

# **STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING**

**ROUND TABLE 8<sup>TH</sup> EDITION – FEBRUARY 25<sup>TH</sup> 2020**  
SUMMARY OF THE DIALOGUE

**GUESTS:** ISABELLE LENICOLAIS, FNAC DARTY

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## INTRODUCTION BY **ANTOINE AUBOIS**



Akoya organized on Tuesday February 25th 2020 its 8th round table, which was an opportunity to offer a new experience in the area of Strategic Workforce Planning.

This new way of approaching the topic allows us to underline how the SWP process is an adaptive one. It never looks twice the same as it blends into a singular context that is specific to a particular company.

This is why we have decided to regularly address this topic and to emphasize the importance of an approach that should be built to fit your organization's own context.

Moreover, it is always interesting to be inspired by the experience of others before building your own SWP.

For this new edition we had the pleasure and honor to welcome Isabelle Lenicolas, HR Project Director at Fnac Darty. The following pages illustrates that there is no single formula for an effective SWP project. First of all, it is necessary to frame and understand the factors of the company's evolution before getting started on the execution.

However, a certain number of steps remain as key success factors of the exercise. Defining the framework of the analysis is a prerequisite to ensure the correct alignment between the work that is about to be carried out and the strategic business concerns.

The SWP will involve all the stakeholders according to the progress of the exercise, starting from management and HR Business Partners, operations, financial and strategic managers, the HR Centers of Excellence, but also the social partners. This cannot be limited to the HR function alone, even if it is the driving force behind it. The SWP is a real strategic business exercise. But foresight does not consist of looking into a crystal ball to guess the future. Far from it. SWP is a reasoned approach that relies on strategic thinking and tools to write down trends and take into consideration scenarios that are weighed by the stakeholders involved.

Simplifying the process and facilitating collaboration between teams are the main assets of Albert, our SaaS tool dedicated to SWP.

After an in-depth examination of the situations and thanks to the data collected, Albert explores the evolution of jobs and prepares HR teams «today» for what will be needed «tomorrow». Albert draws the possible futures of the population and thus guides the strategic HR thinking.

The independent spirit of the story that Isabelle Lenicolas shares is indisputable. However, we think it is important to point out to our readers that we accompanied Fnac Darty on their SWP project and that this exercise was conducted with the support of our tool Albert.

In addition to what Isabelle Lenicolas shares with us, we found relevant to include notes from Vincent Barat, Co-founder and retail expert at Akoya, who accompanied Fnac Darty in the implementation of its SWP. Finally, we would like to share with you our conviction: other retail players will be able to compare themselves to the Fnac Darty story as they address similar issues, especially at the store level.

But of course, no matter your industry you are free to follow, or not, the practices that are shared. Your Strategic Workforce Planning is yours and its uniqueness will only make it more relevant to your challenges.



**Antoine Aubois**  
Co-founder & Partner  
Akoya Consulting

## 1.1. The SWP depends on a specific context of one organization...

### **What was the context of the SWP project for Fnac Darty? Why did you launch this project?**

**Isabelle Lenicolas (Fnac Darty):** First of all, in the past we have experienced many externally driven transformations with the arrival of pure players like Amazon for example. So we wanted to anticipate future transformations and support our teams. The second element to consider was the merger of Fnac and Darty. We wanted to respond to the group's new strategy and address the issue by adopting a common approach. Finally, the SWP offered a response to the IRP, which questioned the group on the impacts of this strategy on the business lines and its support proposals for employees.

## 1.2. ...and requires setting up a relevant analysis framework

### **How did you define the scope of the SWP analysis?**

**I.L.:** Fnac Darty has 18,000 employees in France. We chose to restrict the scope to the non-executive populations of Operations and Operations in France. This choice was made because, on the one hand, these are populations with lower levels of education, for which action plans were necessary. On the other hand, it was a broadest scope in terms of employees - 70% of the population - but still quite limited in terms of professions - 26 professions.

### **Was it easy to obtain quality data?**

**I.L.:** This was a real challenge because Fnac and Darty had different job reference systems. We were afraid that the data wouldn't talk to each other, that it wouldn't be exhaustive and accurate. This would have distorted the exercise. However, the exercise was very well structured. We also managed to involve several actors to help us build a common reference framework. For example, we sent a survey to store managers asking them to indicate the specialties of their salespeople.

**Vincent Barat:** Let's note the commitment of the latter. The response rate to this survey, sent to 140 store managers, was incredible: 100% of store managers responded! This result was then able to feed the strategy. It's a real source of pride when the HR function is able to provide the business with quality, enlightening data.

