

Case Studies: Leadership Skills in Change Management.*

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Abstract

This research study is based on three changes in organisation: The SAP project at Rhodia Silicones (Petrochemicals firm), The Étoile project at Renault Trucks (Automobile firm) and the Progress Project of the Rhône-Alpes region (French regional government). Based on case-study methodology, the study shows in what way piloting change is a specific form of management which requires specific skills.

Change leadership requires an arsenal of specific skills. The three changes studied bring to light these skills and reveal requirements in the profile of the manager.

The technical prerequisites of the change manager are in-depth knowledge of the company's business and of the management tools at his disposal to carry through the project. Moreover, he requires the ability to anticipate the complexities of the project, and must have strong interpersonal skills. Not only does change management require immense technical ability, it also supposes rare leadership qualities: a combination of trust, empathy, authority and intellectual rigour. The question arises – is it possible to learn these skills?

Analysis of the behaviour of such managers in the situation of change leadership shows the importance of these skills in overcoming difficulties linked to the establishment of a new reference framework.

The aim of this study was to show in what way change leadership is a new area of expertise with a strong HR component and governed by a continually evolving professional environment.

Key Words: Change leadership – Management – Skills – Training – Human Resources – Project leadership

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Today, every manager is concerned by the question of change. Moreover, in certain companies there are « change managers » in the same way that there are production managers or human resource managers¹.

Managers concerned by this study are those who are directly involved in running a change project, as the project leader². The manager who is leading a change project has to give the necessary momentum to the change team. This is a difficult role which requires a great deal of energy, an overall view as well as attention to detail, and a strong ability to empathize³. In this study, only organization changes will be tackled.

Change is an integral part of life⁴. It is omnipresent in companies. In a complex system, such as an organization, to last is not enough; the organization must adapt to transformations in the environment, and evolve. Managing change may resemble a blend of psychology of organizations, management and project leadership. What exactly is meant by change management?

Accompanying change consists in guiding a system, a person, an organization through a transformation⁵. From a technical point of view, change leadership implies overseeing every step of the process, from the diagnosis, to the setting up of an action plan aimed to bring solutions in terms of evolution and adaptation that would give the best chances of success; it is an all-encompassing approach⁶.

The aim of this study is to show that change leadership is a specific field of management which requires a specific set of skills. Has change management become a specific area of expertise, moreover, with a strong Human Resources component? ⁷. That is the question the study will try to answer by showing, through case studies, (I) in what way change leadership is linked to expertise in HR (II) for managers of today and tomorrow.

I/ Case studies: Leadership of organizational change in three organizations

This study based on case studies was conducted with the utmost rigor (A) and bears on organizational change in three organizations (B).

A – Analysis of the phenomenon: methodological approach

Our starting point was a research problem, that is to say "an all-inclusive project encompassing questions, process and methodology"⁸. The research theme was to study three organizational changes in different structures so as to establish in what way the skills required and the way they were applied could constitute an emerging profession.

The chosen method was a qualitative analysis method based on case studies⁹. It is applied research that "starts from a certain reality to induce or construct a theoretical explanation"¹⁰. The study has a three-phase design. First of all, we identified the agents to interview (1), then followed a methodological schedule (2), and finally made certain choices of methodology that need to be justified (3).

The agents studied

We asked a number of change managers to fill in a questionnaire. This field study comprised 16 interviews and several informal discussions, and took place over a period of two and a half years (May 2003–October 2005). The majority of the interviews were conducted between June 2003 and November 2003. The subsequent interviews on the evaluation of the changes undertaken took place between September and November 2005.

¹ For example at *Coca-Cola* there is a « *Manager for change and social development* »

² The manager is not necessarily a hierarchic superior.

³ Cf. Christophe Faurie, 'Le Journal du management', May 2004.

⁴ Moreover, the theory of chaos considers disorder a necessary step in evolution and life. On this subject, cf. for example James Gleick, 1991.

⁵ On change management cf. notably: Benoît Grouard and Francis Meston, 1998; François Dupuis, 2004; Gérard-Dominique Carton, 1999; David Autissier and Jean-Michel Moutot, 2003; Jean-Claude Sardas and Alain Guenette (under the direction of), 2004; Harvard Business Review (various contributors), 2000; Les Cahier Qualité Management (various contributors), 2000.

⁶ Anglo-Saxon strategic analysis includes change management in the configuration school, cf. Henry Mintzberg, Bruce Ahlstrand, Joseph Lampel, 2005, p. 328 s.

⁷ On this point, cf. Adrian Thornhill, Philip Lewis, Mike Millmore, Mark Saunders, 2000.

⁸ Frédéric Wacheux, 1996, p. 156.

⁹ Cf. R.K. Yin, 1994.

¹⁰ Frédéric Wacheux,

Interviewees	Position	Number of interviews	Style of interview
Senior Managers	HRM (Region Rhône-Alpes)	1	Semi-directive interviews lasting one or two hours each - direct note-taking.
	Senior manager (Région Rhône-Alpes)	3	
	Senior manager (Région Rhône-Alpes)	1	
	Change Manager (Renault Trucks)	1	
Middle Managers	Assistant Change Manager (Renault Trucks)	2	Semi directive interviews lasting one or two hours – direct note-taking + note-taking during informal discussions.
	Progress Coordinator (RRA)	3	
	SAP Project Manager (Rhodia)	1	
	RACP Projet Manager (RRA)	2	
	Training Manager (Rhodia Silicones)	2	

We chose not to record the interviews so as to diminish the interviewees reluctance to answer, especially with regard to sensitive questions such as those concerning resistance to change. To avoid the risk of deformation when answers were analysed and synthesized, we asked the interviewees to validate the interpretation of their answers at a later date. For us, the advantage of this method was that there was no reason for the interviewee to withhold information at the interview; the interviewees validated the syntheses without difficulty.

