

INNOVATION AND ALTRUISM - A CONTRIBUTION TO THE NEXT NORMAL?

Marion NEUKAM*

mneukam@unistra.fr

Sophie BOLLINGER*

sophie.bollinger@unistra.fr

*Associate Professor

*Université de Strasbourg, Université de Lorraine, CNRS, BETA, 67000, Strasbourg, France

ABSTRACT

This research analyses organizational characteristics that facilitate people-centered innovation in for-profit organizations. According to innovation management literature as well as social psychology, an organizations competitive advantage depends to an important extent on its employees' intrinsic motivation to innovate. Push factors as well as barriers have equally been identified by these streams of the academic literature. However, we currently observe a paradigm change that has been accelerated through the Covid-19 crisis, where people seem more and more sensitive to the organizational purpose and thus the social mission of their employer. Research on non-profit organizations already analyzed the correlation between an organization's purpose and an employee's engagement to a certain task as well as his/her commitment to the organization. By applying a comparative case study design, we compare an actor of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) to an industrial company in order to transpose those results to for-profit organizations and identify the fundamental factors that foster motivation and ultimately creativity under this new paradigm. Our results suggest however that the sole presence of a social mission of the company is not sufficient for intrinsic motivation. The organizational setting and a clear communication strategy of the corporate values is at least as crucial to maintain motivation over time. We therefore not only provide theoretical contributions to motivation theory, but also practical insights about characteristics that managers have to take into account in order to design an organizational environment that takes individual aspirations into account and is thus fruitful for the emergence of disruptive innovation.

Keywords: Disruptive innovation; Values; Commitment; Engagement

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INTRODUCTION

According to Henry Ford, *"the company must make a profit, or it will die. But if you try to run a business solely on profit, then it will also die because it will no longer have a purpose."* Since this statement in the early 1920, it seems that it is still on topic. Societies are currently experiencing a paradigm shift where intelligent technologies are required to respond to increasing societal challenges (Wilenius 2014). At the same time, as illustrated by the Edelman Trust Barometer (2020), the population is continuously losing trust in business and 56% of all participants think that capitalism is doing more harm to society than good.

Consequently, scholars increasingly argue that organizations have to reposition themselves within society and take their responsibility with regard to global societal challenges such as climate change or an increasing population (Wilenius 2014; Henderson, Hsieh, and Snowberg 2020). To respond to these challenges, Porter and Kramer (2011) claim for a new organizational paradigm based on what they called a *"Shared Value Theory"*. According to them, the next generation of corporate innovation will be based on companies which are able to generate not only economic value, but also value for society in a broader sense. However, organizations seem to be confronted to a trade-off between societal (and environmental) requirements and their financial, profit-oriented goals (Crane et al. 2014; Henderson and Van den Steen 2015). With the aim to face that challenge, a movement proposing a more humanism-oriented management has emerged since then (Aguado and Retolaza, 2020; Donaldson, 2017). For instance, Bollinger and Neukam (in press) propose that purpose, altruistic social and environmental engagement, innovation, and financial performance should

not be considered as distinct elements that create tensions between them. Instead, the idea is to create a harmonious system which reconciles those elements, leading to a symbiosis between an organization's altruistic engagement, financial performance, and innovation capacity. The purpose connects these dimensions, as illustrated in figure 1.

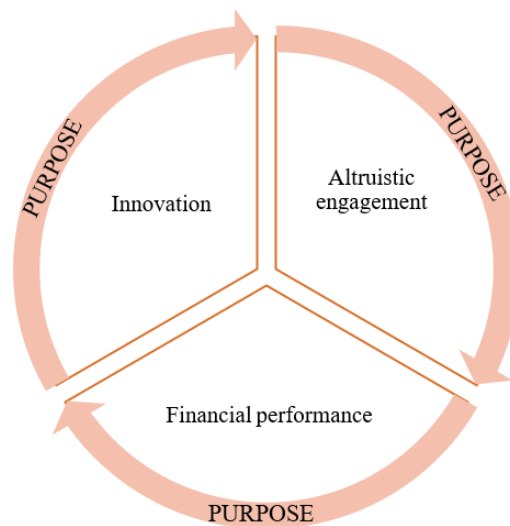


Figure 1 – Symbiosis of tomorrow's firm (Bollinger and Neukam in press)

According to the authors, such a symbiotic approach is crucial in the case of organizations that seek to develop disruptive innovations and that therefore rely on the creative potential of their employees. Considering the earlier mentioned paradigm change, we also argue that organizations require more and more an alignment between the intrinsic motivation of their employees and the overall organizational purpose. The research about non-profit organizations of Vecina et al. (2013) reveals already that this alignment is reached by increasing an individual's commitment to the company and his/her engagement towards high quality tasks. Thus, we aim to apply this to for-profit organizations and formulate our research question as follows *“How to enhance an employee's engagement and commitment in for-profit organizations in order to increase their motivation to perform creative tasks?”*

