

Know the difference between a management consultant and an interim manager

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Do you know the difference?

Companies operating in a fast-paced environment, need a high degree of flexibility and adaptability to keep up with the sudden and frequent changes.

However, many companies working in these types of environments tend to lack these two parameters and therefore situations such as the restructuring of an organization, launching of new projects, relocations of factories, a gap in the management, or a company experiencing such fast growth that they cannot keep up to speed, can cause alarming problems and overwhelm the resources at hand.

Companies tend to look for external services that provide expert knowledge in order to deal with the challenges that arise out of such situations like the ones listed above. This is where a consultant or an interim manager comes into play.

Choosing whether to take an Interim Management approach or hiring a management consultant can be difficult. This is because of the fact that the two concepts resemble one another. However, when we look deeper into the two approaches, we see that there are real differences between the two.

Similarities between a management consultant and interim manager

As previously stated, an interim manager is similar to a management consultant. One could say that an interim manager is a management consultant, but a management consultant is not an interim manager. The similarities that the management consultant and the interim manager have are:

- They share the ability to fast track a critical project
- Strategic and analytical
- An independent and objective view on the challenge
- Temporary addition of top management resources

Although there are some similarities between the management consultant and the interim manager, we see that more senior directors choose to go for the Interim Management solution rather than going for a management consultant. This is because there are some clear advantages to hiring an interim manager instead of a consultant.



Interim Management solution

Going for an Interim Management solution entails that a company receives added management expertise for a limited time period, which means that the commitment on the company's side is low, but the value added into the business is very high. Moreover, the cost of having an interim manager is more cost effective than having a permanent employee for instance. The cost of having the interim is solely based on the time he/she works on the assignment. Once the interim period terminates, the cost goes away.

What differentiates the interim manager from the management consultant?

Similarly, to the consultant, the interim manager lays the groundwork, meaning the analytical and strategic part of the job. The consultant, however, is rarely involved in the implementation process, whereas the interim manager not only implements but also executes the strategy ensuring that the business reaches the desired goal. The interim manager views the company's success as their own success.

The interim manager will be selected and thoroughly assessed by the interim management firm and presented to the company, where he/she will be hired as an independent person on the basis of professional and personal skills as well as reputation. The consultant is on the other hand usually hired based on the firm's reputation rather than a personal fit for the company and the specific assignment.

An interim will therefore solely lay all his/her focus on the company and attempt to cut costs and improve efficiency wherever possible, as this will improve the interim manager's reputation. The consultant on the other hand works for the consulting firm and may therefore try to sell additional services and the focus may lie on generating as much as revenue from that specific assignment.

The interim manager and the consultant also have different ways in which they apply their skills when working on a new assignment. The interim manager will base their competencies and skills on their long standing operating experience, leadership and industry experience. Whereas the consultant, base their skills most commonly on methods, processes and analysis that is laid out by the consulting firm.



What can you expect from your interim manager?

If you decide to take the Interim Management solution, then these are the things that you can expect to get out of your interim manager:

- You can expect to get an overqualified senior manager for the assignment, who has a lot of experience.
- The interim manager often brings key skills that the organization does not tend to have.
- An interim manager will be result driven and 100% focused on the task.
- An interim manager has chosen to go the Interim Management career, because they thrive in this flexible and project-based work life.
- They enjoy the freedom of not being tied down.
- The interim manager is not involved in any politics of the business.
- He or she is solely only there to create results that benefit the company.

International cooperation

This white paper is a contribution of SMW's partner Nextt Management A/S (Christian Hvashøj Schaarup) from Denmark.

Senior Management Worldwide (SMW) regularly publishes best practice examples from its partners. SMW is an international group of like-minded specialists of interim management providers. They operate in partnership under common principles and standards of excellence. Each partner helps organizations solve critical management issues and influence business outcomes. SMW offers the strongest and deepest network of leading interim executives available anywhere in the world. They combine global reach with local knowledge. With their combined reach and experience, the 21 partner countries offer a wide pool of interim and independent executive professionals across the world.

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