EXPLORING MIDDLE MANAGERS’ STRATEGIC SENSEMAKING ROLE IN PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to deepen the research on middle managers’ strategic sensemaking roles. Until now, little research has explored how middle managers use their practical knowledge to realize their sensemaking role during strategic change in their daily activities. Here, through vignettes drawn from the authors’ current research, a framework is developed showing that two micro-practices, “performing distributed conversations” and “enrolling networks”, are critical in the accomplishment of this middle manager strategic sensemaking role. The paper also shows how these two micro-practices are underpinned by middle manager semantic and sociocultural knowledge, and that it is this practical knowledge that enables the middle managers to engage in these practices as part of their day to day activities and draw people in the change. The paper ends by discussing the challenges raised by the findings for capturing and analyzing the practical abilities of middle managers’ strategic sensemaking roles.
INTRODUCTION

Despite some early seminal works (Bower, 1970; Burgleman, 1983) showing that middle managers can have an important strategic role, we have only recently begun to take this seriously. There is now a burgeoning literature on the role middle managers play in both the formulation and implementation of strategic change (see, for example, Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson 2004 & 2005; Currie, 1999; Currie & Proctor, 2005; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992, 1994 & 1997; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Guth & McMillan, 1986; Huy, 2002; Rouleau, 2005; Schilit, 1987; Westley, 1990). This research shows middle managers are more than passive linking pins, transmitting senior manager instructions unquestioningly down the organization. They are critical mediators that facilitate organizational adaptation by both shaping senior manager strategic thinking and orchestrating the deployment of senior manager plans. Middle managers are therefore important because of the way they knowledgeably connect the operational core with the upper echelons in a way that shapes strategic direction.

This growing body of research emphasizes the particular importance of the middle manager strategic sensemaking role. For example, some indicate that middle managers play a role in transmitting information and interpretation of change (Nonaka, 1988; Dutton & al. 1997; Currie & Procter, 2001). Others examine how middle managers interpret the intent to change and how they use their experience to help others understand and diffuse the new strategic orientation (Balogun, 2003; Nonaka, 1994). In implementing change, middle managers use their internal and external contacts to gather and synthesize
information in order to pick up and diffuse new ideas (Dutton et al., 1997; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1994). However, this literature remains silent about the way middle managers put their sensemaking roles into action. As argued by Balogun (2003) research needs to examine these roles in more detail.

Rouleau (2005) proposes the existence of a third order analysis of strategic sensemaking. She argues that whilst we know something about middle manager role content, and something about how middle managers fulfill their different strategic sensemaking roles, we do not know enough about how middle managers draw on their “practical knowledge” to inform their practice. Practical knowledge is about the unspoken or the invisible structure of a situation which is acquired through time (Baumard, 2001). It is what we know without explicitly knowing we know it. Others working within the strategy-as-practice perspective also highlight the need to understand practitioners and the resources they draw on to perform their work (Balogun et al, 2007; Jarzakowski et al, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Johnson et al, 2003; Whittington, 2003 & 2006). It is particularly important to explore how middle managers use practical knowledge in their daily activity because their strategizing roles are often informal; lacking the authority of those who carry more formally recognized strategic roles.

Therefore the focus of this paper is to look at middle manager strategic sensemaking roles in practice. However, this paper is also exploratory. Our aim is to come to some provisional understanding of key middle manager strategic sensemaking practices and the practical knowledge they are using to
perform these activities. To this end, we are not undertaking original empirical research. Instead we utilize a number of empirical vignettes drawn from existing research that provides insight into middle manager sensemaking in practice to derive a framework which captures the dimensions of this role within the context of change implementation. The contribution of this paper is three fold. First, the framework theoretically advances our knowledge of middle manager strategic sensemaking by identifying two generic forms of micro practices, “performing distributed conversations” and “enrolling networks”, through which middle managers engage and mobilize others with change. Second, empirically we go some way towards showing how these generic practices vary by context, but more importantly are consistently underpinned and enabled by semantic and socio-cultural knowledge. Third, we are able to contribute more specifically to the strategy-as-practice research agenda by providing insight into what it means for a middle manager to be a skilled strategic practitioner.

In this paper we first review the literature on middle managers’ and sensemaking to appreciate how we can explore the way these managers action their strategic sensemaking role. We then describe our methodology and present our analysis and the framework we develop from this analysis to further our comprehension of practical knowledge and strategic sensemaking. The paper ends with a discussion of the implications for future research.
MIDDLE MANAGERS AND STRATEGIC SENSEMAKING

As we say above, since the end of the 1980s, numerous authors have recognized the importance of the roles played by middle managers in implementing a strategic change. This growing body of research emphasizes the particular importance of the middle manager strategic sensemaking role in terms of interpreting the intent to change, transmitting information, and gathering and diffusing new ideas. Some make this middle manager sensemaking activity quite explicit. For example, Balogun (2003) highlights the sensemaking activity that underpins four processes in the change intermediary role. Others are less explicit about this. Yet if we accept Gioia & Chittipeddi’s (1991) definition of strategic sensemaking as to do with the way managers understand, interpret, create and diffuse sense of the information surrounding a strategic change, some of these processes are clearly to do with sensemaking. Floyd & Wooldridge (1992), for example, talk of middle managers *synthesizing information*, whereas Dutton et al (1997) talk about *detecting new ideas*. Nonaka (1988-1994) talks of critical middle manager activities to do with *combining macro and micro information* and *unifying individual visions*.

Drawing on this body of literature on middle manager roles in strategic change, we can see that this research provides us with knowledge on the content and processes (the what and the how) of the middle manager sensemaking role. However, building on the work of Gioia & Chittipeddi (1991), Rouleau (2005) argues that this picture is incomplete since it only represents two levels of sensemaking. (See Figure 1.) Analyses of middle
manager role content provide first order explanations of middle manager activity. They are an analysis of the objective facts and events, or the structure of change, and are largely descriptive focusing on the different roles middle managers play as strategic sensemakers. Analyses of the processes middle managers engage in to fulfill these first-order sensemaking roles are more typically to do with second order explanations, trying to discern a deeper comprehension of evolving activity flows associated with the facts and events. These analyses provide us with knowledge of patterns in the ways the roles are interpreted and actioned. They typically focus on the activities associated with the roles. However, these first and second order explanations do not explore how middle managers accomplish these flows of activity on a daily basis to fulfill their strategic sensemaking roles.

