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**SWP 16/94 EFFECTIVENESS OF FRENCH MANAGEMENT:  
ANALYSIS OF THE BEHAVIOUR, ATTITUDES  
AND BUSINESS IMPACT OF TOP MANAGERS**

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**Effectiveness of French Management: Analysis of the  
Behaviour, Attitudes and Business Impact of  
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### **Abstract**

The findings in this paper are based on the results of a postal survey of 168 top level managers in French organisations. Demographic variables, behavioural characteristics and measures of business impact have been linked in order to discover whether organisational infrastructure concerns, educational achievements of top management, or the behaviour of top management, or a combination of these, influence the business performance of French private sector organisations.

The results show that the level of qualification attained does not indicate whether French senior managers will perform effectively, nor is the configuration of organisation structure significant for effective management. Crucial, however, are the attitudes and behaviour of senior managers, who are identified as significantly impacting on group and organisational performance. It is considered that four areas of management development are pertinent to the continued growth and development of French senior managers, namely enhancing the ability to respond positively to feedback, enhancing interfacing skills, effective use of consultants and assisting managers to be high achievers.

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## **Introduction**

In France, large companies in many sectors have grasped the opportunities presented not only by the Single Market, but by global markets generally. French companies have become the second biggest investors globally in terms of mergers and acquisitions in 1992, thus continuing the sharp upward trend observed since the late 1980s (Le Monde, 5 October 1993). Thomson in defence equipment, Alcatel-Alsthalm in both telecommunications and transport equipment, Rhône-Poulenc in chemicals, Lafarge in cement, BSN in food manufacturing and Financière de Suez in banking and insurance, are some of the big names which have moved fast to reach critical size and market share via acquisitions of brands, joint venture agreements and mergers.

The pressure to remain, or become, competitive has intensified in domestic markets, as France has become the main target for inward direct investment, not only in Europe, but in the world. Hence, more so than ever, it is likely that one key factor for promoting success and growth will be the way organisations are managed. Under such circumstances, it is considered pertinent to explore the qualities of French senior management.

### *The French Educational System*

What has been written about the French manager has focused on levels of education, but not on performance attributes (Barsoux and Lawrence 1990). Proving

managerial merit in France primarily requires having a specific level of 'diplôme', a higher education qualification, equal to 5 years study post baccalauréat (taken at the age of 18). The intellect displayed by the acquisition of a 'diplôme' is regarded as the prime criterion for leadership in any field, including business (Barsoux and Lawrence 1990). In addition to universities in France, there are a sizeable number of academic institutions at higher education levels called 'grandes écoles' (Barsoux and Lawrence 1991), a few of which promote an elite meritocratic hierarchy which produce the high quality professional specialists. The latter are specifically geared to the technical, administration and business needs of the civil service, public authorities and private sector.

French managers are referred to by the collective term of 'cadres' who constitute a legally defined group in the area of collective bargaining. There are basically two ways to become a 'cadre': by virtue of educational qualifications or through long-standing service in a company. In particular, companies favour recruits who have a 'diplôme' from a 'grande école' since it is said to emphasise the individual's capacity for 'rapid learning and intellectual virtuosity'.

Gordon (Handy et al 1988) underlines the high degree of competition amongst individuals to be admitted into these 'grandes écoles'. The result is that the educational system tends to produce 'brilliant problem-solving individuals' who compete for positions to '*gain authority and advantage in the bureaucratic hierarchies of the administration*' (p 49) and some of the larger, domestic or international French business organisations (Handy et al 1988). The educational elite benefit from preferential advancement. They are given assignments and postings that are intended to ease their movement into general management, and, depending on their progress and status, are further developed by attendance on executive programmes.

### *Power Distance and the French Educational System*

Hofstede (1980), however, provides a useful insight as to the impact of the French education system on individuals through his power distance index. He uses the concept of power distance as 'a measure of interpersonal power or influence between two people, as perceived by the least powerful of the two'. He states that in French organisations, the

"... educational differences between lower level and higher level employees is confirmed and perpetuated in their different legal status: higher educated employees become 'cadres' and lower educated 'non-cadres', and the transfer between the two groups is very difficult" (Hofstede 1980)

The literature therefore highlights the importance of qualifications in the appointment and subsequent promotion of managers in French organisations. Such qualifications however, have had a high technical aspect and the level of social skills and behavioural aspects have been rarely addressed (Locke 1989). Hence, how effectively are French organisations managed in terms of present practices, behaviour and attitudes, and what are the implications for business performance? The results of the following survey of top managers (by level) in France attempts to assess the impact of French managerial practice in terms of the organisational effectiveness and business performance. The article concludes with suggestions for best practice in terms of addressing the management development requirements of managers in French business organisations.

