

THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: TRANSFORMING THE WAY WE WORK



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For Renault, as for any large company, the question is not “should we accept a digital transformation?” but “how can we go about it?” Recruiting data scientists and big data specialists is of course a priority for Renault, but for the digital transformation to be successful such skills are not enough. We need to change the way we work, and Renault has understood this. Going forward, leaders will play a key role in encouraging collaboration and cross-functionality in a traditionally hierarchical and vertical system. The challenge lies in giving employees an opportunity to learn from first-hand, structuring experiences of sharing, peer-to-peer networks, crowdsourcing and open innovation. Although these are abstract concepts, they are epitomes of our new digital world.

IMPORTANCE OF « SOFT »

Increasingly, managers are recognising the importance of “soft” stuff, too often abandoned by the more rational organisations. General Electric CEO Jack Welch was therefore right, “the soft stuff is the hard stuff”. Because when it comes to the crunch producing a tool or defining a process is not what poses most problems, motivating and inspiring people is much more difficult. And it can't be achieved by issuing orders.

It fundamentally changes the leadership model. Bosses - who have understood that innovation goes hand in hand with a degree of risk-taking- are accepting to let go. The digital transformation begins in a manager's head. To overcome these new challenges and ensure a certain agility, they realise they need to trust their teams, and encourage and speed up cross-functional cooperation and the co-creation of new solutions.

But you cannot simply ask your teams to abandon their silos or be more creative. Very few people will naturally move out of their comfort zone – change is scary, and it's perfectly human of us to think so. The digital transformation is above all a human challenge. We must smooth the way for change, and it's the manager's new job to do so, encouraging teams to move forward and therefore helping them grow, and if this also secures long-term business all the better.

RENAULT EXPERIENCE

Which is why Renault decided to launch a series of initiatives, to move from words to deeds, in order to

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create the right conditions for this change to actually take place. In the past few months, an increasing number of Renault employees have lived the experience. Rather than watching traditional PowerPoint presentations, several hundreds of colleagues from different geographic regions and holding different positions have taken part in some highly interactive and totally unexpected sessions, involving for example physical experiences sufficiently amusing to allay fears but with the very serious aim of creating concrete value for the company. Two sessions in particular – “marketplace” and “co-building” – have allowed participants to experience collaborative sharing of good practices and co-building of innovative solutions addressing very real business issues. Such experiences require meticulous preparation in order to identify issues and establish the appropriate good practices and briefs. But whether or not such initiatives are truly successful depends mainly on how well managers assume their new role of inspirational leader and facilitator, their main mission being to motivate, to inspire and to encourage networking and communication between teams, beyond silos.

LONG AND COMPLEX PROCESS

It's a long and complex process, that will work only if managers show determination and are willing to set the example, through their behaviour, to transform the way we work. (May 2016)