

Title:

Ageism and Interim Management

Word Count:

780

Summary:

There is a tendency to assume that employers veer towards people with less experience in the market place, however statistics show that the age of all executives shows that 85% are between 40 60 years and that the number of people working beyond the age of 65 is, apparently, rising by a third.

Keywords:

interim management, interim manager, interim managers,

Article Body:

There is a tendency to assume that employers veer towards people with less experience in the market place. Why is that? Do they consider the mature applicant to be less flexible, less driven and less technologically aware? It would be naive to think that age isn't taken into account, when employers are looking at a prospective applicant. However the number of people working beyond the age of 65, is, apparently, rising by a third, according to the 'office of National Statistics and so the competition for challenging senior roles will increase; this is especially true of the 'Interim Management' market place.

A great many 'purchasing' activities are 'project' driven - therefore it would follow that the older one is, the greater the experience on a diverse range of projects. Functional projects such as - business process re-engineering, information technology, financing of new product launches, franchising and licensing agreements, critical commercial negotiations, export development and sales improvement etc.,

In an increasingly competitive business environment, mature 'Interim Managers' would be required for their length of experience for short-term needs arising from acquisitions or sudden take-overs; relocation and expansion or consolidation of facilities in the office or manufacturing environment; privatisation issues; start-up or close-down of a company, subsidiary or division; productivity, efficiency or profitability improvement needs. The list is endless. Many organisations managing 'change' find the best way to ensure success and of course avoid costly mistakes is to appoint a senior interim manager who has the necessary skills at hand to quickly establish what needs to

be done; that well-trodden path of maturity and experience is required to ensure that these needs are translated and understood properly and very importantly to ensure it all happens on time.

Often project times are in fact cut dramatically leading to considerable competitive advantages and substantial budget and cost savings.

In today's climate as companies have down-sized-thus causing the loss of a senior executive, for whatever reason, this can often cause a very negative impact on many organisations. Therefore experienced interim managers 'come into their own' during times of crisis, filling gaps caused by sudden departures of key executives, for reasons of sickness, resignation or death; for dismissals, both planned and unplanned; protracted recruitment difficulties, caused by scarcity or unusual market factors; maternity leave cover etc., It is vital, therefore, given these scenarios, that speed is of the essence. Having gained this enormous wealth and breadth of experience, the more mature applicant is sensibly overqualified and has the ability to be able to step in at a moment's notice and has the 'know how' to make a virtually immediate impact on the defined tasks, to fill the vacuum of leadership, to be a self-starter and to literally 'hit the ground running!'

The experienced and more mature 'Interim Managers' are often the preferred choice when it is necessary to fill a critical vacancy, pending recruitment. Often senior executives can take around six months or more to recruit and of course the client really cannot afford to wait that long. The primary objective is to ensure that business momentum is maintained with the 'day-to-day' running of an organisation. The senior 'Interim Executive' must, therefore, be immediately available and suitably very experienced and certainly over-qualified to be effective immediately on day one.

The client may wish the interim not to make hasty changes until the full-time recruit arrives, so that the individual is able to stamp their own mark on the company. However, engaging an experienced interim enables the client to obtain an outsider's impartial view of the business and to achieve some rapid deliverables. They have no agenda and are able to take unpopular decisions if necessary. The older interim would probably have far more confidence to be able to do this, as it only with maturity and experience of people and situations over a lengthy period of time, that would enable them to make some very tricky decisions. The more junior members of an organisation are more likely to listen and respect their judgement as they are able to stand outside the internal politics. Some very confident negotiating skills, would be an absolute necessity!

It is therefore no surprise when analysis of the age of all executives shows

that 85% are between 40 & 60 years. It is generally considered that below the age of 40 it is less likely that an individual will have the necessary experience to meet the demanding standards of an 'Interim Executive' especially in terms of either his or her ability to transfer skills and experience quickly to a new client environment. It is therefore incumbent on the 'mature' applicant to challenge any perceived prejudices, by ensuring that they have presented themselves as 'the very best person for the assignment.'