

**American University Kyiv**

**A Capstone Project**

**FOUNDER VISIBILITY, REPUTATION, AND TRUST IN STAKEHOLDER  
SUPPORT DURING BUSINESS CRISIS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
WARTIME B2B CASES**

**ПУБЛІЧНІСТЬ ЗАСНОВНИКА, РЕПУТАЦІЯ ТА ДОВІРА У ПІДТРИМЦІ  
СТЕЙКХОЛДЕРІВ ПІД ЧАС БІЗНЕС-КРИЗИ: ПОРІВНЯЛЬНЕ  
ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ В2В-КЕЙСІВ ВОЄННОГО ЧАСУ**

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## ABSTRACT

**This research aims** to examine how founder visibility and reputation influence partner support during crisis situations in B2B contexts. The study focuses on understanding the mechanisms through which reputation acts as a key driver of partner behavior, particularly in high-uncertainty environments such as operational disruptions caused by external shocks (e.g., war-related damage to business infrastructure).

The research explores how visibility contributes to reputation formation and how, in turn, reputation affects partners' willingness to provide support, including financial flexibility, continued collaboration, and accelerated decision-making. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis, the study seeks to develop a conceptual model linking founder visibility, reputation, and partner support in crisis conditions.

**The object** of the research is B2B partnership relationships in crisis situations, particularly in cases of sudden operational disruption affecting companies' ability to deliver products or services.

**The subject** of the research is the role of founder reputation, shaped in part by public visibility, in influencing partner support behaviors during crisis situations. This includes trust formation, perceived credibility, risk tolerance of partners, and decision-making regarding continued cooperation or withdrawal.

### **Milestones:**

1. Conduct qualitative research through semi-structured interviews with founders of two B2B companies that were directly affected by war-related disruption (missile strikes on production and infrastructure). The interviews will focus on partners' reactions to the crisis, the nature and extent of partner support (financial and non-financial), communication strategies used by founders during the crisis, and the role of partners in enabling or constraining business recovery.
2. Conduct 7–10 semi-structured interviews with B2B partners of these companies to identify the key drivers behind their decisions to provide or withhold support during the crisis, including financial flexibility, continued cooperation, and other forms of assistance.

3. Identify and categorize key factors influencing partner decision-making in crisis situations, with a particular focus on reputation, trust, and founder visibility, as well as their interplay in shaping perceived reliability and willingness to support.
4. Conduct a comparative qualitative benchmarking analysis of the Biosphere and Micron crisis cases to identify patterns of stakeholder support, crisis communication, and relational dynamics during wartime business disruption. Analyze how founder visibility, reputational capital, interpersonal trust, and ecosystem embeddedness influenced the scale and forms of partner support, and identify best practices associated with effective crisis recovery and organizational resilience.
5. Develop a conceptual framework explaining the relationship between founder visibility, reputation, and partner support in B2B crisis contexts, including mechanisms such as trust formation, perceived reliability, and communication strategies.
6. Provide strategic recommendations for founders of B2B companies on how to build, manage, and leverage reputation as a strategic asset to secure partner support during crises, including both short-term communication actions and long-term reputation-building approaches.

**Research Results:** Research Results: the study revealed significant differences in the scale and mobilization of partner support during business crises depending on the founder's visibility, reputation, communication style, and embeddedness in business networks. Analysis of the interview responses from both cases produced more than 100 initial codes, which were consolidated into seven major themes: depth of relationship, reputational trust, personal communication, founder visibility and personal brand, founder leadership and influence, trust formation mechanisms, and support decision drivers.

The comparative analysis demonstrated that reputational trust and interpersonal relationships were important in both cases; however, the Biosphere case showed that strong founder visibility, active personal communication, and deep integration into business communities significantly amplified the scale, speed, and coordination of support. In contrast, the Micron case demonstrated that even with positive reputation and trusted operational relationships, limited public visibility and weaker communication reduced the mobilization of broader ecosystem support.

The research resulted in a conceptual framework demonstrating that founder reputation creates trust, personal communication activates trust, founder visibility amplifies trust, and business communities scale trust into collective action during crisis situations.

**Keywords:** founder visibility, personal branding, reputational capital, reputation management, partner support, B2B relationships, crisis communication, personal communication, trust formation, stakeholder decision-making, business communities, social capital, network mobilization, organizational resilience, entrepreneurial leadership.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary business environments characterized by war, instability, and systemic uncertainty, organizational resilience increasingly depends not only on operational capacity, but also on trust, reputation, and the quality of stakeholder relationships. Modern crises create conditions in which formal contracts and traditional transactional mechanisms may become insufficient for ensuring business continuity. Under such circumstances, interpersonal trust, founder visibility, and relationship networks can become critical resources influencing organizational survival and recovery.

The full-scale war in Ukraine created unprecedented challenges for Ukrainian businesses, particularly for companies operating in regions exposed to missile strikes and infrastructure destruction. Beyond direct operational losses, wartime disruption generated extreme uncertainty regarding supply chains, production continuity, financial stability, and partner reliability. At the same time, the Ukrainian business environment demonstrated numerous examples of informal support, mutual aid, and rapid mobilization of resources among entrepreneurs, partners, business communities, and financial institutions.

These conditions revealed the growing importance of founder reputation and personal visibility within business ecosystems. In several high-profile wartime business crises, partners provided substantial support in the form of prepayments, deferred payments, operational resources, flexible credit conditions, logistics assistance, and public advocacy. In many cases, such support appeared to be driven not only by the company itself, but also by the founder's personal reputation, visibility, leadership role, and embeddedness within professional and social networks.

At the same time, not all companies affected by similar crises received comparable levels of support. Some businesses with positive operational reputations nevertheless experienced significantly lower levels of partner mobilization, limited public visibility, and weaker ecosystem response. This contrast raises important questions regarding the role of founder visibility, personal communication, and reputational capital in shaping stakeholder behavior during crisis situations.

The growing importance of trust and leadership visibility is also reflected in contemporary academic and managerial literature. Research increasingly emphasizes the strategic role of reputational capital, relationship trust, crisis communication, and social

capital in uncertain environments (Fombrun, 1996; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Granovetter, 1985). Contemporary reports additionally highlight declining institutional trust and growing expectations toward business leaders as trusted communicators during crises (Edelman, 2022; Edelman, 2024). These developments suggest that founders may increasingly function not only as organizational leaders, but also as symbolic carriers of trust capable of influencing stakeholder decisions and mobilizing support networks.

Therefore, this research aims to examine how founder visibility influences partner support during business crises. The study focuses specifically on wartime crisis situations involving Ukrainian companies whose operational infrastructure was severely damaged or destroyed by military attacks. The research explores how stakeholders perceive founder reputation, leadership visibility, interpersonal relationships, and communication practices, and how these factors influence decisions regarding support, cooperation, and resource mobilization.

The study is based on a comparative qualitative analysis of two Ukrainian business cases that experienced similar operational crises but received significantly different levels of partner support and public mobilization. The first case examines Biosphere Corporation, a highly visible company with a publicly recognizable founder deeply integrated into Ukrainian business communities. The second case examines Micron, a less publicly visible manufacturing business with a comparatively lower level of ecosystem mobilization during crisis recovery. This comparative design allows the research to identify similarities and differences in stakeholder reactions under comparable wartime conditions.

The study combines several complementary research approaches: document analysis, literature review, and semi-structured interviews with business partners, suppliers, clients, financial institutions, and ecosystem participants connected to the selected cases. This methodological combination enables triangulation of findings and provides a broader understanding of the relationship between founder visibility, trust formation, communication practices, and partner support during crises.

The first methodological approach involves **document analysis**, which serves as a foundational method for examining public communication and stakeholder reactions during the crisis situations. The analysis includes founder social media posts, public partner statements, business media publications, interviews, and communications from business

communities and organizations. The purpose of the document analysis is to identify patterns related to founder visibility, crisis communication, reputation, leadership perception, and public expressions of support.

In addition to document analysis, the study includes a **literature review** covering academic research on reputation management, personal branding, trust formation, relationship marketing, crisis communication, social capital, organizational resilience, and stakeholder behavior in turbulent environments. The literature review provides the theoretical foundation for understanding how founder visibility and reputational capital may influence partner behavior during periods of uncertainty and disruption.

The final methodological component consists of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders connected to both crisis cases. These interviews focus on perceptions of founder reputation, trust formation, depth of relationships, communication practices, and factors influencing support decisions during the crises. The interviews additionally allow exploration of differences between transactional business relationships and deeper embedded network relationships within the Ukrainian business environment.

This methodological approach enables a comprehensive examination of how founder visibility, interpersonal trust, and communication practices influence the mobilization of partner support during wartime business crises, while also contributing to broader discussions regarding reputational capital and organizational resilience in turbulent environments.

## **CHAPTER 2. DOCUMENTS ANALYSIS AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

In addition to semi-structured interviews, the study employed document analysis as a complementary qualitative research method aimed at strengthening contextual understanding and supporting methodological triangulation. The document analysis focused on publicly available materials related to both crisis cases, including founder social media posts, partner statements, media publications, interviews, communications from business communities, and publicly observable stakeholder reactions during the crisis periods.

The purpose of the document analysis was not only to provide contextual background, but also to identify observable communication patterns, stakeholder responses, and reputational dynamics associated with founder visibility and partner support during wartime disruption. The analyzed materials included founder crisis communications, public statements

from partners and business associations, media coverage, examples of public support initiatives, and ecosystem-level reactions related to the crises.

The selection of documents was based on their direct relevance to the crisis events, stakeholder interactions, public communication processes, and manifestations of partner support. Particular attention was paid to materials reflecting:

- founder visibility and communication activity during the crisis;
- framing of partner support in public communication;
- references to trust, reputation, credibility, and interpersonal relationships;
- communication channels used during the crisis response process;
- expressions of solidarity, reciprocity, ecosystem coordination, and business community support.

The document analysis was conducted alongside the interview analysis and served as an additional source of evidence for identifying recurring relational and communication patterns across the two cases. The materials were analyzed using an interpretive qualitative approach focused on recurring themes related to trust formation, leadership visibility, reputational signaling, stakeholder coordination, and support mobilization during crisis situations.

Importantly, the document analysis enabled methodological triangulation by comparing interview participants' perceptions with publicly observable communication practices and stakeholder responses. This approach strengthened the analytical credibility of the findings and reduced reliance on retrospective participant interpretation alone. The integration of interview data and documentary materials additionally provided a broader understanding of how founder visibility, crisis communication, and reputational capital influenced partner support dynamics during wartime business disruption.

## **2.2 Literature Review and Theoretical Background**

The literature review draws on several interconnected theoretical streams relevant to the study of founder visibility and partner support during crisis situations. The research integrates perspectives from reputation management, personal branding, relationship marketing, crisis communication, organizational resilience, and trust formation in turbulent environments.

One of the central concepts underlying this study is reputational capital. Corporate reputation is widely understood as an intangible strategic asset influencing stakeholder perceptions, competitive positioning, and organizational resilience (Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004). Reputation develops through accumulated stakeholder evaluations based on previous organizational behavior, communication, and interactions with external audiences. Existing literature emphasizes that reputational capital becomes particularly important during periods of uncertainty, when stakeholders rely on symbolic signals and prior impressions to assess organizational reliability and future behavior. Fombrun and Van Riel additionally argue that reputation functions as a signal of predictability and credibility under conditions of information asymmetry. In crisis situations, reputational capital may therefore reduce perceived risk and increase stakeholders' willingness to maintain cooperation despite operational disruption.

The growing role of founder visibility and executive branding further expands this perspective. Bendisch, Larsen, and Trueman (2013) argue that CEOs increasingly function as symbolic representatives of organizations, shaping external perceptions of credibility, values, and leadership through public visibility and communication. Their research suggests that executive visibility contributes to corporate legitimacy when stakeholders associate the founder's personal reputation with the organization itself. Similarly, prior research on CEO reputation indicates that reputable leaders enhance stakeholder confidence in organizational decision-making during periods of uncertainty. Jian and Lee (2011) found that firms led by highly reputable CEOs receive more favorable stakeholder responses because managerial reputation strengthens the credibility of organizational signals and reduces perceived uncertainty.

Recent studies additionally demonstrate that leadership visibility and authentic communication strengthen stakeholder trust during organizational crises. Men and Yue (2023) emphasize that transparent founder communication and visible leadership behavior reduce stakeholder uncertainty and reinforce perceptions of organizational credibility during disruptive events. Their findings suggest that leadership communication becomes particularly influential when stakeholders seek reassurance regarding organizational stability and recovery potential.

Despite the growing body of research on CEO reputation, executive branding, and leadership communication, limited attention has been paid specifically to founder visibility as

a distinct mechanism influencing stakeholder behavior in crisis contexts. Existing studies primarily examine executive reputation in relation to corporate legitimacy, financial performance, or investor perceptions, while comparatively little research explores how founder visibility shapes relational trust, ecosystem mobilization, and partner support within B2B crisis environments. This gap becomes particularly important in turbulent and high-uncertainty settings, where stakeholders may rely more heavily on interpersonal trust, symbolic leadership, and reputational signals when making support decisions.

This study also builds on relationship marketing and trust theories within business-to-business contexts. Morgan and Hunt's Commitment-Trust Theory identifies trust and commitment as key mediating variables sustaining successful long-term relationships. According to this framework, trust increases willingness to cooperate under uncertain conditions and decreases the likelihood of opportunistic behavior. Similarly, Ganesan (1994) emphasizes that long-term orientation in B2B relationships depends on perceptions of reliability, credibility, and relational continuity. Within this context, trust extends beyond formal contractual arrangements and includes confidence that a partner will behave responsibly during unforeseen situations.

