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Does the autonomy of entrepreneurial teams' members  
contribute to develop a new decision-making process?

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## **Does the autonomy of entrepreneurial teams' members contribute to develop a new decision-making process?**

### **Abstract:**

Despite popular legends about individual entrepreneurs, the creation and successful management of new ventures in term of decision making process, strategies and leadership are often a team effort, shared among the members. Indeed, entrepreneurial teams are becoming one of the more popular modes of new venture development. However, even if there the work on entrepreneurial teams is increased, there is a lack of integration concerning the autonomy within these kind teams. This paper presents a field study of autonomy of the entrepreneurial teams members and its role in the decision making process and identifies the importance of the leadership with these approaches. We then developed a longitudinal case study of an entrepreneurial team composed by four members. It focuses on the shared leadership method used to make strategic decisions. The result highlights the fact that autonomy can provide a solution facilitating the management of teams. This innovative practice empowers members by giving them greater flexibility and by involving them in decision-making process. The degree of the members' autonomy and the kind of responsibilities entrusted to the team members seem to evolve according to their professional maturity. Thus, the autonomy of the team members follows a process parallel to the evolutionary development of the members' professional maturity and growth of the organization.

## **Introduction**

Entrepreneurship is a field of research that attracts academics and practitioners over the last thirty decades. This trend is motivated by the desire to meet the needs of small and medium enterprises (SME) which represent the majority of the economic structure.

Entrepreneurs are facing a need of responsiveness and speed of acting to be able to manage environmental risks. Their new awareness of risk can lead them to adopt a new management practice based on a greater autonomy of work granted to colleagues and also subordinates. This choice implies a double reflection. The first one concerns work distribution and coordination methods and the second deals with the processes of decision making and the control systems to adapt in order to ensure results.

Entrepreneurial studies on SMEs are traditionally based on the assumption that this activity is initiated by one person: “a single owner-manager”, to whom researchers attribute the status of “entrepreneur”. This is due to a dominant point of view on management science, and particularly in entrepreneurship, that considers the SMEs as a simple structure led by one leader (Mintzberg, 1979, 1996). So, the concept of “entrepreneurial team” has been neglected for a long time.

However, various studies have shown that the team is responsible is a source of a significant number of new ventures creation. They also established a strong relationship between the success of the new ventures and the entrepreneurial team (Kamm et al., 1990). Researchers like Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1990) emphasize on the quality of the team considered as an important determinant of the success of organizations. Cooper and Bruno (1977, have even asserted that the companies created and managed by teams are more successful than the companies created and managed by only one entrepreneur.

The entrepreneur defined by Schumpeter as an “agent of innovation and change” has a strategic responsibility in the process of adopting managerial innovations. From this point of view, it would be interesting to do an in depth study on the concept of “entrepreneurial team” through the exploration of decision making autonomy.

In fact, several researchers (Everaere 1999; Veltz and Zarifian, 1992, Perrenoud, 2000) revealed the autonomy as a solution to benefit of responsiveness by involving other members

of the organization on the decision-making process. However, this autonomy is even more difficult to manage in a collective context of work; it creates problems of coordination and information sharing.

According to the basic definition of a teamwork as a group of people in complementary skills and personalities who share the same goal; we propose in this paper to experience the degree of autonomy enjoyed by each member.

Thus, this paper will be structured around three main parts:

1. A demonstration of the relevance of autonomy as a managerial practice within a working group
2. A theoretical description of decision-making processes in entrepreneurial teams
3. An empirical study to identify the various decision-making processes and assess the degree of autonomy involved.

## **1 The value of autonomy in managing organizations**

The concept of autonomy as part of the field of managerial innovations attempts to legitimize its use by managers to overcome traditional centralized management, inappropriate to the needs of decision speed and effectiveness that organizations are facing

### **1.1 Definitions**

The concept of autonomy is linked to the field of the new organizations design (Desreumaux, 1992) and managerial innovations (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999). It is even connected to the whole society (Castoriadis, 1975).

The word “autonomy” is derived from two Greek words: *auto*, which means “self” and *nomos*, which means “law”, the first meaning of autonomy would be to give its own laws to act. This first definition establishes a link with the concepts of freedom and independence.

