



Enrolling deceased founders in times of change or discontinuity: The evocative powers and perils of presentification

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Enrolling deceased founders in times of change or discontinuity:

The evocative powers and perils of presentification

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Abstract

Scholars have given increasing attention to the uses of the past in organizational life, with several studies considering how founder figures, may be drawn on in sensegiving to help promote organizational change. Yet most research has been one-sided, neglecting the possibility that leaders’ sensegiving attempts might be contested. Based on three contrasting case studies, we identify four modalities through which deceased founders may be *presentified* (i.e., made present, despite their physical absence) in leaders’ sensegiving attempts and we examine how and why such efforts may be authenticated or contested by others. Our study contributes by showing how deceased founders may not be powerful figures in themselves, but are made powerful, by being presentified in evocative ways that reach beyond citing words to calling up emotions, memories and vivid imagery. The study highlights how audiences develop complementary strategies to either oppose leaders (through counter-presentifications) or to support them (through amplifying presentifications), adding friction or fluidity to the communicative process. Finally, the study illuminates contextual facilitators that explain how actors’ relative positioning with respect to founders and audiences allows certain individuals to tap into more privileged memory sources to presentify founders in more evocative ways.

Keywords

Uses of the Past; Deceased Founders; Sensegiving; Presentification; Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO); Multimodality

Introduction

Recent organizational scholarship has given increasing attention to the roles of memory, history and uses of the past in organizational life (Coraiola, Foster, Mena, Foroughi, & Rintamäki, 2023; Hampel & Dalpiaz, 2023; Ravasi, Rindova, & Stigliani, 2019; Wadhwani, Suddaby, Mordhorst, & Popp, 2018). For example, Suddaby, Foster, and Quinn Trank (2010, p. 166) argue that the past can become a strategic rhetorical resource that facilitates change by creating, “*a sense of continuity and identity of organizational values in the midst of chaotic and profound structural change.*” Yet drawing on the past to give sense in times of change is far from a simple matter. The puzzle is that the deeper the attachment to the past rooted in collective memories, the more challenging it may be to enroll the past to propose a future that departs from it.

One important aspect of the past that brings this puzzle into sharp relief is the role of deceased founders, who in some organizations may have been elevated to the rank of mythical figures (Harris & Ogbonna, 1999). Prototypical examples include Walt Disney (Boje, 1995) or Steve Jobs (Bell & Taylor, 2016). In such cases, deceased founders may symbolize core values and practices to which members are deeply attached, to the point where challenges to the organization’s mission or activities may be seen as undermining the founder’s legacy, leading to a loss of meaning.

A few authors have examined how the memories of historical figures may be drawn on discursively for sensegiving in situations of change, where sensegiving is defined as the process of influencing others’ understanding through persuasive language (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). For example, Basque and Langley (2018) showed how leaders might engage in “progressive invocations” that reference aspects of the founder’s persona (e.g., vision) to suggest their support for change. Maclean, Harvey, Suddaby, and Coraiola (2023) used the notion of ventriloquism to suggest that founders may be made to “speak” through their successors in imaginary conversations about what the founder would do in similar situations. Yet these and

similar studies (Maclean, Harvey, Sillince, & Golant, 2014; Sasaki, Kotlar, Ravasi, & Vaara, 2020) are most often ‘one-sided’ because they focus on the communications of change leaders, without including audiences’ reactions or delving into specific communicative practices shaping those reactions. Indeed, they have tended to assume that references to the founder will be persuasive, independently of the language used or of the relations between the founder, the person citing them, and their audiences.

Yet, other authors have noted the potential for diversity in understandings of the past (Cailluet, Gorge, & Ozcaglar-Toulouse, 2018; Galois-Faurie, Barros, & Grima, 2021; Hampel & Dalpiaz, 2023), implying that leaders’ efforts to draw on the memories of founder figures might be contested. For example, Cailluet et al. (2018) showed how communities inside and outside a non-profit organization mobilized the founder’s name for different purposes. This suggests that deceased founders do not *belong* to any individual or community, but may be drawn on by various protagonists. This seems particularly likely in situations of change or discontinuity when meanings are in flux. However, studies of uses of the past in such situations have not considered how leaders and other stakeholders may engage in reciprocal sensegiving by drawing on similar or different interpretations of the founders’ memory. This seems important to deepen our understanding of how a valued past may be successfully enrolled to shape a future that appears to question it. Specifically, we ask: *“How and with what effects are memories of deceased founders drawn on by organizational members and their audiences for sensegiving at moments of change or discontinuity?”*

We examine this question based on archival data capturing the communications of both leaders and their audiences for three contrasting cases of sensegiving at times of change or discontinuity. In doing so, we mobilize the concept of *presentification* developed in organizational communication research (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009) to refer to the practice of making a person

or thing present in communication in a way that may discursively constitute that person or thing as an ‘ally’ in support of the position enunciated. Extending prior work that has mainly focused on the cognitive aspects of sensegiving, we argue that the notion of presentification allows us to attend to the evocative capacity of certain verbal expressions and images that can make the founder’s presence more or less richly manifested in a particular communication, affecting its persuasiveness. Our study examines how this happens, focusing on whether and why ‘alliances’ with deceased founders come to be authenticated or contested in the responses of others.

Our study contributes to the literature on uses of the past in three ways. First, in contrast to previous work, we reveal the instability and contestability of the meanings associated with symbolic historical resources like deceased founders in moments of change and discontinuity. Second, while prior research has mainly emphasized cognitively-oriented aspects of sensegiving in times of change, we use the notion of presentification to develop deeper insights into the *evocative* capacity of language and imagery manifested in communicative events, identifying four modalities of presentification (*voicing*, *emotionalizing*, *incarnating* and *visualizing*) that vary in how and to what degree they favor a ‘felt’ presence that can convey authenticity. Specifically, we show how the contestation of meanings that occurs when founders are drawn on in situations of change or discontinuity is not just an argumentative struggle, but also an evocative struggle. Finally, extending previous work, we show how the relative positioning of leaders, founders, and audiences that help to explain why leaders’ sensegiving attempts are authenticated or contested. More generally, our study reveals the modalities and contingencies that make efforts to enroll the past to shape the future more or less likely to achieve acceptance and preserve shared meanings.

Theoretical Background: Founder Figures as Symbolic Resources

Deceased founders as symbols of continuity

Coraiola et al. (2023, p. 373) defined the goal of ‘organizational memory studies’ as “understanding the processes through which the past is constructed, reconstructed, deconstructed, and destructed through the memory work of managers and organizations.” This definition considers organizational memory to be socially maintained over time (Foroughi, Coraiola, Rintamaki, Mena, & Foster, 2020; Olick & Robbins, 1998) through practices of remembering, representing and forgetting. As described by Coraiola et al. (2023), practices of remembering are aimed at preserving the past by propagating stories and narratives, maintaining archives and artefacts, and commemorating the past through rituals and ceremonies. The maintenance of collective memory through remembering practices contributes to organizational identity formation and continuity as well as to social cohesion and belonging (Foroughi, 2020; Maclean et al., 2023; Ravasi et al., 2019; Suddaby et al., 2010).

Nowhere is this more evident than in the way many organizations commemorate their founders, who may leave a cultural and strategic heritage long after their demise (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Harris & Ogbonna, 1999; Schein, 1995). For some legendary founders (e.g., Steve Jobs, Walt Disney), successors may deliberately create memorialization practices to shape collective remembering, and sustain fidelity from employees, customers and others (Bell & Taylor, 2016; Boje, 1995; Ponroy, Le, & Pradies, 2019). Thus, Basque and Langley (2018) showed how the founder figure of a cooperative financial services organization was continually invoked as a symbol of organizational identity over 80 years. Maclean et al. (2023) and Bednar and Brown (2023) used the metaphor of organizational ‘ghosts’ to refer to the way in which figures from the past are memorialized in ongoing activity. In other words, for some organizations, deceased and

revered founders may become important symbols of continuity. How then may they be mobilized in contexts of change or discontinuity?

Deceased founders as symbolic resources at times of change or discontinuity

Beyond practices of ‘remembering’ aimed at *preserving* memories, authors have also considered how memory resources may be ‘*re-presented*’ in the present to give sense to current situations (Coraiola et al., 2023). Thus Suddaby et al. (2010) coined the term ‘rhetorical history’ to describe how historical resources including founders (Foster, Suddaby, Minkus, & Wiebe, 2011) may be deployed discursively to establish legitimacy and identity, but also facilitate change. This view implies that memory resources possess some malleability, enabling reinterpretation of the past (Brunninge, 2009; Rowlinson & Hassard, 1993). Yet, malleability is not infinite (Lubinski, 2018; Sasaki, Ravasi, & Micelotta, 2019). Thus, while leaders may be tempted to draw on founder figures as symbols of continuity in times of change, one may question how this is done when founding values are challenged.

A few studies have begun to address this in different ways. Maclean et al. (2023) describe how executives at Proctor & Gamble engaged in soul-searching and imaginary conversations with predecessors when change challenged past values, using the notion of “ventriloquism” to describe how earlier revered executives were ‘made to speak’ through their successors. In their study of identity work at a financial services cooperative, Basque and Langley (2018) documented a shift in how the founder was invoked in a house organ over 80 years. While early invocations cited the founder’s words to argue against change (conservative invocations), later ones constructed the founder as a visionary favorable to change (progressive invocations). Continuity is preserved here by shifting the meaning of the founder’s heritage, while retaining its symbolic value.

In a study of identity change at Lego, Schultz and Hernes (2013) suggested that digging deep into the organization’s past to establish links with a deceased founder might ironically enable

more significant change than recalling recent events (see also Lubinski, 2018). The authors also identified three important forms of collective memory that could be mobilized during change, each carrying different representations of the founder’s heritage: textual memory (i.e., archives), material memory (physical locations, images and artefacts), and oral memory (shared narratives potentially retained in personal memories). They suggested that the simultaneous use of a wider range of memory forms enabled deeper and broader change.

While these studies show that memories of founders may be deployed by leaders to support change, they do not fully explain how their messages may be formulated to be persuasive, especially since founders have often been previously constructed as symbols of continuity. Second, existing studies are either predominantly ‘one-sided’ in that they do not address the reactions of audiences at all (Basque & Langley, 2018; Maclean et al., 2023), or they imply that leaders’ interpretations are shared (Schultz & Hernes, 2013). We consider each of these issues in turn.

Deceased founders as communicatively constituted “allies” at times of change or discontinuity

Prior studies have given surprisingly limited attention to exactly *how* references to collective memories of deceased founders may become persuasive in times of change. While concepts like “progressive invocation” (Basque and Langley, 2018) and ventriloquism (Maclean et al., 2023) offer relevant starting points, studies mobilizing them do not explore in detail the specific forms and uses of language that might make references to founders more or less persuasive.

Scholars studying sensegiving processes more broadly have emphasized different aspects of language in shaping others’ understandings (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994; Moufahim, Reedy, & Humphreys, 2015; Vaara, Tienari, & Laurila, 2006). This literature has, however, most often emphasized how language influences *cognitive* re-orientation (Foldy, Goldman, & Ospina, 2008; Whittle, Vaara, & Maitlis, 2023), while overlooking the crucial *evocative* dimension that can provoke emotional responses or give rise to images and memories

(Benbenisty & Luria, 2021; Bilgili, Tochman Campbell, Ellstrand, & Johnson, 2017; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007).

To better capture these evocative dimensions, we draw here on the concept of “presentification” defined by communication theorists as *“those ways of speaking and acting that are involved in making present things and beings that, although not physically present, can influence the unfolding of a situation”* (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009, p. 10). The concept of presentification sheds light on how different things (people, tools, ideas, emotions, etc.) may be referred to in communication to imply their influence on the situation (Cooren, 2010). It thus seems particularly apt for understanding how references to founders may become influential. Specifically, by referring to a founder’s words in articulating a proposal, the speaker implicitly constitutes the founder figure as an *ally* to amplify their effect, adding ‘authority’ to what is said (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009). Brummans, Hwang, and Cheong (2013) hinted, moreover, that presentification could involve more than just words, notably if references to people or things evoked images and emotions associated with particular memories. We propose in this paper to deepen the analysis of the evocative capacities of presentification as a means to influence stakeholders at moments of change or discontinuity. The communicative accomplishment of authority through presentification can, in any case, be uncertain (Brummans et al., 2013), which leads us to consider the potential for contestation.

Deceased founders as potentially contested allies at times of change and discontinuity

Previous studies have paid little attention to the potential for contestation. Yet several scholars have observed that the meanings attached to founding stories may not be uniformly shared. Cailluet et al. (2018, p. 1811) noted that historical strategic resources such as founders can be *“both an asset and an arena for power struggle.”* Foroughi (2020) showed how two versions of a

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3 founding story coexisted in the same organization, and Galois-Faurie et al. (2021) revealed how
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5 mnemonic communities might split based on alignment or not with the founder’s perspective.
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8 This suggests that attempts to develop “alliances” with deceased founders through
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10 presentification may not always persuade target audiences. Moreover, since deceased founders are
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12 not owned by any individual or community (Cailluet et al., 2018), they could be “presentified” by
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14 different protagonists in different ways. Situations of change or discontinuity may affect different
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16 groups differently, motivating them to constitute historical figures as allies in pursuit of divergent
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18 goals. Yet, the literature has neglected this possibility. The above theoretical considerations lead
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20 us to a refined research question: *“How and with what effects are deceased founders presentified*
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22 *by organizational members and their audiences at moments of change or discontinuity?”*
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26 **Methods**

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28 ***Research context and data***

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31 ***Case selection.*** This study is part of broader research project examining how deceased
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33 founders remain present in organizational discourse after their demise, based on publicly available
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35 data. These data are appropriate because they document managerial sensegiving directed at various
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37 audiences at key timepoints (Anteby & Molnar, 2012; Chreim, 2005). From this material, we
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39 selected three cases of organizations experiencing change or discontinuity: (1) *Le Relais Bernard*
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41 *Loiseau* (founder: Bernard Loiseau; then-CEO: Dominique Loiseau), a French Haute Cuisine
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43 restaurant facing the loss of a Michelin star in 2016, leading to a strategic reorientation; (2) *Hewlett-*
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45 *Packard* (HP; founders: William R. Hewlett and David Packard; then-CEO: Carly Fiorina), at the
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47 time of a proposed merger with Compaq in 2002; (3) the *Desjardins Group*, a cooperative financial
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49 services institution (founder: Alphonse Desjardins; then-CEO: Claude Béland), facing a
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51 restructuring that challenged its governance model in 1999. All cases involved situations of change
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or discontinuity in which deceased founders were explicitly referenced by current leaders, and where audiences publicly responded to sensegiving efforts in contrasting ways.

