The Managerial Experience: a New Challenge for Firms

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Abstract: The objective of this article is to analyze the management system, which is the second part of any approach to promoting managerialism. Hence, the managerial experience must allow the manager to learn in his work situation in the extension of the development devices. Focused on concrete experience and active experimentation of the learning process. The managerial experience must guarantee the manager a minimum of coherence between the main characteristics of his work situation and the requirements of the transformation of his experience into competence.

Any approach can thus advantageously begin with a managerial audit to identify the factors favorable and unfavorable to his managerial learning. But, the new stake for pre-crisis firms must satisfy the three major players represented by its customers, its staff and its shareholders. Today, companies must reinvent themselves to take into account the emergence of a new priority: their environment in the broad sense. They must now try to gain qualities such as being socially responsible, ecologically adult and morally exemplary. Also, a perspective and prospective vision on the post-crisis: the purpose of this article is primarily to provide leaders of firms, concrete management solutions and benchmarks for navigating in turbulent areas.

Keywords: Experience, Managerial, New stake, Firms

1. Introduction

The managerial experience is a real challenge for firms. This societal challenge resonates with the concerns of researchers in the field of firms. Studies on the new stake in firms are now legion, as evidenced by surveys and synthesis (Davidsson and Wiklund 2000, Coad 2007, MacPherson and Holt 2007, Shepherd and Wiklund 2009, MacKelvie and Wiklund, 2010; Jansen, 2011; Wright and Stigliani, 2013; Davidsson and Wiklund, 2013).

However, if empirical studies have multiplied, questions remain about the real progress of knowledge and the development of robust theoretical frameworks (Shepherd and Wiklund, 2007). The authors have thus shown the importance of approaches and a multidimensional vision, so that we can draw robust conclusions from empirical studies. Their study emphasizes that the diversity of methodological choices has played an important role. In fact, Wright and Stigliani (2013) stress the need to engage in a fixed analysis of the growth process, by clarifying the role of the entrepreneur (Who), the process (How), its content (What) and its context (When and Where).

The texts in this article of the managerial experience: new stake for the firms reflect the diversity of these questions and tracks of the research. Several input tracks are possible to browse these texts. Consider the question posed of managerial experience, a new challenge for firms, the type of method used (quantitative, qualitative), type of company studied and took into account the context in which unfolds the action of the leaders.

2. Literature Review

Careful attention should be paid to the growth trajectories that the company experiences (Delmar et al., 2003). That of Tarillon et al., who is interested in the role of governance, while that of Gueguen et al., addresses the question of the persistence of the effect of the leader. Finally, the authors show that "beyond technological innovation, marketing, and managerial skills, financing, and support reinforce the potential of image tests and allow the transition from an exploration logic to a logical one of exploitation. "

Caroline Tarillon, Frédérique Grazzini and Jean-Pierre Boissin (2015) propose an article entitled "Growth trajectories and expanded governance structures: a reading of the representations of the founding directors of startups." In this article, they seek to grasp the link between the representations of Governance: While it is important for the CEO to involve stakeholders in his project, too many stakeholders risk crippling the expansion of his business. Also, Gaël Gueguen, Franck Jansen and Olivier Giacomini (2015) question, for their part, the relationship between "persistence over time of the determinants of growth of SMEs," and wonder if the determinants of growth are stable or decrease over time. To this end, they retain the Dobbs and Hamilton model (2007), and its four sets of determinants of growth (environment, characteristics of the firm, strategic choices, characteristics of leaders), which they will test using SINE database on a sample of 2350 SMEs, with a time horizon of 3 years and 5 years (after the creation of the SME). Their work highlights that the determining variables are different according to the variable taken into account to measure growth (growth of turnover, workforce, or investment development), but also that relations are not stable during the time: a variable that "explains" the growth at 3 years can be insignificant or play a role opposite to 5 years. Finally, the influence of the characteristics of the leader seems to decrease. The diversity of findings leads the authors to consider that "the growth of each firm seems to be unique and result from an idiosyncratic process" (Delmar et al., 2003, Dobbs and Hamilton, 2007, Leitch et al., 2010). In the end, the article by Gueguen, Jansen, and Giacomini is interesting both by its content, its results, but also its implications. It underlines, at the same time, the absence of inevitability in the process of growth, and opens on the interest of finer approaches in terms configurations, or even refined processing techniques (the variables used being dichotomous).

All this leads us beyond to question the dynamics of the managerial experience, growth and its determinants: Carillon et al., emphasize the coevolution of governance mechanisms and the project, while Gueguen et al. question the variability of the determinants of growth, and that Bessière et al. show the differentiation of determinants for academic spin-offs. All these elements lead us to emphasize the interest of processual and longitudinal approaches, and taking into account the diversity of the coherence of the organizational mechanisms (Khandwalla, 1977, Miller, 1986, 1996), as well as the profile of the intention of the leader (Delmar and Wiklund, 2008, Chabaud and Degeorge, 2015).