However, it is hard for this form of individual freedom to be legitimated in the business field because the rules are set and procedures must be implemented carefully. For Miller and Rice (1967) autonomy is achieved when the individual develops a mature behaviour while dealing between his own inner world and the realities of the external environment. The autonomy is therefore a dynamic process.

Chatzis (1999) defined autonomy at work as the ability of a person to determine the rules of action to which he has to obey. The autonomy of a person becomes concrete thanks to its ability to manage its own processes of action (Maggi, 1993).

According to Terssac (1992) the action of putting more autonomy on a work process remains always partial and it needs to be supervised and monitored.

These definitions present autonomy as a complex multiform concept. What about managing this concept inside a collective group of work?

## **1.2 Autonomy for team management**

Autonomy in work is rarely absolute. It is often restrained by more or less flexible constraints (Courpasson, 2000) and by the demands of productivity and performance. It is never giving with a disinterested reason. Because the autonomy of action given to some employees has always implicit expectations that managers would like to see happen (Terssac, 1992).

### **1.2.1 A rational process**

According to Kant (1994), autonomy is the ability to act in accordance with the rules generally applicable to the whole group, which requires an implicit respect of codes and values of the other members. This implies a large responsibility on the person who will decide.

This side of autonomy concerns particularly the decision making process and the team management. In fact there is an effort done by each member to take into account both of the personal opinion of the group's opinion. However, the logic and reasoning of the individual is never *pure*, which leads us to talk about relativity of "human reason" which can be dangerous if it is unique and never criticized.

### **1.2.2 A political dimension**

Having autonomy means the power to self-organize and to self-run the work activity with certain rules and to respect certain limits. This gives the individual "superiority" both in his group and in other groups. The political dimension of his role as a leader, symbolizes its sovereignty within the community. This aspect is noticed in companies where "leaders" who are the chief decision-makers have a central role within their team and even with other

employees. Their desire to preserve this position leads them to centralize strategic decision making.

### **1.2.3 A regulation process**

The autonomous individual is the one that determines the rules, not according to his only reasoning, but by combining it with the arguments of people whose opinions and trends agree with him. This dimension of autonomy has an ambivalent aspect. In fact, each member of the group tries to combine a desire for independence with a “desire of membership”.

However, each member tries to go beyond this paradox through an effort to adapt and integrate other members’ points of view. In a team of work, autonomy is reflected as a regulatory process aiming to find an agreement among the members. But this agreement related to a particular situation is temporary and will therefore be discussed again regularly.

### **1.3 Which impact on the process of decision-making? A need of coordinating efforts**

In a similar situation, there is a plurality of views associated with different actors’ objectives (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). This plurality of visions and logics of acting raises the problem of activities coordination and the maintaining of a global coherence into the organization.

In fact, Mintzberg (1982) states that all human activities generate two fundamental and contradictory needs:

- The division of work into various tasks and roles
- The coordination of these tasks and roles.

Therefore, it is important that decision makers in various work units, act in accordance with the global vision and objectives of the company. That aims to favour a local and independent action oriented to a search of performance and 'efficiency in a more global level.

The difficulty of coordinating among actors in the company or between members of a team and to reconcile the different interests drives us to think about the issue of control (Garden, 2002). This reinforces the constraint of positive results for members.



Adopting a new management model based on a greater autonomy of action granted to employees is not an easy task for entrepreneurs and team managers, because the success of this mission depends on the combination of both individual components, inter-organizational relationships and the establishment of a number of preconditions.

#### **1.4 Prerequisites for autonomy**

As with any change, the adoption of new working practices based on a higher degree of autonomy requires the implementation of a number of prerequisites that are used to better prepare the ground and to reduce the resistances.

Several authors agree that one of the first prerequisites for the granting of autonomy is *competence*. In fact, competence is a favourable factor for the achievement of performance (Mounier, 1999) which must be combined with capabilities for cooperation with other team members. The author Le Boterf (1994, 1998) links the development of professional skills to the processes of psychological development of work autonomy through the building of self-esteem.

In addition of having a recognized competence, the members of a team must share the responsibility. To do this, they have to work independently with the others while being responsible of their own decisions and sharing the collected information.

