

# **POST-MODERN ENTERPRISES**

## **with a**

# **DIGITAL CULTURE?**

Why is it that some companies are more successful than others? Have they found the magic solution? The miracle product? The niche product? The miracle sector? The miracle organisation? The motivation button?

In the various articles you will find here on business performance, I often talk about Post-Modern companies with a digital culture.

These companies have a different paradigm aptly reflecting Peter Drucker's cult sentence: the greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday's logic.

In one of my articles, I talk about moving from the logic of planning to the logic of intuition.

Many of you have asked me questions about these differences in logic. I have even given conferences on this subject in Madrid, Bilbao and Montpellier.

For several months now, I have been examining my French and European clients - SMEs, intermediate-sized companies and key accounts - to explore in more detail this angle on logical intuition and Post-Modern businesses with a digital culture.



The aim of this article is to give you food for thought, using examples of what these Post-Modern companies with a digital culture do.

This article is divided into 4 broad chapters:

1. The logic of intuition
2. The life of Post-Modern companies with a digital culture
3. Concrete examples of results
4. Moving towards action

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## I – The logic of Intuition

In the article ‘What do successful businesses do differently’, I give explanations of this move from the logic of planning to the logic of intuition. Click on this link to read these explanations in more detail: <http://www.anse.fr/francais/que-font-de-different-les-entreprises-performantes>

In a broader sense, the logic of planning is derived from a rational state of mind. That is to say, a state of mind where everything is calculated and planned, where we expect all contingencies to be provided for. A state of mind where the company system is highly centralised towards the top, with a view to measuring, managing, analysing and continually checking in order to readjust, correct and move forward.

In these businesses, where the logic of planning takes precedence, the organigram has a prominent place and time is very linear.

Decision-making is in the hands of experts, analysts, engineers. This is a technocratic culture. We could say that it leans more towards the left-hand side of the brain.

These companies have also developed a humanistic culture to get the best out of each individual. They have thus focused their actions upon employee motivation and active participation in decision-making.

The logic of intuition used by Post-Modern enterprises with a digital culture is derived from a mind-set and DNA which is more focused on the development of emergence, creativity, innovation, experimentation and the irrational. We could say that it leans more towards the right-hand side of the brain.

This is a different paradigm, since experimentation, innovation, creativity and emergence automatically implies the potential for mistakes. The Post-Modern enterprise is comfortable with mistakes, encouraging them and differentiating them from failure.

- So how, then, in this fleeting period, might a Post-Modern enterprise secure or re-secure double-digit rates of return and growth?
- How might a Post-Modern enterprise succeed in creating an environment where it is possible to experiment, try things out, readjust and succeed?
- How might a Post-Modern enterprise do away with the need to invest in training on motivation and conflict management?
- How might CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) fit into the life of a Post-Modern enterprise?
- How might a Post-Modern enterprise place the customer and the product or service at the heart of all discussions?

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- Why, for a Post-Modern enterprise, is discipline, rather than rigour, a virtue?
- Why is irrationality ‘almost’ the *raison d’être* of a Post-Modern Enterprise?

## II – The life of Post-Modern companies with a digital culture

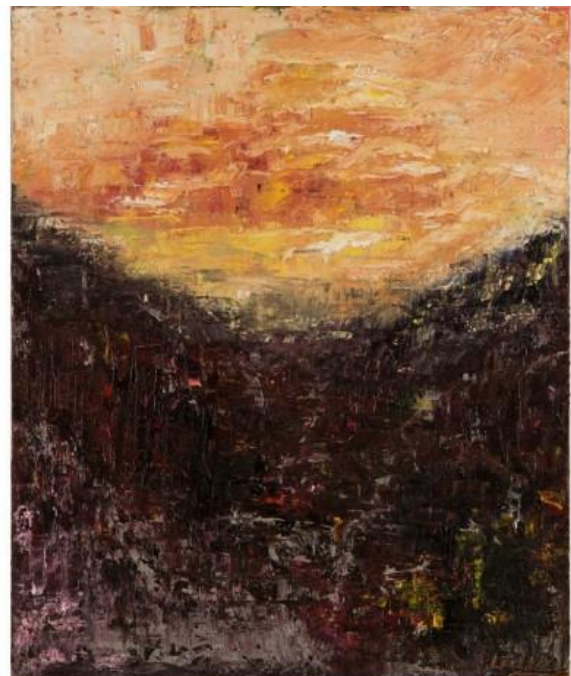
Based on my experience with my clients from SMEs, intermediate-sized businesses and Key Accounts, I would say that one simple word, ‘mistake’, lies at the basis of the Post-Modern enterprise.