Study schedule:

- Individual interviews (June 2003)
- Determination of the 9 problems encountered by the managers
- Drafting the questionnaire
- Completing the questionnaire (July-October 2003)
- Analysing the answers
- Validation of the synthesis of the results by the interviewees (November 2003)
- 1st Study report (January 2004)
- Evaluation 2 years later (October-November 2005)
- 2nd Study report (November 2005)

Justification of choices of methodology

During the initial "creative"¹⁴ interviews, in June 2003, nine recurrent problems experienced by the change-management agents came to light. So as to tackle these problem areas objectively, and to proceed with a comparative study, we grouped these items together in the form of nine questions. The problem areas covered by these questions came out of the interviews, and concern contexts that the interviewees could clearly identify¹¹.

The questionnaire¹² served as a support for our work and for the interviews with the various change managers from both the public and private sectors who had led projects in organizational change. The interviewees completed the questionnaire in the light of their professional experience and the context of their work. The interviews were "active"¹³.

B - Case studies

¹¹ This approach may have the handicap of being slightly empirical. However, in our opinion it has the advantage of reflecting the problems encountered in the real world and uses the vocabulary of the interviewees. This allows us to avoid contamination of the context. On this point cf. notably Raymond-Alain Thietart and coll., p. 244-246.

¹² Cf. annex 1

¹³ The expression of Raymond-Alain Thietart and coll., p. 236.

We recruited change management agents from very diverse structures in order to identify, where the case may be, constants in the leadership of such projects. The change-management agents interviewed on the basis of the questionnaire were:

1) Renault Trucks: Étoile project (St Priest, 69, France, multinational)

Interviewees: The Project Leader of the Étoile project and his assistant. **The company:** In 2002 RVI absorbed the Volvo group and became the international commercial entity Renault Trucks¹⁴. **Activity:** construction of heavy goods vehicles. **Name of the change project:** Étoile Project. **Objective:** to transform human-resource management procedures using an SAP system: **Phase 1:** transfer responsibility for certain aspects of personnel files from central HR management to local managers. **Phase 2:** access of employees to their personnel files via an RVI intranet access code. **Project development site:** Saint Priest (69 France) (foundry, stamping, production of motors and axles). **Employees affected by the change:** All French employees. **Calendar:** Phase 1: January 2004; Phase 2: autumn 2004. **Means:** Analysis of target procedures, analysis of differences, communication/implication, accompaniment at the start. **Consequence of the project:** Reduction in « the HR family (Human Resources) » (repositioning employees).

2) Rhodia Silicones: SAP project (St Fons, 69, France, multinational)

Interviewee: Training manager. **The Group:** Worldwide specialized chemicals group involved in sustainable development¹⁵. **Activity:** production of silicone mastic for various uses. **Turnover:** 6 billion euros. **Employees worldwide:** 24 500 (14 sites around the world, 4 divisions supplying 8 markets). **Calendar:** not given. **Means:** Employee training. **Consequences of the project:** reduction in personnel (refocusing on core business, industrial chemicals).

3) Rhône-Alpes Region: Progress Project (Charbonnières, 69, France)

Interviewees: Human Resources Manager, the Organization Project Manager, Rhône-Alpes Card + Project: Education Manager, who became the Schools Manager, Rhône-Alpes Card +: Culture, Sports and Social Manager, who became Manager for Sports, Young People and Associations as well as personal development, the Assistant of the Consultant for the Rhône-Alpes Card + project. **Local government:** The Rhône-Alpes Regional Council is a local government body located in Charbonnières-les-Bains to the north of Lyon (France)¹⁶. **Project titles: Overall Project:** Progress Initiative RRA. **Division-specific projects:** for example the service project for the Human Resources Department. **Transversal Projects:** Rhône-Alpes Card +. **Budget of the RRA 2003:** 1.62 billion euros. **Consequence of the project:** creation of quality assurance system and rationalisation of the organization /costs.

C - Results

The analysis and synthesis of the answers generated by the questionnaires was undertaken between July and November 2003. The questionnaire, given in annex (Annex 1), picks up on the nine important elements in change management identified during the initial 'creative' interviews that took place in June 2003.

The nine themes are as follows: **the causes behind the change, the content of the change, the impact of the change, resistance to the change, the strategies of the actors, the levers, everyday tools, project leadership, and management.**

¹⁴ Renault was created in 1894 by Louis Renault and Marius Berliet, who went on to found their own automobile group in 1919. In 1978 after a series of developments, the group became Renault Industrial Vehicles, the only French constructor of heavy goods vehicles. Little by little, the group took on an international dimension by buying other companies, and changed the name to Renault V.I in 2001. **Number of employees:** 12 000 approx. **Number of sites:** 18, in France and around the world. **Contacts:** Change Project Leader and his assistant. **Instigator of the project:** Central HRD. **Project budget:** Confidential. Cf. : www.renault-trucks.com

¹⁵ Rhodia manufactures chemical products for 8 target markets: pharmaceuticals, agrochemicals, food products, consumer goods, automobiles, electronics, fibers, industry (advanced materials, paint, wall and floor covering, tyres).