### *The Research*

Studies of top managers have tended to fall into one of two categories; those that focus on examining the attributes of individuals in terms of behavioural, attitudinal or deeper personality dimensions (Bennis and Nanus 1985; Kotter 1982; Margerison and Lewis 1983) or more job, role and organisation related criteria (Mintzberg 1973; Stewart 1982). Initial and intensive case study exploration in this study of the key influences which impact on the decision forming dialogue, decision making and decision implementation processes, strongly suggests that both personal characteristics and job/role considerations need to be taken into account (Kakabadse 1991a).

The original and insightful work of Elliot Jacques (Jacques 1951) on role, culture and individual performance considerations, provides for the conceptual bridge between individual behaviours and role requirements. Crucial is the concept of *discretion*, a characteristic purportedly common to general managerial roles in both private and public sector organisations. The term 'general management' here encompasses roles such as Chairman, CEO, MD, director and general manager. The discretionary element of role refers to the choices the role incumbents need to make in order to provide shape and identity to their role and that part of the

organisation for which the individual is held accountable. For example, a director of manufacturing needs to form a view as to the shape, size, level of investment of the manufacturing function according to the needs, challenges and strategy of the organisation.

How such views are formed highlights the nature of the organisational influences prevalent, as well as the mental and personal influencing skills i.e. capacities of the role incumbent to effectively exercise discretion. There is no reason to assume, however, that, even if the capacity of those top managers is considerable, each of the members of the Senior Executive would form similar conclusions as to the shape, size, direction, desired key qualities of the total organisation and thereby the configuration and cost of their areas of accountability. On this basis, fundamental to leading an organisation effectively is the need to ensure a high quality dialogue amongst the members of the Senior Executive. The results of preliminary case study analyses, examining the capacities and competencies of senior managers, indicates that where the quality of dialogue is high and the relationships amongst senior managers is positive, the issues and concerns facing the business tend to be more openly addressed (Kakabadse 1991b). Where, however, relationships are tense and the quality of dialogue restricted, certain issues and problems tend not to be raised because to do so would generate unacceptable levels of discomfort amongst certain or all of the members of the Senior Executive. In essence, dialogue refers to the content of the conversation concerning the running and future of the organisation, external developments which may affect the organisation and the views and responses of individuals or groups within the organisation. Ironically, unless the top team is working reasonably effectively, issues which need to be addressed are not; in effect, the senior management of the organisation knowingly allows the organisation to deteriorate through lack of attentiveness to key issues and challenges.

This study concentrates on examining the relationship between individual attributes, role and organisational requirements and quality of dialogue amongst senior French managers. The preliminary case studies significantly influenced the design and content of the Senior Executive questionnaire, so that the qualitative element of aspects of national and organisational culture and the unique on-the-ground perspectives influencing attitudes and behaviour, could be captured in order to provide for quantitative comparison. Back translations were employed to assure for consistency in the interpretation. Through examining the exercise of discretion,

individual preferences, strategic intent and cultural considerations are encompassed in the design of the study.

Questionnaires were selected and distributed by our French partner (Banque Paribas). They were then returned anonymously. The findings presented in this article are based on the results of in-depth interviews and returns to a postal survey of top level managers working in French organisations. In total 168 responses were analysed (an approximately 10 per cent response rate from the postal survey), broadly representative by industry sector. Where appropriate, the findings are illustrated with quotations from the sample.

Nine key areas of exploration, based on the interviews and responses to the questionnaire, addressing both organisational and behavioural characteristics are reported, covering:

- The nature and intent of corporate objectives of French organisations.
- The degree of perceived clarity of communication of corporate objectives of French organisations.
- The nature and intent of the personal objectives of senior managers and the degree to which they are in keeping with the corporate objectives and divisional, functional and departmental objectives of French organisations.
- The degree of clarity of definition of areas of responsibility for senior managers.
- The degree of influence of size and structure of organisation on key organisational and behavioural measures.
- The degree of influence of level of education and qualifications on management style and performance.
- The extent to which the organisation is viewed by its management to be performance oriented.
- The quality of dialogue amongst the members of the Senior Executive and the extent to which sensitivities within the senior group inhibit discussing key business concerns affecting the future of the organisation, and how in turn that is likely to impact on the extent to which the members of the Senior Executive hold a shared view as to the future direction of the company. Sensitivities refer to those issues which are perceived by the group members to be difficult to discuss, bearing in mind the different views and positions adopted by individual members which impact on their



relationships and in turn may negatively influence their openness of conversation concerning the organisation and its management.

