

Jacques Ségot - Christian Maréchal

# Who Framed Excellence?



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## **Chapter 3:**

Timothée Scribble came to Charmé and Carla Brunetta's help and deciphered the anonymous letter that appeared shortly after Jean Latour's death. The team discovered that a vast conspiracy threatens the firms competing for the European Prize. Will our heroes be able to stop it in time?

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# IV

CHAPTER

**When a lead  
materializes at last**



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **When a lead materializes at last**

The Police Chief did not have a good night. Timothée got on his nerves, he begrudged Carla for playing into Scribble's game, and the interpretations of the Sudoku grid worried him. He thought that they were a bit far-fetched, a product of the secret agent's imagination. He had always been moving in the world of darkness and saw everything through that filter. When on the street, he watched every unusual movement and examined the faces of passers-by, wondering who was hiding behind these simple anonymous persons; he was always on the alert and the slightest noise made him start. This behaviour had saved his life on several occasions. But it also had made him mess things up, like the day when he refused the sirloin steak that was served to him just because the sauce looked strange, to the great displeasure of the appalled Zagat-rated chef. The very able policeman thought that he had recognized an enemy in the dining room and concluded that his meal had been poisoned. Even more impressive was the jump he had made from the Bridge of Sighs in Venice when, because of his wild imagination, he had mistaken two ordinary tourists for ferocious killers. He had made a dive into the canal and the local newspapers had published headlines on an

attempted suicide by a jilted lover. Needless to say, his presence in the Queen of the Adriatic was spotted immediately and his mission suspended.

– It's better to have a single orientation to improve efficiency, but it also brings about damaging disorders, Charmé thought in the middle of the night. And then, his mind proceeded by associations, as it happens frequently during a restless sleep, and shifted to the quality concept, to the necessity of having a customer orientation, but also to the contribution of the EFQM whose objective is to find a balance between the necessary expectations of customers, of the staff, of the community and of course of the shareholders. I am wondering how it can happen because there is obviously an imbalance between these four orientations, one cannot maintain a permanent parity between them, a firm is a “living body” and thus carries an inherent imbalance like any moving creature.

These thoughts about quality brought him back to PrintCo and to Latour's dubious death: deep inside, he leaned towards the accident theory. An inspection had been made some time before, and the straps were in good condition according to the report. But news items abound in accidents that happened following official controls. Were the controls reliable? Maybe some checks are done too fast, having become a routine. And the friendly rapport often created between individuals may introduce a bias in the risk assessment. It would be a mistake to rely only on the official control. The real control is done every day by the employees themselves: it is a preventive action based on the staff's involvement and sense of accountability. And the official control should be used only to make sure that these regular checks do exist. Charmé, satisfied with this conclusion, fell asleep but he rapidly pulled himself together and realized that the quality approaches developed at PrintCo for many years had strongly made employees aware about security and the necessity of their involvement, and about their role in feedback procedures. Did that mean that Smarto's statements were untrue and that reality was

totally different? The night went by in the same way, as Charmé shifted from one conviction to a contrary belief, from one conclusion to the opposite result.

He got up in a vile mood. He did not like to be carried along by events because it disturbed his peace of mind; he should never have worked for the police forces and never been so dependent on others' passions. An individual's strength lies in his/her capacity to escape risks of the market<sup>21</sup>.

The whole team had agreed to meet at Carla's home. Charmé did not want to disclose his visits to PrintCo. Probably a professional reflex in someone who feels embarked in a nasty situation. One cause of it could be the former secret agent's behaviour. On the way he gave them some instructions.

– I'm running this meeting. Not you – me.

And as if to make things clearer, he sat behind the wheel, as a perfect male trying to assert himself.

Smarto let them in with some anxiety. Receiving the visit of his predecessor, a Police Chief and two other persons with an unclear status did not augur well. Especially since it was not their first visit.

– What can I do for you? he merely asked them, trying to hide his concern.