¹⁶ **Activity:** The role of the Regional Council is to promote the economic, social, health-care, cultural and scientific development of the region, as well as to develop infrastructures and to safeguard the regional identity, in the respect of the integrity, autonomy and attributions of the departments and communes.

Analysis of the answers to the questionnaire, after validation by the interviewees, revealed characteristics that were specific to certain agents (1) and certain characteristics that were common to all (2).

1) Characteristics specific to certain agents

In the context of the organizational changes studied, two types of specific characteristics came to light.

- Characteristics linked to an economic logic.

Economic imperatives oblige private companies to bring into any change strategy the consideration of cost. For Rhodia, the need to reduce costs underlies the setting up of a new information system. For Renault Trucks, though cost-cutting was not the objective, it was a consequence, and explains why the "Etoile" project got the green light.

- Characteristics linked to political logic

In contrast, at the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council, financial considerations have no direct impact on the quality initiative, even though the general guidelines emanating from central government are pushing local government towards convergence between the private and public sector with regard to rationalizing costs.

At the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council, political imperatives are the driving force behind change. Indeed, local government depends on central political bodies that are regularly elected. The necessity to adapt is inherent to local government. The progress initiative was implemented by the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council to meet the challenge of this reality by improving its organization. Since the interviews, the elections in March 2004 have brought in a new council, resulting in a profound reorganization.

2) Characteristics common to all agents

Though the economic or political context may change, there are invariables. The deepest human behaviour patterns are identical and constant.

a) Resistance¹⁷, a factor due to loss of motivation and inertia

In periods of change, homeostasis is found in private as well as public structures. Resistance to change manifests itself in several ways which may be either passive or active. This question will be tackled in more detail later.

At the analysis stage and without delving into the deepest sentiments of the agents studied, it is possible to identify several situations.

- Resistance linked to the fear of being dispossessed of a skill, or of professional identity. This element is valid for the Manager for Sports etc at the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council where certain people in the cultural section who were used to processing cheques found it difficult to adapt to smart cards. The same phenomenon is found at Renault Trucks, in the « Human Resources family»; the Etoile project transferred the responsibility for certain aspects of the personnel files of every employee from central to local managers, and gave employees direct access to their own files.

- Resistance due to fear of losing one's job. This is similar to the case described above, but to a stronger degree because of the fear of the insecurity of unemployment. This context of fear was relatively manifest at Rhodia Silicones. Thus, resistance to change brings to the fore the sentiment of fear which manifests itself in the presence of any new situation, and highlights doubts in the minds of employees - « Will I be good enough? Where will I fit in? And to go further into the question of identity - «Who will I be in the new organization? » These aspects appear to be constant and common to every type of organization. Resistance must be taken into account in change projects; one must know how to manage it.

b) Project management, a factor of cohesion and of involvement

Project management is at the heart of change management in all of the structures studied. At Rhodia, where inspiration came from the American-style management at Valéo, this mode of operation has been in use for a long time¹⁸. In contrast, at Renault Trucks change management appears to be a new phenomenon as such. The Étoile project serves as a prototype, even though a project culture has existed at Renault since the end of the eighties.

For the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council, project-based management is at the heart of the progress initiative. Indeed, the different departments have all chosen the service project to structure their progress initiative.

The overall method used for this study thus allowed us to bring out elements with a general value whatever the organization studied. Indeed, the characteristics of change leadership in terms of management and expertise were similar in the three organizations. It is these constants that we wish to cover in the second half of this presentation, as a contribution to human-resource management.

¹⁷ Cf. notably Alain Vas and Bénédicte Vande Velde, Montpellier (France) 24-26 May 2000.

¹⁸ Participative Management centred on the idea of a « learning company ».

II/ The impact of H.R. shown in this study: highlighting an area of expertise

This study of organizational change management in three organizations has brought to light the existence of the profession of Change Manager. At this stage of the study, we feel that it is necessary to identify the profile of this manager. We will thus proceed with an analysis of the requirements, and make a series of proposals.

The position of Change Manager requires rare talents¹⁹. This true leader, this instigator of change has a simple vision, which develops into a determination able to move mountains. He is a person who sets up informal networks, who is able to delegate, to give power to his organization. Committed and indefatigable, he knows how to get things moving, and has to be very effective in overcoming resistance to change²⁰.

From this panoply of skills necessary to the Change Manager, two major abilities emerge: the art of decoding (A) and the art of influence (B).

A – The art of decoding

In change leadership, analysis of the hands held by the various agents is capital. An organization is based on both individual and collective strategies. In periods of change boundaries become blurred, and from this stems the increased need of individual agents to position themselves²¹. Power plays tend to emerge (1), and the Change Manager must be able to decode the tactics of the different agents (2).

1) Power plays and management strategy

The Change Manager must be able to understand the tactics of the agents that were triggered by the new organization as well as those that existed beforehand. The theory on the tactics of the various agents originates in strategic analysis²². In the French school of organization theory, the tactics used by various agents were revealed by Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedberg, who underlined the relational nature of power²³. The French current of strategic analysis has taken up this theory, and put forward three postulates²⁴:

a) People are actors²⁵

Different agents have different interests, and they will implement strategies that serve these interests. The organization can thus be considered as a structured whole in which power struggles exist²⁶.