Rouleau (2005) therefore argues for a third and deeper level of analysis of sensemaking. This third-order explanation explores how strategic sensemaking processes are “constituted through communication and action in daily routines and conversations. The focus is on the way managers … provide information and influence people around them by modifying their daily routines and adjusting their discourse to the new strategic orientation. Strategic sensemaking… in practice means looking at how these processes are routinely constituted, how they are accomplished on a daily basis, and how they occur over time throughout the organization.” (1432)

This third order explanation is consistent with the growing interest in strategy-as-practice (Balogun et al, 2007; Jarzakowski et al, 2007;
Jarzabkowski, 2004; Johnson et al, 2003; Whittington, 2003 & 2006). This perspective argues that studies in strategy can build on the practical rationality rooted in the concrete details of daily life that make up strategizing (Whittington, 1996, 2003 & 2006; Jarzabkowski, 2003). Strategizing occurs at the nexus of practices, praxis and practitioners (Whittington, 2006), and as such, one of the things we need to be concerned about is the practical knowledge practitioners draw on when doing strategy (Balogun et al, 2007; Jarzabkowski et al, 2007). In order to improve our knowledge of the strategic sensemaking roles, it is important to better understand the ‘know how’ (Ryle, 1949), or what we term here the practical knowledge, and not just the ‘know when, where and what’ (Garud, 1997), of middle manager strategizing (Balogun et al, 2003).

The concept of knowing in practice, or what we here term practical knowledge, can be seen early on in the work of James Dewey. Dewey argues that any distinction between knowing and doing is erroneous since knowledge and doing are inseparably linked (Menand, 2001). As such, the concept of practical knowledge encapsulates the notion that knowing is bound up with action and vice-versa. However, practical knowledge is also tacit knowledge, in the sense that “we know more than we can tell” (Polanyi, 1966:4), and is consistent with Ryle’s concept (1949) of “know-how” versus “know-what”. As Tsoukas (2005) points out, for Polanyi knowing involves “skilful action” since knowledge is not something independent of human action. “All knowing is personal knowing – participation through indwelling” (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975: 44 emphasis in original).”
The notion that skilled action is based on tacit knowledge in which knowing and action are intimately linked has gained wide acceptance. Dryfeus & Dryfeus (1986: 779) use terms such as “situational responses” and “intuitive judgment” to emphasize that tacit knowledge is not rule based and not a purely cognitive activity. Orlikowski (2002) argues that tacit knowledge is embedded in and “reciprocally constitutive” with practice. Tsoukas and Mylonopoulos (2004) similarly argue that “individual understanding is not so much in the head as in situated practice: the individual understands and acts in the world through drawing on sets of socially defined values, beliefs and cognitive categories within particular material and social circumstances.” These authors in turn are building on the work of others such as Giddens (1984), Lave (1998), Hutchins (1995), Suchman (1987) and Brown and Duguid (2000). The argument is that “tacit & explicit knowledge are mutually constituted … inseparable” (Tsoukas, 1996: 14); knowledge is “enacted in people’s practices” (Orlikowski, 2002: 250). Thus here we use the term “practical knowledge” to capture the notion of knowing as something intimately linked to and wrapped up in doing, consistent with Polanyi and Ryle. We are concerned with what Orlikowski (2002) terms “knowledgeable performance”, or “effective action”.

Castillo (2002) argues for four types of tacit knowledge. Nonepistle, semantic, sociocultural, and sagacious. Nonepistle knowledge “is about the most personal feelings and knowledge a person possesses. It is “very personal yet rather ineffable and indescribable” (48). Sociocultural knowledge does not belong to anyone in particular, but is instead “part of the social /
cultural systems that learn and use this form of knowledge” (49). The social form is associated with the part of social/cultural systems that is learned and used through behavioral codes (Spender, 1996). Semantic knowledge is verbalizable knowledge that through special symbolism, for example, within a particular community requires no explanation. It is about the implicitly known meaning of words, acts, and other phenomena. Sagacious knowledge is equated to wisdom: it is knowledge that enables assessment of a situation in the first glance.

Rouleau (2005) shows in her middle manager research that two forms are of particular interest for studying sensemaking: the semantic and the sociocultural. She shows how middle managers become key disseminators of an organization’s new strategy through their day-to-day activities. She shows how the middle managers, for example, a designer, draw on different discourses when interacting with different customers, to get across the sense of the new strategy, here encapsulated in new designs, without explicitly mentioning “strategy”. The way the designer talks to the customers is positioned in their world. He translates the new concepts into something meaningful for each individual, based on his knowledge of what matters to them.

Rouleau (2005) is not the only person to highlight the significance of practical knowledge to a middle managers skilled strategic performance. Floyd & Wooldridge (1997) illustrate how the way middle managers champion and synthesize, for example, is underpinned by their knowledge of who to talk to and how. Floyd & Wooldridge don’t explicitly mention practical knowledge,
but it infuses many of their examples. The same is true of Balogun (2003). Similarly Dutton’s work (Dutton et al, 1997) on middle manager issue selling shows this activity to be based on their reading of the context, which is dependent on their knowledge of what distinguishes a favorable from an unfavorable situation. Dutton et al argue that, “their selling-initiation decisions appear to be based on general cognitive appraisals rather than more specific effortful cognitive appraisals of the context.” (419) Their examples illustrate how their middle managers need to read signals, that would suggest the use of some deeper level knowledge about their context. Huy (2002) examines the emotional balancing role of middle managers during change. He shows that the middle managers develop an embodied understanding of the necessary skills involved in change. Currie and Brown (2003) highlight the importance of middle manager semantic knowledge by drawing on Weick (1995) to argue that “narratives are one symbolic category through which people create or enact the ‘reality’ of organizations” (579).

In this paper, therefore, our focus is on middle manager strategic sensemaking roles in practice. We seek to understand more about 1) the extent to which the strategic sensemaking activity of middle managers as skilled performers is underpinned by practical knowledge, and 2) how different forms of practical knowledge impact on this middle manager strategic activity.

METHODS

This paper draws on two separate research projects exploring middle manager practices during in change situations to develop vignettes on middle
managers that capture their strategic sensemaking activity. In each case we focus on two individuals to create four vignettes. We analyze these vignettes for evidence of the practical knowledge the middle managers are drawing on. We focus on middle managers dealing with change as organizational change situations constitute natural experiments (Dunbar & Starbuck, 2006). It is in situations of change that the unconscious rules and routines are often surfaced in what individuals do as they struggle to make sense of the change and the impact on themselves (Brown 2000; Weick 1995). As is common for middle managers, they are often both the recipient and agent of change (Balogun & Johnson, 2004 & 2005), and this is reflected in our vignettes.

