

MANAGEMENT FOCUS

Culture and Career Advancement in Europe: Promoting Team Players vs Fast Trackers

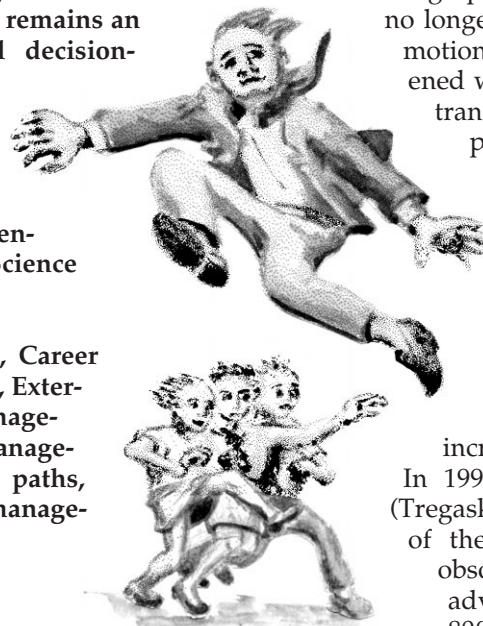
MICHAEL SEGALLA, *Groupe HEC, Paris*
DOMINIQUE ROUZIÈS, *Groupe HEC, Paris*
MARJA FLORY, *Erasmus University, Rotterdam*

This paper reports the results of a study of the cultural influences on career systems and job promotion. The authors report the conclusions reached during the first phase of a large European study on managerial decision-making. Nearly 300 managers participated in this phase, which surveyed 25 firms from the financial sectors of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Models built upon Sonnenfeld and Peiperl's¹¹ career typology and on Derr¹² and Evans et al.¹³ cultural career maps are examined. The results of this study indicate that nationality is a good determinant of the choice of internal or external promotion systems. It also finds that individual self-interest remains an important factor in managerial decision-making. The authors conclude that human resource programs designed to standardise career management policy across Europe may fail because of intentional and unintentional barriers. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved

Keywords: Cross-cultural values, Career management, Internal promotion, External promotion, International management, International career management, Cross-employer career paths, International human resource management

Competitive Markets and Competitive Promotion

When the Maastricht Treaty was signed and the integration of the EU became more reality than dream the careers of thousands of European managers were effectively shattered. Their basic problem stemmed from the fact that good performance, moderate levels of training, and little language competence were no longer acceptable in more competitive markets. Despite their often-lengthy periods of training and 'moving up the ladder' their advancement was no longer guaranteed. The anticipated promotions of these managers were threatened with delay or degrading into lateral transfers. The future looked likely to prefer high-performance, well-trained, and multi-lingual managers. Companies especially needed multi-lingual managers capable of working with foreigners who are increasingly important as sources of skills, investment money, and product markets. They also need managers who can succeed in the increasingly global product markets. In 1997 the European Union estimated (Tregaskis, 1998)¹ that by 2007, 80 per cent of the technology used today will be obsolete, and replaced by new, or advanced technologies. By that time, 80% of the workforce will be working



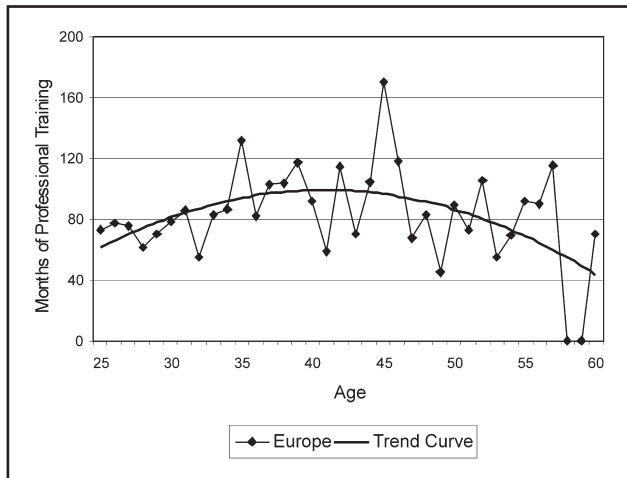


Figure 1 European Managerial Investment in Professional Training

on the basis of formal education and training more than 10 years old.

Of course managers responded to these demands. The total investment in professional training by European managers (Figure 1) shows a marked increase in the mid-career stage² Between the ages of 36 and 46 European managers are investing in more professional training. This trend peaks at age 46 indicating perhaps that at this critical age in one's career a maximum effort must be made to remain competitive in the labour market. Whether they will be able to acquire foreign language skills is another matter. As seen in Figure 2 the sample of Europeans collected by this study indicates that middle-aged and older managers are much less likely to speak a foreign language than their younger colleagues. Languages are notoriously difficult to learn later in life since, according to linguists, the brain cells devoted to language acquisition originally present at birth atrophy after childhood.³ Few adults succeed in perfecting a second language and of course adding full-time job duties and family obligations further burdens even committed learners.

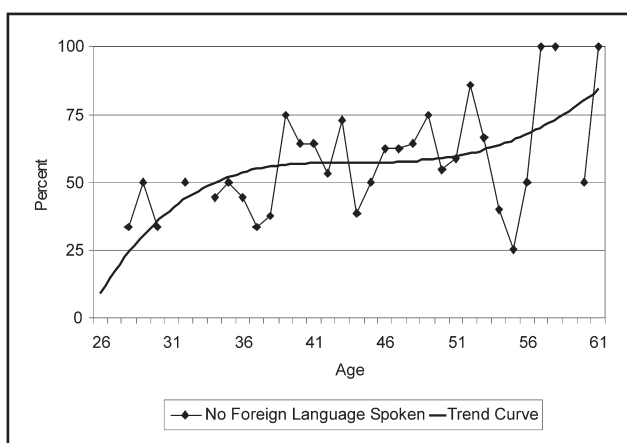


Figure 2 Percent of European Managers without Foreign Language Skills

In this new market environment a manager's promotion should be based on skill and competence rather than longevity. Many companies, recognising the problem, swiftly established managerial fast track programmes to give younger, talented, and linguistically adept employees the experience and exposure necessary to assume higher level managerial jobs. The consequence of this touches all that is sacred in European career systems. Certainly, advancement by seniority and internal promotion is likely to be threatened. Letting younger, perhaps more dynamic employees jump over their older colleagues certainly benefits the economic interests of a typical European company. But are the interests of the employees being satisfied? What impact will side-tracking less capable but committed employees who rightly expect a promotion have on the organisation? What impact does bringing in an outsider have in a system that has been traditionally based on internal promotion? These are important questions whose answers will have a direct impact on European companies.

The European Managerial Decision-Making Project

The European Managerial Decision-Making Project (EMDM) was organised to examine organisational issues that create barriers to effective cross-border integration of European companies. It is funded by the *Fondation HEC* with assistance from the European Financial Marketing Association, the Community of European Schools of Management, and the EU-ASEAN Management Centre.⁴ It sampled nearly 300 managers, working in 25 financial institutions across England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. It concentrated on isolating managers and organisations that have traditionally been the most protected from international competition in an effort to capture the essence of European organisational values.

The EMDM project asked managers to read a one-page scenario that described the following job promotion situation.

Headquarters wants to expand your operations in 2 or 3 years. With the rapid increase in new business you have had over the past few years you do not have enough people to handle the work in your business unit. Personally, if you can keep succeeding you will certainly be a candidate to head-up the new business unit when it is established. You have been asked to make a recommendation about who should join your team. Although you will share this post with others the person hired (or promoted) will spend most of his time with you. A short list of two internal promotions and two external candidates has been already drawn up. You need to make a recommendation.