- The opportunity costs that are likely to arise if the members of the Senior Executive exhibit poor quality dialogue and a lack of shared vision concerning the future.

Cluster, regression and correlation analyses are utilised to explore the relationships between certain of these characteristics.

Driven by comments made in interview that, irrespective of the effectiveness of management of the organisation, French organisations face unique problems and concerns, it was decided to explore whether different categories of organisation could be distinguished from the sample and whether these categories exhibited shared or unique characteristics. French business organisations, therefore, are classified into three groupings - 'effectively managed', 'average' and 'ineffectively managed' through cluster analysis of educational qualifications, effectiveness in terms of communicating key messages, quality of dialogue within the Senior Executive, attitudes towards the members of the Senior Executive, and whether or not the members of the Senior Executive have a shared understanding of and commitment to the strategy of the organisation.

The intention of this study is to link demographic information about individuals - age and educational level, and the company - size, structure, the communication of corporate objectives, with behavioural characteristics and measures of business impact. This is seen as important in addressing the question as to which has the most powerful influence on business performance - infrastructure concerns, the educational achievements of top management, or the behaviour of top management or a combination of the three. Further analysis is undertaken correlating demographic, behaviour and business impact variables with the three categories of organisation in order to ascertain whether a distinction can be drawn between an effectively performing against a poor performing organisation.

A cross-section of industries are represented in the survey (see Table I) with certain corporate organisations having interests in more than one industry.

*Insert Table I*

## **Demographics**

The characteristics of those managers responding to the Top Executives Competencies Questionnaire are highlighted:

- The majority of respondents (73 per cent) are either in the 36 to 45 years of age category (39 per cent) or the 45 to 55 years age group (35 per cent).
- 50 per cent state that their highest level of education achieved is a 'diplôme d'ingénieur' or 'diplôme de commerce' (usually gained from a 'grande école'). This figure supports Barsoux's view that to prove managerial worth attainment to 'diplôme' level is of advantage. For a further 23 per cent, the highest educational qualification achieved was a 'maîtrise' (taken after 4 years study at university). Only 10 per cent indicated that their highest educational qualification was a 'baccalauréat' (taken at the age of 18 in a wide group of subjects).
- 31 per cent have been working with their organisation for between three and six years. A further 42 per cent (supporting Barsoux's view), have had over ten years experience working within their current organisation.
- 43 per cent of the respondents have spent between one and four years in their present job. A further 20 per cent have been in their present job for more than ten years.

## **Corporate Objectives of French Organisations**

The results of the survey highlight competitiveness as a key issue for French business organisations. The respondents identify their markets as competitive (65 per cent). Only 14 per cent identify their markets as providing opportunities for growth. Competitors are described as competitive/aggressive (70%). Content analysis of the corporate objectives of French organisations identifies enhancing quality, increasing profitability, increasing market share and being seen as market leaders, as the mechanisms for constantly improving performance in a competitive environment.

### Respondents' Comments on Corporate Objectives

*"To be recognised by our customers in the areas of quality, technology and service. To be a leader in Europe".*

*"Development and maintenance of a market share compatible with the resources available - improvement to overall profitability".*

*"To aim for: 10 per cent of the world market; 7 per cent profitability; innovation in products, technology, organisation and structures; quality in products, services and relationships;*

*"To be European leader, even leader world-wide, for our main products".*

*"To become one of the five world leaders".*

*"Maintain our position as world leader by increasing turnover and margin".*

*"To strongly increase market share over the next five years to a now complete range of products".*

### Europeanisation

Overall, 66 per cent feel that enhancing competitive behaviour is desired for the future, as the perceived implication of greater Europeanisation is increased competitiveness. Enhancing competitiveness is an appropriate way to deal with operating in a large European market by:

*"finding new markets and developing our position on existing ones".*

26 per cent, however, state that Europeanisation is not a new issue as internationalisation has been an on-going consideration. (Myers et al 1992).

*"We are already European and are present everywhere".*

Competitive intent emerges as a predominant theme in the corporate objectives of the majority of French companies. In fact, 92 per cent of respondents report their organisation's intent to increase market share in either product, service or geographical/regional areas.

### **Objectives of Top Managers**

The majority of respondents identify their personal objectives to tie in with the organisation's objectives.

<b>Respondents' Comments on Personal Objectives</b>
<i>"Contribute to the competitiveness of the company".</i>
<i>"Make sure the company develops harmoniously and in a balanced way, with regard to the strategies required, with a suitable degree of risk and level of performance".</i>
<i>"Pursue company development, to increase markets and be more competitive".</i>
<i>"Focus on the service offered as well as the product, be always available to the customer, have a more aggressive commercial approach".</i>

The emerging evidence is that the personal objectives of senior managers support the declared corporate objectives, in that individuals declare their intent to contribute to the competitiveness of French organisations.

