

## The role of the owner-manager's skills of artisanal Small Business on its strategic vision: illustration by a cognitive map

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### Abstract

The article focuses on the influence of the owner's life trajectory on the representation of his relationship to the business and its relationship to success. Producing knowledge about these elements is essential at both the socio-economic and academic levels. The representation of the relationship that the owner has with his business is poorly known. Success is often understood from an economic and financial point of view. Therefore, this work proposes to look at the strategic vision of the owner-manager of artisanal Small Business. His goal is to assert the role of the owner's life trajectory in building this vision. This research does not look at success from the sole point of view of the company's performance, but more in terms of what it represents in relation to the owner's history. All the interpretations stem from a longitudinal study of a blacksmith. The case analysis allows the construction of a cognitive map. The latter highlights that the construction of the strategic vision of the owner-manager is based on the combination of three variables: the market, the technical skills and the managerial skills. There is thus a strong link between the relationship the owner is developing with his business and his portrayal of his relationship to future success. His ambition and desire for success are projected on the company to enable it to develop. Without a necessary distancing, this relationship becomes alienating which slows down the growth prospects of the company.

**KEYWORDS:** Owner-manager, Small Business, crafts, individual skills, strategic vision, longitudinal case study, cognitive map.

### I. INTRODUCTION

While being an important object of observation, the first company in France, remains relatively "little known and little explored" (Picard, 2006, p.13). In France 94% of French companies have less than 9 employees. Liberal activities and craftsmen account for the majority of Very Small Enterprises (VSE). Of the 3,422,242 companies listed in France, 1,092,185 are related to a handicraft activity. Thus, one in three French companies carries out one of the 510 craft activities listed in 4 different sectors (building, services, production and food). The legal definition of a craft enterprise in France according to the law of July 5th 1996 on the development and promotion of commerce and craftsmanship states that "natural persons and legal persons who aren't recruited more than 10 employees and who carried out, as their primary or secondary activity, an independent professional activity of production, processing, repair or provision of services relating to the craft industry and appearing on a list established by decree of the states Council. The register of trades must be registered for natural persons and legal persons who employ no more than 10 employees and who carry on an independent professional activity in the production, processing, repair or provision of services related to handicrafts, which is listed on a list drawn up by decree in the Council of State. Only those with the required qualification can claim the status of craftsman or master craftsman from their clients. The majority of very small businesses (57% 4, according to INSEE) are made up of owner-managers who are working alone. His task is not simple given its central role in this structure. The low potential of mobilizable resources of these enterprises means that -on the surface- the owner manager must assume all managerial functions and the productive function, in the case of the craftsman (Polge, 2008). However, several studies have shown that it can be based on a close relation to the work in VSE (Jaouen, 2008, Marchesnay, 2008, Torrès, 2009).

Indeed, this company is characterized by geographical, relational, functional and hierarchical proximity. This proximity relationship is an asset on the market. But these specificities are not without implications for the leader on the way to think and how to think and design his business in the short and medium term. The owner-manager often suffers from a "strategic presbyopia" in the sense that he is mastering the desired future for his company, while having an intuitive strategy (Fonrouge, 2002). His personal goals are often confused with those of his structure in an operation, described by Bruyat (1994), as "dialogic".

Taking on the full range of duties requires a significant number of skills (Granovetter, 1995, Bird, 1988) from the owner who is essential to the sustainability of his organization (Chandler and Jansen 1992, Herron and Robinson 1993). This includes, in particular, the ability to develop a strategic vision, that is, in the sense of Carrière (1990), the mental construction of the desired future for the organization. The ability of the entrepreneur to view is inherited in success of his organization (Pettersen, 2005, Laviolette and Loué 2006, Loué et al (2008), Loué and Baronet, 2011, Boughattas, 2011). As a process, the competence is constantly enriched, partly in action, and implies a permanent adaptation of the strategic vision over time. The problem of this research is to understand how the owner of craft VSE competently acts in favor of his strategic vision.

