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WHAT ARE THE COMPETENCES OF THE FUTURE MANAGER? THE “PLAYER MANAGER” SCENARIO

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Abstract

This paper has as its objective to put forward a profile for the ‘manager of the future’. It draws on a review of the literature and on a series of unstructured interviews with 12 trainers, recruiters, directors and young graduates. Research carried out in large global companies in the fields of industry and multimedia confirms the under-exploitation of certain competences and the emergence of new forms of management and recruitment in modern companies. Generation Y is blossoming and, with its practices and its new demands, is jostling against traditional modes of management. This paper first highlights the tensions between individuals, the organization and its environment, plus the lack of recognition regarding these neo-managers’ competences and valuable talents. It then explains the methodology used to collect the data analysed; namely the three complementary approaches of the career forecasting method, the case study method and the scenarios method. An analogy between managers and video game players leads us to the analysis of three case studies and to interviews with 12 experts in their individual professional fields: three trainers, three purchasing directors, and three young purchasing graduates. Their contributions, combined with the conclusions drawn from the case studies permit the co-construction of the profile of tomorrow’s manager, the “player manager”, then permit suggestions regarding new ways of recruitment, training and management within the companies who wish to create the best environment to both welcome and get the most out of this new generation of managers.

Key words: “Player manager”, video games, Y generation, forecasting, collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

A part of the intellect of today's young managers is not welcome in those companies where it is considered as of little real business worth. Indeed, this intellect does not fit in with organizational constraints, and does not correspond to the ways of working currently in place. It does not lend itself to rigorous monitoring. It seems too playful and not professional enough. This intellect is that which is developed, among other ways, through the use of video games or thanks to new practices linked to the development of web 2.0 and 3.0. It is characterized in particular by (1) the mastery of information and communication technology (ICT), (2) the ability to find one's way around virtual environments, (3) the capacity to combine talents, in order to collectively achieve objectives that would be impossible on one's own, (4) digital communication between very different socio-cultural profiles and (5) the ability to undertake several tasks at once and to flit between these, without losing productivity in the process. Yet, the most innovative multinational companies use virtual working teams and information systems based on relatively modern ICT. It is only that new intelligent tools involve a different type of intellect on the part of their users, an intellect which is supplementary and not superfluous. The brain can consecrate itself to more qualitative analytical tasks, whilst the computer stores, creates links, calculates and suggests solutions.

It is the mastery of available technologies and the ease with which managers handle virtual objects, which determines their ability to develop within their environment, to analyze, to make strategic decisions, to improve their professional performance and to make progress. Digital intelligence is therefore already available and meets numerous company needs, but it is not measured and not considered by company leadership. Due to the discrepancy between the aspirations of young graduates and what they are offered in terms of a professional context, the question of how they are welcomed into companies risks becoming a decisive factor. These young graduates feel themselves to be picked on, constrained, excluded and maladjusted. There is often no measure put in place to value them and to capture the product of this new form of intellect they manifest. In traditional companies, where these young graduates are expected to occupy a very precise function, they do not find community spirit and have to subscribe to a stifling vertical structure. How can they best be integrated? How can conditions be created to allow these young graduates to express their creativity in an optimal way? How can companies attract this much fought-over new talent by offering these neo-managers the conditions in which they can blossom and implement the full potential of their genius?

After having considered the characteristics of generation Y and its frustration in the face of the opposition within companies to changes to their modes of management, this article examines several case studies of video games. Here, it highlights the possible transpositions between the practices employed by players and those of managers. The methodology is built around three axes, namely career forecasting, the case study method, and the scenario method, with interviews with 12 experts in their individual professional fields to complete the study. The final section puts forward the profile of a "player manager", along with recommendations for the welcome and integration of this new profile of manager.

1. ANTICIPATING AND REDUCING TENSIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

The differences between individual aspirations, organisational demands and environmental developments are becoming more and more decisive. Indeed, the new generation of managers now gradually entering the employment market is markedly different from the previous one. Here, a presentation of this Y generation and its potentially valuable and untapped qualities leads to an analysis of extent to which companies are behind the times with regards to their environment.

1.1. The Y generation: new knowledge and talents that are not recognised within companies

The Y generation is made up of people born between the beginning of the 1980s and the early years of the 21st century. Also called the “millennium generation”, the “Internet generation”, the “digital generation”, the “Google generation” or “digital Natives”, in five years this generation will represent 40% of all working people (Crampton and Hodge, 2009). At each stage in his education, the child, the adolescent, the young student, develops in a world of constant innovation. Extremely versatile, at every stage the young person develops his own intellect, establishes patterns and develops his creativity via practical experiences which all involve play to a lesser or greater extent. This is nothing new: even Baudelaire observed that "children demonstrate a great faculty for abstraction and their highly powerful skills of imagination through their games. They play without toys" (Baudelaire, 1868). Today, this capacity is increased tenfold by the use of ICT. One observes, however, that companies are extremely resistant to play activities or that they do not integrate these into the established organization.