The first research project focuses on better understanding how middle managers’ identity is performed and transformed through organizational restructuring. The project equates organizational restructuring with a major change in the organizational life, which has significant consequences on the organizational structure and strategy (McKinley & Scherer, 2000). The research has mainly collected data through a specific type of life story which Bertaux & Delcroix (2000) calls a “narrative of practices”. Such a research method allows the researcher to dig into the “lifeworld” of particular actors, here middle managers, in order to capture the taken for granted streams of routines, events and interactions that constitute their social practices (Patriotta, 2003). Moreover, through stories about their lives and work, middle managers make sense of their selves, of the world and their changing

1. For more information on this projects see Author2 (2006).
organization (Vaara, 2002). In total, fifty-eight extensive narrative accounts of how middle managers experience the restructuring of their organizations have been collected. The middle managers involved in the research have come from organizations belonging to private (23), public (18) and non-profit (17) sectors of activities. The narratives of practices have been developed from three in-depth semi-structured interviews with each participant conducted during the organizational restructuring. The interviews lasted from one hour and a half to three hours. (In total nearly 300 hours of interviews). The types of restructuring varied from process reengineering to downsizing, technological innovations and merger and acquisition. Most of the middle managers involved in the research were fighting the changes in negative ways. Most of them saw their tasks, functions or responsibilities extended while they had to fulfill conflicting demands in a context where career uncertainty was becoming the new certainty. Even though, at first glance, they seemed to be more recipients than change agents, the data revealed that they were all developing different micro-strategies to redefine themselves and their work. In so doing, they also subtly, often more or less consciously, act as change agents in order to enhance the strategic change.

One of the main challenges in using narrative accounts concerns the difficulty of accessing the contextual situation (Chamberlayne & Spano, 2000). Even though individual actors present themselves as contextualized social actors, narratives of practices are by nature profoundly subjective (Atkinson, 1998). To grasp the contextual dimensions involved in the organizational restructurings, we therefore also conducted five real-time case studies around
our research participants involving participant observation, interviews and documents analysis of the organizational restructuring efforts.

The second research project explores how middle managers charged with delivering change across organizational boundaries operate to achieve this\(^2\). The research involves longitudinal real-time tracking of change projects and the middle managers involved. A number of organizations were involved in this collaborative research since it was part of an on-going research agenda conducted with a consortium of companies in sectors as diverse as pharmaceuticals, consultancy and automotive, all interested in issues associated with the management of change. The change initiatives were equally diverse, including post-merger integration, exploitation of across-business synergies and implementing more integrative structures. The boundary spanning practices of the managers involved were explored in context to enable an appreciation of the contingency of their emergence and development. All the managers involved were individuals tasked with implementing, across the broader organization, corporate centre change initiatives that required realignment of, or challenge to, existing internal organizational boundaries if the changes were to be successful. Whatever their formal organizational role, to deliver change they had to draw together and get co-operation from others whose assumptions about ways of working, and maybe personal interests, were being challenged by the change initiative. As internal change agents these individuals typically had no sanctioned

\(^2\) For more information on this project see Author2 et al (2005).
authority over many of those they were asking to co-operate, and were often dealing with individuals more senior than themselves. Their roles were therefore challenging.

Recognizing that people can find it hard to articulate what they do when they are divorced from the context of action (Lave, 1998; Suchman, 1987), and that participant observation for a large number of geographically dispersed research subjects given the limited resources was not feasible, the research adopted interviews supplemented with focus groups as a technique that encourages participant self-reflection (Balogun et al, 2003; Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990), especially when comprised of similarly engaged practitioners. Here, we develop our vignettes from two individuals in just one of the organizations, but working on different change projects.

In developing the vignettes from these two research projects we focus on individuals and their strategizing activity as this is consistent with the study of individuals and their practical knowledge. We can’t study practical knowledge in strategic sensemaking activity without being located at the micro-level in order to see how it works in action (Balogun et al, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski et al, 2007; Rouleau, 2005). Obviously, it is also critical that we are able to examine the activity of the middle managers within context. As a result, when we developed the vignettes we wrote stories of their experience in a way which locates their actions within their context of operation. Whilst each of the research projects afforded us the opportunity of developing many vignettes, we chose to focus on individuals for whom we had the richest and greatest depth of data in terms of both actions and their
reflections of those actions. As is the case with all respondents, ours revealed a differential ability for self-reflection.

As is common with qualitative research, we analyzed our stories through repeated iterations between theory and data (Langley, 1999). Our vignettes are not drawn from research projects that explicitly set out to elicit the tacit knowledge of the middle manager respondents. In fact, Tsoukas (2005) argues that it is not possible to convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. However, he also argues that this does not mean that we cannot discuss “skilled performance”. Tacit knowledge is displayed and manifested in what we do. Therefore we can get at tacit knowledge by drawing each other’s attention to how we relate to others and the world around us. Our assumption is that by examining how our middle managers talked about their actions, when encouraged in interviews to describe specifically how and what they do in detail, this will surface to some extent the practical knowledge they are drawing on to act within their context. Since we had already constructed our vignettes with this in mind, our starting point was to seek to understand the linkages between interpretation and action, or the linkages between the why and the action, within the middle manager sensemaking. This is consistent with a sensemaking perspective since sensemaking resides in the interplay of interpretation and action (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). More specifically, the strategic sensemaking process is ongoing through conversations and routines and involves being able to read the situation and interact with others in order to deal with multiple interpretations of change. This is captured in Gioia & Chittipeddi’s (1991) notions of sensemaking and
sense giving (see also Maitlis, 2005). For accomplishing their roles, sensemaking and practical knowledge are intertwined in a way that enables middle managers to construct different ways of interpreting and acting founded on their implicit knowledge of their world.

Having identified cycles of interpretation and action within our vignettes, we then sought to identify the different types of practical knowledge underpinning the interpretation and action. We were primarily seeking to distinguish between semantic and sociocultural knowledge consistent with Rouleau’s (2005) finding that these are the most important types of practical knowledge when strategizing, but we did not close our minds to the possibility of identifying other types of practical knowledge (Castillo, 2002). In the initial stages we broadly equated semantic knowledge with use of language or terminology, and sociocultural knowledge with rules and taken for granted assumptions about the way people behave around here.

This analysis led to us to develop the framework shown in Figure 2. We were able to identify two sets of interrelated actions, that we label “Performing Distributed Conversations” and “Enrolling Networks”. Performing distributed conversations relates to the mediation role middle managers carry out through formal and informal conversations with their peers, subordinates, superiors and customers or other stakeholders, to engage these individuals with their agenda. As we already know, it is the daily conversations between peers, with stakeholders and customers that constitute the privileged vehicle for developing interpretations of what change is about (Balogun & Johnson, 2004 & 2005; Rouleau, 2005). This communicative process is ongoing and
anchored in the way middle managers are relating to others. Enrolling networks is to do with the fact that middle managers know a lot of people disseminated at different places inside their organization and also sometimes outside, and they need to mobilize these networks to enroll and engage others with their agenda, to build alliances and coalition. Enrolling networks is to do with this activity.