The scenario further offered four distinct choices and a dialog among the four fictional managers discussing their own preferences. The choices and justi-

fications of the European managers responding to the survey provide ample reason to suspect that European corporate integration will be difficult. The following report will outline the promotion candidate profiles offered to managers, their choices, their justification⁵, and an analysis of these justifications. The differences among the respondents from England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain will be uncovered and illustrated with examples. An explanation of why these differences might exist and what problems they might cause to European firms is offered.

Promotion: Nice Guy or High Potential, Internal or External?

The basic situation underlying the employee promotion decision scenario is based on the results of a previous study that interviewed nearly 100 European managers about the cultural problems European integration created for their companies.⁶ The principal purpose of this earlier study was to limit, as much as possible, the personal biases of the EMDM project's principle designers. Roberts (1970)⁷, in her influential paper on culture and management studies notes that one of the main limitations of the state of research at that time was that the kinds of questions covered and the methodological strategies employed were largely determined by the author's biases. Little has changed over the past three decades. It is fair to note that most studies of organisational or managerial problems have been primarily ethnocentric and often North American in their conception and execution.⁸ Other European researchers⁹ have examined common organisational problems from a theoretical perspective in one context or another. But few have collected empirical data about managerial values directly from a large sample of European managers about day-to-day managerial situations. During these exploratory interviews high-ranking managers were asked to recount business problems they attributed to the differences among Europe's many national and regional cultures. These stories were recorded and analysed. They are the basis for a series of scenarios¹⁰, including the Promotion scenario.

One of the common problems encountered after mergers or in response to increased competition was who to promote to new or vacant posts. Often, two or more managers were available, sometimes from both of the merger partners. At other times the need to become more competitive encouraged companies with internal promotion policies to look in the external labour market. The typical situation identified during the interviews often had these elements. A new post is created aimed specifically at strengthening international market development. A combination of judgement and client skills is necessary. The post is typically critical to the firm, demanding that an internal manager remain in charge but assisted by someone with the necessary competencies. A roster

of both internal and external candidates is prepared. Among the internal candidates is often the favourite manager who expects a promotion. The other is a younger manager with high performance and potential. From the outside there is the possibility of using a head-hunter to search for high performance individuals. The key to this problem is whether the firm is willing to bypass a likeable, team-player with normal performance for an experienced outsider or a younger, more dynamic, manager with superior performance. The later choice is the classic 'fast tracker' profile that many companies want to retain without discouraging all the 'normal trackers'. The profiles of each of the four choices are presented in Table 1.

Building this scenario is made easier by dozens of studies examining promotion and career systems. Many of these are interesting, but outside the current research context. For example, most of these studies have been American in origin and focus primarily on top executive promotion or other specialised areas such as promotion of racial or ethnic minorities or women. As such, they fall outside of the current research problem. Some of the European studies focus on the origins (social and educational) of top managers. Three recent studies are more directly applicable. The first, Sonnenfeld and Peiperl (1988)¹¹, suggests that a new job assignment (i.e., promotion or job change within a company) is governed by two basic variables, the source of the promotion candidate and the criteria for selection. The authors offer a schematic of the basic elements and organisational policies of their model (reproduced in Figure 3). The most important criteria are the source of the promotion candidate (e.g. internal vs. external) and the performance criterion used to evaluate candidates for promotion (e.g. group service/loyalty vs. individual performance). For example, firms labelled as Clubs promote primarily from within their organisation and base a promotion on the employee's commitment to the firm and its mission. The second type, labelled the Academy, is also based on internal promotion but the criterion for promotion is individual performance rather than commitment to the organisation. The third type is the Fortress, which shares some of the loyalty and commitment aspects of the Club, but where external experts compete with current employees for available posts. The last typology, the Baseball Team, is the best (or worst) combination. A manager is judged not only by his personal performance but also compared with the personal performance of the best managers available on the market.

Many European firms probably fall under the Club typology since according to Sonnenfeld and Peiperl Clubs are typically found in sectors protected by government regulation or monopoly situations. As such, there is direct relevance for the EMDM study where many economic sectors and national markets have been protected from competition by laws or other legal constraints. The four choices offered in the

Table 1 Promotion Choice Profiles

Finalists employed by the organisation				
Choice	Age	Current job	Performance (5 year average)	Personal notes
1	47	Senior Sales Manager	100 per cent of sales target	Very reliable performer, very committed to the company, good team player, well liked throughout the firm.
2	37	Sales Manager	126 per cent of sales target	Extremely productive, has a reputation of being a tough but effective manager, appears to have future growth potential, tendency to work alone.
Finalists not employed by the organisation				
Choice	Age	Current job	Personal notes	
3	46	Commercial Director	Very strong recommendations from director of Crédit Suisse — New York. Was responsible for developing Crédit Suisse's very successful commercial strategy for the US market.	
4	41	Director of Sales	He made an excellent presentation on developing new commercial strategies at an EFMA seminar attended by some of our staff. He would be receptive to a job offer from a dynamic firm like ours. His three previous employers recommend him very highly.	

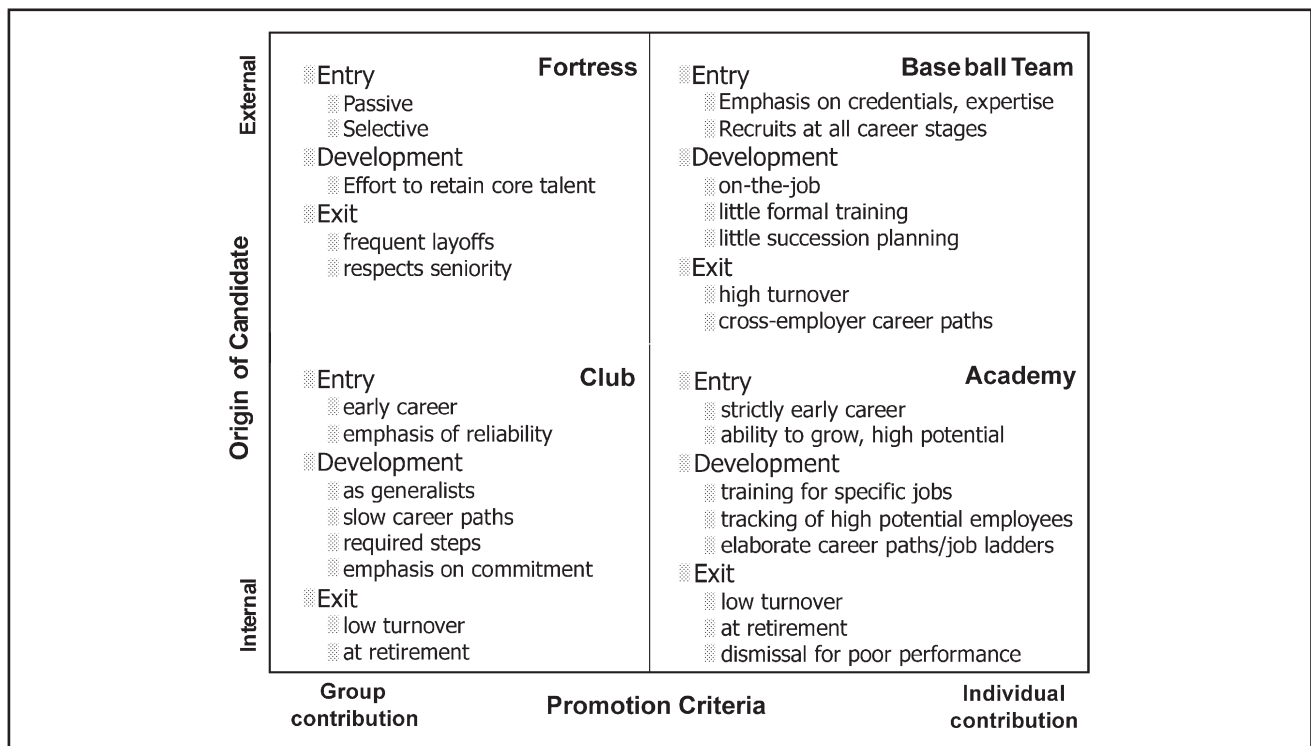


Figure 3 Sonnenfeld–Peiperl Career System Model

Promotion scenario correspond to the Sonnenfeld – Peiperl model. Choice 1 is an appropriate choice for a Club. In the profile summary and in the debate between the fictional managers his commitment and loyalty is emphasised. Choice 2 is the first choice of an Academy, since his individual performance is highlighted. Choice 3, primarily because he is an expert and represents a passive recruitment (The text

specifically mentioned that he wanted to return to his country after several years abroad and that he would ‘fit into our group very well’). Finally Choice 4 represents someone comfortable with a cross-employer career path. Highly competent, with three satisfied former employers willing to give him good recommendations, he represents the Baseball Team model.

