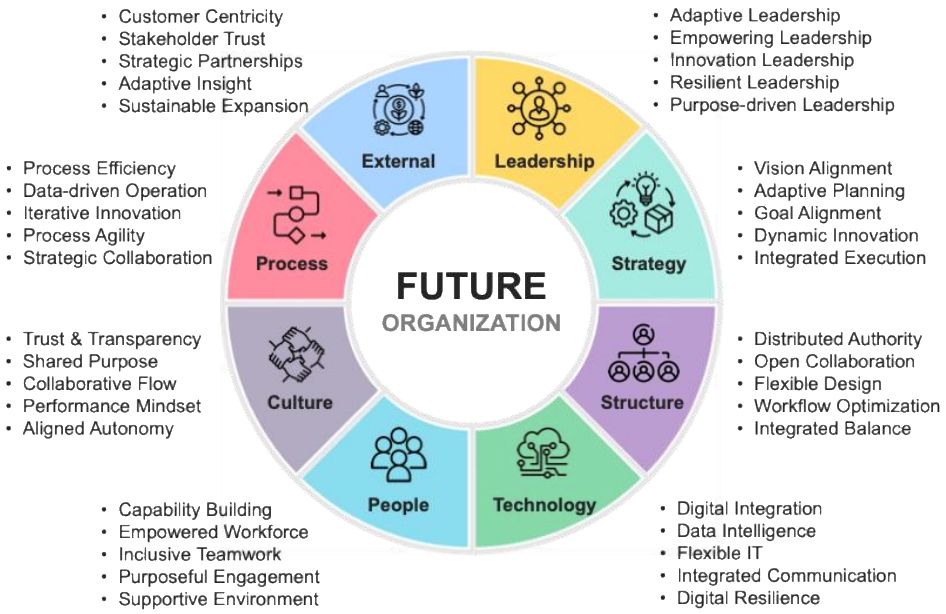

Figure 1: Characteristics of Future Organization

4.1 Leadership

Future organizations require leaders who build trust, inspire, and promote success with integrity, vision, and accountability. They balance innovation, stability, ethics, collaboration, and long-term focus to foster resilience. These five characteristics define leadership.

4.1.1 Adaptive Leadership. Leaders blend vision with agile execution, balancing innovation and efficiency. They encourage adaptability and resilient decision-making to remain competitive in changing environments. (Burnard & Bhamra, 2011; Kohnová, Stacho, Salajová, Stachová & Papula, 2023; Mollet & Kaudela-Baum, 2023)

4.1.2 Empowering Leadership. Leaders empower via trust, autonomy, and development. They promote shared responsibility, collaboration, and decentralized decisions to foster engagement and purpose alignment. (Ates & Bititci, 2011; Hirsch, 2016)

4.1.3 Innovation Leadership. Leaders drive innovation and digital change through vision, adaptability, and fostering a learning culture. They support experimentation and align digital efforts with long-term goals. (Burke & Cowling, 2020; Kiron et al., 2016)

4.1.4 Resilient Leadership. Leaders stay stable during challenges by remaining calm and making informed decisions. They build resilient systems that aid recovery and growth, fostering trust and safety for collective strength (de Waal & Linthorst, 2020; Pisarska & Iwko, 2021; Righi, Saurin & Wachs, 2015)

4.1.5 Purpose-driven Leadership. Leaders incorporate purpose, ethics, and sustainability into their decisions, building trust, encouraging meaningful work, and developing stakeholder partnerships that generate long-term value for both individuals and society. (George, Haas, McGahan, Schillebeeckx, & Tracey, 2023; Hollensbe et al., 2014; Lleo, Bastons, Rey & Ruiz-Perez, 2021; Van Ingen, Peters, De Ruiter & Robben, 2021)

4.2 Strategy

Future organizations view strategy as adaptable, setting vision, aligning goals, and fostering sustainable success. It balances long-term growth and agility, cultivating a shared, evolving mindset. Strategy is dynamic and learning-driven. These are five strategy characteristics.