To answer this question, we will first provide a review of innovation management literature that focusses on the intrinsic motivation and the role of meaningfulness as engine

for creativity. Then, we will consider factors of the collaborators' commitment that leads us to integrate insights from social psychology. In a second step, we introduce the particular case of the social and solidarity economy (SSE), where the interplay between organizational values and innovation capacity is already a prevailing factor. This leads us to compare one for-profit and another non-profit organization of the SSE sector. The first is the industrial firm Bürkert SAS and the second is the protestant Sonnenhof foundation. Based on these insights, we will propose a discussion around two axes: the engagement and the commitment of employees in for-profit organizations. We argue that the key element for organizations to enable disruptive innovation is a clear strategy to increase their employees' commitment in order to retain high potential competencies and thus maintain their creative capacity within the company.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The literature on innovation management analyzes how to transform a brilliant idea into a functional product, service or organizational arrangement that meets the user's requirements. Over this last decade, researchers focused on a fairly neglected moment of this innovation process: the first phase during the front end of innovation before entering the development / conception phase as already here, the foundations for disruptive innovations are created (Koen et al. 2001). Especially with the emergence of the creative economy, attention has shifted towards to the creative processes inherent during that phase and the question about how ideas emerge, are nurtured and transformed within an organization (Cohendet, Harvey, and Simon 2013). Henceforth, the work of social psychology has been integrated into innovation management and economics as basis to understand individual and collective creativity. The work of Amabile (1996) represents an important milestone in this direction to understand how to motivate groups and individuals for creative tasks. In the case of individual creativity, the author states that the capacity of an individual to provide creative outputs depends on three distinct factors: the individual's creative capacity, his/her expertise about the topic in question

and his/her task motivation. Taking into account that the creative capacity as well as the expertise of an individual are both factors that depend highly on the individual, only his/her task motivation can truly be impacted by management once he/she has been engaged by a company.

Intrinsic Motivation and Meaningful Tasks

Considering creative activities of individuals, intrinsic motivational factors such as passion, curiosity, or a sense of duty have been identified as prevailing compared to extrinsic factors such as financial rewards or psychological safety to openly share and discuss new ideas (Lazaric and Raybaut 2014; Staw 1989). Extrinsic factors can directly be influenced by organizations depending on the task at hand, but if chosen poorly, they not only risk to distract individuals from achieving the initial goal (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 2001), they even could have a negative impact on creativity (Hennessey and Amabile 1998). The work of Attanasi et al. (2019) illustrate the complex link between motivation and creativity as it depends if a task is accomplished by an individual or by a group of people, the social context as well as the risk awareness of the participants. Still, they agree that it is about intrinsic motivational factors that obtain a crucial role. To go one step further, Aguado and Retolaza (2020) propose to extend motivation theory by a spiritual component including moral goals and benevolence. According to them, individuals should not only be considered as economic rational actors, but as people with a pro-social identity that consider others in their actions. In line with Melé (2003), they claim for a third type of motivation, transitive motivation, that includes the consideration of others in an individual's reflections. From a similar perspective, several authors argue that the design of meaningful tasks has far deeper impacts on an individual's intrinsic motivation than the prospect of a monthly salary (e.g., Hollensbe et al. 2014). More specifically, Gartenberg et al. (2019) distinguish between “*meaningfulness in work*” describing the significance a task may have on others and “*meaningfulness at work*”

which highly depends on the leader's capacity to provide a clear vision and a shared meaning for the company. Sagnak and Kuruöz (2017) identified a positive correlation between a leader's altruistic behavior and the design of meaningful tasks for his/her employees. Still, psychology research found that both aspects – an individual's self-centered approach as well as the consideration of social well-being – are crucial to maintain motivation. According to Snyder and Omoto (1992), it is this interplay between altruistic and egoistic behavior that provides the foundations of individuals to remain motivated for a specific job over time. From a similar perspective, Vecina et al. (2013) analyzed the work of volunteers in non-profit organizations and found that managers should take into account two distinct aspects: an individual's commitment to an organization as well as his/her engagement to provide high-quality results. Commitment is required for individuals to remain within the company and to adhere to its goals and values. His/her engagement is described by the authors as a "*positive, fulfilling, task-related state of mind*" (p.292) including vigor, dedication and absorption through concentration and well-being on the workplace. They found that organizations increase an individual's commitment by clearly communicating the vision, objectives and expected results of the company. Considering an individual's engagement, the authors identified that the design of meaningful tasks and the establishment of concrete mechanisms to solve problems increase psychological well-being and thus an individual's motivation to provide high-quality work.

Despite their convincing arguments, this study has its limits by exclusively considering non-profit organizations. It remains open how for-profit organizations may apply these results to foster the intrinsic motivation of their employees to accomplish creative tasks. This is why we propose to take a look on the sector of the SSE. This sector has gained increasing attention since several years due to its innovative organizational models placed between the classic "*for-profit/not-for-profit*" opposition and thus provides an interesting starting point.

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)

The SSE is often referred to “*third sector*” or “*social enterprises*” (Perard and Stokkink 2015). Its principles are those of an economy based on the values of democratic and participatory governance, limited profit and social utility. Organizations of SSE pursue different and ambivalent social and economic goals through one single activity (Wolf and Mair 2019). According to the report of the European Economic and Social Council of 2017, the SSE represents 10% of the European GDP and 19.1 million jobs in the European Union (9% of the active population of the European Union). This sector is of particular interest for us because service prevails over profit and the social dimension is integrated into the economic life. As a result of these ambitions, actors in this sector play a considerable role in terms of social and societal responsibility due to specific characteristics such as a clearly defined organizational purpose, democratic governance, or limited profit (Blanc 2008). Accordingly, they are often represented as the next generation of economic actors putting human beings at the center of their business model while relying on strong social values. Moreover, by proposing concrete alternatives to produce, consume and work differently, SSE has proven to be a fertile breeding ground for innovation. It is a pioneer in terms of eco-activities, particularly in the field of waste collection and reuse, waste recovery and resale. Furthermore, several authors identified organizational or managerial innovations in this sector (e.g. Raedersdorf 2018). Still, Wolf and Mair (2019) highlight that traditional governance mechanisms may not work in the context of such social enterprises. Hence, they innovate by implementing an innovative and proactive governance based on the notions of purpose, commitment and coordination achieved through – what they call – small wins that are conceivable for all stakeholders. Considering that the SSE combines an innovative approach with an economic rational in order to reach a purpose-driven organizational mission, one could assume that this sector would be an excellent source of inspiration for for-profit

organizations in order to work on their values and ultimately enhance the engagement and commitment of their employees that encourage creativity.

