

NEW WAYS OF WORKING: ACCOUNTABILITY AND COOPERATION: THE KEYS TO THE NEW MANAGEMENT PARADIGM

AUTHOR



DAMIEN MERMET
damien.mermet@wavestone.com

Against a backdrop of uncertainty, complexity, and the permanent transformation of models, New Ways of Working are increasingly seeing their application in a new management paradigm. The latter, structured around culture and practices, brings together – at the same level – accountability and cooperation.

But how should you empower employees in a climate of uncertainty? How do you create room for maneuver within the limits of your business model? And how can you nurture effective cooperation that contributes to overall performance? The new management paradigm has a host of questions to answer.



DEVELOPING A NEW MANAGEMENT PARADIGM

Companies face a range of external factors that require organizational, management, and cultural responses. We can divide them into two main categories: those linked to activity models, and those relating to socio-logical dynamics.

Rapidly changing activity models

Complexity, uncertainty, and rapidity are the new norm. With regulations, technologies, and uses changing on an almost daily basis, no one can claim to understand and control everything; group working, cooperation, and partnership are essential in mastering an uncertain future.

Customer expectations, bringing offerings to market, and the reactions of competitors are evolving at an ever-increasing pace. The speed at which this is happening underscores the gap between the “*ferocity of markets and technologies*” and the ways companies function, which often remain based on centralized decision-making and individual responsibilities.

At the same time, the boundaries between sectors and functions are changing: economic actors are seeking to develop differentiated positions by looking beyond their traditional boundaries and disrupting incumbents.

The new social dynamics

Today’s society is undergoing structural changes; changes that clearly have an impact on companies.

Our decade is defined by the use of new digital technologies (2.0, 4.0, artificial intelligence, neural control, and so on). A raft of technologies that are revolutionizing the ways people interact: immediacy, an absence of borders, and the availability of information are the new rules of the game.

The opinions of peers in your network change—and often count for more than—your relationship with the management hierarchy.

Life within companies is changing too: career paths are no longer linear.

Everyone wants to build a career that meets their personal aspirations. And companies whose values are translated into demonstrable behaviors are the ones most likely to see engaged and loyal employees.

Lastly, businesses are being subjected to the full force of the drivers of transformation when it comes to activity models. A source of anxiety for many employees, these new models heighten psychosocial risks, something that the whole of management needs to keep in mind.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND COOPERATION: AT THE HEART OF THE NEW WAYS OF WORKING MANAGEMENT PARADIGM

Faced with these environmental drivers, the management models to be developed have to meet the following requirements:

- / **Responsiveness** and **adaptation**, which involves devoting your energies to creating the right conditions for responsiveness—and that means developing every employee’s capacity to understand the environment, to think using scenarios, and to create room for maneuver—rather than mastering a “*forecast-plan-execute-control*” process.
- / **The innovation** resulting from ideas and opinions colliding, the pooling of skills, open-mindedness, business intelligence, and thinking beyond the usual boundaries. As a result, building teams made up of decidedly atypical profiles is a challenging but worthwhile approach.
- / **Coopetition**, driven by the need to develop partnership strategies in a complex and shifting ecosystem of players. It requires detailed work on positioning, ways of open and fluid collaboration, and the management of self-interest.
- / **Adaptation** and development of **skills** to generate the diversity needed to develop the points of reference and thinking, and to offer every employee a career path.
- / **Performance**, performance, and... performance! - this is about the quest for

sustainable performance, both short and long-term, with a strong emphasis on developing shared assets—both tangible and intangible.

In summary, it’s about developing the capacity for both understanding and action in the employees closest to the company’s stakeholders (customers, suppliers, partners, etc.).

RESPONSABILISATION ET COOPÉRATION AU CŒUR DU PARADIGME MANAGERIAL DES NEW WAYS OF WORKING.

The model being targeted could simply be defined as a combination of the principles of accountability and cooperation. The objective is to create a single, unified body, where everyone is committed, works with the limitations and expertise of others, and strives for overall performance.

Accountability involves getting everyone to understand the issues within their purview, and responding, innovating, and adapting to the worlds of their colleagues. It’s never about solitary decisions.

Cooperation involves pooling skills, opinions, and expertise, to maximize the potential to be responsive, innovative, and adaptive for the company. As this doesn’t tend to come naturally, it needs to be intentionally driven by management.

It’s a model that is neither focused on personal initiative taking, entrepreneurship, or bottom-line management, nor built on norms or a semblance of consensus.

It offers a clear challenge to traditional management practices. In this new model, everyone is constantly mindful of the added value they bring to others, and to the company. In that respect, it’s an approach that requires strong accountability and autonomy for managers, and that leading by example—a concept so often lauded—becomes a reality. This involves daring to let go and beginning to change yourself.

In short, for many companies, it’s about a shift from “*controlling individuals*” to “*energizing collectives*”.

HOW DO YOU DEVELOP A MANAGEMENT CULTURE THAT STRIKES A BALANCE BETWEEN ACCOUNTABILITY AND COOPERATION?

Overall, there's a need to develop both the culture (beliefs, representations, values, principles, desires, behaviors), and the "tools" and "systems" that drive behavior (processes, internal contractualization, appraisal, career management, access, and sharing of information), adopting an approach where the "how" (the way things are done) is as important, if not more important, than the "what" (the objective).

