

REGIONAL REPORT – FRANCE



Politics, Projects and Programs

Managing a project: winning the presidential election

By Thibaut Goupil

Out of any political conviction, we can say the winner at a political election is a good project manager. Even the opposition agree: Nicolas Sarkozy proved his leadership capacities (among the necessary **soft skills** to manage successfully a project) within the different ministries he had led, and also within his party which he renowned to make it an instrument of victory, but he was also more prepared for the election project than his competitors. When did this project started? Everyone has his own idea of the precise day his campaign began, but everyone agrees it was a long time ago.

According to *Le Nouvel Observateur* (#2218), a weekly journal who supported the socialist candidate during the election, Nicolas Sarkozy also succeeded in this election thanks to his intuitions and his experience. He is a man who knows to draw the lessons from past failures. Indeed, he has aggregated during many years all the '**lessons learned**' he thought one day would help him (personal notes on humanity, on daily life, on what is working or not, breaking news...) and has kept them in a little closet in his office of the Ministry of Interior. "We all swore to ourselves someday to write what is not working, what we could improve. Most of the time, we forget" he said many years ago. Not him, he has kept everything. The best example of **knowledge management**, isn't it? On the contrary the Socialists are today blaming the First Secretary of the party, François Hollande, to have avoided drawing the consequences from the 2002 disaster (when the Socialists did not pass the first round of the presidential election).

The lefts side candidate Ségolène Royal also suffered from a lack of **prioritization** inside the her *Presidential Pact's* projects portfolio: a misalignment between the **program benefits** expected by the Socialist Party, and those expected by its candidate, Ségolène Royal herself. When she was elected by her party as the official candidate to aspire after France Presidency, the Sarkozy had already spent several months (years?) in his own campaign. His

program was already at that time in a set-up phase prepared by François Fillon, now Prime Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy and their collaborators. The essential of his program was actually described in Sarkozy's book *Libre*, published in 2001, and in Fillon's one *La France peut Supporter la vérité* (France can support the truth). These both books were in fact the drafts of the presidential election **project management plan** of the right side candidate and they were available to his competitors.

On 6 May 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy has been elected as the sixth President of the fifth Republic. A new gate is passed; this is the launch of a five-year presidential program execution period.

Managing a programme: presiding France

He has been elected by a part of France against another part, opposing honest people to the "racaille" (a term he employed when he was a Minister to designate hooligans), and if this strategy was good to win, it will not allow him to lead the country. He now has to be the president of these two parts of France. This is probably part of the reasons which made him open the government to the Left side and the Centre - the other reasons being more political, the Socialists and the centre party being now almost extinct – and it allowed him to win a second project: legislative elections were won.

Having proven that he is an excellent project manager with the victory of several elections he now has to become a program manager. As **France's program manager**, he will have to achieve many different and sometimes antagonist benefits, and to deal with all stakeholders expectations.

If in five years France is back in the average world powers through its economy and in the greatest powers thanks to its diplomacy, his program will be a success. Indeed, even if he has been elected to fight the unemployment and to secure some suburbs, those conceited French expect also him to represent freedom, independence and human rights like long ago Voltaire, Hugo or De Gaulle.

These weeks, some of the big French companies from energy industry are everyday quoted in the breaking news for their good health: Total established a partnership with Gazprom for Chtokman giant gas field exploitation, several small and medium projects were recently attributed to Technip which is still expecting big projects for the end of the year and the beginning of 2008, and Areva should sign in the coming days an important agreement with China for the sales of two nuclear reactors. **Will Nicolas Sarkozy be able to maintain this wave and allow French companies to manage more and more interesting projects and programs?**

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