This leads us to our research question: *“How to enhance an employee’s engagement and commitment in for-profit organizations in order to increase their motivation to perform creative tasks?”* To answer this question, we compare a for-profit organization to an actor of the SSE sector.

METHODOLOGY

The quest towards a re-humanization of business models requires new and insightful approaches. We follow the call of Pirson (2019) who asks for more qualitative and conceptual work in order to provide a fresh look on the human side of management. Hence, we rely our research on a qualitative approach using a holistic multiple case study design (Yin 2003) with an abductive reasoning providing a new conceptualization by continuously confronting empirical observations to scientific literature (Charreire Petit and Durieux 2007; Fylkesnes 2006). More specifically, we conducted a comparative case study where we compared two distinct actors: the Sonnenhof foundation as part of the SSE as well as Bürkert SAS as a for-profit actor of the industrial sector. Our aim was to compare the key characteristics of both actors that enhance their employees’ engagement and commitment and thus their creative capacity to provide disruptive innovations. We describe our cases next, followed by the data collection and data analysis.

Case descriptions

The Sonnenhof foundation is a protestant non-profit organization and actor of the SSE that provides support and accommodates people with disabilities of all ages. Located at the French region *“Grand-Est”*, the foundation with more than 800 employees takes care of around 1 100 people dispatched over several establishments according to the persons’ type of disability

and age. It also includes several sheltered workshops and occupational workshops. With its slogan “*Every live is a light*”, the foundation made it its mission to reduce the gap between the so-called ordinary world and people with disabilities. However, even though actor of the SSE, the foundation is more and more confronted to an increasing competition in order to gain financial support from governmental institutions and third-party donations. Thus, economic performance as well as new innovative approaches gain an increasingly important position within the foundation.

Bürkert SAS is the French factory of the Bürkert group, a German medium-sized and family-owned actor of the industrial sector. With its nearly 3 000 employees dispatched all over the globe, the group produces fluid control measurements including sensors, valves or solenoid valves to regulate all kinds of liquids and gases. From its five factories, four are located close to its headquarters in Ingelfingen and Bürkert SAS in France, also in the region “*Grand-Est*”. The Innovation process is managed by an interdisciplinary team consisting of the R&D department (around 200 employees), marketing (around 50 employees) as well as further members of additional services such as sales, new business development and engineering and consulting. During our study, we focused on employees of this French entity, Bürkert SAS, with its 300 employees. Innovation obtains a crucial role at Bürkert and represents one of the three main strategic pillars of the group besides financial stability and a strong organizational culture based on the family’s core values. Even though the family does not take an active role in management, it is still shareholder of the company and provides the fundamental guidelines that take form within the company’s code of conducts. To support their commitment to society, a Bürkert foundation had been found in the early 2000s to support social and humanitarian actions in the name of the family and the company.

Data collection

We regard both organizations as relevant for our research question for several reasons. First, both organizations are representative for their sector, the Sonnenhof foundation taking care of people with disabilities as actor for the SSE and Bürkert SAS as a typical medium-market actor of the industrial sector with a strong innovative capacity. Second, both actors are medium-sized (Sonnenhof: 800 employees; Bürkert SAS 300 employees). And finally, innovation and individual creativity play a crucial role in both organizations as explained above.

In 2020, we collected qualitative data from both organizations through semi-structured interviews and on-site observations as well as through secondary data such as internet pages, social media or internal documents. In total, we conducted 30 interviews at the Sonnenhof foundation and 21 interviews at Bürkert SAS, which represents 50 hours of recording in total. We talked to employees with different hierarchical levels including top-management, middle-management and operational employees. From a functional point of view, we focused on interview partners that could provide us information about the strategic orientation of the organizations, their financial management as well as their innovative capacity. This included members of the R&D, marketing, strategic and production departments in the case of Bürkert SAS and employees of the administrative, financial and caring staff at the Sonnenhof foundation. We also varied our interview partners with regard to their professional experience within the organization (> one year vs. < one year of membership) and we also interviewed people who left each organization.

To conduct the interviews, we developed a modular interview guide based on our theoretical framework that we adapted to our interview partner depending on his/her profile. We split our questions into five broad categories including questions about (1) the organizational strategy (its definition and its perception by operational employees), (2) the financial performance (its operating principle and its perception by operational employees),

(3) the innovation strategy (definition and perception), (4) the individual's perception about individual and collective motivation as well as (5) the definition and perception of the corporate's values. All interviews have been fully recorded and transcribed using the Nvivo Software.

