

## **PREAMBLE**

No one has ever seen an electron but everyone believes they exist. The first atomic model was formulated in the 18th century and evolved over time. In 1911, Rutherford suggested that matter was made up of atoms that contained protons, electrons and all kinds of other particles. Even if this model is not perfect, it has proven to be the most useful up to now to help understand and predict how materials will behave.

Models also exist to explain human behaviour. In this book, the reader is invited to consider a model that deals more specifically with the relationship between humans and companies. Derived from the theory of evolution, this model is based on the premise that corporations constitute a living species that has reached the zenith of evolution. This assumption explains why human beings transform their environment, change the way they live and adopt values that are likely to ensure corporate wellness, often to the detriment of their own species.

While you are free to subscribe or not to this model, you have to admit that human action is based increasingly on the values and needs of large companies. Humans are consuming ever greater amounts of processed products to feed, clothe, move about, communicate and entertain themselves. Technological advances have even made it possible to reach a level of consumption unheard of until now in the history of humanity. These advances have also caused the pervasive invasion of work into people's personal lives.

In this corporate environment, it is not surprising then to observe that not only budgets but also emotions, moods and even human reproduction are managed. Somewhat like the electrons that follow various trajectories among the atoms, humans are now evolving within a corporate environment to which they are trying to adapt.

This work is based on these relationships, more specifically on the pathologies that vulnerable individuals might experience when subjected to corporate influences. Why does the author choose to frame these relationships in medical terms? The answer is

simple: this model is the latest trend in classifying and trying to understand human behaviour. One look at versions of the DSM (Diagnosis and Statistical Manual), the official guide of the American Psychiatric Association for classifying mental health problems, shows that the number of diagnostic labels has been steadily increasing. It has quadrupled in the last 50 years<sup>1</sup> and yet the next revision of this classification guide will not include the new pathologies described in this manual. If we are to develop preventative approaches, as well as effective treatments to limit the negative effects of these pathologies on both human health and corporate health, it is vital that we study them. We invite you to share this groundbreaking and passionate clinical analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> The number of psychiatric diagnoses rose progressively from 60 in 1952 (DSM-I) to 145 in 1968 (DSM-II), 265 in 1980 (DSM-III) and 374 in 1994 (DSM-IV)! The next revision of the manual, planned for 2012, will undoubtedly include a good number of new diagnoses.

## **A WORD ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

He holds a Ph.D. in psychology and is very passionate about coronology, a discipline that he founded to save humanity and, secondarily, to become rich and famous. He is also a mental health and drug addiction researcher at a major hospital. At the time of publication of this book, he was associate professor of psychiatry at a Montreal university and associate professor at two other universities (in a psychology department and a drug addiction program). The two institutions will remain unnamed in order to protect their reputation.

The author also holds the prestigious international chair of unknown aspects of contemporary coronoses (an unsubsidized position that he has funded himself for the sole purpose of beefing up his biography as well as his notoriety.)

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## CHAPTER 4

### Thinking like a business:

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According to Darwin's theory of evolution, living species have undergone various changes in order to adapt to their environment. This is true for primitive species, but it must be added that species that have reached a high level of evolution have also transformed their environment to suit their needs. Thus, since the prehistoric period, man has succeeded in changing his environment and improving his living conditions by means of various inventions. He invented the hunting weapon, the firelighter, the wheel and, more recently in his history, permanent-press trousers, the gas BBQ and the home theatre. These all made it possible for him to ensure his survival, his prosperity and his dominance over other species.

Man does not, however, have total control over his environment. For example, despite extremely precise weather forecasts, there will always be a few showers, thunderstorms or even occasional blizzards to surprise him at a time or in a place where they were least expected. In addition, his peaceful existence may sometimes be disturbed by a traffic jam, a cold, a subway breakdown or a computer virus. Man is thus at the mercy of a multitude of unforeseen events, whether in his daily routine or at work, or perhaps with respect to his health or other aspects of his life.

Many people face up to such unforeseen events with optimism. Aside from the unpleasantness they cause, such events offer the opportunity to make all sorts of discoveries, as well as to learn very useful things. In the field of medicine, several scientific discoveries have in fact been made quite by chance. For example, Alexander Fleming had only scarce resources to carry out his research and therefore had to make do with a poorly sterilized laboratory. On September 3, 1928, one of his Petri dishes containing a bacterial



culture was inadvertently left uncovered. It was spoiled when it was colonized by a mould in the surrounding environment: penicillin!

A number of other drugs have likewise been discovered in this way. For example, in 1952 surgeon Henri Laborit realized that a drug used to treat post-operative shock had relaxant properties. He suggested it be used in psychiatry to treat psychotic disorders. This became the first neuroleptic drug.

Similarly, at the end of the 1950s, it was noted that an antituberculosis drug (iproniazide) made patients euphoric. Psychiatrist Nathan Kline experimented with it to treat depression. This drug became the first antidepressant in the MAOI family (monoamine oxidase inhibitors). Conversely, Zyban®, a drug specifically developed as an antidepressant, has since been used for a completely different purpose, again discovered by accident – to help people quit smoking. (The reader will have gathered that this drug acts on nicotinic receptors. This information is repeated here for educational purposes.)

This fascinating demonstration could continue with the listing of a large number of popular drugs. Among these, we must mention sildenafil (Viagra®), which is no more than a simple phosphodiesterase type 5 inhibitor (attentive readers will once again want to memorize these terms to show off at social events by demonstrating the extent of their knowledge). This product was originally designed to treat high blood pressure, but since it acts to relax smooth muscle fibres, it increases blood flow in various parts of the body. It promotes an erection in the male, a mechanism that has led to a very different application from the treatment for which it was initially developed. Yet another unintended discovery.

This was also the case for another product known to the general public: Botox® (this is the trademark name, as the product is actually made from botulinum toxin type A). This drug was first used to treat strabismus (poor alignment of the eyes) as well as blepharospasm (a disorder causing contractions of the eyelid muscles). The effect of Botox on wrinkles was a chance discovery by two Canadian ophthalmologists, Drs. Alastair Carruthers and Jean Carruthers, in 1987 (1).

All these discoveries have one point in common: they were made accidentally by people looking for something else. This phenomenon has a name. It was dubbed *serendipity* by the writer Horace Walpole in 1754. The author chose this term to describe the talent of three princes in a tale entitled “The Three Princes of Serendip,” by Amir Khusrau, a great Persian poet (2). In this tale, the princes make various deductions based on clues they discover on their travels. Their reasoning enables them to imagine precisely what happened before they came along, even though this has nothing to do with the purpose of their travels. Modern writers have taken this analysis of serendipity further, by highlighting the positive outcomes that an unexpected situation can offer when we choose to take advantage of it (3).

This positive view of unplanned events is not, however, shared by all. While unexpected occurrences are a source of inspiration for some, for others they are nothing but a waste of time and a major annoyance. For these people, anything that is not written in their calendar or has not been planned in their schedule is just an obstacle preventing them from reaching their goals. In the best-case scenario, these unexpected events are just a useless diversion. These people therefore experience a great feeling of frustration when an event does not occur at the time and place it was supposed to. Unpredictable situations make them anxious; they are suddenly reminded that they do not have complete control over all of the events in their lives. Just like businesses that try to survive in a hostile environment, they react by exerting a very high degree of control over those aspects of their lives that they can control. They try to “manage” them.

For businesses, exercising this control results in the standardization of practices according to accepted norms. This well-intentioned procedural compliance has a calming effect on managers, shareholders and, in the end, on their clientele. It is always reassuring to know that the same product, be it a wine, perfume, hair dye or drug, has the same characteristics, whether it is purchased in different stores or at different times. To achieve this, the most successful businesses make sure that their activities are in line with recognized management and quality improvement principles.

While making use of these good management practices is an essential precondition for guaranteeing that a corporation runs the way it should, it is clearly not enough to ensure its survival and growth. Nonetheless, the great zeal displayed by disciples of good management has led many businesses to believe that all the problems they encounter are caused by bad management. Just like a religious belief, faith in the virtues of best practices in management has spread throughout the industrialized countries.

Proven management practices, designed to ensure a better supply of services and a higher asset yield for shareholders, are taught by university faculties. They are also communicated by consultants, coaches and many other apostles of management. Their faith in the power of good management is usually unshakeable and their loyalty is often greater than that of religious disciples!

