



## How Interim Operations Leaders Can Supercharge Your Business

Three unexpected ways interim operations leaders drove change, overhauled efficiency, and made lasting impacts.

### **Interim Leaders Are Not a New Idea - But Companies Are Using Short Term Executive-Level Experts in Novel Ways to Create Value and Drive Lasting Change**

Executives have long used this option as a way to bridge critical gaps on the leadership team, often during times when they are looking for a permanent hire but can't afford to operate without leadership at the helm to keep advancing the business and making progress toward critical objectives.

However, given the tight labor market we operate in today, some companies are beginning to expand the scope and think differently about how, when, and why to use skilled executives on a short-term, contracted basis. And it's paying off in spades.

Indeed, these companies are finding that the right interim leader—someone with extensive experience and the right mindset—can step in and have a major impact on the company in short order by solving key challenges, improving efficiency, and adding value that lasts long beyond their brief time with the organisation.

## **Specifically, our clients have used short-term executive-level experts in three novel ways that have quickly resulted in tremendous and lasting value for their business:**

### **As A Transitory Executive**

A well-chosen transitory executive can help address critical issues. An interim leader can be specifically assigned to solve a tough challenge, spearhead a lean transition, or tackle other specific issues in the organisation. They bring extensive experience with problem-solving and leading major initiatives, allowing them to generate results quickly while freeing your leadership team to focus on their own critical roles.

For example, one client, a major provider of product packaging solutions, used a highly-skilled interim executive to fill the role of general manager in a plant that was underperforming. In a matter of two months, the interim resource was able to overhaul the plant and resolve an equipment issue that was costing the company upwards of \$200,000 per month, dramatically improving OEE. At the same time, the operation expert helped the company spearhead a lean implementation across two local plants.

During his tenure as interim GM, the leader created and implemented an effective resource plan and also assisted with hiring a new production manager, onboarding and training new hourly workers in lean techniques, and, eventually, supporting the onboarding of the new, permanent GM. Within two months, the acting GM helped make critical culture changes that allowed the organisation to continue to make and benefit from ongoing productivity improvements today.

## As a Skilled Contracted Expert

A skilled contracted expert can add bench strength where you need it most. An interim leader can provide dedicated, experienced manpower in situations where you need short-term bandwidth to get things done. These leaders can also provide coaching and mentoring to help an existing leader “skill up” or accomplish critical objectives.

Recently, one of our clients welcomed a new GM and quickly realized there was so much to be accomplished, that, at least for the time being, the role was a two-person job. We quickly provided the right “level” interim resource to step in as a Director of Operations with heavy emphasis on driving maintenance discipline and overall equipment effectiveness (OEE). In this capacity, he essentially took responsibility for half of the plant’s specific issues, ensuring that the new permanent GM was not spread too thin.

In addition to addressing a specific issue with a very expensive piece of capital equipment and ultimately increasing OEE on the machine from 25% to 87%, the interim Director of Operations successfully introduced Total Productive Maintenance to the maintenance department and developed autonomous maintenance processes for the operators, minimising future interruptions due to machine breakdowns. These efforts helped improve collaboration between operations and maintenance and established the foundation of a culture capable of embracing lean manufacturing principles. Throughout his time in the role, the interim expert worked in partnership with the GM to nurture this culture and ensure all plant supervisors had the training and coaching necessary to sustain gains made and to continue embracing the advantages of lean manufacturing.

## As a Confidential Replacement

An interim leader can help facilitate a confidential replacement. As year-end approaches, companies looking to make **leadership changes** in the new year can benefit from using veteran experts to smooth the transition. Recently, one client identified that the current Director of Operations was in the wrong role within the company. With the plant in flux, productivity declining, and on-time deliverables three weeks behind, the organisation needed a power player to step in.

The company selected a highly experienced, pre-vetted expert to serve as interim Director of Operations while searching for the right permanent replacement for the role.

The interim leader got to work immediately, spearheading the development of a roadmap to better meet SIOB expectations, integrating a team of three expatriates into the Continuous Improvement Team, and helping to make culture changes to facilitate better communication between departments and align corporate, manufacturing, and production around the same goals.

The interim leader accomplished all of this in a matter of three months, helping to create an environment where the new permanent Director of Operations is able to thrive. Our resource also played a key role in evaluating candidates for the permanent role and assisted with onboarding once a selection was made. By bringing a fresh set of eyes and invaluable experience to the team, our leader helped turned what could have been a difficult transition for the organisation into a major success.

## How will interim resources fit into your talent plans?

Time and again, interim resources have proven their tremendous worth by helping clients accomplish much more than filling a seat or keeping the business running. They consistently go above and beyond to drive change and to get or keep operations on the right track. As you evaluate your talent needs in the new year, it might make sense to broaden your perspective on interim talent and rethink how and where you can tap into these experts to accomplish critical objectives or solve specific challenges.

To learn more about the role interim leaders can play and how they can support any major leadership, process, or procedural changes you have planned for 2019, [read this blog post about how interim leaders can help you start the new year on the right foot](#) .





**Shannon Gabriel, Managing Director, Leadership Solutions Practice**

Shannon Gabriel is Managing Director of TBM's Leadership Solutions practice where she leads the organization's comprehensive approach to operational leadership and change management by assessing current leadership capabilities, gaps, or risks.