Data analysis

Data analysis followed a two-stage process. In a first step, we started to use the Nvivo Software to code the collected material (interviews, participant observations, etc.) for each case vertically (Gavard-Perret et al. 2012). An iterative coding process correlates with the chosen abductive reasoning and based on recommendations of Miles and Hubermann (1994), we drafted two distinct intermediary case study reports for each case following the categories of the interview guides. All in all, data collection for this project relies on a content approach (Grenier and Josserand 2007) in order to illustrate the causal link between an individual's motivation to engage in creative behavior and the organization's purpose.

In a second step, we engaged in an inter-field analysis by applying an analysis grid (table 1) based on our initial empirical and theoretical observations (Miles and Huberman 1994). Through a horizontal coding process based on this grid, we identified the elements of our two core concepts (engagement and commitment) (Gavard-Perret et al. 2012).

Dimensions of motivation	Variables or factors analyzed (Amabile 1996; Attanasi et al. 2019; Gartenberg, Prat, and Serafeim 2019; Sagnak and Kuruöz 2017; Snyder and Omoto 1992; Vecina et al. 2013)
Mechanisms or organizational arrangements fostering individual engagement in a creative task	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meaningfulness in work- How do employees perceive the social value of their work (task significance)? 2. Meaningfulness at work - How do leaders support and individual's engagement in a creative task?
Mechanisms or organizational arrangements fostering individual	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mechanisms to communicate organizational values, objectives and results through all

commitment to an organization, its values, objectives and results.	hierarchical levels 2. Mechanisms to increase the identification with an organization
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Table 1 – Analytical grid based on our literature review

FINDINGS

Before entering the analysis of mechanisms fostering commitment and engagement, we provide an overview of each case with regard to their organizational strategy, innovation strategy, financial performance, employees' motivation and their corporate values.

Case comparison: an overview

With the arrival of a new CEO in 2014, the Sonnenhof foundation went through an important managerial transformation. Above all, the industrial background of the CEO and several top-managers that joined the foundation since several years provided a fresh look on the role of innovation at the foundation. The earlier mentioned paradigm change represented by the slogan *“Every live is a light”* claims a new position of the Sonnenhof foundation within its ecosystem. The CEO considers the foundation as a game changer where *“disabled people are not a charge for society, but a treasure”* and she continues that *“this human treasure is an opportunity for society to quit the individualistic perspective and switch to a collective approach”*. According to the foundation's mission statement *“we are all citizens, all innovative and all engaged”*, innovation is the key to show society *“that we can live with another model that is fair and more authentic”* (CEO). Furthermore, creative solutions are not only required to make this paradigm change possible, but also in order to respond to every days' problem-solving. Each disability of the residents requires individual solutions to facilitate that person's live.

At Bürkert SAS, management relies on a high stability. The managing director of the French entity is in charge for 6 years now and for the previous 20 years he had already been working for the company as a team coach and industrial director. The Bürkert family underlines the importance of a careful choice of a suitable management in place, including not only the general manager but all the members of the management team of the Bürkert group. Top management is considered as guarantors of the transmission of the company's principles and values. Furthermore, Bürkert has the particularity of being investigated to local social or humanitarian actions. This strategic choice is facilitated by the Bürkert foundation. Still, the Bürkert family only communicates little about this social involvement, even towards its own workforce. Hence, the foundation and its activities is little known to the employees.

In line with our interview guide, table 2 illustrates key attributes of the two cases in five categories.

CAT.	SONNENHOF FOUNDATION	BÜRKERT SAS
ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY	<p>The foundation has a clear mission statement at top-management level: a paradigm change that reduces the gap between the ordinary world and people with disabilities</p> <p>But the corporate values are not entirely transparent on an operational level</p> <p><u>Perceived difficulties:</u> Employees commented a perceived miss-fit between official values and reality. Some interviewees perceived a missing authenticity.</p>	<p>The Bürkert group bases its strategy on three pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial independence - Technology and innovation leadership - Experience the Bürkert culture, including a strong family culture and a strong code of conduct <p>Most employees totally adhere to these strategic pillars.</p> <p><u>Perceived difficulties:</u> Possibility to “think outside the box” and thus to propose new ideas has been criticized by some interviewees.</p>
INNOVATION STRATEGY	<p>Innovation plays a crucial role on two levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic level: support the paradigm change - Operational level: Problem Solving in response to an individual’s disability <p><u>Perceived difficulties:</u> project management (managerial support, timing, resources, budget...) considered as not sufficient leading to tedious internal negotiations</p>	<p>As one of the company’s pillars, innovation is at the hearth of all new developments. Bürkert invests heavily in research and development to maintain its lead in terms of innovation.</p> <p><u>Perceived difficulties:</u> the innovation process is perceived as too structured due to an increasing silo effect that seems to impede the emergence of disruptive innovation</p>
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE	<p>The Sonnenhof foundation applies a zero-based accounting using a 5-years project and investment plan.</p> <p>The increasing success of the sheltered workshops leads to proper financial means that are reinvested.</p> <p><u>Perceived difficulties:</u> Interviewees criticized an increasing dichotomy between profit orientation of the sheltered workshops and the non-profit orientation of the foundation (SSE).</p>	<p>Financial independence is another pillar of the organization. From that point of view, the Bürkert group does not depend on any third-party shareholders. Most investments are support by their proper means and not by external credits (bancs).</p> <p><u>Perceived difficulties:</u> It was argued that too much independence may impact the decision choices for new projects as it increases risk aversion.</p>