The goal is to highlight the combinations of resources sought when he acts competently in favor of his strategic vision. For this purpose, this research mobilizes the concept of competence through the principle of acting with skills of Le Boterf (2013), complemented by the dynamic representation of the individual competence of Dejours (2001). In addition, the concept of strategic vision, applied to a small business, is also used (Carrière, 1990, Filion, 1991, Cossette, 1996, Jaouen, 2010). In order to dig deeper into this question, this work proposes to rely on a longitudinal case study (Yin, 2008; Dumez, 2013), carried out with a blacksmith. The analysis of the case provided a cognitive map of the relationship between the competency and the strategic vision of the owner-manager. The first part of this article presents the theoretical framework requested in relation to the concept of competence and strategic vision. The second part deals with the methodology in order to present the specificities of the craft studied and the research protocol mobilized. The third part presents the results of the study which starting point is a cognitive map set up to address and facilitates the verbalization of the owner manager concerning his strategic vision.

### **Conceptual framework on the competences and the strategic vision of the VSE manager- owner: The proximity, which is qualified by the VSE,**

presupposes that its leader holds an important place and role there (Jaouen, 2008, Torres, 2003, 2009). Thus, to control its environment, he will be able to rely on a sort of societal proximity (Marchesnay 2008). The leader of a VSE operates in a territory or community area that is dominated by certain values. It is a "man-orchestra" whose task is to steer his company and promote it until its growth (Anderson and Tell, 2009, Fourcade and Polge, 2006). However, this proximity effect makes it difficult to anticipate events that are more distant in time and space (Lafaye and Berger-Douce, 2012). Time and lack of resources limit its possibilities. This phenomenon is very striking in the artisan who has to assume managerial and productive functions. The mastery of all the functions implies a combination of roles and complicates the height gain, the measure of involvement, management priority, and having multiple skills (Bayad et al, 2006). As a result, the strategy of the artisanal TPE is hesitant, more or less formalized and evolves in the action, according to the environmental evolution (Fonrouge, 2002, Torrès 2003, Jaouen and Tessier, 2008). Marchesnay (2003) emphasizes the intuitive nature of manager-owner strategy whose creates himself in action by being very permeable to his environment, because of his close relationship with him. It seems that this is the essential condition for the smooth running of the artisanal TPE. Its owner-manager is in permanent contact with the field, echoing the concept of sensory management of Torres 2009.

The owner-manager maintains such a relationship of proximity that it is possible for him to be content with his sensory capacities, without appealing traditional management tools. The craftsman intervenes on a territory, often close to his place of life, and applies particular customer relations, with commercial and marketing methods that inspire the big company (Abaléa and Cognie, 2010). His biographical knowledge of the clients and the professional environment in which he is immersed from his apprenticeship training allows him to constantly improve his knowledge of the market and the profession. Thus, considering that the capacity for strategic vision in TPE depends on the qualities of its owner ruler, many explanatory features can be advanced: the personality of the owner ruler first, or his motivation, his abilities, his experience, his skills. The purpose of the following developments is to clarify why the leader's quality is apprehended in this research, through the concept of competence and why his strategic vision depends on his skills.

**An owner-manager who acts competently?** Blawat (1995) distinguishes three different dimensions to identify

successful entrepreneurs: personality, motivation and skills. Historically, the first two dimensions were studied. Yet traits and motivations do not discriminate against successful entrepreneurs from those with failures (Lorrain and Dussault, 1988). If personality traits predispose to business creation, they do not explain success once the business is started. It is in this sense that skills are a better indicator of an organization's success over time. (Chandler and Jansen 1992, Herron and Robinson 1993).

Competence presupposes a marriage between individual knowledge and experiences, validated by the organization (Rouby and Thomas, 2004). It corresponds to the result of a dynamic transformation of experiences and practical knowledge into formalized knowledge (Osty, 2002). therefore, individual competence is a mixture of practical, theoretical and social skills (Jolis, 1998). This form of commitment to work is based on three forms of knowledge: knowledge, know-being and life skills (Durand 2006, Bourgault 2005). hence, this knowledge is acquired during the initial training and during the professional career and is then supplemented by the experience in the work situation and the behavior in the company. Therefore, the definition of individual competence depends on the context of the organization (Le Boterf, 2013). This means that this competence is analyzed and understood in the action by going beyond the logic of the attribute (set of knowledge, know-how and know-how) to consider it also as a process.