According to his instructions, Charmé spoke first. He stood in front of the group to prevent Scribble from catching him by surprise.

– We would like to understand how the firm has evolved in recent years. You already know William Rubio who will be able to draw relationships and better appreciate your work since he knew PrintCo before you. You already met Mr. Scribble, who is a colleague of mine, and here is Ms. Brunetta, who is an expert in diagnostics.

He was wondering how he should introduce Carla and he thought

21. The EFQM model seeks to measure this strength examining the way the firm creates the conditions necessary for a long term performance under all the facets of his operation.

that the combination of these two words would impress Smarto enough to dissuade him from asking questions. Anyone can claim to be a consultant or a coach, which is widely accepted, so why not an expert in diagnostics? Smarto did not ask any questions.

– When I came to PrintCo, explained William Rubio, the quality system was in place but under version 94 of the ISO 9001 standard<sup>22</sup>. Employees were not much mobilized to use it and did not take an interest in it, particularly because procedures were applied in a discriminatory way, at least apparently. My first task was to communicate the principles of quality, and to explain and demonstrate the contribution of quality. I emphasized values as well as leadership, and I was able to build confidence progressively. We based our work on the EFQM<sup>23</sup>. model to explain the quality system and the links between existing practices. I must confess in retrospect that the first assessment was a bit weird. I wanted the whole staff to be involved: we had no reference point and clearly we gave marks that were either too good or undervalued. But anyway this exercise helped to incorporate quality into the management sphere and to set in motion the PDCA mechanism. Then the new 2000 version of the standard came out and you were asked to implement it. Is that right? Rubio asked in conclusion.

– That’s right, answered Smarto. Upon my arrival in the firm, and acting on your advice, I tried to have the quality system change through its adaptation to the requirements of the new standard. The concept of a process was not easily understood, or, more exactly, the difference between a process and a procedure<sup>24</sup>.

22. The ISO 9000 standard was established in 1987 in a context linked to the necessity of improving production. A first minor change, that is an “amendment”, was made in 1994. A second change, that was much more significant, was made in the form of a “revision” in 2000 to adapt standardization to the services providers’ needs.

23. Several assessment methods are possible according to the objectives to be reached: by questionnaire, matrix, Pro forma workshop or submission document.

24. Processes have always made the basis of the 9000 series. As version 2000 used this principle in most part, thus one can think that processes were introduced at that moment.

– I can put myself in a worker’s shoes, said Scribble: a procedure<sup>25</sup> sounds concrete; it says how to operate things, whereas the process<sup>26</sup> is a highbrow concept that is useless in your daily work.

The lord of darkness’ intervention made the learned assembly start.

– It is required by the standard, Smarto tried to carry on.

Scribble, who had developed a very concrete philosophy during his dangerous life, insisted.

– Bullshit! If you can justify the description of processes and, more important, their process mapping<sup>27</sup> only by their necessity according to a standard, you won’t be able to attract your employees’ interest, unless you are very good at flannelling.

– The employees understand their role within the processes and, thanks to the Investors in People approach, they got involved into the firm’s activity, the director general replied sharply.

– That’s one problem, Rubio stepped in to calm the game down. Displaying process mapping is not sufficient and I understand Mr. Scribble’s reaction. However, its visual image is similar to the one produced by a flow chart.

– Cool, young man, said Scribble. A flow chart is organized vertically, whereas process mapping is drawn horizontally. Don’t try to pull the wool over my eyes!

Smarto thought he had better not interfere in the discussion.

– That’s true! Vertical flow charts are directed towards spreading the idea that power goes from top to bottom in a company: the concept of hierarchy is clearly perceived. With process mapping that goes from the left to the right hand, you can see without any

25. A process (§ 3.4.1, ISO 9000 Standard, Quality Management System - Fundamentals and vocabulary) is a package of correlated or interactive activities that converts inputs into outputs.

26. A procedure (§ 3.4.5, ISO 9000 Standard) is the specified way to execute an activity or a process. (Note 1: procedures may or may not produce documents.)