Indeed, the acceptance of mistakes is a complete paradigm shift, since accepting mistakes means reconciling ourselves with the fact that we make them and being prepared to talk about them, or rather, encouraging ourselves to talk about them. A mistake is not a failure, with a need to place the blame, but rather an action which will lead us to do better, working towards the final result. This may appear very theoretical, since we have lived for decades with the logic of planning in our DNA. It may even sound utopian, but experiencing this and seeing it in action is to enter into another kind of environment within the company system.

These Post-Modern enterprises have developed a whole system where all the following points, along with many others, are intertwined with each other. This is holomorphic, drawing on both the right and left brain. I even wonder if, in these businesses, the word ‘mistake’ could be seen as the interface between the two different sides of the brain.

These points are not to be taken in sequential form. They constitute a whole, without limits:

- The Post-Modern enterprise has defined or redefined its fundamentals: its value system, beliefs, ideology, limits and what it does not accept. Outside of these limits, nothing is permitted. Within these limits, anything goes. Mistakes are therefore acceptable within these limits. Experimentation, innovation and thus mistakes are encouraged within these limits. These companies are therefore able to take risks. We thus no longer talk about rigour but, rather, of discipline to further the performance of the company. In his research during the 1990s and 2000s, Jim Collins spoke of



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paranoid discipline. At the time, I found these words excessive. Today, I think they are beneficial for safeguarding the performance of companies.

- Post-Modern enterprises know where they lead the world and will do what it takes to remain in this position. Each company has its field of excellence and nobody should be stronger than it within this area. This belief system is very motivational and requires virtuoso discipline, because everybody finds their pride and purpose within the business.
- Post-Modern enterprises handle the paradox of the irrational with ease. Indeed, they will focus more on developing experimentation than on developing planning to achieve a goal and a result. Staff within these enterprises experiment and, once the trial has been successful (within the limits), they plan and act fast.
- Post-Modern enterprises accept and allow for what I call emergent groups. These groups, often made up of 6 to 7 people, have a maximum lifetime of up to 18 months. They come together to work on a concern, a solution to be implemented or an ambition. There may be several hierarchical levels within these groups but, when it comes to meetings, parity is the order of the day, since they are led by the theme, the result to be achieved. There are no power issues because these emergent groups are reduced and have a short lifespan. They are there to get a result; that is to say, they are not only there to make decisions but to implement the decisions they have made. This is a totally different paradigm. The meetings are short, sometimes even informal; management may have a copy of the decisions taken. What interests everyone is the results. The main topics covered in these meetings are customer-centric or focus on improving the product/service for the customer. They are also results-centric.
- The managers/leaders of Post-Modern enterprises are no longer as focused on analysing, measuring and controlling their employees, but more on staff autonomy, encouraging action, risk taking, guarding against demotivation, respect for values, meaning, limitations and strengths (world champion), simplicity, discipline, mistakes and results. They allow their employees to make decisions and implement them. This is not an upside-down pyramid; managers take on the role of coaches.
- As befits their simplicity and fields of excellence, Post-Modern enterprises measure themselves on the basis of 2 or 3 KPIs, of which everyone is well aware. Moreover, emergent groups make and implement decisions based on improving these KPIs, meaning that these companies are much more results-orientated.

Post-Modern enterprises have developed a learning environment which ultimately resembles the start-up models of the mid 1990s, which is why we refer to their digital culture. These emergent groups resemble start-ups in the transversal and circular development which takes place within the company, working for the benefit of others, customers, products and/or services, innovation, experimentation and, of course, performance.