Therefore, it is important for a team to establish a relationship based on trust to have a more transparent management. The transparency of information collected and shared contributes to the strength of the team and establishes the solidarity among members.

Autonomy is most often described as an ability to act (Bercot, 1999). That catches up with the view of Arendt (1961) for whom "to act in the most general sense means taking an initiative, undertake, and set in movement". Autonomy is an inherent characteristic for entrepreneurs and for the functioning of entrepreneurial teams.

In the following part, we will provide further details on the management of these teams, and the particularities of the internal process of decision-making.

## **2. The Decision Making Process Of The Entrepreneurial Teams**

The SMEs have a key role in the economy of the modern market. Their success is largely dependent on the strategic decisions taken by the entrepreneur (Robinson and Pearce, 1983). However, few researchers have focused on the decision making process in the field of entrepreneurship.

Hernandez and Marco (2006) deal with the entrepreneur and the decision and try to link the entrepreneurial approaches with the theory of decision. The authors compare the work of the entrepreneur to the manager who "leads to make crucial decisions "(Hernandez and Marco, 2006, p.7). Their research has shown that the relationship between entrepreneurship and decision is a forgotten dimension of the entrepreneurial research. Although, the logic of the Hernandez and Marco's book is interesting but it limits the scope of the decision to act the act of creation.

The solo entrepreneur is still considered as the main character of the organization decision. Verstraete and Saporta state that: "by error, entrepreneurial team is often assimilated to the entrepreneur and his family, employees and subordinates. Even if they are strongly involved in the development of the new venture, they cannot be confused with the entrepreneurs, with whom they don't share out the decision-making power (...) the entrepreneurial team concept refers to individuals joining together to undertake" (Saporta and Verstraete, 2006: 426). Indeed, the concept of "collaborative configuration" which is two or more people who formally establish a new venture in which they share ownership and / or develop an organization is little studied in the francophone literature.

Before illustrating our discussion with an empirical study, we present in the following subsection a review of the entrepreneurial team concept.

### **1.2. Entrepreneurial Teams: Definition and Attributes**

Kamm and Nurick (1993) define entrepreneurial team as two or more people who formally establish a new venture in which they share ownership. Cohen and Bailey (1997) add the fact that members share interdependent tasks and are seen by themselves and other as a social unit. Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven's (1990) include the fact of holding full time executive positions

at the time of founding. Francis and Sandberg (2000) consider that the entrepreneurial team members have to join the new venture during the first two years of creation.

These authors didn't consider the phenomenon of entry within the team. This point was emphasized by Naffakhi (2008) which states that when a person joined the organization years after the creation, and provides the skills needed for the organization growth, it can also be seen as part of the entrepreneurial team.

An entrepreneurial team can be defined as a dynamic entity composed by two or more persons (founders or integrated) complementary to both professionally and personally. Together they take the risk of creating, developing or retake an organization around a same vision and values. Team members participate actively in the development of the organization throughout its evolution (Naffakhi, 2008: 302).

The question that arises from the precedent literature is related to the autonomy of the entrepreneurial team members and can be formulated as follows: Does the entrepreneurial team is a place where work is carried out independently? To answer this question, we would study the decision making process of the entrepreneurial teams to identify the place given to the autonomy within the teams members.

## **2. The Collective Decisions specificities**

Too often, researchers have proposed models of decision making process but they didn't specify whether it's an individual or collective process.

### **2.2.1. Decision individual versus collective decision**

From an ideological view, individual decision-making comes from the cognitive psychology, while the collective decision-making comes from the social psychology as it is the result of the interpersonal interaction (Brassac and Fixmer, 2004). Based on these authors, collective decisions are made in a flow of activities performed by individuals, but in an "intersubjective" and "intragroupal" frame.

The decision is a collective construction of the team guided by its dynamics. It is a situation where several actors interfere together to fulfil a goal that requires a design process within the meaning of creation, production and modelling of ideas (Brassac and Fixmer, 2004). The

decision making is a participatory process in which several individuals act collectively, analyze problems or situations, examine and evaluate the various plans actions, and choose among, the alternatives or the solution(s).