This belief in the virtues of management has reached such a level of popularity in the business world that it has also spread to individuals, who, just like businesses, come to believe that they will succeed in solving their problems by applying management principles. Since this phenomenon can lead to inappropriate attitudes and behaviours, both in business and in human beings, it will be considered here as a manifestation of disease. Any business or person showing signs of this syndrome will be deemed to be suffering from “managementitis” and, since this is a disease found in businesses that can be transmitted to human beings, it will be classified as a corponosis. Managementitis is therefore defined here as the general propensity to resort to management principles to solve every problem, no matter what kind.

### **Human managementitis**

So why do so many individuals try to apply management principles in their daily lives? This is quite simply vicarious learning – which means “learning by imitation” and which is only used here to make the argument sound scientific. These people try in fact to imitate big businesses, whose success is usually associated with good management. Indeed, the popularity of this concept is more widespread in countries where the number of big

businesses is considerable. Because of their financial and social success, these corporations have become models of inspiration, new heroes! People who are in contact with them may come to believe that their personal success depends mainly on their own ability to manage their resources well, just like corporations (4).

As a result, people who interact most frequently with these businesses, whether through their work or because of the irresistible consumption of certain brands or certain products, are likely to adopt their values and methods. They are then prone, more or less consciously, to borrow the management practices advocated by these big corporations to solve their personal problems. They are at very high risk of contracting managementitis.

Interested readers will no doubt want to assess their own risk of getting this disease. They are therefore encouraged to take the self-screening test below. Once the test is completed, their results can be analysed using the accompanying scale. After thinking about the deep meaning their results have for them, they can continue reading this fascinating text.

## **Managementitis Self-Screening Test**

*Indicate whether you are trying to manage each of the following twenty items by putting a checkmark in the corresponding box.*

<b><i>I try to manage...</i></b>	<b><i>Check the appropriate boxes</i></b>
<i>1. My time at work</i>	
<i>2. My emotions</i>	
<i>3. My finances</i>	
<i>4. Unexpected events</i>	
<i>5. Employees at work</i>	
<i>6. My anxiety</i>	
<i>7. My weight</i>	
<i>8. My romantic relationships</i>	
<i>9. My diet</i>	
<i>10. My family life</i>	
<i>11. My sex life</i>	
<i>12. My hobbies</i>	
<i>13. My sleep</i>	
<i>14. My fantasies</i>	
<i>15. My friendships</i>	
<i>16. My health</i>	
<i>17. My stamp collection*</i>	
<i>18. My spiritual life</i>	
<i>19. My cat**</i>	
<i>20. My shyness</i>	

*\*Or other personal collection, including CDs, DVDs, parking tickets, ceramic mugs, photos, autographs, out-of-date computers, watches or other collectors' items.*

*\*\*Or other pet, including hamsters, dogs, exotic birds, varieties of reptile and pet insects.*

### ***Interpreting the answers***

*The test includes twenty items. Count the number of times you answered “yes” by checking a box. Don’t count items 1 and 5, since they refer to managing time at work, and this kind of management is fairly well tolerated by the human organism. The other eighteen, however, concern various aspects of your personal life. They help you see how much you subscribe to the idea of management. If you get a total of 0 or 1, there is no reason to worry, for the moment. Be careful all the same, as the temptation to want to manage everything is strong. If your total is between 2 and 5, you are suffering from a moderate attack of managementitis. Thinking about the items in question is recommended. What do you want to change by trying to “manage” them? Is this really the solution? Lastly, if you get a total of more than 5, then the corporate influence on you is powerful. You have reached the point of trying to manage most aspects of your personal life. It would be a good idea to think about this tendency with respect to yourself. Why try to “manage” your emotions, your sex life, your spirituality...wouldn't it instead be better to “experience” them? Similarly, isn't it more enjoyable to “make the most of” your health, sleep, friends and the unexpected events of life instead of trying to “manage” them? Finally, trying to examine and understand your fantasies, your cat or your exotic bird poses challenges that can be much more exciting than trying to manage them! It would be a good idea for you to ask yourself just what makes you want to manage everything. Is this really the solution?*

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In completing the self-screening test for managementitis, readers will perhaps have been surprised by the list of suggested choices. If this is the case, they have underestimated how widespread the concept of management is. By way of convincing them, a scholarly analysis of the titles of recent books on management has been carried out. At the time of this study, there were slightly more than 500 books published in French whose titles

included the word “manage”. More than half of these books dealt with the management of business, finances and work. Included were such subjects as managing a budget, sales, workplace conflicts and even “your supervisor”. The other books related to many personal concerns, which shows how badly people want to manage them. In this vein, “managing stress” occurred most often, in a dozen books. “Managing your time” was also among the top ten, as was “managing your relationships with other people”, which appeared not only under this generic theme, but also in numerous specialized books, such as managing “your romantic break-ups”, “your ex-wife and child”, “your relationship as a couple”, “sibling arguments”, your mother-in-law”, and even “your family” in its entirety, for the most ambitious among us. These themes speak volumes about people’s everyday concerns! In addition, other books guide disciples of management toward practical applications linked to their daily activities. These include managing your dog, your stuttering, your wine cellar, your healthy weight, your insomnia, your arthritis and your e-mail. Lastly, some daring authors have even tackled how to manage uncertainty, crises, creativity, disasters, change, pressure and, if all of that doesn’t work, death and whatever comes after!

French writer and sociologist Vincent de Gaulejac examines the popularity of applications of the concept of management in his book *La Société malade de la gestion* (5). He highlights the image of the world projected by the values associated with managing “everything”. He uses the term “managementitis” to describe the tendency to want to manage everything, from our lives as members of a community to our lives as individuals. He also likens this tendency to a disease. Many people do indeed seem to be affected and wind up believing that everything is “manageable”.

Although there are no available epidemiological data on the subject, there is every reason to believe that this pathology has reached pandemic levels, at least in industrialized countries. To fully illustrate the symptoms of this disease, Case Study 7 presents an example of extreme managementitis in human beings (this is a fictitious case created for purely instructive purposes).

## **Case Study 7**

### ***Extreme managementitis: "family quality" certification (fictitious case)***

*Julie and Sebastian live in the suburbs and have two children. Julie is the assistant director of a bank branch, and Sebastian is a senior manager in a pencil-sharpener import business. After several years of living together and feeling that their relationship was growing boring, they decided to spice it up a little.*

*With this in mind, they chose to take on new challenges by managing their many priorities in a competitive environment where the highest criteria of excellence would be encouraged and recognized. They broke new ground by writing it all down in their family charter. But their challenge didn't stop there: achieving their high aspirations for continuing improvement also meant they had to reorganize their time. To do this, they took great delight in establishing a "family quality" committee. In the enthusiasm of the moment, they chose an intergenerational approach in which the children would also be represented.*

*Resolutely focussed on the fundamental values of performance, continuous quality improvement and risk management, they took steps to have their family accredited according to ISO 9001 standards.*

*Sebastian began to apply the conflict resolution principles he was most familiar with, those stemming from the field of management. Julie, who is a manager in a large bank, was already familiar with this approach and willingly agreed to the suggested steps. So it was in a spirit of co-management that they tackled their new challenge of family governance. Despite the innovative nature of the approach, their strategic planning greatly resembled that of a typical modern family: many tasks contracted out to competitive businesses, such as a daycare to manage the early childhood of the younger child and a renowned private school to educate the older, so as to optimize his chances of getting a senior level job in a large company.*

*Meal preparation, always a subject of conflict both with regard to the timing of the services and menu composition, was handed over to a caterer. The increase in costs per meal unit was nonetheless greatly compensated for by more varied choices, significantly more*



*courteous service and a higher level of satisfaction, as shown in opinion polls carried out with family members. A cost-benefit analysis also confirmed the merits of this decision. Everyday domestic tasks such as lawn maintenance and snow removal were given to a family-private partnership (FPP), to enhance their efficiency. The same was done for financial issues, which were entrusted to an investment advisor, a tax specialist and a mortgage broker.*

*To manage their health, compulsory registration of all family members in a fitness club was decided on. In addition, a doctor in a private family clinic took over responsibility for antidepressants, anti-anxiety medication and authorized stimulants. As a bonus, based on the advice of a sexologist, Sebastian got a prescription for Viagra® to ensure a high level of sexual performance for the couple, thus taking care of all aspects of the family's happiness.*

*Julie and Sebastian's way of life is not all that different from that of a typical family in the western world. Nonetheless, it may be surprising to note that the figurative painting in the living room has been replaced by a panel bearing the inscription "In this house, our goal is continuous improvement". It is also surprising to find just above it a display shelf with a visitors' charter and code of ethics on it, as well as the member of the month, honoured for his or her exemplary contribution to optimum family performance. Yet this is just the beginning of the changes their family is making to obtain ISO family certification. Because of its profound attachment to environmental values, this family unit does not intend to stop at just one certification: the children have been tasked with looking into the feasibility of a LEED "family" certification. So many challenges still to meet!*

*Julie and Sebastian are not undergoing treatment for managementitis. Their family mission, along with the rest of their new routines, leads us to believe that they soon should be, however!*

Julie and Sebastian have a case of virulent managementitis. Every aspect of their life together is affected by it, including the subcontracting related to children and domestic tasks and co-management of their sex life. Their moral values are even written up as a code of ethics. Just like a business, they try to exert strict control over everything that can happen

in their family. Without admitting it, they believe that if happiness is inscribed in a charter, it will be achieved according to predetermined steps. Of course, Julie and Sebastian's case has been slightly "dramatized" for the instructional purposes of this guide. It nonetheless reflects a propensity to imitate business with the aim of controlling one's fate. This tendency to act like big companies may generally be harmless when it is limited to a few isolated aspects of people's lives. It can, however, take you far off course when it is applied to every single personal problem.