Data collection. All material collected is in textual or visual form. Each case included somewhat different media because sensegiving efforts were directed at specific audiences. Dominique Loiseau (Relais Bernard Loiseau) used press interviews (radio, TV, blogs) to reach customers who might be disturbed by the loss of a Michelin star, while customers spoke on review sites and social media. For Carly Fiorina (HP), data include speeches, advertisements and messages to employees and shareholders during an eight-month proxy fight on the Compaq merger. Audience responses include letters to shareholders, advertisements and press reports by the founders' sons, and employees. Finally, Claude Béland (Desjardins Group) used an internal magazine, *Revue Desjardins*, to reach employees and officers who would vote on the change. Current and former executives expressed views in books, letters or press reports. We complemented data collection on specific incidents with other material including books and media articles to deepen contextual understanding. In particular, all three leaders published autobiographies that capture their post-hoc reflections on events (Béland, 2015; Fiorina, 2006; Loiseau, 2021). Table 1 shows the sources used.

...INSERT TABLE 1 & FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE...

Data analysis

We adopted an abductive approach to data analysis in five broad steps involving ongoing exchanges between authors, and continual efforts to consider more than one set of meanings (Alvesson, 2003). The concept of presentification guided iterations between data and theory. Figure 1 offers a visual representation of the analytical process. We began by identifying excerpts referring to deceased founders in the textual data ("presentifications") relevant to selected moments of

change or discontinuity, where leaders referenced deceased founders for a strategic purpose (Basque & Langley, 2018).

Step 1: Coding modalities of presentification of leaders and their evocative capacity. After several readings of the excerpts, we realized that founders were being made present in different ways, expressing different actions or ways of being. This led us to focus more pointedly on the verbs used in association with deceased founder(s) because verbs play a crucial role in indicating the actions and states of being of the sentence's subject. We observed significant variations in the verbs used and, after several iterations of coding, grouped them accordingly into four categories (*voicing*, *emotionalizing*, *incarnating*, *visualizing*), where the first three are associated with textual references to the founder, and the last with images. We subsequently analyzed the evocative capacity of each modality by examining the anchoring of the verb at sentence level.

For instance, some verbs such as “to say” or “to talk” made the founder speak, by reporting their exact words. We labelled these incidences *voicing* (i.e., (re)attributing speech to founders). Looking more closely at the full sentences, we saw that reviving the founder's words meant, above all, reviving their thoughts and reflections – involving therefore a relatively low evocative capacity (see examples, Appendix 1). Other verbs such as “to rage” or “to dream” animated the founder in an affective and emotional way, describing what they had, could, or would have experienced, had they been present. These incidences were labelled *emotionalizing*. By associating founders with emotions and affective states, emotionalizing differs from voicing in that it generally possesses a higher evocative capacity. Finally, other verbs such as “to be alive” or “to put energy [into something]” physically revived the deceased founder, by referring to their life, physical movements, or interactions with their environment. We labelled this *incarnating* (i.e., reanimating their body). At sentence level, we saw that by reviving the founder's past physical activity, incarnating has the ability to provide precise and vivid descriptions, operating at a visual level.

Similarly, by suggesting an alternative present in which the founder is returned to life in some capacity, incarnating operates at a more holistic level, rich in evocative capacity.

For visual data, we noted which graphic elements were used in association with the founder, and listed them (e.g., “handwritten signature” or “portrait”). We then categorized the elements by the types of action they made the founder do. We used the label ‘*visualizing*’ (i.e., representing them with images) for excerpts that included an image or artifacts produced by the founder. By proposing direct access to the founder’s image through photographs and private, intimate artifacts, *visualizing* has the ability to evoke a more tangible and realistic sense of the founder’s presence (see Appendix 1 for the coding structure and supplementary illustrations).

Step 2. Connecting presentification modalities and memory sources. We noted that the ability of sensegivers to draw on different presentification modalities depended to some degree on the different memory forms available (Schultz & Hernes, 2013). *Textual memory* grounded in written records is an important resource for *voicing*, notably at HP and Desjardins where founders left extensive writings (Desjardins Group, 1986; Packard, 1995). *Material* memory, including artifacts, physical spaces and emblems (Schultz & Hernes, 2013) enabled *visualizing* or *incarnating* through tangible and visible connections to the founders. Finally, *oral* memory forms, encompassing stories, presentations, and conversations facilitated *emotionalizing* and *incarnating*, with availability depending on personal relationships with, and lived memories of, the founder(s).

Step 3—Coding audience responses. In the next step, proceeding similarly to steps 1 and 2, we identified audience responses to leaders’ presentifications and coded the verbs underpinning them. It should be noted that the four modalities of presentification identified for CEOs were not used as pre-existing categories to guide our identification of the presentification modalities used by the audiences. Although we saw the same four modalities, we found that the audiences were also introducing nuances in the way they used the modalities, as explained below.

We identified two response patterns: ‘supportive’ (manifested in *amplifying* presentifications), and ‘oppositional’ (manifested in *countering* presentifications). For supporters, comparative analysis of the data revealed that when CEOs used a certain linguistic vocabulary in their presentifications, supporters might respond symmetrically, using linguistic features or turns of phrase that were comparable to those used by the CEOs. We labelled this ‘*mirroring leaders’ presentifications.*’ For opponents, many of the responses used a vocabulary referring to the insincere or misaligned nature of the original presentifications (e.g., using words such as “instrumental,” “manipulative,” “strateg[ic]”), with or without presentifying the founders in turn. These statements align with Lehman, O’Connor, Kovács and Newman’s (2019, p. 26) notion of ‘authentication’ as involving “*a verification process about whether or not something is real, genuine, or true.*” Note that specific presentifications might be judged authentic by some and inauthentic by others. We labelled the latter responses ‘*calling out inauthentic presentifications.*’

Finally, our comparative analysis revealed that both supporters and opponents *extended* leaders’ presentifications, but did so differently. For example, supporters might develop further the lexical repertoire associated with presentifications by adding greater positivity (e.g., referring to positive emotions of the founder, using words such as “happy”, “smiling”). In contrast, we noted that opponents would extend leaders’ presentifications by bringing to light an overlooked aspect of the conversation – the founders’ ethos (e.g., sense of care for employees). Appendix 2 provides additional illustrations.

Step 4. Identifying contextual influences. Our next step involved developing an appreciation of the context within which presentifications and audience responses occurred, to help understand how and why presentifications were contested (*countering* CEOs’ presentifications) or supported (*amplifying* CEOs’ presentifications). We compared the cases, drawing mainly on books, media reports, and CEOs’ autobiographies. We focused in particular on two themes that might

contribute to explaining how presentifications and responses played out. First, we considered the historical relationships between the protagonists (CEO and key audiences) and the founder (what we term ‘relative positioning’), notably whether or not there were personal relationships with the founder. These elements were important because they might affect judgments of the credibility and authenticity of presentifications as well as the memory resources individuals had access to (Table 2). Second, we considered the conditions surrounding the leader’s choice to presentify the founder in their sensegiving. Autobiographies were helpful here, as in all cases, leaders explained their rationales for change and positioned their thinking explicitly with respect to the founder’s heritage.

Step 5. Developing a process model. The iterative analytical process led us to develop a process model of sensegiving dynamics through presentification (see Figure 2). The model shows how CEOs’ presentification modalities and their evocative capacities lead to perceptions of authenticity or inauthenticity by audiences which are then reflected in amplifying and/or countering presentifications and influenced by contextual elements. Throughout this analysis, we paid attention to the sequentiality of events, ensuring that audience responses were explicitly related to CEOs’ previous statements, and documenting processual linkages for each case.

Findings

To guide readers in appreciating the findings for each case, we begin by briefly summarizing our conceptual process model of sensegiving dynamics through presentification shown in Figure 2. Specifically, the figure shows the interactive process through which presentifications by leaders at times of change or discontinuity (left-hand box of the figure) are authenticated or not by different audiences (supporters and opponents), and then how the original presentifications are amplified or countered by these audiences (right-hand box) in a recursive loop. The model also shows how the different modalities of presentification adopted by leaders,

supporters and opponents (voicing, emotionalizing, incarnating, visualizing, mirroring, extending, calling out inauthenticity) shape their evocative capacity, and hence, whether or not an “evocative struggle” may emerge, with the whole process having effects on the acceptance of the leader’s change initiative. The model shows, finally, how two contextual elements (access to memory forms, relative positioning) may facilitate or inhibit leaders’ and audiences’ uses of presentification modalities, and the overall authentication process.

...INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE...

Drawing on this model, we now unpack each of the three cases in detail, focusing successively on the contexts for each case, the modalities of presentification adopted by leaders, the authentication process and the responses of targeted audiences. Figure 9 illustrates how the generic process outlined in Figure 2 unfolded for each of the three cases. We conclude the Findings section with a cross-case analysis highlighting similarities and differences in the processes occurring for the three cases as displayed in Figure 9 and Table 2.

Le Relais Bernard Loiseau

Context: Emergence of a need for sensegiving. On February 24th, 2003, Bernard Loiseau, chef and founder of the *Côte d’Or* restaurant killed himself, shocking the French haute cuisine world. Loiseau was known for his flamboyant personality (Chelminski, 2005), and many believed the restaurant would not survive without him. Yet, his widow, Dominique Loiseau, decided to continue the business despite initial criticism from the public and employees, who considered her illegitimate because she was trained in biochemistry-dietetics, not culinary arts (Paris & Leroy, 2014). A reserved woman in a male-dominated environment, she struggled initially to fill the void left by her husband. Over time, the restaurant maintained its 3 stars, helping her gain legitimacy (Paris & Leroy, 2014). She successfully expanded the business, created new restaurants bearing

Loiseau's name, and involved her daughters Bérangère and Blanche as Director of Marketing, and future chef respectively. She renamed the hotel housing the restaurant the *Relais Bernard Loiseau* and Loiseau's cuisine was preserved by his former deputy-chef, Patrick Bertron, there since 1982.

In 2016, the restaurant lost a Michelin star. The event was extremely painful for Dominique Loiseau and her team. While she repeatedly denied rumors that the threat of losing a star had provoked Bernard's suicide, it was known that the three stars had been a driving ambition for him. She reported being "*shocked and disappointed*" (Monier, 2016), and confessed: "*There's something about stars for us. It's in our genes. We have had 3 stars for 25 years*" (Cau, 2016)¹. In her 2021 memoir, she describes her team, especially chef Patrick Bertron, as "*deeply wounded*."²

Such a loss can be devastating for restaurateurs, implying decreased quality and inventiveness. Dominique Loiseau (2021) describes engaging in a media tour to "*deliver a positive message resolutely focused on the future*" despite "*a failing heart*." The attachment to Bernard Loiseau's memory and name was both a strength, attracting clients seeking his mystique, and a weakness given his physical absence. This might raise questions about the restaurant's ability to meet haute cuisine's exacting standards, and challenge Dominique Loiseau's fitness to lead.

Sensegiving by emotionalizing and incarnating the founder, while signalling distance.

As the founder's widow, Dominique Loiseau was in a unique position. With the loss of a star, not mentioning Bernard Loiseau might have been considered inappropriate by clients who knew how important stars were to him. Instead, she presentified him to criticize the declining quality of the Michelin Guide and to pass the baton to Chef Patrick Bertron, drawing primarily on *emotionalizing* and *incarnating* modalities as in this press interview:

¹ Loiseau was reported as saying that if there were four stars in the Michelin Guide, he would be in the starting blocks to get them (Danacher, 2013), and also as confiding: '*If I lose a star, I'll kill myself*.' (Lytton, 2016).

² Original quotes in French were translated by the authors

I am not the only one who does not understand Michelin anymore. The myth is over. I believe that Bernard, who only swore by Michelin, must be spinning in his grave (Pinay-Rabaroust, 2016).

Here, using the metaphor of Bernard Loiseau “*spinning in his grave*,” she both emotionalizes him and incarnates him by setting him in motion even in his grave—conveying his hypothetical disappointment and anger. This strategy shifts responsibility from her team to the Michelin guide. She also distances herself from any negative emotions Bernard Loiseau would have experienced by stating: “*I’m not like my husband, who swore by [the stars]. Losing a star would have been dramatic for him, as he was bipolar*” (Gérard, 2016).

Simultaneously, Dominique Loiseau faced a tension between sustaining the restaurant’s emotional connection to her husband (valued by clients), while developing a more innovative image (important to critics like Michelin). She bridged this tension by *incarnating* him as a “*spirit*” – present yet absent. In a radio interview she presentifies her husband again in emotional terms:

It’s above all the spirit of Loiseau that my clients find when they come to this place for the first time. To hear them say, “Ah! We can feel the spirit of Loiseau,” it’s incredible! That’s why our clients dream of coming to Bernard Loiseau’s place. They do not need to know whether it has 2 or 3 stars. They’ll come anyway (Pacaud & Bonfillon, 2016).

The “spirit” metaphor also allows her to distance herself from his influence in looking to the future:

Today this is my house. There is a spirit here, but I do as I want, without betraying that. I want to have a place in my image. Everything I do here must have meaning: respond to Burgundy, or to Bernard Loiseau. I do not want this to be a dusty or nostalgic place (Cau, 2016).