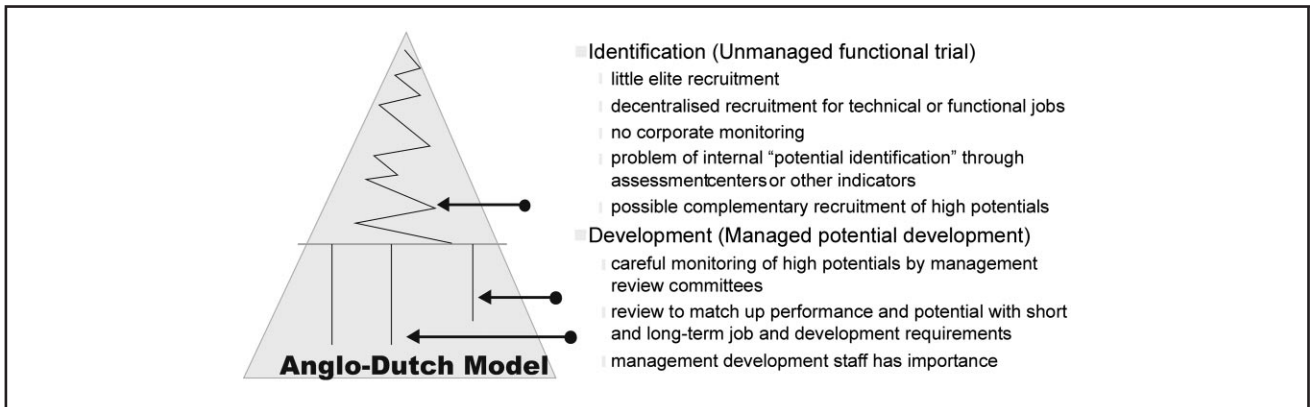


Figure 4 Anglo-Dutch Career Map

Two other related studies (Derr, 1985¹²; Evans *et al.*, 1990¹³) sharing the same dataset are of interest and represent one of the few studies of culture's influence on career management systems. The studies are built on data collected by a survey of European corporations about the meaning of managerial potential. Evans *et al.* develop four typical models, three of which are summarised below.¹⁴ The first model, Anglo-Dutch is presented in Figure 4.

This model is characterised by non-elitist recruitment policies, where young managers are hired for specific technical or functional jobs. During the early career years these graduates are expected to perform and climb in their functional or technical hierarchies. Performance evaluation is less systematic and the parallel notion of a testing period is implicit rather than explicit. At this stage in an employee's career, usually around thirty years of age, organisations attempt to assess future managerial potential. Often this is a difficult task because it might still be too early and because the Anglo-Dutch model does not focus as extensively as some of the others on systematic, in-depth performance appraisals in the employee's early career. Once a 'high potential' label is affixed to a young manager organisational resources are devoted to monitoring his or her career (p. 128¹³).

The second model, Germanic is shown in Figure 5. The Germanic model has a greater attachment to the

notion of formal apprenticeship and functional career paths. Although apprenticeship is more common for skilled and blue-collar employees, many companies also use it with young graduates destined for a managerial career. Typically these graduates undergo a two-year 'apprenticeship' characterised by job rotation through the enterprise accompanied by training. This serves the dual purpose of providing broad exposure to the company and of finding the function or type of job most suited to the individual. By the employee's late twenties, he will have been guided into the appropriate function, where he acquires progressively greater and greater expertise, moving up through that hierarchy (p. 125¹³).

The third model, Latin is presented in Figure 6. Promotion in France is basically a tournament characterised by few rules or systematic norms. 'It is a competitive struggle of achievement, the selling of oneself, and building alliances that is captured by the social game theory of the French sociologist Michel Crozier, though subtly combined with the camaraderie of association with a mafia of fellow peers.'¹⁵ These peers are almost exclusively schoolmates graduating from the same *Grande Ecole*, the elite training schools of the French educational system. Taking France as an example, selection of potential top managers also takes place at entry, mostly on the basis of elite educational qualifications. Studies (Granick, 1972; Sainsaulieu, 1977)¹⁶ have shown that