What's more, even in businesses, the belief that every problem can be solved using best management practices often leads to harmful decisions that can hinder their development, and even their very survival. "Structuritis" is one example. It is seen in the compulsive tendency to constantly change an organisation's structure in order to improve its performance. It is particularly common in large corporations and in government agencies. The damage it does includes, among other things, high structural costs, as well as a general lack of motivation among employees, who no longer know where they belong in the midst of the unceasing turmoil of change.

Structuritis is the result of a company getting managementitis. Because it is organizational by nature, it cannot be caught by individuals. On the other hand, other complications of managementitis may be passed on to people who are in contact with these companies. Among these, micromanagement and nanomanagement are the most widespread and will therefore be discussed here.

### **Complications associated with managementitis**

It is important to remember that businesses are living organisms whose life expectancy is short compared with that of human beings. Their actions take place in a limited time frame and in fiercely competitive circumstances often characterized by an unstable environment and shaky financing. In these conditions, many of their decisions can have consequences critical to their survival. Thus, it is always reassuring, especially for shareholders, to see

that they exercise strict control over all of their activities – in other words, that they employ sound business practices.

The desire to manage everything does not however mean that everything will be managed efficiently. Managing a situation requires considerable effort. It means analysing its various aspects, deciding what must be done to improve it, undertaking the relevant steps and doing follow-up. This exercise is more dangerous it might appear, for its success depends on the ability of the managers in question to target the key aspects of the problem they hope to resolve as well as to choose effective mechanisms for doing so.

The danger lies in the fact that, focussed on the problem that concerns them, the managers involved may lose sight of the overall context in which they are operating. Fifty years ago, Theodore Levitt, a pioneer of modern marketing, called this phenomenon “myopia”, referring to an overly restrictive understanding of the company’s mission (6). Similarly, it could be said that managers with too narrow a view of the problems they have to manage are suffering from organizational myopia. The harmful effects that can be caused by this “vision” problem can be disastrous. A good example of this was the launching of New Coke® in 1985, as it showed that even a large private enterprise, the foremost in its field, with solid expertise in management and marketing, may have been affected by organizational myopia. Coke, since the end of the Second World War, had accounted for 60% of the soft drink market in the United States, but this proportion had sunk to about 24% by 1983. Serious measures had to be taken to re-establish Coke’s first place standing ahead of Pepsi. Taste tests suggested reformulating the Coke® recipe to bring the taste closer to what young people – a clientele that identified with Pepsi – were looking for. After one hundred years of Coke’s existence, they decided to change its recipe. The launch was somewhat distressing, as the company received upwards of 40,000 letters and 6,000 protest calls per day. Sales levelled off quickly and, after 87 days of hell, the company reintroduced classic Coke (6A).

The managers at Coca-Cola had lost sight of the fact that a cola is a mixture of food colourings, phosphoric acid, caffeine and other more or less dubious products that are not at all natural or appealing. You can change the recipe all you want – it’s not taste alone that

makes people want to drink this strange cocktail. It has other qualities! A hundred-year-old product brings back a whole range of associations and memories, which themselves make it a favourite product, a comfort “food”! Changing such a well-established brand by fiddling with its secret recipe – even if the goal is to improve it – is not at all reassuring for a loyal clientele and for the brand’s public image. The Coca-Cola managers of the day had quite simply not included this information in their assessment of the product’s sales problems. This example illustrates the importance of fully grasping the complexity of a problem, and not just some of its aspects, in the desire to “manage” it.

On a personal level, the application of management principles presents the same challenges. Managing a weight problem, for example, may be done in different ways. Some “miracle solutions” may appear to be effective, but their effect is short-lived and they can cause health problems. For example, reducing diets that restrict calorie intake without taking into account a person’s height, weight, age and medical situation may lead to malnutrition-related disorders and health problems. The same is true of programs that aim to reduce the consumption of certain food groups, those that promote rapid weight-loss diets and those that plug sales of diet pills.

In addition to simply managing calorie intake and weight change, the situation as a whole must be considered, as managers at Coca-Cola finally understood. Does the person just have to manage his weight or rather his whole lifestyle? For example, if prepared dishes and packaged foods have too many calories, does he have the time needed to cook his own meals? What’s more, does he burn enough calories through physical activity? This would help him not only to control his weight but also to stay fit. The diagnosis of his problem deserves thoughtful analysis. Is it in fact a question of managing his weight, his time or his health? Just as the Coca-Cola managers’ myopia gave them only a partial view of their business’s problems, the person with a weight problem may tend to manage the situation in a piecemeal way, which will be of very little help to him in reaching his desired personal goals.

Furthermore, whether it has to do with being overweight or with any other problem of a personal nature, when a person with managementitis is unable to see the big picture

with respect to his situation and problems, he may fall prey to one or another of the complications generally seen in common cases of managementitis. These include the “micro” version of managementitis, a very widespread affliction that has already been identified by experts in the field, and the “nano” version of managementitis, described for the first time in this book. What follows is a more detailed examination of “micromanagement” and “nanomanagement”.

### **Micromanagement or the inability to delegate**

The micromanagement syndrome is already well known. Several textbooks refer to this syndrome and Webster’s Dictionary defines it as management involving an excessive control of detail.

This definition lets us sketch a portrait of a typical micromanager. This is a manager who has great difficulty delegating tasks. He feels that his subordinates and even his colleagues never manage to perform the required work satisfactorily (in other words, the way he would do it himself). He therefore has a tendency to do most of the work all by himself, instead of handing the responsibility over to other people. By involving himself to such a degree in carrying out all of the stages of a task, the micromanager spends an undue amount of time working on details that may or may not be important for the project as a whole and is therefore constantly short of time.

This is why this syndrome has been associated with managing tiny parts of the work to be done, hence the expression “micromanagement”. When this tendency spreads to include a number of aspects of everyday life, there is reason to view it as a pathological situation. This affliction typically manifests itself as a notable reluctance to delegate tasks. To illustrate this diagnosis, Case Study 8 presents a case of micromanagement in business, and Case Study 9, a case of micromanagement in the home.

### ***Case Study 8***

## ***A business manager with micromanagement syndrome***

*Bruno is a senior manager with the International Paper-clip Recycling Corporation, a large specialized recycling business. One morning, he gets a call from one of the lobbyists hired by the company's lobbying division. He tells Bruno discreetly that the government is soon going to launch a huge national campaign promoting recycled paper clips. This green campaign is supposed to begin over the coming days, just before the federal election, whose main theme is protecting the work environment.*

*It is therefore important to quickly ramp up the company's paper-clip collection and distribution network, in order to respond satisfactorily to the high demand that will ensue. (Author's note: This is a fictitious example; any sudden increase in the share prices of paper clip recycling companies is purely coincidental.)*

*Bruno now has to call an urgent meeting of the company's national and regional managers, as well as employees in charge of key services, to make sure the company reacts promptly. As the call to meeting will be read by the big bosses, it's important it not contain any errors. Bruno thus decides to write it himself instead of having his department's executive secretary do it. Since he has not mastered all the functions of the word processing software, it takes him several tries before he manages to print the note on the company's official letterhead properly.*

*Unfortunately, the final version he produces is printed on old official paper, which does not display the company's new logo so dear to the new communications director. There's no way the note can be sent like this.*

*He asks his secretary to correct everything that evening and produce the mailing list. It is therefore no longer possible to send the note before the next day, since he will have to re-check everything. On the second day, Bruno notes that one of the addresses on the mailing list is incomplete. There is also a page missing in the document accompanying the letter. Infuriated, he reviews each and every address and decides to do the photocopying himself. Unfortunately, he doesn't completely understand all the commands on the new ultra-fast digital photocopier and makes at least 500 copies of the documents without being able to put*