The concept of trust itself is particularly important for understanding partner behavior during crisis situations. Blois (1999) distinguishes trust from simple reliance, arguing that trust involves expectations of goodwill and voluntary support beyond contractual obligations. This interpretation is especially relevant in crisis contexts, where partners must decide whether to continue cooperation despite increased risks and uncertainty. Under such conditions, support decisions may depend less on formal agreements and more on accumulated interpersonal trust, prior interactions, and perceptions of founder reliability.

The concept of social capital and embedded relationships is also highly relevant to this study. Granovetter (1985) argues that economic actions are deeply embedded within social relationships and networks rather than being purely transactional or economically rational. From this perspective, business decisions are strongly influenced by interpersonal ties, trust, reciprocity, and repeated interaction within social environments. Granovetter further emphasizes that embedded relationships increase predictability, facilitate cooperation, and strengthen willingness to provide support under conditions of uncertainty. This perspective is particularly relevant for the present research, where partner support during crisis situations often emerged through long-term personal relationships, business

communities, and informal networks rather than through formal contractual mechanisms alone.

Recent research on entrepreneurial ecosystems further expands the embeddedness perspective by demonstrating that business communities and entrepreneurial networks may function as collective resilience mechanisms during crisis situations. Roundy (2022) argues that ecosystem embeddedness strengthens organizational adaptability through reciprocal support, shared resources, and collective coordination under conditions of uncertainty. This perspective is particularly relevant for the present study, where ecosystem participation frequently influenced stakeholder support mobilization during wartime disruption.

The literature on crisis communication additionally explains how organizations attempt to preserve stakeholder confidence during disruptive events. Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) proposes that crises threaten organizational reputation because they generate negative stakeholder evaluations regarding competence, responsibility, and future reliability. Coombs (2007) argues that transparent and timely communication significantly influences stakeholder reactions and helps protect reputational assets during crises. Crisis communication research also highlights the importance of visible leadership and direct communication from organizational leaders during emergencies. Within this context, founder visibility may function not only as a branding mechanism, but also as a crisis response mechanism reducing uncertainty and reinforcing stakeholder trust.

Contemporary crisis management literature additionally emphasizes that stakeholder reactions during crises are strongly shaped by organizational legitimacy, prior trust, and reputational perceptions. Bundy et al. (2021) argue that crisis situations intensify stakeholder evaluation processes, increasing the importance of trust, transparency, and relational credibility in sustaining organizational support during disruption.

Organizational resilience literature additionally emphasizes that recovery capacity depends not only on operational resources, but also on relational coordination, adaptive leadership, and stakeholder cooperation during adversity. Williams et al. (2021) argue that resilience emerges through the integration of organizational adaptability, stakeholder coordination, and crisis response capabilities developed prior to disruption. This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding how reputational and relational capital influence business recovery during wartime crises.

The role of turbulent environments and instability is also central to this study. Zafari, Biggemann, and Garry (2023) demonstrate that highly turbulent socio-political and economic environments intensify the importance of interpersonal trust, rapid communication, and social bonding in B2B relationships. Their findings suggest that under conditions of uncertainty, firms rely more heavily on informal communication, rapid relational adaptation, and trusted personal networks. These findings are particularly relevant in the context of wartime Ukraine, where organizations operate under conditions of continuous disruption, uncertainty, and elevated operational risk.

In addition to academic literature, contemporary industry and consulting reports also highlight the growing importance of trust, leadership visibility, and resilience in uncertain environments. The Edelman Trust Barometer reports demonstrate declining trust in institutions and increasing expectations toward business leaders as trusted communicators during crises (Edelman, 2022; Edelman, 2024). Deloitte's reports on organizational resilience and trust emphasize that resilience increasingly depends on leadership transparency, stakeholder confidence, and adaptive communication capabilities (Deloitte, 2021; Deloitte, 2022). McKinsey research identifies trust as a growing source of competitive advantage in unstable and rapidly changing business environments (McKinsey & Company, 2021; McKinsey & Company, 2023). Similarly, PwC's Global CEO Survey highlights that business leaders increasingly operate under conditions of uncertainty, disruption, and pressure to rebuild stakeholder confidence (PwC, 2023; PwC, 2024). The World Economic Forum additionally emphasizes resilience, cooperation, and stakeholder trust as critical factors for navigating systemic instability and global crises (World Economic Forum, 2024). Together, these reports reinforce the argument that trust, visible leadership, and strong stakeholder relationships have become increasingly important strategic assets in turbulent environments.

Together, these theoretical perspectives suggest that stakeholder support during crisis situations is shaped through the interaction of reputational capital, interpersonal trust, embedded relationships, communication practices, and ecosystem participation. Reputation management literature explains how organizations accumulate credibility over time, while relationship marketing and embeddedness theories highlight the importance of trust-based interpersonal networks in sustaining cooperation under uncertainty. Crisis communication and organizational resilience research additionally demonstrate how visible leadership, adaptive communication, and stakeholder coordination reinforce organizational stability

during disruption. Combined, these perspectives provide the conceptual foundation for examining founder visibility not merely as a communication phenomenon, but as a relational and reputational mechanism influencing stakeholder support during wartime business crises.

Overall, the literature suggests that founder visibility functions not merely as a communication or branding tool, but also as a form of reputational capital capable of influencing stakeholder trust, relationship continuity, and partner support during crisis situations. However, despite extensive research on trust, reputation, crisis communication, organizational resilience, and B2B relationships separately, limited empirical attention has been paid to how founder visibility specifically influences partner behavior during extreme wartime business crises. This research addresses that gap through a comparative qualitative analysis of Ukrainian companies operating under conditions of wartime disruption and infrastructure destruction.

## **CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Approach and Interpretive Paradigm**

This research employs a qualitative comparative case study methodology to examine how founder visibility influences partner support during business crises in wartime conditions. The study is situated within the context of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which created unprecedented operational, financial, and reputational challenges for Ukrainian businesses. Building on the identified research gap regarding the role of founder visibility and reputational capital during crisis recovery, the study aims to develop a deeper understanding of how trust, interpersonal relationships, personal communication, and public visibility influence stakeholder behavior and support mobilization under conditions of extreme uncertainty.

This study adopts an interpretivist qualitative research approach aimed at exploring how stakeholders perceive founder visibility, reputation, trust, and partner support during wartime business crises. An interpretivist perspective is particularly appropriate for examining complex relational and communication dynamics because stakeholder behavior during crisis situations is shaped not only by formal organizational structures, but also by subjective perceptions, interpersonal relationships, accumulated trust, and symbolic leadership signals.

Given the exploratory nature of the research questions, a qualitative comparative case study design was selected as the most suitable methodological approach for investigating how founder visibility influences stakeholder reactions and support mobilization under conditions of uncertainty and disruption. Unlike quantitative approaches focused primarily on measuring predefined variables, qualitative research enables deeper examination of meanings, interpretations, and relational mechanisms emerging within real-life organizational contexts.

The comparative case study methodology additionally allows analysis of similarities and differences between the selected crisis cases while preserving the contextual complexity of wartime business environments. This approach is particularly relevant for studying trust formation, reputational dynamics, communication behavior, and ecosystem relationships, which are highly context-dependent and difficult to isolate from their broader social and organizational environment.

The study therefore focuses on understanding how stakeholders interpret founder behavior, communication practices, reputational credibility, and interpersonal relationships during crisis situations, as well as how these perceptions influence decisions regarding support, cooperation, and resource mobilization.

The research focuses on two Ukrainian business cases that experienced severe operational disruption caused by military attacks but demonstrated significantly different levels of partner support and ecosystem mobilization during recovery. The cases were selected through a comparative qualitative design because they represent relatively comparable wartime crisis situations while differing substantially in founder visibility, public communication intensity, and embeddedness within entrepreneurial and business networks.

The comparative case study approach enables the examination of similarities and differences in stakeholder reactions, trust formation, communication practices, and support mobilization mechanisms across the two cases. Rather than establishing direct causal relationships, the research seeks to explore relational mechanisms and interpretive patterns shaping stakeholder behavior during wartime business crises. This approach is particularly appropriate for examining complex social and relational dynamics that cannot be fully isolated from their broader organizational and environmental context.

## **Semi-structured expert interviews**

The research includes semi-structured interviews designed to capture in-depth insights from a diverse range of stakeholders connected to the selected business cases. The primary criteria for selecting interviewees included direct involvement in business relationships with the companies, participation in decision-making regarding crisis-related support, or engagement within the broader business ecosystem surrounding the founders and organizations.

The interview sample included business partners, suppliers, clients, representatives of financial institutions, members of business communities, and ecosystem participants who interacted with the companies before and after the crisis events. Particular attention was given to respondents who were directly involved in support-related decisions, including operational assistance, financial support, payment flexibility, logistics cooperation, and public communication during the crisis recovery process. The diversity of stakeholder roles enabled the study to capture multiple perspectives on trust formation, communication practices, reputational dynamics, and support mobilization across the two cases.

The interviews explored perceptions of founder reputation, personal visibility, interpersonal trust, leadership, communication practices, and factors influencing decisions to provide or withhold support during crisis situations. The semi-structured interview format allowed respondents to discuss their experiences openly and reflectively while maintaining consistency across key thematic areas relevant to the research objectives.

To encourage openness and reduce potential social desirability bias, interviews were conducted confidentially, with respondents identified only through generalized stakeholder roles (e.g., supplier, client, business partner, bank representative, ecosystem participant). This approach additionally supported more candid discussion of sensitive topics related to crisis response, interpersonal relationships, financial flexibility, and stakeholder decision-making. The interview data were collected between March and April 2026.

### **Participants included:**

**Founders and Business Owners.** Two (2) founders whose companies experienced wartime operational crises participated in the study. These interviews provided insights into crisis response processes, communication strategies, partner interactions, and perceptions of

the role of reputation, leadership, and founder visibility during organizational recovery. The founders represented companies with significantly different levels of public visibility, media presence, and embeddedness within Ukrainian business communities, which enabled comparative analysis of stakeholder reactions and support mobilization across the two cases.

**Business Partners and Clients.** Four (4) business partners and clients participated in the study and shared their perspectives on cooperation with the companies before and after the crisis events. These respondents discussed factors influencing their willingness to provide support, including trust, founder reputation, communication practices, personal relationships, and previous collaboration experience. Several participants represented long-term relationships extending beyond purely transactional business cooperation, enabling deeper examination of relational trust and stakeholder loyalty during crisis situations.

**Suppliers and Operational Partners.** Three (3) suppliers and operational partners contributed perspectives regarding operational reliability, communication quality, trust formation, and practical decision-making during crisis situations. These interviews provided insight into how prior cooperation experience, operational credibility, and direct interpersonal interaction influenced support behavior under conditions of uncertainty and disruption.

**Business Community and Ecosystem Representatives.** Two (2) respondents connected to entrepreneurial communities and broader business ecosystems participated in the study. These interviewees discussed the role of business communities, reciprocity, founder leadership, ecosystem influence, and informal support mechanisms within Ukrainian entrepreneurial networks during wartime disruption. Their perspectives enabled examination of how ecosystem relationships and community embeddedness influenced stakeholder coordination and support mobilization beyond direct operational cooperation.

**Financial Institution Representative.** One (1) representative from the banking sector participated in the study and provided insights into how financial institutions evaluate companies during crisis situations. Particular attention was given to the role of founder reputation, stakeholder trust, public communication, reputational risk assessment, and long-term relationship history in decisions related to payment flexibility, restructuring, and crisis support measures.

Some interviewees occupied overlapping positions within the business ecosystem, combining operational cooperation, personal friendship, participation in entrepreneurial communities, and informal support networks. This overlap of stakeholder roles enriched the analysis by enabling examination of crisis situations from multiple relational and organizational perspectives.

Interviews were conducted via Zoom, Teams, phone calls, and in-person meetings, lasting between 20 and 45 minutes depending on participants' availability and level of involvement in the cases. The interviews were conducted in Ukrainian and subsequently translated into English for analysis. All interviews were transcribed, and the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, relationships, and explanatory patterns related to founder visibility, trust formation, communication practices, leadership influence, and partner support during crisis situations. The coding process combined inductive and iterative thematic coding approaches, enabling the identification of patterns emerging directly from the data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical standards were carefully maintained throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation and were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and the intended use of the collected data.

Confidentiality was ensured through anonymization of interview responses and the removal of personally identifiable information where appropriate. Given the sensitive nature of the research context, including wartime disruption, crisis experiences, and business relationship dynamics, particular attention was paid to conducting interviews in a respectful, non-intrusive, and psychologically safe manner.

Participants were informed of their right to decline answering any question and to withdraw from the study at any stage without negative consequences. Additional precautions were taken to minimize potential emotional, reputational, and professional risks associated with discussing crisis situations, financial support decisions, and interpersonal business relationships.

The research design followed core ethical principles commonly applied in studies involving human participants, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, transparency of research objectives, and responsible handling and storage of qualitative data. Ethical considerations were integrated throughout the data collection and analysis process in order to ensure respectful treatment of participants and responsible interpretation of sensitive qualitative information.

The study was conducted in accordance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) principles relevant to qualitative research involving human participants.

### **Ensuring Analytical Rigor and Trustworthiness**

Several methodological strategies were employed throughout the research process to strengthen analytical rigor, trustworthiness, and consistency of the qualitative analysis.

First, the study applied methodological triangulation through the combination of semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and comparative cross-case analysis. The integration of multiple data sources enabled comparison between interview participants' perceptions and publicly observable communication practices, stakeholder reactions, and ecosystem responses during the crisis situations. This approach reduced reliance on a single source of evidence and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

Second, the research incorporated stakeholder triangulation by including participants representing different roles within the business ecosystem, including founders, business partners, suppliers, clients, banking representatives, and members of entrepreneurial communities. The diversity of perspectives allowed identification of recurring patterns across different stakeholder groups and reduced the risk of narrow single-perspective interpretation.