## 2.1. Project stakeholders must be carefully selected...

### **Which stakeholders were involved and which choices were strategic for the SWP?**

**I.L.:** We are convinced that SWP is not just an HR challenge. Therefore, we have engaged different stakeholders to take part in the project. The Steering Committee was composed of the Strategy, HR departments and four members of the Fnac Darty Executive Committee.

HR and operational staff also took part in this project. All these stakeholders then took part in workshops to define actions in order to respond to the main conclusions of the exercise.

The biggest challenge we met was the alignment of everyone's workforce projection assumptions, even though the right people were engaged on this project and regularly met. That's why we had to remember that the SWP was a snapshot of the broad masses at a given point in time.

**V.B.:** We also defined several scenarios for staffing needs. This scenario was interesting because we considered different hypotheses that impact differently certain professions. For example, we defined a scenario where a product was a growth driver for the group and another one where this same product was going to disappear gradually.

**I.L.:** Indeed, we built a scenario close to the strategic plan and a radical scenario. The scenario planning did not reverse the trend in headcount gaps for each of our businesses. Our businesses. On the other hand, it did justify the urgent need to implement action plans for some of the Group's businesses.

## 2.2 ...and the purpose of the SWP must be clearly stated to them

### **Have business leaders become more mature in respect to workforce and skills matters?**

**I.L.:** The business leaders were aware of their own perimeters. We had the ambition to involve everyone in the project. However, it wasn't that difficult: as SWP is a topic that concerns their teams, all stakeholders were interested and got involved.

## How did you manage to identify the changes in the business lines in terms of skills and workforce?

**I.L.:** We interviewed in-house experts. They gave us their vision of transformation of the professions, which was then confirmed by a benchmark and Akoya's expertise. Even if as HR members we had a good idea of the trends, we needed these experts in particular to measure the level of skills needs. The challenge was to find the right business partners. However, we have to be aware that the SWP is not a crystal ball and that experts cannot predict everything.

**V.B.:** As an example, the explosion of click & collect has exceeded all predictions and changed the job of the storekeeper: previously in the stockroom, he must now interact with a customer. This is why we recommend regularly updating the SWP results, to anticipate of the SWP, in order to anticipate these new evolutions.

## SUMMARY: AXIS 3 A STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE COMPANY

### 3.1. The SWP reveals the human issues of the company...

#### Were you surprised by some of the results of the exercise?

**I.L.:** The exercise was full of lessons to learn. We thought we were anticipating downsizing and were pessimistic. Thanks to the SWP we discovered several professions that are under strong recruitment pressure because they are strategic for the group, profiles in these professions are rare and training is almost non-existent.

The SWP has thus enabled us to prioritize and define common actions for the group, such as massive recruitment for certain professions or changes in skills. For example, in the future the delivery technicians will need to have computer skills to program washing machines.

Finally, the SWP also highlighted issues that go beyond talent acquisition and management, such as health and talent management and well-being in the workplace.

### 3.2. ...and helps prioritize actions to address these human challenges

#### What long-term and short-term action plans have you defined?

**I.L.:** Several workshops were conducted with different stakeholders. Most of the actions We defined can be initiated immediately. These actions of different nature will have long-term benefits.

Then we asked ourselves if the gap between the current level and the target level is a priority to address and if it is easy to close.

Thus, compensation is an element of response to our retention difficulties in certain professions. Onboarding in the stores is a response to the high turnover rates. Finally, an additional budget has been allocated to training and existing initiatives, such as academies, internal academies and internal career paths, will be reinforced. The SWP has therefore provided us with arguments to launch and finance these actions.

**V.B.: You have also defined actions to anticipate changes in consumption practices. For example, the trend today is to no longer throw away a television if it breaks down but to repair it. So we have to train our teams to repair them. This is a challenge when you consider the lack of training in this area.**

**I.L.:** Yes, indeed that's how we came up with the idea to develop an in-house Academy to train our technicians.

**Do you use tools to measure employee skills?**

**I.L.:** In Operations, we have product knowledge quizzes for sales people. We would like to integrate these quizzes into the onboarding process to better understand their skills. In Operations, we already measure the skills of our employees because we have created our own academies; such as the Cooking Academy.

**What would you do differently if you were to do the exercise again?  
What are the next steps for Fnac Darty?**

**I.L.:** Three elements were decisive in bringing this project to life. As one of the first projects (Ed: post-merger) we had to carry out a change management process in parallel with the SWP. In addition, it was important for us to involve different stakeholders beyond the HR teams in the project. In this sense, Strategy must be an actor and not a spectator. Finally, we did not rush into anything: delivering the assumptions about staffing needs and aligning ourselves with these assumptions takes time.

Thanks to the SWP, we have written the beginning of the story. The project gave us a direction for defining action plans and closing the gaps that were brought to the light by the SWP.

**Antoine Aubo**

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