Different strategies of collective decision are possible, including, the team can choose the best one suited to their situation. For example, Anzieu and Martin (1973) offer five strategies to make a decision: the consensus, the majority vote, the delegation, or the nominal expert group. These different strategies adopt different leadership styles. The literature highlights in particular two styles that we would present in the following.

## **222. Leadership styles adopted by the management teams during the decision making process**

Recent studies are interested in the leadership style as a strategy for the decision in the management and entrepreneurial teams. Yukle (1998: 3) defines leadership as "influencing others in group or organization". A number of researchers have linked leadership style to the effectiveness of the strategic decision-making and the business performance (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Korsgaard, Schweiger and Sapienza, 1995).

In literature, two styles of leadership were identified: the vertical leadership and the shared leadership.

### **- The vertical leadership approach**

Many works (Yukle, 1998) were interested in the concept of vertical leadership. This style of leadership represents the traditional practices exercised in the authoritarian structure. In this scenario, the leader manages all activities of the team, collect feedback, and attribute the rewards. Vertical leadership is defined as "the responsible behaviour designated by the team leader" (Pearce, 1999).

The leader's main responsibility is to determine the missing functions to do them or to make them do by others. The focus was mainly on the influence of leadership represented by a single person on the effectiveness of teams.

With this approach, only the team leader has the absolute autonomy. The remaining members do not have leeway to decide and to act and must inform the team leader for any decision even the smallest one. For Ensley et al. (2002), the reasons that lead some researchers to conclude that leadership is not particularly important (Meindl and Erlich, 1987), stem from the fact that studies were too preoccupied with the role of the individual and excluded the collective dimension inherent in any team.

Unlike the vertical approach of leadership, shared leadership approach involves all team members by giving them a high degree of autonomy (Naffakhi, 2008).

#### - **Shared leadership approach**

The shared leadership also called collective leadership is determined primarily in terms of individual skills, abilities, behaviours and attributes of the leader, which may directly affect the team dynamics and effectiveness. Shared leadership is a process that involves all team members (Barry, 1991, Pearce 1999).

With this style of leadership, the team participates fully in the activities and tasks of leadership that Katzenbach (1997) considered essential to the effective functioning of the team. Research suggests that when the leadership comes at the team level, it is more effective (Barry, 1991; Katzenbach and Smith 1993, Pearce 1999). With shared leadership, teams have greater collaboration, coordination, cooperation and innovation and are better able to interpret the needs of the team.

Recent results showed that the entrepreneurial team presents a relevant case study of the leadership (Ensley and Pearce, 2000). Indeed, the work of Pearce (1999) and Ensley and Pearce (2000) suggest that leadership is a key prediction of the effectiveness of the team.

The leadership of the entrepreneurial team is essential in achieving the strategic choices, in the interaction and the communication between members and in the strategic decision making process (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). O'Connor and Quinn support this idea: "When leadership is viewed as a property of whole systems, as opposed to solely the property of individuals, effectiveness in leadership becomes more a product of those connections or relationships among the parts than the result of any one part of that system (such as the leader)" (2004: 423).

As stated earlier, have the autonomy does not match the fact to act alone and without constraints but rather to be able to integrate the constraints and done with them. Moreover, in a team, collective work focuses on the interdependence between the members. They have to respect a certain number of rules and abandon a certain degree of autonomy: “Working together to achieve common goal, means relinquishing a certain degree of freedom accepting a common tactic, a coordination of effort and discipline”

To identify the managerial practices of the entrepreneurial teams to assess the degree of the members’ autonomy in decision-making process, we propose a qualitative and longitudinal study of the decision-making process.

### **3 Principles and organization of the empirical study**

The principal issue of this study comes to understand how an entrepreneurial team would tie the leadership in decision making process and to what degree the team members can be autonomous. To find out this issue, an empirical study has been established.

#### **3.1. The methodology and data collection description**

The study is carried out as an empirical longitudinal study in order to be able to assess degree of the entrepreneurial teams members autonomy in the decision making process. Indeed, the nature of the studied concepts and complexity of their combination, direct us towards a qualitative study. The problems of this research are emergent and the studies on autonomy within the entrepreneurial teams are not very developed yet. Exploration seems the most adequate approach to undertake empirical research. A qualitative methodology thus allows identifying the intensity of the autonomy use in a team work based on the co-operation and the interdependence.