MOTIVATION	<p>Most interviewees testified a high intrinsic motivation for their work and especially for individual initiatives that go beyond their role profile.</p> <p>Most appreciate the good working conditions compared to other actors in the socio-medial sector</p> <p><u>Perceived difficulties:</u> High emotional attachment seems to increase the risk of burn-out.</p>	<p>The Bürkert group is rather modest about the Bürkert foundation and communicates on a limited basis, externally as well as from an internal point of view. Employees appreciate that the Bürkert group is a family business with good working conditions.</p> <p><u>Perceived difficulties:</u> The perception of rather long innovation processes seems to hamper the motivation in some cases.</p>
CORPORATE VALUES	<p>The foundation launched a corporate project between 2017 and 2020 to identify four core values: responsibility, altruism, continuous reassessment, dignity</p>	<p>Corporate values have a long tradition and are defined by the Bürkert family: Courage, Closeness, Experience. As well, the Bürkert family provides fundamental strategic choices such as the renouncement to work with the nuclear or armament sectors.</p>

Table 2 – Overview of the case companies

Fostering motivation: about engagement and commitment

As mentioned earlier, the creative capacity of employees plays a crucial role in both cases. In the following, we apply our analytical grid (table 1) and distinguish mechanisms that foster an individual's engagement and his/her commitment to each organization.

Engagement: Meaningfulness in and at work

At the Sonnenhof foundation, almost all participants confirmed that they perceive a high social value for their work (*meaningfulness in work*). The work with disabled people was described by several interview partners as enriching and a crucial motivational factor in their daily business. This has been stated not only by the educational and nursing staff, but also by the administrative employees such as accounting, IT or purchasing. Most of the administrative employees declare that before entering the Sonnenhof foundation, they renounced to well-paid job offers in other sectors (e.g. industry). They explained this acceptance of lower wages by the enrichment of their activity due to the social aspect by proposing their expertise to the service of others. Furthermore, independently of the functional profile of our interviewees, we observed individual initiatives that go beyond the role of those employees. These initiatives

respond to both types of innovative behavior required by the foundation (i.e. contribute to the paradigm change or facilitate the live of disabled people). Such initiatives include for instance the emergence of a youtube channel during the Covid-19 pandemic that enabled disabled people to engage in creative tasks even though the educational personal had to renounce to such activities in person due to the sanitary risk; the preparation and distribution of buns and other sweets during the lockdown due to the pandemic; the participation to a sport raid, the “*Raid Amazones*” and to some sand marathons in order to raise funds for the foundation; or the creation of a theater group “*la troupe Etrange*” that organizes plays together with disabled people in public locations with the objective to raise funds and increase awareness for disabilities.

With regards to the second aspect – *meaningfulness at work* – we observed that most initiatives required creative investment strategies. Considering that financial means are restricted by public funding, the foundation has to provide a zero-based accounting approach. This implies that parallel projects that emerge during an exercise cannot easily be financed. Hence, the CEO invites employees to act as intrapreneurs and to find clever solutions to raise money for their projects. In one case, for instance, an employee wanted to purchase a special music instrument (Bao Pao) that enables disabled people to play music even with very limited physical mobility. This instrument being rather expensive, the CEO negotiated a contract with the employee: She provided a credit for the instrument that made it possible to rapidly purchase the instrument and the employee organized several smaller events such as charity events or selling waffles on public places to raise money. As these examples show, the foundation’s leader is responsive to creative solutions and new ideas that provides a benefit for the organization’s social mission. She enters in a direct dialog with her employees to support the emergence and realization of creative ideas.

However, we also observed barriers to motivation in some cases. Several interviewees witnessed a decreasing willingness to provide new ideas. Most of them argue that projects generally require an important amount of time until their realization and a missing resource allocation makes it difficult for the idea generator to push an idea within the process. In most cases, a missing support on a middle management level has been claimed. As well, the daily business (taking care of disabled people) requires an important time investment and absorbs most of the resource capacity of the foundation. This leaves relatively limited room for individual initiatives within their working hours.

At Bürkert SAS, we observed that questions about meaningfulness and personal engagement are less evident to discuss. Clearly, interviewees felt less concerned about these issues. As a matter of fact, interviews at Bürkert SAS were quite shorter than at the Sonnenhof foundation, in particular the section about the corporate values. We think that this is due to the fact that most interview partners are graduates of engineering schools and this is reflected in their aspirations, shaping their perception of *meaningfulness in work*. Their main source of motivation is the technological challenge more than the social meaning of their projects. This technological attraction combined with good working conditions seems sufficient to enhance an employees' engagement towards creative tasks. However, even though the strategic pillar "*Experience the Bürkert culture*" is well known by employees, the underlying values seem to be less internalized. As well, only very few participants mentioned Bürkert's social engagement via the foundation that seems only little known. The foundation is exclusively known by its name and none of the interviewees were able to cite a specific social action of the foundation, nor did any interviewee participated in one. We observed that only members of the board of directors and the management teams were able to talk about the foundation's activities. In fact, it seems that engineers were rather indifferent to social actions. They considered it rather as a sort of a bonus than an essential motivation criterion.

With regard to *meaningfulness at work*, the good working conditions are appreciated by nearly all interviewees. The family spirit is present within the teams and management supports the Bürkert culture on all levels. However, tensions were mentioned between the production staff and the research and development staff, or between the research and development staff and the marketing staff. In the first case, tensions are due to working conditions that are different depending on the job (e.g., high liberty on the job for R&D members vs. strict time schedules in production). In the second case, tensions are due to different perspectives when working on the same new development project. Nevertheless, we did not observe that these tensions limited the employee's engagement.