*Insert Figure 2 about here*

From examining what our middle managers said about their actions to do with performing distributed conversations and enrolling networks we were able to see that they were based on particular ways of interpreting. When performing distributed conversations, the middle managers were mobilizing particular types of language (semantic knowledge) to trigger linkages with taken-for-granted and accepted ways of doing things in the organization (socio-cultural knowledge), to build acceptance of their position from others. So for example, in vignettes C and D, William and Jane use language such as margin, cost, benefit, to link to the performance, bottom-line culture of their organization and therefore mobilize people for their cause. We associate the mobilization of language with semantic practical knowledge and equate it with symbolic / verbal representations as does Castillo (2002). We associate the mobilization of taken-for-granted ways of doing things with sociocultural practical knowledge and label this identifying social / cultural systems, such as an emphasis placed on bottom-line performance to the exclusion of virtually anything else, or power dependencies, or social networks.
When enrolling networks, the middle managers were mobilizing predominantly their knowledge of the social & cultural systems to determine who they should be having the distributed conversations with and when, or in other words what forum, but were also relying on the mobilization of semantic practical knowledge to determine the configurations of the different stakeholders they needed to involve. In other words, they might need to use different symbolic / verbal representations with different stakeholders, so they needed to use their semantic knowledge to think who they assembled together.

We next present our vignettes and use them to illustrate how we derived our framework. As we explain above, our vignettes are drawn from two different studies. For each study we first explain the context, and then present vignettes on the change projects of two middle managers to illustrate the different dimensions of sensemaking in practice in Figure 2.

THE DOING OF MIDDLE MANAGERS’ STRATEGIC SENSEMAKING

Restructuring Radio-Canada: the cases of Robert and Mary (vignettes A & B)
Radio-Canada is the French division of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation charged with diffusing the Canadian culture from coast to coast. At the beginning 2000, this public trade-unionized enterprise had to face a new competitive environment characterized by deregulation and revolutionary technological change. In a context of government budgetary cutbacks, the top management team wanted to reduce the production costs, transform the hierarchical bureaucracy into more a flexible organization, and privatize part of
the technical division. In order to achieve this, the public enterprise underwent a major restructuring involving re-engineering and plans for reducing whilst making more flexible the workforce. The restructuring also involved the reorganization of the traditional news channel and the management of the new politics of human resources. Two middle managers, here called Robert and Mary, played a central role in this restructuring. The following vignettes illustrate how in order to fulfill their change roles they drew on their practical knowledge to perform distributed conversations and enroll networks.

Vignette A: Robert

At the time of the restructuring, Robert had 12 years experience in Radio-Canada. Some years ago, Robert was in charge of renewing and organizing the technical team for the new specialized information channel created at the end of the nineties. In the context of the restructuring, the top management team decided to restructure and rejuvenate the traditional news channel. To accomplish this, Robert was brought back to his old function as a coordinator of technical services having to supervise around 50 technicians (technicians, point’s men, setters, cameramen). Robert felt betrayed by the organization and saw himself more as a recipient than an agent in of restructuring. However, working on the operational level, his experience gave him the opportunity to tactically use conversations and recompose his personal networks to make sense of the change and to make things happen.

See Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here
As this vignette illustrates, it would have been impossible for Robert to tactically manage and create sense around the change without drawing on his practical knowledge of the “guys” he was working with (see Table 1, quote A2; A4). For example, his long experience of negotiating with people (Table 1, quote A1) and his deep knowledge of the organization gave him the ability to almost work a miracle in the context of an extraordinary snowstorm (see Table, quote A3). The new director of information (his superior) tried to organize a supplementary team to cover the events that evening drawing on an official list of managers, but failed despite a lot of calls. Robert, however, was able to organize a team. He knew who to call and was also close to the guys he called. Robert’s capacity to get the job done by his employees comes from his deep knowledge of what they are; knowledge which is daily acquired through distributed conversations (Table 1, quote A2). In using this deep knowledge Robert creates a new sense of the job to convince people to give some extra to the organization.

This vignette also clearly illustrates that without being able to speak informally with his employees, it would not have been possible to get their cooperation (Table 1, quote A2). And this cooperation is anchored in a specific socio-cultural model that Robert is aware of. As he said, “playing cards” constitutes for him one of his best management tools. This service is mainly dominated by a man culture and a culture in which the guys are in gangs and not very easy-going (a small mafia). Playing cards allows him to be part of the gang, enabling him to build a sense of trust and an informal negotiated order which he can draw on if needed (Table 1, quote A4).
In fact, Robert has his own managerial style largely focused on people and in which “talking” is essential (Table 1, quote A1; A2). This is what gives him the ability to be able to go over the union diktat in daily operations and innovate in its local HMR in the long run. In effect, he was able to redesign the rules for the management of holidays and the work schedules times for the technicians and the cameramen. He also introduced by the back door some forms of polyvalence between the technicians. According to him, all this would never have been possible without “talking with people”.

Vignette B: Mary

Contrary to Robert, Mary is more clearly a change agent. She had been working at Radio-Canada for 9 years and was promoted within the organizational restructuring to the role of Director, Technical Production Division, becoming Robert’s boss. She was now responsible for over 500 employees. Mary began her career as a simple agent, gradually moving to a middle manager in the TV shows division. She marks herself out from her colleagues by emphasizing her leadership through her personal qualities. Thus, this middle manager is acting closer to the top management team than to lower level managers (see Table 2). The vignette shows that her strength in the organizational restructuring was partly linked to her energy and her capacity to trust people (Table 2, quote B6). However, yet again, her experience enables her to tactically use conversations and personal networks to make sense of the change and make things happen.

Insert Table 2 about here
According to this vignette, Mary appeared to deploy a new management style which was unusual in the technical division of Radio-Canada. Moreover, it was needed for rationalizing and making more flexible this bureaucratic trade-unionized organization (Table 2, quote B7). Her personal qualities such as transparency and listening were essential for making sense of the new change (Table 2, quotes B1; B5). The fact that she didn’t have any expertise in technical production opened new possibilities for promoting a more participative management in this division. She had to give more liberty to the technicians to self organize their work. In exchange, she could sell them a different view of the TV shows division to increase the cooperation between and meet the aims of this organizational restructuring context.

Her practical knowledge of the “others” in the organization relies on two things: talking with people through meetings and cultivating strong ties with her old colleagues (Table 2, quotes B2; B8). This way of doing things contributed to climate change in the division. The technical production division was historically perceived as a very secretive and autonomous culture trying to protect their power over the artists and the creators. She had to break it down and the way she accomplished this was talking with people in order to propagate the right “message”.

