

'Senior Interim Management: the difficulties of implementing change on international assignments'

Management hit squads on mission possible

Be your own boss

Carol Lewis

They are the suited crusaders who parachute into troubled companies and execute difficult missions — they are professional interim managers.

Take note of the word "professional", because they are eager to emphasise that they are not temporary or part-time. So much so that even the companies placing them in vacancies are called "providers" and never, ever, agencies, which "smacks of temps", according to Tony Evans, chairman of the Interim Management Association and head of the commercial division of Odgers Interims.

"The last thing we want is someone who thinks they are going to pick up a pocket-money job while they search for another position," he says.

However, the profession started life very much as temporary help. Mr Evans says: "Historically, they would talk about filling vacancies when people were ill, away or on maternity leave, but that's not the case now."

Interim managers have usually reached the level of director or divisional head. "They've built up some scar tissue, some gravitas and some experience, which makes them suitable to be parachuted into circumstances where they will probably be slightly over-qualified, but they have the answer the business needs," Mr Evans says.

They will be hired on contracts of three to 12 months, typically to manage mergers and acquisitions or turnarounds, or to add missing expertise, such as country or sector knowledge.

Very few ever return to full-time work. Mr Evans says that only 2 per cent to 3 per cent go back to permanent full-time work. "They tend to thrive on sequential challenges," he says.

It is difficult to find exact figures for how many professional interim managers there are in the UK but it is thought that as many as 8,000 are registered with providers. There may be others, of course, who source their work through personal contacts.

Originally, interim managers were the sole preserve of the private sector, but over the past five years their use in the public sector has grown. Interim chief executives and directors can now be found everywhere from the NHS to oil refineries.

The recession in the private sector did affect demand but it is now bouncing back with financial services leading the way. The public sector, on the other hand, is only just beginning to see a dip.

Rates are down across the board but



Perform very well, very quickly

Case study

The life of an interim manager is exciting but it can wreak havoc with your personal life, according to Iwan Williams (Carol Lewis writes).

Mr Williams, above, 53, has been an interim manager for three years. Although he loves the "variety, challenge and immediacy of it all", he admits that "you have to arrange your personal life around these periods of intense activity". "If you make a commitment to

do the job, you have to do it to the best of your ability. You don't walk away halfway through because you've found something better or you want to go on holiday," he says.

You need to be prepared to work away from home and in troubled circumstances: "You don't get hired into roles where everything is hunky-dory. You are expected to go in and perform very well, quickly."

The other difficulty he points to is dealing with the fallow periods between contracts.

most interim managers can still expect to be paid between £750 and £1,000 a day. Good managers can command fees of £1,500 or more.

Doug Baird, chief executive of Interim Partners, which places interim managers with private sector corporations, says that there has been consistent demand throughout the recession for managers with experience of managing change. "It's been a tougher market over the last year or so but it is not totally doom and gloom. The market has held firm this year and it is improving."

He adds: "Financial services are coming back quite aggressively and there has been demand for senior managers — whether that is to sort out some of the mess from the credit crunch, integration of banks, or new start-ups."

How to do it

- Experience, rather than qualifications, counts. Most interim managers have management experience at board or divisional level. Some have specialist technical skills or knowledge. The most sought after have led an organisation or a division through change
- Most interim managers set up as limited companies and register for VAT. To do this you need to register your company at Companies House. Find out how at businesslink.gov.uk. It is also advisable to get professional indemnity insurance
- Register with providers. Interim Management Association members would probably be a good place to start. A list of recommended providers can be found at interimmanagement.uk.com
- Networking is important for finding work. There are groups for interims, such as Interim-network.co.uk
- Interims tend to be hired on fixed contracts for up to a year but are paid by the day. The average day rate is £750 to £1,000. Some negotiate expenses and bonuses

Looking to the future, Mr Baird is hopeful for growth in other sectors. "There haven't been the business failures we'd expected and as a consequence there haven't been the interim managers involved in turn-around that we had thought. But it might be a hotspot next year," he says.

Raj Tulsiani, chief executive of Green Park, an interim provider, agrees that financial services is a busy sector where managers with risk and compliance or insurance regulation experience are keenly sought after.

The picture is mixed in the public sector, though, and Mr Tulsiani declares that interim work in central government is dead. "Central government usage has dramatically fallen since a month and a half before the Comprehensive Spending Review," he says, "and there is a lack of certainty about when that market will return."

However, local government and healthcare are quite busy, he says. Local authorities need people who can save money to invest in frontline services. Managers are also needed to work on merging some functions between local government and health authorities and preparing primary care trusts for GP commissioning.

The main thing that interims have to bear in mind in any sector, according to Mr Tulsiani, is honesty about the skills that differentiate them from the rest of the market — an ability to don a cape and put their underpants over their suit notwithstanding.

Lewis, 11/12/2010 (See appendix 1 for typed version)

Contents:

Introduction	3
Personal/Emotional Challenges	5
Business/Industry Challenges	12
Cultural/Linguistic Challenges	17
Conclusion	20
Bibliography	22
Appendices	25

Introduction:

Interim management (IM) is *“the use of senior, professional directors and managers on a fee and fixed term basis to achieve a high impact on specific roles or objectives.”* (Institute of Interim Management, 07/02/2011).

Interim managers are usually contracted in to a client organisation at short notice for a period of between three and twelve months, although these contracts can be extended. They are engaged to achieve specific goals which can vary hugely in nature between assignments and interims, but are typically managing turnarounds or mergers and acquisitions, or filling organisational gaps where there is missing expertise, *“such as country or sector knowledge”* (Lewis, 11/12/2010).

Ultimately, they do not tend to be a standard edition to an organisation: these highly skilled professionals *“parachute into troubles companies and execute difficult missions”* (Lewis, 11/12/2010). In less theatrical terms, interim managers are not hired to carry out the normal day-to-day running of the business: they are contracted for service when action is required, whether planned or unplanned, where the relevant expertise is lacking in the regular staff-body. In summary, they de-risk client positions and improve enterprise value by the effective application of broad, deep operating skills and experience. Essentially, combining consultancy with project management, they enter an organisation for a set time period to observe, make a diagnosis, propose action and how it should be brought about, implement it with full accountability, then leave (Institute of Interim Management, 07/02/2011). To carry out the client aims quickly and effectively (whether business restructuring or improving profit margins), interims are *“sensibly over-qualified for the assignment”* (Institute of Interim Management, 07/02/2011).

IM dates back to the 1970s private sector and remains an important tool for organisations subjected to continued pressures to deliver quickly, efficiently and cost effectively, particularly in light of the economic crisis (Executives Online, 2009). Recent research suggests that board-level interim executives *“achieve goals 20 times faster than permanent senior managers”* (Santagate, 31/03/2011). The high value of these professionals has been increasingly realised, and they are now used across all sectors, in various roles (for a summary of these roles see appendix 6). They sell their services on a freelance basis through being self-employed or through personally owned limited companies (Ibid, 07/02/2011).

In this paper, I will focus specifically on senior (executive) interim managers and the challenges they face in implementing change when working internationally. This encompasses not only technical difficulties in getting to grips with a potentially new industry, or specialism within an industry, but also the personal and socio-cultural challenges arising from the interaction with diverse corporate and national cultures. Each country has individual customs which influence a huge array of matters, from the interim's performance - should they suffer from culture shock - to technical difficulties that come from the socio-cultural, political and legal practices of the host culture, constraining the business conduct and strategy the interim may wish to implement.

I am focusing on international senior interim roles as they are likely to be the highest pressure and most difficult to carry out (in terms of technical issues, and dealing with new client employees they are managing, clients themselves and relevant officials within the culture)¹; they have more obvious responsibilities and greater repercussions for their decisions.

Furthermore, to make this project as anthropological and up-to-date as possible, I have conducted primary research in the form of a semi-structured interview and questionnaires² (see appendices 1-5 for background, data and analysis of all primary research). Responses provided interesting insights into the challenges interim managers face, and individual responses and general trends from it will be used alongside secondary research to explore the title effectively³.

The main body of this essay is split into three categories: personal/emotional; business/industry; and cultural/linguistic challenges. The first section focuses on challenges interims may face personally due to job demands and (in view of this) personality types suited to the profession. The second section explores technical and non-technical issues in dealing with the organisation itself and its employees. Finally, cultural/linguistic challenges examines the impact of culture on business conduct, management style and strategy implementation. These categories overlap and interact so references will be made between them. However, classifying difficulties in this way allows for a clearer structure overall.

¹ These officials will vary between assignments, from government ministers to bank representatives who may need to be brought on side if the interim arrives when the company has very little money left (Tony Evans, 03/01/2011).

² There is a lack of anthropological work, and to a lesser extent broader academic business work, on IM specifically, meaning that conducting primary research was important to combine with information from interim groups' and providers' websites and the application of wider business and anthropological models and theories to the profession.

³ For analysis of the research and full responses see appendix 5, for summary of results see appendix 4.

Personal/Emotional Challenges:

Since the influential Myers-Briggs type indicator and surrounding theory (Myers, 1980), it has been widely acknowledged that personality types can indicate suitability for particular professional roles (e.g. Keller and Richey, 2006). Broadly, the Institute of Interim Management outlines the following attributes as important in a professional interim:

- *“Seasoned approach with self-confidence (not arrogance)*
- *Credible, diligent & enthusiastic*
- *Self-motivated, independent & objective*
- *Comfortable with accountability*
- *Action orientated – hits the ground running*
- *Results focused*
- *Informed risk-taker*
- *Flexible – thinks laterally and strategically & operates hands-on*
- *Flexible / adaptable – fits in, not status conscious, a team player*
- *Resilient with a realistic outlook*
- *Excellent communicator, influencer & leader*
- *Able to handle ambiguity*
- *Politically aware, sensitive to the situation – but does not get involved in corporate politics or compromise their core values”*

(Institute of Interim Management, 07/02/2011).

The primary research showed that some interims think possessing these attributes is not just an advantage: it is a necessity. If professionals go into their first international assignment(s) without certain core personality traits and skills they will not succeed: the process is “*self-selecting*” (Tony Evans, 03/01/2011). These core attributes, repeatedly emphasized in the primary research, are: strong communication skills; cultural sensitivity; flexibility; and adaptability. These characteristics frequently interact.