### III – More concrete examples

The examples I give here are the results of my own clients – SMEs, intermediate-sized companies and Key Accounts. These examples are valid regardless of the size of the company given that, in the digital culture, size is not a criterion, since Post-Modern enterprises function based on the model of several start-ups (small-size) working together:

- A team from the marketing department of a large international group succeeded in mobilising their staff within a sector in difficulty, returning to double-digit growth in less than one year. They simply implemented emergent groups with a sole focus on ‘no longer generating customers but generating fans’. This change was in line with the idea of being world champion in the sector; bringing the teams on board in this way restored pride to all the relevant players in this industry.
- As part of this paradigm shift, a functional management team, often seen as distanced in their ivory tower, simply redefined their main internal customers. Members of the team were placed within emergent groups working for internal customers, as well as internal customers’ management meetings. It goes without saying that circularity and transversality improved, but so did the relationship with the end customer, since everyone was working towards serving the main customer. We can ask the question ‘Who is my primary customer?’ The general management defined the company as its primary customer. Everyone was working to benefit each other. This may seem obvious, but actually seeing it happen gives a very different result. It is no longer a question of words, but of action.
- An SME in a technology sector facing strong Asian competition defined its area of excellence (world champion), emphasising that, within this product sector, the quality of the product and the quality of service had to be irreproachable. In terms of taking pride in the discipline, being irreproachable meant having zero defects. This also meant creating an environment where everyone was aware that zero defects meant identifying any mistakes very early on and repairing them just in time - anticipating and being disciplined throughout. This implied improvements in terms of both production expenditure and cost price since, with zero defects, the company no longer requires an after-sales service. These gains allowed the company to compete once more in terms of market price, with better quality. Two emergent groups were created (there was nobody from the family management in any of the emergent groups). One group focused on zero defects and another on how to revive the after-sales service. They made a series of decisions giving each individual control of their work throughout the production and delivery process. They encouraged and welcomed individual acknowledgement of mistakes made. Each mistake was seen as a challenge and followed by action. They transformed the after-sales service into a Customer Life Improvement Service. In agreement with customers, they integrated a cookie into the product in order to regularly inform them (once a month) of product use and possible gains which could be made through improving this use. Ultimately, they began selling other services around the core product.

- ❑ Through emergent groups, an intermediate-sized company made the decision to change its logistics structure with its franchisees. The aim was to allow franchisees to focus on their sales alone, relieving them of the burden of head office/franchise logistics. The franchisees' turnover increased, along with the intermediate-sized company's margin.
- ❑ A Start-Up needing to raise capital managed to convince its bankers using experimentation, facts, customer testimonials and practical, rather than theoretical, support. It successfully raised €1M after only 18 months of existence.
- ❑ An SME in the food industry developed a simple solution around KPIs. These are reported every day - each morning, everyone comments on the actions they took to achieve the results of the previous day and what they will do differently today to be more efficient and closer to the company's values. At the end of the working day, everyone comments on their results and what they will maintain for tomorrow.

From these concrete examples, we can see that these Post-Modern companies are results and action-centric, focusing upon their customers and quality products and/or services.

## IV – Moving towards action

When I explain all this, I am very often told "yes, but that's what we do".

However, when I ask the following questions, I find that the answers are not so clear-cut:

- What was your last mistake? Who did you tell about it? After all, if you do not accept and talk about your own mistakes, there's a good chance that your employees will also hide their mistakes.
- Is the company system able to differentiate between mistakes and failure? How many times have you encouraged mistakes?
- How many times a day is the word autonomy used? Is it wishful thinking?
- In which area are you world champion? In which area are you recognised as such? What will your employees say if I ask them the same question? And what about if I ask your customers and suppliers?
- How many meetings are carried out without you? And in how many of these meetings are decisions made which go on to be implemented? What impacts do these meetings without you have on the results of the company?
- How many times per year do functional staff actually visit customers?

- How many times per year are your customers invited to decision-making meetings with an emergent group-type lean?
- How many improvement actions are taken in response to customer dissatisfaction? Does the management follow this up or is this done by the company completely autonomously?
- How many improvement actions are taken in response to product or service defects? Does the management follow this up or is this done by the company completely autonomously?
- How many times per year or per month are you able to dedicate yourself to your primary customer, that is to say, your company itself, to propose your services as if it were an end client?
- Do you talk about rigour or discipline? Rigour is imposed from above, discipline is natural.
- How frequently do you make reference to your organigram? Does everyone seek to defend their place in the organigram or to achieve the best result for the company and the customer?
- Which actions have you taken that are in line with the logic of today's high-performing enterprises?
- What is your decision-making process? Is this known to everyone, including your customers and suppliers?
- When was the company's most recent genuinely creative action allowing it to increase profitability?
- What have you done totally differently which has enabled your company system to change its frame of reference and get your performance project back on track?
- If you had a magic wand, what would you do with it? What are your feelings about the consequences of taking action as a Post-Modern enterprise?



