

## **Interim Executive Management: Challenge and Change**

**A position in interim executive management is one of the most exciting and challenging jobs you'll ever tackle.**

Because you have to slip into a position and immediately take up the reins, you must be personable and intelligent. Because you need to be able to perform almost any executive job with little or no preparation, you'll need to have broad-based experience and education. And because your position may require a wide variety of different skills and management techniques, you'll need to be flexible and quick to learn.

Interim executive management is, in short, more challenging than almost any CEO job you can imagine; and it's a perfect way to prepare yourself to be a CEO.

### **Character Counts**

One of the most important traits of a candidate for interim executive management is good character. You'll be entering a variety of different businesses, some of who may compete with one another, and you will be privy to many of their trade secrets. You will, of course, have to sign confidentiality agreements with each employer; but it will be your character that determines whether you will maintain the letter of that agreement.

Honesty is vital for interim executive management; you need to be able to tell your employer the truth about his company, especially the uncomfortable ones that no one else will say. Whether his executive vice president is incompetent and passes all his work to his assistant, or the company's finances are not quite as stable as the CFO would like everyone to believe, or even if the issues are more minor yet critical to the proper function of the company, the truth needs to be told in order to begin to mend the problems.

Strength and willpower will be important when carrying out your main functions in interim executive management. As effectively a temporary employee, permanent executives may try to push you around. Only if you push back as hard as they push you will you survive.

### **Education and Experience**

The most important part of interim executive management education is your former experience as an executive. Only by being an executive can you understand exactly how to fill the role. Beyond that, an interim executive manager needs to be broad-based in his or her skills, so must learn everything possible about every aspect of business management. In today's business environment, executive interim managers especially must be well-versed in technology, and understand how IT tools can maximize the potential of a company.

Rarely will a person without at least an MBA be able to enter interim executive management. A PhD is better. Often having a law degree will give you a real advantage.

### **Working With Difficult Situations**

Interim executive management often involves dealing with difficult management situations, like downsizing and business change or acting as a temporary replacement for a bad executive. Your position will come with some heavy baggage, and you'll need to overcome preconceptions your coworkers won't even realize they have.

When you're taking over the position of a fired executive, you must step in and make the position your own. The more quickly you can thoroughly replace the failed executive and begin reversing the damage he did, the easier it will be to gain the respect of your coworkers.

If you're in a company that needs interim executive management because of business change – downsizing, offshoring, or other strategies that may be leading to the loss of jobs – you should remember to be tactful at all times. Even if you know who's going to be let go, you need to treat all coworkers equally and divorce yourself as far as possible from that knowledge. It goes without saying that you also should never engage in any kind of gossip.

Each new position will not only be challenging in itself, but the peculiar circumstances surrounding it will provide further challenge. Interim executive management is one of the most challenging and interesting careers you can choose.

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