Certain characteristics of the future managers who will enter the world of work in the next twenty years are incompatible with current practices within organizations. Members of the Y generation are “born surfers”, with a perfect knowledge of how to use and optimise their social networks and develop in virtual environments. They communicate thanks to a new language, and are capable of managing several tasks at the same time. They are very familiar with ICT and all electronic devices. They are nomads, whilst also staying permanently connected to their communities and preferred media. These are the citizens of Europe, indeed of the world. They have learnt to speak English thanks to video games and television series. These practices are still too infrequent in the business world and managers risk feeling more and more frustrated, as the gap gets bigger and bigger (Shaw, 2008).

Recruiters find themselves therefore faced with numerous difficulties linked to the gap between the professional environment they offer to young graduates and the world in which these new recruits live and have grown up. How can this new generation be integrated into a system which is largely dominated by highly structured, hierarchical, even state-owned companies? How can we conserve and develop this sense of collaboration, the talent to search for information and the ability to generate community know-how, in a population that refuses to be bullied by a system that it judges outmoded? This new intellect must not be channelled or formatted, as is essentially the case in traditional regulated structures. It must be stimulated and capitalised on, in order to create a new form of value, built around agility and strategic adaptability, commercial anticipation, multicultural knowledge, and interconnection and interaction with the socio-economic environment in real time.

1.2. New competences and new talents that are not recognised in companies

Peter Drucker explains that the reason for being of any organisation is to allow ordinary people to do extraordinary things (...). The very essence of an organisation is to permit people to achieve a greater level of performance than that of which they seem capable, to reveal the slightest talent among its members, and to use each others' talents to improve each others' performances" (Drucker, 1973). However, modern organisations do not adopt this approach, and inhibit their managers' potential for initiative and creativity. Indeed, managers are constrained to focus on realising their objectives in an environment where the performance race and internal competition are predominant (Shaw, 2008). The Y generation's ill-ease seems almost inevitable, faced with the inertia of companies who persist with models which are more and more blatantly out of step with the radical development of modern society (Simard, 2007). Formatting stifles creativity. Confidentiality and the desire to make everything secure is at direct odds with the opening up to the world obtained via social networks and virtual work communities. Instead of favouring individual performance, the pseudo-constraints of the collective prevent managers from achieving their full potential or efficiency.

One only needs to follow current affairs to become aware of the extreme tensions which have appeared between employers and their companies. The 10 suicides in less than two years at Renault and the 33 at Orange during the same timeframe, testify to the ill-ease felt by the personnel of the companies directly incriminated. The management of "psycho-social" risks has become a priority for big companies who have become de-socialised over the past few years. The question of workplace wellbeing is being asked more than ever in a context where the need to recognise and increase the responsibility of managers is rising. Yet, the measures that have been taken in the face of these new risks which put human capital in danger are only palliative, introduced to ensure that too significant damages are avoided. Stress management, relaxation seminars and office massages do not change anything about the intensity of work or the constraints which crush individuals and prevent them from flourishing (Brun, 2008b). These are relief measures for a suffering which is already well established. Upstream prevention consists rather of a cultural transformation, with participative measures and an alignment with the sociological context (Bernard et al, 2007).

Drucker has already observed: "the largest proportion of what we call management consists of making people's work more difficult" (Drucker, 1973). The situation is becoming more and more worrying and paradoxically has consequences which are often dramatic for organisations and for individuals. Based on a study of 17000 Canadian employees, the sociologist Jean-Pierre Brun demonstrates that people's well-being is closely linked to organisational performance, whilst organizations consider this to be a completely secondary factor. Indeed, "managers often concentrate on financial indicators and complicate life by putting in place ambitious action plans and complex processes" (Brun, 2008a). For the Y generation even more than those that preceded it, the "seven missing pieces of management" to be put forward as essential are: marks of appreciation, support, respect, work-life balance, a reasonable amount of work in acceptable working conditions, participation in decisions, and well-defined roles. However, in a sort of blind kamikaze manoeuvre, managers claim to be facing up to the demands of the new 2.0 economy by creating mechanisms which are increasingly constraining and which lead to violent readjustments "through eruptive crises with heavy psychological consequences for the individuals involved" (Uhalde, 2005).

1.3. Companies are out of step with their environment

Numerous socio-economic changes seem to justify the point of view of a majority of entrepreneurs who deplore an increase in competitive pressure and the growing difficulties involved in doing business. Indeed, companies need to face globalisation, decreases in product life-cycles, the increasing numbers of players, particularly of Asian origin, and the development of the Internet as the new distribution channel which turns customers into experts (Allal-Chérif, 2009). However, "the opportunities to exploit new segments of customers and markets have multiplied, (...) at the cost of a growing complexity and a demand for pro-activity" (Slywotsky, 2009). Thus, it would seem to not be the environment which has become particularly hostile, but rather the companies which have not known how to adapt to it.