27. The process mapping represents all the processes that must be under control for the firm to reach its targets.

ambiguity that action cuts across the enterprise and everybody is on a line that has a “before” and an “after”, a supplier and a customer, someone who receives and someone who delivers. It is this new paradigm we try to inculcate in minds.

For various reasons, the audience was lost in thought with his explanation. Scribble was first to react.

– Hey, if process mapping is a paradime, there is no place for arguing. It’s just small change!

As for him, Charmé thought that this discussion was taking them away from the purpose of their visit.

– I perfectly understand how your quality system was progressively built. In a way, there was a sequence of approaches that were more demanding every day and made your firm stronger: ISO version 94, ISO version 2000, certification 14 001, construction of an integrated management system, deployment of the Balanced Scorecards, plus maybe Lean Six Sigma and then Investors in People, with the whole thing wrapped in the EFQM. Am I right?

– Okay with “wrapped”, Smarto said with a smile, as he appreciated the Police Chief’s comment. In fact, the EFQM<sup>28</sup> made it possible to justify the many tools and techniques we launched. The employees have difficulty understanding the links between them. The EFQM shows that they are consistent, it is a communication tool. The employees are lost with all these acronyms: the Six Sigma, BSC, TPM, EAP and so on.

– Don’t you feel that most of them serve no purpose and that people use them only to be fashionable?

Carla Brunetta had kept silent. She had decided to stick her ear in the conversation. The objective of this discussion was to under-

28. EFQM was established in 1989. So it is “younger” than ISO and it makes sense that the EFQM model reproduces, “wraps” and integrates most principles of the existing reference frameworks. This model was created in 1991, modified in 1999, and is presently used under its 2003 version.

stand the hidden side of PrintCo, if there was one, not to give a management lesson.

– Look, said the general manager, turning to her, this is the way it works. When you do an EFQM self-assessment, you can see that, under a given sub-criterion, practices appear to be loose. Let's take 2D, which is policy deployment. One way to reinforce this deployment is to use the technique of the Balanced Scorecards. Also, the process improvement can be based on Six Sigma.

– Lean Six Sigma is understandable when the firm already has good improvement practices and a strong quality culture.

– I quite agree, Smarto answered to William Rubio's comment. Tools are more and more sophisticated and must be used according to the firm's situation, he went on. You don't use a sledgehammer to drive a nail in, do you? Likewise, you do not introduce the Six Sigma technique in a company that follows a hesitant approach to non-conformity. The effort and the step to make are disproportionate.

– In other words, Brunetta wanted to sum up, when you identify an improvement area, you go shopping to find out the existing tools and techniques.

– Most often, we resort to what was put in place elsewhere: you can realize the way it works and benefit from the experience of other people. Thus you can save time. But you also rely on your employees. They were invited very early on to suggest solutions. However they were not used to it and they needed some time to acquire the desire and the reflexes for it<sup>29</sup>. Some solutions are suggested in a strange way. In our activity of printing and distributing posters, old postcards and photos, we had difficulty knowing the dispatching time limits. Of course, we use the postal service. So how can we make sure that the goods ordered reached their destination?

29. The principle of innovation and of continuing improvement is one of the eight foundations of quality. It is based on encouraging employees to get involved in the firm's life, and also on their skill development and on sharing information and knowledge.

– We just have to ask the question by e-mail, Rubio suggested.

– Indeed this is an efficient solution but it is not appropriate in our case. We sell up-market products and dreams sometimes. E-mail is something unreal. We needed a warmer instrument.

– Like a carrier pigeon! Scribble burst out. You can teach him to cook your request! Excellent!

– That’s enough, said an irritated Rubio. Let him go on!

– You are no fun when it comes to quality. I guess that there is whoopee cushion or laughing gas in your tool box.

The general manager decided not to pay attention to Scribble’s jokes, as the links between his visitors were less and less clear to him.