*them together properly. Turning down any assistance from the clerks watching him struggle, he assembles everything by hand on the table in the large conference room, after having cancelled the meeting scheduled to take place there. Finally, at the end of the second day, he has managed to assemble everything and get it all ready to mail.*

*A courier service is supposed to come first thing in the morning on the third day and guarantee urgent delivery to company headquarters and the regional offices. But then another problem crops up: given the two-day delay, the meeting date no longer works. Another one has to be chosen, but the person who looks after coordinating rooms and the computerized agenda cannot be reached in the evening. This means they have to wait until the third day to choose another date and send the invitation.*

*That night, the TV news announces the government's recycling campaign with great fanfare. A few minutes later, Bruno gets a call from the company president. He is very angry and asks how it is that with all the money the company spends on communications and lobbyists, he has only been informed of this important file by the TV news, at the same time as the public at large. He also asks what is planned in order to take advantage of this preelectoral godsend. As Bruno has not had time to work on a plan of action for the company (having been occupied with printing, photocopying, assembling and distributing his message), he can only give a vague reply that does not seem to impress the president in the least. In addition, the president shows no consideration whatsoever for the long hours of work Bruno has put in over the previous days. Exasperated, Bruno foolishly tells him off, adding that he is surrounded by incompetent people, has to do everything himself, and can't do anything more, since he is already regularly working nearly seven days a week.*

Bruno is the perfect example of a micromanager. Let's look at another case of micromanagement, this time on the home front.

## **Case Study 9**

### ***An example of micromanagement in the home (fictitious case)***

*Lawn maintenance is a complex activity that, in theory, can be delegated to a family member, if he or she is conscientious and responsible. This job can also be given to a contractor with the necessary equipment and a team specialized in this task.*

*Nonetheless, anybody with a keen interest in his lawn wants to be directly involved in every stage of its maintenance. This includes planning operations, mowing, cleaning the lawn mower and assorted rakes and scrapers, seeding and applying the latest scientific discoveries on lawn-watering. And remember that all these activities have to be carried out in accordance with municipal bylaws on noise and watering times, which makes the job even more complicated.*

*Thus, very concerned about best maintenance practices for lawns, Stephen has tried to communicate to Xavier, his older son, everything he knows. His expertise in growing grass, acquired through his lengthy experience in mowing and maintaining the family lawn, as well as from his father's generous advice, was worth sharing with his son for the sake of posterity.*

*Unfortunately, Stephen was forced to realize that at 17 his son was not yet mature enough to be counted on to do the job right. Indeed, during the inspection tour he made following his son's first mowing job, he noticed that a flowerbed had been missed, two begonias had been crushed, a pile of grass clippings had not been picked up and the lawnmower had not been thoroughly cleaned. Having also noted a lack of professionalism on the part of contractors who tended the lawns in his neighbourhood, Stephen decided not to rely on anyone else and to do all of his lawn maintenance himself.*

*Such an important job could not be carried out without careful attention to detail. While his lot was barely the size of half a tennis court, Stephen devoted nearly half his weekends to it, not counting the extra time spent reading up on the subject and doing routine inspections.*



*This work got results: all summer long he had a flawless, solid green lawn, both back and front. Each blade of grass – straight, orderly and disciplined – stood on guard in impeccable rows, absolutely and uniformly green.*

*The work earned everybody's admiration and respect. However, no one could really enjoy this heavenly spot. Indeed, weighed down by the responsibility of maintaining his high lawn-quality standards, Steven didn't allow anyone to walk on the grass. In addition, after many quarrels with (former) friends who had trampled the grass while trying to reach the back door, or with others who had refused to put on slippers to get to the patio, Stephen had the yard fenced in and forbade anyone to enter.*

*All summer long, overwhelmed by various maintenance tasks, Stephen complained constantly about not having enough time for his hobbies: seeing friends and playing his favourite sport, golf!*

Case studies 8 and 9 show that micromanagement means exerting a high degree of control over every aspect of a job, right down to the smallest details. The ultimate way to exercise this control is to do all the required tasks yourself.

With its roots in the business world, this syndrome is extremely widespread within companies. Most at risk are those with a vertical management structure. In this kind of organization, the business is entirely responsible for all of its product manufacturing processes, from design to distribution. The risks of micromanagement are therefore high, as the company may end up expending far too much energy to carry out all operations related to its products, rather than subcontracting out certain tasks to businesses more skilled in these areas. This determination to do everything itself, regardless of the cost and outcome, may result in declining performance and profitability for the company. When this happens, micromanagement is the problem.

In contrast, companies that have a horizontal management structure divide their activities among several suppliers, subcontractors and subsidiaries. In theory, this division of labour means that each of these businesses can perform work in its area of expertise.

This arrangement thus helps limit, to some degree, the prevalence of micromanagement symptoms.

Companies may express their obsession with control in different ways, however. They often overdo it with regard to activities that are easy to see and measure and which they have control over. When this control affects activities that make up just a tiny, even insignificant, share of the total operations of a business, it is very likely that it is suffering from nanomanagement.

### **Nanomanagement, or exercising too much control over insignificant factors**

In an era of high technology, the complex tasks flowing from developments in micro computing, the discovery of new drugs and the carrying out of space missions require a workplace organization in which many specialized teams, cutting-edge businesses and government agencies have to collaborate on several levels.

Indeed, the specialization of tasks involved in the production of most common goods and services has resulted in the splintering of the mandate of large corporations. Their functions are thus subdivided among a large number of subcontractors, teams, partners, subsidiaries and sometimes even competitors, and are carried out by a great many micro-organizations that are given very precise mandates (which will here be called “nanomandates”, given their limited size).

Whether these micro-organizations are departments, services, subsidiaries or subcontractors, each has a nanovision of the company’s overall mission, its activities and its environment. To fulfil their nanomandate, they put in place various nanoprograms whose effects can only be detected using hypersensitive measuring tools. Their performance measuring instruments thus have to be able to detect very small changes on the nanometric scale.

This ability to measure minute changes is crucial for managers, since the success achieved in fulfilling a mandate is inversely proportional to the mandate’s size. In other

words, the smaller the size of the mandate, the higher the chances of success for the manager who has to carry it out (on the condition, of course, that he can demonstrate progress, no matter how minuscule or even barely discernable). The equation shown in Figure 1 illustrates this universal law. Applying it to a human problem, that of Zoë, who wants to lose weight, makes it possible to illustrate the relationship among the variables involved. If Zoë sets herself the goal of losing 10 kilos during the year, this is the mandate she has given herself. The mandate M is thus 10. The calculation is simple: if, at the end of the year, she has only lost 5 kilos, her success (S) will be 0.5 (or 1 out of 2, or 50 out of 100), since the achievement (A) of 5 kilos lost is divided by the mandate (M) of 10 kilos. Over time and with more management experience, she will learn that it is safer to set a less ambitious goal. For example, if she sets herself a goal of 1 kilo (M=1) and manages to lose this kilo (A=1), her success will be greater than that of the previous year (1/1=1)!

If she really wants to succeed, she might even set herself a mandate in grams, micrograms or even nanograms on a daily basis. She would thus be assured of success every day! Of course, observations like this do not mean much in terms of Zoë's actual success in reaching her healthy weight. They show, however, on a human scale, the tendency to rely on a partial understanding of a problem and then resort to nanoparticular management of the factors involved.

**Figure 1**

**Relationship between the success achieved and the size of the mandate**

$$S = A / M$$

**(where S = measure of success, A = achievement and M = mandate)**

- **Obsession with nanoparticular management**

“But what exactly are these nanotechnologies you’re talking about?” rightly wonders the sceptical reader, hearing about nanomanagement for the first time. According to the United Kingdom’s Royal Academy of Engineering (7), nanotechnologies involve the production and application of structures, estimates and systems by controlling their shape and size on a nanometric scale. The prefix nano comes from the Greek and means “dwarf”, and a nanometer equals  $10$  to the power of  $-9$ . An atom is smaller than a nanometer, but several molecules, including some proteins, are larger than a nanometer. Based on these highly scientific facts, it is hereby resolved that the nanoparticular management style, whose aims are to manage the smallest possible mandates, be designated by the term “nanomanagement”.

To guide the reader in exploring this entirely new concept, and also to appear serious and scientific, nanomanagement will be examined from the perspective of its three basic principles.