Third, iterative thematic coding procedures were applied throughout the analysis process. The coding process involved repeated review of interview transcripts and documentary materials, continuous refinement of codes, comparison of emerging themes across both crisis cases, and consolidation of conceptual categories during multiple stages of analysis. This iterative approach strengthened analytical consistency and enabled progressive development of higher-order explanatory themes.

To improve analytical reliability, the study additionally employed cross-case comparison between two companies operating under relatively similar wartime crisis conditions but demonstrating substantially different levels of founder visibility, communication intensity, and ecosystem mobilization. The comparative design enabled identification of recurring relational mechanisms while reducing the risk that findings would reflect only one isolated organizational context.

Thematic saturation was reached during the later stages of analysis when additional interviews and documentary materials no longer generated substantially new conceptual categories, but instead reinforced already established patterns related to trust formation, founder visibility, communication behavior, reputational capital, and stakeholder support mechanisms.

Several measures were additionally implemented to reduce potential researcher bias. These included anonymization of participant responses, comparison of perspectives across stakeholder groups, continuous alignment between interview data and documentary materials, and iterative refinement of thematic interpretations throughout the coding process. The use of qualitative analysis software additionally supported systematic organization, categorization, and comparison of coded data across the two cases.

Together, these methodological procedures strengthened the analytical trustworthiness of the study and supported a more comprehensive interpretation of how founder visibility, interpersonal trust, reputational capital, and communication practices influenced partner support during wartime business crises.

### **Limitations**

A key limitation of this study is its comparative qualitative two-case design. While the selected cases enable exploration of mechanisms influencing partner support during crisis situations, the research design does not allow for isolating the specific effect of founder visibility and personal reputation from other organizational characteristics, including company size, years on the market, industry context, financial capacity, existing network embeddedness, and the depth of prior stakeholder relationships. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory and interpretive rather than causal.

The qualitative nature of the research additionally introduces limitations related to subjective perceptions, retrospective interpretation of events, and potential social desirability bias in interview responses. Participants may have interpreted past decisions and relationships through the lens of current outcomes, which could affect the objectivity of recollections and evaluations.

Furthermore, the sensitivity of wartime crisis contexts may have limited participants' willingness to disclose certain operational, financial, or interpersonal details fully. In some cases, respondents may have intentionally avoided discussing confidential business information, internal conflicts, or reputationally sensitive issues.

Another limitation concerns the researcher's access to entrepreneurial and business communities connected to the studied cases. While such access enabled deeper contextual understanding and facilitated collection of rich qualitative data, it also created potential risks of interpretive bias. To reduce this risk, the study employed comparative cross-case analysis, triangulation of interviews and documentary materials, anonymization of responses, and iterative thematic coding procedures throughout the analysis process.

Finally, the study focuses specifically on wartime business disruption within a Ukrainian B2B context, which may limit the transferability of findings to other industries, cultural settings, or non-crisis environments. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, the comparative qualitative approach provides valuable insight into the role of founder visibility, trust, communication, leadership, and relational networks during extreme organizational crises.

### **Analysis Approach**

The qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This method enabled the identification of recurring patterns, perceptions, and relational mechanisms related to partner support during crisis situations, as well as the role of founder visibility, reputation, communication, and interpersonal relationships in shaping stakeholder responses.

The analysis followed several stages, including initial familiarization with the data, inductive coding of significant statements, development of preliminary themes, and iterative refinement of thematic categories to ensure that they accurately reflected recurring patterns

across the interviews and documentary materials. Particular attention was given to themes related to trust formation, reputational capital, founder visibility, communication practices, relationship depth, stakeholder decision-making, and forms of crisis support.

The coding process combined inductive and iterative thematic analysis procedures, allowing conceptual patterns and explanatory mechanisms to emerge progressively from the data rather than being fully predefined by the theoretical framework. This approach supported deeper interpretation of how stakeholders perceived founder credibility, interpersonal trust, and crisis communication during periods of uncertainty.

Given the comparative qualitative design of the study, thematic patterns were analyzed both within each individual case and across cases in order to identify similarities, differences, and relational mechanisms influencing partner behavior during wartime business crises. Cross-case comparison additionally enabled examination of how variations in founder visibility, public communication, and ecosystem embeddedness shaped stakeholder reactions and support mobilization across the two crisis contexts.

### **Coding Methodology**

The coding process was primarily inductive, allowing codes and themes to emerge directly from the data rather than being fully predetermined by the theoretical framework. The analysis began with repeated reading of interview transcripts and documentary materials to familiarize with the data and identify recurring ideas, perceptions, and patterns related to founder reputation, trust, communication practices, leadership behavior, and partner support during crisis situations.

Initial codes were generated during the first stage of coding based on meaningful statements and recurring concepts identified across the interviews. These codes were subsequently reviewed, compared, refined, and organized into broader thematic categories reflecting common patterns and explanatory mechanisms observed in the data. Through iterative comparison and consolidation, the thematic structure of the study was progressively developed into higher-order themes related to reputational capital, interpersonal trust, founder visibility, support mechanisms, leadership influence, and business community relationships.

Given the comparative design of the study, coding was conducted both within individual cases and across cases, enabling identification of similarities and differences

between the Biosphere and Micron cases and supporting deeper exploration of stakeholder support mechanisms during crisis recovery.

Taguette (<https://www.taguette.org/>) and QualCoder (<https://qualcoder.wordpress.com/>) were used to support the coding and organization process, facilitating systematic analysis of interview transcripts and documentary materials and ensuring consistent categorization and tracking of emerging themes throughout the study.

## **CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

This section presents the findings from twelve semi-structured interviews examining how founder visibility, reputation, and interpersonal trust influence partner support during business crisis situations. The analysis draws on insights from founders, B2B partners, suppliers, and stakeholders involved in the Biosphere and Micron cases, as well as documentary materials related to both crisis events.

Key research questions addressed:

1. How does founder visibility influence stakeholder support during business crisis situations?
2. What factors shape stakeholder decision-making regarding support, cooperation, and relationship continuity during crisis recovery?
3. How do reputation, interpersonal trust, and founder-led communication influence partner behavior during crisis situations?

The complete version of the interview guide is available in Appendix A.

Using Taguette and QualCoder, the interview and documentary data were systematically analyzed to identify recurring themes, relationship patterns, support mechanisms, and stakeholder decision-making factors across both cases.

The complete interview guides are presented in Appendix A.

### **4.1 Coding Process and Theme Development**

The analysis of interview and documentary materials was conducted using a systematic thematic coding approach in order to ensure analytical consistency and

transparency of the findings. The coding process followed an inductive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), allowing themes and explanatory mechanisms to emerge directly from the data rather than being strictly predefined by the theoretical framework. The initial review of interview transcripts and documentary materials resulted in 101 unique initial codes representing recurring concepts, experiences, perceptions, and behavioral patterns expressed by participants. These codes emerged through detailed and repeated analysis of the interview data and captured both explicit participant statements and underlying relational mechanisms related to trust, reputation, communication, leadership, and stakeholder support during crisis situations.

The complete interview guides for founders and stakeholders are presented in Appendix A, while the overview of research participants is summarized in Appendix B. Comparative characteristics of the two crisis cases are additionally presented in Appendix E.

The first stage of analysis involved repeated familiarization with interview transcripts, founder public communications, partner statements, and documentary materials related to both crisis cases. Initial codes were generated line-by-line from interview transcripts and document analysis materials following first-cycle coding procedures commonly applied in qualitative research (Saldaña, 2021). Examples of early-stage codes included “trust built over years,” “direct founder communication,” “business community support,” “financial flexibility,” “operational trust,” “public solidarity,” and “visible leadership during crisis.” Examples of initial codes and their consolidation into higher-order thematic categories are presented in Appendix C.

The coding process revealed that stakeholder support decisions were not interpreted by participants as purely transactional or economically driven. Instead, support behavior was consistently associated with accumulated interpersonal trust, founder credibility, communication transparency, relationship depth, and perceived leadership reliability.

Although both cases demonstrated the importance of trust-based relationships, the Biosphere case generated significantly stronger codes related to public communication, ecosystem mobilization, and symbolic leadership. In contrast, the Micron case was more strongly associated with operational reliability, private communication, and support based on localized interpersonal relationships.

The first-cycle thematic coding process resulted in N = 101 initial codes. These codes were subsequently reviewed, compared, refined, and consolidated into 25 focused coding categories reflecting broader conceptual patterns and recurring stakeholder support mechanisms observed during crisis situations. This stage of analysis followed iterative coding refinement procedures commonly applied in qualitative thematic research (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). To ensure analytical consistency and systematic organization of qualitative data, Taguette and QualCoder were used throughout the coding process.

At the next stage of analysis, the focused coding categories were synthesized into seven higher-order thematic groups that formed the analytical foundation of the study: Founder Reputation and Credibility, Personal Relationships and Trust, Founder Visibility and Communication, Partner Decision-Making Factors, Forms of Partner Support, Organizational Resilience and Leadership, and Community and Network Effects.

Theme saturation was reached during the later stages of analysis, when additional interviews and documentary materials no longer generated substantially new conceptual categories, but instead reinforced previously identified patterns related to founder reputation, interpersonal trust, communication behavior, stakeholder decision-making, and support mobilization mechanisms.

The initial interviews with founders and key stakeholders established the core relational patterns associated with reputational trust, crisis communication, and partner reactions during wartime disruption. Subsequent stakeholder interviews added depth and contextual nuance to the emerging themes, particularly regarding interpersonal trust, operational credibility, the role of business communities, and factors influencing support decisions across the two crisis cases.

Later interviews primarily reinforced already identified mechanisms and thematic relationships rather than generating substantially new conceptual dimensions. Documentary materials presented in Appendix D additionally confirmed the consistency and recurrence of the identified patterns across both cases.

As a result of the iterative coding process, 101 initial codes were progressively consolidated into 25 focused coding categories and subsequently synthesized into 7 higher-order themes that formed the foundation for the subsequent comparative analysis.

## 4.2 Analysis of Theme Distribution and Relationships

### 4.2.1 Theme Frequency Analysis

The analysis revealed seven major thematic areas that consistently emerged across the interviews and documentary materials:

1. **Founder Reputation and Credibility**
2. **Personal Relationships and Trust**
3. **Founder Visibility and Communication**
4. **Partner Decision-Making Factors**
5. **Forms of Partner Support**
6. **Organizational Resilience and Leadership**
7. **Community and Network Effects**

These themes were examined through the comparative analysis of the Biosphere and Micron cases, with particular attention to how founder visibility, reputational capital, interpersonal trust, and communication practices influenced stakeholder behavior and support mobilization during wartime business crises (Table 1).

**Table 1. Theme frequency representation**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Number of Mentions</b>	<b>Number of Sources</b>	<b>Representative Code Words</b>
Founder Reputation and Credibility	132	12/12	“trust through reputation”, “track record”, “credibility”, “reliability”, “responsibility”
Personal Relationships and Trust	118	12/12	“direct personal interaction”, “friendship”, “long-term relationship”, “trust through experience”
Founder Visibility and Communication	74	9/12	“public visibility”, “social media activity”, “personal communication”, “direct message/call”

Partner Decision-Making Factors	89	10/12	“support felt natural”, “support as reciprocity”, “shared values”, “relationship-based decision”
Forms of Partner Support	96	11/12	“prepayment”, “payment deferral”, “operational support”, “private loans”
Organizational Resilience and Leadership	63	8/12	“recovery plan”, “confidence in recovery”, “operational continuity”, “leader’s will to rebuild”
Community and Network Effects	51	7/12	“business community”, “network mobilization”, “peer support”, “circle of trust”

Source: Developed by author.

#### 4.2.2 Key Code Words and Co-Occurrence Analysis

The analysis of interview transcripts and documentary materials revealed several dominant code words and recurring conceptual relationships that shaped stakeholder support during wartime business crises. Table 2 presents the most frequently occurring code words and their thematic associations across both crisis cases.

“Trust through direct experience” emerged as the most frequently occurring code group (49 occurrences), closely followed by “Founder legitimacy” (49 occurrences). The high frequency of these codes demonstrates that stakeholder support decisions were strongly influenced by accumulated interpersonal trust and perceptions of founder credibility developed through long-term interaction and operational cooperation.

“Founder reputation” (38 occurrences) and “Relationship depth” (38 occurrences) also appeared consistently across interviews, highlighting the importance of reputational capital and long-term interpersonal relationships in shaping support behavior during periods of uncertainty. These findings suggest that stakeholders evaluated crisis situations not only through operational or financial considerations, but also through previously accumulated relational experience and founder reliability.

The code “Trust through prior perception” appeared 27 times and was frequently associated with “Founder reputation as a trigger of support” (24 occurrences). This co-occurrence pattern indicates that stakeholders often relied on previously formed perceptions of the founder when making decisions regarding cooperation continuity, financial flexibility, or operational support during crisis recovery.

Communication-related codes also demonstrated strong thematic presence. “Personal communication / Founder-led communication” appeared 20 times, while “Transparent explanation” appeared 10 times. These codes frequently co-occurred with “trust,” “support,” and “leadership,” suggesting that direct founder communication functioned as an important mechanism for reducing uncertainty and activating stakeholder trust during crisis situations.

Several reputation-related subcodes additionally appeared with high frequency, including “Reliability” (18 occurrences), “Responsibility” (18 occurrences), “Honesty / transparency” (16 occurrences), and “Keeps commitments” (16 occurrences). Together, these patterns reinforce the finding that reputational trust in B2B relationships was largely formed through operational consistency, predictability, and fulfillment of obligations over time.

Codes associated with business communities and ecosystem relationships also emerged repeatedly throughout the analysis. “Circle of trust” appeared 15 times and frequently co-occurred with “Support felt natural” (14 occurrences), indicating that support decisions were often embedded within broader interpersonal and entrepreneurial network relationships rather than being perceived as purely transactional actions.