Good verbal and nonverbal communication is essential and complicated by the need to manoeuvre around potential cultural and linguistic barriers quickly⁴. Interims must ensure they are listening well and being clear in getting their message across with the intended meaning fully intact. The phraseology and means by which information is expressed are important in order to build and maintain good relationships within organisations⁵. Failure to communicate effectively can lead to costly mistakes from misinterpretation, faulty feedback, and poor employee relations resulting in mistrust, uncertainty and even hostility/conflict (see figure 1; Hickson and Pugh 2001).

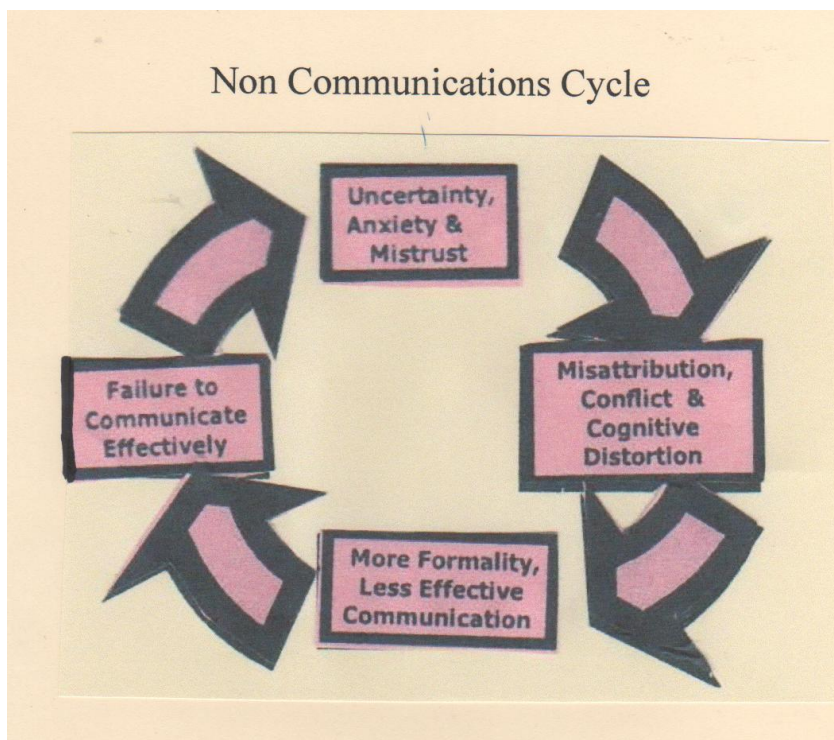


Figure 1 (Gullick, 15/10/2010)

Because of this, it is very beneficial for interim managers to have a comprehensive understanding of the host local and corporate culture prior to the assignment, as is true for any international manager (Ferraro, 2010). This is because communication and therefore tasks can easily be hindered if they do not⁶. Culture *"is a powerful, latent, and often unconscious set of forces, that determine both our individual and collective behaviour, ways of perceiving, thought patterns, and values"* (Schein, 1999, p14). Making decisions without awareness of cultural forces and their incorporation in the company's day-to-day running may result in unanticipated, detrimental outcomes (Ibid, 1999).

⁴This will be examined further in the third section of this project (cultural/linguistic challenges) from a broader cultural angle rather than personal.

⁵This will be explored further in the second section of this project (industry/business challenges).

⁶ This will be gone in to in further detail in the second and third sections of this project.

Learning the local language is also advantageous as culture, language and thought processes are inseparably linked (Whorf, 1956): *“it is generally held that it is impossible to understand a culture without taking into account its language”* (Ferraro, 2005, p54). However, realistically this is not always possible as interims are often called in at short notice.

The importance of cultural knowledge was reflected in the questionnaires where respondents discussed their most recent successful assignments: 13 of 21 who answered the relevant questions and had time between accepting the assignment and entering the role prepared culturally or otherwise had previous experience working in the country. Four Respondents had 48 hours or less notice and therefore very little preparation time for the role.

In cases where individuals do not have time to prepare for the specific culture, flexibility and adaptability are particularly critical in addition to cultural openness and sensitivity. They need to observe speedily but accurately, and assess and tailor their behaviour, ways of thinking and strategies to be appropriate to the given circumstance (Lane et al., 2004). Moreover, they need to be *“prepared for as many eventualities as [they] can”* (Respondent N) in case unanticipated situations arise, be that as the result of a cultural faux-pas or unforeseen market conditions.

As the tasks need to be carried out quickly and efficiently, interims cannot let culture shock impact their focus and performance, despite the fact that these individuals are very exposed to risk of it. They are self-employed meaning that they have limited support in their new role and no formal predeparture cultural and linguistic training set up for them. Furthermore, the intense nature of assignments results in limited ‘down-time’ to acculturate, for example through leisure activities or making host friends (Ferraro, 2010). This is particularly the case if the interim is travelling home regularly in their spare time, as spouses and children *“routinely do not accompany the short-term expatriate abroad”* (Ibid, 2010, p177).

In terms of the foreign deployment cycle (figure 2) and Oberg’s stages of culture shock (Oberg, 1960, figures 3 & 4) interims have to pass through the process at accelerated speed, skipping steps that are recommended for a healthy adjustment to new cultures. In most cases, if interims were to take as long as Oberg’s model to move through the process of culture shock they would not reach the ‘adjustment’ stage by the time they finish the assignment.

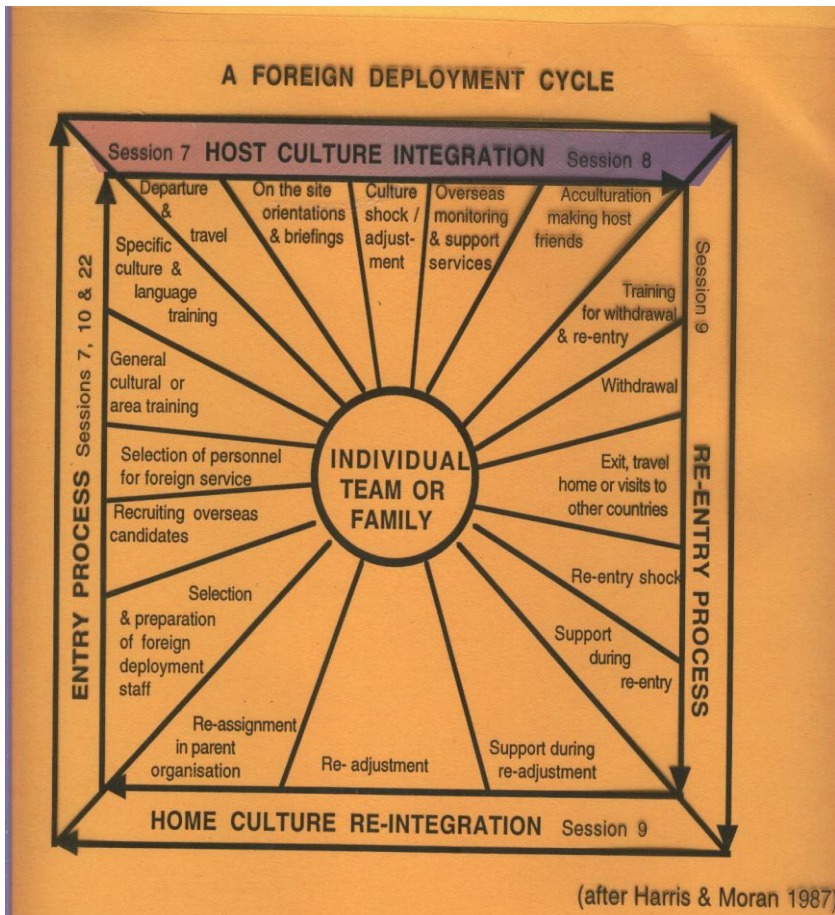


Figure 2 (Gullick, 19/11/2010)

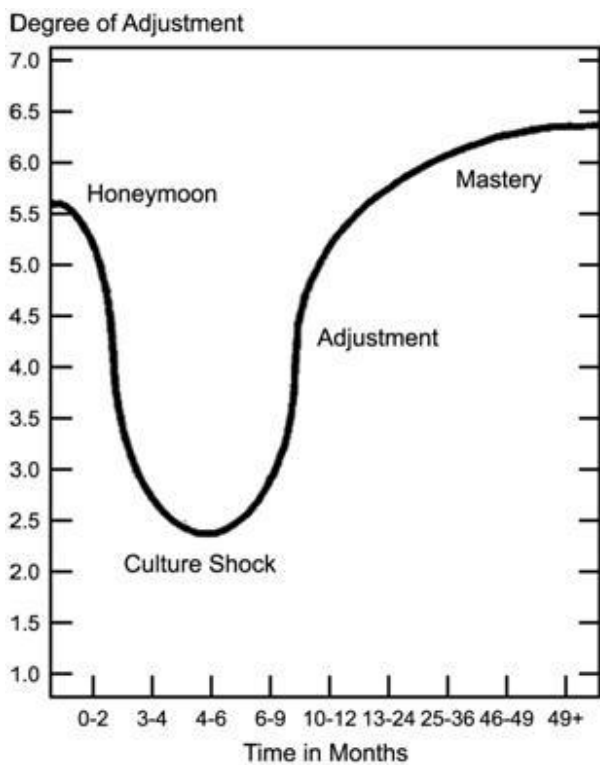


Figure 3 (Uwaje, 2009)



Figure 4 (Uwaje, 2009)

Interim assignments often also require the ability to “*move in uncertainty*” (Respondant B), meaning that interims are also hindered in regaining some of the control and security that culture shock removes, through focusing on set job tasks.