The available human resources are completely capable of mastering this complexity and of having the necessary pro-activity, but the management of these resources does not allow them to make good use of the talent available. "The instrumental, adaptive, even manipulative dimension of human beings" is hegemonic in the majority of modern organisations (Chanlat, 1990). Under the pretext of competitiveness, rationality and analytical thought, sequence and logic are glorified at the expense of creativity, intuition and general thought, both visual and relational. From the time of their training onwards, future managers are considered as machines applying well-worn methods. Indeed, Henry Mintzberg bemoans the fact that "our management schools, in an ostentatious way, educate managers as if their brains only consisted of one single hemisphere" (Mintzberg, 2004). Whereas rationality represents only one of the three tools available to managers to understand environment. Both creativity and emotions are ignored, and this leads to feelings of frustration, of tension and of profound

impotence. The humanist art of management has been supplanted by management techniques and the quest for an illusory model of perfect performance.

In parallel, the fickle and extremely demanding customer, in particular at a time of crisis, has become an expert purchaser who knows how to use all the tools at his disposition in order to meet his needs in the best conditions. Markets in a perpetual state of transformation destabilise the well-oiled mechanics of marketing services, who can no longer manage to detect early enough which segments of the market are emerging and which are going into decline. "Companies, including industry flagships, do not often see new segments emerging. Often, it is the start-ups who are as yet unknown or companies from which one would not expect this, who notice these first" (Slywotsky, 2009). And yet, these future segments are those with the greatest growth potential and those which will be the most profitable in the future.

The majority of big companies do not manage to capture the available talent, as this talent prefers the flexibility of SMEs where it blossoms using avant-garde tools and working methods which correspond to their way of life. The Y generation prefers professional comfort, flexibility, autonomy and being given a sense of responsibility. "Over instrumental values (salary, status, working hours...), this generation prefers symbolic values (pride, passion, mobility...), and above all else wants to follow an individual journey inside a collective project " (Rousset, 2009). Although, this generation's efficiency is also born of the pleasure which managers take in completing their assignments and in using the tools at their disposition. Under the pretext of not giving the impression of giving in to the whims of these individualistic, independent, and anti-authority Web children, and from a conservative position with regards to organisational traditions, managers deprive this generation of this pleasure, and of anything and everything that resembles fun (Trotureau, 2008). However, if we could manage to harness this energy, the Y generation could well become the most productive generation yet seen (Martin, 2001).

In order to reduce the gap which has been ascertained between the profile of tomorrow's manager, who signs up to an environment which is radically different from organisations' persistently obsolete modes of management, this paper puts forward a new approach to management, with the features of the "player manager". The situation is becoming critical; a radical change must take place as quickly as is possible: "over the past few years there has been a marked loss of interest on the part of managers. Job insecurity has broken the contract of trust between employees and companies, and even between employees themselves. Thus, playing together aims to recreate trust, collaboration and fun" (Kalouguine, 2009). However, this article will demonstrate how play can far exceed the framework of coaching and constitute in itself a new form of management.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: THREE COMPLEMENTARY APPROACHES

The methodology employed in this piece of research combines several approaches, in order to gain a better in-depth consideration of the "player manager" concept. In a step focused on forecasting, three cases looking at online role plays have been put together, with the aim of identifying the practices which are transferable to the world of management. Semi-structured interviews with 12 experts in their individual fields offer a new perspective, which is then compared to the conclusions of this study.

2.1. Career forecasting: Anticipating so as to be pro-active

Research is at the heart career forecasting. It permits greater clarity regarding past changes in a profession, in order to be able to anticipate future transformations (Boyer, Scouarnec, 2009). The objective here is to protect oneself against the dangers inherent in the contradictions which develop

between the profiles of new managers and methods of management and recruitment. It is necessary to act and innovate before it is too late. "We want to show that career forecasting can be a way of ensuring a better understanding of possible organizational innovations, new workplace behaviors, and for human resource management to be able to anticipate the competences or job roles which are new, evolving or dying out" (Scouarnec, Yanat, 2003). It is a question of building the future according to both desired and non-desired scenarios, and of acting on the present to point changes in a direction that is favourable for us (Thamain, 2009).

