

CEO Worldwide Expert File

What will be the role of an Interim Manager in the future?

Expert File by Didier Douziech

The world is changing rapidly under the influence of the monetization of society, the pressing environmental issues (1) and the digital transformation (2) that affects all fields. The functioning of organizations is inevitably impacted by these changes, as well as the way we work and therefore the role of an interim manager. But how?

A prospective study (3) presented in the article "The Future of Work" in the Futuribles Magazine of September 2017 (HÉRY Michel, LEVERT Catherine, « [L'avenir du travail. L'impact des technologies sur l'emploi et sa pénibilité](#) », Futuribles, n° 420, septembre-octobre 2017, p.5-18.) postulates 5 assumptions regarding the evolution of society and their impact on the way we work (4). I have taken some excerpts from this study, marked "*in quotation marks and italics*" and supplemented them with other sources and my own managerial experience to present you 5 assumptions of evolution within the context of the work of an interim manager.

1st assumption: Financial profit comes first => Interim manager: victim or executioner?

In this assumption, "the demands of shareholders in terms of return on investment, which have constantly risen over the last thirty years," continue to increase. They aggravate the "very strong growth of medical conditions such as musculoskeletal disorders and those associated with Psychosocial Risks... The increased intensification of work causes accidents and medical conditions, but also premature fatigue of workers and exclusion from the labour market due to lack of suitable jobs. This leads to a society operating at several speeds, with healthy employees on one side and marginalised ones on the other, more or less struggling on compensation packages and minimum allowances."

Interim managers are often key players in these organisational modes, which lead to exclusion, accidents and medical conditions. They may also be victims. However, a seasoned interim manager, thanks to his independent status and his ability to alternate varied missions and inter-missions, stands a better chance to cope with the changes than other workers, and even to develop professionally and maintain his health.

2nd assumption: Digital transformation as a job destroyer => the robot interim manager

"Robotization has accelerated and the gains are concentrated in sectors and companies that have been able to take full advantage of automation and could improve their competitiveness in increasingly competitive markets." The most pessimistic scenarios that predict the destruction of up to 50% of jobs become reality. Thus "the employment rate is falling and funds are lacking to finance social protection". Also in this case, "a two-speed society is developing, with bands of severe poverty". On the one hand there are the designers, makers and profiteers of this increasingly robotic world, on the other hand the "populations who just manage themselves to get by, who live on small jobs, and in precarious situations".

To make a living from his job, whether he specializes in IT or not, the interim manager must constantly be on the lookout, re-train, and ensure the teams, he takes charge of remain at the forefront of digital transformation and bring added value to his clients. When there is an opportunity to implement a job-destroying technological "progress" and/or to downsize the workforce accordingly, the interim manager either

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proves himself efficient and able in carrying out this change, or he excludes himself from an increasing share of his market.

3rd assumption: Digital transformation at the service of mankind => the interim manager as moderniser

In this third assumption, digital transformation allows to *"simplify tasks, but also to reduce the health and safety concerns of working populations. Value-added gains are used to finance social protection and training. They benefit everyone. The general improvement of health, living conditions and prosperity enables the population to work, train regularly and consume, maintaining general well-being."*

In this context too, the interim manager must be constantly on the lookout, training and ensure the teams, he takes charge of remain at the forefront of digital transformation and bring added value to his clients. When his mission requires him to implement technological progress that will put into question the organization entrusted to him, he will also be in charge to redeploy the affected personnel to other activities.

4th assumption: Harmonization of organizations => the energy liberating interim manager

According to the study "Future of Work" presented by the Futuribles Magazine, which inspired this publication, *"excessively structured and pressured work organisation leads to such detrimental effects on the economy (loss of skills, lack of innovation, recession...) that companies"* turn to radically different modes of management *"looking at concepts that are collective, collaborative, return to the local level"*, decentralisation of powers, self-determination and agile organisation. Models such as free enterprise (5), harmonious enterprise (6) and other concepts that meet these needs are implemented in most of the organizations. They promote employee engagement and contribute to social stability and higher living standards. The jobs they create provide citizens not only with financial security, but also a sense of self-esteem and optimism.

In this context, organizations that use interim management need interim managers with radically different skills and know-how from traditional interim managers, who mainly bring business experience, the ability to manage and train teams and deliver results. Rather, they favour managers who develop or maintain the performance of the organization entrusted to them, their own human dimension and that of all the people concerned. These managers take their personal development, and that of their team members very serious, and strive to master management methods that contribute to the coherence and harmony of organizations (7).

5th assumption: Search for Global Performance => the global interim manager

The excesses of unbridled liberalism aggravating social injustice, global warming, various forms of pollution, depletion of resources, geopolitical confrontations and the loss of meaning, brings on an almost generalized awareness of the necessity to react drastically. There is a radical change in the model of society. *"People and quality of life play a central role in companies and society."* Gradually, influenced by the population and inspired by success models such as Patagonia, Pochecho, the Archer Group or the village of Ungersheim (8), public bodies, companies and associations are giving priority to strategies and organizational methods that genuinely combine economic development, social and societal development and environmental preservation. Greenbashing and facade CSR policies are no longer accepted.

In this context, the interim manager is selected based on his or her capacity to develop the Global Performance (9) of his or her organization, according to the following 4 dimensions: economic efficiency, staff

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well-being, environmental performance and positive impact of the organization on the community and future generations. And all this in synergy (10).

Which assumption to use and when?