4.2.1 Vision Alignment. Organizations align vision with strategy, ensuring that all actions support long-term growth and sustainability and foster a unified direction for lasting impact. (George et al., 2023; Hitt et al., 2021; Van Ingen et al., 2021)

4.2.2 Adaptive Planning. Organizations strike a balance between efficiency and resilience by leveraging external insights and trends. Strategic adaptability lets them pivot quickly, staying relevant and competitive. (Burke & Cowling, 2020; George et al., 2023; Power, Sohal & Rahman, 2001)

4.2.3 Goal Alignment. Organizations set measurable goals aligned with strategy, using data and KPIs to guide execution, ensure accountability, and track performance for sustainable growth. (Chakma, Paul & Dhir, 2021; Lengnick-Hall, Beck & Lengnick-Hall, 2011; O'Reilly III & Tushman, 2011)

4.2.4 Dynamic Innovation. Organizations integrate innovation, learning, and responsiveness into their strategy. They adopt new technologies, leverage feedback, and form partnerships to develop agility, uniqueness, and long-term advantages in changing environments. (Hogan & Coote, 2014; Prencipe, 2005)

4.2.5 Integrated Execution. Organizations align strategic goals across units and digital efforts to foster collaboration, manage risks, and improve stakeholder engagement, ensuring consistent execution and sustainable value. (Hitt et al., 2021; Hogan & Coote, 2014; O'reilly III & Tushman, 2008)

4.3 Structure

In a future organization, structure defines roles and workflows to promote collaboration, efficiency, and adaptability. A flexible structure aligns people with changing needs, ensuring stability and growth. Here are five characteristics of structure.

4.3.1 Distributed Authority. Organizations reduce hierarchy and enable teams to act quickly and independently. Decision-making is decentralized yet aligned with goals, promoting agility and a shared sense of responsibility. (George et al., 2023; Hitt et al., 2021; Wang, Huang & Tan, 2013)

4.3.2 Open Collaboration. Organizations build structures fostering open communication, knowledge sharing, and collaboration, enabling quicker problem-solving, strategic alignment, and continuous improvement. (Bowers, Kreutzer, Cannon-Bowers & Lamb, 2017; Mom, Fourné, & Jansen, 2015; Van Ingen et al., 2021)

4.3.3 Flexible Design. Organizations develop flexible structures that support role changes and rapid responses, striking a balance between stability and adaptability to keep teams resilient and aligned with evolving needs. (de Waal & Linthorst, 2020; Hooper, Steeple & Winters, 2001; Price, 2007)

4.3.4 Workflow Optimization. Organizations establish clear structures to streamline workflows, eliminate redundancies, and leverage technology for enhanced efficiency, ensuring coordination, responsiveness, and external alignment. (de Waal & Linthorst, 2020; Power et al., 2001)

4.3.5 Integrated Balance. Organizations combine clear roles with flexible collaboration, enabling cross-functional teams and facilitating decentralized decision-making. This structure fosters innovation, learning, and efficient execution for growth. (Chakma et al., 2021; O'reilly III & Tushman, 2008; Price, 2007)

4.4 Technology

In a future organization, technology serves as a strategic enabler, enhancing efficiency, resilience, and connectivity. It encourages secure data use, digital adoption, and innovation. These are five characteristics of technology.

4.4.1 Digital Integration. Organizations utilize digital systems to enhance operations, accessibility, and informed decision-making. Automation and quick adaptation ensure ongoing

efficiency. (Hogan & Coote, 2014; Kiron et al., 2016; Vázquez-Bustelo, Avella & Fernández, 2007)

4.4.2 Data Intelligence. Organizations utilize AI, analytics, and automation to gain real-time insights, optimize resources, and make informed decisions. Secure, transparent data systems boost efficiency and responsiveness. (Ates & Bititci, 2011; Belloc, 2012; Hyland & Beckett, 2005)

4.4.3 Flexible IT. Organizations develop modular IT systems that adapt quickly, scale efficiently, and ensure continuity. Cloud technology and AI enhance resilience and drive innovation. (Camarinha-Matos, Afsarmanesh & Rabelo, 2003; Price, 2007; Sanchez & Nagi, 2001)