Power can be considered the foundation of organized action²⁷. It is the capacity to act in the face of uncertainty²⁸. Thus, knowing how to manage uncertainty confers power and expertise, which in themselves give the upper hand to those who hold them. The concern of the manager will be to take on board this uncertainty in pushing through the change.

Power is also the ability to structure the negotiated exchange. Power can be defined as an unbalanced exchange of action possibilities, that is to say behaviours between groups of individual and/or collective actors²⁹. This power has an irreducible link with cooperation and exchange. Thus power can be defined as the ability of an agent to structure more or less durable exchange processes in his favour, by exploiting constraints and opportunities. The role of the manager will be to arbitrate and to conciliate, while all the time reminding the agents of the objectives of the project. In the Rhône-Alpes Card+ project, in order to get the different departments, whose interests and cultures diverged, to pull together, the Change Manager continually had to remind everyone of the objective, namely to bring out a product very quickly.

¹⁹ On leadership, cf. notably, Claude Levy-Leboyer, 2001, p. 195-230; Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, Annie McKee, 2002, p. 16-145.

²⁰ On this question cf. notably Christophe Faurie, 2002, p. 15 s.

²¹ Certain speak of leverage: Christophe Faurie, p. 38 s.

²² On this question, see notably, Henry Mintzberg, Bruce Ahlstrand, Joseph Lampel, 2005; Henry Mintzberg, Joseph Lampel, James Brian Quinn, Samanta Ghoshal, 2002.

²³ Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedberg, 1977, p. 64 s. On the theme of power see Jean-Jacques Crevecoeur and Ananou Thiran, 2000.

²⁴ Notably Philippe Bernoux, 1985.

²⁵ Philippe Bernoux.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Michel CROZIER and Erhard FRIEDBERG, 1977, p. 64 s.

²⁸ Those who dominate will be agents who are able to impose both a certain definition of the problems to resolve (and thus the relevant uncertainties) and to affirm their more or less complete control of these uncertainties; Erhard Friedberg, 1997, p. 260. A book perfectly illustrates the differences in the ability of individuals to adapt to change. The book is *Who moved my cheese*, by Spencer Johnson (in French: *Qui m'a piqué mon fromage*) 2002.

²⁹ Erhard Friedberg, p. 123. Not having an attribute, it cannot be stored. It is like love and confidence, inseparable from the relationship through which it acts; p. 124.

Power is also cooperation: a political and economic exchange³⁰. The Change Manager must ensure that the objectives of the project are respected.

Finally, power makes possible negotiated exchanges with regard to non-conflicting behaviour, and as such, it is an instrument of social structuring³¹. The game is the fundamental model of human cooperation; the only model that reconciles the ideas of constraint and liberty, the ideas of conflict, of competition and cooperation³². Participative management integrates these different components.

b) Change agents enjoy a fair amount of freedom in the way they play their hands.

In an organization, every agent retains the right to play as an individual, and he will make use of this right to varying degrees³³. In strategic analysis, the freedom of the agent is essential. Power becomes the means to control these freedoms.

If agents play independently, they apply this independence to areas of the organization that are inadequately regulated. In periods of change, these areas are more numerous, this explains the importance of clarity in the way the manager presents the objectives in the change programme.

c) The agents' strategies have limited rationality³⁴

In strategic analysis no agent has the time or the means to find the most rational solution to reach his objectives. He will stop at the solution which, at that moment, is the least unsatisfactory for him³⁵. No better solution will be taken up. We are far from Taylor's "one best way"³⁶.

From here on, in the context of change leadership, power plays give plenty of leeway to individual strategies. This brings us to a key element in strategic analysis: the zone of uncertainty. Every system includes uncertainties, but none imposes mechanical constraints on the organization³⁷. These uncertainties are incorporated into the tactics of the agents, where they diminish or reinforce independence.

In periods of change, the zone of uncertainty grows. It leads to intensification of the strategies employed by the agents. It is vital for the Change Manager to have the necessary tools to understand these strategies.

2) Analysis of the actors' strategies: to what end?

The Change Manager must be able to decode actors' strategies. That is to say, to understand how those concerned by the change project position themselves. Most projects and programmes unfold in a complex context, comprising many agents (economic actors, associations, national and local administration, local government, elected representatives, the media, lobby groups, unions, religious leaders, etc.) whose positions with regard to the project weave a complex network of points of agreement and disagreement. As a result of this complexity, the Change Manager may find himself disconcerted by the attitude of such or such an agent, or by the appearance of an unexpected alliance of a number of agents against the project. Analysis of the strategies of these agents will make it possible to understand the position of each, to evaluate the relationships of power and influence that exists between them, to measure the degree of agreement or disagreement between them with regard to the project (called convergence and divergence), and finally to spot potential conflicts and alliances, and will enable the Change Manager to outline tactics likely to reduce opposition to the project.

³⁰ Erhard Friedberg, p. 138: On the one hand, there is economic (or instrumental) exchange: the players exchange resources (behaviour) on a you-scratch-my-back basis without including in the exchange the terms or rules that structure them. On the other hand, there is political exchange: here the players again exchange resources (behaviour), but while simultaneously trying to manipulate into their favour the terms or the « rules » that govern the exchange.