While keeping Bernard Loiseau in the loop (“*respond to... Bernard Loiseau*”), she resets the strategic orientation of the restaurant to showcase the current chef Patrick Bertron: “*so that Patrick can more strongly affirm his own identity... His Breton origins are there in the menu, and we dare to affirm this*” (Cau, 2016). She explains that losing a star has “*boosted their motivation*,” and that they will stop “*trying to act like [Bernard]*” (LCI, 2016). She expresses the tension between sustaining the emotional connection to her husband and moving forward as follows:

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3 *One does not detach oneself from someone like Bernard Loiseau instantaneously. When such*
4 *a thing happens, you don't say, "It's my cuisine now." We could not do that, and no doubt,*
5 *customers would not have appreciated it. Patrick Bertron has now arrived at maturity. It was*
6 *important to be faithful to the man, but not to turn him into a museum (Cau, 2016).*
7

8 She emotionalizes Bernard Loiseau again ("*One does not detach oneself from someone like*
9 *Bernard*") by addressing the question of grief, while conveying the idea that she and Patrick
10
11 Bertron needed time to develop their own style. Elsewhere, she notes:
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15 *My chef [Patrick Bertron] spent a lot of time with Bernard. In 1991, he worked alongside*
16 *Bernard to get 3 stars. [...] We've had it for 25 years... [W]e will get it back... to be "on top"*
17 *as Bernard used to say. (Pacaud & Bonfillon, 2016)*
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19 Here, Dominique Loiseau *incarnates* Bernard Loiseau (and *voices* him in passing) by
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21 recalling his close collaboration with Bertron, which might be reassuring as it highlights Bertron's
22
23 own connection to Loiseau. With Bertron's dishes taking greater prominence, only four of the
24
25 founder's recipes remain. Dominique Loiseau also moved the group's other two restaurants
26
27 towards less traditional cuisine, with a Japanese chef at the helm (Rouyer, 2016). The Relais
28
29 Bernard Loiseau's reorientation therefore carried some risk, as customers might be concerned
30
31 about losing the renowned "*Loiseau spirit*" they seek (Cau, 2016).
32
33

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35 Overall, through the modalities of emotionalizing and incarnating, Dominique Loiseau offers
36
37 holistic depictions of Bernard Loiseau (e.g., spinning in his grave, working with Bertron, bipolar)
38
39 and conveys emotions (e.g., his anger and vulnerability, deep ties making it difficult to "detach"
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41 from him). These modalities constitute her as someone with a deep personal connection to the
42
43 founder. We now examine how these presentifications were received by audiences.
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46
47 ***Authenticating and amplifying Dominique Loiseau's presentifications.*** Despite the lost star
48
49 and the strategic reorientation around Bertron's cuisine, social media messages suggest that
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51 Dominique Loiseau's presentifications were viewed as authentic rather than merely strategic.
52
53 Clients praised her dedication to her husband's heritage: e.g., "*Courage to you, Ms. Loiseau, with*
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3 *a big thought for your husband, who you've been fighting for 13 years, keep going*" (Christine M.,
4 2016); *"We have been fortunate to know Bernard. We congratulate Madame [Loiseau] and her*
5 *entire team for maintaining this wonderful establishment"* (Sorrade, 2017). Food critic Perico
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Légasse defended the restaurant by suggesting that the Michelin Guide was declining in professionalism (Genton, 2016) and Franck Pinay-Rabaroust, a former Michelin Guide food critic commented that he found the loss of the star unjustified, noting that the situation reminded him of *"Bernard Loiseau's suicide a long time ago"* (Genton, 2016).

Customers – the restaurant's primary audience – supported Dominique Loiseau on review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor) by presentifying Bernard Loiseau and amplifying her message of continued excellence, *mirroring* and *extending* her presentifications. Some mirrored the 'spirit' metaphor she frequently used (e.g., *"[his] spirit instilled and perpetuated by Mme Dominique Loiseau"*) sometimes emotionalizing Bernard Loiseau as they did so:

"The shadow of her late husband Bernard is ever present, and he would surely be happy with the way his establishment is run. The temporary loss of the third star won't change that." (PetitsGourmands78100, 2016).

Customers often extended her presentifications with greater positivity, sometimes accompanied with a present or future orientation, in contrast to Dominique Loiseau's more past-oriented and negative reflections. One client incarnated him by using a metaphor to convey the image of Bernard Loiseau physically helping chef Patrick Bertron in the future: *"Bernard will give [Patrick Bertron] a hand"* (Marc, R., 2016). Another urged Dominique Loiseau to distance herself from the performance system that Bernard Loiseau loved, consistently emotionalizing and incarnating Bernard Loiseau in the present and positively: *"You must stop running after the recognition of all these guides . . . Bernard watches over you and counts on you,"* (Gilou G., 2016).

These responses amplified Dominique Loiseau's message³, evoking memories and projections of a Bernard proud of her work, and still present as a benevolent spirit ready to step in. Note that a study of the restaurant's reviews by Clauzel et al. (2019) showed no decrease in quantitative ratings after the loss of the star, but marked negativity about the Michelin Guide.

Summary. The Relais Bernard Loiseau case illustrates successful presentification in sensegiving efforts, with the leader's presentifications perceived as authentic and resonating with audiences. While this may seem unsurprising given Dominique Loiseau's exceptional position as the founder's widow, her credibility was not always guaranteed. Furthermore, the lost star could have challenged her leadership. However, her position gave her privileged access to a wide range of memory sources, something less available to leaders without personal connections to the founder. She primarily used oral memory to emotionalize and incarnate Bernard Loiseau, conveying an intimate connection to and understanding of Bernard, while simultaneously renewing her vow to perpetuate his "spirit" and legacy, and distancing herself from his person. This fostered audience empathy, and triggered amplified presentifications that were in turn imbued with memories, images, and emotions (see Figure 9a).

Hewlett-Packard (HP)

Context: Emergence of a need for sensegiving. Hewlett-Packard (HP) is a global provider of computers, printers and related technologies founded in 1939 by William R. Hewlett (1913-2001) and David Packard (1912-1996), known by all as Bill and Dave. The company is famous for its attachment to the "*HP Way*," a management philosophy articulated in a book by Dave Packard (1995), emphasizing employee well-being and contribution to company development. In 1999,

³ We did not find any public opposition to Dominique Loiseau's presentifications. A few comments on Trip Advisor, complained about food quality (as normal), but with no references to Loiseau, or his widow's presentifications.

Carly Fiorina was hired as the first outsider CEO. In her 2006 memoir, she describes entering a company in desperate need of “*reinvention*,” but paralysed by its attachment to the past:

The past and the status quo were... wrapped in the religion of the HP Way and the mythology of the founders. Bill and Dave had once been radicals and pioneers, but now there were too many instances when a new idea was quickly dismissed with the comment, “We don’t do it that way. It’s not the HP Way.” (Fiorina, 2006, p. 182)

She describes her early efforts to draw on the symbolic power of the founders by creating an ad campaign featuring Bill and Dave’s original garage with herself standing next to it, noting how this “*reminded everyone what Bill and Dave had really done*” (Fiorina, 2006, p. 205). These efforts received mixed support, at best, from employees at the time (Paroutis et al., 2013).

In September 2001, Fiorina negotiated a merger with technology firm Compaq, viewing this as a way to strengthen HP. However, the merger involved dismissing 10% of HP’s workforce, and its announcement caused an 18% drop in the share price. Most critically, the project faced opposition from the founders’ sons Walter Hewlett and David W. Packard, resulting in a proxy fight and a major sensegiving challenge. Fiorina confronted the challenge, in part by presentifying the founders as supporters of change. She used multiple media both to reassure shareowners—who would vote for or against the merger—and appease employees who feared for their jobs.

Sensegiving by voicing the founders to claim their support. In an email to HP employees in November, 2001 after it became clear that the founders’ sons would oppose the Compaq merger, Fiorina dismissed the idea of a conflict between past and future as a media fabrication:

Most of the media... is positioning the merger with Compaq and the recent actions by Walter Hewlett and David Packard as a fight between the past and the future -- between the Hewlett-Packard of our co-founders and the future that we're trying so hard to position ourselves to achieve... There is no conflict in honoring our past while at the same time determining that we must change to secure our future. I do not desire to tear down the foundation of Hewlett-Packard. In fact, we must continue to build upon that foundation. (Hewlett-Packard, 2001)

She went on to presentify the founders as supporters of her position in multiple forums, drawing repeatedly on their words, especially those of Dave Packard, using the modality we called *voicing*. Indeed, in a retiree meeting, she claimed to have read *The HP Way* six times (Hewlett-Packard, 2002d), and repeatedly drew similarities between her approach and that of the founders, implying that others may have misunderstood it. For instance, in promoting the merger in a public speech, Fiorina voiced the founders to show that both they and she shared tenacity in defending innovations against detractors:

[I]n an industry that is changing as rapidly and fundamentally as ours is, there is no future in the status quo. As Dave Packard once said, 'Since we participate in fields of advanced and rapidly changing technologies, to remain static is to lose ground' ... Every step along the way, there have been skeptics who said, 'it won't work, it won't sell, it won't succeed, it's not the HP Way.' And to every single person who said, 'it's never been done before,' Bill and Dave replied, 'Yes, but there's never been a company like Hewlett-Packard before' (Fiorina, 2002)

Fiorina used this same approach repeatedly, drawing on one of Dave Packard's sayings (*'to remain static is to lose ground'*) in meetings, speeches and letters to employees, retirees and shareowners, as illustrated in the following New Year's Message:

This company has always believed in change. David Packard himself once wrote in his book, The HP Way, "Continuous growth was essential for us to achieve our objectives and to remain competitive. Since we participate in fields of advanced and rapidly changing technologies, to remain static is to lose ground." (Hewlett-Packard, 2002a).

This same mantra voicing Dave Packard (*"to remain static is to lose ground"*) also appeared in a full-page advertisement in major newspapers including an old photograph of Bill and Dave handling computer equipment (Figure 3), combining *visualizing* with *voicing*. However, unlike the case of Dominique Loiseau, the *emotionalizing* and *incarnating* modalities were largely absent.

...INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE...

(Dis)authenticating and countering Fiorina's presentifications. By relying primarily on the voicing modality, Fiorina mainly offered her audience the founders' *words*, repeated often and with assurance, but based almost entirely on her interpretation of *The HP Way*. Her sensegiving

efforts thus suggested the founders’ alignment with her aspirations for change, but did not convey a strong personal connection. Indeed, the founders’ sons *called out* Carly Fiorina’s presentifications as inauthentic. Notably, in an advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal*, responding to Carly Fiorina’s own advertisement, David W. Packard condemned her use of his father’s words as a manipulative marketing ploy (see Figure 4):

“Ms Fiorina, your recent advertisement misappropriates David Packard’s words “to remain static is to lose ground.” As a professional marketer you know how to enhance your message by invoking the image of an admired person. But my father’s quote has no relevance to your argument. You expect readers of The Wall Street Journal to believe that your disruptive merger plan is the only possible path forward—that your opponents want HP to “remain static.” (Packard, 2002).

Others also criticized the practice of making the founders appear to speak in favor of the merger: *“most of the nastiness has come from... quoting the late Dave Packard in apparent agreement”* (Forbes, 2002a). Some employees suggested that Carly Fiorina was *“manipulat[ing] both shareholders and employees”* (Forbes, 2002b). These reactions resulted in efforts by David W. Packard, as well as others, to *counter-presentify* the founders as opponents of the merger.

... INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE...

These opponents drew on a wide range of presentification modalities. The founders’ sons were in a relatively advantageous position to discuss the founders’ viewpoint, with access to a more extensive and personal reservoir of memory sources. David W. Packard’s advertisement in Figure 4 not only challenged Fiorina’s mechanical overuse of the founders’ words, but also concluded with his own quote from his father: *“You recall another of my father’s favorite sayings: ‘More companies die of indigestion than starvation.’ There is now a real danger that HP will die of a broken heart.”* Some opponents *extended* Fiorina’s presentifications, highlighting a new and key aspect of the merger related to the founders’ ethos and how they cared for their employees. For instance, David W. Packard voiced and emotionalized the founders to imply their disapproval:

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3 “My father and Bill Hewlett managed a company in a way that it was never necessary to tell
4 people, ‘Sorry, business is not so good right now. Goodbye.’” (Statement to shareholders
5 cited in Elsbach, Stigliani, & Stroud, 2012).
6

7 Employees and former executives also highlighted in comments to the press the differences
8
9 between the founders’ ethos and Fiorina’s, deconstructing her claims to represent their views by
10 incarnating and/or emotionalizing Bill and Dave. The founders were portrayed as simple
11 individuals who maintained close relationships with employees, “deer hunters, engineers and
12 mountain climbers,” who “drove to work in their old cars... used to frequent the cafeteria... [and
13 wear] geek clothes—jeans, sneakers, and checked shirts” (Goodell, 2002; Ward, 2002), while
14 Fiorina was nicknamed ‘The Queen’ or ‘Rock Star’ by employees (Ruello, 2001; Ward, 2002),
15 who “refused to pose with some long-term employees ... [wore] Armani or Versace [and has] an
16 army of corporate-communications [people]” (Ward, 2002). The vivid descriptions of the
17 founders, indicates a personal knowledge of them that Fiorina lacked.
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30 Former top executives shared experiences of working alongside the founders, combining
31 the incarnating and voicing modalities to evoke specific memories:
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35 “Mr. Hewlett would come around and sit down and say, ‘What are you doing?’ He would
36 listen. He knew people—you know, when their dog died...” One former employee recalls
37 Hewlett stopping by in the late 80s and asking him all sorts of questions about what he was
38 working on. “It astounded me that someone with the types of things that he needed to be
39 thinking of would still have the ability or the interest,” (Ward, 2002).
40

41 Yet, Fiorina was not entirely alone. She had support from two board members who had known the
42 founders personally and had a greater capacity to presentify them in evocative ways as we see next.
43
44

45 ***Amplifying Fiorina’s presentifications.*** Dick Hackborn (HP Board member) intervened on
46 several occasions to extend and shore up Fiorina’s presentifications. For example, in a pre-vote
47 message to shareowners, he wrote:
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52 *Dear Fellow Shareowner,*

53 *As March 19 approaches, I’ve spent a lot of time thinking about the first time Hewlett-*
54 *Packard introduced the laser printer in the early 1980s. If you remember, when it was*
55 *introduced, the critics hated it...*
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Through it all, Bill and Dave would listen patiently, smile, nod, and then encourage us to proceed full-steam ahead. They absolutely loved the business. When I asked him why, Dave Packard told me that “if we had stopped every single time somebody told us that something wouldn’t succeed, we never would have made it out of the garage.”