Returning to the idea of IM being self-selecting, international interims will have to have a high level of emotional maturity and self-awareness, and be happy dealing with change and ambiguity (Interim Management Association, 01/04/2011). This is so that they can rapidly adapt and renegotiate behaviour to suit the assignment and minimize culture shock, should they experience it (and most international managers can expect to (Ferraro, 2010)). If they do not achieve this and cultural differences impact on their work, they will not survive in the profession. However, overcoming culture shock cannot be done by insulating themselves by looking through ethnocentric lens’, anticipating and viewing “*anything foreign as inferior*” (Bock, 1970, pix), and thus blocking any chance of gaining the necessary cultural understanding to tailor strategy to the context. Interim managers need to respect the different customs and traditions, and to varying extents incorporate them into their approach.

Interims seemed to deal with culture shock either by putting in place mechanisms to avoid it e.g. the preparation previously mentioned (which Ferraro cites as the single best way of minimizing the impact (Ferraro, 2010)), or by nipping it in the bud upon arrival. For example, Respondent S had experience of the organisation but not the country they were entering. They experienced above

average levels of culture shock in relation to the country (selecting 5 on a scale of 1 to 9 compared to the average of approximately 3). In response to this, they acknowledged the need to develop a new attitude and way of thinking: “[i]t’s different here – not better or worse” (Respondent S), so that they would stop comparing the host culture to the countries they had worked in previously (in this case, UK and US).

Interims can use numerous other methods to reduce symptoms of culture shock. In terms of preparation, symptoms will be reduced by improved knowledge of “*general cultural concepts, local communication patterns, cultural self-awareness and culture-specific information*” (Ferraro, 2010, p169). However, upon arrival, adjustment goes beyond gathering information and requires the interim to actively develop new skills, attitudes and “*modifying old ways of doing things*” (Ferraro, 2010, p169). This may be helped by increased awareness of surroundings through visiting local cultural sites during limited time off (Tony Evans, 03/01/2011). Tony Evans emphasises that building a social infrastructure is also important as it provides personal stability at a time where work is anything but stable. This is a key point, as a symptom of culture shock (which may cause other symptoms) is a feeling of loss of control (Ferraro, 2010) which interims are greatly exposed to due to the uncertain and sometimes ambiguous⁷ nature of the job.

On top of these traits and attributes, interims need to be highly experienced through carrying out senior management roles and working for a range of - preferably international - organisations by which they have a proven track record (interimjobs.com, 01/04/2011). This previous experience of international firms is likely to have taught them cultural awareness. If they have worked in different countries or survive the first international assignment despite not doing so, they should find that “*each subsequent assignment becomes a little easier*” (Ferraro, 2010, p166). Even so, many will continue to suffer some symptoms of culture shock in each new environment (Ibid, 2010) meaning that preparation and methods of minimizing symptoms remain important. If they are unable to adapt quickly and perform immediately, they will not survive in this profession that boasts speed of response as one of its key selling points (Institute of Interim Management, 07/02/2011).

Sources often emphasise this experience and that these professionals are ‘sensibly over-qualified’ for assignments (Vousden, 2002). However, experience need not be in the country or industry in which the client organisation exists. The questionnaire responses showed that most interims had prior

⁷ Principally due to unclear project scope, or false details of the situation (see section 2).

experience of the principal industry that their last successful assignment was concerned with, but this was only by a small majority: 57.1% (12 of 22 participants). 42.9% (9 of 22 participants⁸) had not had any previous experience of it prior to being contracted in to their most recent successful assignment, showing that it is not crucial. The key thing is to have the transferable skills from a wide range of corporate experience (Tony Evans, 03/01/2011; most interim group and provider websites, e.g. Albemarle, 04/04/2011; Veredus 04/04/2011). This point was also mentioned in questionnaire responses (e.g. Respondent L). Furthermore, Respondent H (an interim provider) emphasised that interims can (and often do) enter industries that, were they looking for permanent employment, they would not be considered for given their CVs. Client's contract interims in more for the value of a *"high calibre experienced leader"* (Respondent H).

Interims will need all of these traits, attributes and experience on top of standard good management practice, e.g. strong interpersonal skills (Arthur and Bennett, 1995). This characteristic, along with others classically associated with standard good management practice, was rarely mentioned in the primary research. The reason for this may be that the questions focused specifically on international senior IM. Therefore, responses focused more on elements that differentiated interims from other managers. However, interim managers need to finely tuned classic management skills to form good relations and earn trust (which underlies good communication) more quickly than permanent managers. This goes hand-in-hand with cultural awareness, and help interims move beyond simply not offending host colleagues to forming actively good relations with them.

Other characteristics mentioned in the questionnaires included decisiveness and courage (to *"move in uncertainty"* (Respondent B)), patience, tolerance and respect, focus, calmness under pressure, self-confidence and strong leadership skills (with an emphasis on good listening skills) (see appendix 5).

⁸ One participant skipped this question.

Business/Industry Challenges:

As previously stated, because interims are often contracted in when businesses are not running smoothly, there is pressure to “*perform very well, quickly*” (Lewis, 11/12/2010). Therefore, they need to acquire technical expertise, and adapt to the corporate and national culture at speed to form realistic goals and tailor strategy delivery in a very short space of time. Assignments can vary hugely in their demands and this combined with the role’s international nature means that a one-size-fits-all approach is unsuitable for an interim to implement indiscriminately throughout their career. This reiterates the necessity for these professionals to be flexible and adaptable, with the courage to make quick but considered decisions - in response to the often uncertain context - which could have major implications for the organisation.

Overall, the typical ‘Interim Management Assignment Lifecycle’ (bearing in mind the myriad diverse roles different assignments require) is as follows: entry, diagnosis, proposal, implementation, and exit (Institute of Interim Management, 07/02/2011; see appendix 7 for extended outline of lifecycle). Challenges which may arise, particularly in the initial stages, may be broadly split into technical and people-based (Tony Evans, 03/01/2011).

Technical issues may provide challenges for interims, especially as they often do not have direct prior experience of working for the industry or organisation (less than half of respondents had experience working for the client before: 47.6%). On a basic level, technical challenges may sometimes simply be down to the objective difficulty of the task as interims are brought in to implement strategies beyond the comfortable capabilities of the client business. They may involve learning about and adapting to certain business practice or protocol within the legal, economic, political, religious and social structures of the culture, industry or individual organisation. For example, Respondent A mentioned having issues understanding sales cycles, Respondent D with different contract negotiations in Russia compared with the UK, and Respondent J with relatively poor ‘health and safety’ protocol.

However, these tasks are sometimes complicated by other factors. For example, one issue that can impact technical aspects that was brought up in the primary research is that clients are not always entirely honest when giving interims the project scope. For example, Respondent F stated that it is usual for clients to not put all issues “*on the table*” in discussion at the entry stage and that on their last assignment IT and telecom capabilities later “*popped up*” as an unforeseen hurdle. This issue

could develop into a highly problematic situation as without a clear and accurate project scope based on the genuine technical situation these managers cannot form a realistic and effective strategy (Wilson, 12/01/2011). An understanding of the culture is again important here as ideas of truth and honesty vary transculturally (McLaren, 1998).

Tony Evans mentioned that the technical challenges he has faced have been straightforward to deal with compared to issues presented by the people he has had to manage. Because technical factors are quantitative, they tend to be “*relatively straightforward to understand and agree on*” (Tony Evans, 03/01/2011). By contrast, there is no concrete way of quantifying culture, or even defining it (Jordan, 2003), but it is necessary to deal with as it underlies the actions of all of the people the interim works with. Interims may face barriers in implementing strategy from people involved (principally employees of the client organisation) due to the nature of the role interims perform, and the technical issues that arise as a result of cultural differences: “*the interaction between the corporate and the national cultures...add[s] an additional dimension*” (Tony Evans, 03/01/2011).

Senior interim managers are often contracted in due to significant problems in an organisation. Because of this, employees can be circumspect or even hostile about the interim’s arrival as an ‘outsider’ is in charge and implementing major changes. Respondent Q highlighted this as a “*usual difficulty that you face on assignment – acceptance by the management team and the department that you are working within*”. Hostility may arise particularly out of concern over job security if the interim decides they are not part of the solution. In order to combat this concern, communication is central. There is a need to “*quickly remove any “foreigner” problems the in country client may have – I am not from head office but I am here to help you and get the job done!*” (Respondent L). It is important to let employees know the interim’s role: “*to help get everyone to work together to a common set of goals and objectives, again in the appropriate time-frame, to achieve the end result required*” (Tony Evans, 03/01/2011). Understanding helps employees to relax and become less resistant and more responsive (Ibid, 03/01/2011).

Due to the time-sensitive nature of the work, it is important for interims to provide and receive good, clear communication and feedback through the correct mediums from the very beginning of assignments. This prevents any poor relations, conflict or interference with the smooth running of the strategy rather than spending time repairing damage done (see figure 5). For example, Tony Evans highlighted the importance of a clear introduction of the interim by the client to the organisation’s employees to ensure that they understand why the interim is there and legitimize what they are

doing⁹. Showing a willingness to listen courteously to the client employees and responding to it can help form good relationships based on mutual respect and trust. Indeed, initially interims should “listen twice as much as [they] talk” (Respondent U). Furthermore, through doing this, interims learn how best to adapt their behaviour and deliver the necessary strategy to suit the culture of the country and business.

