STRATEGIC
WORKFORCE PLANNING

ROUND TABLE 6TH ÉDITION – JANUARY 22ND 2019
SUMMARY OF THE DIALOGUE

GUESTS: LILIANE SEBAS, CNES
MICHEL DELANOUE, CNES

INTRODUCTION BY
ANTOINE AUBOIS

On January 22nd 2019 Akoya Consulting organized its 6th roundtable dedicated to Strategic Workforce Planning.

After receiving Guillaume Lamothe from Axa and Fabienne Astier from Sanofi Pasteur, we had the pleasure and honor to welcome Liliane Sebas, Director of Change Management at Cnes and Michel Delanoue, Deputy Director of Human Resources Development at Cnes. The entire Akoya Consulting team joins me to thank them for their dedication in preparing and holding this meeting.

The following pages summarize the exchanges we had during this SWP-dedicated evening. Firstly, we will look at the approach taken and its practical deployment within the Group. Secondly, we will understand how Cnes is today developing concrete actions to safeguard and develop its skills in a rapidly changing environment.

Even if the basic spirit and methodology remain the same, each company has its own way of looking at Strategic Workforce Planning. Not only is this normal, it is also perfectly normal.

The SWP must never become an off-the-grid process, automated and disconnected from the business issues and operating modes of the organization as this will lead to wasted efforts. When one organization wants to address headcount issues on declining populations as a priority, another will prefer to focus on competency issues following the implementation of a skills repository and a third may favor a financial approach to the payroll planning scenario with a view to balancing its overall footprint. Anything is possible.

And as for any other strategy, there is no good or bad one, but there are definitely some that are most likely to be successful and respond to the expectations and aspirations of the organization.

This should remind us of the importance of thinking in terms of «process» before considering any tools.

When it comes to tools, it is obviously crucial to choose them carefully. Akoya can also support you in this decision, which should ensure the sustainability of the exercise as well as the increase of HR teams' skills.

Our SaaS tool, Albert, is a kind of SWP genius, which takes care of all the calculation parts in order to simplify the work and collaboration of the teams so that they can focus on the higher value-added tasks and in particular the strategic conversations between operational leaders and their HR Strategic Partner.

Our dedicated team is obviously at your disposal to present Albert in more detail and answer your questions.

Lastly, if Liliane and Michel's open mindedness and independence of speech seems to us to be absolutely indisputable, it is important to point out to our readers that Cnes has been an Akoya client for several years on Strategic Workforce Planning issues.

This is why Xavier Le Page, Senior Manager at Akoya Consulting and an expert in the aerospace and defense sector (quoted below), assisted them in their SWP-related questions and projects.

Enjoy your reading!

Antoine Aubois
Co-founder & Partner
Akoya Consulting

1.1. Use SWP to prioritize actions

Akoya Consulting : In what context did Strategic Workforce Planning begin?

Liliane Sebas (Cnes): The first point has to do with the business environment. Cnes is a pioneer in the space sector, but today it is undergoing a series of changes. We needed to know what role and positioning Cnes should adopt in order to meet certain new challenges. [Ed: to continue to serve industry and science, to promote access to space in the private sector and/or to develop a strong expertise on data.]

Michel Delanoue (Cnes): The second point is related to HR issues. Cnes has its own specific staffing constraints. As a result, internal mobility is the «breathing space» of our Group. We have had a mobility rate of over 10% for several years which must be taken into account. However, today we are facing new questions: how can we develop career paths and expertise and ensure that key skills are maintained internally? What effects will these changes in the space sector have on our skills? Will we need new skills, perhaps softer ones, to accompany these changes? Anticipating the evolution of jobs and skills is fundamental in this type of environment as it allows us to set up specific training programs as well as more efficient tools to collaborate with the management.

Akoya Consulting: Did you have a predefined approach to implementing Strategic Workforce Planning?

L.S.: We started the exercise without having a predefined approach since we do not have control over the volume of recruitment. The recruitment needs are established by an agreement with the State in the form of a framework contract renewable every 5 years. However, as the SWP is based on a flexible methodology, staffing levels and skills are not fixed as in the GPEC approach. The initial idea was therefore to use the exercise to set up priority actions that were easy to deal with and to iterate the SWP within several departments in order to progressively adopt the approach.