– The solution was given to us by an old lady, a neighbour of one of our employees, Sally Besson, who occasionally does some shopping for her. Malou – that’s her name – had worked some time as a panellist. It’s something you may not know, he went on as the other parties looked astonished, but the European postal institutions pay back considerable amounts to each other<sup>30</sup> for the foreign mail that is taken care of on their territory. These fees depend on the delivery time: the shorter it is, the higher the amount they can ask the sending country. So panellists send letters equipped with a device that makes it possible to trace them at different points of the postal circuits and, thus, to know delivery times. Clever, and a reliable system, isn’t it?

– So you send fictitious parcels, Brunetta asked incredulously.

– Not at all. Our lovely Malou suggested that we get all her fellow panellists involved to know the delivery times. Then, with this information in hand, we call our customers at the date when they are supposed to receive their parcel, and we do not asked them if they received it but if they are satisfied with the service, which is it totally different. This way, we managed to establish an almost friendly

30. Since the stamp was invented in Great Britain, the cost of transportation, the “postage”, has been paid by the sender. So, for a letter sent to France by a German citizen, for example, France has to be paid back by Germany such part of the stamp price that corresponds to the transportation on the French territory.

relationship with customers who – don't forget it – do not know us<sup>31</sup>.

The PrintCo's general manager suspended his demonstration. A question was on his lips, which he decided to ask.

–Can I ask you what the purpose of your visit is? It is certainly an honour for me that you are interested in the management methods put in place in this firm, but I doubt your presence today is just for curiosity's sake. Wouldn't it be better...?

–...to fill you in? Sure, you are right! Tell him, Police Chief!

Timothée had proved the fastest to answer once again, to Charmé's despair. Now he had to face it and to lay his cards on the table. Charmé tried to find his words.

–We are not sure that Latour's death was due to an accident. We knew of a threatening letter and we think that other persons are concerned. The question for us now is to know how to identify them before it is too late. Our preventive action requires a good understanding of the causes of Latour's death. So we try to determine what prompted someone to commit a murder.

–Was Latour the real target? Who had an interest in bumping him off? Was it payback, revenge, so to speak? What's the reason of this dirty trick? Scribble added with his usual outspokenness.

–We think that the process of this murder will give us the keys of future ones, the former manager went on.

The three men's words filled Smarto with consternation.

– I don't understand, he mumbled. How is it possible? A can assure you that Latour had no enemies here. By the way, no one is the enemy of anyone else. We are like a family, we know everything. I would say that there is a good team spirit among us, and even that we are just good friends. I have worked at it for months, with a success I take pride in...No, Police Chief, you are on the wrong track, he

31. It means applying the CYQ method (Measuring and Managing Quality, by Insep Consulting), where the firm determines the expected quality, measures the quality level and checks the client's satisfaction. For an accomplished process, it would be necessary to reinforce later the service requirements taking into account the client's expectations.

concluded. And after all, who are these other firms? How do you know their existence?

– I'll say nothing about my sources, the Police Chief answered. I just want to point out that I did not mention firms but individuals working in given firms, and that these firms are probably located in various European countries.

– It does not make sense at all, Police Chief, because PrintCo does not maintain trade relations with other European firms. We can't imagine there is a link between what happened here unfortunately and the other murders that you mentioned. That's impossible, that's ridiculous!

– However you just said you have trade relations with many countries. So your employees communicate with foreign counterparts.

– That's not possible, it's a malediction, Smarto repeated, obviously overwhelmed by the Police Chief's remark.

The four visitors paid respect to the general manager's agony and let him stagger under the blow. Brunetta looked at him intensely as if to read his thoughts.

– We need to talk to the employees, hoping that these discussions will bring out a sign, a reason for resentment strong enough to explain a murder, Police Chief Charmé explained.

– Right now? Smarto asked.

– Right now, Charmé and Scribble answered in unison.