Instead, we collected examples that show how the company maintains the link between technological appeal and family spirit. First of all, the technological attractiveness is supported by a so-called 5 Days Award which is an opportunity for employees to submit ideas in any area. Any collaborator can participate and take part in the development of his idea. Indeed, many ideas come from French employees which is traced back to the managerial support at that entity to actively participate in the innovation process. In the same vein, the construction of a Fablab located close to the French entity and open to the public and the organization of several creative cafés allows to maintain a creative dynamic within and outside the company. Still, despite these initiatives to promote creative ideas, some engineers expressed their disappointment in not being able to invest as much time in disruptive research as they'd like to. They argue that since the last big innovation released several years ago all the new products are considered as rather incremental innovation. Secondly, the family spirit is favored on the management level as the Bürkert group follows a process organization with flat hierarchies. Hence, all members of the management level are accessible to all employees. This promotes a climate of trust in which individual and collective initiatives are welcomed. As well, Bürkert SAS has supported several measures to create social links between

employees. These included for instance the organization of solidarity days during which employees switched to another department and find out how they work. For example, people from R&D experienced a day of the human resources manager, an engineer spent the day in production, a worker spent the day in accounting. Furthermore, Bürkert SAS regularly organizes open day events where the site can be visited. During that days, general public may spend pleasant moments with employees and their families. Finally, each department is free to organize internal team events such as the innovation department that organized a hiking tour to increase the team spirit of its members.

No specific action is taken to communicate internally or externally on social actions carried out by the organization. On the contrary, humility and modesty are the order of the day and somehow are part of the organization's values. Still, the mentioned actions seem to increase an employee's engagement by creating meaningfulness at work.

Commitment: Communication and identification with corporate values

At the Sonnenhof foundation, an interdisciplinary project had been conducted between 2017 and 2019 in order to identify the core values of the foundation. Even though the foundation lives from the intrinsic value of contributing to society, the values of the foundation have never been clearly stated before. Based on its protestant foundations, the corporate project identified four core values: responsibility, altruism, continuous reassessment and dignity. However, we observed that these values did not gain the awareness of all employees. Indeed, only a few interview partners were able to quote exactly those values. Nevertheless, the majority of our interviews revealed a rather consistent picture of the intrinsic nature of the foundation. The people-centered social mission has been underlined by nearly all participants. But despite the good working conditions compared to other actors of the socio-medical sector, we observed that turnover is similarly high at the foundation.

At Bürkert SAS, the values displayed and communicated internally and externally are related to the family business and concern (1) the business' ethics, (2) the respect for human rights, (3) socially sustainable working conditions and (4) compliance with environmental standards. A strong code of conduct was established and allows any employee to refer to it. Employees have to adhere to it and any deviation are considered by the employer as misconduct and is consequently sanctioned. Commitment to the company is high at Bürkert and most employees stay with the company for a long time above average (40 years of adherence are not unusual). Good working conditions and the solidarity of the company are undeniable advantages recognized by the interviewees who believe in the corporate values. In addition to the draft of this code of conduct, workshops are organized for middle management, i.e. *corporate leadership development*, to ensure that values are maintained on the managerial level.

To sum this up, we observed a different approach at the foundation and at Bürkert SAS with regard to the transmission of corporate values. At Sonnenhof, we observe that there is a missing link between the operational level and top-management. Even though both share similar principles, they articulate it differently within their daily business. We argue that this is due to a missing commitment of middle-management, creating a barrier between top-management and the operational level (figure 2).

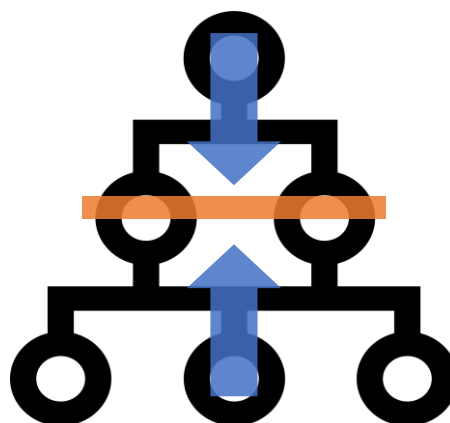


Figure 2 – Transmission process of corporate values at the Sonnenhof foundation

At Bürkert SAS, we observe a clear top-down approach to diffuse the corporate values on each organizational level. The three corporate values (closeness, courage, experience) are constantly communicated to all employees (independently of the length of their organizational affiliation) and supported by management (corporate leadership development). These values are specified by the Bürkert family and then adapted to the daily activities of the company. The resulting strong organizational culture represents an important competitive advantage for the company as it supports its innovative capacity. But it also raises the risk that a highly qualified employee quits the company due to a miss-fit between his/her personal convictions and the company's values (Figure 3).