Founder visibility and symbolic leadership appeared more frequently within the Biosphere case. “Visibility as trust signal” appeared 11 times, while “Public personal brand” appeared 10 times. These codes were strongly connected with public communication, ecosystem mobilization, and broader stakeholder coordination, suggesting that founder visibility amplified the scale and speed of support mobilization during crisis recovery.

Leadership-related codes also demonstrated notable frequency, including “Founder influence on business environment” (14 occurrences) and “Charismatic leadership” (12 occurrences). These codes frequently appeared alongside trust- and communication-related themes, reflecting the importance of perceived leadership credibility in shaping stakeholder confidence during wartime disruption.

The co-occurrence patterns among the dominant code words reveal strong relationships between founder reputation, interpersonal trust, communication behavior, and stakeholder support mechanisms. For example, “Founder reputation” repeatedly co-occurred with “Trust through direct experience,” “Relationship depth,” and “Support felt natural,” indicating that reputational capital and accumulated trust functioned as interconnected mechanisms influencing stakeholder behavior during crisis situations.

Overall, the frequency and co-occurrence analysis demonstrates that stakeholder support during wartime business crises was shaped primarily through relational and reputational mechanisms rather than through formal contractual structures alone. These findings support prior research emphasizing the role of interpersonal trust, embedded relationships, and reputational capital in stakeholder decision-making under conditions of uncertainty (Granovetter, 1985; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

**Table 2. Primary Code Words and Their Frequency**

<b>Code Word</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Associated Themes</b>
Trust through Direct Experience	49	Personal Relationships and Trust; Founder Reputation and Credibility
Founder Legitimacy	49	Founder Reputation and Credibility; Organizational Resilience and Leadership
Founder Reputation	38	Founder Reputation and Credibility
Relationship Depth	38	Personal Relationships and Trust
Trust through Prior Perception	27	Founder Reputation and Credibility; Partner Decision-Making Factors
Founder Reputation as a Trigger of Support	24	Partner Decision-Making Factors; Forms of Partner Support
Personal / Founder-Led Communication	20	Founder Visibility and Communication
Reliability	18	Founder Reputation and Credibility; Organizational Resilience and Leadership
Responsibility	18	Founder Reputation and Credibility

Honesty / Transparency	16	Founder Reputation and Credibility; Founder Visibility and Communication
Keeps Commitments	16	Founder Reputation and Credibility; Personal Relationships and Trust
Circle of Trust	15	Community and Network Effects; Personal Relationships and Trust
Support Felt Natural	14	Partner Decision-Making Factors; Community and Network Effects
Founder Influence on Business Environment	14	Organizational Resilience and Leadership; Community and Network Effects
Charismatic Leadership	12	Organizational Resilience and Leadership
Visibility as Trust Signal	11	Founder Visibility and Communication
Transparent Explanation	10	Founder Visibility and Communication; Partner Decision-Making Factors
Public Personal Brand	10	Founder Visibility and Communication; Community and Network Effects

Source: Developed by author.

#### 4.2.3 Themes Co-Occurrence Analysis

The Theme Co-occurrence Network (Figure 1) illustrates the interconnections between the seven higher-order themes identified in the comparative analysis of the Biosphere and Micron crisis cases. The network visualization demonstrates how founder reputation, interpersonal trust, communication behavior, stakeholder decision-making, and ecosystem relationships interacted in shaping partner support during wartime business crises.

Founder Reputation and Credibility emerged as one of the central nodes in the network, demonstrating strong connections with Personal Relationships and Trust, Partner Decision-Making Factors, and Organizational Resilience and Leadership. This centrality reflects the foundational role of reputational capital and accumulated trust in shaping stakeholder behavior during crisis situations.

The strongest co-occurrence relationship appeared between Founder Reputation and Credibility and Personal Relationships and Trust, indicating that support decisions were

strongly influenced by prior cooperation experience, interpersonal trust, and long-term relationships rather than purely transactional considerations.

Founder Visibility and Communication demonstrated strong bilateral connections with Community and Network Effects and Forms of Partner Support. This relationship was particularly visible in the Biosphere case, where public founder communication contributed to broader ecosystem mobilization, public solidarity, and accelerated stakeholder support during crisis recovery.

Organizational Resilience and Leadership maintained strong connections with Partner Decision-Making Factors, highlighting the importance of visible leadership, operational continuity, and transparent crisis response in maintaining stakeholder confidence during wartime disruption.

The network additionally demonstrates that Forms of Partner Support functioned as an outcome theme influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including founder reputation, interpersonal trust, communication practices, and business community relationships.

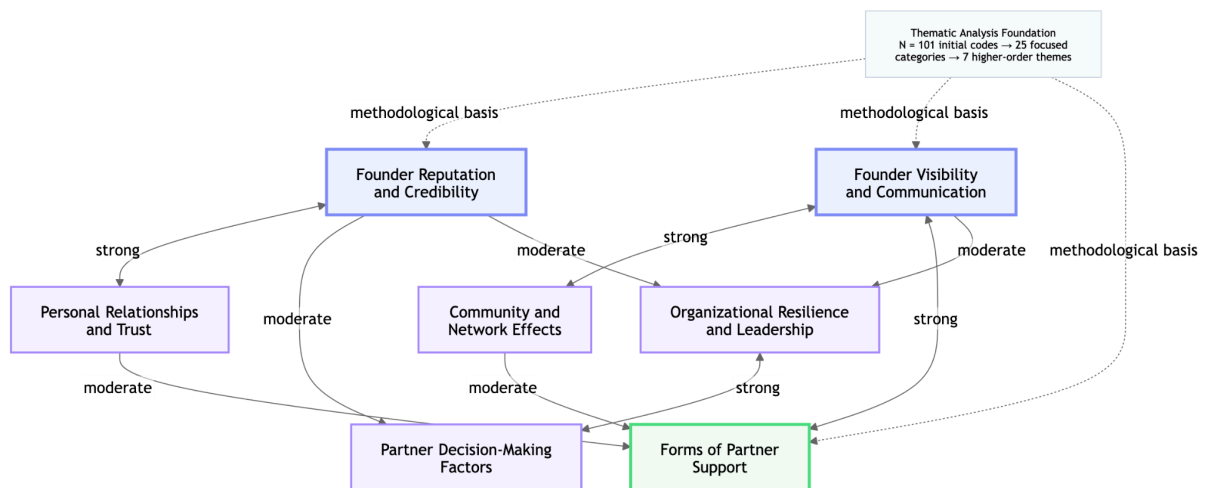


Figure 1: Theme interconnection network visualized using Mermaid diagram syntax (mermaid.live). The network demonstrates relationships and co-occurrence patterns between the seven higher-order themes identified in the research (N = 7), where connecting lines indicate thematic interactions emerging from qualitative analysis of the Biosphere and Micron crisis cases.

### 4.3 Thematic Differences Across Stakeholder Groups

**Table 3: Priority Themes by Stakeholder Group**

<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Primary Concern</b>	<b>Secondary Concern</b>	<b>Tertiary Concern</b>
Founders	Organizational Resilience and Leadership	Founder Visibility and Communication	Community and Network Effects
Business Partners / Clients	Personal Relationships and Trust	Founder Reputation and Credibility	Forms of Partner Support
Financial Stakeholders	Founder Reputation and Credibility	Personal Relationships and Trust	Partner Decision-Making Factors
Suppliers / Operational Stakeholders	Personal Relationships and Trust	Founder Reputation and Credibility	Founder Visibility and Communication

Source: Developed by author.

The analysis of thematic priorities across stakeholder groups revealed important differences in how crisis situations, trust, communication, and support mechanisms were perceived during wartime business disruption. Table 3 presents the dominant thematic concerns identified among founders, business partners, financial stakeholders, and operational stakeholders participating in the study.

Founders demonstrated the strongest focus on Organizational Resilience and Leadership, reflecting their emphasis on operational continuity, crisis response, recovery coordination, and maintaining business stability during periods of uncertainty. Founder Visibility and Communication additionally emerged as a major concern among founders, particularly regarding stakeholder confidence, public communication, and ecosystem coordination during crisis recovery.

Business Partners and Clients demonstrated the strongest concentration around Personal Relationships and Trust and Founder Reputation and Credibility. This pattern

suggests that support decisions were strongly influenced by accumulated trust, previous cooperation experience, founder reliability, and long-term interpersonal relationships rather than purely contractual or financial considerations.

Financial Stakeholders demonstrated stronger emphasis on Founder Reputation and Credibility and Partner Decision-Making Factors, indicating the importance of operational reliability, transparency, and confidence in the founder's ability to stabilize and restore business operations after the crisis. These stakeholders demonstrated greater focus on predictability, accountability, and recovery capability compared to other stakeholder groups.

Suppliers and Operational Stakeholders primarily emphasized Personal Relationships and Trust, highlighting the importance of direct communication, operational familiarity, and long-term cooperation experience during periods of uncertainty. Founder Reputation and Credibility additionally remained an important factor influencing willingness to maintain operational flexibility and continue cooperation during crisis recovery.

Pattern analysis additionally revealed several recurring cross-group relationships. First, Personal Relationships and Trust emerged as one of the dominant themes across nearly all stakeholder categories, demonstrating the central role of interpersonal trust in shaping stakeholder behavior during crisis situations. Second, Founder Reputation and Credibility consistently influenced both strategic and operational support decisions across external stakeholder groups. Third, Founder Visibility and Communication demonstrated substantially higher importance among founders and stakeholders connected to broader entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The differences in thematic priorities between stakeholder groups demonstrate that crisis support mechanisms were shaped differently depending on relationship proximity and organizational role. While founders focused primarily on leadership visibility and organizational recovery, external stakeholders emphasized trust, reputation, communication quality, and continuity of relationships as the primary factors influencing support decisions during wartime disruption.

#### 4.4 Key Thematic Findings Analysis: Trust, Reputation, and Stakeholder Support Mechanisms

Table 4 presents a comparative analysis of the dominant findings identified across the seven higher-order themes. The analysis focuses on the mechanisms through which founder reputation, interpersonal trust, communication behavior, leadership visibility, and ecosystem relationships influenced stakeholder support during wartime business crises in the Biosphere and Micron cases.

**Table 4. Summary of Key Thematic Findings**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>Representative Evidence</b>
Founder Reputation and Credibility	Stakeholder support depended on accumulated reputational trust, reliability, and operational consistency	Advance payments, payment deferrals, private financial support
Personal Relationships and Trust	Long-term interpersonal relationships influenced support decisions more strongly than formal contracts	“Trust through direct experience”, direct communication
Founder Visibility and Communication	Public founder communication amplified ecosystem mobilization and stakeholder coordination	Social media communication, public business support
Partner Decision-Making Factors	Support decisions were shaped by trust, leadership perception, transparency, and recovery confidence	Operational continuity, direct founder involvement
Forms of Partner Support	Support included financial, operational, symbolic, and ecosystem-based mechanisms	Advance payments, logistics support, public solidarity
Organizational Resilience and Leadership	Visible leadership and rapid operational response increased stakeholder confidence	Rapid recovery actions, team preservation
Community and Network Effects	Entrepreneurial ecosystems amplified collective support mobilization	business club support, business community initiatives

Source: Developed by author.

#### 4.4.1 Analysis of Founder Reputation and Credibility

The findings revealed that founder reputation and credibility functioned as one of the most influential mechanisms shaping stakeholder support during crisis situations. Across both cases, participants consistently associated willingness to provide support with accumulated trust, operational reliability, fulfillment of obligations, and long-term founder credibility developed before the crisis.

Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized that support decisions depended not only on business performance, but also on the founder's reputation for responsibility, transparency, and consistency in previous cooperation. Reputation was perceived as a mechanism reducing uncertainty during periods of disruption and increasing confidence in the company's ability to recover after the crisis.

In the Biosphere case, the founder explicitly emphasized the importance of long-term reputational discipline, operational predictability, and relationship management in securing support during crisis recovery. Similar patterns emerged in the Micron case, where support decisions were strongly connected to honesty, operational expertise, and personal responsibility rather than formal contractual guarantees.

**Success Stories in Trust-Based Financial Support:** The research identified several examples where reputational capital directly influenced financial and operational support. In the Biosphere case, major partners publicly announced advance payments and large-scale product purchases shortly after the crisis, while banks agreed to restructuring and support mechanisms following direct founder communication.

In the Micron case, several suppliers provided substantial payment deferrals, while some partners agreed to advance payments and private financial support despite the company's operational disruption.

#### 4.4.2 Analysis of Personal Relationships and Trust

Personal relationships and interpersonal trust emerged as foundational mechanisms influencing stakeholder behavior during wartime business crises. The strongest co-occurrence relationship identified in the coding analysis connected Founder Reputation and Credibility

with Personal Relationships and Trust, indicating that support decisions were deeply embedded in long-term relational experience.

Participants repeatedly emphasized that support was often driven by direct personal familiarity with the founder rather than by formal partnership structures alone. Stakeholders associated trust with repeated interaction, operational consistency, personal communication, and previous cooperation history developed over many years.

In the Micron case, respondents directly stated that “*the key factor was personal relationships and trust rather than formal contracts.*” The findings additionally demonstrated that interpersonal trust frequently outweighed short-term economic calculations during crisis response.

The analysis also revealed differences between stakeholder groups. Suppliers and operational stakeholders emphasized operational predictability and direct communication, while business partners more frequently connected trust with founder integrity, leadership reliability, and relational depth.

The findings support prior research emphasizing embedded relationships and interpersonal trust as critical mechanisms influencing stakeholder behavior under uncertainty (Granovetter, 1985; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

**Success Stories in Entrepreneurial Solidarity:** Several participants described support mechanisms as acts of reciprocity and mutual responsibility within entrepreneurial communities. In the Biosphere case, business associations and founder networks actively contributed to operational recovery, including financing protective infrastructure and providing additional logistical support.