3. Methodology

This article is an invitation, not only to continue to "think customers," but also to exceed the approaches conventionally used. It is no longer about trying to come up with the best product or the most relevant service. The stake is of another nature. Firms, which they sell to other firms (B to B) or individuals (B to C), can indeed renew their value proposition by engaging in an economy of experience. The managerial experience is not limited to managing quality or trying to seduce the customer by playing on its different senses, as we invite experiential marketing. It is, in fact, a strategic renewal that can be adopted by any type of organization such as companies, administrations, associations, etc.

4. Problematic

Beyond the products, the question we must ask is to know, not "what to propose to the customer," but "what experience to make him live." This is a real change of posture, it is somehow adopting a new managerial philosophy. Take a moment to think about a meal in a restaurant that you particularly enjoyed. The memory you keep is only related to the quality of food. The service, atmosphere, setting, and so on could help make this meal a memorable one. It is very likely that you spoke enthusiastically to friends who, in turn, became prescribers. There is no better ambassador for a company than a customer with a memorable experience. Conversely, who, contacting the hotline of an internet service provider or seeking to join an administrative service, did not rage on the phone by undergoing for long minutes the little music waiting to be finally invited to recall later? The customer lives an experience!

The managerial experience requires a holistic approach that is difficult to reconcile with the operation of siled organizations. All employees must feel responsible for the overall experience and understand how they can actively contribute to it. The major airlines have defined very precisely what to do if a technical problem occurs in flight. All flight attendants are prepared, and every effort is made to ensure the safety and comfort of the passengers. On the other hand, if a technical problem prevents the aircraft from taking off, it is not uncommon, as a passenger, to be left without precise information as to the time of take-off or the possibility of taking another flight. Then begins a wait that can last long minutes (or long hours). The passenger may feel that the airline has knowingly decided to make the passengers experience an unpleasant experience. However, it must be acknowledged that she has failed regarding to managing the customer experience! Thus, the challenge for firms is to answer the question: how to manage the customer experience?

In terms of the customer managerial experience, we propose to distinguish four facets. Two are from the company and two from its clients (Figure 1).

The desired company: it corresponds to a reflection of a strategic nature led by the company (firms), leading it to formalize the experience that it wishes to make live to its customers.

Figure 1: A managerial model presentation

It is based on vision and strategic intentions, knowledge of the competition and customers, identification of opportunities to seize, etc.

This approach, which can be participatory, is, however, the responsibility of the management team. By way of illustration, the UFR Economics and Management Department of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny University (Abidjan-Cocody) wishes to provide managers and managers participating in its continuing education programs with an experience based on taking a step back, putting in perspective and promoting exchanges between peers. The proposed experiment: a real operationalization of the strategy, it is a question of defining what must be in such a way that the intentions formulated translate into reality. It is the responsibility of everyone, and it is a real business project. Everyone must see how they contribute to the development of this desired experience. At the UFR Seg de Félix Houphouët-Boigny, professors, project managers, program managers, assistants, logistical and administrative staff all have a role to play to invite the participants to live the desired experience. Everyone at his level must contribute to it. Taking a step back is not just a question of pedagogy. The context itself, the organization of time and space must contribute to it.

The expected experience: it is essential to have an intimate knowledge of the expectations of prospects and customers. But it is also necessary that marketing, communication, and commercial actions help to adjust the level of expectations. Surprisingness is dangerous because it brings disillusionment. The lived experience: it is undoubtedly the most important facet of the system of the managerial experience. The customer experience is the result of a meeting of their expectations and experience is essential. Too often, satisfaction survey questions measure the quality of the product and service in a standard way rather than looking at the experience. The experience management model described above can be applied to all types of stakeholders, and cannot be limited to clients only. Being supplier, shareholder, employee is also living an experience that must be managed by the company.

In a context of crisis, organizations wishing to rethink their strategy and operation, and eager to find mobilizing projects, have everything to gain by adopting this approach. They will thus contribute to the emergence of a real economy of experience.

5. Modalities and Ambiguities of the Growth of Firms

The strategic choices and the organizational mechanisms put in place seem appropriate to inform the growth of firms. Cathérine Thévenard-Puthod and Christian Picard (2015) propose to go towards a better apprehension of the "diversity of strategies of growth of the craft enterprise and profile of the leader," so small companies (craft or not) were neglected in work on growth. Thévenard-Puthod and Picard propose for us an interesting empirical study based on the study of 11 cases of craft enterprises, whose strategies "were analyzed over a period of four years, from 2007 to 2010, both posterior, i.e. after the companies have grown (for the period 2007-2008) and longitudinally (for the period 2008-2010)." Their work highlights the great diversity of growth strategies observed, as craft firms are "able to adopt growth strategies often considered as reserved for larger firms (Delmar et al., 2003, Jaouen, 2006). They can thus acquire other companies and diversify. However, proximity to the initial base of resources and skills (technical or of the company appears to be a *sine qua non* of these strategic choices.

