

Preface

Saint-Gobain since several years has launched a program of World Class Operations Management, which is the application of Continuous Improvement principles to our industrial organization.

As all large companies, Saint-Gobain has to adapt itself to the new world created by globalization.

Consider the long heritage that Saint-Gobain has: it was established in France in 1665, 350 years ago, as *Manufacture royale de glaces de miroirs*, by Louis XIV. In 1684, Saint-Gobain won the order to create the mirrors that still adorn the Hall of Mirrors in the Royal Palace of Versailles, in the South of Paris. Since then innovation has been the core business and the group, in the different historical phases of its life, has always been leveraging to reinvent and adapt the business model to be at the cutting edge.

The globalization process we have gone through the last 15 years has meant mainly three challenges:

- a wider strategic field, leading to an increasing size of the Company, offering more opportunities for development;
- consequently more complexity in the Organization;
- more competition as well.

To take these three challenges, WCOM™ appeared as the most appropriate approach, because

- it creates results,
- it builds a common industrial culture, ensuring a factor of cohesion between persons working for the same company, but in different businesses, countries,
- it develops, through the common culture, the strategic flexibility and reactivity of the company,
- and most important, it empowers the people at the shop floor level and develops their autonomy to adapt and improve permanently the organization.

In the meantime the art of management has changed. It is not anymore the time when the managers tried to instill their thoughts in the operators pretending they execute. It is more the moment to create, in all decentralized organizations, the best conditions for success. The need for speed and for simple pragmatic solutions to operational problems makes it mandatory to empower the shop floor and make it proactive and autonomous (in problem solving).

In our world, the large Company cannot be managed by a few persons: problems have to be dealt and fixed where they happen, through a large number of empowered employees.

Of course, strategy imports, investments import, innovation imports, but the motivation and the knowledge of all the people is key. And what better way to motivate than to give more responsibilities, more influence on their work and performance, to all the operators?

We consider that, together with innovation and expansion to new markets, WCOM represents the third pillar of our growth journey. We are now extending the approach to the whole value chain, because we consider that, beyond the results already achieved, more is yet to come.

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WCOM (World Class Operations Management)

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