According to Le Boterf (2013) a competent person is able to manage complex professional situations, to face events, to take initiatives, to arbitrate and to cooperate. He knows how to act with relevance in a particular context by choosing and mobilizing personal resources (knowledge, know-how, qualities, cultures, emotional resources ...) and network resources (data-banks, documentary networks, networks of expertise ...). It is therefore a complex combinatorial process. By going beyond the classical approach of the competence notion. Le Boterf (2013) emphasizes the importance of considering combinatorial knowledge and the ability of the individual to mobilize the necessary resources in a given context. The combinatorial approach around knowing how to act, wanting to act and being able to act implies a dynamic. The competence of an individual results from a combination of the three factors and the action of the individual, which he adapts according to professional situations. This work seeks above all to understand how the owner-manager acts in skills rather than to report, in a linear way, his intrinsic skills. Boterf (2013) evokes the idea of "acting with competence". Indeed, an individual may have skills but not know how to combine, activate. The interest is the consideration of the contextualization of skills and also their purposes. The skills of an individual will depend on three different axes: the axis of the activity (knowledge of the automatic activation), the axis of the available resources (personal and network resources) and finally the axis of distancing (reflexive return on his combinations and strategies of previous action) (Le Boterf, 2002). Given the relative isolation of the owner manager, a problem of recognition of his skills (validation by others) and distancing appears.

In addition, the importance of learning in action for the owner manager. Given this particularity, the concept of dynamic representation of the individual competence of Dejoux (2001) allows the concept of continuous acquisition to be further developed and refined, and the competency approach as a dynamic process. The two contributions of this approach are around the storage function and marginal skills. The actor has a skill storage function that he uses, or not, and enriches through his experiences. The individual adapts to complex and varied situations and, as a result, acquires new skills (marginal skills).

Competence, as a process of continuous learning in action, will influence the strategic vision. Acting in skills requires the individual to manage professional situations in order to achieve results, in order to meet challenges. This resonates with the strategic vision. This seems to be an important capacity for the entrepreneur. Indeed, several works on the entrepreneur have highlighted this competence (Pettersen, 2005, Laviolette and Loué 2006, Loué et al (2008), Loué and Baronet, 2011). Pettersen (2005), studying 142 entrepreneurs and 677 members of their environment, demonstrates the importance given, by the leaders themselves, to the competence "strategic vision" in the company's success. Loué and Laviolette (2008, p.78) in their referential of entrepreneurial skills emphasize the interest for the individual to develop an entrepreneurial vision.

**The strategic vision of the VSE owner-manager :** Taking into consideration the vision of the owner-manager in a small structure has attracted the interest of several researchers to understand his decision-making process (Reyes, 2012, Jaouen, 2010, Smida and Condor, 2002, Bayad and Garand, 1998, Cossette, 1996). 2003, Filion 1991, Carrière 1990). Pettigrew (1979) is one of the first to be interested in the concept of vision. The notion is very ambiguous because it does not have the same meaning according to its use (Bayad and Garand, 1998). It can be applied to planning strategic, corporate strategy or analyzed in an entrepreneurial context. Nevertheless, there is a consensus among authors that the concept of vision includes the idea of a future state to be achieved for the organization. Therefore, the strategic vision is related to "a mental construction of a desired and possible future

for the company" (Carrière, 1990: 304). It is based on the owner manager and will impact the activities of his organization. The strategic vision is distinct from the strategic plan as it represents the anchor of the strategy (Bayad and Garand, 1998). It precedes and structures intentions and actions and allows for the implementation of a frame of reference in which the mission and goals of the enterprise fit (Morris, 1987). The vision is all the more fundamental for the VSE in that it focuses on the sole vision of the owner-manager. Thus, the insight of the leader, based on his intuition and experience (built partly in action) will condition his ability to implement a vision also taking into account the environment in the future (D'Amboise and Bouchard, 1990). This research is based on the main definitions of the concept of vision in the field of entrepreneurship and the VSE (Jaouen 2010, Smida and Condor 2002, Fillion 1991, Carrière 1990 D'Amboise and Bouchard 1990). Thus, it will be based on the realistic side of the vision, the consideration of the environment and the qualities of the visionary owner-manager. The entrepreneur defines the object that will determine his own future (Fillion, 1991). The goals of the VSEs are those stated by the owner manager. Many researchers agree with the principle of involvement, see the owner's nesting relationship with his company, as it is essential to take into account his personal goals (Cadieux and St Pierre, 2011, Fonrouge, 2002 ).

