



FEATURE



Should Organizations Choose Consultants or Interim Managers?

[By Nihit Aurora]

Many organizations find themselves in Catch-22s when it comes to choosing between consultants and using their internal skills to bring about organizational changes.

Organizational managers often discover that they pay far too much to external consultants in an effort to make up for their own lack of related experience. But consultants, though proficient, may not possess enough experience either. And managers often make the mistake of selecting budding young consultants instead of specialized consultants with substantial experience. This can be a problem because many consulting firms refuse to take complete responsibility for the consequences of the solutions they provide.

What Managers Expect From Consultants

Nonetheless, many organizations prefer hiring consultants who have proven accomplishments and hands-on experience. Managers often feel more comfortable working with these consultants to initiate changes in the organization. When choosing a consultant, keep in mind the following questions:

- Is the consultant able to do the assigned work?
- Can the consultant gel with the people he or she will work with?
- Will the staff and management

respond to the consultant's proposed solutions?

- Will the management be able to gain anything worthy from the consultant?

When Organizations Make Way for Interim Managers

Consultants will have wide exposure to their areas of expertise, as well as experience in understanding managements' own ideas regarding particular problems. However, many managers often feel that consultants play only limited roles, especially in times of crucial transitions. Therefore, it's often a good idea to hire interim managers who know that their time and roles in organizations are limited to bringing about the expected change.

The Role of Interim Managers

Many professionals now specialize as interim managers. Unlike people who are in-between jobs or have only brief exposures to management roles, interim managers are experienced in and committed to their jobs. They usually have a considerable amount of experience in industries similar to the ones they will work in. Unlike consultants who

work in an advisory role and attempt to bring about change, interim managers usually prefer to work as line managers at middle and senior levels where they can closely interact with directors and boards.

Because of their interim capacities, interim managers can be quickly assigned roles in organizations. And because of their skills and experience, organizations can expect them to produce immediately. Interim managers can provide a variety of benefits:

- Quick and effective transitions, especially if a key member has just left the organization.
- Assistance with quick and effective implementation of important projects.
- Training of new personnel.
- Standardization of an organization's procedures.

Every organization has to bear growing pains while undergoing changes. Depending upon the desired outcomes and the lengths of transitions, organizations can make sensible decisions when choosing between consultants and interim managers to bring



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about preferred outcomes in the best interests of their organizations.

On The Net

Interim Management and Leadership:
Making the Best of a Difficult Time
www.axi.ca/tca/May2003/associatearticle_2.shtml

How to Select a Consultant - The Three Imperatives
www.businessperform.com/articles/select_consultant.html

Consultancy or Interim Management— Which?
www.businessperform.com/articles/interim_management.html

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