Career forecasting is "alert research into emerging facts which allows us to draw up future possibilities in terms of competences, activities, training, etc..." (Scouarnec, Yanat, 2003). This future is not a manager's fantasy, but a collaborative construct, based on elements of the past and the present, of a probable future towards which companies can choose to strive. "Forecasting is a philosophy of action which seeks to bring the one who engages in it to the right questions to ask, in order to decide on or clarify present actions" (Boyer, Scouarnec, 2009). Action is therefore at the heart of forecasting and it is from more or less weak signals, captured thanks to explorations carried out that parameters for action are defined. "Forecasting plays, to use an image borrowed from Gaston Berger, the role of a car's headlights, lighting the road at night and all the further into the distance as the car drives more quickly. The more the environment changes and moves, the more forecasting has to look with care towards the long-term future. Once the light is shown on it via forecasting, strategy will be able to choose the trajectory which seems to be the most appropriate" (Boyer, Scouarnec, 2009; Berger, 1964). The step involving coming to an understanding of the context, first consisted of reviewing the existing body knowledge on companies' increasing maladjustment to their socio-economical environment and their inability to welcome future managers in the right conditions. A sample of three online role plays was then defined, in order to observe herein certain practices which are specific to the Y generation.

12 experts in their individual professional fields were also selected, in order to undertake semi-structured interviews, designed to reveal the different facets of the issue and to offer some recommendations. The pre-formalisation stage permitted an initial analysis of the interviews' contents, and an initial structure underpinning the "player manager" phenomenon to be identified, along with to identify the distinction between strong hypotheses and more ambiguous suppositions. The construction stage consisted in confronting the different points of view of these experts to each other by presenting them with their differing visions. The validation stage offers jointly constructed recommendations in order to act positively on this phenomenon (Boyer, Scouarnec, 2009).

2.2. The case study method: a rigorous and exploratory process

"In general, case studies constitute the strategy of choice when one needs to ask the questions 'how' or 'why', when the researcher has little control over events and when the topic of research deals with a contemporary phenomenon in a real life context" (Yin, 1994). This piece of research offers answers to the following questions: Why is there a discrepancy between the Y generation and practices within organisations? Why does this discrepancy constitute both a significant threat and a significant opportunity for companies to make a new start? How can the Y population be integrated, and how can their qualities be put to the service of the organisation? In order to obtain the most pertinent answers, the case study method must be validated by a triangulation between the information collected. In other words, data must be compared against itself, and against testimonies and theories, alongside the use of several sources. The combination of a literature review, three case studies and interviews with 12 managers from the Y generation therefore constitutes a topographical fieldwork research strategy, designed to compare the information sources.

Yin defined the case study as "an empirical study which examines a contemporary phenomenon in its real life context" (Yin, 1994). He then specified that, for this method, the number of cases is not a criterion determining its validity: it is not necessary to have a multitude of cases in order to identify pertinent parameters for analysis. Rather than the number of cases, it is the rigour of the methodology

employed which is decisive in the description, the understanding and the explanation of certain phenomena. The use of several cases only serves to reinforce the results already obtained from one case and to maximise pedagogical value by immersing oneself in different contexts. The dispersion logic (Glaser et Strauss, 1967) requires that the cases studied are sufficiently varied. In fact, taking into account several cases allows one to compare and validate hypotheses stemming from the analysis of each case. This comparison and inference process favours the development of new theories or exploration of new ideas, using an inductive approach (Yin, 1984; Bansal et Roth, 2000; Zbaracki, 1998). Therefore, the choice to study three case studies concerning online role plays with different models and a wide range of practices to observe, permits an analysis of the phenomenon of the "player manager" that is sufficiently complete and in-depth.

Specialists in the case study method emphasize the extent to which it is important to be rigorous when using this method, and that it is necessary to follow a research protocol that is as precise as possible, in order to avoid ambiguities. Yin provides a certain number of validity criteria to be tested in order to check the overall validity of the method. Whilst the case study method is particularly appreciated for its strong internal validity of its results, the external validity is difficult to defend, as the transposition of the results obtained is problematic (David, 2004). The data collection proceeds in four phases. The first phase corresponds to an exploratory phase. This stage concerns the discovery of the research field, the identification of opportunities to use and of obstacles which could crop up. The second phase is much more analytical and less descriptive, with exclusively semi-structured interviews with participants, in order to conduct an in depth study of applications. The gathering of documents and the choice of more structured questions brings us closer to our objective. The third phase consists of structured interviews with questions of a much greater precision asked to a larger number of sources with a more critical view with regards to the way the platform works, and the desire to encourage participants to engage in self-criticism and suggest improvements. The fourth phase consists of presenting the research outcomes of the analysis of these key sources and combining the different opinions.

2.3. Interviews to validate and to hone the scenarios created

Interviews will allow us to complete the conclusions from these case studies. Participants will be encouraged to make sense of their practices, to stand back and describe events, actions, values, experiences and the problems they face in everyday life (Thiétart, 2007). The exploratory status and forecasting nature of the research is coherent with this approach: The experts interviewed will talk about their personal experiences, will respond to each other and will communicate their experiences on the themes put forward. Unlike questionnaires, these interviews are not intended to be representative. This is a question of recreating the world of research. It is the uniqueness of each career, of each point of view, which is essential to the evaluation of the pertinence of the envisaged questioning and the hypotheses (Rogers, 1945).