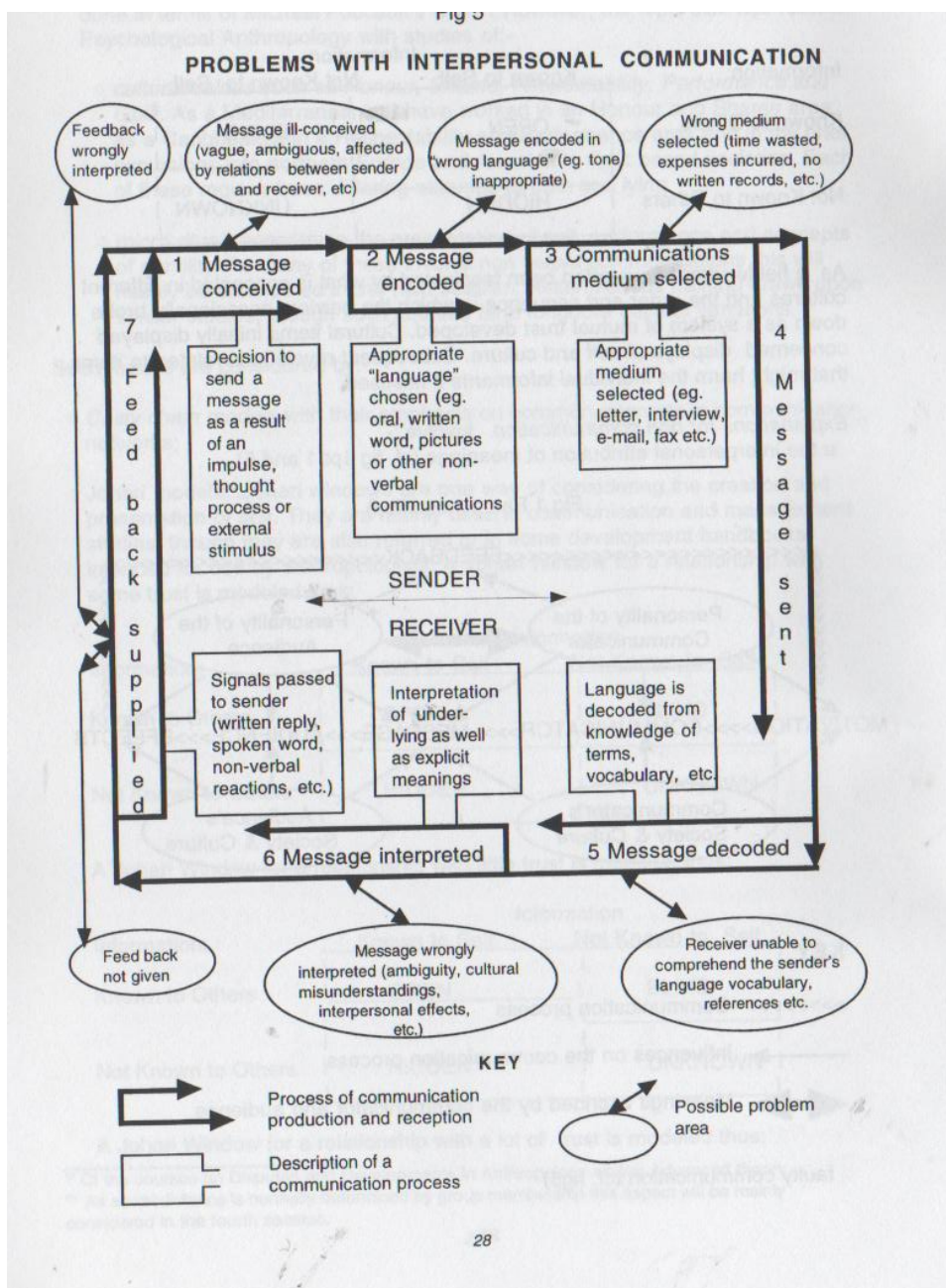


Figure 5 (Gullick, 15/10/2010)

⁹ Respondent P illustrated the importance of a good first introduction to legitimize the interim's role. The organisation failed to do so and they joined them for the first time half way through their regular weekly meeting. Consequently, they faced "cross-examination" as to who they were, why they were there and why head office had employed them over others (Respondent P).

However, while it is important to spend time getting employees ‘on-side’ and making them part of the solution, there is only so much these independent practitioners can do. As figure 6 shows, the work can be fitted to the employees to an extent but ultimately the fundamental objectives still need to be met, sometimes the survival of the organisation depends on it. So, although the interim may tailor the way they are managing people and delivering the strategy to suit the client organisation, the fundamental strategy and objectives remain the same.

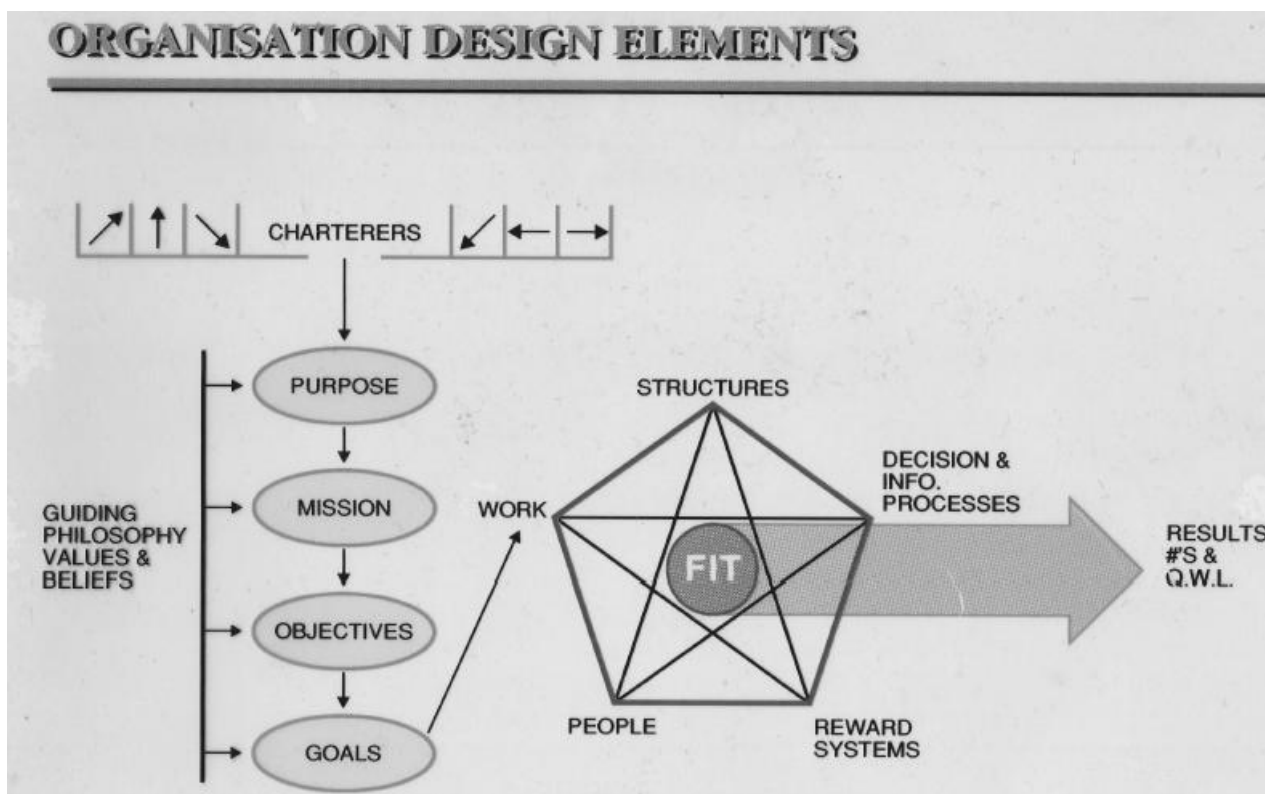


Figure 6 (Diagram provided by Tony Evans, original source unknown)

In tailoring strategies it is not only the national or regional culture that is important: organisations can vary significantly in their internal corporate culture. For example, Mr Evans previously worked for Mars during his corporate career which is guided by five core principles: quality, responsibility, mutuality, efficiency and freedom (see appendix 8 for diagram and more detailed explanation of these). This example offers a good illustration of a large international company (the third largest food manufacturer in the world) with a strong corporate culture requiring consideration when looking at tailoring behaviour and strategy-delivery. More broadly, there is always a need to understand the role culture plays within an organisation, including looking at how corporate and national culture

interact¹⁰, as comprehending – and incorporating - this can help improve the efficiency of project teams and ultimately the organisation overall (Schein, 1997).

¹⁰ This interaction normally results in a “think global, act local” ethos which needs to be understood and worked with.

Cultural and Linguistic Challenges:

Particularly in an assignment's early stages, effective communication to gain employees' (and clients') trust can be challenging as interims have to navigate cultural and linguistic minefields and business cultures which can vary massively internationally (Hofstede, 1980; 1999). Consequently, an organisation's culture (in the context of national culture) needs to be analysed to adapt management style and strategy to the largely culturally determined expectations. National culture also needs broader consideration in relation behaviours and practices of parties external to the organisation (such as suitable marketing and advertising for the region and legal requirements). All potential cultural/linguistic barriers need to be identified so that mechanisms can be put in place to minimize their adverse effects (Howes et al., 2003).

When working in different countries IM styles need to be flexible and sensitive towards business and national cultures as cultural issues will impact upon employees' responses. If interims do not try to understand the culture and incorporate it in their business conduct, they will experience difficulties in implementing change as *"a management style that works at home may fail to produce the desired response abroad, or it may even be counterproductive"* (Sanchez et al., 1995, p264). This returns to the idea of uninformed behaviour creating poor relations through miscommunication or behaving in a manner considered unsuitable, inadequate or outright rude. Embracing cultural differences and using elements of them to form an innovative approach not only helps an organisation to run smoothly, it can actively add value through channelling this diversity for competitive advantage (Rhinesmith, 1993; Howes et al., 2003).

Issues that need to be addressed in terms of national culture, internally and externally to the business, include: awareness of hierarchical structures (culture often dictates how individuals and groups identify themselves and relate to others (Kajewski and Weippert, 2001)); communication methods (including correct language usage and use of intermediaries for communicating); motivating employees and encouraging co-operation.

To take an extreme example of two very different cultures: an English interim working in Japan needs to consider the highly contrasting business cultures: notably the very different communication style (both verbal and non-verbal) (see figure 8); business etiquette and expectations of managers; styles of working and interactions with employees. These disparities often stem from fundamental contrasts in broader cultural ideologies. Japanese business conduct and organisation focuses on

stability, harmony, respect and a family-oriented/communitarian ethos in accordance with cultural values (Morrison and Conaway, 2006). Conversely, English businesses focus on the individual, change and action. In Japan, workers are generally non-confrontational and unemotional, and decisions are made through consensus compared to conflict-based organisations in England. There is also a lot of subtle communication through non-verbal cues in Japan (Ibid, 2006). These factors influence elements of business practice which the interim needs to be aware of, such as meeting and decision-making protocol, mediums by which to communicate, and appropriate reward systems (e.g. rewarding the group rather than individual achievements).