I think about that story every time people ask me why I’m such a strong and enthusiastic supporter of the merger between Hewlett-Packard and Compaq. It’s in the best spirit of the imagination, daring, and determination that made this company such a treasure in the first place.” (Hewlett-Packard, 2002c).

In this letter, Hackborn *mirrors* Fiorina’s claims that Dave Packard would view change favorably, but at the same time, he *extends* Fiorina’s presentifications with greater positivity by emotionalizing (“*They absolutely loved the business*”), incarnating (“*Bill and Dave would listen patiently, smile, nod, and then encourage us*”) and voicing (“*Dave Packard told me that...*”) the founders. Hackborn’s proximity to them gave him access to oral and personal memory sources, allowing him to use a variety of presentification modalities, and imbuing the founders and the merger with a heightened sense of vitality and positivity, transcending the mere alignment with the founders’ thoughts seen in Fiorina’s own presentifications.

Other messages reminded shareowners that some of the board members in favor of the merger, including Dick Hackborn and Jay Keyworth, were very close to the founders:

The merger represents the collective judgment of your Board of Directors, six of whom are independent directors, who together with HP management, represent three centuries of combined business and technology industry experience...

-Dick Hackborn, a 30-year HP veteran who worked alongside Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard and built HP’s imaging and printing business. (Director since 1992).

-Jay Keyworth, chairman and senior fellow of the Progress and Freedom Foundation and former director of the White House Office of Science and Technology, was a long-time friend and advisor to Dave Packard. (Director since 1986) (Hewlett-Packard, 2002b).

In essence, these and a few other supporters⁴ amplified Carly Fiorina’s presentifications by mirroring and extending them to counter the symbolic power of the founders’ sons as interpreters

⁴ A few journalists and colleagues mirrored her thinking by voicing the founders. More evocatively, a *Time* magazine journalist compares Fiorina’s boldness to that of the founders by incarnating them: “*Fiorina’s gamble on greater growth is about as gutsy as their decision to build an oscillator in their garage back in 1939.*” (Taylor, 2002).

of their fathers' wishes, something that Fiorina could not imitate. In the face of the intense public debate surrounding the merger which pit the founders' sons against current executives (and metaphorically, the founders against themselves), the merger passed at 51.4% approval, an underwhelming result given that mergers are typically overwhelmingly supported by shareholders. Some analysts claimed that the founders' sons "won" by significantly influencing shareholder opinion (Lohr & Gaither, 2002). Others suggested that, although the merger was confirmed, the process tarnished employee trust in Fiorina's leadership (Elsbach et al., 2012), and along with subsequent struggles in integrating the merger contributed to limiting her tenure at HP.

Summary. Fiorina's confident yet relatively mechanical approach to *voicing* the founders based on their writings may have persuaded some stakeholders, but alienated key others, missing the personal connection associated with Bill and Dave. This triggered many counter-presentifications from opponents better positioned relatively to the founders, and using a richer range of modalities (*voicing, emotionalizing, incarnating*) that could evoke emotions, memories and images, while denouncing her perceived manipulation of the founders' heritage. Although she had a few supporters better positioned to offer evocative presentifications, the resulting stalemate and conflict surrounding the merger damaged her credibility longer term (see Figure 9b).

Desjardins Group

Context: Emergence of a need for sensegiving: The Desjardins Group is a cooperative financial services organization in Quebec with over 50,000 employees. Founded by Alphonse Desjardins in 1900 as a network of autonomous community banks or "*caisses populaires*," the organization evolved after the founder's death in 1920 through the creation of Regional Unions and a central Federation to coordinate the network. The cooperative mission and democratic structure remained closely associated with the founder (Basque & Langley, 2018).

In 1999, faced with concerns about the costly governance structure, President Claude Béland proposed a major restructuring plan. This would eliminate the regional level of governance by merging it into a single central federation. While this restructuring could appear to challenge the founder’s cooperative philosophy, Béland (2015) argued in his biography that the creators of the regionalized structure had “*ignored Alphonse Desjardins’ last wishes.*” Citing historical texts, Béland notes that the founder had instead proposed the creation of a single central federation for all the caisses. However, changing the structure constituted a sensegiving challenge as regional bodies were reluctant to relinquish their autonomy. To achieve this transformation, Béland needed to persuade representatives of the *caisses* themselves to vote in favor of restructuring.

Claude Béland had a long association with the cooperative movement and had led the Desjardins Group since 1987. From 1990 to 1994, 5 times/year, his messages to employees in the internal magazine, *Revue Desjardins*, were accompanied by his photograph in front of a portrait of the founder (see Figure 5a), implying their mutual identification. However, this case contrasts with the previous two because neither supporters nor opponents had known the founder personally.

...INSERT FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE...

Sensegiving by drawing on multiple modalities of presentification to appropriate the founder’s will. A key element in Béland’s communication plan to convince the caisses to vote for the restructuring was a 1999 Special Issue of the internal magazine, *Revue Desjardins*. This includes an interview with Béland reviewing the project’s history and rationale, an excerpt from a letter written by Alphonse Desjardins in 1920 (Figure 6), and an excerpt from a 1990 comic book about Alphonse’s life (Prouche, 1990) (Figure 7). These elements were juxtaposed to imply that the restructuring would, in fact, fulfil the founder’s wishes and continue the work he began “*at the end of his life,*” presentifying the founder as supportive of change.

... INSERT FIGURES 6 AND 7 ABOUT HERE...

Alphonse Desjardins' letter (see Figure 6) is a remarkable exhibit for several reasons. The letter was originally addressed to the caisses in 1920 when he was dying, and outlines his plan for a 'Federation' and 'Central Caisse' to support the existing caisses. The letter immerses readers in the founder's last wishes, suggesting support for Béland's 1999 restructuring project:

To strengthen further these organizations and to orient them uniformly towards my idea of them, I also dreamed of organizing a federation where all the Caisses would be represented, benefiting from the new force that this central body could not fail to give them... I believe that such a federation would render valuable services to all the Caisses. It would serve as a centre of information concerning the path to follow and especially of the spirit that should always prevail in their management... Revue Desjardins, (Goulet, 1999)

Poignantly, the 1920 letter ends by requesting the caisses' opinion on the founder's project: "*I ask you therefore to let me know the opinion of your Caisse as soon as you have undertaken the proposed consultation.*" – exactly what Béland was doing in 1999.

With this letter, that *voices* the founder and that seems to speak directly to Béland's audience, it appears obvious that Alphonse himself would support the restructuring: it would "*strengthen*" the *caisses*, and preserve "*the spirit that should always prevail.*" The letter discloses the founder's thoughts, and also his sentiments—there is *emotionalizing* here as well. The founder designates the creation of a federation as his "*dream*" suggesting to readers that they would be fulfilling that dream by accepting the project. This effect is heightened by the presentation of the letter as a historical piece from Desjardins' archives (see Figure 6), seeming to be a direct scan of the original. The date at the beginning ("*Lévis, 3 July 1920*") is partly in cursive script. The rest of the letter is typewritten and ends with Desjardins' handwritten signature. This creates the impression of reading an authentic historical document. However, on close examination, it is apparent that while the *content* of the letter is authentic, its physical rendering is not: it is staged. The letter has not been

scanned but is reconstituted (e.g., passages are cut and the signature has been added)⁵. Using the *visualizing* modality, the 1920 letter transports the reader to the founder’s space and time.

Juxtaposed with the letter is a scene from a 1990 comic book for children about the founder, staging Desjardins speaking to his daughter (Prouche, 1990) (Figure 7). The founder’s words express his intention to create a central federation, and his daughter is seen to approve (*“That’s a marvelous idea!”*). The image of Alphonse’s body, smile, and spontaneous hand gestures is evocative and conveys his viewpoint in an embodied and immediate way.

Finally, communication about restructuring also included a brochure sent to officers of the caisses, with an image of the founder and a text titled: *“If Alphonse Desjardins were still alive...!”* (Figure 8). This uses both the *incarnating* and *visualizing* modalities of presentification, transporting readers into a fictional world where the founder returns to life, and makes decisions in ways that align with Béland’s project:

If he [Alphonse Desjardins] were back today, it's a safe bet that he would ensure, as his successors are doing today, that the Desjardins Group has the organization and tools to meet the realities of the early 21st century. He would also ensure, as the officers of the caisses are doing today, that the Desjardins Group would continue to affirm and highlight its cooperative distinction.

Note how the last sentence refers explicitly to the *“officers of the caisses”* (i.e., voters targeted by Béland) implying that Alphonse himself is overseeing their actions.

... INSERT FIGURE 8 HERE...

Overall, the use of a diverse modalities seems aimed at creating significant evocative and emotional effects, as readers share in the founder’ last wishes, and he is revived to confront contemporary challenges alongside them. We now examine how these presentifications were received.

⁵ The letter is genuine. The complete text appeared previously in the *Revue Desjardins* in 1949 and 1960. In 1999, an effort was made to give it a (falsely) authentic character as a *physical* artifact, not done before.

(Dis)authenticating and countering Claude Béland's presentifications. Although some groups opposed the restructuring for its effects on local autonomy, few directly contested Béland's presentifications of Alphonse Desjardins. A notable exception was René Croteau, who had joined Desjardins in 1946 and retired in 1991 from a position as advisor to the President. He was known for his deep knowledge of Desjardins' history (Rompré & Croteau, 1996). In a manifesto titled "*Time to Act: Deviation or Manipulation?*" Croteau (1999) *called out* Béland's presentifications as inauthentic. He accused him of making a "*manipulative*" and "*abusive*" use of the founder's letter. Croteau also *extended* Béland's presentifications by highlighting the founder's cooperative principles, which he argued were violated by the project and the decision process. He *voiced* the founder himself to support this argument. Referencing the same letter used by Béland (Figure 6), he noted: "*Mr. Desjardins explained in his letter that his project could be "approved," "amended" or "rejected" by the caisses [...] The model proposed in 1999 and the means used to ensure its adoption have absolutely no relation to Mr. Desjardins' project, nor with his way of proceeding.*"

Reacting to Béland's brochure speculating on how the founder would act were he still alive, Croteau responded by *emotionalizing* the founder: "*He would enter into a fit of rage faced with the project you have proposed*" (Croteau, 1999). Like Béland, Croteau shows some affinity with the founder, even though he did not know him personally. However, perhaps because Croteau no longer had a formal role, and because his presentifications were rare, they received limited support.

Yet, one observer was not insensible to the irony of Béland's "reframing" of Alphonse Desjardins' vision in the light of past associations with his image. Figure 5b shows a 1999 newspaper cartoon in which this reframing is represented as a creative distortion of Alphonse Desjardin's original portrait in Figure 5a, implying (tongue in cheek) some doubt about the authenticity of Béland's presentifications.

Amplifying Béland’s message by voicing, incarnating and emotionalizing the founder:

Generally, however, there were few comments in the press about Béland’s presentifications, which suggests that they were deemed authentic. However, one President of a Caisse, Rémi Petit, took exception to opponents who portrayed Béland as Machiavellian, accusing some of them as being manipulators themselves (Petit, 1999). Moreover, multiple observers signalled approval by amplifying Béland’s presentifications, repeatedly *mirroring* them in the media.

Significantly, Clément Samson, President of a caisse, voiced the founder in the same language as Béland, amplifying his message: “*Times have changed, and the unique structure advocated by Mr. Desjardins at the turn of the century may now be the solution to reducing costs*” (Samson, 1999). Similarly, Laurent Barrette, another President of a caisse, incarnated the founder: “*If Alphonse Desjardins were to return today, I am not sure that he would create a Caisse as he did in 1900... It is a matter of adapting to or rejecting a new reality.*” (Turcotte, 1999). Finally a newspaper headline (Beaudoin, 1999) reads, “*Alphonse is right at last*” underlining the emerging consensus around the restructuring’s inevitability. It was approved by a “*crushing majority*” in December 1999 (Sansfaçon, 1999).

Summary. The Desjardins case differs from the Loiseau and HP case in three ways (Figure 9c). First, Claude Béland used a wider range of modalities than Dominique Loiseau and Carly Fiorina, making the founder present in immersive and evocative ways thanks to the brochure that visualized and incarnated him, and to the letter and comic book excerpt, which subtly combined voicing, visualizing, and emotionalizing. Opponents, and especially René Croteau, unsuccessfully tried to counter this with more limited presentifications that were not amplified by others. A second difference pertains to the relative positioning of all the protagonists, as no-one knew Alphonse Desjardins personally, broadening possibilities for reinterpretation. Third, Desjardins’ longer history created an accumulation of textual and material memory forms, that could be layered over

one another (Maclean et al., 2023). This enabled the juxtaposition of a letter from 1920 with a comic book from 1990, each reflecting slightly different understandings. The cartoon in Figure 5b illustrates another representation, showing metaphorically how founders themselves might be ‘transformed’ through the process of their presentification.

Cross-Case Analysis

Figure 9 empirically unpacks the generic process model of Figure 2 for each of the three cases, allowing us to highlight the key similarities and differences in how deceased founders were presentified in each organizational context (see also Table 2 for further detail). First, we see that although all three leaders strategically presentified the founders at a time of significant change or discontinuity, their modalities of presentification and evocative capacities were quite different (shown in the left-hand boxes in Figure 9) and the outcomes varied significantly due to variations in the authentication process and perceived authenticity from supporters and opponents (middle part of the figures). Dominique Loiseau primarily used emotionalizing and incarnating modalities, leveraging her unique personal connection to evoke empathy and maintain client loyalty despite losing a Michelin star. Conversely, Carly Fiorina predominantly used voicing, drawing extensively on written records to legitimize the controversial merger with Compaq, but encountered resistance due to perceived lack of authenticity. Claude Béland combined multiple presentification modalities – including voicing, emotionalizing, incarnating, and visualizing – to convincingly align restructuring initiatives with the founder’s original vision at Desjardins, despite lacking a personal relationship with him.

