



**The development of meaning in the company:**  
**A powerful lever for employee engagement in times of**  
**great uncertainty**

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Faced with the Coronavirus crisis, many companies, whatever their sector of activity, are redoubling their efforts to make a direct or indirect contribution to the fight against the pandemic as shown by the example of the alliance between Air Liquide, Valeo, PSA and Schneider Electric in France to manufacture thousands of respirators. If this formidable initiative should be welcomed as it should because it mobilizes companies and significant resources, We must not forget the multitude of ideas translated into concrete innovations by teams in the field to solve problems linked to the explosion of the pandemic from the manufacture of washable protective masks to the improvised respirator with the Easybreath diving mask from Decathlon by a team of caregivers and a start-up from Lombardy in Italy.

These ideas correspond to the model of frugal innovation as proposed a few years ago by Navi Radjou and Jaideep Prabhu in their bestseller. These show, convincingly, that we can innovate with very limited resources as long as we leave the teams great freedom to undertake and test simple but effective solutions to the problems encountered in the field. In the case of the current crisis, all relevant ideas are good to take in companies to deal with the consequences of the pandemic. In this perspective, HRDs should be on the front line to create an environment in which employees dare to

take risks by testing disruptive ideas for the common good to the point of practicing “corporate hacking” that does not respect company rules.

What clearly falls under "empowerment" can indeed be encouraged by a rapid evolution in managerial practices, made necessary today by the pandemic, towards more trust, transparency and accountability. Beyond words, it is in everyday actions that we can judge an evolution in managerial practices. As such, HRDs can act today by making managers aware of the need for even greater empowerment of their employees in such a completely new situation. In order not to leave managers alone with their responsibilities, this incentive could be accompanied by virtual sessions to share best practices or even co-development. In the longer term, following this crisis which we hope will be brought closer, it is managerial models that are likely to be upset. We can indeed hope that the famous model of "command and control" will be quickly put back in the register of antiquities as the expectations of trust and accountability have been high during this period of crisis.

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