4.4.4 Integrated Communication. Organizations use digital tools to improve communication, share knowledge quickly, and align teams, boosting decision-making and ongoing learning. (George et al., 2023; McManus, Sevill, Vargo & Brunsdon, 2008; Mom et al., 2015)

4.4.5 Digital Resilience. Organizations secure adaptable operations through cybersecurity, IT governance, and digital capabilities, boosting innovation, trust, and sustainable growth. (Kumar, Singh & Jain, 2020; Mollet & Kaudela-Baum, 2023; O'reilly III & Tushman, 2008)

4.5 People

Future organizations prioritize people as they drive growth and innovation. By fostering learning, development, and goal alignment, they cultivate a resilient and high-performing workforce. These are five characteristics of people.

4.5.1 Capability Building. Organizations invest in continuous learning and skill development to build a resilient, adaptable workforce capable of driving innovation and navigating change. (de Waal & Linthorst, 2020; Kiron et al., 2016; O'reilly III & Tushman, 2008)

4.5.2 Empowered Workforce. Organizations empower individuals with autonomy and ownership, fostering accountability, initiative, and a culture of proactive contribution and innovation. (Kumar et al., 2022; O'Reilly III & Tushman, 2011; Worley & Lawler, 2010)

4.5.3 Inclusive Teamwork. Organizations foster trust, inclusion, and cross-functional teamwork, enabling diverse perspectives to fuel open communication, innovation, and shared success. (Bowers et al., 2017; Deshpandé, Farley, & Webster Jr, 2000; Sherehiy, Karwowski & Layer, 2007)

4.5.4 Purposeful Engagement. Organizations motivate and commit by linking individual purpose with meaningful work and goals, boosting performance and success. (Hubbard, 2009; Mollet & Kaudela-Baum, 2023; Pal, Torstensson & Mattila, 2014)

4.5.5 Supportive Environment. Organizations foster a supportive, inclusive environment that promotes well-being and engagement, helping individuals stay aligned and resilient. (Deshpandé et al., 2000; Stopford & Baden-Fuller, 1994; Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003)

4.6 Culture

In a future organization, culture shapes values and behaviors, fostering trust, accountability, and improvement. It empowers individuals, encourages collaboration, and enhances adaptability. These are five characteristics of culture.

4.6.1 Trust & Transparency. Organizations foster a culture of trust, transparency, and accountability, creating a safe space where people feel respected, heard, and empowered to engage openly and ethically. (Deshpandé et al., 2000; Kumar et al., 2022; Pfeffer, 2010)

4.6.2 Shared Purpose. Organizations unite people through shared values and purpose, fostering a sense of belonging, alignment, and motivation that inspires long-term commitment. (de Waal & Sivro, 2012; Deshpandé et al., 2000; Sherehiy et al., 2007)

4.6.3 Collaborative Flow. Organizations promote open communication and cross-functional collaboration, breaking silos and enabling teams to co-create, innovate, and adapt effectively. (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Pisarska & Iwko, 2021)

4.6.4 Performance Mindset. Organizations foster personal accountability and continuous improvement, empowering individuals to take ownership of their roles, pursue excellence, and sustain high performance. (Chakma et al., 2021; Hitt et al., 2021; O'reilly III & Tushman, 2008)

4.6.5 Aligned Autonomy. Organizations empower individuals to act with autonomy while aligning with goals, fostering innovation, agility, and contribution to shared success. (Atiq-Ur-Rehman, 2017; Kiron et al., 2016; Kohnová et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2022)

4.7 Process

Future organizations view process as a flexible system that increases efficiency, encourages innovation, and supports data-driven decisions. These are five characteristics of process.