...INSERT FIGURE 9 AND TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE...

These contrasting uses of presentification highlight the significance of leaders’ relative positioning and available memory sources (see ‘contextual facilitators or inhibitors’ in Figure 9) in

influencing how effectively they could authenticate their sensegiving efforts. Audience reactions across the cases consistently reflected their perception of leaders' authenticity, either *amplifying* leaders' messages through positive reinforcement (mirroring and extending leaders' presentifications with greater positivity, seen mainly in the Relais Bernard Loiseau case, Figure 9a) or *countering* them by calling out inauthenticity and highlighting perceived misalignment with the founder's ethos (found in both Hewlett-Packard and Desjardins cases, Figures 9b and 9c). However, in these last two cases, the outcome was different because the contextual facilitators and inhibitors were more contrasted between the CEO and opponents. In the Hewlett-Packard case, several opponents had strong access to oral memory forms, resulting in a high evocative capacity that Carly Fiorina, with her weak relative positioning, could hardly match. In the Desjardins case, the imbalance was less visible, as no one had known the founder personally. Claude Béland's relative positioning was hence similar to that of his key opponent, levelling the playing field and placing him in a better position than Carly Fiorina to win approval for the change he proposed. In the discussion below, we further theorize the dynamics underlying these differing outcomes.

Discussion

The empirical literature on uses of the past, and in particular that on how leaders draw on the memories of deceased founders has often tended to be “one-sided,” in the sense that it has rarely interrogated audience's reactions, feelings, and interpretive work. This limitation is notable given the complex and nuanced ways in which different organizational members may interpret and respond to leaders' use of historical figures as illustrated in our study. Indeed, scholars of organizational memory studies (Coraiola et al., 2023) have recently argued for the need to attend to an ecology of ‘mnemonic communities’ who may hold differing memories, and differing perspectives on how the past is germane to the present and future (see also, Cailluet et al., 2018;

Galois-Faurie et al., 2021). Nowhere is this of greater importance than in a context of change or discontinuity when memories of deceased founders may be challenged, even as leaders attempt to mobilize them as symbols of continuity to orient future decisions. Our study innovates by taking a multi-sided view on the dynamics of founder presentification at times of change and discontinuity as illustrated in Figure 2, and revealing how this process can unfold depending on a number of contextual elements (Figure 9). The model contributes in a variety of ways.

First, by offering a multi-sided ecological and processual perspective, our model importantly highlights how leaders' presentifications trigger audiences' responses, leading them to develop complementary strategies to either oppose leaders (through *countering presentifications*) or to support them (through *amplifying presentifications*), respectively adding friction or fluidity to the communicative process. Second, our process model suggests that deceased founders may not be powerful figures in themselves, but *are made* powerful, by being presentified in evocative ways. Third, the model illuminates contextual facilitators that explain how *relative positioning* allows certain individuals to tap into more privileged memory sources to form their presentifications in an evocative way (See Figure 9). Taken together, these three contributions explain how the general process we uncovered can unfold differently, depending on the contextual factors we highlighted.

Deceased founders as unstable and contestable symbolic resources

Because of their one-sided nature, most previous studies have tended to imply that leaders' memories and interpretations of founders in the context of change or discontinuity are necessarily shared (e.g., Maclean et al., 2023; Sasaki et al., 2020). In contrast, our study shows that leaders' presentifications may trigger a conversational dynamic with audiences who either amplify leaders' presentifications, or alternatively counter them. In the latter case, the conversational dynamic may derail leaders' sensegiving efforts and render their interpretations contestable as deceased founders become metaphorically "torn" between alternate positions. As highlighted in Figures 2 and 9, these

sensegiving dynamics do not occur in isolation but rather unfold through a sequential and reciprocal process. The authenticity perceived by audiences is continuously negotiated through ongoing interactions between leaders' presentifications and audience responses, which can reinforce or undermine leaders' initial efforts. The iterative nature of these dynamics emphasizes the need to consider how successive communicative events cumulatively shape organizational members' acceptance or resistance to change.

Hatch and Schultz (2017) argue that authenticity in uses of the past emerges when organization members engage in careful historical research and thoughtful recontextualization of artefacts in the present. Yet neither their study nor others directly examine the process through which *audiences* assess the perceived authenticity of founder presentifications. Our article suggests that the *authentication* process enacted by audiences is of critical importance as it can make or break the credibility of leaders' presentifications. Specifically, we show how supporters may authenticate leaders' original presentifications by *mirroring* them and *extending* them to convey enhanced positivity. In contrast, opponents disauthenticate them through claims of distortion and through counter-presentifications that draw on a wider range of modalities and often emphasize the founder's ethos (see Figure 2). Thus, audiences are instrumental in the overall communication process, contributing to both the acceptance of change and to shaping collective memories of founder figures for the future (Coraiola et al., 2023).

By focusing on the interpretations and responses of audiences, we extend previous research by highlighting the instability and contestability of meanings associated with deceased founders in moments of change and discontinuity. Rhetorical history scholars have discussed the malleability of historical resources (Brunninge, 2009; Decker et al., 2021), but some studies have argued that this malleability is not unlimited (e.g., Lubinski, 2018; Sasaki et al., 2019). Yet this work does not provide insight into the dynamic processes that reveal and explain these limits. By attending to the

1
2
3 reactions triggered by the use of deceased founder figures, we highlight both their malleability and
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5 also their contestability. This reflects what Blagoev, Felten and Kahn (2018) call the duality of
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7 memory. Anyone can *attempt* to presentify a founder, from those who knew them personally to
8
9 those who did not. Yet, not all presentifications are perceived as acceptable—something that is
10
11 only partially known beforehand, as our cases show. Nevertheless, our study also suggests that *how*
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13 founders are presentified may make a difference, as discussed next.

14 15 16 17 ***Enrolling the past to orient the future: An evocative struggle***

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19 Making deceased founders *speak* through the practices of “ventriloquizing” (Maclean et al.,
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21 2023) or “invoking” them as role models (Basque & Langley, 2018) have been recently noted as
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23 ways leaders may draw on founder figures in situations of change. However, these studies have
24
25 essentially reduced the persuasive power of these figures to arguments of authority, implicitly
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27 ascribing power to the figures themselves, rather than focusing on how they can be *made powerful*
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29 in sensegiving processes. The concept of presentification (Benoit-Barné and Cooren, 2009) proved
30
31 instrumental in helping us to become more sensitive to how deceased founders are not only *used*,
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33 but also *made present* by leaders and audiences in situations of change. However, previous studies
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35 using the concept have not distinguished between different forms of presentification, nor have they
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37 explored the more sensory or evocative dimensions of language that may be involved in making
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39 someone present to evoke not only their speech but also images and emotions.

40
41 We identified four modalities of presentification, including *voicing* (which corresponds to
42
43 making deceased founders speak), as well as newly elaborated modalities such as *emotionalizing*,
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45 *incarnating*, and *visualizing*. We therefore reveal a wider variety of ways in which historical figures
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47 can be made *present* as allies than in previous work, elucidating some of the subtleties of
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49 sensegiving dynamics. Importantly, we highlight that all four modalities tap into the evocative
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potential of calling up a deceased person to ‘touch’ audiences, not only by *voicing* that person (the least evocative modality), but also by calling up emotions, memories and vivid imagery.

Our study also shows that audiences tend to use the same four presentification modalities, but may incorporate variations, depending on whether they support or oppose leaders. Supporters tend to mirror leaders’ presentifications and extend them with increased positivity, while opponents call out perceived inauthenticity and emphasize the founders’ ethos in their own presentifications. We show, moreover, that depending on their relative positioning, opponents might even use more evocative modalities than leaders (as in the HP case), affording them a significant advantage via privileged access to certain memory sources. In this way, audiences can establish themselves as more credible than leaders in terms of understanding what the founder would do or want. Overall, leaders and audiences may become engaged in an evocative battle that reaches beyond the authority attached to the founder’s words or rational argument.

Theorizing the role of contextual facilitators

Our study also reveals two contextual elements rooted in the *relative positioning* of leaders, founders and audiences that may help explain why sense giving attempts are authenticated or not. First, different relative positions may offer different bases of credibility. This is reflected in both the objectively deducible relationships between the leader or other protagonists and the founder (family members demonstrate greater proximity), but it is also often expressed in audiences’ explicit reactions and their own presentifications. For example, Carly Fiorina’s credibility to speak about what Dave Packard would have wanted was undermined by never having known him – something that was exploited directly by her opponents. This helps to explain why some of Fiorina’s final appeals to shareowners to accept the merger explicitly referenced the proximity of two supportive board members to Dave Packard, implicitly recognizing that these board members’ capacity to speak for the founders was more credible than her own, as well as more evocative.

Second, different relative positions provide protagonists with different memory resources. Thus, Dominique Loiseau could draw on oral memory unavailable to others. In contrast, Fiorina's access to oral memory was limited compared with the founders' sons and long-term employees. At Desjardins, neither Béland nor Croteau knew the founder personally, but Béland's position as President gave him advantaged access to organizational memory resources, which he skillfully leveraged, drawing on a full range of presentification modalities offered in appealing ways.

However, relative positioning must be handled carefully, as it does not automatically confer credibility. Dominique Loiseau's unparalleled proximity to the founder was not always advantageous, as observers initially questioned whether her technical background qualified her to succeed as leader of an haute cuisine restaurant. However, her distinctive connection with the founder gave her access to oral memory sources that enabled her to presentify Bernard Loiseau in an evocative and compelling manner. This illustrates the importance of conceptualizing relative positioning as a contextual facilitator, rather than a deterministic influence. The influence of relative positioning depends not just on objective proximity to the founder, but on how skillfully actors leverage their position and associated resources in ways that resonate with audiences.

So, in the end, why did one effort to presentify founders appear to work so convincingly (Dominique Loiseau) when another faced marked resistance (Carly Fiorina) and a third succeeded but not without some pushback (Claude Béland)? All three theoretical elements discussed above and presented in Table 2 and Figure 9 help to explain these dynamics. On the one hand, we see that the CEO's skill in drawing on a wide range of evocative modalities of presentification is crucial to audience perceptions of authenticity, and to the subsequent generation of amplified or counter-presentifications. Thus, Dominique Loiseau and Claude Béland drew on more evocative modalities of presentification than Carly Fiorina. Yet, the capacity to prevail in evocative struggles is also shaped by contextual facilitators related to the relative positioning of leaders and audiences with

founders, as well as the range of memory resources that this positioning provides them with. Thus, Carly Fiorina was clearly handicapped in this process by her limited personal connection with the founders, while Dominique Loiseau was advantaged. Yet, neither of these results is necessarily determined in advance. Interestingly, at Desjardins, Claude Béland and René Croteau were equally matched in terms of relative positioning – neither had personal connections with the founder. Here, it was the evocative richness of his presentifications supported by extensive material and textual memory resources that favored Claude Béland’s message despite some opposition.

In concluding, it is fair to ask how important the presentification of deceased founders as allies really is in change decision making. Is this the foundation on which business decisions are made? In other words, did the audience support or oppose the changes proposed by leaders *solely* because of the presentifications of deceased founders? Or is it possible that the audience supported these presentifications but opposed the change itself, or vice versa? The Compaq merger was no doubt approved because shareholders felt that it would increase the value of their shares. The Desjardins restructuring was approved because it would save money. Yet, we argue that the symbolism of effective or ineffective founder presentification matters nevertheless. Thus, following Dominique Loiseau’s vigorous defense of Bernard Loiseau’s heritage, customer ratings were sustained (Clauzel, Delacour, & Liarte, 2019). In contrast, observers noted that Carly Fiorina’s tenure at HP was tarnished by perceptions of inauthenticity generated during the proxy fight (Elsbach et al., 2012). Finally, the symbolism of being able to show that they were accomplishing Alphonse’s will (rather than betraying his heritage) could make restructuring at Desjardins nobler and easier to digest, ultimately facilitating its implementation.

Conclusion

Recent research has suggested that organization members' interpretations of the past can shape their anticipation of the future (Coraiola & Murcia, 2020; Hampel & Dalpiaz, 2023). By taking a novel multi-sided approach to this phenomenon, we reveal the potentially contested nature of uses of the past, and more precisely how making an alliance with an authoritative, but immaterial symbolic resource, ostensibly available to all, is never a done deal. Including audiences' reactions to leaders' presentifications of deceased founders in times of change allows us to expose not only the dynamism of such communicative practices, but also to reveal how meanings attributed to historical resources like deceased founders are fundamentally fluid and contestable. Importantly, our study emphasizes that these communicative dynamics can be evocative, and not just argumentative, and that the relative positioning of leaders, founders and audiences contributes to shaping these processes and their effects.

Our process model may be relevant to other settings where people may draw on historical figures in situations of change or discontinuity. The model orients future research towards the development of multilateral explanations of communicative dynamics in the uses of the past, and calls for studies deepening understanding of audiences' role in influencing the success or failure of leaders' presentifications, perhaps using other methodologies that might capture these processes in real time as they are emerging. These studies could also include further investigation of the evocative dimensions of presentification.

Given the specific nature of the figures we studied (deceased founders), it is also important to reflect on the transferability of our findings and model to other circumstances. These could involve for example, different dimensions of the past (e.g., practices and performance criteria) or different kinds of organizational contexts (e.g., non-profits; nation-states). Novel presentification modalities might emerge in dynamic creative settings where both inventiveness and tradition are

highly valued (e.g., fashion, haute cuisine, crafts). Finally, research could further illuminate how different organizational contexts may enable or constrain particular presentification strategies based on different modes of conservation and exploitation of memory resources. The information explosion of recent decades offers not only enhanced opportunities for evocative presentification (e.g., through audiovisual media), but perhaps also more opportunities for contestation as well, not to mention enhanced opportunities for researchers to capture and study these phenomena.