Code	Category	Fonction / Programme	Firm / Sector
A1	Trainer	Expert in E-learning	FNEGE
A2	Trainer	Expert in CVs / Interviews	APEC
A3	Trainer	Lecturer in HRM	Grenoble EM
A4	Recruiter	HR Manager	Nestlé
A5	Recruiter	Profiler / Head hunter	Big Fish
A6	Recruiter	HR Manager	EDF
A7	Director	Departmental Director	HP
A8	Director	Director of a Subsidiary	Nestlé
A9	Director	Purchasing Manager	Total
A10	Young graduate	MAI BEM Bordeaux	Purchasing
A11	Young graduate	DESMA GEM Grenoble	Communication

Table 1 List of the experts in their individual professional fields organised into four complementary categories

3. MMORPG PLAYERS AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR COMPANIES

Until now, the mass-market entertainment industry has known a great deal more about making profits from the democratization of the Internet and broadband, than the consumer durables industry with the framework of trade between businesses. Indeed, unlike commercial sites which have experienced difficulties in making their presence felt, video gaming sites, for example, those devoted to EverQuest, have had no problem in making themselves popular and attracting a considerable number of very active members (Allal-Chérif, 2007). The sites devoted to massively multi-player online role playing games (MMORPG - Massively Multi-player Online Role Playing Games) make up powerful C2C communities. This piece of research will be based on the study of three MMORPG, Dark Age Of Camelot (DAOC), EverQuest and Second Life.

3.1. EverQuest : managing a collaborative virtual project

A MMORPG is a persistent virtual world in which a large number of players can control characters, symbolized by avatars, and make these evolve in real time in an imaginary graphic environment (Fuger, 2003). Whilst Meridian 59 (1996) and Ultima Online (1997) were the first successes, the current MMORPG are The Fourth Prophecy (distributed by Goa), Dark Age Of Camelot (also distributed by Goa), EverQuest (distributed by Sony), Asheron's Call (distributed by Microsoft), or Anarchy Online (distributed by FunCom). Whilst in the game players can simultaneously have up to eight different identities, they can only use one at a time, and have to compensate for the missing competences by creating temporary or lasting partnerships with other players.

EverQuest (EQ), which is very popular in the United States, and federates hundreds and thousands of members, many of whom are permanently connected. Each server supports a specific and independent version of Norrath, the EQ world which is permanently evolving in real time. This constraint encourages the players to be very active or to abandon the game: they do not want to miss certain events or to see themselves outdistanced by others (Chee and Smith, 2005). The collaboration is facilitated by the interface and recompensed by the completion of tasks which require complementary capacities from different types of characters. Players have to cooperate to accomplish certain quests which they could not complete alone. Playing a MMORPG does not have an end: moreover, certain players have been playing for years and have a particularly good knowledge of the world in which they are still developing and progressing. They can be a source of information for newcomers who are still getting to know this world. This initiation is one of the ways of interaction which can occur in a MMORPG.

The time spent in the conception and development of characters, plus learning the very elaborate rules and in discovering a complex world which is constantly evolving, encourages players to pursue their adventures and therefore to pay each month to access the site. The numerous feedback, the quests and associated rewards, the challenges that become more and more difficult and the impression of spending time in an amusing and socialising activity are particularly effective means of making players faithful to and even dependent on these games (Humphreys, 2003). At the launch of EQ, the principal was that each player would try to make him or herself as different as possible from other players. He or she would consider other players as potential enemies, likely to be surpassed during quests or from whom he or she could take one of a number of objects for use in combat or magic. It

was almost against the will of the designers of these online role play games that players formed themselves into communities which, from then on, even constituted the foundation of MMORPGs (Fuger, 2003). Thus, from a strategy founded on a systematical confrontation, players have spontaneously developed a collaborative strategy which favours social cohesion.

Amongst EQ players, a hierarchy and grades exist. Players are divided into category families, types of professions with several development grades – and into guilds – strategic alliances from within which individuals can be co-opted or recruited, via a search in the game or an advertisement on its forums. Guild members complement each other: they are chosen according to their specific competences. Different guilds can exchange information or competences between them. "The guilds which group together players are made up of (...) different characters with different roles, showing a clear work division (magicians, warriors, craftsmen) and a significant formalisation in exchanges and behaviours. Thus, we can note the key role played by recruitment in constituting these guilds, a recruitment process which is carried out practically, following an organisational model" (Craipeau, 2002). The social status of MMORPG players is fundamental to their behavior. The higher the level of competence and specific characteristics shown, the more they are worthy of consideration from other players. This virtual status influences the relationships between characters, who "try to be at an acceptable level, to have some rare objects and, by building their reputation, they also build an identity" (Fuger, 2003).

