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BOOK REVIEW

Diriger l'entreprise africaine à l'ère de la transformation numérique et de l'intelligence artificielle

ABSTRACT

This review examines *Diriger l'entreprise africaine à l'ère de la transformation numérique et de l'intelligence artificielle* as a practical contribution to debates on the management of digital change in African firms. The book is distinctive in approaching the continent from the perspective of African authors and by resisting both narratives of technological backwardness and promises of effortless digital leapfrogging. Its central recommendations concern skills development, an enabling regulatory environment and technological infrastructure. The review highlights the accessibility of this approach, its relevance to business leaders and its recognition of structural constraints. It also considers four limitations: the diversity concealed by the category of "the African firm", the predominance of environmental rather than organizational levers, the limited treatment of partial or symbolic technology use, and the need to clarify the data and management foundations on which artificial intelligence depends. Illustrations drawn from the Moroccan business context show why digital readiness must be examined at the level of individual organizations. The review concludes that the book provides a timely and valuable starting point for managers and researchers, particularly when its practical recommendations are complemented by a closer diagnosis of organizational processes and information quality.

KEYWORDS African firms · digital transformation · artificial intelligence · leadership · managerial capabilities · Morocco

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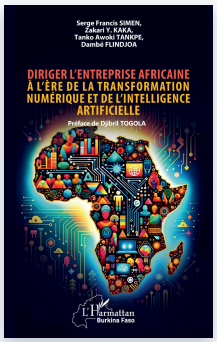

REVIEWED BOOK

TITLE	Diriger l'entreprise africaine à l'ère de la transformation numérique et de l'intelligence artificielle
AUTHORS	Serge Francis Simen, Zakari Y. Kaka, Tanko Awoki Tankpe and Dambé Flindjoa
PUBLISHER	L'Harmattan Burkina Faso
PAGES	158 pages
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1. Introduction

Digital transformation and artificial intelligence are increasingly presented as essential determinants of competitiveness. For African firms, however, these opportunities cannot be separated from uneven access to finance, technical infrastructure, managerial expertise and stable institutional support. It is within this context that Serge Francis Simen, Zakari Y. Kaka, Tanko Awoki Tankpe and Dambé Flindjoa address a central managerial question: how can business leaders respond to technological change while accounting for the specific conditions in which their organizations operate?

The principal merit of this volume is its standpoint. Rather than transferring a supposedly universal digital management model from another economic setting, it takes the situation of African firms as its starting point. The authors neither reduce African enterprises to delayed versions of Western firms nor assume that new technologies automatically compensate for older structural constraints. Digital transformation appears instead as a strategic choice that requires deliberate leadership and supportive conditions.

This review evaluates the book as a management guide, rather than as an empirical research monograph. It first presents its main arguments and practical orientation, then assesses its strengths and limitations, before positioning its contribution within the wider debate on digital management. Particular attention is paid to how its recommendations can be interpreted by managers facing heterogeneous organizational realities, including those observed in Morocco.

2. Summary of Contents

The book develops a clear argument around the opportunities and constraints associated with the digital transition of African businesses. Its diagnosis recognizes the growth of digital markets, mobile technologies and technological entrepreneurship, while noting enduring obstacles related to financing, workforce qualifications, connectivity and the institutional environment. In this account, digital change is neither an inevitable success nor a purely technical upgrade. It requires organizational intention, investment and sustained attention to the conditions of implementation.

The authors organize the guidance around three complementary levers. The first is the development of human capabilities. Digital technologies become valuable only when firms can recruit, train and retain people able to deploy and use them. The second concerns regulation: predictable and appropriate rules can facilitate investment and experimentation, whereas uncertainty may discourage both. The third is technological infrastructure, including reliable connectivity and access to essential digital resources. Together, these levers help explain why the pace and form of transformation vary across business environments.

A particularly useful feature of the discussion is the way the authors relate the management of technology to broader economic and social conditions. Skills are not treated simply as an individual training problem; their availability and retention depend on the surrounding labor market. Similarly, infrastructure is presented as a determinant of the range of solutions that an enterprise can realistically adopt, not as a peripheral technical issue. This contextual sensitivity prevents the book from turning digital transformation into a purely prescriptive checklist.

Artificial intelligence is approached as part of this wider transformation. Its promise is linked to improvements in managerial decision making, operational efficiency and competitiveness, but the authors emphasize the broader foundations needed for business adoption. For executives seeking a first orientation, the resulting message is accessible: investing in new technologies is insufficient if firms do not simultaneously address people, regulatory constraints and the conditions that make digital operations possible.

The short format is consistent with this objective. The book favors a direct and readable account over extended theoretical debate. It can thus serve as an introduction for decision makers who want to identify key priorities before launching or expanding a digital initiative. Its principal value lies less in specifying one technical roadmap than in identifying the environment within which such a roadmap must be designed.

