# Tribal management

**Flashback** to a managers' meeting, 21 January 2015 at 11.02 am

Our working day had begun over two hours ago and we'd been reviewing the successes and failures of 2014. Now we're going to look ahead at the year to come.
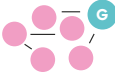
**Slide 54:** a list of issues put forward by all the managers, and grouped under themes – what needs improving, what should be launched, what we should stop doing

**Slide 55:** suddenly, you could hear a pin drop…

**LEVEL 1**
**2%**
Individuals living their lives separately
" All life sucks "

**LEVEL 2**
**25%**
Individuals without a strong and enduring connection, a vague notion of a group
" My life sucks "

**LEVEL 3**
**49%**
Individuals structured into a pyramid
I want to be the best, Egosystem
" I'm great " (You're not)

**LEVEL 4**
**22%**
Individuals understand the value of teamwork, and that everyone benefits when the team wins
Multiple interactions
" We're great "

**LEVEL 5**
**2%**
The fundamental drivers of the brand are so well known to everyone that they are considered obvious.
Projects and processes move forward autonomously
"Life is beautiful, we are martians"

**55**



We discovered the concept of tribal management, taken from the book Manage Your Tribe by Dave Logan, John King and Halee Fischer-Wright.

Tribal means tribe: the tribe is the basic element of any important human enterprise, especially when it comes to making a living. Some tribes require everyone to excel and they are constantly evolving. Other tribes are satisfied with the bare minimum. Where does the difference in performance come from? From the tribal leaders. The tribal leader focuses his/her efforts on the edification of the tribe or, more precisely, on developing the tribal culture. When he/she succeeds, success is guaranteed. **At level 5 of the "tribal evolution", the meaning given to action and strategy is sufficiently clear and known to everyone so that projects are self-organised around triads.**

On January 21 2015 at 11:05 a.m., slide no. 55, we realized that the way we run key projects at Davidson would radically change. Our CEO told us that the 15 priority projects would not be led by management but would be entrusted to autonomous triads, which would be free to pursue the projects as they saw fit, subject to two conditions:

**1.** No reporting;
**2.** Submitting the fruit of their reflections on these subjects to the community in order to reach a consensus before making irreversible decisions (or decisions with high reversibility costs).
Whether it is a question of redesigning part of our ERP, creating a cross-feedback tool (the famous SYSK that we describe in another chapter of this book), or renewing our communication tools, from that point forward we would work in groups of volunteers who could let their creativity run wild…

**5 years later, what are the lessons learned?**
• Between 10 and 15 major triads are deployed each year to lead projects in a collaborative fashion, without managerial pressure and at a pace and with results that far exceed what would have been achieved with a "classic" approach. Beyond the capacity of producing a "deliverable", we also noticed that the "V0" are often close to the "Viable Product".

- Tribal management was put to the test in April 2020, when the COVID crisis "sent us all home" with dozens of new issues and opportunities to deal with (staying motivated remotely, maximising the usefulness of the time available by organising training courses, making the right operational decisions at the right time, testing the robustness of our digitalisation of processes, launching Fast Track optimisation projects... to name just a few). Our habits and attitudes that were firmly established before this particular period facilitated creating a "crisis" organisation capable of quickly executing the iterations of a process that could be "summarised" as:

**1.** Analysing an event.
**2.** Identifying the alternatives available to Davidson within 24 hours.
**3.** Using collective brainpower to make the best decision.
**4.** Communicating information and decision-making.
**5.** Organising operational implementation within 72 hrs. 6. Measuring effectiveness and going back to Step 1 if necessary.

**Jonathan & Thibault**

*Feeling inspired ?*

**Everyone**

**There can be no trios without new ideas to fuel them.** Use every channel of expression available (forum, progress reviews, surveys, first impressions reports, competitions of professional/personal interest, iTab, Pic Push, etc) to give the tribes food for thought!