The majority of owner-managers works for the growth of their business, but only until it reaches a size that allows them to achieve their personal, professional and family goals. So, they yearn for stability. McMahon (2001) agrees, noting that owner-managers do not necessarily aim for growth. This research is based on the three aspirations of the owner-manager about artisanal TPE (Julien, Marchesnay, 1987): sustainability, independence and power. The personal fulfillment of the leader, even if this dimension is rarely taken into account in research, in favor of the achieving power's goal, represents a deep desire of the owner-artisanal leader (Bayad 2006, Fonrouge, 2002, Polge, 2008).

Ultimately, these conceptual developments illustrate several points. One of the peculiarities of VSE is its lower potential for mobilized resources and its requirement for multiple skills (Granovetter 1995, Bird 1988). The owner manager works by himself, or in a restricted team, and bears all the anxiety aroused by his activity. This requires a sense of responsibility, versatility and autonomy. The performance of the organization will depend on the personality of the manager-owner but also his skills. He must be a good technician to ensure the control of his know-being and a good manager to ensure the sustainability of his organization. This implies that one man has technical and managerial skills that guarantee the success of the organization and its sustainability (Boughattas, 2011). The development of the artisanal enterprise will thus rest on the shoulders of the manager-owner. This requires specific skills (Polge, 2008). Therefore, the vision is a form of the skills demonstration of the manager-owner, particularly in his capacity to project himself (Cossette, 2003, Bayad, Garand, 1998). It is in this sense that this work establishes a link between the individual skills of the owner- manager and his strategic vision.

## **II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This comprehensive qualitative research seeks to understand the link between the skills of the owner of an artisanal VSE and his strategic vision. By choosing a case analysis study, this work makes it possible to consider human and organizational behaviors in their context, given the representations people give to things and their actions (Hlady-Rispal, 2002, Gavard-Perret et al. , 2011, Dumez, 2013). The case study focuses, particularly, on the review of decision- making processes, the development and implementation of organizational actions (Yin, 2008) .The unique case study is justified in its longitudinal typicity (Yin , 2003), which allows the evaluation of the relationship between the owner's skills and his strategic vision over time.

This case concerns a blacksmith owner studied from June 2004 (date of the business creation project) to 2013. With regard to the majority of craft organizations (57% of craft enterprises have no employees<sup>5</sup>), the manager-owner in the study works alone. This peculiarity makes it possible to isolate the intrinsic skills of the owner-manager and to qualify their roles on the vision. Craft industry is organized around 4 sectors: food, manufacturing, building and services. Although the building remains mostly represented (49.1% of the craft enterprises), the services sector, from which the blacksmith has been studied, persists in its growth, with 30% of the craft enterprises concerned, and experiencing the strongest growth ( 6.4%, compared to 4.7% for the building sector).In addition, the approach of the blacksmith's profession makes it possible to mitigate the heterogeneity of craftsmanship (Marchesnay 2003, Richomme-Huet 2006, Torres 2009). In addition, it concedes the apprehension of the skills of the blacksmith owner, who express themselves through the exercise of his missions (Boyer, 2002).The blacksmith ensures the preservation of the physiological functioning of the foot ,adapting horseshoes to equine hooves, in order to protect the animal's feet from wear and tear or to correct plumbing defects.

In addition to installing standard fittings , the blacksmith, in agreement with the veterinarian, makes orthopedic

or therapeutic fittings. Provider of itinerant service, he intervenes every 6 to 8 weeks with equines (donkeys, ponies, horses) and also cattle. Contrary to popular belief, the democratization of equestrian practice, in particular, helps maintain the profession and creates new vocations, to the point that the sector becomes more and more competitive. The project to create the owner's study began in 2004, the date of his mandatory placement at the Chamber of Trades. In the case of a professional retraining project, the owner-manager then trained as blacksmith before setting up his sole proprietorship on 1st January 2006. In order to optimize triangulation, the study uses a combination of data collection methods (Hlady-Rispal, 2002). Given the major role of the owner-manager in the conduct and direction of his organization, he represents the main person to observe and interview. A non-directive biographical interview has established a contact of trust with the owner manager. It was supplemented by the participatory observation technique in the field, which aimed both at becoming familiar with the profession and at understanding the gap between discursive and practical awareness (Giddens, 1987). A series of semi-structured interviews was conducted to study the manager's technical and managerial skills and his vision. Finally, secondary data was collected (business, activity sector, training standards, etc.) and specific to the case studied (accounting sources, official business creation file, etc.).