### **INFLUENCES ON PERFORMANCE**

#### **Classification of Organisations**

Having undertaken a detailed content analysis of personal and organisational objectives and identified the intent of senior managers, single item questions were used to examine the impact of the already identified organisational and behavioural characteristics on the effectiveness of communication and implementation of objectives, in order to identify the manner in which intent is attained.

As stated, using cluster analysis (Everitt 1981), three groupings of organisation emerged. Organisational and satisfaction related factors, based on top managers perceptions, were entered into the cluster analysis. The organisational factors are perceived as being: clarity of communication of operational and corporate objectives; clarity of definition of job related responsibilities; degree of orientation towards rules and regulations; and being an organisation that values performance and professionalism. The 'satisfaction' factors are perceived to be: satisfaction with job; satisfaction with organisation; satisfaction with top management; and satisfaction with the management of internal and external interfaces. The emerging clusters, based on top managers' perceptions, are classified as the '*effectively managed*' organisation (i.e. more positive response to the scale items); the '*averagely managed*' organisation and the '*ineffectively managed*' organisation. Based on this analysis, approximately 57 per cent of French organisations fall into the 'effectively managed' category; 32 per cent in the 'averagely managed' category; and only 11 per cent in the 'ineffectively managed' category.

Key organisational and behavioural characteristics are correlated with the three categories of organisation in order to explore differences in terms of impact on business performance.

### Organisation Characteristics

The organisational characteristics refer to the communication of objectives and the clarity of responsibilities of senior managerial roles. Attention is also given to exploring the impact of size of organisation and structural configuration on the management of the three categories of organisation.

#### *Communicating Objectives*

97% respondents in the effectively managed organisation category believe that functional/departmental objectives are clearly communicated. 100% of the respondents in the ineffectively managed category believe that functional/departmental objectives are poorly communicated, or report that they do not know whether such objectives exist. In the averagely managed category, 56% indicate that functional/departmental objectives are effectively communicated.

As far as corporate objectives are concerned, 95% of respondents in the effectively managed category indicate clarity of communication, whereas 94% of respondents

in the ineffectively managed category highlight poor communication or lack of knowledge of such objectives. In the averagely managed category, 71% of respondents identify clarity of communication of corporate objectives.

#### *Clarity of Definition of Responsibilities*

As can be seen (see Figure 1), the majority of respondents highlight that senior managers have clearly defined areas of responsibility. Only 41% of the respondents in the ineffectively managed category highlight lack of clarity concerning job related responsibilities.

*Insert Figure 1*

#### *Company Size and Structure*

When examining the three categories, the results show that the size of the organisation is not a significant variable when it comes to distinguishing between the 'ineffectively managed' from the 'effectively managed' companies (see Figure 2). An effectively managed company is not necessarily large (more than 2,500 employees). Likewise an ineffectively managed company is not necessarily small (less than 100 employees). Further, structural configuration, in terms of functional, product, divisional or matrix structures, does not significantly differ between the three categories of organisation (see Figure 3).

*Insert Figures 2 & 3*

#### Behavioural Characteristics

##### *Educational Qualifications*

Table II indicates that qualifications have no significant relationship with managerial capability. The results are subdivided into two levels of qualification - those who are 'highly' qualified, i.e., those having a Diploma, Maîtrise or doctorate - approximately 85 per cent of the sample, and those who are 'lowly' qualified, i.e. possess qualifications below diploma level - approximately 15 per cent of the sample. Those organisations who are identified in the effectively managed category are just as likely to have senior managers who are highly qualified as are the ineffectively managed organisations (see Table II).

*Insert Table II here*

### *Valuing Performance*

Overall, 72% of French managers describe their company's management style as valuing performance and professionalism. However, only 45% of senior managers are identified as being performance oriented. As can be seen in Figure 4, 50% of senior managers in the effectively managed category are identified as being performance oriented, in comparison to 53% in the ineffectively managed category. Only 39% in the average category organisation are recognised as being performance oriented. On this basis, emphasis is placed on examining those elements that significantly influence performance orientation.

### Quality of Dialogue

Correlation analysis (Table III) indicates that the significant relationships between senior managers being performance oriented and other organisational and behavioural characteristics are the quality and dialogue within the top team, (significant at 0.05 level) sensitivities that merit but do not receive attention within the top team (significant at 0.05 level) and the performance of one or more members of the top team (significant at 0.05 level). In effect, the more the behaviour and attitude of one or more members of the top team is considered as promoting a poor quality of dialogue inhibiting the discussion of key issues, the greater the likelihood that senior managers will not be performance oriented.