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Very often these questions lead to reflection. While they might form part of the theoretical thinking of certain companies, Post-Modern enterprises set themselves apart since, thanks to their digital culture, they really do act upon them.

### **So what is the role of the systemic coach?**

The role of the systemic coach is precisely to create a crucible in which the company system will adjust itself to embrace this digital culture, this DNA, this spirit of accepting mistakes, developing emergence, creativity, innovation, experimentation and the irrational.

The systemic coach will work through modules of 3 to 4 days, either with particular teams and/or with the whole enterprise – all 100 or 200 people working within the organisation. Depending on the size of the company, the systemic coach could work with several teams involved in different environments, or emergent groups. The systemic coach could also initially provide support to the manager or leader of the team wishing to develop the Post-Modern enterprise.

With all the systemic coaches working within the Metasystème network, we have also identified that systemic coaching fits in perfectly with the Lean Management method developed with Key Accounts and intermediate-sized businesses.

Lean management is a work organisation system which seeks involvement from all stakeholders to eliminate waste liable to reduce the efficiency and performance of a company, production unit or department. To this end, the aim of Lean Management is to eliminate waste, overwork and irregularity. During the integration of Lean Management, Kaizen groups often develop within companies. These Kaizen groups resemble what we have referred to as emergent groups. Note that Lean Management, coupled with the mind-set of the digital culture of Post-Modern enterprises, represent the right and left brain, the Yin and Yang working towards business performance.

## **V – Are you a company director, leader or manager?**

- Do you wish to develop the performance of your company system?
- Do you wish to take action and be a successful Post-Modern enterprise with a digital culture?
- And all this without investing in initiatives with an army of consultants, focusing more on pragmatic, results-focused action?

I invite you to leave me a message, either through the Contact section:

<http://www.anse.fr/francais/contact/>, by telephone on: +33 (0)6 82 69 70 83 or on skype: [claude.arribas](https://www.skype.com/fr/contacts/claude.arribas).



## VI – Are you a coach or consultant?

- Do you wish to allow your clients to enter into this new paradigm?
- Do you wish to develop your talent as a coach and thus increase your turnover from coaching?
- We offer several types of systemic coaching training through Alain Cardon's Metasysteme School, where several thousand coaches have been trained in Europe:

Firstly, supervision, which remains central to the development of coaching competence. This is a genuine resource for developing your skills and hence your business. There are still some places remaining in the systemic supervision groups which I am running in Montpellier and Toulouse for Alain Cardon's Metasysteme School. I invite you to click on this link to access the dates and various modalities: <http://www.anse.fr/francais/groupe-de-supervision-systemique-a-montpellier-et-toulouse/>

Do you wish to develop your talent as a coach, learning to sell yourself without intent and increase your turnover from coaching? Click on this link to access the detail of the Anse-Metasysteme programme: Selling yourself better as a coach: <http://www.anse.fr/francais/formation-coaching-pour-coach-et-consultant-comment-mieux-se-vendre>

Training in systemic coaching is the best way to enable this paradigm shift. I invite you to click on this link to access the various Metasysteme School training modules run by Alain Cardon in Paris, Lyon or Romania:

<http://www.metasysteme-coaching.fr/francais/formation-au-coaching-systemique/>

or by Claude Arribas in Madrid, Spain:

<http://www.anse.fr/espanol/fechas-y-inscripciones-en-espana/>

You can also leave me a message via the Contact section <http://www.anse.fr/francais/contact/>, by telephone on +33 (0)6 82 69 70 83 or on skype: claud.arribas.

## VII – From Darkness to Light, the work of Laura, artist/coach

As you read through this article, you will have noticed illustrative works by Artist/Coach Laura Calabuig. You can view the complete set of works 'From Darkness to Light' by clicking on this link: <http://www.lauracalabuig.com>

Thank you for placing your trust in me.

Kindest regards

Claude Arribas

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