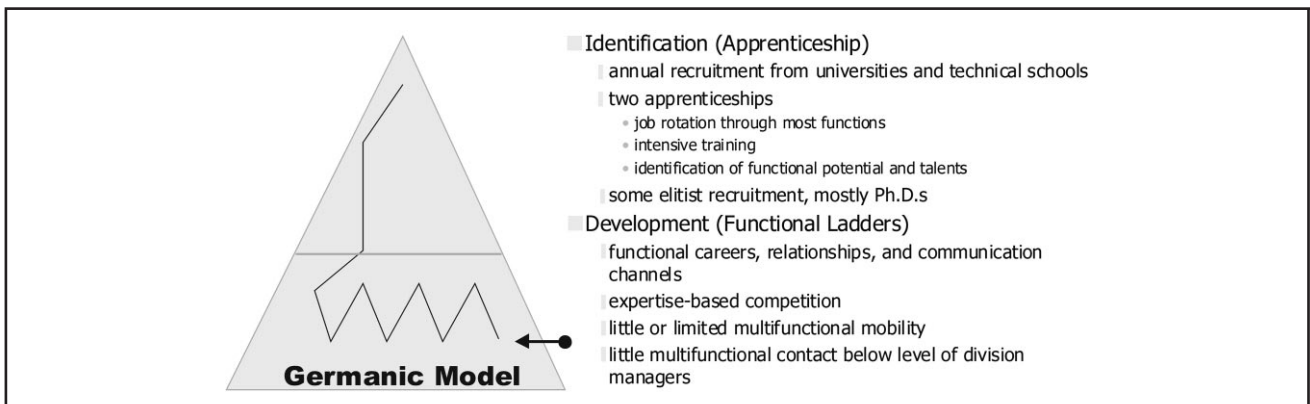


Figure 5 Germanic Career Map

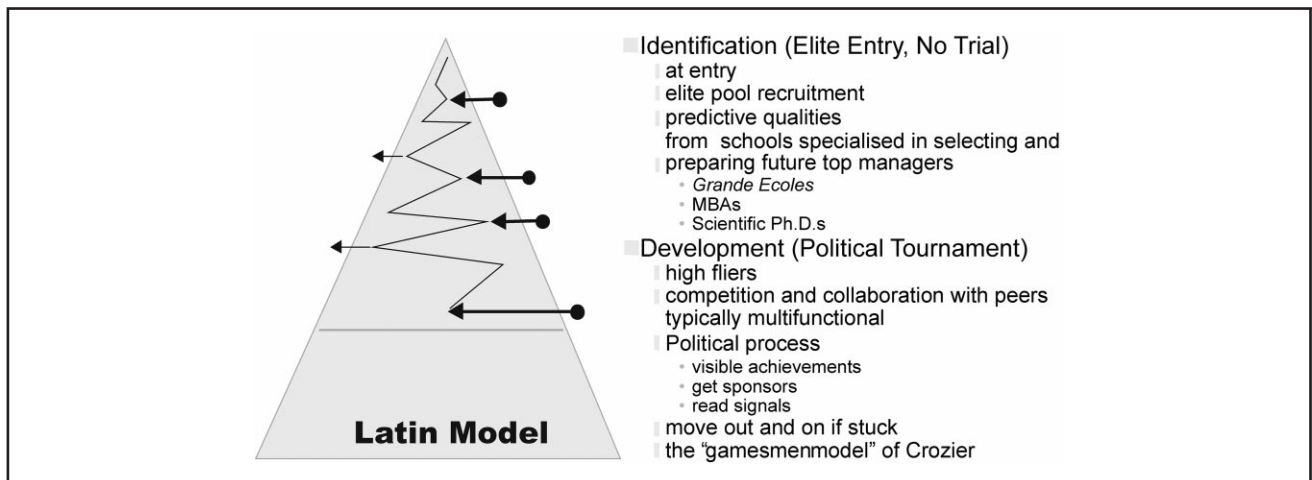


Figure 6 Latin Career Map

the graduates of the three best *Grandes Ecoles* who chose an industrial career had a 90 per cent probability of landing up as president of a company. Sometimes the most important criteria for success is being labelled early as an individual of high potential (Laurent, 1986; Roussillon and Bournois, 1998)¹⁷ whereas in other countries success was more linked to personal qualities or achievements.

What this study suggests is that the label 'high potential' is likely to be attributed using different standards from country to country. Among the four choices available to the respondents of the EMDM study there is likely to be considerable difference regarding their potential for success. To the extent that the Latin model also generalises to Italian and Spanish firms one should expect to see internal promotion, since winning a political tournament would be practically impossible from the outside. There should also be a marked preference for high individual performance that could be labelled 'high potential' given the French preoccupation with this signet. The Germans can also be expected to value internal promotion but for different reasons. Internal promotion under the Academy involves extensive training, which fits well with the Germanic practice of apprenticeship. German values related to workforce indicate a strong concern for maintaining group solidarity and social peace.¹⁸ This supports the notion that some Germans may also appreciate the careful orderly ascension through the managerial hierarchy characteristic of the Club. The English, with their more open organisations, may be less concerned with maintaining a true internal promotion system. They are likely to make promotion decisions based upon the current needs of their firms, even if this demands an external search. They are willing to fire even high seniority managers with poor productivity.¹⁸ Therefore they are more likely to adopt the more flexible external source system. Before turning to the results of the EMDM study it should be noted that both the Derr (1985)¹² and the Sonnenfeld and Peiperl (1988)¹¹ models were proposed in the mid- to late-1980s. The

EMDM study was conducted several years later after the signature of the Maastricht Treaty and the effects of the new environment may already be reflected in the values of European managers.

Surface Tension: The Delicate Balance between Inside and Outside

Have you ever filled a cup a bit too full? The water sits delicately on the rim ready at any instance to spill down the side. Something akin to this may be happening to career systems in Europe which appear to be posed between the older tradition of internal promotion and the market pull of external promotion. Before elaborating this story let's think about what and how country-specific characteristics might influence this balance. Among researchers focusing on international business appear three dominant streams of research, which are used as a basis for understanding and explaining the values and practices of companies. Some argue that organisations are essentially 'culture free' (Lammers and Hickson, 1979)¹⁹ and that technology (Child, 1981)²⁰, strategic orientation (Miles and Snow, 1984)²¹ override differences in national context leading to a global standardisation of management practices. Others rejoin that organisations are 'culture bound' (Dore, 1973;²² Maurice et al. 1980²³) and that management practices are, and continue to be, heavily influenced by collectively shared values and belief system. The 'culture bound' perspective has been applied to the individual level also by Derr and Laurent (1989)²⁴ who argue that a manager's perception of career success is conditioned by cultural values. A third approach combines certain elements of the first two approaches. Its proponents argue that interactions between market necessity and national socio-economic institutions such as trade unions (Brewster 1995²⁵; Whitley 1992²⁶), educational systems (Felstead et al., 1994)²⁷, legislation, and pattern of industrial organisation (Brewster et al., 1996²⁸ Lane 1989²⁹) affect the way organisations are managed. The decisions taken by

the respondents of the EMDM study are displayed in Table 2 and provide direct evidence that at least one of these models does not explain human resource management practices.

Examining the promotion choices in Table 2 it is clear that the pure 'culture free' model is not supported. Both on a casual examination and with statistical tests the nationality of the respondent is the best explanation of the choices. However the Latin nationalities appear to have similar responses (especially Italy and Spain) so that the cultural groupings (Latin, Germanic, or Anglo-Saxon) may explain managerial values regarding promotion. The Latin group tends to favour internal promotion and has a tendency³⁰ to promote the 'favoured' candidate (who also happens to be in their age range), thereby adopting the Club typology. But the age of the candidate does not seem to be the decisive factor as they avoid recruiting outsiders for a senior management position who are also in their age range. The average age of the Latin managers in the sample is 45 which is close to the ages of the 'favoured' internal candidate (47) and the older external candidate (46). Outsiders entering a Latin organisation must present a young and dynamic image. Mere excellence is not sufficient to merit recruitment at a later age. It is interesting to observe that the Latin Career Map presented in Figure 6 appears to suggest that Latin cultures are more open to external promotion than the Anglo-Dutch and Germanic cultures. Yet the Latin nationals among the respondents are the least likely to bring in an outsider.

Surprisingly the German respondents are, in terms of direction, much farther from the other cultural groups. Fully 73 per cent favour the young, dynamic outsider over the next most favoured (16 per cent) high potential internal candidate. Older outsiders are never chosen and the older, 'favoured' choice receives very little support (11 per cent). Earlier, after considering the German desire for social peace and group unity found in the EMDM's parallel workforce reduction study¹⁸, the Germans were assumed to favour the Club or Academy career typologies while in reality they overwhelmingly select the Baseball Team. This contrasts strongly with the Germanic Career Map (Figure 5) which indicates that external

promotion is seldom authorised. The English respondents follow a more predictable pattern being, except for the Germans, the nationality most willing to promote an outsider. But here too, as seen in the workforce reduction study referred to above, they do not greatly respect age or seniority since on the whole they prefer younger managers. Furthermore, since they are more likely to bring in an outsider than promote one of the two internal choices they are a bit at odds with the Anglo-Dutch Career Map (Figure 4) which indicates that outside recruitment is a complementary option rather than the rule.

The Reasons for Promoting a Manager

The choices made by the respondents clearly indicate that European managers do not always agree about who should be promoted. Although the choices we make are different, perhaps the seasons for them are related to differing assessments about the individual qualities of the four promotion choices and the importance of these qualities to the promotion decision. To study this question the written responses were examined to determine what criteria respondents used to make their decisions.³¹ The top ten reasons aggregated at the European and country levels for dismissal are presented in Table 3. The number one reason for justifying a promotion is the manager's *past performance*. On average, every nationality cites this quality the most often in the written reasons for the decision. This finding is supported by other empirical studies (Abraham and Medoff, 1985³²; Mills, 1985³³) which, when examining the relative importance of seniority and performance found the latter to be the more important (although sometimes just barely) for managerial professions.