*Insert Figure 4 and Table III here*

In order to understand the significance of these findings, regression analysis was undertaken in order to explore the impact of poor quality dialogue amongst the members of the top team. Regression analysis indicates significant relationships between quality of dialogue amongst the members of the Senior Executive, sensitivities which inhibit discussion within the Senior Executive and a lack of shared vision amongst the members of the Senior Executive. (See Table IV). If the quality of dialogue is recognised as poor, then issues which should be addressed remain unaddressed, with each of the key senior managers possibly adopting a different view or position in terms of how to resolve conflicting issues of an operational and strategic nature.

An additional statistic provides supporting evidence and enhances understanding as to the nature of poor quality dialogue. Irrespective of organisational category, 56% of the sample are identified as feeling more negative towards their colleagues in the Senior Executive. The key concerns identified by the respondents as to what contributed to the growth of negative sentiments are that the members of the top team are,

- not easy to talk to
- less likely to openly discuss sensitive issues
- less likely to be understanding of each others problems and challenges in the company
- less likely to trust each other
- more likely to implement decisions which personally suit the individual, as opposed to what was jointly agreed in meetings
- as a result, more likely to address short term issues, minimising discussion addressing the medium to long term issues.

*Insert Table IV here*

### Opportunity Costs

Table V highlights the impact of poor quality dialogue amongst top management on French business organisations.

*Insert Table V here*

The implications of working within such a team environment are that the performance of one or more members of the top team are likely to be affected and the relationship amongst the top team harmed further. As a result, the issues affecting the long term future of the company are less likely to be adequately explored. Under such circumstances, each of the senior team may attempt to apply their view to the strategic direction of the organisation and to how the organisation should be managed. The effect of such behaviour is that the manner in which the



structure of the organisation is worked is likely to be disruptive to the effective management of the enterprise. Should issues of restructuring arise, it is further considered that deep differences of opinion concerning the manner and means of re-organisation, would emerge, leading to inadequate integration of the different elements of the organisation. As a result of such opportunity costs, it is considered that the morale of employees would be substantially damaged.

Content analysis of respondents' comments provides for further supporting evidence of the negative nature of senior managerial relationships.

#### *Respondents' Comments on Performance*

*"There are conflicts and obstacles, the main thing is to achieve one's ends by bypassing or confronting them (I prefer the latter)".*

*"The company history was mainly based on 'each man for himself' and not on team-work".*

*"Lack of structure, poor team spirit, due to indifferent, dictatorial management".*

*"The company's evolution and its difficulties in developing frequently highlight the question of certain individuals who could block expansion (restructuring)".*

#### MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF FRENCH MANAGEMENT

Naulleau and Harper (1993) offer three recommendations for the management development of French managers, namely opening up career opportunities for the less educationally qualified to top management positions, empowerment programmes for lower and middle management and social skills programmes for top management.

The results of the survey highlight the need for management development and certainly support the empowerment programme recommendations of Naulleau and Harper (1993). However, the evidence in this paper suggests greatest attention needs to be focused on on-the-job development in order to address the more negative impact of top management behaviour in the management and future development of the organisation.

Table VI highlights the likely benefits to improving top team performance. Top managers recognise that improving the quality of dialogue is likely to lead to improved discussion concerning the impact of competitors in the marketplace and specifically on the company. Equally, the management of both internal and external interfaces is likely to improve. In terms of achieving targets and objectives, top French managers consider that fewer inaccurate commitments are likely to be made to bosses and subordinates. In conjunction with these improvements, employee morale is likely to improve which in turn is expected to lead to higher standards of performance from company employees.

*Insert Table VI here*

In order to achieve such improvements, four on-the-job development recommendations are offered.

#### On-the-Job Development

##### **1. Feedback as an Executive Development Tool**

A key on-the-job development experience for senior management is feedback. Feedback is an important mechanism for adjusting and improving performance. No matter how well trained/developed is a manager, feedback is required if an individual is to adjust performance in order to address contingencies within the business or working context. Especially so with work of a strategic nature, as making the 'right' strategic choice is as much a statement of belief as it is logical deduction from quantifiable data. As much depends on effectively communicating ideas as does emerging with the theoretically 'appropriate' policy and direction. Key to effective communication is behaviour. As has been shown, the behaviour of the members of the top team directly influences the beliefs and trust others have in the mission and strategies of the organisation. The more feedback senior managers can invite and digest, the more conscious they will be of the impact they make on the overall management of the organisation. Hence, managing the process of giving and receiving feedback at senior level is crucial for the continued growth and progress of the business.