- **The three basic principles of nanomanagement**

Nanomanagement is based on the management philosophy of subdivisible decision-making. (Readers must not waste their precious time looking in other sources to learn more about this approach; it has just been invented, especially for this chapter. They will learn more by continuing to read.) According to this approach to problem solving, a complex task can be subdivided into an infinite number of simpler tasks that can always be carried out by a person or a business that is more skilled than others. For the purposes of this discussion, the application of nanomanagement is based on the following three premises.

First, it is possible to divide a mandate into submandates that will then be easier to operationalize, execute and measure. The process of work can thus be subdivided until the smallest unit is reached: the nanomandate.

Secondly, every decision can be divided into an infinite number of nanodecisions which, once taken, help to create a significant nanoprogression in the overall accomplishment of a mandate. This principle is well illustrated in the decisions made by large companies. For example, a government decision is usually preceded by a series of nanodecisions: identifying consultants, commissioning a study, holding public consultations and special commissions usually precede any important decision.

Lastly, technologies now exist to measure success on a nanometric scale. It is essential to remember that the degree of success in fulfilling a mandate is inversely proportional to the size of this mandate (refer again to Figure 1). As a result, for a good nanomanager to be able to assess his progress in accomplishing a mandate, he must have access to cutting edge nanotechnologies. He will thus be able to generate impressive figures for his quarterly reports and boast of a measurable and observable mega success when describing the achievement of his nanoparticular objectives, in accordance with the best practices of nanomanagement. All of this will earn him enormous success, along with a huge performance bonus.

Despite concrete successes, nanomanagement often leads to a somewhat inefficient fragmentation of work. Indeed, the division of tasks into nanoparticles can make it difficult to pull together the work done by each employee responsible. This parcelling out is often seen in large corporations or among government bodies. We then say that the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. It must however be admitted that often, in big companies, the right hand doesn't even know the left hand exists! This splitting up of the components of the organization, where much attention is paid to completing nanoparticular aspects of a mandate (on the pretext that they are highly visible or that they can be easily measured and observed) generally leads only to nanoreresults in terms of overall performance.

Bearing in mind these explanations, it is possible to define nanomanagement as a set of steps aimed at exerting tight control over factors that make only an insignificant contribution to completing an activity, be it a project, a job or another specific mandate.

Certain conditions provide fertile ground for nanomanagement. For example, when an atmosphere of urgency influences decision making, it then becomes acceptable, even desirable, to consider only a single aspect of the problem in question (a nanoview of the problem): one that can be seen, over which it is possible to exert tight control and whose progression is easily measured (especially in the very short term). Once this aspect of the problem has been identified and defined, the tendency is then to act in a great hurry, focussing all possible attention on the nanoactions themselves, even if they contribute only very slightly to the overall resolution of the situation as a whole. These conditions are summarized in Table 5 below. Taken together, these conditions make it possible to focus on a nano-objective for action that will demonstrate to the entire Universe the dazzling success of the steps undertaken.

**Table 5**

**Conditions providing fertile ground for nanomanagement**

- Atmosphere of urgency (pre-existing or created for the occasion)
- Need to resolve the situation quickly
- Simplistic understanding of the situation (a nanoview of reality) focussing on a single aspect of the problem, usually inappropriate but easy to observe and measure

Studying a few concrete examples of nanomanagement will provide support for these highly theoretical explanations.

**• A few examples of nanomanagement in large corporations**

“Security-itis” is a common case of nanomanagement, consisting of paying an extraordinary amount of attention to observable and measurable security measures, even when they have only a trivial impact on public safety.

Security-itis is a social disorder that is particularly common in our twenty-first century world, both in businesses and in the corridors of governments. Several strains of security-itis have already emerged in industrialized countries in recent decades. For example, widespread fear of nuclear attack was a feature of the 1960s. In the 1970s, it was the fear of an oil shortage, and in the 1980s and 1990s, fear of AIDS, infectious diseases and government budget deficits. Then came the Y2K bug to wrap up the twentieth century.

A new strain of security-itis appeared at the beginning of the twenty-first century – associated with terrorism. The World Trade Center disaster in New York in 2001 has in fact led to an extraordinary spreading of this latest American security-itis mutation to Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and all the other continents. Its symptoms are easily seen in the air transport industry, where it has reached pandemic levels. This is why, for the purpose of illustration and instruction, this particular example of nanomanagement is presented in detail in Case Study 10.

### ***Case Study 10***

#### ***The early twenty-first century security-itis pandemic***

*Following the air strikes in the United States on September 11, 2001, radical measures had to be taken immediately to re-establish an atmosphere of safety and social order. Security measures for passengers and baggage quickly became bogged down in questionnaires and various checks; the main role played by their implementation was to show everybody that the authorities were ensuring adequate safety in public places. People told each other that if such a detailed examination were given to every single object in every passenger's toiletry bag, then logic would dictate that there must also be rigorous checks on the other ways of getting offensive weapons onto airplanes. In this context, the extended wait time to board planes, the searches and multiple checks, including being forbidden to take a nail-clipper on board, quickly reassured passengers (who incidentally could carry on a bottle of wine, which, being made of glass, is a much more dangerous weapon than a simple nail file!).*

*Despite these security measures, in 2002 the first study on the subject, done by the United States Transport Security Agency, revealed that in thirty-two of the largest American airports, one fourth of the attempts to board planes with weapons such as pistols, dynamite and simulated bombs were not detected.*

*In Canada, The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence published a report in 2003 entitled The Myth of Security at Canada's Airports (8). The title of this report summarizes its contents very well. It also reminds us that Canadians had a special tax of 24 dollars on round-trip tickets imposed on them and that this tax resulted in the collection of the sum of 2.1 billion dollars in five years.*

*What about the measures adopted during this period? The authors indicate that "the [Senatorial] Committee sees the front door of air security as now being fairly well secured, with the side and back doors wide open." Several security gaps are mentioned – potentially dangerous cargo, which is not electronically scanned, and airport and outside workers who have access to airplanes without adequate entry searches, as well as the "haphazard examination" of entry passes. The document lists as well a large number of inconsistencies in security measures under various highly colourful headings, like "'Plastic Knives Don't Cut it", pointing out that the stainless steel knives on trays given to passengers have been replaced by plastic knives, which is not the case for forks. We read as well that "crews want training, not a wing and a prayer" and that there is "a lack of any plan to train maintenance workers in the recognition of potentially dangerous persons, objects or substances."*

*In August 2006, nearly five years after the September 11, 2001, tragedy, in order to foil attacks on British and American flights, a second round of security measures was implemented. With the aim of keeping passengers from boarding with explosives made from household materials, they were forbidden to take any kind of liquid or gel into the cabin. This was a mutation of the security-itis syndrome, whose symptoms involved restricting liquids instead of nail-clippers.*

*Do passengers really feel safer in airplanes with all these measures in place? A second Senate report on the subject, published in 2007, again concluded that there is really no reason*



*to feel safer (9)! The situation in other countries is no better: on December 25, 2009, a passenger on Northwest/Delta Airlines flight 253 from Amsterdam to Detroit tried to blow himself up during the flight, as the plane was landing in Detroit. Luckily, the explosive device failed and no one was killed. The case nonetheless revealed a good deal about the international air security situation more than eight years after the attacks in New York. The name of the terrorist who committed this attempt was actually on the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center list, a list of 550,000 names of "suspected" persons, some of whom have, or have had in the past, links with terrorist organizations. It doesn't seem to have been very useful in this case. Yet the young terrorist's father had flagged him to American authorities six weeks earlier! Furthermore, this young man had only bought a "one-way" ticket to Detroit, he paid cash for his ticket and had not checked any baggage! None of these clues was judged to be important at the various checkpoints in the airports the passenger transited through – when leaving Niger and stopping over in Amsterdam he was nonetheless able to board two planes carrying explosives and a detonator (10)!*

### ***Clinical interpretation***

*Since September 2001, airline security has provided endless possibilities for nanomanagement. The security-itis syndromes seen in airline security are associated with two conditions typical of standard cases of nanomanagement:*

- 1. the need to act quickly associated with a perceived imminent disaster that encourages fast action to resolve the situation in the short term;*
- 2. attention focussed on a single element of the situation, the one that is easiest to demonstrate control over. In the current case, an Olympian nail file monitoring exercise was carried out in passengers' luggage. However, this step has very little connection with the overall improvement of security in airplanes (besides, nail files have never been considered a source of imminent danger in all of human history.)*

*The best we can say is that, while not very effective in actually countering the source of the anticipated danger, security check rituals in airports and public places help reduce the level of anxiety felt by people and societies with security-itis, in much the same way that superstitious behaviours do.*

