

CONSTRUCTION OR DESTRUCTION OF SENSE DURING THE FORMALIZATION PROCESS OF ETHICS IN ORGANIZATIONS? THE CASE OF A PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the process of sensemaking (or destruction of sense) during the formalization of corporate ethics.

Based on an intervention in a pharmaceutical company (in order to give support for the writing of a code of ethics), the author analyzes the delicate and fragile process that lasted for more than two years to the adoption of an ethical document. The research uses the conceptual framework of Sensemaking (Weick).

Ambiguities encountered are multiple and discussed:

- how to organize the functioning of the working group?
- which format for the final document? (credo, principles of responsibility, ethical code, rules of conduct?)
- what role for the different stakeholders?
- which department is legitimate to lead the process: the CSR department (or Sustainable development department), what degree of involvement of the HR department?
- how about the engagement of the CEO?
- what could be the value added by the external consultant?

Some managerial recommendations are then put forward to strengthen the organizational resilience.