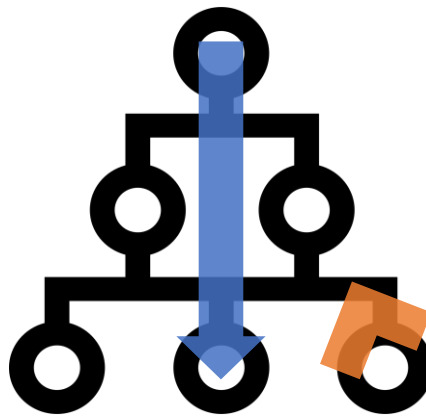


Figure 3 - Transmission process of corporate values at Bürkert

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our article aims to answer a critical question: *“How to enhance an employee’s engagement and commitment in for-profit organizations in order to increase their motivation to perform creative tasks?”* It contributes therefore to previous work such as Pirson (2019) claiming for a humanization of our management models or Hamel and Zahini (2020) asking for a human-centered approach to management and innovation. The multiple case-study design comparing the Sonnenhof foundation as actor of the social and solidary economy (SSE) and Bürkert SAS as actor of the industrial sector provided us consistent insights about the underlying

characteristics that encourage and empower employees to engage in disruptive innovation. By taking a closer look on the two case studies, we confirm that the organizational purpose of a company and its performance are not necessarily two opposing components but can co-exist in a symbiotic form (Bollinger and Neukam in press): Both actors support social missions and thus have a strong organizational purpose and still are financially stable. At Bürkert SAS, we observed that social actions of the foundation seem to matter more than spoken words in order to enhance authenticity of a people-centered organizational culture. Also, we observed at the Sonnenhof foundation that an industrial rational does not necessarily contradict but facilitate the social mission of actors in the SSE. Still, our case comparison shows that while not exclusively distinct, both approaches are complementary and actors of each sector can learn from one another. Our results are in line with research on individual and collective creativity showing that meaningfulness more than financial incentives foster an employee's motivation. However, our study indicates also that the sole fact of a social mission is not sufficient to maintain an employee's engagement and thus his/her intrinsic motivation. By mobilizing the interplay between engagement and commitment of Vecina et al. (2013), we make several contributions to literature.

Engagement and the role of management

Indeed, our study is in line with Gartenberg et al. (2019) illustrating the interplay between *meaningfulness in work* and *meaningfulness at work*. At Bürkert SAS, the former is supported by management, but employees feel less concerned about the social value of their work. At the foundation, the latter and thus the perception of the social value has been underlined by nearly all interviewees. Still, in both cases, we observed that these aspects alone were not sufficient to keep the workforce entirely engaged in creative activities over time. Hence, our case comparison allows us to enter into more details about how to reach and maintain an employee's engagement.

The first lesson to be learned is about the allocation of resources that played an important factor in both cases. We distinguish here different types of resources: (1) attention, (2) financial resources and (3) material resources. We define attention here as the behavior of an individual who devotes a certain amount of time and effort to one task rather than to others. (Ocasio 1997). Attention selection occurs when a person's act is voluntary and induces actions that differ. This can be influenced by management: The way an organization distributes and controls the allocation of problems and solutions impact people's attention selection (Ocasio 2011). Furthermore, Mayer (2016) argues that an actor's attention can be influenced by so-called "*issue selling*" practices (Dutton et al. 2001) that include specific rules, procedures and communication channels managing the prioritization of tasks; the encouragement of interactions with others; the coupling of problems and their solutions with the values of the organization; and the creation of a shared history based on best practices the company seeks to promote.

In both cases, we observe that attention was derived considering that interviewees stressed a missing time commitment as main barrier to creativity. They did not have difficulties to create new ideas, but they often lacked the time to develop them. In both cases, this was argued to be a crucial demotivational factor. At Bürkert SAS, management decided therefore to work on specific tools to promote innovation by creating time opportunities for creativity such as the earlier mentioned 5-Days Award.

With regard to financial resources, practices diverged between the two cases. Within the Sonnenhof foundation, financial means are scarce, but management provides its employees the possibility to fund their projects as intrapreneurs. This role as intrapreneurs relished a visible creative potential and led to the emergence of several promising projects. The involved employees claimed that this was definitely a push factor for their motivation. At the Bürkert group, however, the rather high risk-awareness linked to the strategy of financial

independence has been identified as crucial factor for a slow and time-consuming decision-making process. In some cases, this reduced motivation of the project members.

All in all, we conclude that the organizational setting to promote innovation and creativity is at least as crucial to foster an employee's engagement and thus his/her intrinsic motivation as the social value of the task at hand itself. Meaningfulness in work as well as meaningfulness at work have to be taken into account by management. In other words, if an organization wants actors to be motivated to think about innovative topics, they must not only see the relevance for their job (meaningful task), but also be given the opportunity to do so. These actions need to be integrated into the daily business.

Commitment: the key for disruptive innovation?

As Vecina et al. (2013) argued, an employee's motivation to remain in the company can be increased through the communication of an organization's values, its objectives and results. Also when it comes to innovation, corporate values that form a strong organizational culture have indeed been identified as a positive factor to foster innovation as they create a shared vision (Neukam 2017; Tellis, Prabhu, and Chandy 2009). During our study, we observed two different transmission processes of corporate culture that support an employee's commitment: A top-down process at Bürkert SAS and a parallel top-down and bottom-up phenomenon at the Sonnenhof foundation. In both cases, we observed that the fit between the corporate values and an individual's personal values played a crucial – and in some cases even highly emotional – role to increase (or kill in the case of a miss-fit) an individual's commitment with the organization. Especially in the case of the foundation, we observed that even if employees and top-management fundamentally shared the same values, the communication barrier on a middle-management level led to a perceived missing authenticity on the operational level and thus caused a decreasing motivation in the case of several employees. This case comparison

leads us therefore to refine the link between organizational culture and an employee's commitment.