3.2. Dark Age of Camelot: building an influential network and a legendary reputation

In DAOC, as explained on this game's website (www.daoc-europe.com), the player can join three different kingdoms: Albion – the kingdom of the late King Arthur, which is suffering from the absence of his authority and is in prey to multiple offensives – Hibernia – a primitive western hemisphere island inhabited by Celts – or Midgard – icy lands peopled by Vikings. The three nations have a choice of races (Trolls, Elves, Kobolds, Dwarfs...) and of single classes (disciple, apprentice, druid, sentry...) as well as different capacities and forms of specific magic. Players can adopt very different behaviors, but always in a team: there can be clashes between kingdoms (player versus player), a player can try to take possession of his adversaries' relics by attacking their reliquary fortresses. He or she can conquer territories, and accomplish quests (the player versus his environment) for his or her personal account or that of his or her guild. A MMORPG player launches him or herself into a virtual world by means of his avatar, a performance which combines both illusion and reality, in other words elements which are the player's own and others which are unfamiliar to him or her. It is the time spent developing this character and its specific, if not unique, characteristics, the experience which he or she is going to gain and the network he or she is going to build inside the game, which creates the player's identification with his avatar and builds his or her commitment to the performance of this double (Yee, 2001).

"Players attach a great deal of importance to their status because they know, perhaps unconsciously, that this will influence the relationships that they will enter into with other members" (Fuger, 2003). Indeed, the interpersonal aspect is extremely significant in MMORPG. Players seek, therefore, to improve their characteristics in order to progress through the levels of development and to become a legendary figure in their kingdom. "Climbing up the rungs of the virtual social ladder is one of the most important objectives for the majority of participants" (Fuger, 2003). Taking care of one's image leads to a certain degree of popularity and makes it easier to find partners. In DAOC, there are a multitude of objects which make it possible to associate a character to his status and his level. As a result, players have to behave in the same way as managers in companies and act on according to these gauges and variables, in order to improve and work in partnerships to complete project or achieve objectives. Certain advantages can be associated with a good reputation as much as a player in a MMORPG as in a company: "the notions of good and bad reputations exist and have an influence on

the status accorded to members of the community to which they attach a great importance" (Fuger, 2003).

MMORPG players make transactions. In fact, a specific monetary system exists which is unique to each game. This permits the characters to acquire certain objects, either in the shops, or by buying them from one another. Bartering also works very well. In order to obtain money, players can accomplish quests, sell objects, or confront one another. However, in a MMORPG, money is only one of numerous "values" which can be accumulated by a player. Players can also consecrate their energy to killing MOBs ('mobile objects' - computer generated monsters) in order to gain experience and increase their level in certain characteristics such as dexterity, strength, la force, furtivity, or magic. The more they increase their level and the more they can kill big monsters and earn money or the powerful and valuable objects which can be found on their corpses (Yee, 2001). This individual gaming strategy becomes exponentially longer and more difficult from one level to the next, and there is no maximum level. Certain players spend their time acquiring objects to sell them for considerable sums.

On the forums, certain participants have specific roles. On the one hand, players who have a great reputation and who attract a good deal of attention when they express themselves on a topic, play the role of opinion leaders (good players, the masters of guilds) who relay information produced by the experts (the games' creators). On the other hand, les games' developers need to be attentive to players' comments and the demands, in order to be able to react quickly, as this speed of reactivity is one of the main factors key to the success of MMORPGs. Thus, forums can provide both technical support and a sort of "suggestion box" which will enable the games creators to improve the playability, the graphics, the ergonomics and the overall design of the game. Market places could favor the development of professional forums, by highlighting the advantage that these give to the companies who use them.

3.3. Second Life: a virtual world pre-empting the real world

Second Life, the best-known virtual world in the world with 15 million fans, has had to deal with a serious financial crisis which perfectly reflects the real crisis and has provided us precisely with information on how to manage crises in general" (Kaplan, 2009). Indeed, this game has its own currency, with a floating interest rate of 270 lindens dollars (\$L) for one American dollar and its own banks which offer to place money with interest rates which can go as high as 40%. Real banks, such as the French national banks Crédit Agricole and the Caisse d'Epargne, have opened agencies in this virtual world and certain brands carry out virtual marketing there, examples include Toyota, which surveys avatars regarding its prototypes, or L'Oréal which organizes fashion parades in Second Life. Ailin Graef has become the "Rockefeller of Second Life" (Sloan, 2009) thanks to her avatar Anshe Chung through whom in 2006 she earned her first real million dollars as a virtual estate agent. Today she employs one hundred programmers and designers and has invested in several multimedia companies.

In 2007, gambling was forbidden in Second Life which led to the filing for bankruptcy of Ginko, "a virtual merchant bank which had massively invested in this sector" (Kaplan, 2009). This bankruptcy had the same kind of domino effect as that of Lehman Brothers, America's fourth merchant bank, impacting on all the other banks in the virtual world and all its inhabitants who held a bank account. These individuals immediately demanded very strict regulations and transparency in the financial sector. "Numerous parallels can thus be observed between the virtual crisis and the real crisis. In both worlds, the best means of resolving the crisis is to call on state good sense".