4.7.1 Process Efficiency. Organizations simplify workflows and reduce inefficiencies through standardized and automated processes. This enables consistent performance, decentralized decision-making, and minimal bureaucracy. (Burke & Cowling, 2020; Hitt et al., 2021; Hollensbe et al., 2014; Marković, 2008;)

4.7.2 Data-driven Operation. Organizations leverage real-time data, analytics, and automation to enhance accuracy, transparency, and accountability, enabling continuous optimization and informed decision-making. (Hogan & Coote, 2014; Righi et al., 2015)

4.7.3 Iterative Innovation. Organizations adopt iterative and experimental processes fueled by feedback, enabling innovation, adaptability, and alignment with long-term growth. (de Waal & Sivro, 2012; Kohnová et al., 2023; Sheffi & Rice Jr, 2005)

4.7.4 Process Agility. Organizations strike a balance between clear process structures and adaptability, enabling strategic pivots, scalability, and responsiveness to change while fostering long-term growth. (Gittell, Cameron, Lim & Rivas, 2006; Marković, 2008;)

4.7.5 Strategic Collaboration. Organizations design collaborative processes that align strategy with execution, encourage cross-functional teamwork, and support innovation through shared goals and seamless coordination. (Atiq-Ur-Rehman, 2017; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011)

4.8 External

Future organizations prioritize creating value, building relationships, and adapting to market changes through strategic engagement, partnerships, and responsiveness. These are five characteristics of external.

4.8.1 Customer Centricity. Organizations focus on customer needs, utilizing real-time feedback and digital tools to enhance personalization, responsiveness, and loyalty in the face of rapid change. (Hogan & Coote, 2014; Lleo et al., 2021; Power et al., 2001)

4.8.2 Stakeholder Trust. Organizations build lasting stakeholder relationships through transparency, respect, and ongoing engagement, fostering shared value and adapting to social and economic changes. (Deshpandé et al., 2000; Pal et al., 2014; Sanchez & Nagi, 2001)

4.8.3 Strategic Partnerships. Organizations boost innovation and growth by forming cross-sector alliances, sharing resources, co-creating value, expanding into new markets, and building sustainable competitive advantages. (Eccles, Ioannou & Serafeim, 2014; Hogan & Coote, 2014; Pisarska &

4.8.4 Adaptive Insight. Organizations stay relevant and resilient by monitoring external trends, analyzing change drivers, and making data-driven decisions to keep strategies agile and competitive. (Hubbard, 2009; Lleo et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2013)

4.8.5 Sustainable Expansion. Organizations grow sustainably by expanding into new markets while maintaining their core strengths, striking a balance between innovation and efficiency to remain competitive in the long term. (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; O'Reilly III & Tushman, 2011; Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003)

The 40 characteristics were further examined in relation to their sources across the nine organizational models. The resulting relationships between each characteristic and the nine models are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation between the 40 Characteristics and the Nine Organizational Models

Model	1. Leadership					2. Strategy					3. Structure					4. Technology					5. People					6. Culture					7. Process					8. External				
	1.1 Adaptive Leadership	1.2 Empowering Leadership	1.3 Innovation leadership	1.4 Resilient Leadership	1.5 Purpose-driven Leadership	2.1 Vision Alignment	2.2 Adaptive Planning	2.3 Goal Alignment	2.4 Dynamic Innovation	2.5 Integrated Execution	3.1 Distributed Authority	3.2 Open Collaboration	3.3 Flexible Design	3.4 Workflow Optimization	3.5 Integrated Balance	4.1 Digital Integration	4.2 Data Intelligence	4.3 Flexible IT	4.4 Integrated Communication	4.5 Digital Resilience	5.1 Capability Building	5.2 Empowered Workforce	5.3 Inclusive Teamwork	5.4 Purposeful Engagement	5.5 Supportive Environment	6.1 Trust & Transparency	6.2 Shared Purpose	6.3 Collaborative Flow	6.4 Performance Mindset	6.5 Aligned Autonomy	7.1 Process Efficiency	7.2 Data-Driven Operation	7.3 Iterative Innovation	7.4 Process Agility	7.5 Strategic Collaboration	8.1 Customer Centricity	8.2 Stakeholder Trust	8.3 Strategic Partnership	8.4 Adaptive Insight	8.5 Sustainable Expansion
Agile	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Ambidextrous	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Digital																		X																							
High-Performance											X													X	X	X	X		X	X					X			X				
Innovative			X			X		X	X		X	X	X	X			X				X		X		X			X				X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Purpose-driven				X	X	X					X			X									X	X	X	X	X										X	X		X
Resilient				X		X	X	X	X	X			X							X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X						X	X		X		
Sustainable				X	X																	X		X												X		X		
Teal		X									X								X			X		X		X														