*In addition, it is useful to add here that perceived danger is much more important than real danger, as an examination of the main causes of death in the United States indicates. Figures provided by the National Center for Health Statistics show that heart disease and cancer were responsible for half the deaths in the US in the early 2000s. In a single year, heart disease killed more than 700,000 Americans. Seven times more than deaths from accidents and infinitely more than deaths during terrorist attacks!*

*Be that as it may, adopting control measures in airports provides both reassuring rituals for passengers and observable and measurable indicators of the measures taken to protect them: the number of passengers checked, costs associated with buying equipment, hiring staff, seizure of nail files, nail clippers and other tools used by professional airline terrorists, awarding contracts for the installation of the very latest in security surveillance systems...*

*The fear of attack also offers a superb business opportunity for all companies in the field of surveillance and electronic inspection. They rush to the aid of the population by protecting it with sophisticated devices against acts of sabotage by malicious individuals. It may not be very effective, but it is reassuring for passengers. All of this greatly boosts the growth of security companies. All the same, so as not to be on bad terms with businesses in other sectors, on September 27, 2001, barely two weeks after the September 11 attacks, the prime ministers of Canada and Great Britain and the president of the United States formally encouraged their citizens to go shopping as a patriotic gesture to support their economy (11).*

Security-itis is one example of nanomanagement, but there are many others. In fact, in these early years of the twenty-first century, another nanomanagement syndrome has also reached pandemic levels in western countries: "greenitis". This syndrome manifests

itself in the consumption of products advertised by their manufacturers as being green, with the aim of saving the planet. In order to play their role in protecting the environment, governments have a tendency to support the purchase of these “green” products with a lot of publicity, even if they often have only an infinitesimal effect in fighting environmental pollution. As an example, Case Study 11 illustrates one of these cases of environmental nanomanagement. It describes a program whose main role seems to be to showcase a department and promote two makers of low-speed vehicles, instead of taking serious action to improve air quality.

### ***Case Study 11***

#### ***A case of environmental nanomanagement***

*In Quebec, with citizens becoming more and more sensitized to environmental questions, there is much debate over air pollution. Against this background, with much publicity, the provincial government, in June 2008, authorized the use of low-speed electric vehicles (LSVs) on its roads. The initiative is highly praiseworthy, but the proposal affects only two makes of vehicle...which can only travel at less than 50 km an hour! As they are not very self-sufficient, they can meet the needs of just a tiny portion of the market – vehicles designed to perform specialized tasks. Transport Canada’s Internet site indicates in fact that the department “does not encourage the use of LSVs on public roads, since they go much more slowly and are not required to provide the same level of safety as mainstream vehicles (12).”*

*“But why raise this very interesting initiative in the nanomanagement context and associate it with a diagnosis of greenitis?” the reader concerned about saving the planet right now may wonder.*

*For the following reasons: first of all, the number of electric vehicles covered by this program could not be more than a few hundred at most. Already in July 2008, the two companies in question made public their difficulties in responding to demand, given their relatively limited production capacity. Secondly, if we examine the environmental impact of*

*putting these few vehicles on the road, it only makes a nanocontribution to dealing with the world's pollution situation!*

*The contribution of this measure to a healthier environment looks tiny if we compare it to the damage caused by common sources of air pollution. For example, the recent increase in the number of scooters, which are highly polluting combustion vehicles, has a considerable impact on air quality. In fact, statistics from the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ) show that from 1999 to 2003 the number of small scooters increased 31.7% on Quebec roads. A journalist from Le Devoir who doesn't seem to be at all affected by green promotionitis offered the following analysis: "There are 18,000 scooters with two-stroke engines in Quebec (these are the most polluting models). At least half of these vehicles are apparently driven in Montreal, and each one belches out, on average, the hydrocarbon equivalent of 100 cars (a conservative estimate based on tests conducted in Europe). This equals the daily hydrocarbon waste of the 800,000 cars with catalytic converters that criss-cross the island of Montreal. Luckily, these polluting little engines cover far fewer kilometres per day than do cars, which reduces their overall contribution to smog (13)."*

*If this analysis should prove to be correct, taking a few of these mopeds off the road, a dozen or so, for example, would have an impact equal to the program announced with great pomp by the government!*

*This comparison can also be made with other sources of pollution. For example, we learned in 2007, courtesy of Montreal's first inventory of greenhouse gas emissions sources, that the city's two oil refineries pollute as much as all of its cars together (14). A meaningful government effort to fight greenhouse gases would therefore depend first and foremost on reducing the emissions of these two main polluters, before targeting the individuals who use their polluting product. These figures make it even more obvious that the program to introduce LSVs makes only a nanocontribution to improving air quality.*

*A third illustration of the negligible impact of LSVs stems from a comparison of their effects to those of wood heating, which is especially effective in increasing the emissions of particles into the air. A June 2008 City of Montreal press release indicates that the*

*concentration of fine particles produced by a woodstove over a nine-hour period equals the emissions of a mid-size motor vehicle in an entire year (or 18,000 km).*

*In 2007, it was estimated that there were 50,550 wood combustion devices in the city of Montreal. Thus, if each of these 50,550 wood combustion devices located in the Montreal area were used nine hours a day for a month, the total of fine particles emitted would equal that of about 1.5 million vehicles doing 18,000 km every year (15)!*

*What do governments have planned to curb this major pollution source? A municipal bylaw prohibiting the installation of new polluting wood combustion systems. But what will be the real impact of this initiative on air pollution, when all the old wood heating systems continue to pollute? Here again the limited impact of the LSV program stands out compared with this other major source of pollution.*

*To conclude, given the nanocontribution of the LSV program to the improvement of air quality (particularly compared with its importance in the eyes of its promoters!), there is every reason to diagnose a case of environmental nanomanagement contracted here by a government organization. This diagnosis, made right when the program was launched, has been confirmed by the extremely low demand for this kind of vehicle. Less than two years after the government announcement on LSVs, in December 2009, one of the two manufacturers producing this vehicle in Quebec, Zenn Motor, issued an extremely discreet press release from its headquarters in Toronto. It announced that production of this vehicle would cease in 2010, owing to a "realignment of its activities" (16). After two years of this pilot project, only 51 low-speed vehicles are authorized to be driven in Quebec. Despite this failure, the government decided to extend the project until 2014 (17).*

Case studies 10 and 11 provided illustrations of two cases of societal nanomanagement. The first dealt with maintaining international airline safety by checking passengers' toiletry bags, and the second concerned the nanoparticulate contribution of small electric vehicles to fighting air pollution. In both cases, the urgent need to act led to actions that, even though they produce very few results, are hard to argue with.

Some situations are particularly conducive to the development of cases of nanomanagement. The huge amount of media hype surrounding the financial crisis of 2008, for example, created an atmosphere of urgency perfect for the emergence of new strains of government nanomanagement. Many countries rushed to commit enormous sums to save businesses that were ill adapted to conditions in their economic environment. This batch of corporate social welfare measures clearly signified the return of the welfare state, except that this time, its primary concern was the wellbeing of businesses rather than individuals!

### • Personal nanomanagement

Corponoses are diseases that affect businesses, but they can also be contracted by humans. To illustrate the impact of these attacks on individuals, two fictitious cases have been invented. Primarily for educational purposes, they will be described and analysed so as to illustrate nanomanagement symptomology in human beings. The case of Charles (a false name), who wants to get into shape playing tennis, will be discussed first, in Case Study 12. It will be followed by that of Isabelle (another false name), who wants to enhance her pregnancy performance (Case Study 13). To guide their diagnostic analyses, readers are encouraged to analyse these cases by referring to the definition of nanomanagement found at the beginning of this section of the chapter and to examine the conditions surrounding the emergence of this syndrome as they were summarized in Table 5.