We can highlight the diversity of firms' growth patterns, based on different anchors. However, they emphasize, each in their own way, the role of the values and profiles of the leaders as an element of differentiation, and of orientation of the company: an essential element to grasp the strategic diversity of the company (Thévenard-Puthod and Picard, 2015), the management tools implemented (Meyssonier, 2015), and even management practices as a whole (Bérard, Brugère and Saleilles, 2015).

6. Firm Growth, Public Policy, and Context

The insights provided on the growth of firms have hitherto ignored the context in which they deploy their action. Two sets of perspectives then seem particularly stimulating: to question the effects of context on the growth strategy of firms, thus returning to the neo-institutionalist traditions (Peng et al., 2009, see Grand Claude and Nobre, in this issue), but also to question the possible effects of public or private policies accompanying businesses (Mirabonnardel, 2015). It is the context of action, and both public and private institutions, that must be taken into account in the analysis (Welter, 2011). But, Grandclaude and Nobre surveyed 28 SMEs and establishment managers. They identify three types of behaviors facing the thresholds (renunciation, circumvention, and crossing) and show how the trajectory intentions and modalities of firm's growth are affected.

Beyond the typology, their work also highlights how the crossing of thresholds is accompanied by an "entrepreneurial reappropriation of the growth of firms since the entrepreneur must commit to pursuing the opportunities available to him despite new environmental constraints and, perhaps simultaneously, acquired comfort. Managerial over-appropriation, since the entrepreneur must implement management practices with a level of complexity that is much higher than the practices that existed previously to overcome legal obligations. Thus, the impact of the social thresholds on the intention of the growth of the leaders is not mechanical but requires at the same time an apprehension of the psychology of the entrepreneur and questioning on the pedagogy of the rules. Sylvie Mira-Bonnardel (2015) focuses on the growth of SMEs by "internationalization" and highlights "the reticular leverage effect of French Chambers of Commerce abroad." His work extends that of Catanzaro, Messeghem and Sammut (2012), which showed that support through the implementation of a network approach is particularly beneficial and relevant for companies with rapid and early internationalization.

The goal of Sylvie Mira-Bonnardel is to question the impact of support in the internationalization of companies more traditionally focused on the local market. To this end, it studies the role of the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan (CCIFJ), combining two empirical studies: a satisfaction survey conducted with 300 French SME managers who used the services of CCIFJ, and an in-depth qualitative study of 5 of them. The work carried out makes it possible to show how much the accompaniment process set up by the CCIFJ allows positive spin-offs for the accompanied companies, via the role of the accompanying person in the qualification of the networks and regarding organized learning. In doing so, it highlights how CCIFJ is an effective vector of growth and leads to a more detailed examination of the role of formal networks in the growth of firms.

All this shows the importance of taking into account the institutional and cultural context in the analysis of growth strategies. If this context impacts, the growth choices of the leaders, the inclusion in the agenda of accompanying potential actions on growth is also important. We can think that the generic measures, the public policy passes by the establishment of actors and or targeted actions which help the leaders to acquire competences, to realize apprenticeships and to access to new networks, even to develop the entrepreneurial culture or entrepreneurial spirit.

7. Conclusion

The contributions are diverse, by their questions, research methods, and implications. However, they present a real coherence and mark the importance of the issue of growth in SME entrepreneurship research and, more broadly, management. The studies are already numerous, but we hope to have shown many ways of deepening are numerous, and how important the issues are for firms, territories and nations. In this, if management sciences are action sciences, we understand that they challenge both business leaders and public decision-makers. The leaders, therefore, have three challenges today to put themselves in a position to win this other battle of the end of the crisis.

First, ensure that the firm is genuinely socially responsible and that it is recognized as such. Then, forge new bonds of trust and commitment that go beyond remuneration and that integrate values such as mutual investment, individual development, and the best redistribution of created value (just distribution among all stakeholders), and sharing a clear and motivating business project. This is a major challenge for management in the future.

Finally, the constant search for exemplary leadership regarding ethics, consistency (say what we do, do what we say), and respect for a fair balance between performance in the short term and long-term construction, will become the essential key to a renewed trust. They will thus have ensured at best the preservation of the strategic interests of their firms. Our model of managerial experience can be applied to all types of stakeholders, and cannot be limited to clients only. Being supplier, shareholder, employee is also living an experience that must be managed by the firm. In the context of crisis, organizations wishing to rethink their strategy and operations, and eager to find mobilizing projects, have everything to gain by adopting this approach. They will thus contribute to the emergence of a true economy of experience.

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