1.2. Reconcile in a concrete way the work of Human Resources and that of the Cnes Directions

Akoya Consulting: Have the changes in the industry caused you to take a different approach to GPEC?

M.D.: Not only. Initially, there were two observations. The first was that it's not easy to evolve in a company with a lot of technical professions where HR people are not always comfortable talking to expert employees and vice versa.

The second point was related to the people in our company who have a rather cerebral culture. There comes a time when you have to take action. Through SWP we looked for a pilot that would allow us to move faster and towards action.

L.S. : It was essential to move towards action in order to conciliate in a concrete way the work of Human Resources and that of the Cnes departments. What has changed since the first SWP exercise is the Group's desire to move towards a stronger HR Business Partner dynamic through the creation of a Change Management Department. Today, this department allows the HR function to be integrated into the global vision of Cnes and to support the Group's strategy. It is no longer just a question of GPEC but of strategic work on the skills of tomorrow, linked to change management. The SWP exercise therefore enables managers and HR to structure a common action plan.

1.3. We initially turned to HR-friendly departments

Akoya Consulting: What strategy did you use to start the SWP exercise in a «technical» group?

L.S.: When we wanted to experiment with the SWP exercise we first approached HR-friendly departments. At that time, we had two new directors who wanted to work differently with HR and whose departments had impactful business change issues. They wanted to benefit from a non-technical perspective by bringing real HR added value to the subject. The selection of HR-friendly departments allowed us to work more quickly with people who were eager to move ahead. This made things much easier for us in terms of methodology.

SUMMARY: AXIS 2
A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO STAKEHOLDERS

2.1. Simplifying the segmentation was well received

Akoya Consulting: How has management reacted to this new approach?

L.S.: It depends on the department. For example, if we take the Orbital Systems Department, I would say that the SWP exercise was rather well-received. What was interesting was that by working with Akoya on this scope, we ended up with less than 15 business families when previously we had 300! The fact that we presented a segmentation directly to the managers greatly contributed to the success of this new approach. Even if there was some debate at the beginning («my job is not the same as the person next to me», etc.), we quickly got past that because we wanted to move quickly towards action. Another interesting fact was that the segmentation was inspired by jobs outside of our organisation and the training offered by engineering schools.

The reason for this was twofold: firstly we had to ensure that the job titles would be understood externally despite the specific nature of Cnes. Secondly, this represented an important HR issue for us because we needed to become more attractive in order to recruit in a more targeted way.

2.1. Each mobilized employee was able to have a global view of their department

Akoya Consulting: Was the SWP approach obvious from the start?

M.D.: Initially there were debates, but I found that overall the managers accepted it rather well, particularly from the moment we worked with them in collaborative workshops to produce things together. What is interesting is that the SWP allowed us to arrive at a common language.

L.S.: During our first «pilot» experimentation, we realized that individual exchanges with each manager were not always useful before the SWP. During a second experimentation, we worked with the Launchers Department and the managers concerned to collectively reflect on the businesses. Each participant was able to take a global look at his or her department and not just at his or her job. And there we saw a desire to collaborate, to share and to look at each other's jobs from different angles.

2.3. The collaborative work allowed us to take ownership of the subject

Question from the audience: What was the added value of this collaborative workshop?

Xavier Le Page (Akoya): The goal at the end of the collaborative workshop was to develop a radar where participants identified the key competencies, the current level and the target level. 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.

M.D.: By working in a collaborative workshop with people at the N-1 level, the operational staff were able to take ownership of the subject and become involved in this new approach. However, it was important for us to conduct individual interview sessions prior to these collaborative workshops with people who have a vision of the issues at stake for management and the business.

Question from the audience: What is the typical course of a collaborative workshop?

M.D.: There were about twelve people at the first workshop, divided into three groups. The groups were formed by putting together more technical professions, those more focused on the project and others around innovation. It is better to have several groups because you don't want to take up too much of their time and they need to be able to see the added value generated quickly.

X.L.P. (Akoya): The first workshop lasted two hours. The secret is to select the right speakers, and adequately prepare and coach them. First, we have to explain why we are doing this SWP

work, what is our methodology and why we have made these choices in the segmentation of the professions. Then we have to study each family of professions and have the experts work on the skills they identify as being at risk. This is an opportunity to exchange views with other members of management who are not experts. There is a richness in these exchanges because they challenge each other, both in terms of business lines and skills.