These 5 assumptions are already a reality to varying degrees. The first, "Financial profit comes first", is no more than the amplification of the dominant economic model. The "Digital transformation" is in its early stages and is looking for a path between the 2nd assumption "job destroyer" and the 3rd assumption "at the service of mankind". The 4th and 5th assumptions "Harmonization of organizations" and "Search for Global Performance" can only be found in a few rare organizations, but they give rise to more and more publications, debates, awareness building, projects, vocations, globally, especially among young people. This gives a chance to the last 3 virtuous assumptions to overtake the first 2, but at what speed?

The defenders of the 1st or 2nd assumption treat, in the name of "realism", the 3 other as utopian visions and consider them only in a minor way or, in some cases, use them to give themselves an artificially responsible image or good conscience. Utopians dream of a quick switch to the 3rd, 4th or 5th assumption. The true realists, who are still in the minority, are aware that at the risk of plunging into a devastating crisis, human civilization has no other choice but to shift towards a world driven by Global Performance and harmonious organizations within the next ten years latest. At the same time, they are aware of the huge challenge inherent to this shift in paradigm.

What approach should the interim manager adopt?

For his part, the interim manager, a key actor in the implementation of these 5 assumptions, has, to simplify, the choice between 5 approaches:

1. to **ignore** these issues;
2. to **reject** the issues and to refuse to believe in it;

or to be aware of the issues and opt for one of the following:

3. to be **passive**, by selecting one's missions based on criteria that correspond to one's values, without being militant, at the risk of reducing the number of potential assignments.
4. to be **cynical**, by acting along any of the 5 assumptions, according to the opportunities of the assignment, to get the maximum benefit from it;
5. to **show militant engagement**, by selecting one's missions according to clearly stated criteria (e. g. refusal of pre-defined missions to close down a company) or by accepting missions corresponding to any of the 5 assumptions, but by seeking to influence the course of the missions and the organizations in which one intervenes according to one's values (e. g. supplementing a purely financial mission objective with an approach to improve the quality of life at work). The interim manager must of course respect the client's objectives if he or she wishes to remain in the business, but he or she can also try to change them (11).

Of course, the 5 assumptions and approaches above are caricatured. Reality is likely to be a mixture of these and new realities may emerge. The purpose of these caricatures is to sensitize interim managers to the often neglected purpose of their profession. It is not just about earning a living, social integration, meeting the needs of our clients and to develop further. It is also a means of contributing to the evolution of our society, which is at a crucial turning point. It is up to each of us to make a contribution!

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Special Thanks to “Futuribles” for allowing me to quote from their article “L’avenir du travail. L’impact des technologies sur l’emploi et sa pénibilité.” (HÉRY Michel, LEVERT Catherine)

- (1) Areas of influence of the environmental issues: energy transition, material depletion, water crisis, human and natural migrations linked to global warming, loss of biodiversity, etc....
- (2) Digital transformation = robotization, uberization artificial intelligence, Big Data, etc... see a complete list in the [Digital Innovation Glossary](#).
- (3) INRS = Institut National de Recherche et de Sécurité pour la prévention des accidents du travail et les maladies professionnelles. The coordinators of this study are Michel Héry and Catherine Levert.
- (4) The 5 assumptions presented in the article of Futuribles of September 2017 (www.futuribles.com) which inspired this publication are 1. Work intensification. 2. Privatization of the benefits of robotization. 3. Robotisation with distributed profits. 4. Essence of liberated companies. 5. Relocation. Article original : HÉRY Michel, LEVERT Catherine, « L’avenir du travail. L’impact des technologies sur l’emploi et sa pénibilité », Futuribles, n° 420, septembre-octobre 2017, p.5-18.
URL: <https://www.futuribles.com/fr/revue/420/lavenir-du-travail-limpact-des-technologies-sur-le>
A memo on "The future of the managerial profession: Agony or Harmony?" was also published on The Blog of B-Harmonist
- (5) Movements of the liberated company: www.mom21.org, www.reinventingorganizations.com
- (6) Harmonization of Organizations: www.b-harmonist.com.
- (7) See Article: "[Liberated enterprise and transitional management](#)" and (8)
- (8) Management mode allowing the harmonization of organizations and oriented towards Global Performance: manager21.net.
- (9) Models of lead organisations: [Patagonia](#), [Le Groupe Archer](#), [Pocheco](#), [Village of Ungersheim](#).
- (10) Global Performance, a concept developed by the CJD: www.performanceglobale.cjd.net. Read articles: [Why integrate Sustainable Development into the strategy and management of your company?](#) and [How to integrate the D. D. ...?](#)
- (11) Argument for changing the objectives of the principal: [Open letter to 21st century business leaders](#)

About the author: Didier DOUZIECH



Didier Douziech is graduated from Arts et Métiers Paris Tech, one of the top French engineering schools and he participated to the Advanced Management Programme of INSEAD. He has a 31 years' work experience, 21 in France, 10 in other countries (Japan, Germany, England and Spain). French is his mother tongue and he uses English, Spanish, German and Japanese professionally. He has extensive experience in most of the key positions in a company: board member, managing director, sales & marketing director, industrial director and data processing manager.

With this multidisciplinary and multicultural experience, since 2006 Didier Douziech has operated as Executive Interim Manager and Consultant in industrial and BtoB service companies, as Managing Director, Plant and Industrial Director or Sales & Marketing Director. This field experience is enhanced by ongoing training in the areas of personal development, communication, change management and sustainable development. As a result, Didier Douziech has developed a structured set of skills, methods and tools entitled “Life skills and know-how of 21st century Managers” which he transmits to his employees when on mission as well as widely through conferences and on the web.

To view his short bio, click [here](#)

His service offer:

His preferred position is Managing Director of companies involved in BtoB market. He's especially efficient in global business development and turnaround of distribution, service and industrial companies. His education and professional experience allow him to be also an efficient sales & marketing director or plant manager.

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