

## Stress of interim management

<http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/09/03/03/10290885.html>

03/08/2009 10:05 AM | By Carole Spiers, Special to Gulf News

The practice of hiring temporary managers (or head-renting) is aimed at relieving the potential problems inherent in major organisational change.

It provides professional leadership management through a transitional phase by experts carefully selected for compatibility with a particular corporate environment.

In exchange for the admittedly high cost, you are meant to enjoy a win-win situation. Interim managers are not only exceptionally well-qualified in their speciality, but also in the interim role itself, being able to steer you confidently towards a given objective within the necessary timescale.

Yet they can interact fully with the staff as there is no conflict of interest, and can remain comfortably outside company politics or personal feuds.

Meanwhile, they can contribute fresh insights through their outsider status and, furthermore, their influence is very often felt long after they have left.

So why can the arrival of an interim manager potentially initiate so much stress?

Not long ago, I staged seminars for a swimming-pool contractor, that had to deal with the sudden death of its chief executive. As there was no deputy to act as a replacement, an interim manager was brought in, whom I got to know fairly well.

When he heard I was a stress consultant, he joked that he might be in the market, himself, for this service in the near future. I asked him what exactly the problem was and he thought there were three main issues.

First, there was the atmosphere of shock and disbelief after the untimely death of their respected chief executive. He, the interim manager, was the only person around the office who had not known the CEO, and could not, therefore, share in the general mourning. As a result, he was made to feel an outsider, and this did not help in the day-to-day running of the company during this emotional period of loss. However, even in less emotive situations, a new face in the office can often cause resentment.

Secondly, the idea of interim management was not especially popular in that company, following two previous instances when outside managers were the cause of internal problems.

Finally, the interim manager is always going to meet resistance from individuals who feel threatened or resentful. In this instance, there was an embittered junior executive who kept trying to discover the manager's salary, which was of course, quite high, but which he did not have to reveal.

So there will always be some stress attaching to interim management. The advice is: find a professional management agency, and brief them comprehensively about the requirements and objectives of your agenda. Interim management should relieve stress, not be the cause of it.

### Key points

- Tackling Fears n Interim management is meant to smooth-out the change process
- Full-time staff need to be kept informed of the HR agenda
- A reputable agency can overcome inherent fears about interim management

*- The writer is a BBC broadcaster and motivational speaker, with 20 years experience as CEO of Carole Spiers Group, an international stress consultancy based in London.*