Different means of feedback can be utilised. Survey feedback can be a powerful mechanism for effectively adjusting to internal and external developments. Data surveys can focus on the external interface, i.e. marketing surveys, customer satisfaction type surveys etc. When addressing internal interfaces, organisational

data survey feedback should aim to link behaviour and attitude with performance; performance at the individual, group/team and/or organisational level.

Equally, use of psychological and management style tests and exercises, as well as mentoring and coaching, through third party facilitation, can enhance greater self understanding and a realisation of strengths and weaknesses. In this way the individual can recognise what skills and styles require development in order to better manage complex relationships.

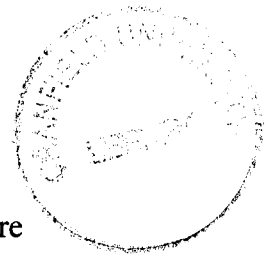
Particular attention should be paid to the nature and quality of feedback in the superior/subordinate relationship. Respect and attention given to the appraisal process can substantially enhance an individual's understanding of their current behaviours which in turn helps to focus on those areas where improvements is desired by both the superior and subordinate.

Informally, attempting to improve quality of relationships between superior and subordinates and between peers can encourage a greater robustness of dialogue which is likely to strengthen each individuals capacity to respond maturely to comment or advice.

However, careful consideration should be given as to whether subordinates should be encouraged to offer feedback to superiors during the early stages of an on-the-job management development initiative. The likely reluctance of subordinates to offer their views could be matched by a defensiveness of superiors in expectation of loss of face, unless both parties have been adequately prepared for such encounters. The prevailing norms within the organisation need to be supportive of a freer interplay between the levels of management.

## **2. Effective Interfacing**

Crucial to effective strategy implementation is the development and nurture of the key interfaces in the structure of the organisation. Important to effective interfacing is being sensitive and responsive to the nature of the problems and concerns of the managers at the key interface points. Of course, a shared view is required to emerge as to which interfaces, in particular, require nurture and attention. Having recognised where effort needs to be placed, it is crucial that the key interfaces are treated in a consistent and disciplined manner. On having decided how to support/address the concerns of the managers at the sensitive interfaces, it can be destructive to experience different members of the top team responding differently



to the same interface issues. For French top management in particular, where inconsistency of behaviour and sensitivity of dialogue are the key findings of this study, particular attention needs to be paid to this point. Inappropriately managing the interfaces could substantially demotivate key senior and middle managers, which, in turn, is likely to undermine the organisation's capacity to focus resources to address business challenges. The right strategy in a mismanaged structure can be as bad as the wrong strategy!

### **3. Using Consultants**

In the face of considerable on-the-job development concerns, increasing use is likely to be made of third party services. In addition to utilising the services of expert consultants, for example, specialists in areas such as strategy, organisation structure, information systems, human resources, particular attention will need to be paid to facilitation and mentoring. Strategic development and attaining effectiveness at policy implementation are likely to be equally important client needs. Consultants will require insights and methodologies for concluding what's right for the business as well as developing an understanding of how to handle the people involved in making strategy work. High quality third party services are likely to require submission of reports as well as contracting for support during the phases of implementation.

### **4. Managers as High Achievers**

The evidence in this paper strongly highlights that attaining educational qualifications is no guarantee for effective managerial performance. Additional development is required. In keeping with the Naulleau and Harper (1993) recommendation of improving access to senior managerial positions for those with excellent performance records irrespective of educational attainment, management development emphasis needs to be placed on enhancing experience of different functions in the organisation. Managers who display potential for senior office in terms of their work related performance, need the opportunity to acquire the necessary experience of managing different parts of the organisation.

High potential managers need to move to jobs which provide for challenge and profit centre responsibility. Being held accountable for measurable business results is a powerful developmental experience. Further practical experience could be gained through exposure to early leadership positions, learning how to allocate work, resolve differences, chair meetings and be held to account for the results of

one's subordinates. In this way, the individual should move into high office with greater confidence.

Adopting a wider organisational perspective allows for greater insights as to the running of a more integrated business. Building career tracks across the functions into manpower plans could provide individuals with substantial experience of two/three functions before entering into high office.

### **Off-the-Job Development**

One off-the-job development experience is highlighted, attendance on executive development programmes.