³¹ Des relations de pouvoir comprises comme des échanges négociés de comportement ne sont pas toujours conflictuels ; For an application, see. For example, Genie Laborde, 1991. Here the game mechanism comes into play and the social structuration of the field takes place. The game with its rules guarantees this stability; *Ibidem*, p. 140.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 141.

³³ Philippe Bernoux, p. 131. Bruno Bettelheim, to explain how he managed to survive his imprisonment in concentration camps during the 2nd world war, highlights « this ability of the individual to preserve a certain initiative, to remain in control of certain aspects of his life » (Bruno Bettelheim, 1972, p. 168-169 cited by Philippe Bernoux)

³⁴ On limited rationality, cf. Herbert A. Simon, 1947; Herbert A. Simon, 1955; Audrey Becuwe, 2-3 June 2005.

³⁵ Philippe Bernoux, p. 132.

³⁶ Frederick W. Taylor, 1911.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 149.

Moreover, involving the whole project team in the elaboration of this strategy leads to a structured exchange of information between the actors: through this method, the members of the project team can share all of the information they have at their disposal on their " partners " in the project, and construct a common view of how the agents will play their hands.

Thus, for the three organizations studied (Renault Trucks, Rhodia Silicones, Rhône-Alpes Region), in their answers to the questionnaire, a certain number of HR professionals confirmed the importance of taking into account the strategies of agents in change leadership, and the need to identify, if it can be expressed thus, the powers in the arena. Understanding the likely strategies of the various agents is capital in negotiations with the unions (for example with regard to a specific function bonus which is part of the remuneration package at the Rhône-Alpes Region).

3) The decoding process

The method we will present here is based on the work of Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedberg³⁸, of Michel Godet³⁹, and finally on that of Jean-Christian Fauvet⁴⁰.

It comprises three phases: a phase concerning the analysis of the power relationships between agents (1); a phase concerning the convergences and divergences with regard to the scope of the project (2); a phase to integrate the results of the first two, and to define tactics likely to improve the chances of success for the project, by reducing opposition and reinforcing support for the project (3).

a) Analysis of the power relationships between actors

It is to discover who is the decision-maker?

In this first phase, the agents directly involved in the project are identified. Once the list of the agents has been established (to be limited to around 15), a diagram showing the relationships of influence between them is drawn up. This can be described as a power relationship matrix.

In the three organizations studied, the cards held by the different agents weighed heavily in the balance. However, we detected a certain reserve even embarrassment when this subject was broached. There seems to be some sort of taboo notably for the senior managers we were able to meet.

b) Analysis of the convergences and divergences with regard to the scope of the project

This phase, unlike the first, aims to analyse the positions of the various actors, not in absolute terms, but with regard to the project. The first step consists in wondering, for each of them, what he wishes to obtain or avoid, in the project. This step will lead to the drafting of a single list of objectives, which brings together all of the objectives (positive or negative) that could motivate the different agents with regard to the project or the programme.

The aim is to calculate the convergences and divergences between actors. Two agents are considered convergent on an objective if both are favourable or against an objective. The same process is performed for the divergences. This makes it possible to characterize any pair of agents according to the degree of convergence or divergence between them.

During the interview with the Human Resources Manager at the Rhône-Alpes Region, the question of the power-relationship matrix revealed a gap between theoretical knowledge of such tools and operational reality, which leaves little time for this type of speculation. For this manager, a Change Manager, the likely strategies of the different agents are not necessarily identified in a formal manner; they are evaluated more by intuition.

c) Making tactical choices

Ultimately, by bringing together the two phases, we can answer the following questions: « Who holds the power in the system? Who are the dominant actors, and, who is "dominated"? Who are the allies, the opponents, of the central agent (generally, the organisation which conducts the study itself)? How solid are the opposition blocks? What objectives need to be suppressed, or attenuated, or added to the existing objectives of the project, to divide a block of opponents, or to attract from their ranks a powerful actor?»

All of these questions must be considered in order to build a strategy and to know the forces present in the arena during a change project. It is well and truly decoding.

After the art of decoding, we will now turn to the art of influence.

B – The art of influence

³⁸ Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedberg.

³⁹ Michel Godet, 2001.

⁴⁰ Jean-Christian Fauvet, 1996.

The position of the Change Manager is capital; he must be able to exercise his influence skills⁴¹. He must be able to play his role fully and enjoy legitimate authority. His responsibility will be limited in time, until the end of the project, and transversal, that is to say it will extend to the different levels of involvement in the project.

From a hierarchic point of view, the Change Manager in a horizontal/transversal management system, he is answerable to the project, and as such benefits from his personal position in the organization chart, but also from his specific legitimacy as Change Manager. He is responsible to the Board of Directors, and enjoys a status which is identical to that of department managers. Without this formal power, Change Managers have little chance to influence to any significant degree the outcome of the project⁴².

What strategies should the Change Leader bring into play to make a success of the project? He must be able to influence those with whom he is to work⁴³. How? He must generate interest in the project (1) and facilitate communication and creativity within his team (2).

1) Generating interest in the project

It is important for the Change Manager to know how to give a contagious impetus to the project. It is a leadership of resonance with which a group of followers will vibrate in unison with the optimism and enthusiastic energy of the leader⁴⁴.

This resonance is amplified and prolonged by the emotional impact of the leadership style. The more individuals act in unison, the more dynamic are their interactions⁴⁵. What will weld the team together and involve them more deeply in the project are the emotions they feel⁴⁶. But enthusiasm, even persuasion⁴⁷ is not enough, the leader must be able to communicate and develop the creativity of the team.