The data analysis was the subject of a scrupulous method articulated around a content analysis and the implementation of a cognitive map, that is to say "a graphical representation of the mental exposition that the researcher is made up of a set of discursive representations stated by a subject based on his own cognitive representations about a particular object" (Audet and Cossette, 1994, p.15). The apprehension of the vision requires vigilance in the analysis (Bayad and Garand, 1998) to isolate the idyllic strategic vision (D'Amboise and NkongoloBakenda, 1993). The objective is to facilitate the verbalization of the strategic vision of the owner-manager, to understand the representations of his beliefs concerning his vision (Axelrod, 1976), to model the links to finally isolate the elements inherent in the skills. One of analyzing risks through the cognitive map is to deprive the owner of a part of his representation by including extrinsic data to his vision (Cossette 1996). The process consists in involving the owner-manager in all the stages of his constitution. Inspired by the method proposed by Cossette (2003), the protocol articulates around 4 different phases. The first is during an interview, to challenge the owner manager on the key factors impacting the future of his business. From the factors identified by the owner manager, we asked him to repeat the operation on two different levels. We then formalized all these factors around a map cognitive that we submitted in a second time to the proprietor for discussion. This second cognitive map is based on a final cognitive map, which is submitted to the owner-manager. The cognitive map method allows us to make the links more explicitly inherited in its strategic vision.

### III. RESULTS: THE OWNER-MANAGER'S ROLE SKILLS IN HIS STRATEGIC VISION

This research has established a cognitive map that links the skills of the manager-owner of artisanal VSE and his strategic vision as it is presented below.

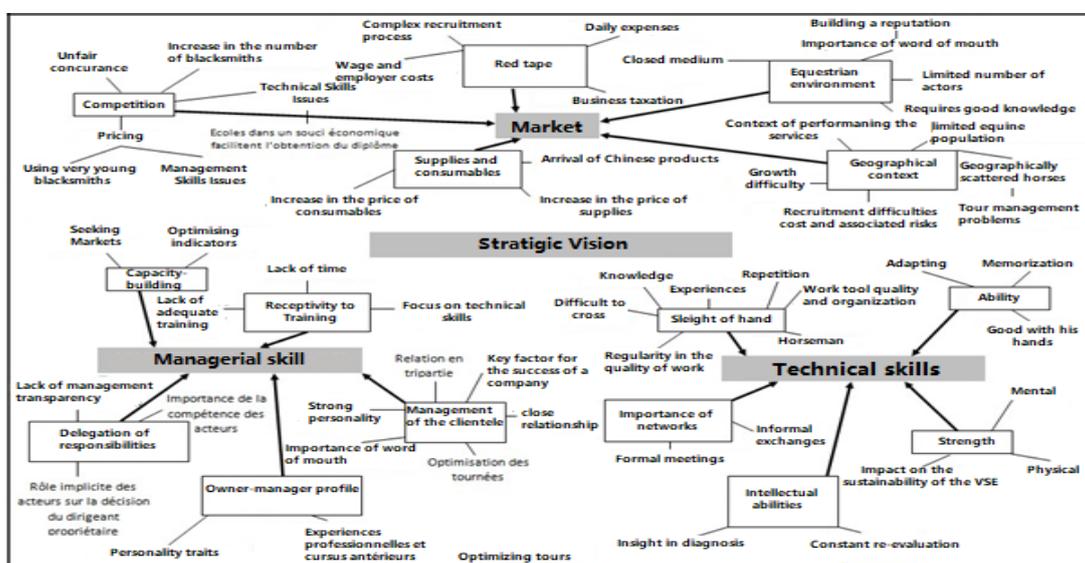


Figure 1: Cognitive map - The role of the owner-manager's skills in his strategic vision

The cognitive map evokes the main constituent dimensions of the strategic vision of the manager-owner of the artisanal VSE studied. Three variables result from the strategic vision: the "market" includes the factors "red tape", "equestrian environment", "geographical context", "supplies and consumables" and "competition"; the "managerial skills", concentrate the factors "capacities", "Responsiveness to training", "delegation of skills", "owner-manager profile" and "client management"; finally "technical skills" equate the factors "resistance", "aptitudes", "clout", "importance of the network" and "intellectual abilities". The cognitive map helps to understand the role of skills, from a managerial and technical point of view, taking into account a specific context, called "market", on the strategic vision of the owner-manager studied. The ability of the manager-owner of artisanal TPE to act with skills in favor of his entrepreneurial vision is illustrated in his art of composing between his competences (technical and managerial), taking into account the constraints inherent to the environment in which his TPE evolves. The results are presented in two parts. The first presents the influence of the "market" variable on the strategic vision. The second discusses the impact of the factors "managerial skills" and "technical skills" on the strategic vision.