The findings suggest that strong interpersonal relationships within entrepreneurial ecosystems significantly increased the speed and scale of stakeholder mobilization during crisis situations.

#### **4.4.3 Analysis of Founder Visibility and Communication**

Founder visibility and communication emerged as major differentiating factors between the Biosphere and Micron cases. The Biosphere case demonstrated substantially stronger thematic concentration around public communication, symbolic leadership, and

ecosystem mobilization, while the Micron case relied primarily on private communication and direct interpersonal relationships.

The findings revealed that founder visibility functioned not only as a communication tool, but also as a trust amplification mechanism during crisis situations. Public communication reduced uncertainty, accelerated stakeholder coordination, and increased ecosystem engagement around the company.

In the Biosphere case, the founder used social media as the primary communication channel immediately after the strike because of its speed and accessibility. Public communication rapidly spread through media channels and generated large-scale public and business support.

At the same time, the Micron case demonstrated that public visibility was not the only pathway toward support mobilization. The findings showed that strong interpersonal trust and founder credibility could partially compensate for lower public visibility when long-term operational relationships already existed.

**Success Stories in Founder-Led Crisis Communication:** The Biosphere case demonstrated how direct founder communication can rapidly mobilize stakeholder ecosystems during crisis situations. Public founder statements on Facebook were immediately amplified through media publications, partner communication, and public business support initiatives.

The founder additionally used direct voice messages, personal outreach, and individual communication with banks, suppliers, and partners as primary crisis communication tools. These actions reduced uncertainty and strengthened stakeholder confidence during the early stages of crisis recovery.

#### **4.4.4 Analysis of Partner Decision-Making Factors**

The research identified several recurring factors influencing stakeholder decisions regarding support, cooperation continuity, and operational flexibility during crisis recovery.

The most influential factors included accumulated interpersonal trust, founder reputation, communication transparency, operational reliability, confidence in organizational recovery, and perceived founder leadership during the first stages of the crisis.

Participants repeatedly emphasized that support decisions were influenced less by formal agreements and more by relational confidence accumulated before the crisis. Stakeholders frequently evaluated whether the founder had historically fulfilled obligations, maintained communication discipline, and demonstrated operational responsibility during previous periods of uncertainty.

The findings additionally demonstrated that support decisions were strongly influenced by perceptions of leadership behavior during the first days following the crisis. Rapid communication, visible founder involvement, operational action, and direct engagement with partners reduced uncertainty and strengthened stakeholder confidence regarding business continuity.

At the same time, the analysis revealed that not all partners responded positively. Both cases demonstrated examples where some stakeholders increased pressure, tightened financial conditions, or minimized cooperation despite previous relationships. Participants often associated such reactions with organizational policies, risk aversion, or differences in values rather than with operational realities alone.

#### **4.4.5 Analysis of Forms of Partner Support**

The findings revealed multiple forms of stakeholder support activated during crisis recovery across both cases. Support mechanisms included advance payments, payment deferrals, operational assistance, equipment relocation, warehouse support, public solidarity campaigns, private loans, supplier flexibility, and symbolic public support.

The Biosphere case demonstrated particularly strong ecosystem mobilization, where public support initiatives generated additional waves of support from other stakeholders. Public announcements by major partners created a cascading effect encouraging broader participation in support activities.

In contrast, the Micron case demonstrated more localized and relationship-based support mechanisms. Support was mobilized primarily through direct personal outreach, private negotiations, and operational cooperation rather than through large-scale public communication.

**Success Stories in Ecosystem Mobilization:** One of the strongest examples of stakeholder mobilization emerged in the Biosphere case after Rozetka publicly announced that profits from Biosphere products would be directed toward warehouse recovery. This initiative generated a broader “support flashmob” among Ukrainian businesses, including Varus, EVA and other partners.

The findings demonstrate that public ecosystem support itself became a mechanism reinforcing additional stakeholder engagement and accelerating collective support behavior during crisis recovery.

#### **4.4.6 Analysis of Organizational Resilience and Leadership**

Organizational resilience and visible leadership emerged as critical factors influencing stakeholder confidence during wartime disruption. Participants repeatedly associated successful recovery with rapid decision-making, operational continuity, founder visibility, and proactive communication behavior.

The Biosphere case demonstrated highly visible crisis leadership, including direct public communication, immediate stakeholder outreach, operational coordination, and ecosystem engagement. In the Micron case, resilience was demonstrated more through rapid operational action, preservation of the team, equipment acquisition, and restoration planning.

The findings suggest that leadership visibility reduced uncertainty for stakeholders and reinforced confidence in the companies’ recovery potential. Participants frequently interpreted decisive founder behavior as evidence of organizational stability and future viability.

**Success Stories in Organizational Resilience:** The Micron case demonstrated a rapid operational recovery response, where the founder purchased a new production line within two days after the destruction of the facility and simultaneously searched for used equipment to accelerate operational restart.

The Biosphere case additionally demonstrated long-term resilience investments, including installation of mobile bomb shelters, war-risk insurance for employees, and operational relocation measures aimed at reducing future organizational vulnerability.

#### **4.4.7 Analysis of Community and Network Effects**

Community and network effects emerged as important amplifiers of stakeholder support during crisis situations. Entrepreneurial ecosystems, informal business communities, and personal founder networks significantly influenced the scale and speed of support mobilization.

The Biosphere case particularly demonstrated the role of entrepreneurial communities and public ecosystem solidarity. Support initiatives from partners, business associations, and public business leaders created a collective mobilization effect extending beyond direct contractual relationships.

Participants repeatedly described support as a form of reciprocity, mutual responsibility, and entrepreneurial solidarity during wartime conditions. In several cases, stakeholders framed support not only as assistance to an individual company, but also as support for broader Ukrainian business resilience.

The findings additionally revealed that embeddedness within entrepreneurial ecosystems increased access to informal support mechanisms, including private financing, operational flexibility, strategic introductions, and symbolic public support. These findings align with prior research emphasizing the importance of network embeddedness and relational capital during periods of uncertainty and crisis (Granovetter, 1985).

## **CHAPTER 5. MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT MOBILIZATION DURING WARTIME BUSINESS CRISES**

### **5.1 Framework Structure**

#### **Vision and Mission**

The proposed framework aims to help B2B companies strengthen organizational resilience during wartime disruption through the systematic development of reputational capital, stakeholder trust, and ecosystem relationships. The framework positions founder reputation and stakeholder relationships not as secondary communication assets, but as strategic managerial resources directly influencing business continuity and recovery capacity during crisis situations.

The mission of the framework is to provide founders and management teams with an integrated approach to building, managing, and leveraging reputation, trust, communication, and ecosystem embeddedness in order to secure stakeholder support under conditions of extreme uncertainty. The framework emphasizes that support mobilization during crises emerges not from visibility alone, but from long-term relational and reputational dynamics accumulated before the crisis occurs.

The findings of this research demonstrated that founder visibility amplifies existing reputation and trust rather than creates them independently. While the Biosphere case illustrated how public visibility accelerated ecosystem mobilization and collective support behavior, the Micron case demonstrated that substantial stakeholder support could also emerge through strong interpersonal trust and long-term operational relationships despite lower levels of public visibility. These findings suggest that visibility functions primarily as a trust amplification mechanism embedded within broader systems of reputational and relational capital.

### **Core Values**

The framework is built upon several core values that emerged consistently throughout the thematic analysis, including trust, transparency, operational reliability, reciprocity, long-term relationship orientation, stakeholder accountability, and organizational resilience. These values reflect both the practical realities of B2B stakeholder relationships and the broader relational mechanisms shaping support behavior during wartime crises.

### **Strategic Objectives**

The framework proposes six interconnected strategic objectives:

- 1. Strengthen founder reputational capital through consistent operational reliability, transparency, and long-term stakeholder trust.**
- 2. Develop relationship-based trust infrastructure capable of supporting cooperation under conditions of uncertainty.**
- 3. Implement founder-led communication systems that reduce stakeholder uncertainty during crises.**
- 4. Increase ecosystem embeddedness through participation in entrepreneurial communities and business networks.**

5. **Enhance organizational resilience through operational preparedness, communication coordination, and stakeholder confidence management.**
6. **Institutionalize stakeholder support mobilization mechanisms for crisis recovery and business continuity.**

### **Theoretical Foundation of the Framework**

The framework integrates several complementary theoretical perspectives. Stakeholder Theory emphasizes the importance of long-term stakeholder relationships and mutual value creation (Freeman, 1984). Trust Theory highlights the role of accumulated interpersonal trust in reducing uncertainty during crisis situations (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Social Capital and Network Embeddedness theories explain how relational networks facilitate access to support and cooperation during periods of disruption (Granovetter, 1985). Signaling Theory additionally explains how founder communication and visible leadership function as signals reducing stakeholder uncertainty under conditions of information asymmetry (Spence, 1973).

The framework also incorporates insights from crisis communication and organizational resilience literature, emphasizing the importance of transparency, visible leadership, and rapid communication during organizational disruption (Coombs & Holladay, 2021). Recent reputation management studies additionally demonstrate that reputational capital directly influences stakeholder confidence, cooperation willingness, and organizational resilience during crisis recovery (Deephouse et al., 2024).

### **5.2 Key Elements of the Framework**

The framework consists of six interconnected domains influencing stakeholder support mobilization during wartime business crises (Figure 3). The framework illustrates how founder reputation, trust infrastructure, strategic communication, ecosystem embeddedness, and stakeholder support mechanisms interact to strengthen organizational resilience and recovery capacity during periods of disruption.

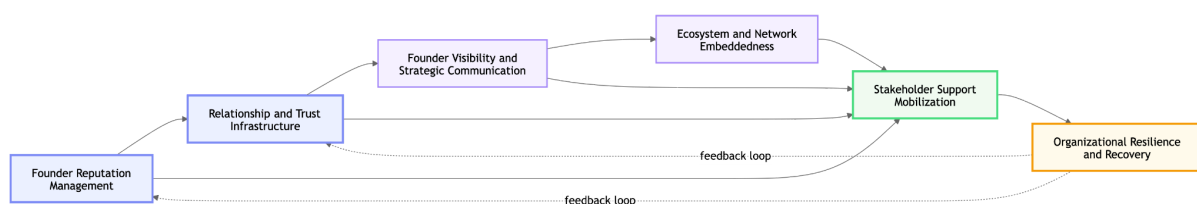


Figure 3. Management framework for stakeholder support mobilization during wartime business crises. The framework illustrates how founder reputation, trust infrastructure, strategic communication, and ecosystem embeddedness interact to mobilize stakeholder support and strengthen organizational resilience.

Source: Developed by the author using Mermaid diagram syntax (mermaid.live) in VS Code.

### **5.2.1 Founder Reputation Management**

Founder reputation management represents the foundational element of the framework. The findings demonstrated that stakeholder support decisions were strongly influenced by accumulated perceptions of reliability, operational discipline, consistency, and accountability developed prior to the crisis.

Reputational capital was formed through repeated interaction, fulfillment of obligations, payment discipline, transparent communication, and long-term cooperation history. In both cases, stakeholders associated support decisions with the founder's prior behavior rather than with short-term crisis communication alone.

Recent research additionally confirms that corporate and founder reputation function as strategic intangible assets shaping stakeholder trust and willingness to cooperate under conditions of uncertainty (Ali et al., 2024; Deephouse et al., 2024). Managerially, this suggests that reputational capital should be treated as a long-term strategic resource rather than a short-term image management activity. Reputation-building practices should therefore include operational transparency, predictable communication, relationship continuity, and visible accountability during both stable and crisis periods.

### **5.2.2 Relationship and Trust Infrastructure**

The findings revealed that interpersonal trust and relationship depth were among the strongest mechanisms influencing support mobilization. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized that long-term direct relationships mattered more than formal contractual arrangements during periods of uncertainty.

Relationship infrastructure within the framework includes direct founder interaction with stakeholders, continuity of communication, reciprocal support behavior, operational

familiarity, and long-term cooperation practices that strengthen relational embeddedness and stakeholder trust.

The findings support prior research suggesting that embedded relationships reduce uncertainty and facilitate cooperation during crises (Granovetter, 1985; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Contemporary stakeholder management literature additionally highlights that relationship quality and stakeholder engagement significantly influence organizational resilience during crisis situations (Bundy et al., 2021).

From a managerial perspective, companies should intentionally cultivate relationship continuity before crises occur, rather than relying exclusively on transactional or contract-based interactions.

### **5.2.3 Founder Visibility and Strategic Communication**

The research demonstrated that founder visibility and communication played different but complementary roles across the two crisis cases. In Biosphere, public visibility accelerated ecosystem mobilization and stakeholder coordination, while in Micron, direct interpersonal communication compensated for lower public visibility.

The framework therefore conceptualizes founder visibility as a trust amplification mechanism rather than an independent source of stakeholder support. Visibility becomes effective only when supported by previously accumulated trust, credibility, and relational legitimacy.

Strategic communication within the framework includes transparent crisis updates, founder-led messaging, direct stakeholder outreach, symbolic leadership communication, and public signaling of operational continuity. Prior research additionally demonstrates that transparent communication and visible leadership significantly reduce stakeholder uncertainty and strengthen trust during crisis recovery (Coombs & Holladay, 2021; Men & Yue, 2023).

The findings additionally demonstrated that rapid founder communication reinforced perceptions of organizational stability and recovery capability during crisis situations.

### **5.2.4 Ecosystem and Network Embeddedness**

Entrepreneurial ecosystems and business communities emerged as major amplifiers of stakeholder support. Embeddedness within entrepreneurial networks increased access to operational flexibility, symbolic solidarity, financial support, and stakeholder coordination during crisis situations.

The framework therefore emphasizes ecosystem participation as a strategic resilience mechanism rather than merely a networking activity. Business communities functioned as informal crisis infrastructure supporting collective mobilization during wartime disruption.