#### ***Case Study 12***

##### ***An individual nanomanagement crisis: Charles needs to get more exercise (fictitious case)***

*Charles is the deputy director of a bank. He is especially sedentary and works at keeping this title by putting in long hours and restricting his movements and daily exercise. Then came the day when, suddenly, he turned forty-five. This birthday coincided with the realization he was*

*overweight and had high blood pressure. It also coincided with a separation from his spouse, a promotion to senior management at the bank and a heart attack.*

*In the hospital, the doctor prescribed a series of tests and drugs and told him to get some exercise and stop smoking. The doctor was clear: if Charles didn't change his habits right away, the next time he felt unwell it would not be just a simple heart attack. He would have to expect the worst.*

*Nothing could be easier for Charles than cutting out smoking, since he had never smoked. As for getting regular physical exercise, that would take time and quite a few major changes in his very busy schedule.*

*He went to a specialized sports store and met a tennis advisor, tennis being a sport he had played when he was young. The advisor explained to him that the game had changed greatly, especially where equipment was concerned. He showed him the latest model of second-generation intelligent racquet – the much touted i-Racquet 3.0. Equipped with electronic components that adjust the tilt of its head, this racquet corrects technical imperfections in its lucky owner's strokes and significantly improves his playing ability.*

*The high-end model also has an electromagnetic system that increases or decreases the tension of the string bed depending on the level of the game and the speed of the shot. What's more, thanks to sensors in the frame and on the grip, a built-in computer records the characteristics of forehand strokes, backhand strokes and volleys. After a few hours of play, this magnificent piece of machinery recognizes its owner's style and efficiently corrects all of his strokes.*

*Lastly, if the client has bought the "telecoaching" package, the racquet can also put him in touch with a professional trainer who will be able to analyze his game and offer advice in real time (only when the electronic help function via satellite is activated; additional costs apply).*

*Charles was especially impressed by how tennis had changed and showed a great interest in the i-Racquet 3.0. He nonetheless hesitated to buy it because of its high cost and the*

*limited time he could devote to tennis. The sales advisor therefore called in two other specialists: a planner certified in integrating leisure activities into the workplace and an authorized sports equipment agent.*

*After an analysis of his personal needs profile, it was explained to Charles that registering for the Play-Work-Be-Fit-at-a-Small-Monthly-Cost Package would allow him to subscribe free to the "mobile-office" plug-in. During serves or major rallies, he could thus put his phone calls on hold or take messages from important clients. A direct link to his voice mailbox at work could also be set up automatically when the racquet was in play. Furthermore, a special circuit would make it possible to use it on-line and wireless with a hand-held device, at competitive commercial telephone rates.*

*Among other optional capabilities was the most popular service – the business telemeeting, where the central computer organizes matches between players chosen from the client list, as part of the Leisure-Work Package. A special agreement with certain large companies also gave the right to substantial reductions, including a free ninety-day trial.*

*Charles realized that while relaxing on a tennis court, he could take his messages, check his e-mail and move a few files forward during quiet periods. He could thus stay in contact with his family and friends at any time of the day or night, no matter where he was playing. He was reminded that the Cost-of-Installation-and-Free-Subscription Package was ending that very evening. He had to make a quick decision and sign up on the spot if he wanted to benefit from this never-before-seen bargain. So Charles quickly signed up for this service.*

### ***Clinical analysis***

*Charles is faced with a difficult decision. If he dedicates more time to his physical fitness, he has to spend less on his work and with his family and friends. However, if he doesn't change his situation, his state of health may interfere both with his performance at work and his family life. The concept of a racquet-office automation tool lets him resolve this dilemma by moving his workplace to the tennis court.*



*It is important to remember that he is being offered this deal in an emergency situation: he has to take steps quickly to improve his state of health and act fast to benefit from the subscription package. He therefore signs up for the plan suggested to him, but by limiting what he does to solve his health problems to this single package, Charles is likely demonstrating nanomanagement. Indeed, after a few games that will most certainly impress his colleagues and clients, who will be fascinated by the technological innovation, it is highly likely that, just like half of those who join a fitness centre, Charles will end up not using his package. In the medium or long term, the i-Racquet 3.0 will overall have only a very small impact on Charles's physical condition.*

Isabelle's story is another example of the nanomanagement of personal problems. There is also, in her role as "hyperwoman", a risk of confusing life goals and work goals. Like many self-employed individuals and small business owners, she identifies both with her business and with her personal role as a high-performance mother-to-be.

### **Case Study 13**

#### ***Attack of maternal nanomanagement: Isabelle's high-performance pregnancy***

*Isabelle is 39.2 years old. She is an interior design professional with two cats, a jointly owned apartment and a part-time boyfriend. She runs her life successfully. Following perinatal complications surrounding the birth of her own business, she has developed advanced expertise in managing her moods using antidepressants and various concoctions made from natural products and red wine. Her entire life is run in accordance with her career plan, including the goal of conceiving a child before she turns forty – she is several months pregnant, in line with her strategic planning schedule.*

*Then an unexpected event turns her life upside down: the Department of Various Rules and Regulations (not a real name) has issued an invitation to tender for the decoration of a huge departmental office complex. The final bids have to be submitted in the fall, precisely at*

*the time she expects to give birth. For Office Design, Isabelle's small firm, this is a unique chance to consolidate her ties with the Department, an important client. How can she coordinate the baby's birth and the submission of her bid on the same dates?*

*For a sensible manager, this is not that complicated: it is merely a question of re-negotiating the planned schedule. This is exactly what Isabelle tries to do. She speaks to her doctor, and then to her obstetrician, to ask them to use the latest medical discoveries to speed up the development of her pregnancy by one month. This would enable her to give birth before the deadlines set for the submission of bids in the competition. Moving her delivery ahead in this way would free up enough of a margin of time for her to prepare a complete bid, including authorizations, specifications and all the certified copies, while respecting the departmental schedule.*

*Isabelle is astonished by her doctors' hesitation. As surprising as it may seem, no one has yet experimented with the use of growth hormones – nonetheless tested in many high-level sports competitions – to speed up the development of a pregnancy. Nor are there any conclusive results as to the effect of serums or multivitamins in the context of programs known to speed up pregnancies.*

*Her request is actually very simple: she is asking only to shorten the gestation period by thirty days to enable her to do everything a bidder for a government contract has to do. A delivery occurring after eight months, in other words, scarcely a month before the generally accepted term, would represent an 11% improvement in her average pregnancy performance.*

*In the twenty-first century, technology should certainly make reaching this goal possible without any difficulty! The incorporation of this practice, if it were extended to all pregnant workers, could in addition significantly reduce the period of time spent away from work. This reduction in the "egg-cradle" timeframe would have an economic impact in terms of productivity worth several billion dollars, not counting the improvement in quality of life for pregnant women.*

*Unfortunately, Isabelle's doctors cannot respond positively to her request. They underline the lack of tested treatments to safely speed up the rate of growth of a human*

*foetus. Nonetheless, because of the commercial and humanitarian factors surrounding her request, they agree to take exceptional measures to accommodate her.*

*A few months later, although the birth does indeed take place after nine months of pregnancy, it occurs in a specially prepared room, so that she can be in contact with her staff. The hospital organized a delivery office for her, with a computer monitor, a photocopier and the documents required to complete any bid for large-scale projects. In addition to the doctor and nurse, the attending team is therefore made up of an accountant's assistant, a computer specialist and an administrative officer. Isabelle can thus be the first to use this trailblazing room and give birth while overseeing the smooth operation of preparing the bid for the department's project.*

*The whole process runs beautifully, and all of the forms, codes, procedures, signatures and documents for the annexes are submitted in due form before the deadline. The experience was a great success; shortly thereafter, Office Design won the departmental contract. Isabelle's baby was also born in excellent health and her doctors received honourable mentions for their contribution to the advancement of businesses and the condition of women.*

*Both the company and the baby are flourishing in the happy and harmonious atmosphere of a very full life.*

### **Clinical analysis**

*Isabelle's case illustrates a typical nanomanagement situation in the life of a human being. Three recognized risk factors are evident: 1) a sense of urgency (she is in the middle of her pregnancy and there is a tight schedule between the moment of delivery and the closing of the department's bidding period), 2) a short-term view of the situation, and 3) strict control of factors that have only a modest influence over the situation. In short, managing the schedule around the delivery date is incidental and does not in any way resolve the conflict between the place her business occupies in Isabelle's life and that of her single parent family.*

*A diagnosis of nanomanagement is therefore justified in Isabelle's (fictitious) case.*

The examples presented in this chapter illustrate the tendency to resort to business practices to exert greater control over the environment at home, at work, but also in society at large. In each case, whether in the management of a “quality” certified family, micromanagement of the lawn, environmental nanomanagement of airline safety or even in Isabelle’s high-performance pregnancy, similar processes are applied. Just like Charles, who did not want to face a second heart attack, governments have implemented measures designed to prevent further terrorist attacks in airports. In both cases, action was taken urgently by putting in place measures of dubious effectiveness: in one by buying an i-Racquet that made it possible to play tennis while working; in the other by checking passengers’ toiletries. In both examples, as well as in other cases discussed in this chapter, the biggest risk is the illusion surrounding the management process, an illusion that leads us to believe, even during an emergency, that managing a single element of a complex problem is the same as controlling the situation as a whole.

### **To sum up**

Management practices enable companies to solve some of their problems by putting in place control measures that give them greater mastery over their environment. Some people tend to think of themselves as businesses and borrow the management techniques used by corporations to resolve their personal problems. Managementitis is the result.