**A strategic vision conditioned by the "market" :** The owner-manager studied envisions in his company a way to live him and his family, preserving his independence. The dialogical relationship he has with his company creates confusion between his personal vision and that of his organization. The owner-manager aspires to a competitive business, but this is not just about growth. Other factors are very important, such as customer satisfaction, the welfare of the animal, recognition...

The environment itself constrains its strategic vision. The geographic basin, for example, constitutes a constraint of development through growth. In fact, the owner-manager who is a farrier-scholar is bound by his productive capacity. It can only develop by recruiting a worker. However, the characteristics of the geographic basin concerned by the case study, with a disseminated equine population in particular, do not make it possible to amortize such recruitment (investment in another workshop vehicle, multiplication of travel expenses, etc.). Because of the shortage of workingman in the Blacksmithing, some of the owner-managers set up their own business, by force of circumstances. This has certain consequences for the vision of their organization. This "forced installation" has immediate consequences on the nature of competition. In addition to the problem of skills, many young apprentices settle on their own with practical facilities (such as being still domiciled with their parents). Some kill the market through the creation of a parallel economy (moonlighting) or the practice of prices regardless of any break-even point. The destabilization of prices, downwards, as well as the devaluation of know-how are the two main consequences. These same young creators benefit from aids to creation. What favors them in the first years of installation but precarious in their management of business in the long term. Thus, the market concerned by the study experienced the installation and the disappearance of many farriers. A dozen blacksmiths were installed during the creation of a company in 2006. Thirty or so, on average, taking into account successive terminations and creations, now occupy the same territory.

Administrative hassle is an inherent part of the owner-manager's strategic vision. The predilection for the status quo is in a way a deliberate strategy, a kind of optimum balance between sales and expenses. The farrier studied told us to rule on a "balance turnover", allowing him to live with him and his family, and not to "be murdered by the charges". He flees all the constraints that could further poison his daily life. Thus, in another register, while the owner-manager studied had apprentices before, he preferred, because the constraints were too important (implementation of the contract, youth management, pay, training organizations), to qualify more customers and dispense with the services of a journeyman apprentice.

Hence, the consideration of the environment in the strategic vision will reside in the skills of the owner-manager to understand the environmental constraints. They are multiple and illustrate the fact that this leader must deal with a fairly dynamic market seeking both technical skills and managerial skills.

**A strategic vision focused on "technical skills" to the detriment of "managerial skills":** The vision is certainly oriented by the environment but also by the technical skills of the owner-manager, who are particularly distinguished in his relationship to the profession. The know-being is at the heart of the strategy of the manager-owner of artisanal VSE studied who chooses more the profession for his practice than in the vocation to become a business manager. This remark is essential from the training courses, focused, in terms of RNCP6 standards, more on the acquisition of technical skills at the expense of managerial skills. The blacksmith studied, holder of a CAPA (Agricultural Proficiency Certificate) blacksmith, illustrates this statement. Management skills to be acquired concern more the mastery of basic calculations of VAT, for example, and this, on a paltry training volume of derisory.

The historical anchoring in technical skills still illustrated today by the classification of trades according to their technical content, reveals the particular relationship of the owner-manager studied with his profession. His strategic vision lies in a specialized development of his company on his technical competence, fruit of years of practice. This particularity on orthopedic fittings, more sophisticated, allows it to counteract the constraints of the geographical area that prevent it from developing through growth, to value the price of its service in relation to its know-how and to ignore the constraints inherent in the market (such as the increase of the raw material). The experience and the routine give the blacksmith the opportunity to optimize his confidence and constitute a real competitive advantage. Often for lack of experience, competitors do not wish to opt for this strategic positioning.