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Nora Meziani is an Assistant Professor in Organization Studies at ESCP Business School. Her research focuses on the role of embodiment in teamwork, exploring its various forms and implications. She has a genuine passion for communicational dynamics, and is empirically interested in artistic organizations, extreme contexts, and entrepreneurs.

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Table 1. Data sources

	Le Relais Bernard Loiseau (Restaurant)	Hewlett-Packard (HP) (Technology)	Desjardins Group (Financial Services)
Contextual material	• Website • Books: Loiseau (2004, 2021); Chelminski (2005) • Documentaries on the restaurant (2020; 2022; 2023, n= 3) • Press interviews with Dominique Loiseau (2003-2015; 2017-2020) (n=42) • Clients’ comments on social media (n=258)	• Website • Books: Burrows (2003); Fiorina (2006); Packard (1995) • Carly Fiorina’s speeches (2000-2004) (n=22) • Press articles on merger and Fiorina’s legacy (2001-2016) (n=102) • Analyst conference calls (2013-2018) • Annual reports (2011-2014) • Advertisements for and against the Compaq merger (n=26)	• Website • Books/ theses: Béland (2015); Prouche (1990); Croteau (2005); Laurin (2012); Poulin and Tremblay (2005); Desjardins Group (1986) • <i>Revue Desjardins</i> (internal magazine : 603 issues 1935-2015) • Press articles (1999-2000) (n=58) • Annual reports (1999-2000) (n=7)
Specific corpus analyzed in detail in the current paper	<u>CEO’s sensegiving</u> • Press interviews with Dominique Loiseau (February-September 2016) (n=19) • Press kit (n=1) (2017) • Podcast on ‘Haute Cuisine and Michelin stars’ (n=1) (February 2016; 49 min), with Dominique Loiseau as guest <u>Audience’s responses</u> • Comments from clients (and sometimes chefs and regional stakeholders) on social media (e.g., Trip Advisor, Facebook, Twitter; 2016) (n= 62) • Press interview with two renowned food critics (February 2016) (n=1)	<u>CEO’s sensegiving</u> • Carly Fiorina’s speeches at various events (2001-2002) (n=7) • Advertisement (n=1) • Extract from press article (n=1) • Letters to employees (n=6) • Letters to shareholders (n=3) • Transcript of discussion session with HP retirees (n=1) • Annual report 2001 (n=1) <u>Audience’s responses</u> • Press articles (2001-2002) (n=18) • Press articles citing the founders’ sons (2001-2002) (n=6) • Letters from employees (n= 6) • Letters from the founders’ sons (to shareholders) (n=2) • Messages from board members (to shareholders or employees) (n=5) • Advertisement (n=1) • Posts of employees on HP Forum Archive (n=6) • Articles posted on HP’s internal website (n=1)	<u>CEO’s sensegiving</u> • <i>Revue Desjardins</i> Issue on Restructuring (1999), including an interview with the CEO, an extract of a comic book on the founder’s life, and a letter written by the founder in 1920 • Brochure included in the annual report (1999) (n=1) <u>Audience’s responses</u> • Manifesto (1999) and book by opponent of restructuring (Croteau, 2005). Book includes letters to top executives of Desjardins (4 to CEO Béland and 3 to other executives; 1999) • Press articles (n=26)

Table 2. Case summaries

	Relais Bernard Loiseau	Hewlett-Packard	Desjardins Group
Context of sensegiving	Loss of a Michelin star leading to a strategic reorientation to give more room to current chef's	Proposal to merge with another technology company—Compaq.	Organizational restructuring: merging regional levels of governance into a single centralized federation.
Risks & challenges	Jeopardizing the restaurant's reputation for innovation and excellence, and losing clients.	Layoffs of 10% of HP's workforce and drop in stock price.	Democratic principles and community-based autonomy called into question.
Relative positioning: CEO's vs. Audience's relation to the founder	CEO has stronger relative positioning than the audience: Founder's widow	CEO has weaker relative positioning: She is an outsider compared to family members and employees who knew the founders personally	CEO and key opponent have similar relative positioning vs. the founder: neither knew Alphonse Desjardins personally, but both had deep knowledge of the founder's heritage
Modalities of presentification used by CEOs	<i>Dominant modalities used by CEO</i> • Incarnating • Emotionalizing	<i>Dominant modalities used by CEO</i> • Voicing	<i>Dominant modalities used by CEO</i> • Voicing • Emotionalizing • Incarnating • Visualizing
Authentication process	Authenticated	Mainly contested	Mainly authenticated
Responses by the audience	<i>Amplifying CEO's presentifications</i> Who? Critics and customers (supporters) – maintaining support despite loss of star • Mirroring and extending with greater positivity	<i>Countering CEO's presentifications</i> Who? Founders' sons, employees & former executives (opponents) • Calling out inauthenticity • Extending with the founders' ethos <i>Amplifying CEO's presentifications</i> Who? Mostly board members (supporters) • Mirroring and extending with greater positivity	<i>Countering CEO's presentifications</i> Who? Former executive and cartoonist (opponents): • Calling out inauthenticity • Extending with the founders' ethos <i>Amplifying CEO's presentifications</i> Who? Current executives & journalists (supporters) • Mirroring

Figure 1. Data analysis process

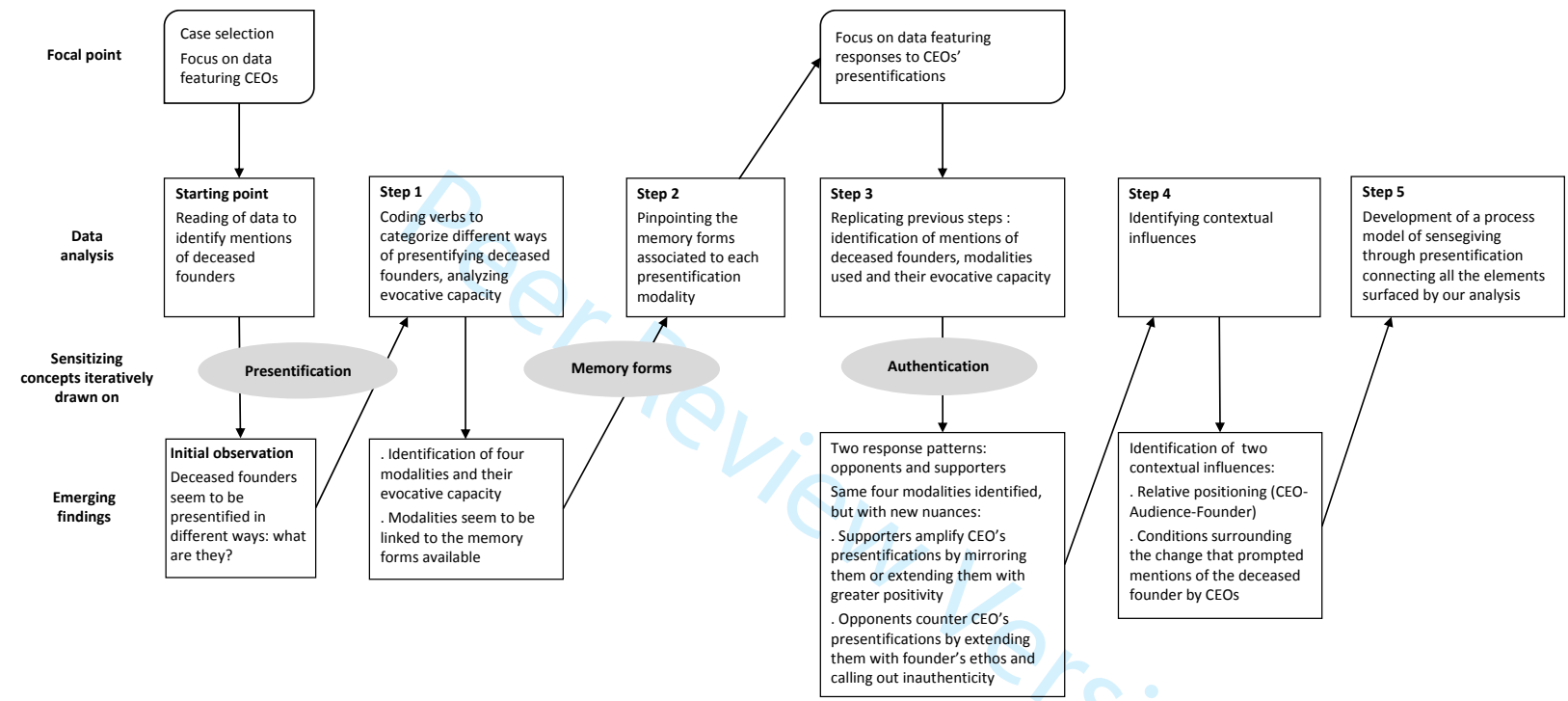


Figure 2. A generic process model of sensegiving dynamics through presentifications

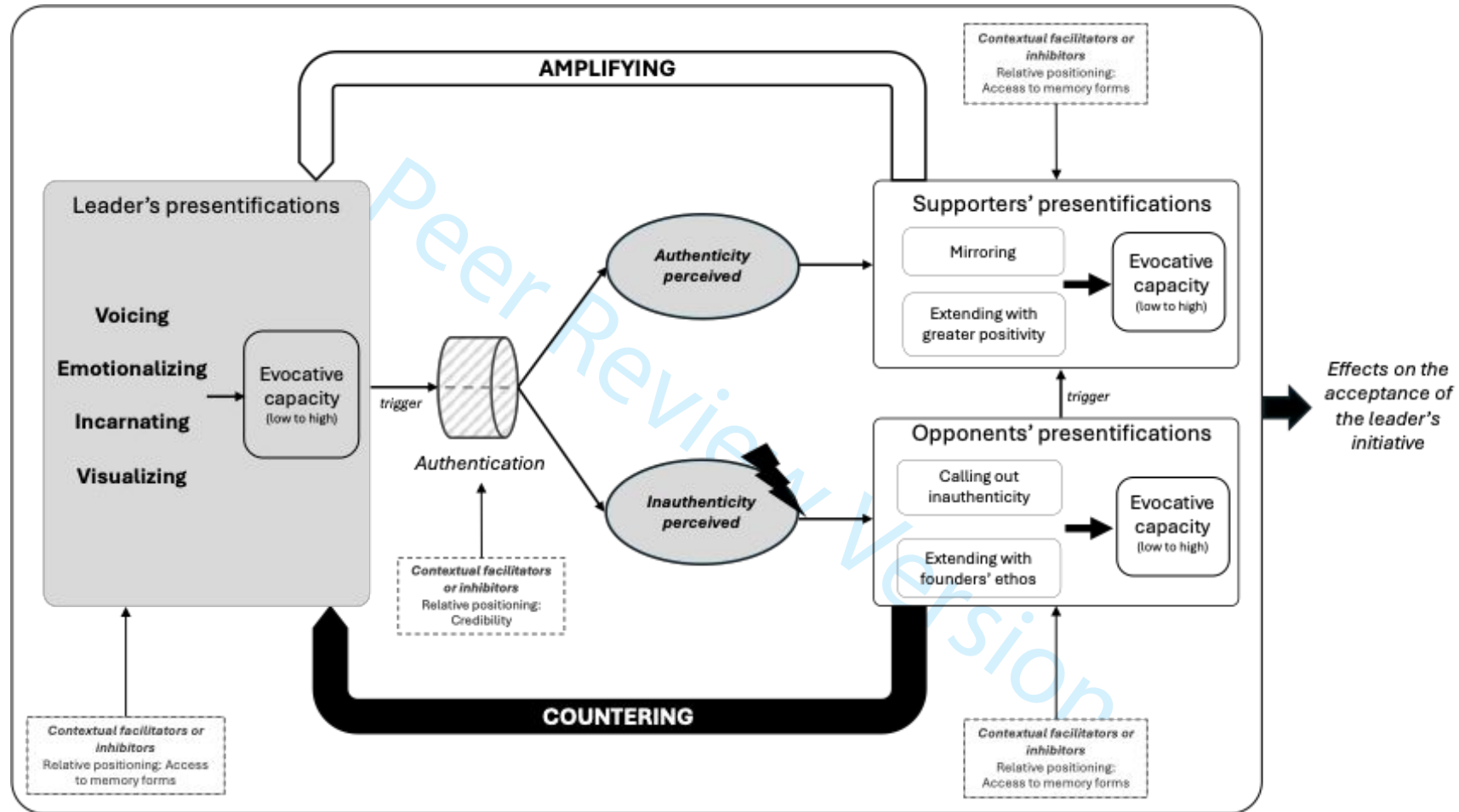
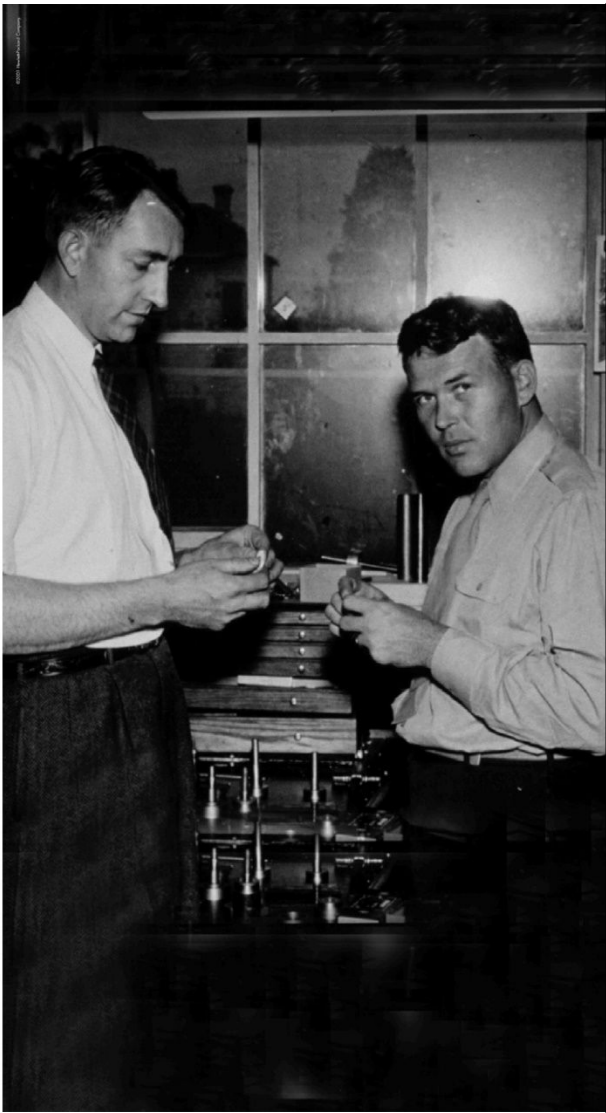


Figure 3: Advertisement by Hewlett-Packard visualizing the co-founders and voicing founder Dave Packard (New York Times, 2002)



“To remain static is to lose ground.”

Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard understood that in the face of change, HP could choose to lead or to follow. Always, they chose to lead.

As Dave Packard wrote:
“Continuous growth was essential for us to achieve our other objectives and to remain competitive. Since we participate in fields of advanced and rapidly changing technologies, to remain static is to lose ground.”

When it made sense, they led with innovation from within. But when the market demanded it, they acquired companies whose technologies and products complemented their own. While some doubted these moves even then, the HP Way has proven bold enough to embrace change, and flexible enough to absorb it.

Today our industry is again in the midst of profound transformation, driven by technical advances, intensified competition and changing customer requirements.

The merger of HP and Compaq is a renewal of HP’s traditional aims, adapted to new technological times.

Together, we will be leaders in servers, storage, management software, PCs, services, and printing and imaging. Together, we will offer the end-to-end solutions customers now demand. Together, we will compete more powerfully than either company could on its own. Together, we expect to generate the earnings growth our shareowners deserve; indeed, we believe cost-savings alone will add \$5 to \$9 of present value to each HP share.

To stand still—in these times, of all times—is to fall behind.

That is certainly not the HP Way.



Figure 4. Advertisement from David W. Packard (son of Dave Packard) voicing his father and countering Carly Fiorina's presentifications (The Wall Street Journal, 2002)

C20 THE WALL STREET JOURNAL WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2002

There You Go Again!

Ms. Fiorina, your recent advertisement misappropriates Dave Packard's words "to remain static is to lose ground."

As a professional marketer you know how to enhance your message by invoking the image of an admired person. But my father's quote has no relevance to your argument.

You expect readers of *The Wall Street Journal* to believe that your disruptive merger plan is the *only* possible path forward—that your opponents want HP to "remain static."

You rebuke Walter Hewlett (and former top HP executives) for preferring organic growth focused on genuine product innovation enhanced by manageable acquisitions such as Indigo.

In recent months hundreds of HP employees have written eloquent, passionate letters to me opposing this merger. Some say it will "dissolve the personality and soul of HP."

I received 200 letters against the merger before I got a single letter in favor.

The HP board must insist on a *truly independent* survey. Not because business strategy should be generated by employee polls, but because a major *measure* of successful management is the trust and loyalty of employees.

HP thrived for 60 years without a single colossal merger remotely approaching the scale of Compaq.

Was HP "losing ground" all those years?

You recall another one of my father's favorite sayings: "More companies die of indigestion than starvation."

There is now a real danger that HP will die of a broken heart.

David W. Packard
c/o Finch Montgomery Wright & Emmer
350 Cambridge Ave. Palo Alto, CA. 94306

This advertisement was written and paid for by David W. Packard, acting as an individual.
Mr Packard served on the HP board from 1987 to 1999. He himself was a loyal HP (summer) employee in 1957-9.
The Wall Street Journal® is a trademark of Dow Jones L.P.

Figure 5. Founder Alphonse Desjardins visualized with Claude Béland

- a) Photograph of Claude Béland in front of a portrait of Alphonse Desjardins, in every issue of the *Revue Desjardins* between 1990 and 1994
- b) Cartoon by André-Philippe Côté published in the newspaper *Le Soleil* (1999) titled “Alphonse Desjardins, revised and corrected by Claude Béland”



Figure 6. Reproduction of a letter sent by Alphonse Desjardins to the 'caisses populaires' in 1920

Original image published in the *Revue Desjardins*, 1999

English translation (by the authors)

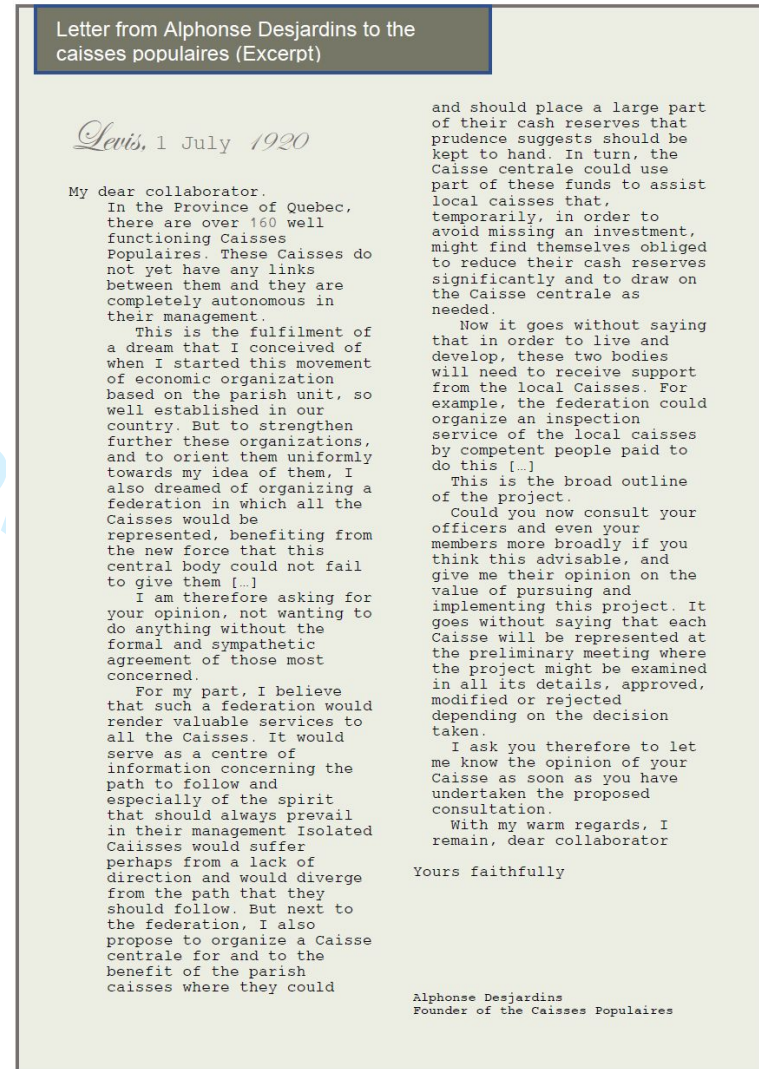
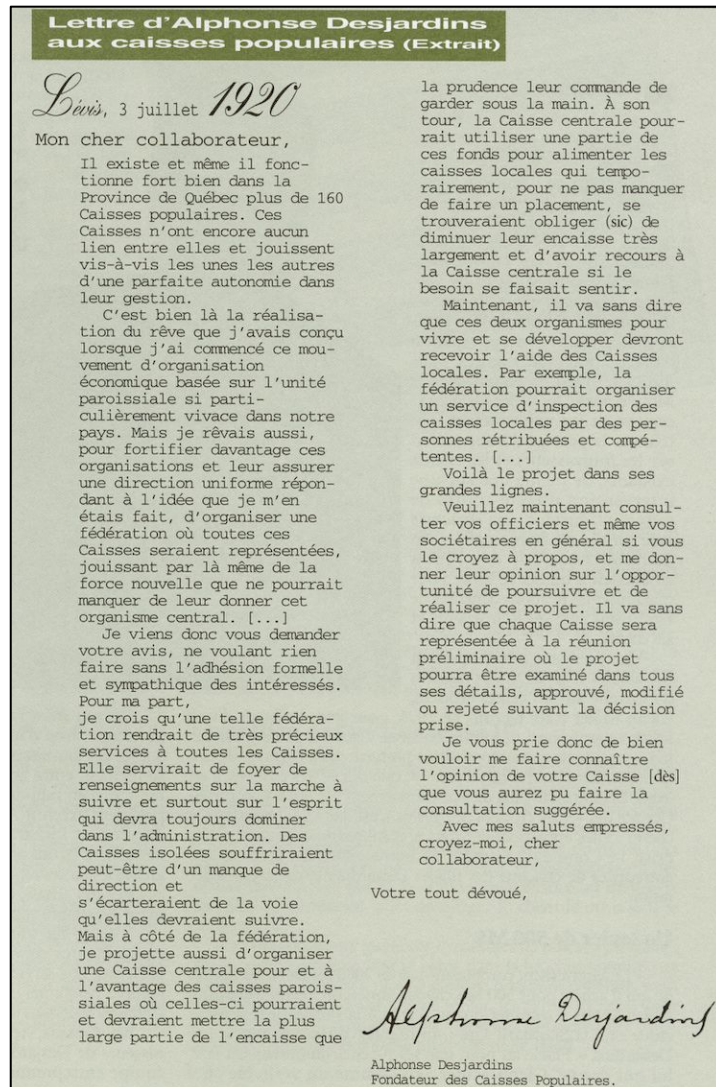
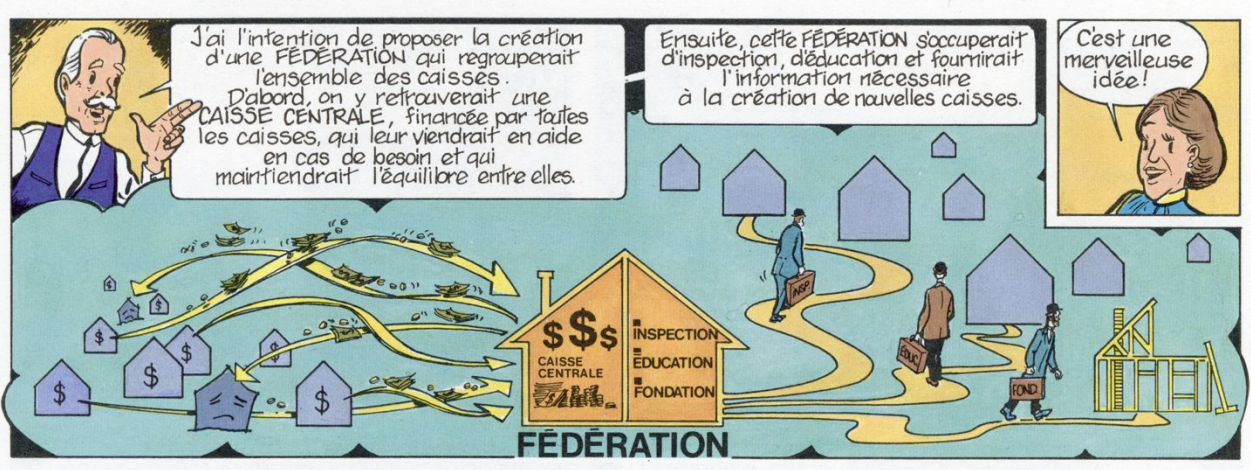


Figure 7. Visualizing, voicing and emotionalizing Alphonse Desjardins: Extract from a 1990 comic book about Alphonse’s life, published in *Revue Desjardins* (1999)



Translated text in speech bubbles...

I intend to propose the creation of a
FEDERATION that would bring
together all the caisses.
First, there would be a CENTRAL
CAISSE, financed by all the caisses,
that would assist them as needed, and
that would maintain the balance
between them.

Then, this FEDERATION would handle
inspections, and education, and would
provide the information needed for the
creation of new caisses.

That's a
marvellous
idea!

Figure 8: Excerpt from a brochure sent to officers and members of the caisses,
Desjardins Group

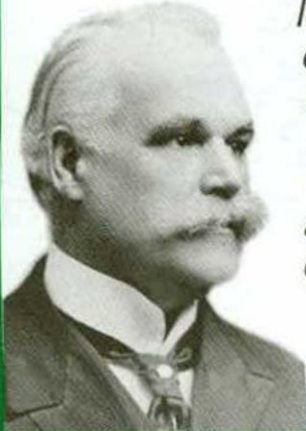
Original image and text	English translation of original text
« Si Alphonse Desjardins était encore là !... » Alphonse Desjardins, fondateur des caisses, a consacré plusieurs années à mettre au point le modèle de coopérative d'épargne et de crédit qui conviendrait le mieux à la réalité du Québec du début du siècle. S'il revenait aujourd'hui, il y a fort à parier qu'il veillerait, comme le font maintenant ses successeurs, à ce que le Mouvement Desjardins ait l'organisation et les outils pour se mesurer aux réalités du début du XXI^e siècle. Il veillerait également, comme le font aujourd'hui les dirigeants des caisses, à ce que le Mouvement Desjardins continue à affirmer et à mettre en évidence sa distinction coopérative. 	“If Alphonse Desjardins were still alive !...” Alphonse Desjardins, founder of the caisses, spent several years developing the cooperative model of savings and credit that would best suit the realities of Quebec at the beginning of the century. If he were back today, it's a safe bet that he would ensure, as his successors are doing today, that the Desjardins Group has the organization and tools to meet the realities of the early 21st century. He would also ensure, as the officers of the caisses are doing today, that the Desjardins Group would continue to affirm and highlight its cooperative distinction.