Recent research on entrepreneurial ecosystems additionally demonstrates that network embeddedness strengthens collective resilience and adaptive recovery during periods of uncertainty and disruption (Roundy, 2022). These findings strongly align with the Biosphere case, where ecosystem solidarity amplified both public and operational support mechanisms.

Managerially, companies should actively participate in professional associations, entrepreneurial ecosystems, and collaborative business communities before crises occur in order to strengthen relational capital and reciprocal support mechanisms.

### **5.2.5 Stakeholder Support Mobilization**

Stakeholder support mobilization represents the primary outcome domain of the framework. The research identified multiple forms of support activated during crisis situations, including advance payments, payment deferrals, operational flexibility, logistics assistance, private financing, public solidarity campaigns, and symbolic support.

The findings demonstrated that these forms of support rarely emerged independently from relational dynamics. Instead, support was strongly shaped by accumulated trust, reputation, communication quality, and ecosystem relationships. Contemporary crisis management literature similarly suggests that stakeholder reactions during crises are significantly influenced by prior relational trust and organizational legitimacy (Bundy et al., 2021).

The framework therefore conceptualizes support mobilization as a relational process rather than a purely financial or contractual phenomenon.

### 5.2.6 Organizational Resilience and Recovery

Organizational resilience represents the final outcome of the framework and reflects the company's ability to stabilize, recover, and adapt during periods of disruption.

The findings demonstrated that stakeholder confidence increased when founders demonstrated visible leadership, rapid operational response, communication transparency, decisive action, and operational continuity planning. In both crisis cases, leadership visibility reduced uncertainty and reinforced stakeholder confidence regarding recovery potential.

Recent resilience research additionally highlights the importance of adaptive leadership, stakeholder coordination, and network support in strengthening organizational recovery capacity during adversity (Williams et al., 2021).

The framework therefore positions resilience not only as an operational capability, but also as a relational and reputational phenomenon shaped through stakeholder perceptions of organizational stability and recovery potential.

### 5.3 Conceptual Framework of Stakeholder Support Mobilization

The conceptual framework developed in this study explains how reputational and relational capital transform into stakeholder support during wartime business crises.

The framework demonstrates the following relational sequence:

***Founder Reputation and Credibility → Trust Formation → Founder Visibility and Communication → Ecosystem Mobilization → Stakeholder Support → Organizational Resilience and Recovery.***

The framework suggests that reputational capital and interpersonal trust function as foundational conditions enabling stakeholder support behavior. Founder visibility and crisis communication subsequently amplify stakeholder coordination and ecosystem engagement, particularly during periods of uncertainty.

The comparative analysis additionally demonstrated that founder visibility alone does not guarantee support mobilization. Instead, visibility amplifies previously accumulated trust, legitimacy, and relational embeddedness. The Biosphere case illustrated large-scale ecosystem mobilization driven by public founder communication, while the Micron case

demonstrated that strong interpersonal trust and operational credibility could sustain stakeholder support despite lower public visibility.

The framework also highlights the importance of feedback loops within crisis recovery processes. Successful support mobilization reinforces founder legitimacy, strengthens stakeholder trust, and increases future relational capital, thereby contributing to long-term organizational resilience.

#### **5.4 Strategic Recommendations for B2B Founders**

The findings suggest that B2B founders should treat reputation, trust, and stakeholder relationships as strategic resilience assets rather than as secondary communication tools. Before crises emerge, companies should systematically invest in long-term stakeholder relationships, maintain operational reliability and payment discipline, and actively participate in entrepreneurial ecosystems and business communities.

The research additionally demonstrates the importance of establishing communication infrastructure before crisis situations occur. Founder visibility should be developed through expertise, transparency, and credibility rather than through media exposure alone. Long-term relational consistency proved substantially more important than short-term visibility during crisis recovery.

During crisis situations, founders should prioritize rapid and transparent communication with stakeholders, maintain visible leadership presence, and directly engage with key partners and financial stakeholders. The findings suggest that direct founder involvement significantly reduces uncertainty and reinforces stakeholder confidence during periods of disruption.

Following crisis stabilization, companies should maintain reciprocity toward supporting stakeholders, institutionalize relationship management practices, strengthen resilience systems, and continue communication transparency throughout the recovery process. Public acknowledgment of stakeholder support additionally contributes to strengthening long-term relational capital and ecosystem trust.

#### **5.5 Practical Implications for Crisis Management and Reputation Strategy**

The findings of this study suggest that reputational and relational capital play a broader managerial role than is typically reflected in traditional approaches to crisis communication or corporate branding. Across both analyzed cases, stakeholder behavior during wartime disruption was shaped less by formal contractual structures and more by accumulated perceptions of credibility, reliability, and previous interaction experience. Interview narratives repeatedly demonstrated that partners evaluated not only the operational state of the company after the crisis, but also the history of cooperation, communication behavior, and the perceived legitimacy of founders within the broader business ecosystem.

Within this context, reputation functioned not merely as a symbolic image-related construct, but as a strategic organizational resource directly influencing recovery capacity, stakeholder coordination, and continuity of cooperation during disruption. This interpretation aligns with Fombrun's (1996) understanding of reputation as accumulated stakeholder evaluation developed through repeated organizational behavior over time. Several respondents specifically associated continued cooperation with prior operational reliability rather than with short-term crisis communication efforts alone.

The comparative analysis additionally demonstrated that trust operated as a form of crisis resource accumulated gradually through long-term interaction and relational consistency. In both cases, support mechanisms frequently emerged through interpersonal confidence and previously established business relationships rather than through formal guarantees. These observations are consistent with Morgan and Hunt's (1994) commitment-trust perspective and Granovetter's (1985) embeddedness theory, both of which emphasize the role of trust-based relationships in sustaining cooperation under elevated uncertainty.

The Biosphere case particularly illustrated how visible founder communication accelerated ecosystem coordination and symbolic mobilization during the early stages of recovery. Participants repeatedly referred to public founder visibility as a mechanism reducing uncertainty and reinforcing confidence in the company's ability to stabilize operations after the attack. At the same time, the Micron case demonstrated that public visibility was not the only pathway toward meaningful support. Several stakeholders continued cooperation despite lower public visibility because interpersonal trust and operational credibility had already been established through years of collaboration. This distinction became one of the most important analytical findings of the research.

Another important implication concerns the role of entrepreneurial ecosystems during crisis recovery. Across both cases, business communities, informal networks, and long-term ecosystem relationships influenced the speed and flexibility of partner reactions. The findings suggest that ecosystem embeddedness can function as an informal resilience infrastructure facilitating reciprocal support, symbolic legitimacy, and operational coordination beyond formal institutional mechanisms. This observation expands recent discussions on collective resilience within entrepreneurial ecosystems (Roundy, 2022).

Overall, the study indicates that organizational resilience in B2B environments should not be interpreted exclusively through operational or financial capabilities. The findings instead suggest that adaptive recovery is strongly connected to accumulated stakeholder trust, relational continuity, ecosystem participation, and reputational legitimacy developed before disruption occurs.

### **5.6 Framework Implementation Considerations**

The implementation of the proposed framework requires long-term organizational integration rather than isolated communication initiatives introduced only after a crisis occurs. The comparative analysis demonstrated that stakeholder cooperation during recovery emerged through the interaction of operational reliability, relationship continuity, communication consistency, and ecosystem participation developed over extended periods of time. In both cases, support mechanisms were most effective when stakeholders already possessed previous positive interaction experience with the company and its founder.

Several respondents emphasized that rapid communication became important primarily because trusted relationships already existed before the crisis. This suggests that communication effectiveness cannot be separated from broader organizational behavior and stakeholder experience accumulated over time. Founder communication reduced uncertainty during the first recovery stages, but interview narratives repeatedly demonstrated that communication alone would not have been sufficient without prior credibility and operational trustworthiness.

The findings additionally indicate that implementation of the framework requires systematic stakeholder relationship management beyond transactional interaction models. Companies relying exclusively on short-term contractual cooperation may encounter significant limitations in mobilizing support during disruption. In contrast, organizations

maintaining long-term relational engagement with suppliers, clients, financial stakeholders, and entrepreneurial communities demonstrated stronger adaptive capacity and greater access to operational flexibility during recovery processes.

Another important implementation consideration concerns internal organizational coordination. In both crisis cases, recovery depended not only on external communication, but also on the ability to synchronize operational management, stakeholder interaction, leadership visibility, and ecosystem coordination simultaneously. Participants frequently associated successful recovery with the founder's active involvement in communication and decision-making during the early post-crisis stages. However, this involvement was perceived as effective primarily because it reflected broader organizational consistency rather than isolated symbolic visibility.

The framework also assumes that reputational preparedness cannot be developed reactively during disruption itself. Several interview narratives suggested that stakeholder confidence was strongly connected to long-term perceptions of accountability, communication transparency, and operational reliability accumulated before the crisis occurred. This observation aligns with organizational resilience research emphasizing that adaptive recovery depends on capabilities and coordination mechanisms established prior to adversity (Williams et al., 2021).

Overall, the findings suggest that implementation of resilience-oriented stakeholder strategies requires continuous organizational investment in communication routines, ecosystem relationships, relational continuity, and operational credibility rather than short-term reputation management activities activated only during emergencies.

### **5.6.1 Crisis Preparedness Through Reputational Capital**

The findings of this research indicate that reputational capital functions as a form of organizational preparedness significantly influencing stakeholder reactions during crisis recovery. Across both analyzed cases, support mechanisms emerged not primarily because of reactive communication strategies, but because stakeholders relied on accumulated perceptions of reliability, accountability, and previous cooperation experience developed long before the crisis itself.

Interview narratives repeatedly demonstrated that many support decisions were made under conditions of incomplete information and operational uncertainty. In these situations, partners often relied on relational trust and founder credibility when deciding whether to maintain cooperation, provide flexibility, or continue financial engagement despite elevated risks. Several respondents described support decisions as based less on formal guarantees and more on confidence in the people behind the business.

The Biosphere case illustrated how reputational legitimacy and ecosystem visibility accelerated collective mobilization and symbolic support during recovery. Public founder communication reinforced stakeholder confidence because it was supported by already established market credibility and strong ecosystem relationships. In contrast, the Micron case demonstrated that even without comparable public visibility, interpersonal trust and long-term operational reliability still generated meaningful support mechanisms, including continued cooperation, payment flexibility, and partner accommodation during the rebuilding process.

These observations suggest that reputational capital should not be interpreted solely as a communication-related or symbolic asset. Instead, the findings indicate that reputation operates as accumulated operational experience translated into stakeholder confidence during periods of instability. In practical terms, crisis preparedness emerged not only through formal risk-management systems, but also through long-term investments in relationship continuity, communication consistency, ecosystem participation, and trustworthy organizational behavior.

The comparative analysis additionally revealed that trust frequently substituted for formal safeguards during disruption. Several stakeholders remained engaged despite operational interruptions because previous interactions had created confidence in the founder's integrity, responsiveness, and willingness to restore operations over time. This supports Blois's (1999) argument that trust in B2B environments extends beyond contractual dependence and includes expectations of goodwill and responsible behavior under uncertain conditions.

Taken together, the findings suggest that reputational capital functions as a strategic resilience resource accumulated gradually through repeated interaction and organizational behavior. Crisis support, therefore, was not created during the disruption itself, but largely

activated through stakeholder perceptions and relational structures established before the crisis occurred.

### **5.6.2 Limitations of Founder Visibility**

Although founder visibility emerged as an important element influencing stakeholder coordination during crisis situations, the findings of this research also revealed several limitations associated with visibility as a standalone mechanism. The comparative analysis demonstrated that public visibility alone was insufficient to generate sustainable stakeholder support without previously accumulated trust, credibility, and operational legitimacy.

The Biosphere case illustrated how visible founder communication accelerated ecosystem mobilization and strengthened collective support behavior during crisis recovery. However, the Micron case demonstrated that meaningful stakeholder support could emerge despite lower levels of public visibility when strong interpersonal trust and long-term operational relationships already existed. These findings suggest that visibility functions primarily as an amplification mechanism reinforcing existing relational and reputational capital rather than acting as an independent driver of support mobilization.

The research additionally indicates that excessive dependence on founder-centered communication may create organizational vulnerabilities. Publicly visible founders often become symbolic representations of organizational stability, increasing stakeholder expectations regarding communication responsiveness, leadership visibility, and operational transparency during periods of uncertainty. While such visibility may strengthen coordination and symbolic support, it may simultaneously intensify reputational pressure and increase organizational dependence on individual founder presence.

These observations align with signaling theory, which suggests that communication effectiveness depends not only on signal visibility, but also on the credibility and legitimacy of the signal sender (Spence, 1973). Contemporary crisis communication research similarly emphasizes that authentic and credible communication produces stronger stakeholder trust than visibility without operational consistency or relational reliability (Coombs & Holladay, 2021; Men & Yue, 2023).

The framework therefore conceptualizes founder visibility as a strategically valuable but relationally dependent mechanism. Public visibility becomes effective only when

supported by accumulated trust, operational credibility, and stakeholder legitimacy developed prior to the crisis itself.

## **CHAPTER 6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

### **6.1 Research Limitations**

The selected qualitative comparative methodology provided valuable insights into the mechanisms influencing stakeholder support during wartime business crises. However, several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study.

First, the research was based on only two crisis cases within the Ukrainian B2B context, which limits the broader generalizability of the findings. While the Biosphere and Micron cases provided rich comparative insights into stakeholder behavior during wartime disruption, they cannot fully represent the diversity of crisis experiences across industries, regions, or organizational contexts.

Second, the study relied on a relatively limited qualitative sample consisting of 12 semi-structured interviews. Although thematic saturation was achieved during the later stages of analysis, the findings should still be interpreted as exploratory rather than universally representative. Additional perspectives from a broader range of stakeholders, industries, and organizational contexts could further strengthen understanding of support mobilization mechanisms during crises.

