



Executive Interim Managers, Ninjas & Market Segmentation: the Executive Interim Manager's Story

By Dr Alf Oldman FCA

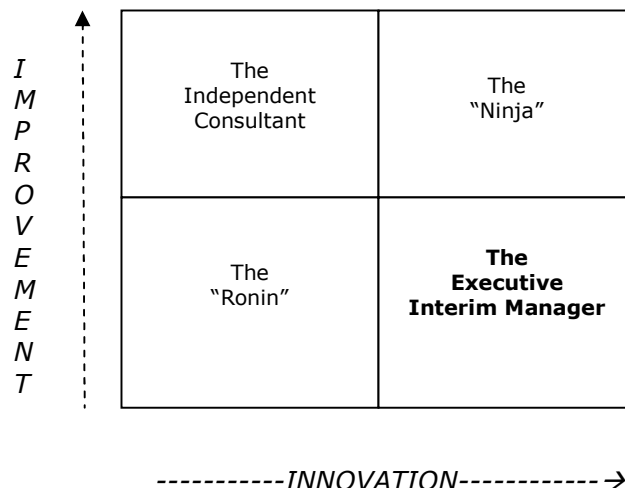
Introduction

In response to popular demand, this is my third "Ninja" article. This will be the first of four related articles that will be released weekly. In my article "Interim Managers, Ninjas and a Road Map in a Downsized World", I introduced the terms "Ronin" and "Ninjas" in the context of the interim management industry. The "Ronin" were temporary soldiers, called in to bolster troop numbers; the "Ninjas" were highly skilled and professionally trained individuals, capable of exceptional specialist services.

This article introduces four archetypes: "Ronin", "Ninjas", the "Independent Consultant", and the "Executive Interim Manager". This article looks at the Executive Interim Manager.

Based upon some of my earlier, published research, I introduced a four-state model, linking cost reduction models to organisation context. I have adapted this model for interim management industry segmentation.

The Interim Management Industry Four State Model#



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The horizontal axis of my earlier research dealt with Weak Market Orientation and Strong Market Orientation. This is simplified to degree of Innovation. Similarly, the vertical axis of my earlier research deployed "No Turnaround Need/Successful" and

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Strong "Turnaround Need/Unsuccessful". Again this is simplified to degree of Improvement.

Definition of an Executive Interim Manager

An Executive Interim Manager is a proven heavyweight executive for [crisis](#), [transition](#) and [change management](#). The term "heavy-weight" usually denotes that the Executive Interim Manager "has successfully completed a similar role many times before". In some situations, like venture capitalists looking for turnaround specialists, it is further qualified to be "has successfully completed a similar role many times before, in the same industry".

The Profile of an Executive Interim Manager

Typically the Executive Interim Manager will have an established track record in senior management, in large, well-known organisations, before becoming an Executive Interim Manager. An Executive Interim Manager will be able to demonstrate exceptional leadership skills. To become an established Executive Interim Manager, he/she will be able to demonstrate numerous "commando type" cameos, where he/she had "hit the deck running" and went on to achieve his/her "objective". To be successful in leading [change management](#), the Executive Interim Manager will be able to highlight strong stakeholder manager expertise. To recap, the emphasis is on management, especially leadership, with demonstrable change management expertise.

Finding an Executive Interim Manager (Caveat Emptor – let the buyer be ware!)

The most effective sources for finding an Executive Interim Manager are strong personal recommendation/endorsement. Alternatively, a specialist intermediary in Executive Interim Managers is a safe solution. The specialist intermediary will know the proposed Executive Interim Manager well, with regular meetings and will be able to vouch for references and the integrity of the CV. However, one should not rule out the "broad line intermediary", especially when they work with a "hot list" of say one hundred trusted, favoured and tested interims. The acid test for the Executive Interim Manager intermediary is being able to produce a short list of say two candidates, in under forty-eight hours, from Executive Interim Managers that they know well. When choosing an intermediary for an Executive Interim Manager, the quality of the intermediary's service offering is critical. It would be prudent to ask the intermediary to provide three high profile references that would confirm the quality of their service offering.

Challenges for the Future

Established Executive Interim Managers and intermediaries of Executive Interim Managers need to constantly promote the niche status of the Executive Interim Manager market. With the proliferation of the internet, low cost intermediaries have

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proliferated and this has led to much of the interim management market becoming commoditized. Many prospective interim Finance, Marketing, and Operations Directors, plus indeed Chief Executives, are not yet aware of the changing market. Choosing an effective Executive Interim Manager is about quality, not low cost solutions. The acid test when recruiting an Executive Interim Manager is the answer to the question "Can we afford to fail?"

Personal Insights

Because of my own formal background in research, I have been heavily influenced by the Japanese approach to cost reduction. Japanese buyers look at products or services from three dimensions: (1) functionality; (2) quality; and (3) cost. Buyers of Executive Interim Manager intermediary services would be wise to focus upon: services offered (functionality) and quality. My own specialist area of expertise as an Executive Interim Manager has permitted me to develop the Financial Performance Improvement Programme.

The Financial Improvement Performance Programme (FPIP):

An Executive Interim Manager diagnostic tool is the first step in the Financial Performance Improvement Programme (FPIP). FPIPs deploy leading edge research tools to clarify stakeholder requirements and structured planning to achieve stakeholder satisfaction. The methodology includes iterative analysis and intervention.

FPIPs have been successfully deployed in some of the World's most complex organizations. Based upon research and successful deployment, I have developed a simple questionnaire to see whether an FPIP is appropriate to your organization:

1. Has there been a pan-functional or pan-organizational record of failure?
2. Have ten of millions of Dollars been invested without benefit realization?
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, you definitely need to contact me via alf@alfoldman.com.

Also, I am always on the look out for other Executive Interim Managers, especially if they fit the Archetype!

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