Beyond her organizing and communicative abilities, she is aware of the fact that she is a woman having to work in a man’s universe (Table 2; quotes B3; B4). She is also conscious that she is working in a public organization subsidized by the federal government but having the mission to diffuse the French local culture. Therefore, managing in this context, means to
symbolically incarnate this social dynamic. Mary is careful to take into account the sociocultural forces in which the organization is embedded.

**Delivering Change in a Multi-National: the cases of William and Jane (vignettes C & D)**

Engco is a multi-national engineering company, with several diversified divisions reporting into a corporate centre located within the UK. Despite the differences between the divisions, and the traditional silo based way of working where each division acts autonomously of each other (see Table 4, quote D1), rewarded for and only answerable to the centre in terms of performance (see Table 3, quote C1), Engco was also running change projects aimed at creating cross-business synergies between these diverse business divisions. The research at Engco focused on two individuals - William and Jane - involved in these projects. It highlights how these individuals drew on their practical knowledge to succeed at making sense of their respective projects in what was a very difficult context. Engco provided no central mandate for its centrally initiated change projects, despite the fact that the divisions within Engco traditionally operated as autonomous silos resisting change originating from the centre. As such, to succeed, William and Jane both needed to use their understanding of the context to engineer divisional support for projects that would otherwise fail.

**Vignette C: William**

William, the group head of remuneration and benefits, was examining across business practices in areas such as pensions with the aim of creating common procedures and using common providers where possible to reduce
costs. He was relatively new having joined Engco within the last year. The vignette shows, however, how William uses his networks and his position as an HR expert to influence the board through clever use of language. Through his knowledge of their interests (the bottom line) he was able to generate a dialogue linking his projects to their business concerns. See Table 3.

**Insert Table 3 about here**

William is aware of divergent interests across the divisions and therefore the need to create commonality through ‘selling’ messages (See table 3, C2). He estimates that he spends at least half his time gathering intelligence or else ‘crafting’ his presentations to senior management. In particular, he is quick to link his agenda to the perceived need for change in view of external exigencies (‘margin issues’ and ‘business reality’). We can see from the quotes in Table 3, that to draw people in he relies on symbolic and verbal representations relevant to Engco – regularly referring to things such as bottom line, cost focused, balance sheet, margin, money, cash, profits. However, distributed conversations are not just underpinned by semantic practical knowledge, they are also informed by William’s sociocultural knowledge, in terms of the way the conversations are staged and the purposes of the conversations. William wanted to get non-financial objectives included in the reward and performance assessment of senior managers (Table 3, C3) so that he could use this to push his objectives. He saw the traditional forms of reward as a barrier. Similarly the need to sell rather than tell (Table 3, C2) shows an understanding of the relationship between senior managers, such as himself, working from the centre and divisional managers.
We can also see from the quotations in Table 3 (C3 – C5) the importance placed by William on enrolling networks. For example, he set up a sub-group within HR in the UK as well as a Benefits Committee at grass roots level. He has an appreciation of other peoples’ agendas (C7), and has a policy of working with people individually when necessary (“the ones who are probably the most vociferous, resistant or have the most personal power”) to get them on his side before calling individuals together to progress things as a team. Furthermore, William’s boss had a dotted line to all the HR directors and to the CEO. These chains were now being used. In addition, as William developed his networks within, he widened his access to include the bosses of his clients, which enhanced his access to decision makers and his role context. William also tightened the communications linkages. When he ran meetings he made it clear that it was the responsibility of the HR people present to communicate back to their divisions – and that their HR Directors had already been communicated with and knew of their responsibility.

All of this was underpinned by William’s sociocultural knowledge of Engco. He recognized the different characters of the divisions and the importance they placed on this, “It was interesting at the international leadership conference because you could tell which group was which. They do have very different identities and they like to reinforce that.” He therefore understood the need to “herd cats” (C5). He knew he could only use persuasion to get buy-in to his initiatives. He had no access to any forms of incentives, such as reward mechanisms, to encourage others to take his initiatives forwards. Instead he recognized that his position as a relatively senior manager, in the culture that
existed at Engco, afforded him certain access through his networks. He had a
direct line to the board through his senior vice president (a member of the
board). This, combined with the tougher economic climate for Engco, gave
William some leverage. There needed to be an even greater cost
consciousness which William was able to use to re-configure his context to
one more enabling for himself, and to position himself to work more as a
partner with senior management.

Vignette D: Jane

Jane was running an innovation project to encourage the development of new
business ideas from the divisions. She had less board access than William
and was therefore more reliant on her project sponsors to facilitate support.
However, like William, she use her practical knowledge of the way the
organization works to be supported for her project.

Insert Table 4 about here

As with William’s initiative, there was no formal mandate forcing
businesses to engage with Jane’s group and take up the ideas – it relied on
individual’s (mainly divisional coordinators) being released to take things
forward – and that could be counter cultural. In this context, her role was to
oversee that process and to work with those local facilitators and the different
review groups. To achieve this, she developed a full range of ways to be in
close contact with them to create a group feel – predominantly through
performing distributed conversations (Table 4, D1 – D4). As this vignette
shows, these distributed conversations do not have to be verbal and face-to-
face. Jane used monthly audio conferences, plus two or three times a year,
physical get-togethers, and also one-to-one phone conversations. Jane saw these face-to-face meetings as very important. However, she also used a lot of other mechanisms - story-telling, newsletters, web site, regular use of e-mail to maintain contact and the roadshow. These distributed conversations were again underpinned by both semantic and sociocultural knowledge. Jane recognized the “balancing act” (D1) and that her point of persuasion was encouraging the organization to “think about the future” through a “pipeline of ideas” and through such means “drag the organization away - even one degree - from its straight and narrow operational performance focus.” She persuaded senior managers by, for example, parceling the future of her projects in order to sell its short term benefit, or nurturing ideas to identify who to see them to. She also recognized that aside from the operational focus, the existing social and cultural systems were all divisional and silo based, so she had to generate a flow of conversations that created alternative connections. Whenever she wanted someone to do something she was in competition with their division – there was a constant battle “releasing resources and finding funds”. She commented that, “the power that you have is that you have the steering committee and some of the main board directors and senior guys from the divisions on that committee, therefore you are acting with their goodwill ... but at the end of the day if the division decides they are not going to work on any of the new ideas there is not a lot you can do.”

This last quote clearly shows the link between performing conversations and enrolling networks. Again, because of the nature of the centre-division relationship, Jane has to rely on others to promote the innovation project
(Table 4, D5-D8), and in particularly draw on senior management sponsorship when it is available – such as the innovation summit.