Another limitation concerns the retrospective nature of several interview responses. Participants reflected on crisis situations after the events had already occurred, which may have influenced recollections, interpretations, and emotional framing of stakeholder behavior during the recovery process.

The wartime environment additionally created practical limitations regarding access to sensitive operational and financial information. Some participants demonstrated caution when discussing financial support mechanisms, operational disruptions, or internal stakeholder negotiations due to confidentiality concerns and ongoing security risks. As a result, the research relied primarily on qualitative perceptions and narratives rather than fully verified operational or financial performance indicators.

Finally, the study focused specifically on the Ukrainian wartime business environment, which represents a highly unique geopolitical and economic context. Consequently, the findings may not be directly transferable to non-crisis environments or to countries operating under different institutional and cultural conditions.

Despite these limitations, the research provides important exploratory insights into the relationship between founder visibility, reputational capital, stakeholder trust, and organizational resilience during periods of extreme uncertainty.

## **6.2 Potential Research Biases**

Several potential biases may have influenced the design, interpretation, and analysis of this research.

One potential source of bias relates to self-reporting and retrospective interpretation. Participants reflected on emotionally significant crisis experiences that may have shaped their narratives and evaluations of stakeholder behavior. In some cases, respondents may have unintentionally emphasized successful support mechanisms or underrepresented negative experiences and conflicts during the recovery process.

The research additionally relied heavily on founder and partner narratives regarding trust, reputation, and support mobilization. Such perspectives may naturally contain subjective interpretations influenced by personal relationships, emotional involvement, and retrospective sense-making processes following crisis events.

Another potential bias concerns socially desirable responses. Given the wartime context and the strong social emphasis on solidarity and mutual support within Ukrainian business communities, some participants may have framed their actions or decisions in ways perceived as socially or professionally appropriate.

The professional background of the researcher in public relations and strategic communication may have influenced the interpretation of reputational and communication-related mechanisms within the analyzed crisis cases. While this background contributed to deeper contextual understanding of founder visibility and stakeholder communication processes, it may also have increased analytical sensitivity toward relational and reputational dynamics compared to alternative operational or structural explanations.

Finally, the wartime context itself may have influenced both participant responses and analytical interpretation. Conditions of uncertainty, emotional stress, collective solidarity, and national resilience potentially shaped stakeholder perceptions and support behavior in ways that may differ from non-war crisis environments.

Acknowledging these biases is important for maintaining analytical transparency and supporting balanced interpretation of the findings.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

The findings of this research suggest several managerial recommendations for founders and B2B companies operating under conditions of uncertainty and disruption.

First, companies should treat reputational capital as a long-term strategic asset rather than solely as a communication or branding activity. The findings demonstrated that stakeholder support during crises depended significantly on accumulated perceptions of operational reliability, accountability, and trust developed before the crisis occurred.

Second, organizations should institutionalize stakeholder relationship management beyond transactional cooperation models. Long-term relationship continuity, direct communication, and relational embeddedness significantly influenced stakeholder willingness to provide operational flexibility, financial support, and continued cooperation during periods of disruption.

Third, founders should develop crisis communication systems that prioritize transparency, speed, and direct stakeholder engagement. The findings demonstrated that visible founder communication reduced uncertainty and strengthened perceptions of organizational stability during crisis recovery. However, communication proved effective primarily when supported by previously established credibility and trust.

Another important recommendation concerns participation in entrepreneurial ecosystems and collaborative business communities. The research demonstrated that ecosystem embeddedness strengthened access to reciprocal support mechanisms, symbolic solidarity, and operational coordination during wartime disruption. Companies should therefore approach ecosystem participation not only as networking activity, but also as a strategic resilience mechanism.

Finally, organizations should integrate relational resilience into broader crisis preparedness strategies. Crisis recovery depended not only on operational capabilities, but also on stakeholder confidence, ecosystem relationships, and accumulated reputational capital. As a result, resilience planning should include communication preparedness, relationship continuity systems, and stakeholder coordination practices alongside traditional operational risk management approaches.

#### **6.4 Future Research Directions**

This study opens several promising directions for future research related to stakeholder support, reputational capital, and organizational resilience during crisis situations.

First, future studies could conduct quantitative validation of the findings across larger B2B samples in order to test the relationship between founder visibility, trust, reputational capital, and stakeholder support using statistical methods. Such research could strengthen the generalizability of the conceptual relationships identified in this study.

Second, future research could explore cross-country comparisons of wartime business resilience and stakeholder behavior in different institutional and geopolitical contexts. Comparative analysis across countries may help identify how cultural, economic, and institutional factors shape support mobilization mechanisms during crisis situations.

Another promising direction involves industry-level comparison between manufacturing, service, and technology sectors. Different industries may demonstrate varying levels of dependency on founder reputation, ecosystem embeddedness, and interpersonal trust during organizational recovery processes.

Longitudinal studies could additionally examine how stakeholder trust, founder reputation, and relational capital evolve over time following crisis recovery. Such research would contribute to understanding the long-term sustainability of support mechanisms activated during periods of disruption.

Future research may also investigate the risks and limitations associated with founder-centered communication strategies, including organizational dependency on visible leadership, reputational vulnerability, and stakeholder expectation management during prolonged crises.

Finally, further investigation of entrepreneurial ecosystems as informal resilience infrastructure may contribute to broader organizational resilience and stakeholder management literature. The findings of this study suggest that business communities and ecosystem networks can play a critical role in facilitating cooperation, operational flexibility, and collective adaptation during periods of extreme uncertainty.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This research explored how founder visibility, reputational capital, and stakeholder trust influenced partner support during wartime business crises within the Ukrainian B2B environment. Through a comparative qualitative analysis of the Biosphere and Micron cases, the study identified several interconnected mechanisms shaping stakeholder behavior during periods of disruption and recovery.

The findings demonstrated that stakeholder support depended primarily on accumulated trust, reputational credibility, interpersonal relationships, and ecosystem embeddedness rather than on visibility alone. Founder visibility and public communication strengthened coordination and amplified support mobilization, but did not independently create stakeholder trust in the absence of previously established relational and reputational capital.

The comparative analysis additionally revealed that entrepreneurial ecosystems and business communities functioned as important forms of informal resilience infrastructure during wartime disruption. Ecosystem participation strengthened access to reciprocal support, operational flexibility, symbolic solidarity, and stakeholder coordination beyond formal contractual mechanisms.

Another important contribution of the study concerns the interpretation of reputational capital as a strategic organizational resource influencing crisis preparedness and recovery capacity. The findings suggest that reputation should be understood not only as a communication-related construct, but also as a long-term managerial asset shaping stakeholder confidence and organizational resilience during uncertainty.

Overall, the study contributes to stakeholder management, crisis communication, organizational resilience, and reputational capital literature by demonstrating how relational and reputational mechanisms influence support mobilization within B2B crisis environments.

The research additionally highlights the importance of integrating trust, communication, ecosystem relationships, and reputational preparedness into broader resilience-oriented management practices.

Under conditions of wartime uncertainty, the ability to mobilize stakeholder support emerged not as a consequence of visibility alone, but as the result of long-term relational investment, operational credibility, and accumulated trust developed before the crisis itself.

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### Appendix A. Interview Guide

#### Appendix A.1 Interview Guide for Business Partners and Stakeholders

1. Tell us about your cooperation with this company: how long has it lasted and what was the format of interaction?
2. How would you describe your experience working with the company before this situation? What was key in these relationships?
3. What was your perception of the founder/CEO before this event?
4. Where did this perception mainly come from?
5. How did you learn about the situation in the company and how did you decide to act?
6. What influenced your decision the most in this situation?
7. Have you had similar experiences with other partners? If so, what was decisive in those situations?
8. If you generalize, what are the key factors that determine whether you support a partner during a crisis situation?

#### Appendix A.2 Interview Guide for Founders / Case Owners

1. Please describe the crisis situation your company experienced and its immediate impact on the business.
2. What were your first actions during the first 24–72 hours after the crisis event?
3. How did you communicate the situation to employees, partners, clients, suppliers, and other stakeholders?
4. Which communication channels did you use during the crisis and why?
5. How did your partners, clients, suppliers, and financial institutions react to the situation?
6. Which forms of support were most important or unexpected during the recovery process?
7. In your opinion, what factors most influenced partners' willingness to support the company during the crisis?
8. To what extent do you believe your personal reputation, visibility, and relationships influenced stakeholder reactions and support?

9. Did this experience change your understanding of the role of founder visibility, communication, and reputation in business relationships?
10. What lessons regarding trust, communication, and partner relationships did you take from this crisis experience?

## Appendix B. Participant Overview

Participant	Role	Case
Andriy Zdesenko	Founder & CEO of Biosphere Corporation	Biosphere
Oleksandr Manko	Founder & Owner of Micron	Micron
Speaker 3	Partner / Retailer	Biosphere
Speaker 4	Partner / Retailer	Biosphere
Speaker 5	Entrepreneur / Member of Business Community (FBN environment)	Biosphere
Speaker 6	Bank Representative / Corporate Banking	Biosphere
Speaker 7	Partner in Another Business Venture	Biosphere
Speaker 8	Creditor / Personal Connection	Micron
Speaker 9	Client / Agricultural Business Representative	Micron
Speaker 10	Supplier	Micron
Speaker 11	Business Partner / Co-owner of Related Business	Micron
Speaker 12	Supplier / Trade Partner	Micron

## Appendix C. Coding Structure

### Initial Coding and Theme Development

The coding process followed an inductive thematic analysis approach. Initial codes were generated directly from interview transcripts and documentary materials, focusing on

recurring patterns related to trust, founder visibility, partner decision-making, reputation, communication behavior, and forms of support during crisis situations.

A total of 101 initial codes were identified across the two cases and later consolidated into 7 higher-order thematic categories to improve analytical clarity and reduce overlap between closely related concepts.

The coding process was conducted using Taguette and QualCoder qualitative analysis software, which enabled systematic tagging, organization of excerpts, comparison between cases, and iterative refinement of themes.

### **Main Themes and Consolidated Codes**

<b>Higher-Order Theme</b>	<b>Examples of Consolidated Codes</b>
Founder Reputation and Credibility	Reliability, responsibility, ethical behavior, fulfillment of obligations, integrity, transparency
Personal Relationships and Trust	Friendship, long-term interaction, emotional closeness, interpersonal trust, shared history
Founder Visibility and Communication	Public visibility, social media activity, personal communication, communication transparency, media presence
Partner Decision-Making Factors	Shared values, empathy, perceived recovery potential, leadership perception, emotional response
Forms of Partner Support	Financial support, prepayments, operational assistance, payment flexibility, resource sharing
Organizational Resilience and Leadership	Crisis leadership, rebuilding orientation, adaptability, initiative, operational continuity
Community and Network Effects	Business clubs, entrepreneurial ecosystem, reciprocity, industry solidarity, peer support

### Examples of Initial Codes

Initial Code	Related Theme
“Trust built over years”	Personal Relationships and Trust
“Direct founder communication”	Founder Visibility and Communication
“Keeps promises”	Founder Reputation and Credibility
“Personal friendship”	Personal Relationships and Trust
“Support without formal request”	Forms of Partner Support
“Strong leadership during crisis”	Organizational Resilience and Leadership
“Business community support”	Community and Network Effects

### Cross-Case Coding Differences

The Biosphere case demonstrated stronger concentration of codes related to:

- founder visibility;
- public communication;
- ecosystem mobilization;
- reputational capital;
- large-scale stakeholder support.

The Micron case demonstrated stronger concentration of codes related to:

- direct interpersonal relationships;
- operational trust;
- localized business ties;
- pragmatic decision-making;
- limited public communication.

These differences became central to the comparative interpretation of how founder visibility, communication, and reputational capital influence stakeholder support during wartime business crises.

## Appendix D. Document Analysis Materials

### Document 1. Founder Public Statement Following the Missile Strike

**Source:** Facebook post by Andriy Zdesenko

**Date:** April 2025

**Type:** Founder crisis communication

#### Relevance to research:

Demonstrates direct founder-led communication, emotional framing, rapid public response, and visibility during crisis.