In MMORPGs, one of the keys to success lies in interaction with other players, regardless of whether these are on or offline. The emergence of communities of practice around these games is hardly a surprise. It is one of the particularly engaging aspects of these communities, which can even in certain cases lead to addition, which can be intriguing and possibly serve as a model in the development of

other, more professional communities. Inside these communities, partners work together to reduce costs (for example, data collection, transaction costs...) but also to seize business and industrial opportunities, of which there are no shortage. Within these forums, "those who contribute are motivated by the construction of a corpus which is likely to promote their opinions and their tastes and, for this; they are willing to invest a considerable amount of time (...). These contributors are not altruistic: They are looking to increase the clientele for goods which appeal to them, so that these products increase in number and improve in quality. The readers of these opinions are not exploiting those who contribute, quite the opposite, the more numerous they are, the more the contributors will have succeeded in promoting their views" (Gensollen, 2003).

4. TOMORROW'S MANAGER'S NEW COMPETENCES: TO BE THE BEST PLAYER SO HIS COMPANY WINS

Joseph Chilton Pearce wrote "Play is the only means by which humanity's highest degree of intelligence can reveal itself" (Pearce, 1992). This superior intelligence, produced thanks to play, is extremely valuable for organisations, which nevertheless refuse to recognise it as such, and even often judge it with disdain. However, the analogies between practices, tools, relationships, objectives and aspirations are very clear.

4.1. The market as an environment for playing

A game is fully characterised by four elements: (1) a list of players, (2) a list of possible strategies or actions for each player, (3) a description of the rewards allotted to players according to their strategic profile and (4) the rules of the game (Fisher and Waschik, 2002). In a similar way, company managers, competitors, clients, suppliers and other partners, all evolve in an environment where they know each other, where they have to make choices which are contingent on the others, where each decision can have serious consequences and where a certain number of rules need to be respected. Consequently, managers chose their strategies according to their competitors' former strategies, based on an anticipation of their future actions, on shape of the market, and the potential financial repercussions taking into account the rules of the economic game. "Our backdrop has changed and we are now probably entering into a veritable tempest of changes without precedence (...).

The waves of changes are tighter and tighter and closer and closer together. From now on, they overlap and we scarcely have the time to come to terms with the wave that has just arrived, than another one starts to gather force" (Saussereau, 2007). This instability is already present, and in a way even more intense in MMORPGs. Players are completely used to this. For them, this is no anomaly: it is natural. They have adopted the necessary reflexes to know how to act according to shifting parameters, so as to optimise personal and collective development and performance. In management, "momentum is precisely the moment at which the decision to act must have an impact" (Saussereau, 2007). Managers need to have the capacity to recognise this moment to put into place the right actions, in order to maximise their effects. They also need to play collectively and take their internal and external partners into account when taking this decision. Indeed, the performances of an organisation depend on the capacity of its employees to work collaboratively with each other and with their external partners.

4.2. New competences and new talents to be detected: how can we turn a good player into a good manager?

As Bernanos wrote, "one can engage very seriously in what one enjoys, children offer proof of this everyday" (Bernanos, 1949). However, play, because it is amusing, is not considered as serious by managers, who generally refuse to see any interest at all in it. Play is vulgar and futile, whilst management is noble and covers important stakes. Nevertheless, as early as five centuries before Jesus Christ, Héraclès explained that "man only really reaches his maturity once he rediscovers the

seriousness that he put into play when he was a child". Platon also said: "one can learn more about a man in one hour of play than a year of conversation". In addition, Carl Young (1936) wrote that "the creation of something new is accomplished not by intelligence, but by instinct for play".

New information technologies give us the illusion of equality between managers who participate in a community: they no longer have an age, a skin colour, beauty, a gender, qualifications, accents etc. They can create a new identity, sheltered from prejudices behind their computer screen, using their mastery of tools as a way of asserting themselves. The balance of power no longer relies on the same criteria. The power of having spent a long time studying is less significant than that of the mastery of virtual worlds and new qualification and evaluation codes. Communication with a "geek" is very different from traditional communication. In fact, young people group themselves into communities, clubs and tribes. Indeed, young people who play online and spend large amounts of time on forums, communities and networks have an intelligence which is structured differently from that of the traditional manager. "One of the complicated stakes for HRM is to manage individual talents individually, according to personalities, competences and ambitions, but at the same time to get individuals to federate around a collective project" (Added et al, 2007).

"More and more employment interviews directly involve putting candidates into real life situations. L'Oréal, which takes particular care of its employee branding, has built on this strategy with its business games, which allow the company to communicate about its jobs and to reveal who has potential: the L'Oréal Brainstorm, for example, requires participants to reinvent one of the group's brands. As for TF1 and Bouygues Télécom, they have embarked on the Virtual Regatta adventure, where candidates sign up for free for a virtual sailing race. The participant chooses the boat with the colors of one of the 25 companies present at the race, and if he wins, he is assured to meet the recruiters of the company whose colors he chose" (Trotereau, 2008).

