Effective Interim Management

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Interim management

How Organization Twins Help Interim Managers Turn Around

Unmanaged States

When Interim Managers step into an organization, they often face chaos disguised as business-as-usual. The numbers may look acceptable, but beneath the surface, teams are disconnected, decisions delayed, and learning suppressed. These are symptoms of what we call the *unmanaged state*—organizations that muddle through rather than master their management.

Interim Managers are brought in precisely because something is broken. Yet, their challenge is twofold: to *fix the urgent* while *building the lasting*. They must act fast, often without context or continuity, and they are judged by immediate results. What they rarely have is a reliable map of the terrain they have entered.

That’s where Organization Twins change the game.

From Blind Spot to X-Ray Vision

Most organizations operate with partial visibility. Interim Managers may receive reports, dashboards, and KPIs—but these show *outcomes*, not *causes*. They tell you *what* happened, not *why* it happened.

An Organization Twin provides the missing X-ray.

It is a digital reflection of how the organization truly works—its purpose, relationships, collaboration patterns, and learning capacity. Built from data collected through the Global Executive Survey and enriched by 25 years of research across 500 organizations, the Organization Twin reveals hidden patterns of

management behavior.

For Interim Managers, this means they can see in weeks what would otherwise take months to uncover:

- How work really gets done (not what the org chart says)
- Where decisions stall or accelerate
- How leadership attention is distributed
- Which capabilities drive performance—or drag it down

This diagnostic view creates immediate clarity. It replaces intuition and anecdote with evidence. It allows Interim Managers to focus energy where it matters most.

The Unmanaged State: Where Interim Managers Begin

Every unmanaged organization exhibits predictable dysfunctions. We've identified nine recurring types of management failure—from mechanistic to detached—that define the unmanaged state. They show up as rigidity, fragmentation, short-termism, or disconnection from purpose.

Interim Managers encounter these failures every day.

They are not caused by bad people but by outdated management logic—models built for a stable world, now operating in a dynamic one. The result is:

- Reactive management: Fixing problems rather than anticipating them
- Siloed behavior: Teams optimize locally but weaken the whole
- Leadership fatigue: Managers chase efficiency while losing adaptability

Interim Managers inherit this landscape. Their success depends on how quickly they can make sense of it—and shift it.

Organization Twins: The Interim Manager’s Diagnostic Mentor

Think of the Organization Twin as a Diagnostic Mentor—a tool that teaches by revealing. It combines three superpowers that every Interim Manager needs:

- Fast Diagnosis: Within days of collecting data, the Twin visualizes organizational patterns. Interim Managers no longer rely solely on interviews or observation; they can see systemic weaknesses and strengths.
- Comparative Benchmarking: Because Organization Twins are built on global data, Interim Managers can benchmark the client’s organization against hundreds of others—instantly exposing where it lags or leads.
- Learning Guidance: The Twin doesn’t just highlight problems; it reveals the learning opportunities—the specific management practices that, if changed, will unlock better performance.

These insights turn an Interim Manager from a firefighter into a designer of better management. They can address root causes, not just symptoms.

Turning Around Management, Not Just Performance

Traditional turnaround efforts focus on results—cost, revenue, market share. But without addressing how the organization is *managed*, improvements rarely sustain. Interim Managers often feel the pressure to deliver quick wins, yet real value lies in creating the conditions for continued success.

An Organization Twin helps strike this balance.

It supports a dual agenda:

1. Stabilize operations: By clarifying how decisions flow and

where execution breaks down, the Twin accelerates operational recovery.
2. Innovate management: By revealing hidden assumptions and outdated practices, it enables the redesign of management itself.

This is where *turnaround* becomes *transformation*.

The organization doesn't just survive—it learns to manage itself better.

A Five-Step Journey for Interim Leaders

Using Organization Twins, Interim Managers can structure their assignment around five steps that mirror the Journey to Mastery outlined in Unmanaged:

1. Assessment – See Reality Clearly: Start with data. Conduct the Global Executive Survey to create the Organization Twin. Use it to visualize where the organization is unmanaged and where its management strengths lie.
2. Adoption – Build Shared Awareness: Share the Twin with the executive team. Facilitate reflection: "*Is this who we are?*" This shared understanding aligns leadership attention and creates readiness for change.
3. Adaptation – Prioritize Actions: Focus on one or two leverage points—areas where small shifts in management can create big impact. Examples: decision speed, collaboration patterns, or capability development.
4. Evolution – Enable Self-Improvement: Use the Twin's indicators to track progress. As the organization learns, update the data to visualize change. The Twin becomes a living mirror of improvement.
5. Perfection – Institutionalize Better Management: Before exiting, the Interim Manager helps embed the new management logic into policies, leadership practices, and

governance frameworks—so that mastery continues after they leave.

In this way, Organization Twins provide both *structure* and *continuity*. They allow Interim Managers to leave behind not just results, but a new way of managing.

Why Interim Managers Are Ideal Catalysts

Interim Managers have unique advantages over permanent leaders:

- They are independent—free from organizational politics.
- They are time-bound—which sharpens focus on essentials.
- They are experienced across contexts—able to recognize recurring patterns.

These qualities align perfectly with the Organization Twin approach.

Where permanent leaders may be blind to their own management habits, interim professionals can look objectively and act decisively. The Organization Twin gives them the evidence to challenge assumptions and the credibility to lead change.

It also enhances their value proposition: instead of being seen merely as temporary fixers, Interim Managers become catalysts of management innovation—leaving their clients not just healthier, but *smarter*.

From Muddling Through to Mastery

In unmanaged organizations, leadership is reactive, fragmented, and often exhausted. Interim Managers enter these environments to restore direction and performance. Organization Twins give them the tools to go further—to transform management itself.

By combining diagnosis, learning, and benchmarking, Organization Twins enable Interim Managers to:

- Discover management blind spots quickly
- Engage leaders in fact-based dialogue

- Guide organizations toward mastery, not dependency

In a world where business complexity outpaces leadership capacity, this is no small advantage. Interim Managers who master the use of Organization Twins can turn even the most unmanaged organizations into learning systems—capable of evolving long after the interim mission ends.

Because better management is not just about fixing what's broken.

It's about helping organizations learn how to manage themselves—better, faster, and for the future.

About Management Insights

Founded by Lukas Michel, Management Insights draws on more than 25 years of research and practice to help people understand how their organizations work. The Organization Twin brings organizational patterns into view for reflection, dialogue, and informed choice.

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