Moreover, it is standard practice to mix business and pleasure. In Japan individuals often work at the same company for life and the organisation is like a family unit (Alston and Takei, 2005). It is acceptable for employees to seek the boss's advice on non-business related matters. This would be seen as unprofessional in England with its stronger cultural 'work-life' distinction. This example is one of many showing that interims need to take care they do not judge behaviour ethnocentrically as being inappropriate or inefficient (Lane et al., 2006), in this case by bringing 'home' problems to work.

The interim also needs to be aware of the loyalty Japanese workers feel towards their group. There is a strong sense of in- and out-groups and outsiders usually have to be accepted into the group before they are permitted to participate in decision making (Morrison and Conaway, 2006). So employees may not respond well to management outsourcing, especially if this new individual is making major changes and may need to make some of the workers redundant.

To summarise, Japan and England have fundamentally varying ways of perceiving society and how people relate (social structure: interactions), dissimilar values and different philosophical outlooks. These cultural elements will vary significantly interculturally and need individual attention. This is difficult to explore beyond stereotypes before entering host countries, which is one of the core reasons interims have to be flexible and adapt behaviour, strategies and business styles quickly. Understanding these unique cultural idiosyncrasies is vital for effective communication and good, trusting relationships: having other people on side and understanding the process is crucial (Tony Evans, 03/01/2011).

Japan	England
Emphasizes 'we' (group)	Emphasizes 'I' (individual)
Formal	Informal
Importance of rank	Emphasizes equality
Group consensus	Individual opinion
Cooperative – compromise, conciliation	Competitive- adversarial, win
Polite	Argumentative
Avoid controversy	Express controversial issues
Unemotional	Emotional
Indirect	Direct
Patience	Impatience
Suspicious of words	Emphasizes words
Tolerates silence	Abhors silence
High context	Low context
Better at listening	Better at speaking
Emphasizes form	Emphasizes context
Qualified statements	Positive, assertive statements
Prefers a set agenda	Prefers free-form discussion
Controlled nonverbal cues	Exaggerated nonverbal cues
Lower decibel level	Higher decibel level
More passive role	More assertive role
Avoids dominating	Likes to dominate
Little eye contact	Relatively high eye contact
Relationship oriented	Task oriented
Willing to learn English	Less willing to learn Japanese
Opens with apology/flattery	Opens with a joke
"yes" means "I hear you"	"yes" means "I agree"
Don't like public praise	Like public praise
Long pauses between speakers	Little or no pause between speakers
Emphasis on business cards	No great emphasis on cards
Slower pace of speech	Faster pace of speech

Figure 8 (Ferraro, 2005, p64)

Wider cultural issues need to be understood so that interims know how to play by the system's rules (or get around them). In the questionnaires there was little correlation between experience of the host country and cultural/linguistic barriers, I would hypothesise that further analysis might show a clear interaction given a third factor: the contrast between the country the interim is most experienced at doing business in and the host culture. In short, minimal experience of a host culture combined with a radically contrasting in-business protocol (stemming from cultural idiosyncrasies) would be much more likely to lead to cultural/linguistic barriers due to the degree of adaptation necessary.

Learning the host language can be very useful for any business person working internationally both for the direct communicative implications and because it offers a deeper comprehension of the culture. Language can represent and embody socio-cultural identities (Joseph, 2004), and determine

and exemplify cognitive perceptions and ways of categorising the world around us (Whorf, 1940). Consequently, it offers insights into dominant cultural behaviours relevant to understanding customs and practice, tailoring management styles and general business conduct. However, given the tight time frame interims have to work within, this is often impractical. Just three interims spoke of knowing or learning the host language. Yet eleven identified it as a barrier to effective communication.

Perhaps because of the short preparation time, culture and linguistic barriers were the two highest scoring areas for being an issue to an interim (see appendix 4, question 17). However, culture shock was scored lower on the same scale, suggesting that the 'self-selecting' hypothesis could be valid. Interims face relatively significant (and largely unavoidable given the time frame) cultural and linguistic barriers but usually do not experience high levels of culture shock due to suitably adaptable and flexible personality types.

Conclusion:

Executive interims face significant challenges in implementing change on international assignments. This is particularly at the hands of cultural differences (both corporate and local) which can act as barriers to the effective implementation of tasks and the assignment overall. In order to combat these challenges, and succeed in the profession, interims need to be equipped with certain personality traits, skills and corporate experience: strong communication skills, cultural sensitivity, flexibility and adaptability, and a wide breadth of experience up to board level which has developed transferable skills with an emphasis on strong leadership.

These characteristics can help interims grasp both technical and non-technical (i.e. people-oriented) aspects of assignments quickly. Corporate and national cultures underlie these aspects and potential barriers stemming from them need to be identified, understood and managed through cultural awareness to minimize their detrimental effects, especially as a result of miscommunication - and its subsequent implications for interpersonal relationships - which may already be under strain due to the nature of IM generating concern. Beyond this, interims need to be open to incorporating these cultures into business strategy and management style - as well as the way in which they present themselves to others - to carry out the assignment successfully and add value to the organisation.

Bibliography:

Albemarle, "Thinking outside the box", Albemarle: a Randstad company
<<http://www.albemarleinterim.com/about.php>> (viewed 04/04/2011).

Alston, Jon P. and Takei, Isao (2005) *"Japanese Business Culture and Practices: A Guide to Twenty-First Century Japanese Business"*, Lincoln: iUniverse.

Arthur, Winfred, and Bennett, Winston (1995) "The International Assignee: The Relative Importance of Factors Perceived to Contribute to Success", *Personnel Psychology*, 48:1, pp.99-114.

Bock, Philip K. (1970) *"Culture Shock: a reader in modern cultural anthropology"*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Executives Online, "Interim Management Trend Update: Research and Analysis on the Netherlands Market for Interim Management and Other Fast-Track Executive Resourcing", Board room metrics
<<http://www.boardroommetrics.com/library/presentations/report-on-interim-management-trends>>
(report published 2009, viewed 28/03/2011).

Ferraro, Gary P. (2005) *"The Cultural Dimensions of International Business"*, Fifth Edition, Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc.

Ferraro, Gary P. (2010) *"The Cultural Dimensions of International Business"*, Sixth Edition, Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc.

Gullick, Charles (15/10/2010) Lecture in Business Anthropology: "Intra & Interpersonal Communication", University of Durham.

Gullick, Charles (19/11/2010) Lecture in Business Anthropology: "Cross Cultural Management & the Foreign Deployment Cycle", University of Durham.

Hickson, David John and Pugh, Derek Salman (2001) *"Management Worldwide: Distinctive Styles amid Globalization"*, Second Edition, London: Penguin.

Hofstede G. (1980) *"Cultural Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values"*, Volume 5: Cross-Cultural Research and Methodology Series, London: SAGE Publications.

Hofstede, G. (1999) *"Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind"*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Howes, Rodney, and Tah, Joseph H. M. (2003) *"Strategic Management Applied to International Construction"*, London: Thomas Telford Publishing.

Institute of Interim Management, "An Introduction to Interim Management", Institute of Interim Management website <<http://www.iim.org.uk/WorkAsAnInterim/index.asp>> (07/02/2011).

Interimjobs.com, "What is an Interim Manager?", interimjobs.com
<<http://www.interimjobs.com/what.php>> (viewed 01/04/2011).

Interim Management Association, "Interim Managers: Will you make a good interim manager?", Interim Management Association <<http://www.interimmanagement.uk.com/pages/good-interim-manager.aspx>> (viewed 01/04/2011).

Jordan, Ann T. (2003) "*Business Anthropology*", Prospect Heights IL: Waveland Publishers.

Joseph, John E. (2004) "*Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious*", Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kajewski, Dr. S. and Weippert, Achim, "Industry Culture: a need for change", eprints <<http://eprints.qut.edu.au/7989/1/7989.pdf>> (2001, viewed 04/04/2011).

Keller, Kevin Lane and Richey, Keith (2006) "The Importance of Corporate Brand Personality Traits to a Successful 21st Century Business", *Journal of Brand Management*, 14, pp.74-81.

Lane, Henry W., DiStefano, Joseph J. and Maznevski, Martha L. (2006) "*International Management Behaviour: Text, Readings and Cases*" Fifth Edition, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Lane, Henry W., Maznevski, Martha L., Mendenhall, Mark E. and Mcnett, Jeanne (2004) "*The Blackwell Handbook of Global Management: A Guide to Managing Complexity*", Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Lewis, Carol, "Management hit squads on mission possible; Be your own boss", *The Times*, (11/12/2010).

Linkedin, Linkedin networking website, <<http://www.linkedin.com/>> (viewed repeatedly throughout carrying out primary research).

Mars, "Company Overview", Mars <<http://www.mars.com/global/news-and-media/company-overview.aspx>> (02/03/2011).

Mars, Incorporated, "The Five Principles: Quality, Responsibility, Mutuality, Efficiency, Freedom", Mars <http://www.mars.com/global/assets/documents/mars_the_five_principles_of_mars.pdf> (2003).

McLaren, Margaret C. (1998) "*Interpreting Cultural Difference: the Challenge of Intercultural Communication*", Dereham: Peter Francis Publishers.

Morrison, Terri, and Conaway, Wayne A. (2006) "*Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: The Bestselling Guide to Doing Business in More Than 60 Countries*", 2nd Edition, Avon, MA: Adams Media.

Myers, Isabel Briggs (1980) "*Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type*", CA: Davies-Black Publishing.

Oberg, Kalvero (1960) "Culture Shock: Adjustments to new cultural environments", *Practical Anthropology*, 7, pp.177-182.

Rhinesmith, Stephen (1993) "*A Manager's Guide to Globalization – six keys to success in a changing world*", Homewood, IL: Business One Irwin.

Sanchez, Juan I., Spector, Paul E. and Cooper, Cary L. (1995) "Adapting to Boundaryless World: A Developmental Expatriate Model", in *International Management Behavior: Text, Readings and Cases*, 5th Edition, edited by Henry W. Lane, Martha L. Maznevski, and Joseph J. Distefano, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), pp.264-278.