Among the nationalities sampled *seniority* is among the top ten reasons for only the Italians (seventh place) and the Spanish (sixth place). For the French it ranks very far down the list at eighteenth place. This is not to say that the French or English reject internal promotion policies. Both nationalities rank *wanting someone already in company* and *already knows how company works*, two clear internal promotion factors, among their top ten reasons. For the French

Table 2 Promotion Choices

Row %	Club, internal promotion, group-based	Academy, internal promotion, performance-based	Fortress, external promotion, group-based	Baseball team, external promotion, performance-based
England	13.2	26.3	10.5	50.0
France	26.2	33.8	16.9	23.1
Germany	10.8	16.2	0.0	73.0
Italy	28.1	23.6	2.2	46.1
Spain	31.0	20.7	3.4	44.8
Europe	23.3	25.2	7.0	44.6

Table 3 European and Country Rankings of the Top Characteristics Justifying Promotion Choices

European ^a	England	France	Germany	Italy	Spain
+ Past performance/success	1	1	1	1	1
- Person is a team player	2	2	3	2	3
+ Person is a team player	9	3	2	5	2
+ Seems ambitious/high potential	4	5	7	3	4
+ Already knows how company works	7	5	13	8	5
+ General experience in the field	3	22	6	9	14
+ Young age	14	10	15	4	8
+ Has long seniority in firm	11	18	11	7	6
+ Wants someone already in company	7	4	17	11	10
+ Open-minded, can understand and promote innovation	21	18	4	14	15

^aThe plus or minus sign before the justification indicates how the respondent viewed the characteristic

these two arguments respectively rank fourth and fifth. For the English they are tied at seventh place. Some criteria appear to be ranked idiosyncratically. For example the French rarely indicate that *general experience in the field* (twenty-second place) is considered important while the English rank it third. For their part the English are rarely concerned that the promotion choice is *open-minded or can understand and promote innovation*. The Germans rank this characteristic in fourth place. The importance of open-mindedness and creativity for the Germans is supported by the findings of an earlier study (Derr, 1985)¹² of European companies. In his study, 69 per cent of the German companies valued entrepreneurial and creative people. The same concern was not as high for the English (55 per cent) or the French (38 per cent) firms.

Perhaps the most puzzling finding concerns the importance of being a team player. Overall, without considering the positive or negative appreciation placed on this characteristic by the respondents, the *team player* characteristic is the most often cited factor in a promotion decision. However, as with all the criteria, the respondents' reasons were coded for whether they had a positive or negative appreciation of being a team player. Here there are strong differences across the EMDM sample. In all countries except England a large number of respondents select a choice because he is viewed as a team player. Simultaneously a large number select a choice because he is not perceived to be a team player. Overall, not being a team player is favoured as it always ranks second or third place across all nationalities.

Apart from the differences in reasons displayed in Table 3 there is also considerable disagreement across the countries about which characteristics should be considered. In Figure 7 these disagreements are displayed. Four criteria: *knows how a firm works*, *past performance*, *ambitious/high potential*, and *team player status* are always considered. Except for the opposite preferences concerning team player status the top concerns are not surprising. Proven success (*past performance*), the ability to fit (*firm knowledge*), and

potential to succeed (*ambitious/high potential*) are all desirable characteristics. Descending the Figure however opens up many sources of conflict. For example, the two criteria that are agreed upon by four of the nationalities are generally opposed to each other. Wanting *young age* and *long seniority* are usually incompatible. This same conflict is also evident from those wanting *someone outside the company* and *someone already in the company*.

Two criteria in the last group merit special commentary. Notice that some respondents mention that the new post created in the scenario represents a *promotion for the person*, which is interpreted as a desirable outcome. This is clearly a concern that the job change be taken positively by the person selected. But at the same time some of the nationalities are concerned that the person selected be *acceptable to the group*, which indicates a concern for the work group as a whole. This suggests that balancing the career expectations of someone with high potential with group acceptance of the promotion may not always be easy.

When Theories Prove Inadequate

The analysis presented above supports the centrality of past performance and success in the choice of a promotion candidate. This is well supported by both theory and empirical research. Furthermore the importance of culture, as measured by nationality, is fully supported by theory and empirical research. Additionally the Sonnenfeld–Peiperl Career typology is broadly supported.³⁴ Internal promotion and an emphasis on the group acceptability of a promotion candidate are characteristics of the Club profile. In the EMDM study the Club profile was given to the first promotion choice. The top five reasons given by those selecting this choice are: + *person is a team player*, + *past performance/success*, + *someone who stayed for a long time in company*, + *someone we know and like*, and + *already knows how bank works*. For those selecting the second choice (Academy profile) the top five reasons are: + *past performance success*, + *seems ambitious/high*

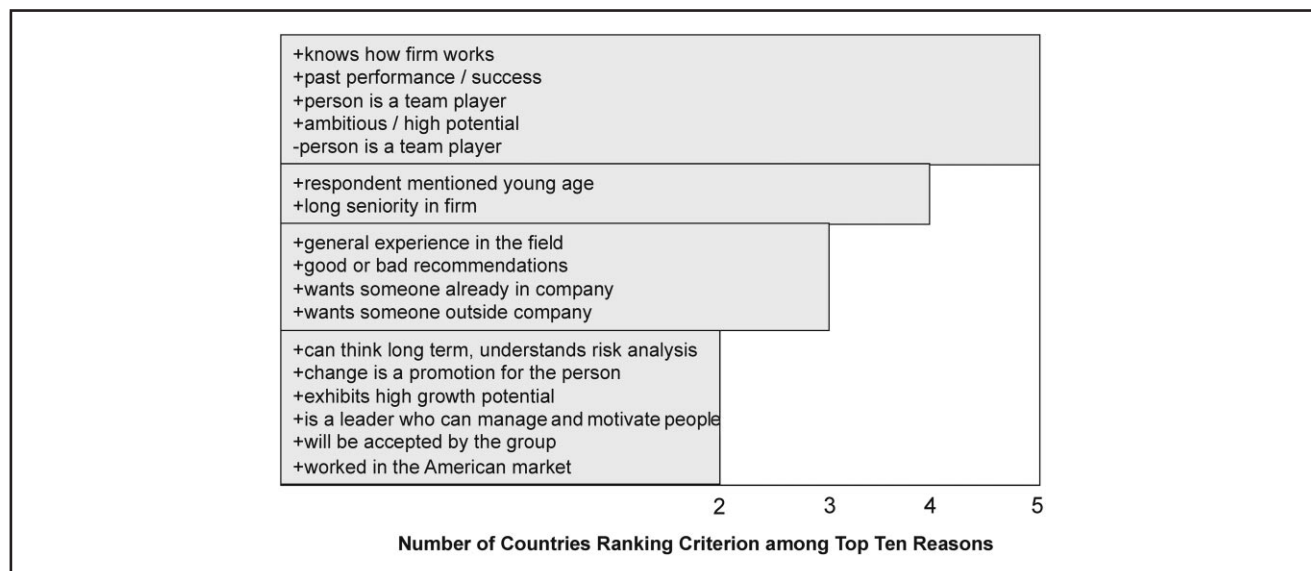


Figure 7 European Disagreement about Important Promotion Criteria

potential, – person is a team player, + respondent mentioned of young age, and + already knows how bank works. Finally³⁵ for those accepting the fourth choice (Baseball Team profile) the top five reasons are: + good or bad recommendations, + general experience in the field, – person is a team player, + wants someone outside company, + open-minded, can understand and promote innovation. These results follow the reasoning of Sonnenfeld and Peiperl. The Club profilers want co-operative insiders; the Academy profilers want ambitious insiders focused on performance rather than friendship. The Baseball Team players follow the Academy profilers but are more open to innovation and outsiders. Collectively, results are consistent with the career typology model.

