

→ | **TIME IS SPEEDING UP AND IS OBLIGING COMPANIES** to constantly adapt themselves. David Autissier, author of several works on this subject, gives us the secrets of a successful change.

“ THE RACE AGAINST TIME

Companies have launched themselves into a perpetual race against time. Globalization and financialization of the economy have helped speed up time, but it is above all the computerization of company functioning that has made the difference in changing the pace of events. By making information available in real time, computerization has completely changed our behavior.

Supermarket department managers consult sales figures twice a day. If there is the slightest problem, they must take action to rectify the situation, and they end up doing this constantly. And what is true for supermarket department managers is also true for companies as a whole. Strategy, products, information systems: the faster paces make continuous adaptation a necessity. It is the market that dictates the tempo. But this does not necessarily mean that we have to suffer from this speeding up of rates. An efficient

company is capable of renewing itself by capitalizing on its know-how, and must push the system in order to dictate its own terms. By introducing a new collection every three weeks, the clothing company H&M anticipates its customer's expectations and stays ahead of the market changes. But achieving this often requires reconsidering the entire company organization. When the Seven Eleven brand decided to optimize the supply of its supermarkets in Japan, it had to create new computer applications that triggered automatic deliveries according to numerous selection criteria, such as purchase simulations, weather forecasts, etc. Thus relieved of the task of handling resupply logistics, store managers were able to focus their efforts – with success – on commercial aspects. This is not always the case however. I have seen many projects for change – decided in the highest company spheres – fail to materialize because they were not suitably communicated in the field. Changes cannot be decreed. They have to be introduced with tact in



order to be adopted by those who are going to be subjected to them. And I use the word "subjected" advisedly: an employee's first reaction to a planned change is wariness. There are several ways of overcoming this. Launching an employee shareholding plan can thus enable a company to raise employee support for its new strategy. In short, it is vital for the change to create a new situation that makes sense to the employees. To get this message across, it is essential to know how to manage the change. This

requires a true internal marketing campaign, or even lobbying actions. Once the change has been decided, a network of messengers has to be set up and mobilized with particular care. Because it is these messengers who will be responsible for carrying the good word through a whole series of aids ranging from conferences to role-playing games and setting up intranets and discussion forums. Change means replacing something that is known and exists by something promised in the future and justified by progress. This latter factor is of prime importance. Without progress, there will be no support for the change, and without support... there will be no change". ■

Profile

David Autissier lectures in management at the University of Paris XII.

He contributes as an expert in change and transformation projects in large corporate groups. He conducts research into strategies for change and the development of individuals'

involvement in work. He has authored ten publications, including the "Atlas du Management" (Eyrolles, 2007). Find out more on his website at www.davidautissier.com