DISCUSSION

In this paper, we try to better understand the extent to which the strategic sensemaking roles performed by middle managers are underpinned by their practical knowledge, and how different forms of practical knowledge underpin this sensemaking activity. In order to develop our argument, we have used some empirical vignettes to derive a framework that captures the basic dimensions of how our middle managers perform their strategic sensemaking roles in practice within the context of strategic change. Our framework shows that two micro-practices are critical in that performance, “performing distributed conversations” and “enrolling networks”. Our analysis also shows that to perform these practices our middle managers need to draw on their semantic and sociocultural knowledge as they go about their day to day activities to draw people into the change.

Performing multiple distributed conversations means that middle managers have to compose and diffuse different versions of the story for the different audiences with whom they are working on a daily basis. In some ways, it refers to a constructive verbal exchange which attempts to reconcile divergent demands and interests coming from upper and operational levels, or from different parts of the same organization. “Performing distributed conversations” is an ongoing communicative practice anchored in the way middle managers are relating with others. It is in these distributed...
conversations that middle managers perfect their communicative devices, each time creating language game opportunities towards the change which is necessary in a context where multiple and conflicting interpretations are important (Leitch & Davenport, 2005; Denis et al. 2005).

Enrolling networks refers to the capacity of middle managers to mobilize people around a change project in order to make sense of it and build an alliance working towards the change, even if it is for different reasons. In strategic sensemaking, middle managers have to mobilize others, to draw them in to their cause, to enroll their lateral colleagues and their subordinates, and maybe their superiors. They need to assign them specific tasks and build alliances and coalitions. Activating their networks give them new opportunities for making the different meanings and interests that exist mutually compatible around the change. It also provides them legitimacy for acting as change agents. Activating networks allows them to bypass formal organizational rules and, sometimes, create more flexible links between top-down levels or lateral organizational positions. So enrolling networks does not just refer to the knowing who to enroll but also how you collectively put different stakeholders groups together.

Whilst others have explored the strategic sensemaking role of middle managers (Balogun, 2003; Dutton et al., 1997; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Nonaka, 1988; 1984; Rouleau, 2005), they haven’t explicitly recognized how “performing distributed conversations” and “enrolling networks” are two interconnected micro-practices through which this role is daily accomplished. These two micro-practices allow us to shed light on what are the critical yet
apparently mundane activities middle managers have to accomplish if they are to be able to link to the strategic goals of their organizations in their day-to-day work. More than that, consistent with the second aim of this paper, these practices highlight the way practical knowledge is at play when middle managers are delivering against their strategic sensemaking role.

We demonstrate that when “performing distributed conversations” and “enrolling networks” middle managers rely on semantic and socio-cultural practical knowledge. The way middle managers perform distributed conversations and enroll people in networks cannot be understood without taking into account the knowledge middle managers have of others (for example, their interests, issues and loyalties) and their organizations (for example, the rules, routines, assumptions, and language uniting yet dividing those within). Even though their experience is intuitive, unique and largely contextual, middle managers not only mobilize specific verbal expressions and symbolic representations, they implicitly draw on their deep knowledge of organizational codes and sociocultural rules. When Robert was “playing cards” with his employees, he was using symbolic representation that had meaning in the “mafia” organizational climate in which he was intervening. It was the same for William who organizes his discourse around the profit culture of his organization. To help others make sense of or relate to a new activity, or to sell ideas to top management, middle managers need to talk with words that, and / or link their discourse to verbal representations that, have meaning for others in a way that management / strategy speak typically does not. They need to use verbal representations that reveal more than they
actually say. New managerial demands, such as the new pensions program, have to be symbolically anchored in the internal rules and the way managers position themselves in the social rules in order to create sense and influence others. As such, it is also hard to separate the use of semantic knowledge from sociocultural knowledge. The two are inter-dependent as are the two practices of conversations and networks.

As we say above, Rouleau (2005) also identified these two types of practical knowledge as central to sensemaking activity. Our findings therefore corroborate her findings, but also deepen them by showing more explicit linkages between practices and knowledge. Yet we also tried to be open minded in our analysis to other types of practical knowledge such as sagacious and nonepistle (Castillo, 2002). These certainly seemed to be present. For example, how did any of our middle managers “know” what to do in particular situations? How did they “know”, for example, how to stage things? This would seem to fit with Castillo’s definition of sagacious knowledge. William, for example, was new to Engco, yet seemed to “know” how to do things from his previous experience once he had worked out how to tailor his action to the Engco context. Our data did not give us the opportunity to explore this. This is an area for further research. We need to understand more about the different types of practical knowledge used by middle managers in their strategic sensemaking role, and the extent to which this is context specific versus generalizable and transferable.

Our findings also support others who argue that if we are to understand more about the precarious and unstable strategic sensemaking role of middle
managers we need to pay more attention to the social processes underpinning it (Maitlis, 2005) and specifically the way middle managers interact and talk to others (Westley, 1990). In this sense, our framework extends the microsituational theory of strategic conversations developed by Westley (1990). She argues that strategic conversations are the basic unit for situating routines that make up strategy. They are discrete, observable events which contain all elements of social structure. Moreover, she suggests that all verbal interactions are bounded by a typical conversational content proper to specific coalitions. Her microsituational theory therefore suggests that the skilled middle manager is the one who is able to draw on the conversational content proper to the coalition to which the person who s/he is interacting with belongs, in order to include or exclude this person by energizing him/her or not. By proposing that verbal representations are linked with sociocultural rules, our framework supports and advances one of her fundamental contributions.

Moreover, a strategy-as-practice perspective is interested in developing a better understanding of the skilled practitioner (Whittington, 2003 & 2006; Denis et al., 2007). Skills in general, and social skills in particular, are the apex of the iceberg in terms of practical, tacit knowledge. Our findings show that studying strategic sensemaking in practice is important because it provides an opening towards a better understanding of the skilled strategic practitioner, both at senior and middle manager levels, although our focus is on middle managers. As we argue above, we are concerned with “knowledgeable performance” and “effective action” (Orlikowski, 2002). Our
findings point specifically to the value of investigating “performing distributed conversations” and “enrolling networks”, in order to enable the capture of the “knowledgeable performance” of strategists, and to advance our understanding of “effective action” within this by understanding the performance outcomes. It is important to explore this “third order” of strategic sensemaking because it is the fundamental key to grasping what skilful action is and involves. We need to extend our study out from the implementation of change to other contexts where middle managers play a strategic role to identify if there are other generic micro practices in addition to the two we identify here and extend our exploration of the practical knowledge involved. However, practical knowledge, precisely because it is tacit, is hard to study (Tsoukas, 2005). The study of micro-practices such as “distributed conversations” and “enrolling networks” therefore raises some methodological challenges and suggests the need for the development of new and appropriate ways of gathering data.