Figure 9. Presentification dynamics in the three cases

Figure 9a. Relais Bernard Loiseau

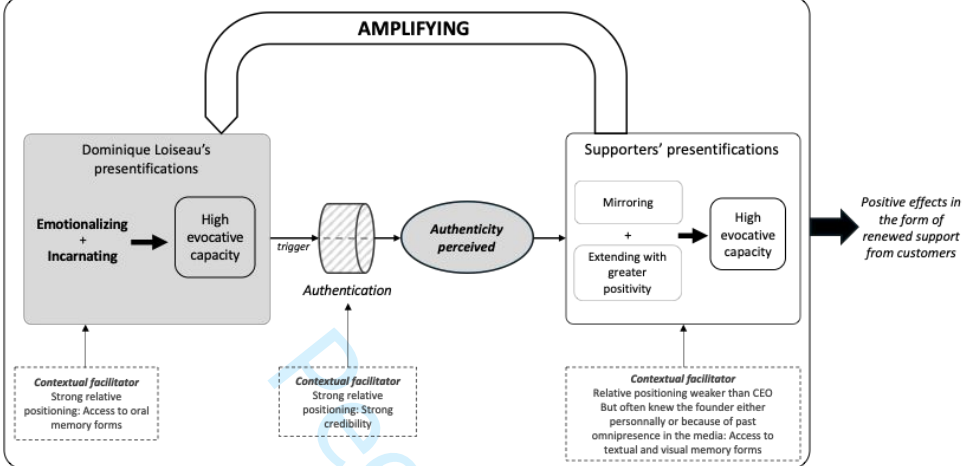


Figure 9b. Hewlett-Packard

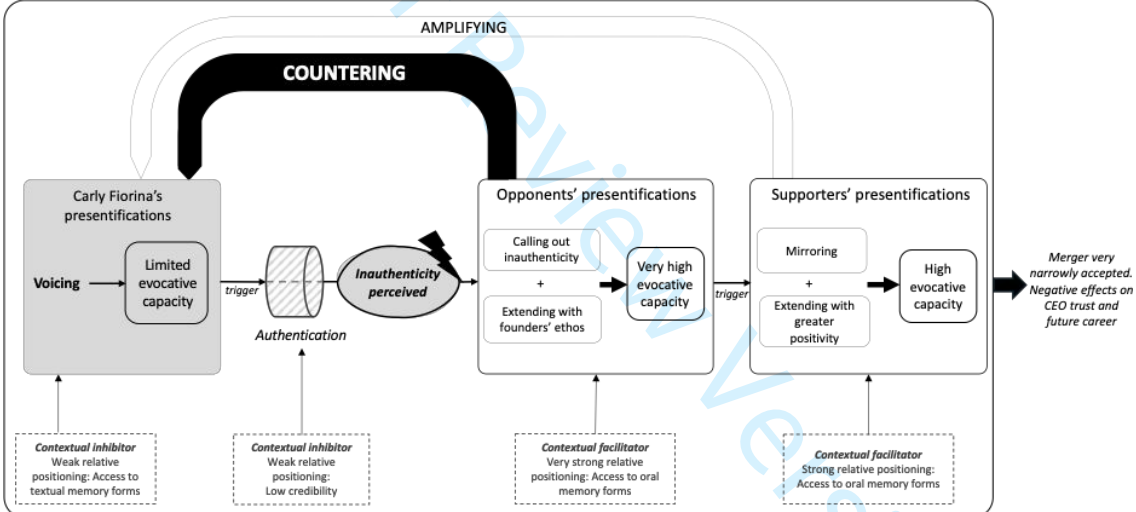
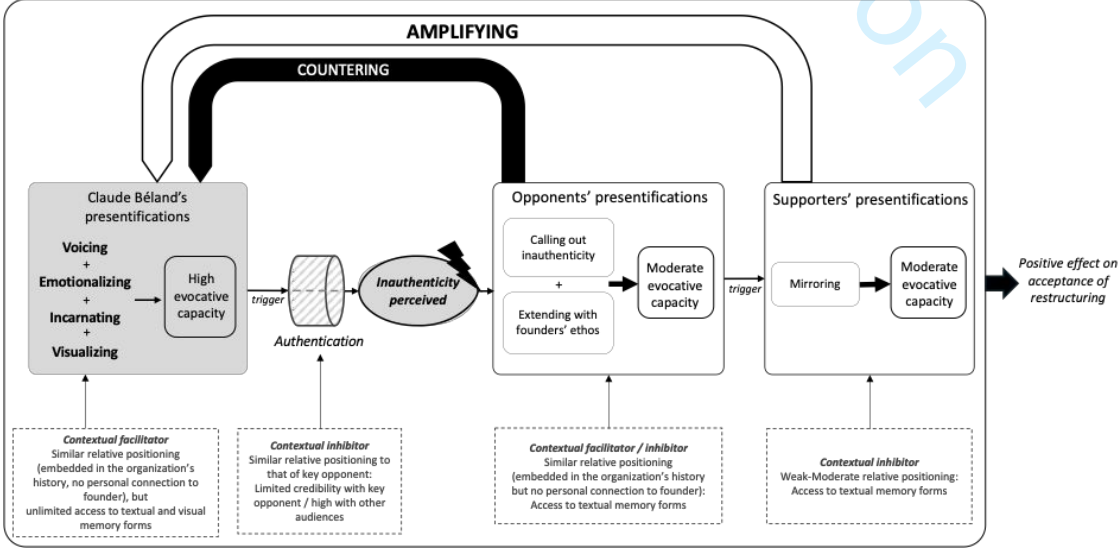


Figure 9c. Desjardins Group



Appendix 1: Identification of presentification modalities used by CEOs and their audiences: Additional illustrations

Illustrations from raw data	Verb related to deceased founders	Type of action	Presentification modalities
“[A]s Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard often <u>preached</u>, profitability is still the key to job preservation, and investment in R&D and innovation, and contribution to community” (Fiorina, 2002)	To preach		
“Now Dave Packard once <u>said</u> something really interesting. I don't know how many times you all have read the book, <i>The HP Way</i>, but I've read it now six times, and every time I read it I find something new. And one of the things that Dave Packard <u>said</u>, and I may not get the quote exactly right, but he <u>said</u>, “Since we participate in fields of advanced and rapidly changing technologies, to remain static is to lose ground.” (Carly Fiorina in an HP Retiree Meeting, Hewlett-Packard, 2002b)	To say To say To say	Verbs related to speech— more specifically oral speech—are used in relation to deceased founders. Using these verbs <i>makes the deceased founders speak</i> , as they are quoted (directly or indirectly)	Voicing
“I didn't shoot down Michelin. I simply wanted to place their impact in perspective... I wanted to show that I was not <u>obsessed</u> by stars like my husband” (Dominique Loiseau in Cau, 2016)	To be obsessed		
“It is the entire organization <u>imagined</u> by Alphonse Desjardins... that would risk collapse” (Claude Béland in Revue Desjardins, Goulet, 1999)	To imagine	Verbs related to the experience of emotions (e.g., anger) and/or affective states (e.g., desires, dreams) or experiences (e.g., friendship). Using these verbs <i>makes the deceased founders experience or feel</i> things or associate them with affective experiences.	Emotionalizing
“I wrote a book, I had to calm people down. People still <u>cry</u> when they talk about [Bernard Loiseau]. All the French dream of coming here. It's incredible.” (Dominique Loiseau in Cau, 2016)	To cry		
“HP employees were used to chief executives who <u>mingled</u> with the rank and file. [Dave] Packard was known for <u>walking</u> among the cubicles, <u>pulling up</u> a chair next to a random employee, <u>putting his feet up</u> on his desk and asking things” (Cha, 2001)	To mingle To walk To pull up a chair To put one's feet up	Verbs related to physical presence, human existence, and/or physical engagement with their environment (e.g., movements). Using these verbs <i>makes the deceased founders physically (re)animated</i>	Incarnating
“Mr Bernard Loiseau is very <u>present</u> there... [It is] a magnificent house with a soul” (Yann Hulin, Client, 2016, LinkedIn)	To be present		

Illustrations from raw data	Graphic elements associated with the deceased founder	Type of action	Presentification modalities
Letter (see Figure 6)	- Handwritten signature - Handwritten writing at the top of the letter - City and date [space and time] where he wrote the letter - Typewriter font - His own actual words	Graphic elements showing the readers the deceased founder in a more or less realistic way (e.g., photo vs. cartoon), and/or a more or less explicit way (e.g., image or photo of the deceased vs. his handwritten signature). Using these graphic elements <i>make the deceased founders physically appear</i> to the eye of the readers who can visualize the deceased founder	Visualizing
Cartoon (see Figure 7)	- Drawing reconstituting the founder's body (face, iconic moustache, upper body, hands) - Drawing of his daughter (face, upper body) - Speech bubbles		
Photo (see Figures 3 & 8)	- Photo of founders (HP) - Iconic portrait photo (Desjardins)		

Appendix 2: Audience's responses: Additional illustrations

		Relais Bernard Loiseau	Hewlett-Packard	Desjardins Group
Amplifying leaders' presentifications	Mirroring	Dominique Loiseau often used the “spirit” (or “soul”) metaphor when referring to Bernard Loiseau. Supporters would respond symmetrically: <i>“Bernard Loiseau’s restaurant is a paradise of French gastronomy... This place has a soul, that of Bernard Loiseau... Thank you Madame Loiseau and thank you the whole team of Bernard Loiseau’s restaurant.”</i> (jeanfrancoism603, Trip Advisor, 2016) <i>“[I]n the heart of the Morvan region of Burgundy, I have rediscovered the spirit of Bernard Loiseau, instilled and perpetuated by Mrs Dominique Loiseau at the Relais Bernard Loiseau.”</i> (Mikaël Kerric, New Employee, 2016, LinkedIn)	Carly Fiorina often voiced the founders, notably by quoting The HP Way. Supporters would respond symmetrically, though quite rarely: <i>“As Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard often said, profitability is the key to job preservation, to investment in R&D and innovation, and contribution to the community”</i> (Letter to HP shareholders, from Robert P. Wayman here using the exact same quote as Fiorina, Hewlett-Packard, 2002a).	Claude Béland referred to Alphonse Desjardins’ words and wishes to create a single federation. Supporters would respond symmetrically: <i>“In 1920, Alphonse Desjardins spoke of creating a single federation.”</i> (Beaudoin, 1999) <i>“Mr Samson recalled that in 1918 Alphonse Desjardins had proposed the creation of a single federation for the whole of Quebec”</i> (Pelchat, 1999) <i>“This weekend’s conference finally vindicated the vision of founder Alphonse Desjardins”</i> (Beaudoin, 1999)
	Extending with greater positivity	Dominique Loiseau mostly presentified Bernard Loiseau with a form of negativity (referring to negative emotions he would feel, and mostly referring about him in the past tense). Supporters would refer to him more positively – incarnating and emotionalizing him in the present and with positive emotions: A comment posted with a photo of Bernard Loiseau and his team: <i>“With the whole team, we hope to regain our 3rd Michelin star... so that M[r.] Bernard can celebrate once again”</i> (Mikaël Kerric, New employee, 2016, LinkedIn) <i>“You still have two stars in the guide, and for me a third that will remain forever: that of Bernard, who shines and watches over all of you”</i> (Julien d’Aussois, Client, 2016, Facebook)	Carly Fiorina mostly presentified the founders by referring to their thoughts and reflections (voicing), with neither negativity or positivity. Supporters referred to the founders with additional modalities (e.g., incarnating, emotionalizing), and conveyed more positivity and vitality: <i>“I don’t think that people should predict what Dave and Bill would do in today’s business environment because frankly we will never know... I think they would be out there pushing changes”</i> (Dick Hackborn in Hewlett-Packard, 2001b) <i>“Her [Fiorina’s] leadership is not a departure from the ideals that the founders embraced and imbued into the company”</i> (Robert Knowling in Hewlett-Packard, 2001a)	

Countering leaders’ presentifications	Calling out inauthenticity	Members of the press pinpointed Fiorina’s inauthenticity as crucial in the proxy fight: <i>“Fiorina argued that her grow-fast-or-die strategy reflected the founders’ true entrepreneurial spirit -- pro-merger ads quoted David Packard: “To remain static is to lose ground.” The whole subtext of this battle, ostensibly about HP’s future, in fact turned on one key question: “What would Bill and Dave think?” Casting herself as the true heir of the HP Way was a tricky strategy for Fiorina to pull off... And it’s especially difficult to argue that you’re channeling the true spirit of the company founders while you’re simultaneously dissing the co-founder’s son” (Goodell, 2002)</i> <i>“Fiorina had used the HP heritage shrewdly from the moment of her arrival... and in an attempt to suggest the founders would have supported the merger, quoted Packard: “To remain static is to lose ground.” ... [S]he may have irreparably damaged the company’s relationship with its own employees—two-thirds of whom were opposed to the deal...” (Holmes, 2002)</i>	Former executive Croteau and allies from the press called out Béland’s presentifications as inauthentic: <i>“For a year now, [Claude Béland] has been trying to convince us that mergers are the answer... They’re trying to convince us that the small and medium-sized Caisses must disappear, that they must merge quickly... We believe that this centralisation is a distortion of Alphonse Desjardins’ message.” (Michaud et al., 1999)</i> <i>“Mr Croteau is right to talk about deviation and manipulation... [Management] led us to believe, and I myself believed ... that [the Desjardins Group’s] raison d’être was to look after the needs of its members. I even believed that all of this was a little bit mine. Today I’m a customer who’s been tricked into buying just about everything.” (Carbonneau, 1999)</i>
	Extending with the founders’ ethos	Founders’ ethos: sense of invention and care for employees <i>“Dave Packard was a big believer in R&D. He would never have sacrificed a project if it had merit to save or make a quick dollar. He would have fought tooth and nail to prevent what Queen Fiorina [is doing]” (J.C. Randerson, Employee, 2001, on HP Forum Archive)</i> <i>“HP has worked well for 50 years under founders who were committed to principles like innovation, respect for employees and rejecting growth for growth sake. Where is the innovation in this merger?” wondered one of the company’s former executives. (Ruello, 2001)</i>	Founder’s ethos: defending the cooperative model against the banks <i>“Those who say that if Alphonse Desjardins were alive today, he would be working with a computer are certainly right. But would he be a cooperator or a banker? (Carbonneau, 1999)</i> <i>“Alphonse Desjardins was the architect of Quebec’s greatest success story. He wanted to protect: ‘this class, tied hand and foot to all the rapacity of exploiters, greedy middlemen, often dishonest and fraudulent’ (Reflections of Alphonse Desjardins, Confédération des caisses populaires et d’économie Desjardins du Québec, 1986).” (Morin, 1999)</i>

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