The owner-manager studied also evokes his vision as a result of the constraints inherent to the practice of his profession and in particular to the physical resistance of the profession. Unlike other trades, the blacksmith can not reduce the difficulty of his work. He must consider his conversion from the moment he starts business. This specialization aims to save money, to qualify its service by optimizing its added value. His vision is illustrated by concrete strategic actions undertaken by the owner manager: training actions (seminars ...), choice of interventions (more technical ...), challenges (conceptualization of a prosthesis for a donkey). The other problem underlying the recruitment of a worker, and even an apprentice, lies in the transmission of the knack and especially the acceptance by customers of another provider. A strong personification qualifies the proximity relationship between the blacksmith, his client and his animal, since it is a tripartite relationship, which makes it all the more difficult the transmission of his business.

From then on, managerial skills are clearly in the background. Owning directors become business leaders by force of circumstances and live this function as a constraint rather than a vocation. The owner-manager studied, for lack of time or control, has chosen to delegate a number of managerial skills to actors more or less close to the organization (family, accountant ...). The lack of managerial skills, partly explained by the training courses, makes it difficult to assess the skills of its partners. He just trusts. He is so confident that he sometimes delegates full responsibility for the task, losing visibility on the general operation of his business and partitioning the productive part of the managerial part. This prevents it, for example, optimizing certain ratios. Contrary to popular belief, the owner is not alone. He acts at the heart of a system of interactions that influences his vision. Consideration of one's individual skills is not enough and needs to be supplemented by collective skills (family supports, communities of practice ...). He evaluates his vision under the influence of other actors more or less close. It then undergoes their influence, even their constraints (in the case of the opposition of an artisan husband during a transmission, for example). The acquisition of new skills will depend on his intellectual capacity and, in particular, to question his work and optimize his storage function. It will also depend on its capacity to solicit communities of more or less formal practices. The pooling of skills helps to break the loneliness of the owner-manager of the craftsman and above all, allows him to adjust his entrepreneurial vision on the experience of his peers. For example, on the hardness of the work and the fact to last in time through the choice calmer horses or how to "educate the customer" in the implementation of shoeing area. It can be noted that the owner-managers discuss more about technical skills than managerial skills. The Association for the Development of Farrier and the French Union of Farriers, which are the two representative bodies of the profession, thus offer technical training through internships or seminars but they do not offer managerial training. The problem also lies in the fact that not everyone has access to this type of communities of practice. Some proprietors prefer to stay isolated in the management of their business, of their own free will. For others, familiarization with communities of practice, more or less formal, is more difficult since it goes through initiatory rites, also more or less formalized. The owner-manager studied is in this case.

Far from the overly tedious side of management, the proprietary manager studied integrates customer management as a competitive advantage in running his or her organization. This variable is all the more important in "barometric trades", such as the blacksmith (or hairdresser ...), Who is brought back to his client every 6 to 8 weeks. Yes customer management is a key success factor, it is also a time-consuming element. The owner-manager studied explains that he must always compose in the proximity relationship he has with his customers, in order to preserve the interests of his organization. In a sense, the proximity relationship that he maintains on several scales (functional, with his clientele ...) gives him a good knowledge of the environment. At the same time, it hurts to his ability to "rise", to "ask himself to think" about the future of his organization. The owner studied expresses his tendency to drown in his daily life: management schedules, unpaid, orders, paperwork, benefits .... His ability to distance is undermined, which constrains his ability to project. To such a degree, the cognitive map establishes that the owner-manager studied acts competently by composing and combining his technical and managerial skills in professional situations that allow him to consider his strategic vision, taking into account the constraints of the environment in which his VSE craft evolves. The close relationship he

maintains with his environment and his organization optimizes his knowledge. The perpetual evolution of his skills will shape his strategic vision over time. His skills are illustrated by his ability to read and analyze all factors and compose his strategic vision accordingly. It should be clearly noted that the owner-manager opts here for a strategy of specialization based on the impact of the territory but also the relationship maintained with the profession. This is reminiscent of Porterian strategies. As an ongoing process, the owner-manager acquires new skills through action and also by his ability to solicit external resources, including communities of practice, more or less formal. The owner manager is thus at the heart of an interaction system (communities of practice, family supports, etc.), which has an influence on his strategic vision.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONDISCUSSION**