However a deeper explanation of cross-national differences for promoting managers is more elusive. The career maps proposed by Derr (1985)¹² and Evans et al. (1990)¹³ are less well supported. The Germans, with their closed systems are by far the most willing to select outsiders while the Latin nationalities, with their more open systems, the least. Of course this could reflect changing priorities as Germany tries to catch-up and therefore over emphasises the need to bring in new ideas from outsiders. To more deeply examine the differences between the countries the same technique employed in the analysis of the Recruitment Study³⁶ is used here. As with the other scenarios distributed by the EMDM coding team found that some respondents listed a large number of criteria that they or their firms typically considered but indicated that certain were more important. Therefore, during the coding process the research team recorded these differences in importance. Each criterion cited by a respondent was coded as unimportant, important, or necessary according to the respondents' written remarks. These qualifications for the criteria are a rich source of additional precision that can be used to interpret the underlying values of European promotion systems. This is

especially important when examining the differences among the nationalities sampled. This data, presented in Table 4, is exploited to investigate the most important reasons given to justify the promotion choices.

The scores presented in Table 4 are calculated using the frequency and importance rating of each criterion. As such they are not based on a single standard scale but rather a unique scale for each country. Therefore, one should not directly compare the scores across countries (i.e., one country is not twice as interested in a criterion as another simply because the importance scores have this ratio). These scores should be interpreted as the relative importance of each criterion within the country. With this in mind, one finds some very interesting information about what and how the Europeans look at the promotion issue.

First, notice that past performance is not the most important requirement for a promotion. In every country but England it is less important than being a team player. In both England and Germany it is less important than not being a team player. In France it is less important than appearing to be ambitious or having high potential. This last finding is ironic. Given that the French attribute much importance to symbolic recruitment³⁶ it could be ungraciously restated as implying that appearances are more important than facts in France. This of course fits very well with the ideas of Crozier (1964)¹⁵ who views French career systems as political tournaments. There are other notable oddities in the importance scoring. Firstly, note that the French place very high importance on *open-minded, can understand and promote innovation* which might suggest that they would be more open to outsiders. Secondly, the Latin respondents place very little importance on *can think long-term* ranking it near the bottom. On the other hand the English respondents rank this criterion the

Table 4 Importance Score for Job Candidate Characteristics in Promotion Decision

European ^a	England	France	Germany	Italy	Spain
+ Past performance/success	13.9	6.5	13.7	6.4	15.1
+ Person is a team player	1.1	7.5	19.3	6.8	20.0
– Person is a team player	15.8	1.7	15.6	0.8	9.1
+ Seems ambitious/high potential	1.4	9.7	1.6	2.9	10.8
+ Can think long term	10.4	0.5	6.4	2.3	0.4
+ Would/would not accept number two job	10.2	3.3	0.4	0.4	0.2
+ Already knows how bank works ^b	1.2	3.1	0.7	1.5	6.5
+ Open-minded, can understand and promote innovation ^b	0.7	9.3	2.0	1.0	0.2
+ Is a leader who can manage and motivate people	1.3	5.7	1.1	2.1	0.5
– Has theoretical (not practical) knowledge	0.3	1.1	0.2	7.0	0.8

^aThe plus or minus sign before the justification indicates how the respondent viewed the characteristic

^bTied for seventh for all respondents

third most important factor in their promotion decisions. Finally, the English respondents are the only nationality greatly concerned about whether the *number two status* of the position being filled should be of importance in the decision.

One of the most interesting, if not most perplexing contradictions, exposed in Table 4 is the tension between wanting a team player and not wanting a team player. The French and Italians want team players. The English do not want them. The Spanish have notable positions on both sides of the issue. The Germans are truly bipolar by placing nearly the same importance on both positions. Given that being a team player and developing effective work teams is a popular topic in the academic and business literature these findings merit more attention.

Team Player Versus Loner: Europeans Against the Trend

Being able to work effectively in a team not only helps managers obtain a job or a promotion; it has many other benefits for the organisation. It leads to better product development and sales teams, better customer service, closer links with foreign subsidiary managers, less turnover of valuable employees, and in general, the type of competitive advantages that equal a profitable survival in the global market (Lawler et al., 1992³⁷; Osterman, 1994³⁸; Mohrman et al., 1995³⁹). Perhaps developing team players is not quite the human resource management fad of this decade, but it certainly has received much attention. The importance of developing work teams has increased over the past few years. Only about 25 per cent of firms surveyed in the early 1980s systematically used work teams. (Wellins et al., 1991)⁴⁰. A decade later another survey found that 60 per cent indicated that they would increase or greatly increase their use of teams; 37 per cent said their use of teams would stay the same, and only 3 per cent said they

would reduce or discontinue the use of teams. (Lawler et al., 1992³⁷) By mid-decade 54 per cent of American firms were using teams while 40 per cent had a majority of their employees working in teams. (Osterman, 1994³⁸). With the increasingly strong connections between North American and European companies this trend is also reflected in the EU. Gibson and Zellmer (1997)⁴¹ report that the use of teams is pervasive among most multi-national companies operating in Europe. So it is little wonder many firms want to hire and promote managers with team player credentials.

But what are the characteristics of a team player? In the EMDM coding process many respondents mentioned team player in either positive or negative ways without defining what they meant by the term. In order to create a richer definition and to analyse differences between the nationalities participating in the study a team player score was created. To calculate this score the authors examined the criteria often mentioned to justify promoting the two internal candidates. These two candidates were clearly designed in the promotion scenario to fit either the team player or loner label (Table 1). Among those respondents deciding to promote the team player profile (Choice 1) the criteria most representing their reasoning were selected and measured to create the team player score. A loner score was calculated using those criteria representing the sentiment of respondents selecting the loner profile (Choice 2). The specific criteria used are displayed in Table 5.

The team player and loner scores were then calculated for each country resulting in an overall score representing a ratio between the nationalities preferring team players and those wanting loners. This is displayed in Figure 8. The English respondents lead the Europeans with the highest loner score followed by the Italian, Spanish, and French. The Germans appreciate team players the most but are not universally enamoured by them. Interpreting these results

Table 5 Underlying Criteria for Computing Team Player Score

Team player criteria	Loner criteria
- Person is a team player	+ Past performance/success
+ Person is a team player	+ Seems ambitious/high potential
+ Has long seniority in firm	+ Young age
+ Will be accepted by the group	+ Exhibits high growth potential
+ Someone we know and like	+ Can be trained easily/is adaptable
	- Seems ambitious/high potential

demands further research but it is tempting to draw some casual conclusions. The English, true to their Anglo-Saxon tradition, appreciate the loner more than the collectivistic cultures of continental Europe. The three Latin nations buffer the English from the Germans more than geographically. The results of the Recruitment Scenario and Workforce Reduction Scenario^{18,36} provide evidence that German companies are relatively closed to outside recruitment of

high potential foreigners and very protective of high seniority managers whose performance fails to keep pace with their salaries. These findings imply that a protective cocoon surrounds German firms protecting entry-level jobs for Germans and older managers from job loss. But when new ideas are needed, they open their organisations more often than the other nationalities participating in the survey. Perhaps as a protection they search more intently for a person who will adapt to the group rather than forcing the group to adapt to him. In effect, they dampen the risk by assuring themselves that the new person will be sensitive to their needs.