2) Facilitating communication and creativity: The learning manager

In a context of innovation, of reform, of improvement, the manager must also convince. To this end he must build a communication plan that reaches every level⁴⁸, and is an integral part of an overall logic of process planning⁴⁹.

In a « learning organization » the idea of change becomes an obvious objective for all concerned⁵⁰. In such a context, the Change Manager is the key agent in the process. He will inject the energy and the necessary skills into the management of the project. In a dynamic context such as that found in a reorganization process, the Change Manager must be a learning manager. What is a learning manager? A number of characteristics make him recognizable:

a) The Change Manager: a manager who accepts to revise his opinions

For this, the manager must bring into play the necessary means to revise his opinions successfully.

- He must refuse the single mindset. Every level of an organization, of an enterprise or of local government is a seat of micro decisions. The manager must be a relay of information; thus the importance of close-proximity management, which is link between decision-making and operational bodies, in the strictest sense of the terms. The manager helps his team to take on board the idea that there are other visions than their own. « The learning manager enables all of the agents in the company to consider these alternative dimensions valuable, as he himself shows by embarking on a program of change »⁵¹. Thus, for example, within the framework of the progress initiative at the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council, a management course was set up for all of the managers so as to create a common management culture and to teach them how to situate themselves as other than experts, the holders of the unique truth.

- He creates new learning spaces. The learning manager has confidence in and motivates his team. The independence granted to individuals and teams is the corollary of confidence. For the manager to accept to stand back from the process he is in charge of is a clear sign of his confidence. This condition is extremely important.

⁴¹ Christophe Midler.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 65.

⁴³ Notably their behaviour, on this point, cf. Adrian Thornhill, Philip Lewis, Mike Millmore, Mark Saunders, p. 197 s.

⁴⁴ Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, Annie McKee, 2002, p. 38. For a systemic view, cf. Giorgio Nardone and Paul Watzlawick, 1993.

⁴⁵ Christophe Midler.

⁴⁶ Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, Annie McKee.

⁴⁷ David A. Garvin and Michael A. Roberto, p. 104-112.

⁴⁸ John P. Kotter, p. 13.

⁴⁹ Cf. Marcel MINANA, 2002 ; Henri-Pierre Maders, Elizabeth Gauthier, Cyrille Le Gallais, 2000.

⁵⁰ Robert Heller, 1999, p. 15.

⁵¹ Agefos pme, p. 78.

The manager is thereby unequivocally demonstrating his confidence in the ability of his project team to incorporate this change⁵².

The manager who identifies with his team in a learning attitude gives himself the means to motivate, because motivation stems from exchange, from dialogue, and from visible signs of recognition expressed to his employees for their efforts⁵³. For example, within the framework of the SAP project at Rhodia Silicones a general training programme for the SAP software was set up by the HR manager so as to enable the company, and more generally the group worldwide, to adopt this new form of process management.

b) The Change Manager: a manager who entrusts and motivates

Capable of decoding the tactics of the various actors, the change manager must put into place new sufficiently motivating objectives⁵⁴. As we have already seen, power is based on organized action. In such a context, the zone of uncertainty is a space where power can be acquired and in which power struggles and antagonism are exacerbated.

The objectives of the organization⁵⁵ and the objectives of the agents are not necessarily compatible, forgetting the latter may trigger strong resistance. Indeed, not taking account of the specific objectives of the agents concerned will lead to reactions destined to maintain the status quo. This was what happened at the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council: the project to set up a new job description schedule included the downgrading of a function that had benefited, for historical reasons, from a particular status in the organization. In such circumstances, motivating staff in periods of change requires the manager to double his efforts, notably by being particularly clear on the objectives sought, while being attentive to individual interests. The diplomacy of the manager here is essential⁵⁶.

c) The manager as the guarantor of values

Because of his position, the learning manager embodies a further dimension which goes beyond normal everyday activity: the purpose of the company, in other terms « that which makes sense »⁵⁷. For this, the manager must take two priorities into account:

- **He must embody the meaning.** The Change Project Leader must continually remind everyone of the purpose of the project. That is to say, to insist on the need for the change and its objectives. Being the bearer of the sense of the change project is capital in a period of mutation. It gives the possibility to defuse resistance due to fear. Thus, in the Rhône-Alpes Card+ Project, at the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council a great deal of resistance was defused thanks to the intervention of an assistant of the consultant, an expert in the field of change management⁵⁸.

- **He must be open up to the multitude of points of view.** The Change Manager must be able to look beyond his own mindset and open up to the way others perceive things. This attitude will help him understand their reasoning as well as their reactions to change.

There is, in fact, a group-specific emotional intelligence⁵⁹. Good leaders should be able to maximize this intelligence, notably by developing within the team a team conscience, a capacity for self-management and for empathy⁶⁰. Updating the emotional reality of the team, notably the underlying discord, will instil in the team the desire to change⁶¹.

By escaping from the standard patterns, the Change Manager will underline the legitimacy of the different points of view expressed by other agents⁶². In this situation, the manager must find the middle ground between his role as an instigator and his role as a « listener ».

Here, it is about underlining the idea that the company is a complex environment that can generate wealth⁶³. The different agents have different sets of values, to which they are deeply attached. Negotiations involving values must therefore be handled with caution. If an agent believes his set of values has not been accepted, he can only

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 82.