To determine the complexity of operation within the teams and the interactions between the entrepreneurial teams’ members, we adopted the method of the cases and we choose to collect data by interviews. Yin (1990: 23), define the case study as “an empirical investigation which studies a contemporary phenomenon in a context of real life, where the limits between the phenomenon and the context are not definitely obvious, and in which multiple information sources are used”. The method of case study consists to bring back a real situation taken in its context and to analyze it to see how appear and evolve the phenomena in which the researcher is interested (Mucchielli, 1996).

A case study has the advantage of taking into account at the same time a static description of an unspecified situation and the evolution of the research object (Hlady Rispal, 2002). Thanks to a longitudinal study that last two years (from March 2006 to March 2008), we could continue this step. Thus, our research is based on a single and longitudinal case study with an aim of seizing the evolutions of the processes and the behaviours in a long term.

### **3.2. Presentation of the case study and the data collection**

AP is a medium company situated at Lorraine in France. The company is specialized in manufacture of the covers for robots in the corrosive conditions. It was created in 1988 by two associated. The entrepreneurial team developed with the wire of time and at the time of the study, we attended the integration of the fourth member and transferee Mr. AP-FG. The profiles of the team members are heterogeneous but complementary.

**Table 1- Entrepreneurial team members' profile**

	<b>Associated AP-AR</b>	<b>Associated AP-DK</b>	<b>Associated AP-PP</b>	<b>Associated AP- FG</b>
<b>Age</b>	56	58	42	35
<b>Gender</b>	M	M	M	M
<b>Education background</b>	BTS Building	Bachelor on literature + Training on marketing	Bachelor on mechanics construction + BTS maintenance	Bachelor technique + BTS computer integrated manufacturing
<b>Continuing training</b>	Formation sur la piqueuse + English langage training + training on management (2 days per year)	Accounting training every year	(after 7 work years) Technical-commercial engineering diploma	-
<b>Experience background</b>	8 years experience in public works + New venture creation in a manufacture field (5 years)	Banker (13 years)	Automobile manufacture (7 years) : Panels workshop + Product Unit + Methods et product means	5 years experience ( stocks computerization + blacksmith &press control + team leader) + Responsible for R&D team at AP since 2000
<b>Function within the team</b>	CEO	Administrative Vice-president	Commercial Vice-president	R&D Vice-president
<b>Initiator of the project idea</b>	Yes	No	No	No
<b>Carrier of the project</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No



To approach the members of the entrepreneurial team and to explore their manner of working together, the qualitative data were collected mainly by interviews and non participating observation (we assisted to some work meetings in which the members of the entrepreneurial team and the chiefs of the different units took part).

The interviews are completely *retranscribed* and analysed. The coding and the themes analysis of the *retranscribed* interviews are assisted by the software of textual analysis Nvivo7 which helped us to strip the data and to code them thanks to categories inspired by the literature review and the observation of the team work.

#### **4 Results of the empirical study**

The entrepreneurial team adopts a flexible organization which changes according to the organization growth needs. The assignment of the tasks takes place naturally according to the competences and the affinities of each team member.

At the creation phase, the majority of people interviewed evoke the versatility in spite of their professional complementarity. Nevertheless, for some tasks which require specific knowledge, the distribution is organized naturally according to knowledge of each member. This distribution is accentuated with time and becomes more transparent with the development of the size of the organization.

##### **4.1. Results related to the firm growth**

We could identify three successive phases in the process of decision making strategy of the studied team.

###### **4.1. 1. Phase of formation of the team and the organization**

During the new venture creation phase, Mr AP-AR, the founder and the carrier of the project idea is an experimented entrepreneur. His experience allowed him to carry out the project alone for one year. Meanwhile, the second associated AP-DK was still working in a bank; he joined the company only when AP-AR received an important order which allowed the solvency of the company.

During this phase, the associated agreed on the distribution of the responsibilities and the leadership tasks according to the competences of each member, their experience background and their personal motivation. However, when the work is accentuated the associates become polyvalent and work together on the same task in order to satisfy their customers.