Santagate, Dr. Franklin, "Today's corporate superheroes: interim executives", Central Valley Business Journal <<http://www.cvbizjournal.com/general/local-news/todays-corporate-superheroes-interim-executives.html>> (31/03/2011).

Schein, Edgar H. (1997) "*Organizational Culture and Leadership*", San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Schein, Edgar H. (1999) "*The Corporate Culture Survival Guide*", San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Uwaje, Ashim C., "Culture shock, Re-Integration and Re-Entry culture shock – Managing Cultural Differences", Munich Business School <[http://www.munich-business-school.de/intercultural/index.php/Culture_shock%2C Re-Integration and Re-Entry culture shock - Managing Cultural Differences](http://www.munich-business-school.de/intercultural/index.php/Culture_shock%2C_Re-Integration_and_Re-Entry_culture_shock_-_Managing_Cultural_Differences)> (2009).

Veredus, "Interim Management", Veredus <http://www.veredus.co.uk/practices/interim_management> (viewed 04/04/2011).

Vousden, Paul L. (2002) "Interim Management: now a permanent feature of the workplace", *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 34:3, pp.120-122.

Whorf, Benjamin Lee (1956) "*Language, Thought, and Reality: selected writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*", edited by John B. Carroll, Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.
Whorf, Benjamin Lee (1940) "Science and Linguistics", *Technology Review*, 42:6, pp. 229-31, 247-8.

Wilson, Paul, "Interim Management Views", Aster Interim Solutions <<http://www.aster-interim.co.uk/blog/>> (12/01/2011).

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Typed version of newspaper article.

Management hit squads on mission possible; Be your own boss

Carol Lewis

They are the suited crusaders who parachute into troubled companies and execute difficult missions — they are professional interim managers.

Take note of the word "professional", because they are eager to emphasise that they are not temporary or part-time. So much so that even the companies placing them in vacancies are called "providers" and never, ever, agencies, which "smacks of temps", according to Tony Evans, chairman of the Interim Management Association and head of the commercial division of Odgers Interims.

"The last thing we want is someone who thinks they are going to pick up a pocket-money job while they search for another position," he says.

However, the profession started life very much as temporary help. Mr Evans says: "Historically, they would talk about filling vacancies when people were ill, away or on maternity leave, but that's not the case now."

Interim managers have usually reached the level of director or divisional head. "They've built up some scar tissue, some gravitas and some experience, which makes them suitable to be parachuted into circumstances where they will probably be slightly overqualified, but they have the answer the business needs," Mr Evans says.

They will be hired on contracts of three to 12 months, typically to manage mergers and acquisitions or turnarounds, or to add missing expertise, such as country or sector knowledge.

Very few ever return to full-time work. Mr Evans says that only 2 per cent to 3 per cent go back to permanent full-time work. "They tend to thrive on sequential challenges," he says.

It is difficult to find exact figures for how many professional interim managers there are in the UK but it is thought that as many as 8,000 are registered with providers. There may be others, of course, who source their work through personal contacts.

Originally, interim managers were the sole preserve of the private sector, but over the past five years their use in the public sector has grown. Interim chief executives and directors can now be found everywhere from the NHS to oil refineries.

The recession in the private sector did affect demand but it is now bouncing back with financial services leading the way. The public sector, on the other hand, is only just beginning to see a dip.

Rates are down across the board but most interim managers can still expect to be paid between £750 and £1,000 a day. Good managers can command fees of £1,500 or more.

Doug Baird, chief executive of Interim Partners, which places interim managers with private sector corporations, says that there has been consistent demand throughout the recession for managers with experience of managing change. "It's been a tougher market over the last year or so but it is not totally doom and gloom. The market has held firm this year and it is improving."

He adds: "Financial services are coming back quite aggressively and there has been demand for senior managers — whether that is to sort out some of the mess from the credit crunch, integration of banks, or new start-ups."

Looking to the future, Mr Baird is hopeful for growth in other sectors. "There haven't been the business failures we'd expected and as a consequence there haven't been the interim managers involved in turn-around that we had thought. But it might be a hotspot next year," he says.

Raj Tulsiani, chief executive of Green Park, an interim provider, agrees that financial services is a busy sector where managers with risk and compliance or insurance regulation experience are keenly sought after.

The picture is mixed in the public sector, though, and Mr Tulsiani declares that interim work in central government is dead. "Central government usage has dramatically fallen since a month and a half before the Comprehensive Spending Review," he says, "and there is a lack of certainty about when that market will return."

However, local government and healthcare are quite busy, he says. Local authorities need people who can save money to invest in frontline services. Managers are also needed to work on merging some functions between local government and health authorities and preparing primary care trusts for GP commissioning.

The main thing that interims have to bear in mind in any sector, according to Mr Tulsiani, is honesty about the skills that differentiate them from the rest of the market — an ability to don a cape and put their underpants over their suit notwithstanding.

How to do it

Experience, rather than qualifications, counts. Most interim managers have management experience at board or divisional level. Some have specialist technical skills or knowledge. The most sought after have led an organisation or a division through change

Most interim managers set up as limited companies and register for VAT. To do this you need to register your company at Companies House. Find out how at businesslink.gov.uk. It is also advisable to get professional indemnity insurance

Register with providers. Interim Management Association members would probably be a good place to start. A list of recommended providers can be found at interimmanagement.uk.com

Networking is important for finding work. There are groups for interims, such as interim-network.co.uk

Interims tend to be hired on fixed contracts for up to a year but are paid by the day. The average day rate is £750 to £1,000. Some negotiate expenses and bonuses

Perform very well, very quickly; Case study

The life of an interim manager is exciting but it can wreak havoc with your personal life, according to Iwan Williams (Carol Lewis writes).

Mr Williams, above, 53, has been an interim manager for three years. Although he loves the "variety, challenge and immediacy of it all", he admits that "you have to arrange your personal life around these periods of intense activity".

"If you make a commitment to do the job, you have to do it to the best of your ability. You don't walk away halfway through because you've found something better or you want to go on holiday," he says.

You need to be prepared to work away from home and in troubled circumstances: "You don't get hired into roles where everything is hunky-dory. You are expected to go in and perform very well, quickly."

The other difficulty he points to is dealing with the fallow periods between contracts.

(Lewis, Carol, "Management hit squads on mission possible; Be your own boss", *The Times*, (11/12/2010)).

Appendix 2: Interview question agenda.

Interview agenda as presented to Mr Evans via email three days prior to the interview (conducted 03/01/2011):

Interview with Tony Evans, immediate past chairman and current director of the Institute of Interim Management

1. What do you see as being the role of a senior interim?
2. What characteristics do you think a successful senior interim manager needs to possess?
3. What are the core issues you deal with when starting a new assignment?
4. Are there any factors that can get in the way of you implementing change in a client organisation?
5. To what extent can the culture of the organisation itself or the country you are working in impact successful communication?
6. To what extent, if any, does culture shock cause problems for interims, and how do they cope with it?

Working definition of culture shock: the psychological and social disorientation experienced by people who find themselves in new, markedly different cultures. Symptoms may include, but are not limited to, home sickness, irritability, withdrawal from and hostility towards host nations and loss of ability to work effectively (Ferraro, 2010).

Appendix 3: Transcript for the interview with Tony Evans: immediate past Chairman and current Director of the Institute of Interim Management (conducted 03/01/2011).

Mr Evans has been a senior interim manager working at board level since 1994, and prior to this had worked (also at board level) for a number of large international firms since the 1970s when his corporate career began.

Before the official interview commenced we discussed ethical issues relating to the research. Mr Evans said that he had no problem with his name and comments being directly used.

The interview was semi-structured and the broad agenda was sent and agreed to by Mr Evans three days prior to the interview taking place (see appendix 2).

Another issue encountered was that I spoke informally with Mr Evans prior to the recorded interview where some of the matters we cover here were discussed. Because of this, one of my comments: *“So is what you’re saying, that to be a successful interim manager you have to be the kind of person that either doesn’t suffer from culture shock very severely or otherwise has very good coping mechanisms in place – **otherwise to be an international interim Manager you would struggle**”* (p7 of this transcript) while implied, seems to take a jump from what Mr Evans has said. This is due to a previous comment that if an individual suffered from culture shock badly they would have likely failed early in their career due to the need to work effectively from the word go and respond to time pressures which, if not met, can cause serious problems for the business, even killing it, as the interim is generally contracted in very late in the day. He covers this to some extent in his response to this comment where he states that interim work is very *“self-selecting”* (p7).

Interview transcript:

Interview with Tony Evans: immediate past Chairman and current Director of the Institute of Interim Management.

What do you see as being the role of a senior interim?

The role of a senior interim manager will vary according to the client’s requirement, but essentially the interim is there to fulfil an obligation to the client based on commercial law, so it’s a contract for service not of service, and it’s usually there to implement some form of change which the client is unable, for whatever reason, to do for themselves.

Can the role that an individual interim takes on vary from assignment to assignment, or do they tend to specialise on one area?

Most interims undertake similar types of role from assignment to assignment. The sort of role that I would do, for example, is Operating Managing Director or Chief Executive Officer. What does change is either the type of organisation which you are working within or the industry which that particular organisation is a part of. Another point that I think it’s useful for us to take into account at this stage is that the role of an interim manager involves taking line authority for the decisions that will need to be taken during the extent of the assignment. This is different to the work of a Consultant or a Contractor, where they are there to research or to recommend or to implement according to the wishes of a manager within the organisation. The interims, themselves, actually have that power of authority. In my terms it means I have the power of hiring and firing; that’s what makes the difference.

What characteristics do you think a successful interim needs to have if they are working on an international basis?