To explore the proposition that the conflict between promoting a team player or a loner resides at the nexus of individual self-interest (as suggested by the parallel scenarios) the age of those selecting the team player profile is graphed. In Figure 9 one can see that the majority of those selecting the internal team player profile are in the middle of their career span. The youngest and oldest are the least likely to select the internal team player. The peaks for the periods of 39–46 and 51–57 stand out among the ages. Turning back to Figures 1 and 2 one is struck by the visual

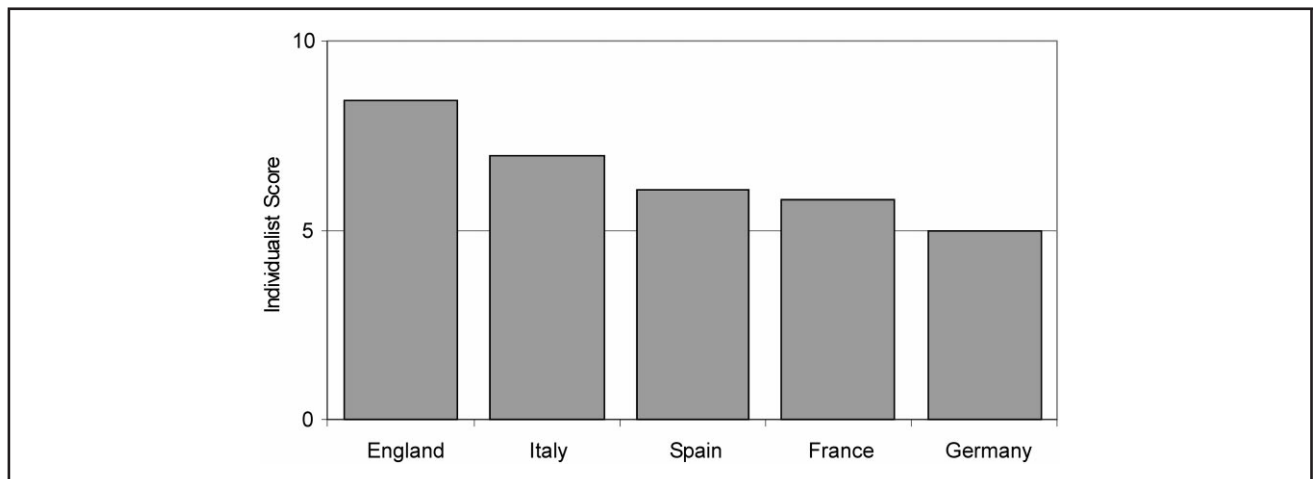


Figure 8 Team Player or Loner?

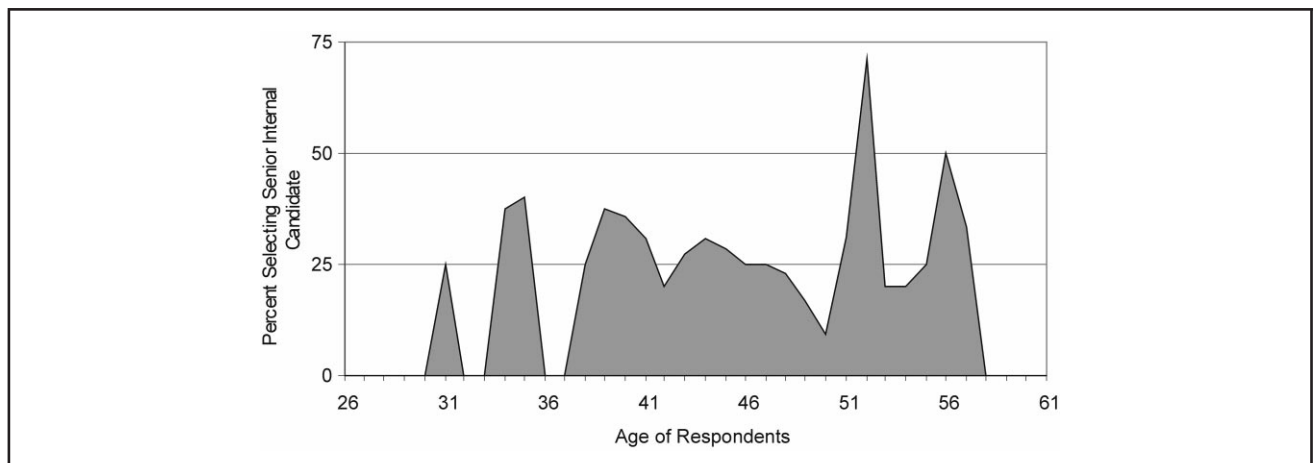


Figure 9 Who Wants to Promote the Team Player?

evidence that these age groups are simultaneously the most threatened and perhaps the most aggressive in guarding their careers. Even though they are clearly disadvantaged by their lack of linguistic skills they report the highest level of professional training and favour internal, high seniority, average performance, team players. Perhaps this choice represents a retrenchment against an evident threat to their own self interests.

Conclusions

This study suggests that one of the indirect consequences of the Maastricht Treaty and the general trend toward global markets is the negative impact on the careers of many European managers. This is attributed to their inability to adapt quickly enough to the market demands for multi-lingual, well-trained, high performance senior managers. Europe's companies are fighting back by relying on formal and informal 'fast track' programs to identify and promote high potential younger managers. These programs are designed to compress the normal years of experience necessary to be an effective top manager and therefore accelerate the career of certain highly-skilled younger managers. Managerial employees themselves also appear to be reacting to guard and enhance their career prospects. Middle-aged managerial employees report the highest amount of professional training, peaking at age 44. Furthermore, in apparently unorganised group solidarity, many mid-career managers prefer internal promotion policies favouring seniority rather than performance, albeit by a very slim margin. Both younger and older respondents are much more likely to favour external promotion policies favouring performance over a long commitment to a firm. In the words of one HR manager, 'I do not expect to stay with my current employer more than five years, why should I expect any different from those I hire?'

This study finds a strong cultural influence on promotion practices that transcends normal national borders to coalesce into three cultural types, English, Germanic, and Latin. The German respondents most often prefer external promotion favouring employee performance to commitment. However to soften the 'hired gunslinger' impact of this policy they want someone with strong team player values. The English respondents are more interested in avoiding team players than in hiring them. Perhaps team players represent too strongly the dreaded term 'consensus decision-making' which is acquiring a negative connotation among European managers. Yet, perhaps strongly influenced by England's traditional preference for generalist rather than technical managers, almost 40 per cent still want to maintain internal promotion policies. The respondents from three Latin countries represented share many characteristics.

They prefer internal to external promotion and generally value seniority more than performance.

The study also finds that after a few standard criteria, such as past performance, the criteria used to justify a job promotion are remarkably inconsistent, even directly contradictory. The most dramatic example is the debate about promoting a team player or not. The respondents of some countries, notably Germany and Spain, are quite at odds with themselves over this question. It appears that many Europeans worry that too much co-operation results in too little action. There is also a strong element of self-interest apparent in the choices and reasons of many respondents. The younger and older ones show marked preference for external promotion policies favouring performance factors. The middle-aged managers, the starting point of this article, are much more comfortable with internal promotion policies that are sensitive to their commitment and ability to work easily with colleagues. The key lesson for companies wanting to prepare for an integrated Europe and global markets; be careful about nationalities, ages, and career prospects of the members of your promotion committees as they hold the keys to your future.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Paul Evans, C. Brooklyn Derr, and Barton Weitz for their valuable assistance and commentaries.

Notes

1. Tregaskis, O. (1998) Preface. *International Studies of Management and Organization* 28(1), 3.
2. Eurobarometer 42 (4.12.96) Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung an der Universität zu Köln. Survey of managerial employees from England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain.
3. Pinker, S. (1985) Language acquisition. In *An Invitation to Cognitive Science*, 2nd edn, Vol. 1, eds D.R. Gleitman, M. Liberman and D.N. Osherson. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
4. Additional support came from individual researchers, research institutes, and universities participating in the project. These include: Professor Marja Flory, Erasmus Universiteit — Rotterdam (Netherlands), Professor Alfonso Sauquet, Esade — Barcelona (Spain), Mr Rod Scarth, London School of Economics (United Kingdom), Dr Professor Lorenz Fischer and Dr Gabriele Jacobs-Belchak, Universität zu Köln (Germany) and Erasmus Universiteit — Rotterdam (Netherlands), Dr Professor Karl Sandner and Dr Christiane Müller, Wirtschaftsuniversität — Wien (Austria), Professor Carlo Turati, Università Luigi Bocconi, Milan (Italy), and Mr Pierre Lemaitre, CFPB - La Défense (France).
5. Justifications are based on the entire database of responses since not all cases have been fully coded.
6. Segalla, M. (1994) Managerial decision-making in Europe: the influence of economic, social and cultural criteria on Euronational firms. Unpublished Presentation to the Fondation HEC. Jouy-en-Josas, France.
7. Roberts, K.H. (1970) On looking at an elephant: an evaluation of cross-cultural research related to organizations. *Psychological Bulletin* 74, 327–350. Also in Weinshall, T.D.