### **Executive Development Programmes**

No particular distinction as to appropriate types or ranges of executive development programmes is made. According to particular needs and circumstances, it is recognised that formal development programmes can be of value. The reason that training is not considered a priority experience is the recognition that learning through concepts and ideas is an already developed facility for French managers. The danger is, that even a social skills programme could be treated in a similar manner to a strategy programme by its participants. Discussion on issues concerning personal performance and feedback could be challenged, analysed and re-analysed to the point of oblivion by individuals who are well versed in the skills of debate. Executive development programmes tailored to address individual company (or consortium) circumstances are likely to have greater impact at the individual and group level as organisational context is taken into account. Hence, social skills development programmes, for example, configured to company circumstances, either in programme content and/or mix of participants, are considered as a more effective development lever than traditional off-site courses.

A key finding in this study is that quality of interaction and dialogue impacts on individual, group and organisational performance. Hence, taking into account the contextual nature of each organisation can substantially assist the perceived effectiveness of any executive development programme. Off-site, executive programme development could be of positive benefit at the individual level. The issue for the individual will be integrating learning back into the work place. It is considered that the tailored programme route is likely to enhance integration of

programme learning and workplace experience. In this way Naulleau and Harper's (1993) recommendations for improving personal growth and work related behaviours are likely to be more effectively implemented.

### **Summary**

The level of qualification attained is identified as not being a significant indicator of performance of French senior managers at the individual or organisational level. Equally, aspects of configuration of organisation are identified as not being significant indicators between effectively and ineffectively managed organisations. Crucial however are the social skills, attitudes and behaviour of senior managers, who irrespective of organisation, are identified as requiring improvement in the areas of individual and team performance. In response, on-the-job management development strategies are highlighted as key levers for improving senior management behaviour.

**Table I: Industry Sector**

Sector*	% of companies
Manufacturing (consumer)	25.6
Manufacturing (industrial)	16.1
Merchandising/wholesale/retail	19.0
Transportation/distribution	14.9
Financial/insurance services	20.2
Other services	23.2

\* denotes that some organisations may be in more than one sector

**Table II: Educational Qualifications**

Qualifications	Effectively managed (%)	Average (%)	Ineffectively managed (%)
Highly qualified	85	89	81
Lowly qualified	15	11	19

**Table III: Top Team and Organisational Performance**

Association:	Being Performance Oriented
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sensitivities which do not receive attention in Top Team</li> <li>▪ Quality of dialogue within the Top Team</li> <li>▪ Negative performance of one or more members of the Top Team</li> <li>▪ Relationship between various functions and departments</li> <li>▪ Cost management and control</li> <li>▪ Quality of products/services</li> <li>▪ Changes in company's product/service portfolio</li> </ul>	<p>**</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>ns</p> <p>ns</p> <p>ns</p> <p>ns</p>

\*\* Significant at .01 level

\* Significant at .05 level

ns Not significant

Pearson Correlation Analysis

**Table IV: *Impact of Poor Quality Dialogue***

Predicted impact:	Poor quality dialogue within Top Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sensitivities which do not receive attention in Top Team</li> </ul>	**
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of shared vision</li> </ul>	**

\*\* Significant at the .01 level

**Table V: *Opportunity Costs from Poor Top Team Performance***

Predicted impact:	Poor Quality Dialogue at Top
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Issues affecting the long term</li> </ul>	***
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Manner in which structure of the organisation is worked</li> </ul>	***
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Performance of one or more members of the Top Team</li> </ul>	***
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Relationship between Top Team members</li> </ul>	***
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Differences of opinion concerning re-organisation</li> </ul>	, **
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Morale of employees</li> </ul>	***

\*\*\* Significant at the .001 level

\*\* Significant at the .01 level



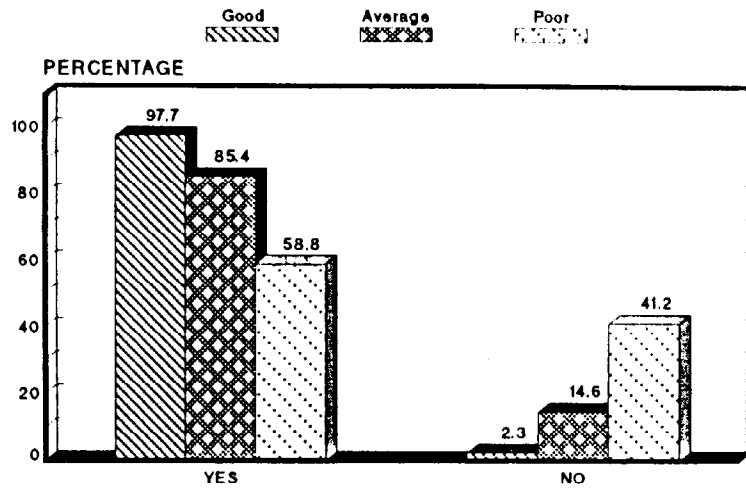
**Table VI: *Improved Top Team Performance and Business Impact***