The rest of the day was used to question the employees. Timothée and Carla were entrusted with that task in spite of Charmé's reluctance. She had stressed that although the employees kept good memories of William, he had been their boss. Consequently, they would not speak spontaneously. As far as Daniel Charmé was concerned, everyone knew his office, which could make them keep quiet. On the contrary, Charmé had asserted that it was precisely a police investigation and that they could not do without his presence. Then Carla had answered to his assertion that the solidarity among the PrintCo staff was too strong, and that he needed to learn to trust people and accept that other methods were possible.

– Tim’s glibness and my attractiveness are deadly weapons, she concluded.

– That’s exactly what worries me, he said in a resigned tone.

They left each one in a different direction. Scribble took the shops on and Brunetta the offices. They explained that they had been entrusted with a quality audit. In the evening, they met at the police station to take stock at the express request of Charmé, who tried once again to regain control of the situation and show his authority in managing the case.

Charmé, who dreaded Tim’s outbursts, invited Carla to take the floor.

– Ladies first, he said as an excuse.

– I did not get a lot of tangible information, she started. The quality approach is appreciated; it was used to put the plant in running order, to clarify roles, to increase the synergy between departments and to better mobilize the teams. We can see some reluctance because of the additional work or the excessive number of indicators, and doubts about the link between the quality system and a sustainable performance. Some practices are not understood very well.

– I also heard the song on the job losses that will obviously result from it, added Timothée who could not wait for his turn any longer.

– Nothing else? asked a disappointed Police Chief. He thought that he would probably have succeeded if he had done the questioning himself.

– I noted other complaints that I want to bring to your knowledge in one go: “Quality does not solve all problems. Some people are difficult to live with and IIP won’t change anything to it.”

– They mentioned the same problems to me, Scribble commented.

– There is no relation with the figures in the Sudoku grid, Rubio announced.

Tension was mounting in the room. Everyone was realizing that the wishes voiced the day before could not come true. They all felt

that they had a great responsibility: they suspected a series of murders that they would be unable to prevent.

– One thing is clear, though, the secret agent began slowly.

They all looked at him. Charmé turned pale.

– This morning I listened to all these great explanations on processes, on the pilot who controls operations from his charts, on input and output, and so on. In other words, I understood that processes help to get things straight; everyone stops to work for himself as he pleases and, more important, power does not belong anymore to the section heads but to the pilots. You could have here a delayed-action bomb. I checked every wall and noticed that the flow chart is displayed in some places and the process maps in some other ones.

– Damn! But what about Latour? asked the Police Chief.

– He was in favour of process mapping – a map lover, the secret agent from the South answered bombastically.

– So, that could be the explanation we were looking for. A fight for power, Smarto said.

– And it fits in with the message, Rubio went further.

– We've got a lead for the police investigation, at last! the Police Chief cried out.

– Tim, you are a genius! Carla shouted to Daniel Charmé's despair.

# Who Framed Excellence?

*Foreword by Chris LEBEER, Chief Executive Officer - EFQM*

Could Excellence, too often mistaken for mere performance, kill people? This very topical question will need to be answered by our team of investigators, once again united around the spirited Carla Brunetta and grappling with a new adventure. The discovery of Jean Latour's body in the dawn's early hours is a prelude to a vast investigation all around Europe to understand the meaning of the EFQM acronym and the foundation of the EEA Prize award that is given every year to the best firms.

At the end of this innovative educational thriller, you will know the reasons why this management tool is the key to sustainable Excellence.

**Jacques SÉGOT and Christian MARÉCHAL:** two doctorates (in mathematics and history), 38 years of professional experience promoting quality and, finally, a great thriller mixing unexpected situations, humour and passion to help understanding the approaches to Excellence.

Christian Maréchal is a management consultant and the creator of the ESP assessment method.

Jacques Ségot has been very involved in teaching and coordinating activities for several years to promote quality within the ISO (he is chairing the AFNOR Quality and Management Standards Committee in charge of the advancement of ISO 9000 standards) as well as within La Poste where he initiated the system certification policy, the development of the Professional Equality label, the implementation of the Investor in People reference framework and the Working-to-Excellence approach.



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