A successful interim requires a number of characteristics which apply whether on an international assignment or not. These include being able to work very flexibly and being able to adapt to the operation and to the mode of operation of the client organisation. But on top of that, if one is working internationally, you have to be able to deliver the assignment effectively within a different national culture. The interaction between the corporate and the national cultures can add an additional dimension. In order to be a successful interim manager it requires the individual, almost certainly, to have had a fairly extensive corporate career prior to setting up as an interim. This means that the individual will have a very broad range of both technical expertise to deal with the kinds of issues that could crop up in the sort of role they are going to undertake, and also to have that breadth of experience which comes from working across a range of businesses or industries and perhaps on an international basis bearing in mind the nature of the work. Perhaps one of the things we can do to summarize these comments is to say that, in aggregate, a successful interim needs to show a high level of emotional intelligence, and a very strong can-do attitude to focus on dealing with management objectives in a tight time-frame for the particular piece of work.

So, going back to what you were saying about the necessity to have a wide range of experience of the corporate world before becoming an interim manager, what kind of experience did you personally have (before going into that line of work)?

Well, in my corporate career I worked for a number of large international organisations, going back actually to the 1970s. So, I worked with ICI, the Courtaulds group, the Mars group of companies, Digital Equipment Corporation, and a FTSE 350 business called McKechnie PLC. These ranged from chemicals to textiles to food, fast moving consumer goods, the I.T. industry, and plastics conversion to service a whole raft of different industries.

Have you found that your interim roles have been in relation to these industries as well or are they based more on the skills set that you have and applying that to a new industry?

Some of the work that I do is linked to those industries on occasion, but it is not exclusively tied to them. A lot of what I do, because it's the application of skill and experience, can be done in a whole range of different industries and circumstances. The transferable skill is the important thing.

Thank you. If we could move on to when you start a new assignment – what are the core issues that you have to deal with at first?

Well, when you first start an assignment, assuming we're through the meeting stage, and we're starting the work, I see things as splitting roughly into two. The technical aspects of the work: this includes understanding the quantitative elements of the organisation; the balance sheet and understanding the detail of a cash flow for example. Then getting into the factors that go towards making up the profit and loss account. The technical aspects of the work are usually quantitative and relatively straightforward to understand and agree on. The second element of the work becomes actually the more complex to deliver going forward. This is to understand and work with the people of the organisation that you have just joined. Given the way that the work needs to be done, very early in the time on assignment, one needs to spend as much time as possible with each individual in at least the senior management team and, ideally, one below that if at all possible. This is to understand who's part of the problem, who's going to be part of the solution, and what to do in the event that somebody who is currently part of the problem, in the time-frame you've got (and that's actually an important element) - are they going to make it to being part of the solution or not: and if not, how you deal with that. Without dealing with these issues, you're going to end up with difficulties in achieving the overall objectives of the assignment, and the client is not going to get the successful piece of work they want.

In your experience, have you ever found that any employees that already work for the organisation have been quite awkward to deal with? For example, have you ever experienced any hostility from them or other behaviour that might've got in the way?

It can happen that when you first start in an organisation the people are circumspect about your arrival. Generally speaking, when I arrive it's because there is significant problem in or with the organisation. People usually understand there is a problem, but may be reluctant to accept either external help and support or be very worried by the fact that they may have their role terminated in the business because of me coming in and deciding they're not going to be part of the solution. That's a naturally worrying situation for people. So these (issues) all need to be sorted out and overcome. Part of the way of doing this is to make sure people understand why you're there. It's generally not to do their job for them, but to help get everyone to work together to a common set of goals and objectives to achieve the end result required in the appropriate time-frame. And, as all that becomes clearer to everybody, and it needs to be made clear quickly, then I find that people tend to relax more and start to recognise that they have a role to play going forward.

And are there any other factors that can get in the way of you implementing strategies within the international organisation?

Yes. There are many things that can get in the way. The first thing, of course, is how the client organisation introduces me, the interim to the assignment within the organisation. That initial positioning of the work to be done is crucial. If that's not done well it can cause problems which, in my experience, can result in a bit of delay getting everybody to a point where they understand and appreciate what's going on. I have to say that it's never been a factor which has killed a project: it's just something that can mess things up early on. Beyond that, there are things that can get in the way from all sides really. These can be the law of the country that you're in: it may be significantly different to the law within the United Kingdom, for example. There may be environmental issues needing to be considered. One's own legal standing within the country and company is potentially relevant. You've also then got the local culture and the company's culture as to how things get done. That's not always the same in every country, and where there are significant differences you need to be empathetic for those, but they mustn't get in the way if you're going to achieve things often in a very tight time-frame. So, finding a way around those things; working with situations as much as possible, is important. Going a little further: another aspect that's important to recognise is that within both the company and national context, local country activities can be left to their own devices for quite a long period of time, and then suddenly to have someone like me appear, often provided where my client is the central resource situated in another country, can be difficult for the local management team to accept because they have just been left to their own devices for some time. This adds to the need to make sure that the way you work with people, how you communicate with them and how you get the messages through, not just to the immediate management team but throughout the business, becomes an essential element of getting the job done effectively. It keeps everything on the straight and narrow.

So, do you find when you're implementing new strategy, that you tend to adapt it to suit the culture you're in: the corporate culture and that of the country, or do you try and implement a certain strategy and then adapt the people to that?

That's a good question. The strategy and its implementation is what's required in order to have, in a turnaround for example, the business turned around. If we don't achieve that there's no business. What we're trying to do then is say 'okay, this is the work we have to do, these are the end results we require. How do we work with what we have to get those results achieved? So, we're not allowing the local situation to bend the strategy, we will allow it to impact on how we deliver it. However we mustn't allow it to increase the time-frame because, particularly in circumstances such as

turnaround, this can be all important. If you don't adhere to the time-frame, it will almost inevitably mean you run out of money and the business will die.

What kind of time-frame are you normally working with?

Again, the time-frame depends very much on the circumstances that the interim finds when they go in to the company. In circumstances like that it is often very late in the day. So I've worked in organisations to turn them round, when they've had virtually no money left at all, and nothing left with their banking covenants and so on - in fact, potentially in breach of them on occasion when I arrive- that makes life difficult. So there then has to be an external credibility generating session with the banks for example, in order to make sure we have enough time to do what we need to do. But it's usually being done then on a very tight time-frame of no more than probably two or three weeks to get certain initial things done – if I can't pay the pay-roll at the end of the month, we have a problem. So at the start, when talking to, for example, the Finance Director as I start to understand the business, one of the early questions I'll ask is 'can we pay the pay-roll? – can we pay it at the end of the month, or the end of the week?' depending on the situation. If the answer to that question is 'yes we can', then we can take a particular view. If the answer to that question is 'no', then we'll have to do things pretty rapidly, at least to get to a holding point. So, the circumstances that we find at the point of entry is actually all important in determining how you can go about what you need to do.

Okay. So you have mentioned that communication is really crucial in these situations. Have you ever had any problems with linguistic barriers, and had to use, say, a translator?

In my experience, working internationally, I benefit from the situation of English being the international business language by-and-large. So, I can work in a number of countries where the expectation will be that senior management, at least, will speak English, so I don't have to do things like learn Hungarian or Romanian or Czech or Polish or Hebrew or whatever. It doesn't happen quite like that. In such countries, usually speaking English is sufficiently good in the business to do all that you need to do, and I don't have to become a linguistic expert. What is interesting is that you tend to end up looking carefully at body language a lot more where a conversation is going on in the mother tongue, and you also tend to listen a lot more to the music in what is being said, which perhaps in your mother tongue you don't take as much care over. When dealing with authorities, however, in foreign countries where you can't speak the local language very fluently, then it's a requirement really to take a translator with you. So if I'm dealing with Government Ministries- for example, in the sugar industry in the past where I've worked- I've had to go and deal with the Ministry of Agriculture. On occasion, in other industries I've gone to meet Trade and Industry Ministers, that kind of thing. It's much more important to ensure that the formality of the occasion is dealt with correctly, protocol is observed, and it's very important to make sure what you are saying and what you are hearing is dealt with carefully through formal translators. One of the things I ought to mention when dealing with translators, is that in situations when I'm going to see ministers, it can be because the organisation that I'm working with is having difficulty of some description, and may or may not require the understanding and/or action of a positive nature from that particular minister. One of the things that having the translator has, as a benefit, is that when being asked a question you have time - you can pause, you listen, you can consider before replying, where when speaking in the same mother tongue together, there's often much more pressure to respond quickly and immediately, which may result in a significantly poorer response. So the considered view is, in my experience, very helpful.

Have you come across any disadvantages of using a translator, such as miscommunication or anything like that?

One is reliant upon the translator, and you obviously have to trust the translator to be interpreting what you say correctly. Going back to my own experience, I would say that it's not a problem, because there's still always the opportunity, as in any discussion or meeting, to clarify or check understanding of the other person, and in circumstances like that I think it's also quite acceptable for either party to clarify to make sure they've truly understood what it is that you say.

Okay. You mentioned body language before and how you start to pick up more when people are speaking in their mother tongues: you start to pick up the body language more when you don't understand it. Have any other cultural elements got in the way of you implementing any of your strategies?

I don't think cultural barriers get in the way of implementing the strategy. I think once people of any culture understand the benefit of doing what needs to be done they are inclined to get on and do it, particularly if their own livelihoods are at risk. Where there is a less dramatic situation, where the change programme might be the introduction of a new process or something like that and it's not necessarily fatal to the business as a whole; then yes you have to continue to work, and it's the same (in my experience) in any country. It's just how you get people there. So some countries tend to like to be quite results oriented, objectively led, don't particularly feel the need to understand all the detailed underlying strategy and so forth. They're just happy to get on and do it. Other cultures require longer discussion. There tends to be a lot more argument about how things might be best achieved, but once everyone's had the opportunity to have their say, and that's all drawn together and said 'okay taking on board all this, this is what we're actually going to do, and this is how we're going to do it', people are comfortable. Those generalities (and they are generalities I accept that) you could still find within the UK if you looked. You'll find some organisations tend to be much more inclusive and seeking of consensus before they move on, and other organisations are quite autocratic and, therefore, the chain of command tends to be 'we're going to do this, we're going to do it now, just get on and do it', and everyone does it because if you're not prepared to acquiesce to that approach, you will have left the company and gone to work somewhere else.