The space taken up by information and communication technologies abolishes spatiotemporal frontiers and leads modern managers to work with colleagues all over the world. The serious games, which are already used in medicine and aviation in the United States, make for new modes of recruitment, training, evaluation and management of organizations based on virtualization and a heightened reality. The languages are encoded, symbolic, based on grading grids, scores or levels. In and of itself, knowing how to read is no longer even essential: like a child of six years who manages to complete an extremely complicated video game more rapidly than an adult, it is no longer the graduate who is the best equipped to understand these languages and to find his way in the socio-economic environment, modeled here in order to bring in the best business for his company. Managers are connected in socio-professional networks to each other, to the company, to their knowledge base, to their artificial intelligence, to forums and messaging services, as well as to different tools with applications which are specific to their individual professions. They are developing in an environment where their avatar interacts with those of their internal and external colleagues in order to carry out projects such as developing a new product, identifying the best suppliers, or carrying out market studies.

4.3. Adapting company management to "player managers"

Google is a Y company. It was created by the Y generation. At Google, the average age is 29 years old. Employees have the possibility to work in different company offices all over the world: Google sends them to New York, Atlanta, San Francisco, Paris, Dublin, Brussels, Milan, Oslo, Moscow, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Mexico or Dubai. Every week, employees have appraisals with their managers. 20% of work time is consecrated to personal projects, from which Gmail is a fruit. Work spaces are divided between three or four people. The equipment includes all the new information and communication technologies, but also video games, musical instruments, athletic fields, a swimming pool or a climbing wall. The creation of associations and clubs is welcomed. Brainstorming sessions take place around the coffee machine or in the canteen where everything is free. Management development is participative, ethical, sustainable, collaborative, and the virtual is on the march, as is

illustrated by the account of our expert in his professional field A7. Before, it was a real war to become a manager. Now, most of those who have the right predisposition and who could become a manager, do not want to do so. They work at all hours, day and night, they are constantly connecting and disconnecting and without losing efficacy, as a result. They adapt spontaneously to colleagues' demands, and need to maintain an extremely high level of motivation. They expect fewer constraints and less monitoring, with more autonomy and a greater level of ease at work.

4.4. The risks of virtual management

Companies need to manage the collision between generations. Indeed, the gap between the competences of the "new recruits" and those of "older" ones is widening, and it is becoming bigger between smaller and smaller age gaps. This observation holds true in almost all activity sectors in the race for innovation and the necessity to be agile which are omnipresent. In certain companies, the average age, for that matter, is significant of the "freshness" of human resources, which can pose a problem, as in the case of the company Google who had a lawsuit brought against them for discrimination against older generations. It is possible to ask oneself questions about the desire to keep the average age of employees under the age of 30 and the ways of doing so.

Companies need to adapt the working conditions and tools they offer their employees to socio-economic developments and to the new employee profiles available. These new profiles will exclude from their job prospectation companies who impose a framework which is too restrictive for their creativity. As Louis Philippe de Ségur highlights, "a conqueror is a determined player who takes a million men as playing chips and the whole world as rug". New technologies make information, resources and interlocutors accessible anywhere in the world and at any time of the day or night. A colleague or partner who is on the opposite side of the world communicates with you as if he were in the office next door: You see him, you speak to him, you share the same documents, and you work on the same media. Managers can therefore find themselves working at home, in public transport, or in the middle of the night, according to constraints, either alone or with other people elsewhere in the world. There is no longer a notion of "early" or of "late" in this globalised world where the place where you are is no longer really of importance: everything comes down to opportunity and proactivity. Respecting deadlines and anticipation are absolute priorities, regardless of conditions. It is the presence or absence of need which governs interactions between individuals. As a result, the amount of time something will take has become more and more difficult to comprehend. It is the tasks, the missions and the projects which determine employees' performance and remuneration.

CONCLUSION

The tensions between organizations, their environment and individual behaviors have become more and more difficult to manage. The situation is progressively getting worse and risks becoming very quickly decisive for a significant number of companies. "Deep down, the only real age-old question to be asked revolves around the third millennium and is about its humanity. In the end, will the third millennium be the much-awaited one of the reconciliation of progress and the human condition? A reconciliation for which we are waiting to such an extent, and yet, paradoxically, proves so difficult. Progress has, indeed, greatly disappointed us. We have waited for progress in terms of techniques, but also for economical progress and, obviously, for progress in terms of the human condition as a whole" (Aded et al, 2007). This paper has shown how play can be the source of a regained humanity for companies, if they accept to study it with all the potential that it contains. In order to integrate the Y generation, practices associated with play need to be transposed, and in particular those associated with MMORPGs, which can also bring with them effective solutions. Play makes up an integral part of the profile, which still remains atypical, of the "player manager" which will spread progressively.

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