Managementitis may be accompanied by complications like micromanagement syndrome (associated with the inability to delegate tasks to more efficient people or companies) or nanomanagement syndrome (a tight control over factors that contribute only insignificantly to completing a project). Cases illustrating micromanagement and nanomanagement have shown that they exist in both companies and individuals. Managementitis and its complications are, in fact, the most widespread human corponoses.

In the next chapter, the situation of people who believe that all problems can be solved by appropriate training will be studied. This is another strain of corporonosis – “trainingitis”.

## For further information

1. Visit the Intelligence-creative.com website (at [www.intelligence-creative.com](http://www.intelligence-creative.com)) for more information on these drugs and the context in which they were discovered.
2. This was the first tale in his collection *Hasht Bihist (Eight Paradises)*, written in 1302).
3. On this subject, see Robert K. Merton, "The Serendipity Pattern," in *Sociological Theory. American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 50, 1945, p. 462-473. See also the book by Robert K. Merton and Elinor Barber, *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity* (1958), which was (finally!) published by Princeton University Press in February 2004. See as well the overview by Pek van Andel, a former researcher and scientist at the University of Groningen, published in 2005 under the title "Sérendipité, ou de l'art de faire des trouvailles" in *Automates Intelligents*, available at: [www.automatesintelligents.com/echanges/2005/fev/serendipite.html](http://www.automatesintelligents.com/echanges/2005/fev/serendipite.html).
4. At least this is the case in the management of food, energy and cultural resources. In all three cases, industrialized countries, reputed to be good managers, claim authority, to the point of domination. Let's look at a very simple example: the issue of world food supply. According to a report by the World Health Organization, the earth has sufficient resources to feed 12 billion people on 2,700 calories per person per day (see Jean Ziegler's book *La Faim dans le monde expliquée à mon fils*, Paris, Seuil, 2000). Yet, while two billion people suffer from chronic malnutrition and 18 million die every day from diseases related to hunger, according to the *Atlas de l'alimentation dans le monde* by Erik Millstone and Tim Lang (Paris, Autrement, 2003, "Atlas/Monde" coll.), in the industrialized countries we have an obesity problem! A similar situation is seen in the sharing of energy assets and raw materials. While one of the most industrialized countries, the United States, accounts for less than 5% of the world's population (less than one-fourth of the populations of China or India), it is the world's largest consumer of a number of resources, such as corn, coffee, oil and natural gas (*Atlas of Population and Environment* of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, available free in English at

[www.atlas.aas.org](http://www.atlas.aas.org)). The complete reference is Paul Harrison and Fred. Pearce, "AAAS Atlas of Population and Environment," Victoria Dompka Markham, editor, American Association for the Advancement of Science and the University of California Press, 2000, 215 p. The industrialized countries' culture also takes over and becomes dominant. According to UNESCO (*Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing*, available at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap.html>), between 6,000 and 7,000 languages are currently spoken worldwide, 30% of which are in Africa. Nearly half of them could however disappear in the coming years. This decline is attributed to the limited value placed on local languages; since they compete with those of countries with economic influence, they do not help their citizens to get good jobs. These examples would indicate that a country's influence depends on its ability to ally itself with multinationals. Their success in this alliance makes it possible for them to not only impose their economic program, but also their cultural domination! In these three cases, namely in the areas of food, energy and culture, "good management" is a synonym for wealth, influence and power. It is obvious that when big corporations work together with the countries where they are established, they cannot only grow and prosper beyond the borders of these countries, but they can also benefit the local population through their own growth and the transfer of wealth coming from their international networks. By giving access at cut-rate prices to raw materials in less developed countries, they can create many jobs in the product-processing sectors of those countries that offer them a favourable environment. They thus contribute to the accumulation of wealth in countries and among individuals in places where they deign to set up shop. This means they can both wield great influence and enjoy considerable renown, especially since the growth of big companies is often seen as a necessary precondition for the improvement of the human condition.

5. Vincent de Gaulejac, *La Société malade de la gestion. Idéologie gestionnaire, pouvoir managérial et harcèlement social*, Paris, Seuil, 2005, 275 p.
6. Theodore Levitt, "Marketing Myopia," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 38, No. 4, 1960, p. 45-56.

(6A) See under MSN "Actualités finances," "Les plus gros flops marketing : le New Coke de Coca-Cola," published on September 23, 2010, and available at:

<http://finances.fr.msn.com/en-images/photo.aspx?cp-documentid=154751690&page=1> (accessed on February 11, 2011).

See as well "Le New Coke, ou l'histoire d'un échec" at [www.cocacolaweb.fr/2010/04/23/le-new-coke-ou-lhistoire-dun-echec/](http://www.cocacolaweb.fr/2010/04/23/le-new-coke-ou-lhistoire-dun-echec/) (accessed on February 11, 2011).

7. See the report of a study conducted by the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering at the request of the British government in 2003, published in 2004 under the title *Nanoscience and Nanotechnologies: Opportunities and Uncertainties*. The research of the two working groups was supervised by Professor Ann Dowling. The report is available at [www.nanotec.org.uk](http://www.nanotec.org.uk).
8. The report's complete reference is The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, *The Myth of Security at Canada's Airports: Summary*, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Fifth Report, Ottawa, Senate, 2003.
9. This refers to the report by The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, *Canadian Security Guide Book, Airports* (March 2007, 162 p.). A reading of the introduction of this second report on airline security in Canada makes us realize just how little issues related to basic safety, which have nonetheless been raised since the 2003 study, are taken into account and how few are resolved. It is possible to access this document on the Internet by following the links at [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca).
10. Information drawn from the CBS News website of December 26, 2009, entitled "Suspect charged in airline bombing attempt" ([www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/12/26/national/main6024848.shtml?tag=strip](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/12/26/national/main6024848.shtml?tag=strip)) unsigned and accessed on December 27, 2009. See also information reported on *TIME* magazine's Internet site on December 28, 2009, entitled "Why was the accused bomber banned in Britain, not the U.S.?" by Mark Thompson at



[www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1950280,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1950280,00.html) (document accessed January 5, 2009).

11. Reported in the article by Jill Vardly and Chris Wattie “Shopping is patriotic, leaders say,” published in the *National Post* on Friday, September 28, 2001.
12. See the Transport Canada website at [www.tc.gc.ca/eng/menu.htm](http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/menu.htm) (accessed on February 6, 2011).
13. Excerpt from Louis-Gilles Francoeur’s article “La rage du Scooter,” published in the July 16 and 17 editions of *Le Devoir*.
14. Louis-Gilles Francoeur has quoted statistics from 2002-2003 on the most polluting companies. He published his assessment of the “contribution” of two Montreal refineries in the Friday, June 15, 2007, edition of *Le Devoir* in an article entitled “Alerte aux GES.” The information is taken from a report produced for the City of Montreal by the ministère du Développement durable, de l’Environnement et des Parcs du Québec (Quebec’s department of sustainable development, environment and parks, or the MDDEP).
15. Press release entitled “Chauffage au bois à Montréal” published on Wednesday, June 18, 2008, by the Office of the Mayor and Executive Committee of the City of Montreal. The press release also adds, “More information on the pollution emitted by wood combustion and heating with wood is available on the website of the public health division of the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal [Montreal’s health and social services agency at [www.santepub-mtl.qc.ca/Communiqués/2008/18juin.pdf](http://www.santepub-mtl.qc.ca/Communiqués/2008/18juin.pdf), accessed on February 6, 2011] and from the Association pulmonaire du Québec ([www.pq.poumon.ca](http://www.pq.poumon.ca)) [Quebec’s lung association].”
16. This announcement was made in a press release from the Zenn Motor Company Inc., entitled “Zenn Motor Company Updates on Realignment of its Business Operations,” published in Toronto, Ontario, on December 7, 2009. It was accessed on the

following website on December 13, 2009:

[www.zenncars.com/media/press\\_rel/12\\_09/ZMC\\_OPERATIONS\\_Dec09.pdf](http://www.zenncars.com/media/press_rel/12_09/ZMC_OPERATIONS_Dec09.pdf)

(accessed on February 6, 2011).

(17) The figures on the evaluation and extension of the program were presented in a report on the “Chaîne Argent” (TVA - Nouvelle) – TVA’s financial news network. The article was entitled “Voitures électriques : Québec met les bouchés doubles” –

Quebec pulls out all the stops – published on January 18, 2011. It is available at:

<http://argent.canoe.ca/lca/affaires/quebec/archives/2011/01/20110118-064611.html> (accessed on January 23, 2011).