As shown in Table 1, each organizational model emphasizes a specific subset of characteristics. Using operational cut-offs for cross-model recurrence, we classify characteristics that appear in five or more of the nine models as 'core,' those appearing in three to four models as 'peripheral,' and those occurring in only one or two models as 'unique.' The core set includes 4.2.1 Vision Alignment, 4.3.1 Distributed Authority, 4.5.3 Inclusive Teamwork, 4.5.4 Purposeful Engagement, 4.5.5 Supportive Environment, 4.6.1 Trust and Transparency, and 4.8.1 Customer Centricity. The remaining characteristics, found in fewer than five models, are considered peripheral, with a small subset being unique to just one or two models. This stratification highlights broadly applicable design elements while indicating where focus should be adjusted based on specific conditions.

5. Discussion, Conclusion, Implications, and Future Research

The study reveals that future organizations possess 40 key traits derived from nine models, marking a shift from rigid, siloed operations to flexible, people-focused, data-driven systems. A key pattern across dimensions is decentralization and empowerment, with distributed authority, empowered staff, and aligned autonomy indicating that decision-making is shifting to the front lines (George et al., 2023; Kiron et al., 2016). This enables quicker responses and

engagement, supported by structural flexibility and digital integration, allowing adaptation without losing control (de Waal & Linthorst, 2020; Vázquez-Bustelo et al., 2007).

Another key theme is aligning purpose with execution. Characteristics like vision alignment, purposeful engagement, shared purpose, and integrated execution show high-performing organizations stay clear on their direction and adaptable. (Van Ingen et al., 2021). This mix of strategy and agility lets them respond to change without losing their core identity. The findings emphasize the importance of continuous learning and innovation, with iterative processes, flexible planning, teamwork, and capability development showing how organizations adapt through feedback and proactively evolve (Chakma et al., 2021; Kohnová et al., 2023). Backed by data-driven systems that support real-time decision-making, they also highlight the interdependence between internal and external responsiveness. Traits such as stakeholder trust, adaptive insights, and strategic partnerships suggest that future organizations are open systems, constantly sensing and adjusting to shifts in customer needs, market dynamics, and societal expectations. (Pal et al., 2014; Lleo et al., 2021)

The 40 characteristics form a future-readiness framework balancing stability, change, autonomy, alignment, technology, and humanity. Future organizations combine capabilities to withstand disruptions, compete, and preserve long-term value. This study links theory with emerging practices using a review and coding framework, identifying 40 validated characteristics across eight dimensions, consistent across models and aligned with success in today's VUCA environment. This study offers a framework for researchers to test and expand, serving as a diagnostic tool for practitioners to evaluate organizational readiness and guide change. Policy-makers and educators can develop curricula and support programs using these findings, fostering resilient institutions. Future research should investigate the applicability of these traits across various industries, including education, healthcare, and manufacturing, as well as in regions such as emerging and developed markets.

This study is a literature-based synthesis that relies solely on a systematic review and does not, at this stage, evaluate the relative importance (weighting) of each characteristic across different contexts or break down the effects of specific characteristics by 3S dimension. Therefore, the findings should not be seen as universal guidelines or as claims about which traits more strongly influence Survive, Succeed, or Sustain outcomes. Future research should expand on this work in three main ways: (1) investigate characteristics across different settings such as business, education, healthcare, SMEs, and others; (2) analyze how individual traits influence each capability of future organizations, including Survive, Succeed, and Sustain; and (3) examine the relationships among these traits, including how they complement, conflict, or trade off with each other. Together, these efforts will improve external validity and boundary conditions, clarify which traits impact specific 3S outcomes, identify complementary combinations and unavoidable trade-offs, and ultimately provide more accurate theory and practical guidance for managers and policymakers across various sectors.

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