This research contributes to a better understanding of the specificity of artisanal VSE, its leader and his vision. The objective was to highlight the combinations of resources solicited when the owner-artisan manager acts competently in favor of his strategic vision. To this end, the cognitive map has made it possible to isolate the links between the skills of the owner owner of artisanal VSE and his vision. The map shows three main variables as factors that explain the vision of the owner of the artisanal VSE studied. The "market" implies that the farrier's profession operates in harmony with an environment that has gradually hardened. This somewhat obscures the leader's ability to project and limits the prospects of the desired future. To master this market, he must then demonstrate skills. They are first of all "technical". If his vision is undeniably influenced by the market, his job, by the expertise he understands, also plays a very important role. The map shows that the technical skills needed to practice the farrier's trade are used as assets by the manager to cope with the constraints of the market. These "technical skills" are supplemented by "managerial skills" or more particularly, in the case studied, by a lack of them. Indeed, the lack of managerial skills of the blacksmith illustrates the fact that the function of entrepreneur is not always fully assumed. Therefore, this deficiency is filled by the proximity maintained between the manager and his service partners such as the chartered accountant or the community of practice. Thus, the strategic vision of the owner-manager is also related to the managerial skills that he demonstrates but also those brought by his entourage. These results open two points of discussion.

The first concerns the concept of strategic vision. The work on the strategic vision in SME / VSE establishes that it is based on the leader and his ability to adapt to his environment (Jaouen, 2010, Smida and Condor, 2002, Filion, 1991, Carrière, 1990, D'Amboise and Bouchard 1990). This work is a continuation of these analyzes, showing the importance of the leader in defining the desired future. In addition, he proposes to go further by using the skills as a reading grid for the definition of the strategic vision. Indeed, generally the strategic vision is explained by the behavior or character traits of the owner of TPE (Jaouen, 2010). This work proposes to use the concept of skills to explain the strategic vision of the leader. It is then explained that the vision is established by a modulation of the technical and managerial skills of the leader to face the weight of the market. The second point of discussion concerns the concept of competence. This research is in line with the work of Le Boterf (2013), which emphasizes the importance of understanding individual skills in terms of attributes and processes. Indeed, competence is the sum of attributes (knowledge, know-how, well-being) but also a complex combinatorial process, composed of resources but also of the personality and the aptitude of the individual and his expectations. which are evaluated in the action (Dejoux, 2001).

This dynamic process is useful for understanding the skill in its context. The cognitive map establishes a link between the perception of a desired future on the part of the owner-manager and the skills needed to achieve this goal. Therefore, the skills mobilized by the farrier are no longer just their own attributes (a technical knowledge on orthopedic hardware for example) but also its willingness to act thanks to its expertise on its market, according to a dynamic process in response to the established strategic vision. It is then well according to this dynamic of knowing-to-act, wanting to act and being able to act that the cognitive map presented in this article has revealed. From then on, the managerial interest of this research is to understand the cognitive approach of the owner-manager in the elaboration of his vision and, ultimately, in his strategic action. Highlighting one's mental schema during the decision-making process may allow the Consular Chambers, in particular, to better understand how it works and concretely, to better meet its expectations. In the same way, young creators could benefit from this contribution to understand the foundations of the construction of the strategic vision in order to avoid the risk of cessation of activities. Indeed, more than half of the companies disappear after 5 years (Picard, 2006). Finally, this research values the skills of the owner and allows him to consider him no longer as a craftsman, a henchman (even if it remains), but as a business leader. The lack of recognition of the crafts industry, even though the public authorities are multiplying openings for the creation or takeover of a business, 7 also explains, in part, the lack of vocations. These results must be understood in relation to the limitations of this study. Given the exploratory

approach of this work only a case is used. It will be necessary to multiply the cases on the same trade or on other trades of the craft industry before considering a generalization of the results. In addition, several variables such as the character traits of the manager, the collective skills established by his partners, the impact of his job or his professional identity have been intentionally played down for the construction of the card to focus on skills. This opens interesting research perspectives. It would be necessary to increase the number of cases to test the modeling of the cognitive map (Laukkanen, 1992) and to implement a comparative case study to isolate, in particular, the impact of occupation and identity. Similarly, research has found that the owner-manager is at the heart of an interaction system. The consideration of collective skills, including family supports, would be inescapable in assessing the impact of other actors on the strategic vision of the owner-manager.

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