SUMMARY: AXIS 3
A READJUSTMENT OF KEY COMPETENCIES

Akoya Consulting : What types of skills emerged from these collaborative workshops?

M.D.: Soft skills appeared quite naturally in the key competencies. This was quite pleasing, because when dealing with technical professions, our reflex might be to only bring up hard skills. In addition, sometimes we would see key competencies identified that are not "competencies" in a pure HR academic sense. We could have discarded them for that reason, but we decided to keep them. The skill of «hacker» is an example. We continued to work collaboratively with the participants to develop a portrait of the hacker in order to translate it into competencies and finally arrive at the level where we can act.

What I find interesting in these cases is that the SWP exercise is not only about training, career paths, talent management, recruitment, etc. If we take the example of the «hacker», what it takes for this person to be able to «hack» is a dedicated place, a new organization of work and/or distribution of activities within a project etc. We are in the process of digging up the meaning behind this «tinkerer»: I think that there is something important in the idea of keeping alive the tinkerer, who prototypes in a DIY fashion.

3.1 Knowledge transfer by managers

Question from the audience : Once the gaps were identified, did you combine this work with a knowledge transfer process? How did you fill these gaps, the difficulty often being to move from observation to the transfer of skills?

M.D.: At Cnes, we often hear the question «what role does HR have in knowledge transer and what role should they have in relation to managers?». We feel that the transmission of knowledge is mainly taken into account by managers and experts themselves.

X.L.P. (Akoya): The identification of gaps can lead us to conclude that it is really important to ensure that this skill is passed on either by the manager or through training where the experts are the internal trainers.

Akoya Consulting : What would be the main development areas, co-constructed with the departments, that would support you in terms of SWP over the next two years?

M.D.: Today, Cnes is facing the evolution of the global space ecosystem as the use of space data for commercial purposes is rapidly evolving. There is therefore a huge amount of diversity in these new uses of data. A first axis is therefore to equip many of our people with knowledge of the different existing business models. This knowledge is becoming increasingly relevant in order to work with both large groups and smaller organisations who have increasingly complex business structures. There is therefore a second axis dedicated to business set-ups.

SUMMARY: AXIS 4
A STRUCTURING EXERCICE FOR HR

4.1. A light tool

Akoya Consulting: Did you use a particular tool for your SWP?

M.D.: We obviously have an HRIS tool. But what I like about the SWP exercise is that the tooling is fairly light. It doesn't have to replace the entire HRIS, which is important in a company like ours.

L.S.: We did not need to implement any elements in our HRIS. That's also the ease of adoption. As of today, we have not implemented any additional tool and everything fits together quite well. Perhaps when we get to the jobs and the reworked skills, we will ask ourselves what we want to capture that will bring real added value to Talent Management.

4.2. It's not the speed but the involvement that counts

Akoya Consulting: What lessons have you learned from this SWP exercise?

L.S.: We were given a flexible methodology that allowed us to develop the SWP and adapt it to our partner-managers. What is interesting is that this flexibility makes it easier to appropriate the methodology and the transfer of skills is done quite quickly. However, we wanted to go fast and I learned that for our culture this was a mistake. What counts today, with hindsight, is the commitment that is generated because even if it takes longer, it will be transformed into action. It's not necessarily the speed but the involvement that I think is important.

Bonus: What does Cnes do?

Cnes is the National Center for Space Studies and was created in 1961. The role of Cnes if twofold: the role of agency to implement the French space policy (including within the European Space Agency) and the role of a technical center (which is a specificity in the agencies of the various European states). It is a public establishment with an industrial and commercial character (EPIC): there are no shareholders but its activity is overseen by three ministries, and it is financed at 80% by subsidies.

Cnes has around 2,400 employees, 1,700 of which are based in Toulouse, where the orbital systems and data centers are located. It is the largest center with about 300 employees in the Launchers Directorate. The launcher space base is in Kourou, with about 300 employees. The head office is at Les Halles, with about 170 employees.

More than 90% of Cnes' staff are highly qualified engineers and managers, with a wide range of expertise. Its workforce is stable, with a decreasing trend, low turnover and an average seniority of 20 years.

Antoine Aubois
Co-founder & Partner
antoine.aubois@akoyaconsulting.com

Akoya Consulting
8 Uzès Street, Paris
akoya.group