The formation of the team follows certain rules to ensure some of its strength and the success of its business. Among these conditions, we include the complementarities of skills and profiles of members.

During the phase of constitution of the team, some organizational and management rules have been fixed to avoid the dysfunctions which can emerge from a lack of coordination and miscommunication between the team members. In fact, during this stage, the team members are in a phase of integration and knowledge of the other. A leader could emerge from the team members at that time: *“It is necessary to avoid anarchistic structure; the team must have an overall coherence”* (AP-PP).

Thus, AP-AR was indicated like the leader of the team and the final decision maker in case of no consensus: *“concerning the decision making, I would say that I have the decisional capacity, if there is an agreement, it’s ok but if at the end we need to slice, if there is a choice to make, I’m the one who takes the risk of the final decision”* (AP-AR).

Based on the mutual trust that plays a moderator role among members and minimize the conflicts, the distribution of power within the team depend on the skills and the previous expression of the team members: *“I have great confidence in him because he knows the industry better than me so we can say that I always had a blind trust on the decisions he took”* (AP-DK).

#### **4.1.1. Development phase of the team and of the organization**

The company AP has experienced a significant and intense period of development. With the growing demands of customers, the members of the entrepreneurial team were forced to work together with polyvalency in order to deliver orders on time. Following this wave of growth, the top management team felt the need to hire workers.

The expanding of the company size pushes the entrepreneurial team members to delegate some tasks and to have more managerial responsibilities. Accordingly, the team members were gradually removed from production tasks to deal with strategic decisions: *"We were two at the starting, today we are 40 so it is completely different at management level... people were really polyvalent. The more organization extends the more the tasks become restricted, Functions have been restructured"*(AP-DK).

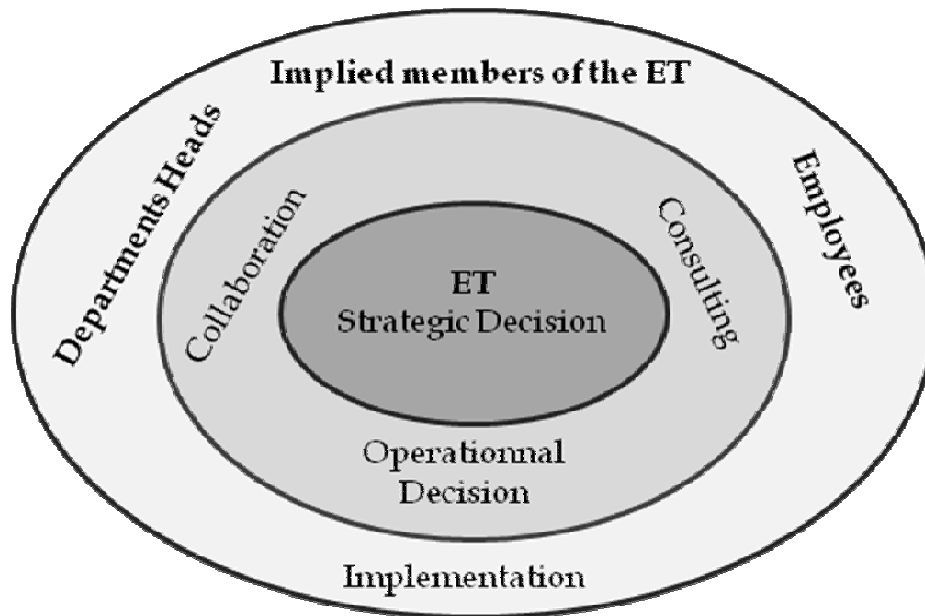
During this phase, the two partners have included a third partner to extend the activities outside the borders. This strategic decision led to reorganization of work within the team: *"When the activities of the company have been extended, many tasks had to be delegated...it was the best way for the competitiveness of our company, we could not continue to do all the tasks we used to do... "The most slowly to take are those related to "the passing of the torch", the more the company extends the most decision-making have to be delegated... it's not easy to delegate, I feel like I remove a part of me..."*(AP-AR).

Thus, more autonomy in decision making is given to different services, but also within the entrepreneurial team: *"Before when we were only two we exchanged a lot. The extension of the venture activities led us to change some routines...Yes; there is more independence and autonomy by service"*(AP-DK).

