

Why your interim provider must assure shadow management

a white paper authored by Arrowstone,
partner of Senior Management Worldwide in Belgium

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Many articles have been written about key success factors of Interim Management Assignments and about the added value of the professional provider.

In our eyes, there are two success factors worth reminding.

First reminder: thorough preparation

It is common knowledge that thorough preparation is a must to bring a project to a successful end. This works also with Interim Management assignments. Even as urgency is often the cause, the dialogue between client and provider must start at a strategic business level.

The provider must not come in as selling interim management, but must be able to understand the business issues very quickly and on all levels:

- technical
- functional
- human
- organizational
- and political

He must have a holistic view on the business and:

- very quickly ask the right questions
- detect the real risks
- share comparable experiences with the client
- bringing in multi-sector experience
- opening different options
- and be able to challenge

To do: Select a Provider with a deep, strategic understanding of business dynamics and a wide management culture and experience.

Second reminder: hit the ground running

The Interim Manager must “hit the ground running” and face all challenges, some expected and some that were not clearly identified at the start. Some challenges are experienced before by the interim manager, and some not, even if an interim manager is most of the time overqualified. Many decisions must be taken and they should be the right ones.



Problems can arise on governance issues.

The Interim Manager can be in a lonely spot here. He cannot always share his questions and doubts within the company. He cannot indeed speak totally freely with the people below him and is not supposed to take too much time freewheeling about possible options with people at the top.

And it is our experience that the provider can and must play an important role: he must assure an efficient "Shadow Management".

Shadow Management

We consider Shadow Management an essential duty which can work on four levels.

1.

First of all through what is called "personal Shadow Management". Having very regular face-to-face contacts with the Interim Manager, where he can speak totally freely about all aspects of the situations he faces.

Shadow Management provides the Interim Manager with a sounding board, helping to detect and solve possible risks that will endanger the desired outcome of the assignment. As mediator the shadow

manager will facilitate, and in some cases act as an arbitrator between the client and the Interim Manager. The provider-partner who takes the role of "listener and challenger" must have a very wide management and business culture, must be very curious and be a creative thinker. If that is the case he will be a real accelerator for the Interim Manager.

2.

It is also important to have the necessary status meetings with the client, the Interim Manager and the provider. The objectives of those meetings are the following: ensure time is taken to communicate, approve, adjust and maintain focus on the agreed priorities. It also ensures that the client remains fully involved in the governance and is part of the process: he is not "outsourcing" a change process, he is part of it. Those meetings are more strategic than operational. As in a lot of assignments the success of the Interim Manager depends on decisions to be taken above him, it can also be the place where the mutual expectations are transformed into concrete action points.



3.

The Interim Manager may be confronted with questions where very precise technical assistance can be needed. Some providers, such as Arrowstone, have made agreements with some service providers (legal, audit, fiscal, etc.) who give free technical support for some hours in case of urgency. Those service providers do it for lead generation without any fee for the provider.

4.

A last but sometimes an important point is that the provider can put its large network at the disposal of an Interim Manager in assignment. This can cover technical advice by another Interim Manager, it can be an introduction to a supplier or a potential client. It has also happened we were able to help in the resolution of inter-company potential conflicts through establishing the right top-level contacts.

To do: Select a Provider who really does “Shadow Management” and takes the assignment at heart with concrete actions.

International cooperation

This white paper is a contribution of SMW's partner Arrowstone (Patrick Lhoest) from Belgium.

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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