⁵⁴ On motivation, cf. notably, Claude Levy-Leboyer, 2001.

⁵⁵ On the theme of organization, cf. notably, Henry Mintzberg, 1982; Gareth Morgan, 1989.

⁵⁶ Raymond Vaillancourt, June 2004.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁸ On this project, cf. Annexe 2

⁵⁹ On this question, cf. Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, Annie Mc Kee, 2002, p. 215 s.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 222-228.

⁶¹ By saying for example: « *I fancy a different atmosphere at work* »: *ibidem*, p. 229.

⁶² *Managing change...*, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

⁶³ *Ibidem*.

envisage his action within a personal context that is so superficial that there is little room for the company in the ambitions he has for his life⁶⁴.

Taking into account the human dimension and the diversity among individuals is at the heart of participative management in a classical context; in periods of change, this approach is essential. Indeed, for people to play an active role in the change project, they must feel that their questions and their aspirations with regard to the new organization have been understood.

Opening the door to diversity is to make the agents creators of their change⁶⁵.

Conclusion

Making change management an integral part of the usual mode of management supposes another way of organizing a company, or any other organization for that matter.

Project leadership is at the heart of change management through the suppleness it allows (by favouring close working relationships) as well as the ability to federate staff. Being together with a common objective multiplies energies and potentials. As this style of management sometimes fails due to the lack of a solid framework, the main point is to have a sufficiently well structured project.

The Change Manager has to juggle with the logic of his project and with the logic of the organisation, while taking into account the possible strategies of all of the agents. The exercise is delicate because it requires a combination of empathy to obtain adhesion, firmness to be able to decide, and technical competence to convince⁶⁶. Studying change in the three organizations revealed this complexity and the necessity for the Change Manager to bring into play a panoply of skills.

Today, change management is an emerging field of expertise. Any manager may find himself in the role of Change Manager in the context of his own speciality. In Human Resources, the Human Resource Manager, the Training Manager, the Recruitment or Payroll Manager, and more generally, any Change Manager are all concerned.

Finally, to open the debate, we can wonder if attitudes to change are to a large extent cultural. Certain countries for historical, political, or economic reasons have been able to adapt quickly to profound change. Such is the case of the United States and especially Japan⁶⁷. Others, like countries of 'old Europe' such as France and England, have usually proposed their economic and political model rather than adapt to a different context. Moreover, is it not surprising that change management, as a new model of management, should arrive later in France and in Europe, and that it should become crucial with globalization.

One question remains: to what extent can French society meet the need for managers able to manage change? Change management supposes an aptitude to revise one's opinions, one's beliefs, one's prejudices and habits. Above all, it requires a state of mind which allows one to see things in a new light⁶⁸.

Japanese companies stimulate the creativity of their employees, and encourage them to propose novel ideas or improvements; for them, it is a cultural model. American school children are encouraged to ask questions at school⁶⁹, and to talk to their teachers with no dogmatic or hierarchic prejudices. School in the U.S. is above all a place where pupils forge their critical spirit, and learn how to think for themselves. The aim is to make good citizens and adaptable adults.

These two examples illustrate in what way change management is not a spontaneous phenomenon, but the result of cultural choice. Are the French and Europeans in general ready to quit the comfort of a number of certitudes to launch themselves into the challenge of the controlled unknown, as did the pioneers of the gold rush or those of the "Japanese miracle"? Is French society ready to shape tomorrow's change managers?

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⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁵ For an application of creativity in management cf. Florida Richard and Jim Goodnight, "Managing for creativity", p. 124-131.

⁶⁶ The behavioral dimension is essential, in this sense, Éric Albert, March 2005.

⁶⁷ On this question, see notably, Christophe Midler, 1998.

⁶⁸ En mettant en pratique une certaine forme de créativité. Sur les jeux générateurs d'idées cf. par exemple Michael Michalko, 2002.

⁶⁹ About Problem Based Learning cf. Barbara Duch, Susan Gron and Deborah Allen, 2001.

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Annexes

Annexe 1: questionnaire

Question 1: Causes of change: In your opinion, is the change project conducted in your organization linked to: (classify in order of importance the items below)

- A – The need to reduce costs
- B – Downsizing
- C – Repositioning a product
- D – Improving service to clients
- E – The desire to improve the organization
- F – Overall quality improvement

	Results
RENAULT TRUCKS	E
RHODIA SILICONES	A – E
REGION RHONE-ALPES Progress initiative Rhône-Alpes Card Plus	D-E E

Question 2: Resistance: Does the change project conducted in your organization generate resistance? If YES, are they:

- A – Individual (loss of references, fear of the future)
- B - Structural or economic situation (working conditions, operational reasons, atmosphere at the place of work)
- C – Collective (values, standards, rites)

	Results
RENAULT TRUCKS	A: Resistance from a well-defined group “the HR family”
RHODIA SILICONES	A – B: Strong result-based culture. Worry expressed by individuals faced with the need to update skills, to learn, to adapt skills, to change to a new team. Feeling that error is no longer tolerated, which reinforces pressure
REGION RHONE-ALPES Progress Initiative Rhône-Alpes Card Plus	A: Doubts and self-questioning about the degree of implication of individuals. However, no real resistance (HRM) A - B – C: At the initial phase of the project, the energy of the leader is a powerful motor that instills a desire to succeed. In the second phase of the project, writing down the procedures reassures certain individuals (who cling to these) at the risk of stifling the momentum (Department manager)

Question 3: Impact of the change: among the different departments cited above which were affected most by the change project?