However, when the size of the team grows, some problems of communication and information exchange occur. We need a real information system running smoothly to deliver data on time to the members concerned: *"Concerning information when we were a small team we were well-informed about what's happening, communication was going instantaneous and continuous. Today it is much more fragmented and communication has become something important "*(AP-DK).

This change was not easy for the entrepreneurial team, because dialogue and exchange is a source of enrichment they especially allow to explore several scenarios arising from diverse reasoning: *"It's important to discuss several points of view because it is difficult to make decisions on their own if we do not have references and critical it is not obvious" (AP-DK).*

1The involvement of human capital of the organization in making strategic decision  
Source: Naffakhi (2008: 351)



### 3.2 Transmission phase of the team and the organization

The founders of the company decided ten years before retirement to start the transmission process. They decide to transmit their company to the third partner and an employee of the firm. The phase of integration of the new partner and the future owner has been characterised by a transition and a restructuring period within the team.

The choice of the new member is a strategic decision which aimed to incorporate new skills needed by the organization, and to prepare the transmission of the organization:

In addition to skills, the partner has been chosen because of his personal characteristics that help him to integrate easily the team. Indeed, it is not enough to be brilliant. Mainly, a good partner has to know how to deal with others. Because the personalities incompatibility can be a source of disagreements and even deadlock: *"You can have people who are very talented and have a personality that makes relations difficult, partners have to respect the ideas, knowledge and competences of the others and know how to manage their employee"*(AP-AR).

The increase of the size of the team explains the evolution of the decision process. As the size grows, there is a need to delegate and involve others.

However, to break the stalemate in case of complex situations, members are resigned to accept that the leader will be the only decision maker to act quickly even if there is an effort of the negotiation to reach an agreement: *"Yes there are always negotiations but we are forced to leave power to a single person" (AP-DK).*

Thus, the main leaders of the team are the creator of the firm Mr. AP-AR and the responsible of trade department Mr. AP-PP because of his experience, profile and importance of the service given to the company: *"Well, I am aware and active but for me it's still AP-AR the leader with AP-PP but there is a dialogue when there are big decisions, there is a consultation so far we always agree, there were no worries" (AP-FG).*

The ultimate goal of the leader is not to monopolize decision-making but to prepare the team to have more autonomy because authoritarianism is not always effective and prescription takes time and it is costly to the organization: *"We must not return to dictatorship, well it may works on a small group (AP-CP).*

#### **4. 2. Relationship between skills and autonomy**

Having a mastery of his work with a high level of competence allows any team member to be an expert or a specialist in his field. This expertise recognized by other members allows him a greater degree of autonomy to make decisions: *"We are very autonomous in a service and even if think bout it together, the final decision depends on the top manager of department" (AP-DK).*

Through the speeches of the members interviewed, we were able to identify the coexistence of different decision-making processes within the team. Choosing a process compared to another one depends on the nature of the decision, the issues and the competence useful to find a solution: *"Decisions are all mentioned in the same time, there are subjects where each one of us has a strong autonomy recognized, which means that from today it is "you" who are doing it. And there are other decisions taken together. At a certain point the leader must bring to a*

*sudden end and when opinions are different. The hierarchy asks the founder to be the judge, and in this kind of situation, he is forced to decide” (AP-CP).*

However, with the company growth, daily decisions become taken in an individual way by each service responsible: *“There are areas where each of us has a strong autonomy that means that from today you are the one to cope with such decisions but there are other ones to take together” (AP -PP).*