According to Hofstede et al. (2010, 6), culture is “*the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others*” and more specifically, organizational culture is captured by cultural practices such as symbols (e.g., gestures or the way people are dressed), heroes (role models of society), and rituals (e.g., the way people greet). With his onion diagram, Hofstede distinguishes organizational culture from national culture as the latter is constructed around the inner circle of the diagram and thus a nation's core values (fundamental beliefs/convictions) that are transmitted to individuals during childhood. Cultural practices represent the outer layers of the diagram and this implies that people with different national cultural backgrounds are totally able to work together within the same organization, share the same objectives and the same organizational goal, even though they do not share the same convictions. As well, the work of Hofstede suggest that individuals are able to adapt to cultural practices and thus to different organizational cultures whereas it is nearly impossible to change one's core values.

However, based on our study, we suggest that such a straightforward and neutral identification with an organization corresponds less to the case of purpose-driven organizations. Both organizations, Bürkert SAS and the Sonnenhof foundation, rely on strong values that impact not only the way people work together, but also how they perceive society and how they think about the role of the organization within their ecosystem. We think that this goes beyond cultural practices (symbols, heroes, and rituals). In line with previous studies (Aguado and Retolaza 2020; Melé 2003), we argue that strong values that support an ethical and purpose-driven organization provide an important potential to foster innovation and creativity as it positively impacts the intrinsic motivation of employees. However, this also touches the inner circle of Hofstede's onion diagram and thus the core values of an individual.

As a result, his/her commitment to remain in the company gains an increasingly emotional factor and even a small miss-fit with one's personal convictions risks to be considered as a deal-breaker where the final solution is to quit the company. Hence, despite the high motivational potential, the risk of losing precious competencies might be higher for purpose-driven organizations than in the case of companies with less strong cultures. Consequently, such purpose-driven organizations not only have to consider an individual's competencies during the recruiting process, but also his/her personal convictions to avoid a miss-fit from the beginning.

All in all, our study provides first insights about how a for-profit organization may enhance an employee's engagement and commitment that ultimately support the creative capacity of an organization. Still, our study also illustrates that organizational purpose alone is not sufficient to support an employee's engagement, nor are strong corporate values without risk for its innovation capacity. From this point of view, our study finally reveals that organizations have to take care of their employees' commitment as well as their organizational setting in order to develop the full potential inherent in a strong organizational purpose. We therefore provide first empirical evidences about how for-profit organizations may transform towards a "*firm of tomorrow*" (see figure 4) as it has been underlined by Bollinger and Neukam (in press).

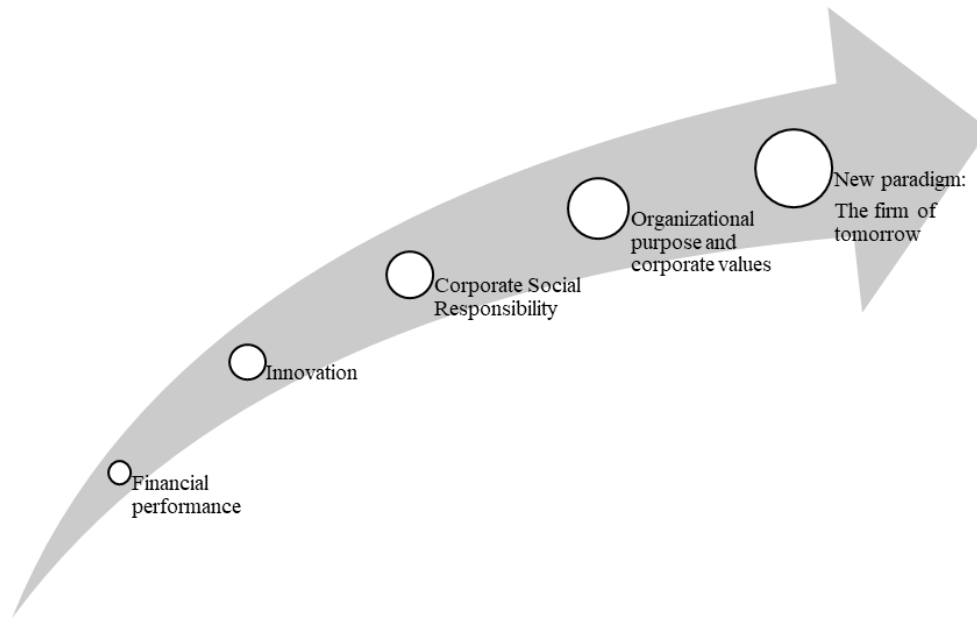


Figure 4 – Evolution of firms' objectives (Bollinger and Neukam in press)

There are some limits to our study. First, the study was based on a small number of observations in only two cases. Therefore, it is important in a future phase to verify these results with a larger number of cases. Moreover, the selected organizations are both located in the Upper Rhin region. Hence, we consider it interesting to analyze also the geographical and cultural variables that are specific to this region. For instance, it could be interesting to extend our research with a control case located in another region.

Secondly, the selected industrial company is a family-owned company with strong values and an important social investment that have been passed on for generations. This induces a bias in the study insofar as the results are not directly replicable in a similar organization that doesn't have this family tradition.

Finally, a last bias that we think it is necessary to highlight is that our study focusses on a high level of requirements for organizations. Indeed, we think that this approach does not describe the survival of an organization in the short term but rather a long-term strategy. For future research, it will be interesting to observe how a crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic impacts an organization's long-term strategy due to important short-term constraints.

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