- A – Finance and administrative (billing process, margin management, allocation of resources, expenditure...)
- B – Production (stock management...)
- C – Economic and commercial (innovation process, development of new products...)
- D – Cultural and human (training processes, information, communication, recruitment, evaluation, gratification, giving responsibility, delegation...)
- E – Decision making (decision making processes)

	Results
RENAULT TRUCKS	D
RHODIA SILICONES	A – B – C - D
REGION RHONE-ALPES Progress initiative Rhône-Alpes Card Plus	A – C – D A - C

Question 4: The strategies of agents: Are these strategies important in change management?

- If yes, why?
- What strategies have you seen in your organization?
- Do you believe it is possible to anticipate the strategies of agents?

	Results
RENAULT TRUCKS	4-1 Yes. It is necessary to analyse the possible strategies of the agents at the outset to determine the risk of resistance to the change. 4-2 Resistance to the transparency of information. 4-3 Yes. By explaining, communicating and involving the agents
RHODIA SILICONES	4-1 Yes, obviously. 4-2 Too early to answer for the SAP project 4-3 No comment
REGION RHONE-ALPES Progress Initiative Carte Rhône-Alpes Plus (No comment on this question)	4-1 Yes It's part of life 4-2 HRM: no answer Coordinator: at every level 4-3 HRM: yes. Anticipating the strategies of agents is very important. For example for a HRM to understand the strategies of agents and unions. However, it's not possible to control everything. Coordinator: no. Total anticipation would be dangerous, and would leave no leeway to others. Human nature never ceases to surprise.

Question 5: Levers: In your opinion what are the factors that lead to success, tools or change levers?

- A – The methods (Project management techniques, planning...)
- B – People (team management, development of communication...)
- C – Structures (group projects, Steering committee...)
- D – Other

	Results
RENAULT TRUCKS	A - B – C: The three aspects are important.
RHODIA SILICONES	A - B – C: Organization in group projects. Early involvement of agents. Presence of change agents in the field.
RHONE-ALPES REGION Progress Initiative Rhône-Alpes Card Plus	A - B – C: B is crucial. For a minor change method is primordial. The greater the change, the more important the human dimension (HRM). Human energy: the impetus must come from individuals. Being a change agent is a function and is a role in its own right (Coordinator) A - B – C: Motivation of the staff and project leadership are extremely important.(2 senior managers)

Question 6: **Everyday tools:** In your experience, what tools do you use on a daily basis to lead a change project?

	Results
RENAULT TRUCKS	Analysis of target processes. Analysis of divergence. Communication and involvement. Training. Accompaniment in the initial phase.
RHODIA SILICONES	Many tools, notably: Management chart. Project management tools.
REGION RHONE-ALPES Progress Initiative	Simple general: Gantt chart, diagram of the leadership structure, Diagram of the overall plan, meetings and explanations. It's not necessary to have a plethora of tools (HRM). Classical tools (project structure, communication...) trusting your intuition (Coordinator).
Rhône-Alpes Card Plus	Project leadership. Simplification (Project Manager RACP)

Question 7: **Project leadership:** How do you see the role of project leadership in change management?

- Not important
- Of little importance
- Important
- Very important

	Results
RENAULT TRUCKS	Very important, Capital.
RHODIA SILICONES	Very important. An essential tool in change management.
REGON RHONE-ALPES Progress Initiative	Very important. Makes it possible to set up participative change (HRM) May answer the question « How to motivate to overcome inertia? » (Coordinator)
Rhône-Alpes Card Plus	Very important. The role of the Project Team Leader is to build a climate of trust, by giving shape, meaning and objectives to the project. His role is to simplify project processes by « capturing » information at various levels and being able to impart it in such a way that every agent will understand it (Project manager)

Question 8: **Management:** In your opinion what is the role of management in change leadership?

- Not important
- Of little importance
- Important
- Very important

	Results
RENAULT TRUCKS	Very important, Managers are the change agents.
RHODIA SILICONES	Very important, an essential role. In change leadership, the manager serves as an interface; he relays the strategy of the enterprise. He relays information and gauges the temperature in the field.
REGION RHONE-ALPES Progress initiative	Very important. He plays a major role in change leadership (Coordinator)
Rhône-Alpes Card Plus	Very important.

Question 9: Lessons

What lessons have you learned from this change leadership experience?

- In terms of team management?
- About yourself
- About others

	Results
RENAULT TRUCKS	<p>The involvement of agents gives meaning to the project.</p> <p>Better anticipation of the resistance to change.</p>
RHODIA SILICONES	<p>The management team needs to be supported with regard to its future.</p> <p>It is necessary to have a certain visibility to manage a change project, even though it may be relative.</p>
REGION RHONE-ALPES Progress Initiative Rhône-Alpes Card Plus	<p>No comment</p> <p>Change leadership sometimes leads to doubts (notably about the capacity of a group to manage itself), and makes it necessary to leave the safety of a mastered skill. It pushes people to cooperate and to stretch themselves in order to build something together (Senior Manager).</p> <p>« I saw my mindset change from a technical to a managerial approach to my job. I learned to trust my colleagues, and to delegate tasks to them (40 people) » (Senior Manager).</p> <p>We are more effective as a team than as a group of individuals (Project Manager).</p>