



Change, Continuity and Interim Management*

By Dr Alf Oldman FCA

Many businesses face an irony in Business Strategy.

On one hand there is a need to be flexible, nimble, to embrace change and circumstance. On the other, businesses need to maintain consistency, to create a corporate culture, and achieve economies of scope, scale and experience.

Sometime referred to as the 'Ansoff Vs. Mintzberg' debate, how can senior managers navigate this contradiction? Is planning possible?

We certainly live in times of rapidly changing technology, social values, and global influences. These processes have been accelerating and appear to continue to do so. But with change comes opportunity, especially (here's the irony again) if the change can be anticipated.

Anticipation months or even weeks in advance has far higher value than ever before since greater ability to rapidly commercialise products exists. Time to market is weeks or months rather than years. Given that time itself becomes a strategic asset, rapid implementation is key. Purely on timescales, and risk, it is far quicker to put an interim manager in place and for that person to be up-to-speed than to recruit, select and commit to bringing in a new Senior Manager.

This is true not just of launching new products but anywhere along the product life cycle. Managing a product or market in decline may present challenges unfamiliar to a management team weaned on expanding in a growing market. Increasingly, mentoring senior executives is often quicker and less risky than replacing them. Interims typically specialise in getting things done, quickly, with minimum risk and disruption. Rarely do interims hold formal authority – normally, they exert power through influence. It is for this reason that in the most sensitive situations, interim are deployed for mentoring senior executives.

Returning to our theme, whilst core competencies should dictate what competitive battlegrounds a company fights on, it isn't always that simple. One option is to retreat altogether or to outsource areas outside the core competency to other companies, however strategically that, too, can spell problems.

An alternative to consider is to bring in a temporary interim manager that can 'bridge' between the existing experience, values, skills of the management team and the problem in hand. Recruiting a permanent manager at senior level for a single, short-term situation is probably not the right move – unless strategically that person or those persons have other application. Besides an interim manager has specific objectives and is responsible and accountable to achieve them. They possess the specialist skills, competencies and experience sought.

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Most interim managers are tactical, rather than strategic. However, some specialists in the Executive Interim Management market are now helping organisations at the strategic level too. This includes applying leading edge diagnostics and deploying a whole team of specialist interims. For example, Dr Alf Oldman specialises in the **Financial Performance Improvement Programme (FPIP)**. This has been successfully deployed in some of the World's most complex organisations. Based upon his research and successful deployment, Dr Alf Oldman has developed a simple questionnaire to see whether FPIP is appropriate to your organisation:

1. Has there been a pan-functional or pan-organisational record of failure?
2. Have ten of millions of Dollars been invested without benefit realisation?
3. Have major consultancies been deployed and failed?
4. Is the situation potentially embarrassing to senior management?
5. Are reputations at risk?
6. Are there multiple stakeholders to satisfy?
7. Do line executives have conflicting views on solutions?
8. Is the issue multi-functional?
9. Is there a strong financial dimension?
10. Is there a critical IT or systems involvement?
11. Is there a need for change at the house-wide level?
12. Do other options not stack up?

If you have scored a yes to eight or more questions, contact Dr Alf Oldman via <http://www.alfoldman.com/>

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