1 Putting in place a living, strategic framework for maximum responsiveness. In an uncertain and constantly changing environment, the objective of a strategic framework is to enable everyone to understand and assimilate the company's direction, in order to be able to exercise their responsibilities on the ground, in sync with the rhythm of external changes. This continuous, living, strategic process, open to external stakeholders, takes shape through workshops and seminars involving analysis, co-construction, and sharing.

2 A collective dynamic of debate and co-construction, based on clear responsibilities. Far from being centered on formal delegation of responsibility and arbitration, the management model being targeted aims to create a framework that makes it possible to weigh up and deliberately integrate each

point of view for the benefit of the greater good. The work of management has to first target purposes and ways of working (the how), with a strong focus on group functioning and reciprocal added value. By doing this, as organizational changes unfold, co-construction will focus more on defining relationships than on affirming individual responsibilities for each employee.

3 The deliberate development of room for maneuver. This is an essential point: at operational level, it takes a form that is both cultural (taking responsibility) and analytical (creating favorable operating conditions and providing the means). At the management level, it's a question of being better able to stand back, and exercising responsibilities while being fully aware of the overall challenges.

4 Processes and frames of reference for the concrete translation of the targeted management model. Initial thoughts clearly turn to human resources (recruitment, training, appraisal, salary, recognition, and promotion) and management (internal contractualization, reviews, appreciation of results), but looking beyond this, fostering accountability, room for maneuver, and cooperation, involves all of a company's processes.

The means used by management to get work done are also placed under the spotlight, including in efficiency terms: such a mentality allows both synchronous and asynchronous methods of group working to develop, fostering expression, listening, creativity, analysis, decision, and ownership.

5 Organized cooperation, rooted in high-quality, individual relationships. Developing the capacity of a group to work together effectively means taking the time to build trust and helping everyone learn to work—and appreciate working—with very different people. This involves finding solid answers to questions like:

"What do they expect of me? What can I offer them? In terms of what I do, which bits have an impact on them?"

Cooperation begins with attention to others; we can talk in terms of a management style that has "high relational intensity." This assumes that traditional "management courage" extends to "relational courage between hierarchical levels and peers". Effective cooperation doesn't simply develop from a mindset of mutual aid. The right approach involves working both on the principles of managing cooperation and on a clear definition of the "objects of cooperation".

6 New ways of circulating information that transforms the role of managers. Collaborative platforms and communication tools make it possible to circulate and share all relevant information... or not. These tools accelerate responsiveness, adaptation, and innovation if they are used in a way that enhances meaningfulness and allows freedom of expression. By developing "pull" practices, these tools are a good fit with the dual philosophy of cooperation and accountability. Transparency of information allows everyone to have easy access to the information they consider necessary.

EMPOWERING CUSTOMER CALL CENTRE AGENTS

Faced with some extremely demanding operational performance issues, an energy company decided to give more freedom to its customer service agents. A pragmatic approach based on the needs expressed at different levels of management, and aiming for a balanced set of objectives (effective in financial terms, and for customers and employees), made it possible to define and share well-designed management practices.

The initiative provides a coordination platform for ongoing projects and leads to concrete commitments — written into responsibility contracts — that are managed over time. For example, it has resulted in that "essential item" — roadmaps for each of the parties involved. In summary, it's about developing a customer-oriented culture, and frameworks, tools, and operational methods that empower call center agents and sales staff to take the initiative.

It also makes it possible to engineer profound changes in the system of regulation by making true “peer” regulation possible. Digital, the quintessential mass-cooperation medium, is also the one that allows, in its way, a move from supervision to “co-supervision”.

7 Demonstrating and translating values clearly. A living approach to communication, firmly rooted in real situations, is essential in moving from “pioneering pilots” to the involvement of the entire company. Direct communication with employees plays a role in stretching managers as a result of expectations that come “from below”. And, once again, it is exemplarity and consistency among leaders that is required.

As employees become physically more remote, there’s a requirement to work on both the need to belong, and the need to be different. The first lever of cohesion and coherence is the living out of strong values, which are perceived as sincere because they are translated into practices and visible behaviors. It seems to us that meaning, trust, kindness, transparency... and, also, being demanding, are the values that best fit the proposed management paradigm.

CONCLUSION

The management paradigm of accountability and cooperation meets the need to respond to the current economic, technical, regulatory and social environments that companies operate in. Without a doubt, it’s is a highly demanding model that questions a touchstone of the way businesses operate: decision-making. A far cry from models of formal delegation, decisions appear at the operational level as an open search for the best answers to stakeholder expectations, and at corporate level as the logical outcome of an approach that integrates all opinions and points of view.

The circumstances and objectives are different for each company, and the management model proposed consists of a collective

IDENTIFYING, SHARING, AND OPTIMIZING COOPERATION BETWEEN GROUPS

We’re in in a business where the different functions are part of highly integrated business and activity models. A range of stakeholder expectations assumes a fluid and efficient relationship between a range of players.

In order to embed and optimize this cooperation within current operations, the company—using a combined project team from business units and corporate functions—defines a set of principles (for example integrating cooperation into managers’ formal responsibilities: in the management cycle, and in appraisal and employee recognition practices). It also develops a toolbox (a qualified inventory of essential ways of cooperating, and a concrete proposal for ways to facilitate and manage cooperation). This allows each part of the business to identify and facilitate the types of internal or external cooperation it needs to foster.

dynamic that follows a co-constructed trajectory; it’s not about superficial consensus, but about striking the best balance, on the basis of nourishing permanent debate in order to compare points of view.

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