One approach is conversation analysis. Samra-Fredericks (2003, 2005) has used this technique to reveal the different skills managers use in micro-conversations when they are strategizing. Her work shows conversational analysis to be a valid way of studying strategists “doing strategy”. However, we are talking here more in terms of distributed and networking conversations. Sensemaking is a collective based process which is socially constructed with people (Allard-Poesi, 2005). Moreover, practical knowledge is tacit and cannot be fully articulated (Tsoukas, 2005). Middle managers’ sensemaking role in practice can only be played out by participating with others in joint action.
Therefore, to know more about how strategic sensemaking is inscribed in practical knowledge needs researchers to capture the micro-practices and activities through which it is performed in daily activities. What we have been able to achieve with the data we have provides us with some pointers as to what these new means are.

Of course, the best way to learn about skills practitioners is certainly to become an “apprentice” as Tsoukas (2005) suggests. However, participant observation and action research are very time consuming. Whilst some observations is likely to be of value to understand performance at its moment of occurrence, as Balogun, Huff and Johnson (2003) argue, we should use methods that can provide more breadth and flexibility while changing the ways we as researchers engage with practitioners. We therefore propose two complementary ways of gathering data on strategic sensemaking in practice in order to better understand how middle managers perform distributed conversations and how they enroll networks: biographical methods and interactive group discussion. Biographical methods such as narratives of practices allow the researcher to gather information on the subjective essence of one person’s work life focusing on individuals who are asked to reflect on their experiences in order to document general processes of change normally related to important period of change (Atkinson, 1998; Smith, 1994). They also allow for more in depth probing of the practical knowledge individuals are drawing on both from their immediate context and their broader experience. Thus biographical methods have the advantage of building up the detail of the individual. Interactive discussion groups refer to all group-based data
collecting methods that could allow the researcher to know more about the values, attitudes and beliefs that managers have, shared and negotiated in real time (Balogun et al, 2003). Their strength lies in the snowball effect as individuals in their storytelling encourage deeper reflection from each other. In terms of tacit knowledge, their potential lies in the possibility of encouraging attendees to “start recursively drawing our attention to how we draw each other’s attention to things” (Tsoukas, 2005: 158).

CONCLUSION

This piece of research has allowed us to advance the body of empirical evidence about the existence of a third order analysis of sensemaking providing a better understanding of how practical knowledge is working when middle managers are trying to make sense of strategic change. In order to develop our framework, we have developed vignettes extracted from previous research on four middles managers. Consistent with other research we are considering managers hierarchically located below the top managers and above the first-level supervision in large bureaucratic organizations as middle managers (Currie, 1999 & 2005; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992, 1994 & 1997; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Guth & McMillan, 1986; Huy, 2002; Schilit, 1987). Yet these vignettes do compare middle managers who are change agents to different degrees, with at one end Robert who was in some ways more a recipient of change and at the other end William who is clearly a change agent. These managers are also involved in two different contexts of change (restructuring in public administration and change in a diversified
multinational). However, since we are looking at sensemaking and practical knowledge, which is in some ways are ubiquitous concepts, the fact that our framework has been derived from different contextual situations supports the relevance of our findings.

The findings do have practical relevance. There are already calls for us to rethink the way we develop the skills based of our middle managers (Balogun, 2003; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1994). The research here emphasizes the importance of socializing middle managers into their context of operation to enable them to “play the game”, but also provides insight into how to appreciate which middle managers are likely to be more effective than others.
REFERENCES


Figure 1: Middle Managers as Strategic Sensemakers

First Order: Role Content
(E.g. Issue Seller, Change Agent)

Second Order: Role Processes
(E.g. Synthesizing information, Detecting new ideas, Unifying individual visions, Helping others through change)

Third Order: Role Practices
(E.g. The communication & action through which middle manager daily experiences are constituted)
The sets of micro-practices involved in strategic change activity

Patterns in the way strategic change activity is actioned & interpreted

The structure of strategic change activity
Figure 2: Strategic Sensemaking in Practice

**Interpretation**

- **Semantic Practical Knowledge**
  - Drawing on Symbolic / Verbal Representations

**Action**

- **Performing Distributed Conversations**

- **Sociocultural Practical Knowledge**
  - Identifying Social / Cultural Systems

- **Enrolling Networks**
### Table 1: Robert

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Performing distributed conversations</th>
<th>Enrolling networks</th>
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<td>A1. “My first managerial experience was with my tenants, sign the contract, come to terms with them. I know, it is not the same but I learned how to negotiate with those people, what words has to be used and when… you need to engage yourself in relationships with respect for each other, I learned it there. For this job now, it is the same. …” Here the climate is difficult, the technicians were generally seen as a “small mafia” … Some people are not fair, you need to accept them, to learn how to recuperate the situation without provoking war, you are always dealing with people…. and you always have to adjust yourself to the situation.”</td>
<td>A3. “For me it (the snowstorm) was an opportunity. They saw that I was competent. They needed a team for producing a special information event in the evening but they cannot find anyone. I said, call this one, tell him this thing and you will see, he will come. It took me half an hour, we had a team. I knew who was living at Montreal, who had such and such technical expertise. (…) Looking at the employees list, I realized that it is almost 95% of personnel that I had managed or been in contact with. I know almost everyone here. I knew who could be more susceptible to be in breakdown and I knew how to speak to people to convince them to help us.”</td>
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<td>A2. “When I came back, one of my main management tool was playing cards. Guys come to see you, you talk with them, you learn to know who they are. After, when they come to ask you something, you know if it is true or not. When you give them something, they know that they owe you something for next time.”</td>
<td>A4. “In the new context of the budgetary cutbacks, we had to make TV shows with what was left and all the communication networks were reduced. Of course, there is the official network, we know that such person is in charge of such thing. But, all of which is not official, the informal networks…the guys who I know I can count on them. When you are in difficulty, calls this one, he will help you. This kind of thing is writing anywhere and when I come back it did not exist anymore. It was very painful.</td>
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<td>A5. There were also some assignment which did not make sense. I had to rebuild all this. I felt a bit discouraged. It is impossible to make good show and giving sense to what we are doing without having those strong personal ties.”</td>
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Table 2: Mary