- (ed.) (1979) *Culture and Management*. Penguin, Middlesex, UK.
8. Chapman, M. (1997) Social anthropology, business studies, and cultural issues. *International Studies of Management and Organization* 26(4), 3-29 (p. 9).
 9. See for example: Hofstede, G. (1980) *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Sage, Beverly Hill, CA and Trompenaars, F. and Hampden-Turner, C. (1998) *Riding the Waves of Culture*, 2nd edn. McGraw-Hill, New York. Maurice, M., Sellier, F. and Silvestre, J.J. (1982) *Politique d'éducation et organisation industrielle en France et en Allemagne*. PUF, Paris, Pg. 186f.
 10. The scenarios which are reported in this Issue of the *European Management Journal* are: Recruitment, Compensation, and Work Force Reductions.
 11. Sonnenfeld, J.A. and Peiperl, M.A. (1988) Staffing policy as a strategic response: a typology of career systems. *Academy of Management Review* 13(4), 588-600.
 12. Derr, C. Brooklyn (1985) Managing high potentials in Europe: Some cross-cultural findings. *European Management Journal* 5(2), 72-80.
 13. Evans, P., Lank, E. and Farquhar, A. (1990) Managing human resources in the international firm in human resource management. In *International Firms: Change, Globalisation, Innovation*, eds P. Evans, Y. Doz and A. Laurent, pp. 113-143. St. Martin's Press, New York.
 14. The fourth is the Japanese Model, which is not relevant to our study.
 15. Crozier, M. (1964) *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*. Chicago University Press, Chicago.
 16. Granick, D. (1972) *Managerial Comparisons of four Developed Countries: France, Britain, United States and Russia*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA. Sainsaulieu, R. (1977) *L'Identité au Travail*. Press de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris.
 17. Discussed in Laurent, A. (1986) The cross-cultural puzzle of international human resource management. *Human Resource Management* 25(1), 91-102 and Roussillon, S. and Bournois, F. (1998) and La perméabilité des élites dans les entreprises françaises. In *Preparer les Dirigeants de Demain*, eds F. Bournois and S. Roussillon, pp. 137-160. Editions d'Organisation, Paris.
 18. Segalla, M., Jacobs-Belschak, G. and Müller, C. (2001) Cultural influences on employee termination decisions: Firing the good, average, or the old? *European Management Journal* 19(1), 58-72.
 19. Lammars, C. and Hickson, D. (ed) (1979) *Organization Alike and Unalike*. Routledge and Kegan, London.
 20. Child, J. (1981) Organizational structures, environment and performance: the role of strategic choice. *Sociology* 6, 2-22.
 21. Miles, R. and Snow, C. (1984) Designing strategic human resource systems *Organizational Dynamics* 13, 36-52.
 22. Dore, R. (1973) *British Factory - Japanese Factory: The Origins of National Diversity in Industrial Relations*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
 23. Maurice, M., Sorge, A. and Warner, M. (1980) Societal differences in organizing manufacturing units: a comparison of France, West Germany, and Great Britain. *Organization Studies* 1, 59-86.
 24. Derr, C.B. and Laurent, A. (1989) The internal and external career: a theoretical and cross-cultural perspective. In *The Handbook of Career Theory*, eds Arthur, M., Laurence, B.S. and Hall, D.T., pp. 454-471. Cambridge University Press, New York.
 25. Brewster, C. (1995) Toward a 'European' model of human resource management. *Journal of International Business Studies* 1, 1-21.
 26. Whitley, R. (1992) *European Business Systems: Firms and Markets in their National Contexts*. Sage, London.
 27. Felstead, A., Ashton, D., Green, F. and Sung, J. (1994) *Vocational Education and Training in the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Japan, Singapore and the United States*. Centre for Labour Market Studies, Leicester.
 28. Brewster, C., Tregaskis, O., Hegewisch, A. and Mayne, L. (1996) Comparative research in human resource management: A review and an example. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 7, 586-604.
 29. Lane, C. (1989) *Management and labour in Europe*. Elgar, Aldershot.
 30. Except: For the French who favour the internal, high performance employee.
 31. The questionnaire did not present a list of reasons from which to select. The nearly 40 reasons in the justification provided by the respondents were identified during the coding process.
 32. Abraham, K.G. and Medoff, J.L. (1985) Length of service and promotions in union and non union work groups. *Industrial and Labour Relations Review* 38(3), 408-420.
 33. Mills, D.Q. (1985) Seniority versus ability in promotion decision. *Industrial and Labour Relations Review* 38(3), 421-425.
 34. Although the purpose of this study was not to test the Sonnenfeld and Peiperl model it should be noted that they place banks (from which we obtained our respondents) in the Club category. Since most respondents did not select a Club profile this placement does not appear to apply to Europe.
 35. Commentary on the Fortress profile is not included since it is the least often accepted by the respondents.
 36. Segalla, M., Sauquet, A. and Turati, C. (2001) Symbolic vs. functional recruitment: cultural influences on employee recruitment policy. *European Management Journal* 19(1), 32-43.
 37. Lawler, E., III, Mohrman, S. and Ledford, G. Jr. (1992) *Employee Involvement and Total Quality Management*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
 38. Osterman, P. (1994) How common is workplace transformation and who adopts it? *Industrial and Labour Relations Review* 47, 173-188.
 39. Mohrman, S.A., Cohen, S.G. and Mohrman, A.M. (1995) *Designing Team-Based Organization*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
 40. Wellins, R.S., Byham, W.C. and Wilson, J.M. (1991) *Empowered Teams. Creating Self-directed Work Groups that Improve Quality, Productivity, and Participation*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
 41. Gibson, C.H. and Zellmer, M.E. (1997) Intercultural analysis of the meaning of teamwork: evidence from six multinational corporations. Paper presented at the *Academy of International Business Conference*, Monterrey, Mexico.



MICHAEL SEGALLA, Groupe HEC, Department of Management and Human Resources, 1 rue de la Libération, 78350 Jouy-en-Josas, France. E-mail: segalla@hec.fr

Michael Segalla is Associate Professor of Management at Groupe HEC, France. He is Director of the European Management Decision-Making Project (EMDM) and French Technical Expert for the Global Employment Marketplace in the Information Society Programme (GEM) funded by the European Commission DG XIII. He also co-ordinates or manages other projects on cultural barriers to cross-border company integration, including the ASEAN-EU International Decision-Making Project. A forthcoming book is titled, 'Hidden Borders'.



MARJA FLORY, Erasmus University, Faculteit Bedrijfskunde, Postbus 1738, 300 DR Rotterdam, The Netherlands. E-mail: mflory@fac.fbk.eur.nl

Marja Flory is Assistant Professor of Change at Erasmus University, Rotterdam. Her research focuses on leadership skills in an organisational context, and on the installation and effectiveness of self-managing teams.



DOMINIQUE ROUZIÈS, Groupe HEC, Department of Marketing, 1 rue de la Libération, 78350 Jouy-en-Josas, France. E-mail: rouziès@hec.fr

Dominique Rouziès is Associate Professor of Marketing at Groupe HEC, France. Her research centres on strategic management of salesforces, including optimal salesforce compensation structures and salesforce control in cross-cultural settings.