Predicted impact:	Improved Performance at the Top
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved discussion covering competitor impact</li> </ul>	**
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved management of external interfaces</li> </ul>	**
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved management of internal interfaces</li> </ul>	***
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fewer inaccurate commitments to bosses/subordinates</li> </ul>	**
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improved employee morale</li> </ul>	***
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Overall, improved performance from company employees</li> </ul>	***

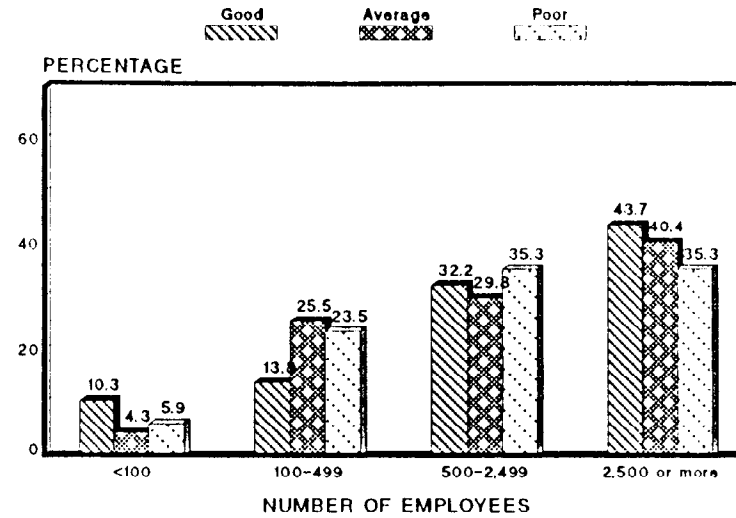
\*\*\* Significant at the .001 level

\*\* Significant at the .01 level

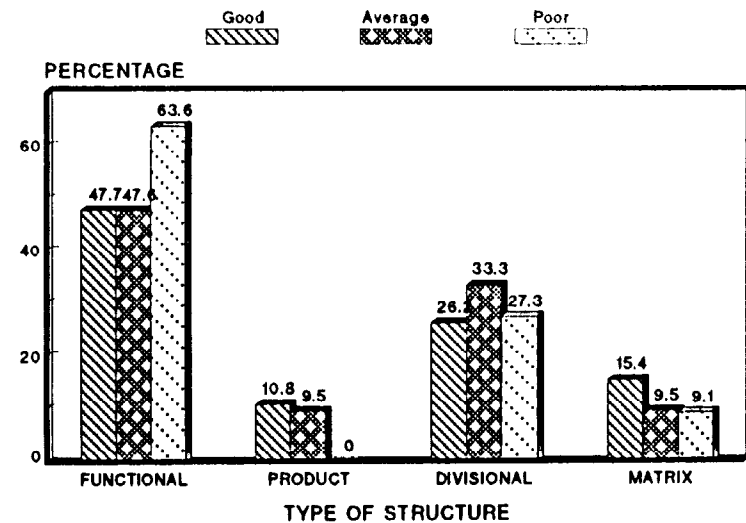
**FIGURE 1: DO SENIOR MANAGERS HAVE CLEARLY DEFINED AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY?**



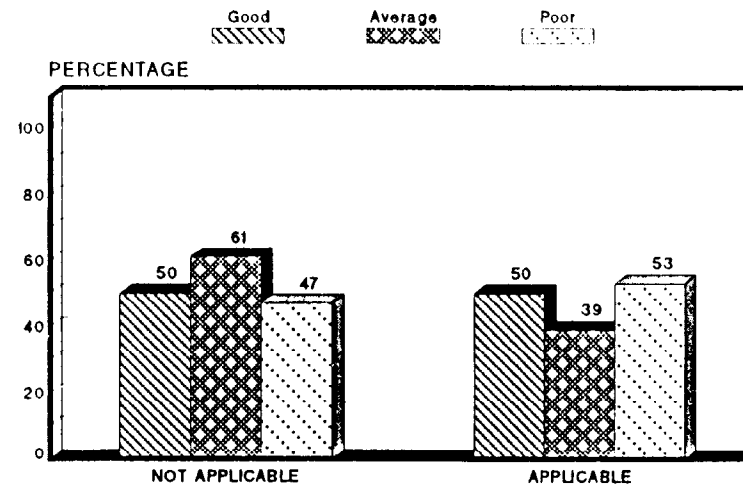
**FIGURE 2: COMPANY SIZE**



**FIGURE 3: COMPANY STRUCTURE**



**FIGURE 4: PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION BY TYPE OF COMPANY**



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