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<th>Performing distributed conversations</th>
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<td>B1. “Not knowing the technique was not a problem for me. I told to people, it is your business; I am here for reorganizing things. This is my job. I had to make sense of my own position in the division. They knew my reputation; they knew that they can trust me.”</td>
<td>B5. “When I arrived in the technical production division, I knew almost nothing about the techniques. What saved me is the fact that when I was at the shows production I used to come down to see how the shows were made. So, I knew some cameramen and some people from the technical team. So, I could rely on them to support me.”</td>
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<td>B2. “Everything has to be done and it was a big mess. A lot of people just retired, we had lost very experienced people. We had to make a lot of meetings. In the meeting, I prefer to listen and after I go to see people which I think need it. Then, I can find the right words to give the message.”</td>
<td>B6. “I try to involve as many people as I can. Instead of doing all the job myself or with their supervisor, I asked them to work in a team and make their own evaluation. It is an enormous change because they really have to work together.”</td>
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<td>B3. “I was not alone doing all this. I was working with John. We were a really good team. I had the knowledge of how to make a show; I could speak to the guys in their language and he had some experience with the collective bargaining and the way to deal with those “guys”… It was the first time that this division was not run by managers with technical expertise. More than that, I was French, he was English; I was a woman and he was a man. This kind of small things are sometimes more important than you imagine.”</td>
<td>B7. “Now, the guys are working with people from the private sector. It is not so bad because a lot people from the private sector have already worked in Radio-Canada. In fact, Radio-Canada, our way of doing things, is now not only in; it is also outside; it is a big network or if you wish a small world.”</td>
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<td>B4. “A manager, it is “men” that can do everything; someone who is able to communicate, to use the words that they will make people move fast and efficiently”</td>
<td>B8. “Now, I can tell that if I had not some strong ties all over the place, I would have not been able to go through this restructuring. When you are on the technical side of TV production, you support the others. So, you need to know how things are done elsewhere, you need to be able to draw on some strategic people. Otherwise, it seems impossible to me.”</td>
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### Table 3: William

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<td>C1. “There is a way of thinking that is probably consistent, how to do things with the least amount of resources possible. Bottom line, cost focused is probably the cultural identity” and “I think there is a mistrust of anything that is not money, money, money …You have a group of accounting people and a group of engineering people who want very quantitative things. Cash and profit are things you can identify”</td>
<td>C5. “It is almost like herding cats to begin with, to get people together and create some common purpose and some common trust and with a series of meetings we have had .. we have done that as businesses worsen people are a little more focused on the cost control aspect but we don’t want to lose the recruitment nature of the programmes you don’t just want to cut health care completely, you don’t want to do that. So no mandate from the top, but at least now we have interest, we have a little more common purpose, this group in the middle, so we can start putting proposals forward”</td>
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<td>C2. “They have to believe it because they have to sell it, and it is not a pleasant message for them to hear. So we start off by saying we did good last year and made a lot of progress but now things are tougher we need to take another step. I didn't just say we have to save x million, it was more selling than telling, but not sugar coated. Profit is up, earnings down so we have margin issues, it is business reality.”</td>
<td>C6. “having done a lot of traveling last year and meeting a lot of people has helped so I don't have to do so much of that anymore. I can now rely on one part of the network and get them to spread it out. I reinforce it a bit but I don't have to go and communicate to every single person in my network.”</td>
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<td>C3. “I put together the proposal (for inclusion of objectives other than financial performance in senior management rewards) and went to the board meeting and presented .. they almost closed me down before I got to my slide. I said, 'excuse me, if we could just go through the logic before you make a final decision' So we did and a couple of people actually said they agreed. Some still said they didn’t but there was enough support.”</td>
<td>C7. “I guess you try and find out what is in it for them … Try and find out how reluctant they are. Are they reluctant because someone else is? I had this issue in the US with one of the guys who was very bright and capable but very resistant and it turned out that it was his boss who was resistant and not him. So then I had to find ways to appeal to his boss and sell the message as if I was talking to his boss but through him.”</td>
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<td>C4. “I think what I am doing now in benefits and pensions is a lot more connected to the business … because of the implications for the balance sheet. I am in the boardroom a lot more … It is a different role, rather than just reporting on what the stock options were and the bonuses, this is more about how we reduce our risk and liability, what are the cash flow implications, etc.”</td>
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Table 4: Jane

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<td>D1. “It’s a very delicate balance because the divisions within Engco are all powerful, they have all the resource, we have no resource. So a lot of it is about persuasion really, saying to them ‘we are trying to make sure that across the whole of Engco we have a good pipeline of ideas in all of these horizons.”</td>
<td>D5. “The process that I inherited is that we have a network of people out there in the different businesses - all over the world - and they are our local facilitation team, our ambassadors for innovation and learning. They are also the way we collect ideas for new businesses from around Engco, they filter them back to us via a web-based process. These ideas are assessed by various teams, depending on the type of idea”</td>
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<td>D2. “Well there were a number of mechanisms to sort of keep them together … there was the monthly audio conference, and then two or three times a year actual physical get together which also happened to overlap with other meetings … so at night you would have a dinner with everybody … that was a way of basically trying to use the group to develop the process.”</td>
<td>D6. “So those sorts of things speak volumes to people. We had an ‘innovation summit’ last year and invited about 100 people who were involved in the process to come to Cardiff and our CEO turned up and gave a speech and it spread like wildfire around the place. All of a sudden everyone comes back much more energized.”</td>
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<td>D3. “We had other things like newsletters which we would send out to divisional co-ordinators but also to all of our local facilitators to put it on notice boards … so that became more the sort of chatty things, oh by the way, this company here has just had a launch and these people … here are the prizes they have won .. and in between divisional co-ordinators … I would email them, either individually or collectively on a number of different issues and a lot of it was done by phone call and just personal contact … I would go and talk to them.”</td>
<td>D7. “I found that helped enormously (using own personal networks). If I had a problem I’d ring up them, need a bit of help, and from my own personal benefit that has been very supportive.”</td>
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<td>D4. We have had to say, don’t talk to us, talk to each other. Like we organized a roadshow recently, which basically is just five big black cases, it opens up into a big stand, and we have had five of them in different languages and we deliberately have organized it so that it is like a hand me on type of activity, so we sent it to the first location in a given country. Gave everybody who was to receive it a timetable and they were the next person in the chain and said, right, get on with it, use whatever transport links you already have, just do it, and remarkably it has actually worked very well.</td>
<td>D8. “I think what people do say has worked well about the innovation side of things that we have built up a network … and even though we’ve, for several months now we have not really tended to this network, we have not encouraged it much we have just left it alone, we have still had ideas coming forward, people ringing up saying “what is happening”. So it has got a life of its own, mainly by dint of a few, probably no more than a dozen or twenty people who actually enjoy it. They enjoy doing this, they get some sort of kick or buzz out of it. They don’t want to be paid for doing it, or measured for doing it, they just enjoy it.”</td>
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