## Document 2. Public Support Statement from TERWIN Group (EVA / VARUS)

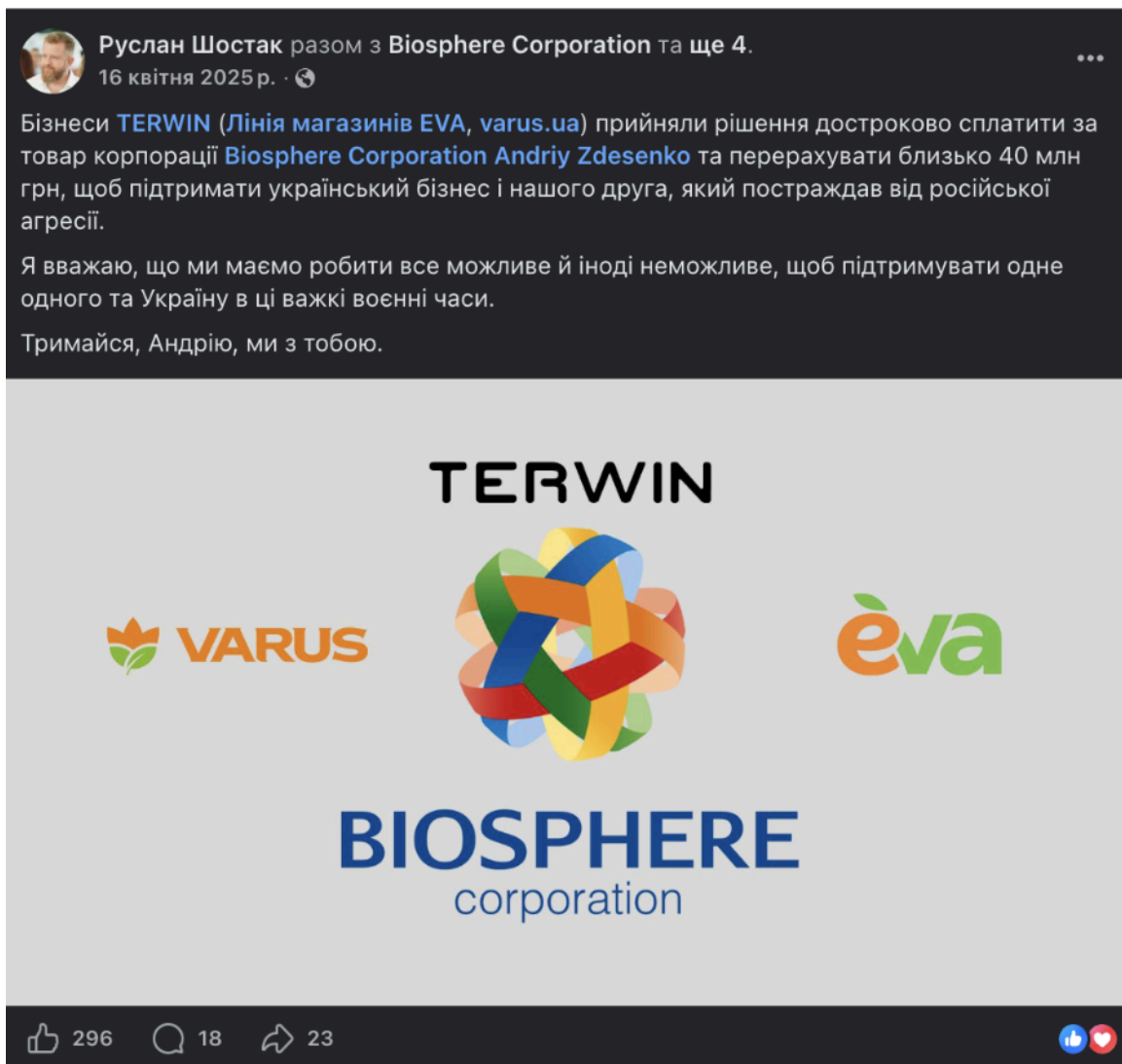
**Source:** Public statement by Ruslan Shostak

**Date:** April 2025

**Type:** Partner support communication

### Relevance to research:

Illustrates ecosystem-based support, relationship depth, reputational trust, and public solidarity between business leaders.



The image shows a Facebook post from Ruslan Shostak, dated April 16, 2025. The post text is in Ukrainian and states that the TERWIN group (including EVA and VARUS) has agreed to prepay for goods from Biosphere Corporation and pay approximately 40 million UAH to support Ukrainian business and a friend affected by Russian aggression. Shostak expresses a commitment to support Ukraine during these difficult times and offers support to Andriy Zdesenko.


Руслан Шостак разом з Biosphere Corporation та ще 4.  
16 квітня 2025 р. · 🌐

Бізнеси **TERWIN** (Лінія магазинів **EVA**, **varus.ua**) прийняли рішення достроково сплатити за товар корпорації **Biosphere Corporation Andriy Zdesenko** та перерахувати близько 40 млн грн, щоб підтримати український бізнес і нашого друга, який постраждав від російської агресії.

Я вважаю, що ми маємо робити все можливе й іноді неможливе, щоб підтримувати одне одного та Україну в ці важкі військові часи.

Тримайся, Андрію, ми з тобою.

**TERWIN**

**VARUS**  **eva**

**BIOSPHERE**  
corporation

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### Document 3. Public Support Statement from Rozetka

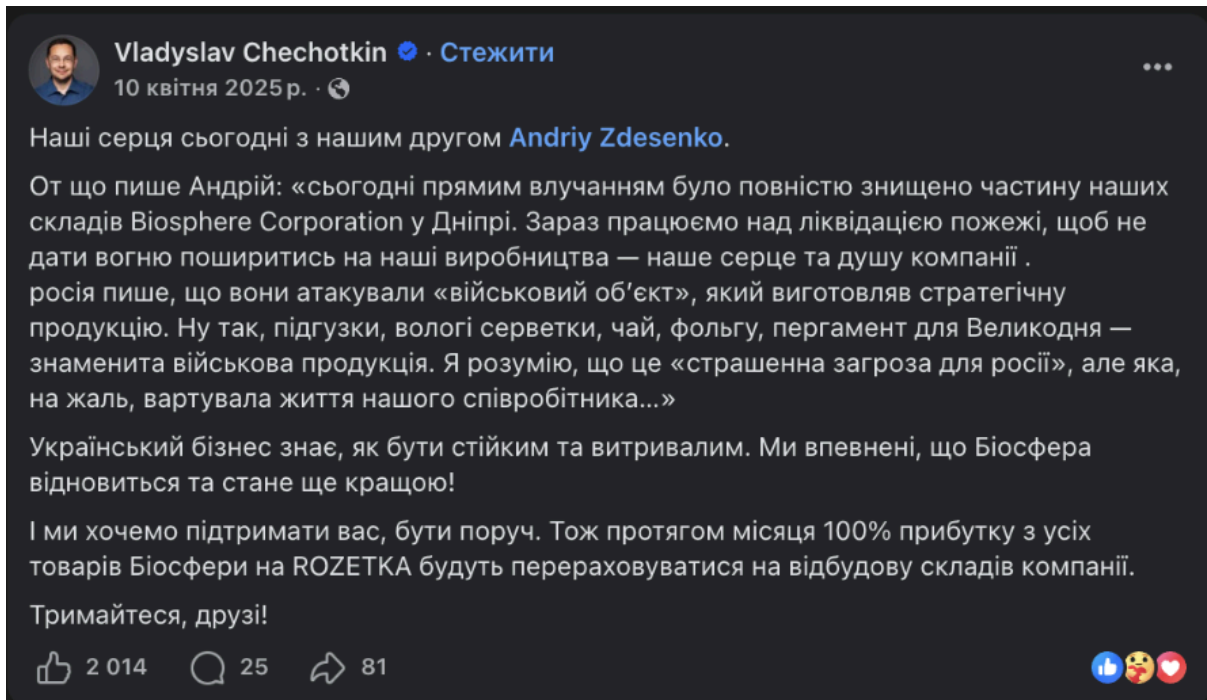
**Source:** Public Facebook post by Vladyslav Chechotkin, founder of Rozetka

**Date:** April 10, 2025

**Type:** Partner support communication / public solidarity statement

#### Relevance to research:

This communication demonstrates public ecosystem support mobilized through long-term personal and professional relationships between founders. The statement highlights friendship, emotional solidarity, and reputational trust, while also illustrating how founder visibility and public communication amplify support actions. The case additionally demonstrates how highly visible business leaders publicly associate their brands with crisis support, reinforcing both relational trust and ecosystem signaling. The decision by Rozetka to transfer 100% of profits from Biosphere products toward warehouse reconstruction also illustrates the conversion of interpersonal trust into concrete financial and operational support mechanisms during crisis recovery.



### Document 4. Official Partner Communication Request from Biosphere Corporation

**Source:** Official partner letter signed by Andriy Zdesenko, Founder and CEO of Biosphere Corporation

**Date:** April 2025

**Type:** Founder-led crisis communication / operational support request

**Relevance to research:**

This document demonstrates the role of direct founder communication during crisis situations and illustrates how personal leadership becomes integrated into operational recovery processes. The letter combines emotional framing, transparency regarding losses, and specific partnership requests, including deferred payments, operational flexibility, and temporary adjustments to contractual obligations.

The communication additionally highlights several mechanisms identified in the interview analysis:

- the importance of transparent and rapid communication during crises;
- the role of founder visibility in maintaining stakeholder trust;
- the activation of long-term partner relationships through direct communication;
- the transition from transactional interaction toward relational and ecosystem-based support.

The document further demonstrates how organizational reputation and accumulated trust are operationalized during wartime disruption through direct appeals to solidarity, continuity of cooperation, and shared responsibility within the business ecosystem.



### Шановні Партнери!

Внаслідок прямого попадання російської балістичної ракети по виробничо-складському комплексу компанії корпорації «Біосфера» у місті Дніпро 10 квітня, частина складських приміщень корпорації, де зберігались основні запаси готової продукції та сировини, була повністю знищена.

Ми приємно вражені рівню підтримки, який отримуємо щодня, за що дуже вдячні. Це мотивує та надихає увесь колектив не впадати у відчай та залишатись незламними, гуртуватись та працювати над відбудовою зруйнованих потужностей, щоб продовжувати нашу плідну співпрацю, а споживачі могли завжди знати та бути впевненими, що їх улюблені бренди завжди будуть з ними, створюючи затишок та комфорт в оселях українців.

Наразі ми закінчуємо оцінювати збитки, завдані ворожою атакою, і вони виявилися доволі значними: ми в один момент втратили більше 10 000 метрів квадратних складських приміщень на більш як 14 000 палетомісць з готовою продукцією та сировиною. Але, нажаль, внаслідок атаки, серед наших співробітників є жертви – 1 людина загинула, Ігор Кизима, інженер з устаткування та IT поранено. Орієнтовна сума збитку за попередніми оцінками складає 400 мільйонів гривень. На щастя, виробничі потужності залишилися цілими, тож наше виробництво продовжує працювати і виробляти продукцію за цих екстремальних умов. Окрім цього, частину обладнання та складів були заздалегідь переміщені на інші об'єкти в межах України, що дозволяє зберегти функціонування корпорації. Команда виробництва та логістики зараз працює на грані людських можливостей, розбираючи наслідки влучання. Щоб швидко відновитися, закупити сировину та напрацювати стоки товарів, нам потрібне значне фінансування.

Наразі, уся корпорація працює в режимі 24/7, але ми не обійдемося без партнерської допомоги.

У зв'язку з вищезазначеними факторами, ми вимушені звернутись до вас із наступним:

- Просимо встановити відтермінування оплати по укладеним договорам на 30 календарних днів, і закріпити його строком на 6 місяців. Наразі, для нас цей крок є критично необхідним;
- Скоротити всі промоактивності, які були погоджені раніше, або знаходяться на стадії погодження, на період до кінця травня 2025р. На жаль, ми не зможемо логістично забезпечити підвищений акційний попит.
- Просимо вас не застосовувати передбачені договорами штрафні санкції за недопоставку товару в цей важкий для нас час, терміном на 6 місяців. Прямий приліт російської ракети призвів до масштабних руйнувань, яким ми не могли запобігти, це очевидні обставини непереробної сили.

Компанії корпорації «Біосфера» багато років поспіль успішно виконують функції одного з лідерів ринку. За 25 років нашого існування ми пройшли всі кризи, подолали COVID-19, але наразі стикнулись з трагедією такого масштабу, з якою неможливо впоратися без вашої допомоги, розуміння та підтримки. Зі свого боку робимо ВСЕ, щоб якомога швидше відновити стабільне виробництво, логістику, та просування товарів Корпорації!

Щиро вдячні за ПІДТРИМКУ та СОЛІДАРНІСТЬ!!!

Більше з ситуацією та наслідками можна ознайомитись за лінком:  
<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14x3u85t5C/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

З повагою,  
Андрій Здесенко, засновник та CEO корпорації «Біосфера»  
та  
Biosphere team

## Appendix E. Comparative Case Overview

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Biosphere Corporation</b>	<b>Micron</b>
Founder	Andriy Zdesenko	Oleksandr Manko
Industry	FMCG / Consumer Goods Manufacturing	Industrial Manufacturing
Years on the Market	More than 25 years	Approximately 3 years in current operational scale
Scale of Business	National market leader with international operations	Small-to-medium manufacturing business
Founder Public Visibility	High	Low to moderate
Founder Media Presence	Active public communication, interviews, Forbes coverage, conferences, social media presence	Limited public communication and media visibility
Participation in Business Communities	Active participation in major Ukrainian business communities and entrepreneurial networks (including FBN and Inspira ecosystem)	More limited participation in public business communities
Personal Brand Strength	Strong personal brand associated with leadership, entrepreneurship, and social influence	Primarily reputation-based within direct business circles
Crisis Event	Missile strike destroyed part of Biosphere warehouses and logistics infrastructure in Dnipro	Missile strike destroyed production facilities in Dnipro
Public Crisis Communication	Immediate founder-led communication through social media and direct outreach	Limited public communication during crisis
Communication Channels Used	Facebook, personal outreach, media interviews, direct partner	Direct personal communication with selected partners

	communication, business community networks	
Partner Support Mobilization	Extensive and highly visible	Limited and mostly relationship-based
Examples of Support	Large prepayments, operational support, warehouse support, payment flexibility, public support campaigns, bank restructuring	Limited operational support from close partners and personal contacts
Public Visibility of Support	High — support widely covered in media and public communication	Low — most support remained private and informal
Business Ecosystem Reaction	Strong mobilization from business communities, entrepreneurs, retailers, banks, and partners	Selective support from close relationships and operational contacts
Role of Founder Reputation	Central to stakeholder trust and willingness to support	Important primarily within direct personal relationships
Role of Founder Visibility	Significant influence on scale and speed of support mobilization	Limited influence due to lower public visibility
Dominant Trust Mechanism	Combination of public reputation, personal relationships, and ecosystem trust	Interpersonal trust and operational credibility
Dominant Communication Pattern	Highly proactive and public founder communication	Reactive and mostly private communication
Recovery Support Mechanisms	Financial flexibility, operational resources, ecosystem mobilization, public solidarity	Operational assistance and limited partner flexibility

Key Comparative Insight	Public founder visibility amplified ecosystem mobilization and support coordination during crisis	Support depended primarily on direct personal relationships rather than broader reputational influence
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