

7 **Editorial**

Jean-Marie Doublet

11 **Contributors to this issue**15 *Sales force management and competitive intelligence activities*

Joël Le Bon

This paper deals with salespeople's contribution to competitive intelligence activities. The key role of the sales force in collecting and transmitting environmental information is underlined as well as the management issues related to it. As salespeople's competitive intelligence behavior relies on their motivation and attitude towards this mission, an analytical framework is proposed in order to provide managers with appropriate recommendations.

31 *Creativity and leadership of research teams*

Jean-Jacques Pluchart

The present article scans the influence of the leaders' behaviours on the potential and on the creative process of project-teams in charge of the conception of high tech products. The frame of the research, the building of the problematic and the definition of the hypothesis are based on a state of the art relative to the concepts of leadership and creativity in the organizations. The observations contribute to a better understanding of the power modes, the behavioural styles and the character features of the team leaders engaged in an innovative process.

45 *Sponsorship research. Which evolution and which results?*

Björn Walliser

This article has as triple objective to present the state of the art of sponsorship research, to trace back the evolution of this research area, and to identify future research avenues. Close to 300 contributions of scientific nature on sponsorship are divided into four research streams (the nature of sponsorship, managerial aspects of sponsorship, analysis of sponsorship effects, and strategic use of sponsorship) and critically evaluated. Although the debate on the conceptual limits of sponsorship has not yet come to an end, this communication instrument seems to become legitimized today through the analysis of its effectiveness as element of an integrated communications strategy.

- 59 *The impact of banking mergers and acquisitions on loan agreements to SMEs*

Mehdi Nekhili, Ghassen Bouslama

Bank mergers and acquisitions affect the process of loan agreement by transforming the nature of the relationship between the bank and the borrowers as well as that between the different agents who intervene in the decision-taking process concerning the attribution of loans. SMEs are the firms most affected by this phenomenon. The study of the organizational aspect of banking enables a deeper analysis of the functions and motivations of the agents involved in the process of loan agreement and a better understanding of the changes of loan policy that follow a consolidation operation.

- 73 *From community to “ba”. Groups as organizational innovation devices*

Sophie Peillon, Xavier Boucher, Christine Jakubowicz

This article stems from a work based on an action research method realized in collaboration with Schneider Electric. It analyzes the role of transversal networks of actors in knowledge and skills development, through notions like community and “ba”, and the role of psychosocial mechanisms within these groups.

File – Management and social networks

Guest Editors: Christophe Baret, Isabelle Huault, Thierry Picq

- 93 *Management and the social networks approach. Shedding light or casting shadows on organisations?*

Christophe Baret, Isabelle Huault, Thierry Picq

- 107 *Defining good personal networks. The case of R&D engineers*

Barthélemy Chollet

There is a growing literature showing that personal networks in knowledge-intensive organizations are a way to access technical resources (knowledge, equipment etc.). Meanwhile, personal networks can also bring political resources. Such resources allow influencing decision processes. Based on data from R&D engineers in the semiconductor industry, our study identifies what kinds of personal networks are the best providers.

- 127 *The social capital of post-bureaucratic organizations*

Emmanuel Lazega

In flexible, post-bureaucratic organizations, where members' commitment can be contingent and variable, informal and personal social relationships

play a role that can be considered even more important for cooperation than it is in bureaucratic organizations. Investments in relationships reflect various forms of social discipline that are recognized as legitimate by the members, and without which collective action would not be possible. These forms of social discipline can be considered to be a collective asset, a key component of the social capital of the organization.

- 139 *The determinants of communities of practice. A comparative study*
Guillaume Soenen

Communities of practice contribute to an organization's social capital by facilitating the emergence of specific relational structures, which are characterized by attenuated opportunistic behaviours and a general system of exchanges. They constitute collective answers to inevitable prescription breakdowns. The functioning of a community is characterized by privileged knowledge exchanges, creation of new collective knowledge and gradual identification of members to the community. A comparative study of two intra-organizational communities of practice illustrates the role of catalysing factors such as leadership style, actors' interdependences, hierarchy of expertise and access to specific resources.

- 155 *Productivity and social networks. The case of firms in the construction industry*
Catherine Comet

From a sample of 150 firms of four various trades, this article shows how functional interdependences determine the social capital return. The intra- and interprofessional relationships may or not improve small firms' productivity according to their position in the building process and the extent of their specialization.

- 171 *Collaborating learning and networks of venture capital investors*
Michel Ferrary

Venture capital investment induces an appraisal of uncertainty. This evaluation is based on tacit and informal information. Social ties are an important way to gather this kind of information. The contractual relation of investment is the formal condition to induce an informal collaborating learning process to create social ties between the entrepreneur and his investors. Investors use the legal framework of syndications to organize informal, reciprocal and deferred exchanges of resources that follow the gift exchange's principles.

- 183 **Summary**

- 187 **Instruction for authors**