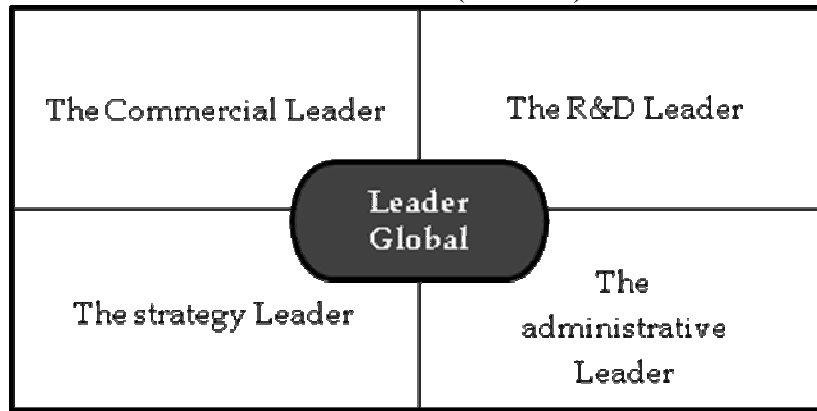
Contrariwise, strategic decisions are done collectively, but with a collegiate trend according to the skills of each member and to the nature of the decision: *“To prepare a decision, each one has his specific competencies, and the people involved are responsible of bringing the information and necessary arguments so it's not a collegial decision neither a collective one. It is between the two ”(AP-AR).*

#### **4.3. Synthesis of the study**

The entrepreneurial team of AP has four leaders each one with its specific competence and expertise. AP-PP is the trade leader who deals with marketing the product AP. AP-FG is the leader of engineering design and method that handles the “method office” and the design of new products. AP-AR is the leader in strategy; he is the CEO and president of the company. Members refer to him in case of problems or strategic consultation. AP-DK is the leader in administrative management and covers everything related to the personnel management and monitoring of accounts.

To be reactive and have good results, team members must have a capacity to act even if others do not agree totally. That assumes a great responsibility from them and a great experience. Team members are aware of the importance of participating in decision-making. Because it minimizes the risk of failure by taking into account multiple opinions.

**2Diagraph of the Entrepreneurial teams' Leadership**  
 Source: Naffakhi (2008: 331)



To conclude, the various analyses reveal the use of a progressive leadership that adapts to the development of the organization. Thus one moves from a vertical leadership that leaves little autonomy to the remaining team members to take individual decisions, to shared leadership where the leader's role is to make decisions involving the members in discussion, to assign tasks and to delimit responsibilities. The following table presents a summary of the different phases of this transit, illustrating each time the role played by the team leader, the specific decision process and the degree of autonomy granted to other members.

**Table 2. The different phases of the process**

The different phases of the process	Period	The role of leader	Description of decision process	The level of autonomy granted to team members
<b>New venture creation phase</b>	1988 1991	A central role in managing the team and in taking the decisions that affect them, which tends to inhibit some team members	Centralized at the level of team leader	A minimal degree because the Decision-making is still centralized. Members follow the directives of the leader
<b>Development phase</b>	1992 2002	A Significant role but less intense, that frees part of the members initiatives	The leader always takes the final decisions but during the process he consults more often other members	A greater degree than in the previous phase, team members begin to find their place and to

			to get their opinions each one in his specific area	participate more actively in decisions, they gain confidence and independence
<b>Maturity and preparation for transmission phase</b>	2003 2008	A role of coordination, communication but he is always the one to take final decision in case of disagreement between members	The outbreak of a central and unique in decision-making process in several small processes where each member takes his responsibility for finding solutions each one in his area but with ensuring a global coherence	Members are very autonomous each one in his field of activity. They have a great autonomy to decide and to act alone for the routine decisions

### Conclusion

The process of decision-making within a community is revealed to be a complex activity. As it is an effort of reconciling the often contradictory objectives, namely, to decide quickly and efficiently while taking into account as possible the opinions of team members. Autonomy can provide a solution facilitating the management of teams. This management practice empowers members by giving them greater flexibility and involving them in decision-making process. First this allows saving time and a greater reactivity while offering them the opportunity to express their creativity and intuition. The degree of autonomy of the members and types of responsibilities entrusted to them, seem to evolve according to their professional maturity. Thus, the autonomy of team members follows an evolutionary parallel process to the development of the members' professional maturity and growth of the organization

As part of an evolving system, the growing autonomy over time depends not only on skills but also the complementary personalities. Indeed, the compatibility of personalities is an important criterion of choice. The team is aware of the importance of this variable, so he tried to choose the people with whom they have an affinity to integrate the team. Thus, beyond the competence and expertise, other dimensions can play a role to enhance the performance of a team but are often the most difficult to manage such as the relational dimension and the harmonization between different personalities.



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