3. Critical Evaluation

3.1. Strengths

The first strength is the authors' commitment to an African-centered discussion of managerial transformation. This helps correct the tendency to present management innovations as universal before considering the different resources and constraints that shape their adoption. By speaking directly to African executives, the book makes the debate more relevant to the organizations that must take practical decisions.

Second, the book offers a balanced account of technological change. It avoids both an overly pessimistic view of African competitiveness and an uncritical celebration of artificial intelligence. This balance is especially important because business leaders may otherwise feel pressured to adopt visible technological solutions without first defining the objectives they are intended to serve.

Third, the framework of skills, regulation and infrastructure makes the complexity of digital transformation understandable. These dimensions are interdependent. Training a workforce has limited impact when necessary tools are inaccessible; infrastructure alone does not deliver value in the absence of adequate managerial and technical skills; and uncertain rules can constrain the use of both. By placing these conditions side by side, the authors provide a useful structure for strategic reflection.

Fourth, the practical style widens the book's readership. The language and concise organization make it suitable for entrepreneurs, managers, students and professionals beginning to explore digital strategy. Its independence from a particular software vendor is also valuable, because it encourages reflection on organizational needs rather than promotion of a specific technological product.

3.2. Weaknesses

The main limitation concerns the breadth of the category "African enterprise". Firms operating within the continent vary widely in size, sector, institutional environment, access to capital and degree of digital maturity. The needs of a small domestic distributor may differ sharply from those of an exporter integrated into international supply chains. The three recommended levers remain relevant, but their relative importance and practical implications cannot be identical across these situations. A more explicit classification of organizational profiles would help readers identify recommendations that apply to their firms.

A second limitation is that the framework primarily describes the environment surrounding the company. Regulation and infrastructure are largely determined beyond the control of an individual manager, while the supply of qualified specialists is only partly manageable at firm level. The book might therefore offer more actionable guidance by developing internal organizational levers, such as data quality, managerial coordination, process redesign, employee involvement and the integration of information systems into everyday decisions.

A third issue is the difference between acquiring digital tools and effectively using them. Some organizations adopt software without incorporating it into established work practices. Others use dashboards mainly for external reporting or continue to rely on parallel spreadsheets and informal exchanges. These forms of

incomplete adoption deserve particular attention because they may persist even when the technical infrastructure is already in place.

Finally, the relationship between artificial intelligence and the quality of underlying management information deserves a fuller treatment. Predictive or analytical applications depend on sufficiently complete, consistent and timely organizational data. When transactions are recorded late, operational information is fragmented or employees make decisions outside formal systems, the results of automated analysis may be misleading. The question for executives is therefore not only whether the technology is affordable, but whether their organization can provide trustworthy information and use the outputs responsibly.

These reservations do not undermine the relevance of the three levers. Instead, they suggest that the framework would be strengthened by linking external enabling conditions with an internal assessment of managerial and informational readiness.

4. Contextualization in the Literature

The book belongs to a wider conversation in management research about whether the adoption of technology is sufficient to produce organizational performance. Established work on information systems distinguishes implementation from effective appropriation: a tool can be installed while remaining disconnected from the activities it was meant to transform. From this perspective, the authors' attention to skills is particularly valuable, because technological capabilities depend on people and routines as well as material investment.

The Moroccan context illustrates why an organizational lens would complement the book's continental perspective. A business operating with established reporting obligations and close links to international buyers may have sophisticated external information requirements, while still relying internally on fragmented records or informal coordination. Conversely, a smaller enterprise may need to begin with basic transaction recording before considering advanced analytics. These are illustrative organizational configurations rather than findings from a systematic study; they show why the same technological recommendation can have different consequences across firms.

The book can thus be read as a useful strategic orientation that invites a second, diagnostic question: which organizational conditions must be established before the recommended investments create value? This additional question connects the authors' contribution to research on the adoption, appropriation and governance of management technologies without diminishing the importance of the broader economic environment.

5. Conclusion

Diriger l'entreprise africaine à l'ère de la transformation numérique et de l'intelligence artificielle makes a timely and constructive contribution by bringing African perspectives into discussions of technology and business leadership. Its concise analysis and three principal levers offer readers a practical entry point into a complex managerial transition. The book is strongest in its balanced diagnosis and recognition that technology adoption cannot be detached from capabilities, regulation and infrastructure.

Its usefulness would be enhanced by differentiating more explicitly among firms and by examining internal readiness, data reliability and actual patterns of use. Nevertheless, these are avenues for extension rather than reasons to dismiss the work. As a guide for executives and an opening contribution for researchers, the volume encourages an important shift: digital transformation should be managed in relation to organizational realities, not pursued simply because technologies are available.