Perhaps it will be useful if I just mention an organisational change model which I find quite helpful in circumstances, and it applies equally to the international environment. If you picture yourself looking down on a lily pond, you see on the surface of the water very clearly the large lily leaves, and they can move around relative to one another. Just underneath that, leading from each of those big leaves, you can see the stems, and they disappear down in to the murk, and gradually they join together: eventually into one stem which disappears in to the mud at the bottom of the pond, where all the root system is, which you can't see. If we compare that with the way people are, you could see that the roots represent the values or beliefs that the people have; they tend to be buried, they're relatively few in number, and nobody is likely to change their values or beliefs. Then secondly, the stems, moving up towards the surface, are the attitudes towards things that people display, or start to display, as a result of the values and belief systems that they hold dear. Then, the lily pond leaves themselves (the things that you can see), are actually the behaviours of those individuals, and the truth is, in any organisational change, all you're trying to do really is move those lily leaves around relative to one another: then have them fix in the new condition relative to each other, to maintain the change you are trying to implement. If you can't fix those leaves in to the new pattern so that when you take the pressure of the change process away, they will slide back again. The change is not permanent and people will revert back to the old way of doing things. So I use this model as quite a useful, simple and graphic representation of what you're trying to do. Getting people to permanently change the 'way they do things around here' is quite a difficult thing. It is good to keep in mind the comment from Einstein who said 'it is lunacy to assume that doing the same things is going to result in a changed outcome'.

So if we could move on to the interims as individuals now: to what extent have you found...(in your experience and your experience of other interims)...that culture shock has caused problems? And, if it has, how have they coped with it?

Okay. Assuming that in terms of the idea of culture shock we are talking about things where the individual is being adversely affected by the circumstances they are having to work in, in some way, then if the assignment is in a country where it's possible to work Monday to Friday and come home at the weekend then it's not really a problem. Frankly, it's no different to the way many people work within the UK: you don't have time to be homesick; the work that you're doing is actually all consuming while you're there; there are actually advantages from being away from home and family while you're having to concentrate like that because you don't have all the pressures of the normal family existence going on around you. You're just too far away for it to be relevant. Where you've got individuals who are having to be further away internationally, where coming home for the weekend is just not a practical proposition, then it's quite reasonable to recognise that you've got the potential for home sickness, that you've got the issues of all the pressures of stressful work potentially building up and no place of safety really to get away from that. Or there's the potential for it – you might be there for a month or two before having time to come on back home and to recharge the batteries, as it were. So, the way that I've found of dealing with that most appropriately, is to ensure that you build a kind of social infrastructure that works for you as an individual. You deliberately create your own leisure time, leisure activity, a pattern of work which is going to allow you to have some personal stability at a time when the actual working environment, of course, is likely to be exactly the opposite of that. There's going to be a lot going on, and if you're going to do things successfully, and you're going to have real credibility within the organisation, you are the person who is going to have to be cool, calm and collected; taking a lot of difficult situations, awkward people and emotional irritation within the organisation. You're going to have to deal with all of that, help people settle down again, straighten them up and set them off doing the right things. That goes on day-in/day-out, which is what I was saying earlier: the level of emotional intelligence required to do this kind of work is high.

So is what you're saying that to be a successful interim Manager you have to be the kind of person that either doesn't suffer from culture shock very severely or otherwise has very good coping mechanisms in place – otherwise to be an international interim manager you would struggle?

The point you're making I think is quite valid. Being a professional interim is actually very much self-selecting, particularly in the current circumstances where in the UK we've effectively got a recession going on at the moment. A lot of people (senior people) leaving corporate life will consider going in to interim work, but it's a different balance of skills necessary in order to take on the kind of work that we do, and it's not everybody's cup of tea. So yes, I would encourage folk to go and give it a try, but only if you're confident that you can deal with all these changing circumstances, both personally and for the organisation that you're working with, and that it's going to be fine for you to do that. The flexibility and adaptability required to work in those different circumstances, and to apply the knowledge and experience you have, has to be quite high. There are no real skills that an interim has that their corporate counterparts (permanent employees) wouldn't have; it's just in different balance and different measure.

If you don't mind me asking (this is quite a personal question), how have you, in the past, gone about getting that social stability that you were talking about before?

From a personal point of view, one of the things I find important is to stay physically quite fit. I am a firm believer in sharp mind and sharp body going well together, so I like to make sure I have the time and the opportunity to play sport or get in the gym: that kind of thing. Historically I've done quite a lot of swimming - having a pool nearby is useful as well. Beyond that, taking advantage, where you can, of being in a country that perhaps you haven't been in before, is to go and see things

in the country. If you are able to link with local people (who may or may not be in the business or directly working with you so that you can build a social relationship that isn't necessarily going to put you in a difficult position subsequently from a commercial point of view) so much the better. And, of course, interim work is not always done as just one interim going in to an organisation. On occasions in the past I have been part of a small team that's gone in, and of course that brings with it its own social support network. It is helpful to make sure you can work for extended periods with other interims that are going out in the team, before you go, otherwise it could be a real problem if you get on each other nerves- you need to find out before you go on assignments. Personally I've done a number of assignments where I've worked with folk and this has worked extremely well.

Okay. Going back to what you were saying about playing sport: do you do that to maintain the routine you've had at home, or from a socialising point of view (so that you meet others who play the sports) or just a question of healthy body healthy mind...?

Well, certainly the latter...that's for me the core thing. After that, if you get the social interaction being built up through meeting other people then that's fine. One thing that a professional interim needs to be able to do is to be comfortable with themselves...in their own company...because you can't guarantee a large friendship group, and if you're doing a lot of difficult work which may involve the removal of people from the business then while that's all going on it can be rather difficult to have social time with people that are going to be potentially suffering at your hand, as it were, in the not too distant future.

Right. Well thank you very much for taking the time out of your day to do the interview. *It's a pleasure, and I wish you well with the assignment.*

Appendix 4: Summary of questionnaire responses.

The interview with Tony Evans helped inform what questions I should ask interims. The questionnaire is made up of 20 questions which focus principally on interims own experiences and challenges they have faced, but also, to a lesser degree, on their broader view of the profession.

I accessed interims through IM groups on LinkedIn with the help of Ad van der Rest – the moderator for the Institute of Interim Management group - who acted as a gatekeeper. I contacted Mr van der Rest who subsequently supported the project by allowing me to publish the questionnaire and information about it on the group's 'wall', 'liking' it, and putting the link to the questionnaire in the monthly newsletter for the Institute. As the moderator for the Institute of Interim Management LinkedIn group, and therefore an influential member of the online interim network, he acknowledged the legitimacy of the research through these actions which seemed to help persuade interims to participate. I received a few replies after first publishing the article but these were coming in slowly. Shortly after Ad 'liked' the post I received a rush of replies which then slowed again. I received a final burst of replies which got me to a reasonable sample size to gauge aggregate data from when Mr van der Rest published the link to the questionnaire in the Institute of Interim Management newsletter. Ad also referred me to several other LinkedIn groups which I subsequently joined and published the questionnaire on their 'walls' as well.

Alongside the link I posted the following information on these LinkedIn pages:

Dear all,

My name is Judith and I am a joint honours anthropology and sociology student at Durham University. For one of my final year anthropology modules I have chosen to do a project on international senior interim management entitled 'Senior Interim Management: the challenges of implementing change on international assignments'.

Having spoken with Ad, the Group moderator, it is clear that there are many members here who have a rich set of experiences that would make this work much more valid and current. I would be very grateful if as many of you as possible who have carried out international interim work could take the time to answer the questionnaire which the link below will take you to.

Names of participants will be kept anonymous and responses will be generally aggregated to obtain trend data, etc. The final copy of this project will be read by the module lecturer, and examiners and modulators within Durham University only.

In order to allow a reasonable amount of time for analysis, could you please let me have your response by Monday 21st February.

Overall, the questionnaire should take approximately 15-20minutes.

Thank you in anticipation.

Based on the number of requests I received from interims who participated in the survey, and otherwise, to view the results of my research, and the lack of information readily available on the internet, further anthropological research in to IM, with a larger sample size, is necessary.

Furthermore, this study was limited by respondents having to be able to speak English. While some participants had learnt English as a second language, they were predominantly L1 English speakers. Cross-cultural analyses of interim work using similar questions could help verify to what extent these results reflect the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of those questioned, or whether there is consensus internationally.

1. What is your most recent successful* international interim role? (*successful here refers to meeting the aims set out between you and the client)
Response Count : 22
Answered Question: 22
Skipped Question: 0

2. How did you prepare yourself for this role?
Response Count : 21
Answered Question: 21
Skipped Question: 1

3. Did you have any experience of the assignment's host country before this assignment?
Response Count : 21
Skipped Question: 1
Yes: 61.9% - 13
No: 38.1% - 8

4. If yes, what kind of experience did you have of it? (For example, worked, lived or visited the country for a certain amount of time)
Response Count : 14
Answered Question: 14
Skipped Question: 8

5. What issues, if any, did you face due to the international nature of the assignment?
Response Count : 21
Answered Question: 21
Skipped Question: 1

6. How did you deal with these issues?
Response Count : 21
Answered Question: 21
Skipped Question: 1

7. Did you have any previous experience working for the client organisation prior to that assignment?
Response Count : 21
Skipped Question: 1
Yes: 47.6% - 10
No: 52.4% - 11

8. If yes, what experience did you have of working for them? (For example, a previous role with the same organisation in a different country)
Response Count : 12
Answered Question: 12
Skipped Question: 10

9. What issues, if any, did you encounter when initially starting work with the client organisation?
Response Count : 20
Answered Question: 20
Skipped Question: 2

10. How did you deal with these issues?
Response Count : 19
Answered Question: 19
Skipped Question: 3

11. Did you have any previous experience of working in the principal industry that the assignment was concerned with?
Response Count : 21
Skipped Question: 1
Yes: 57.1% - 12
No: 42.9% - 9

12. If yes, what experience did you have of the industry? (For example, previous employment in the field)
Response Count : 14
Answered Question: 14
Skipped Question: 8

13. What issues, if any, did you initially encounter when entering the industry for the first time?
Response Count : 17
Answered Question: 17
Skipped Question: 5

14. How did you deal with these issues?
Response Count : 14
Answered Question: 14
Skipped Question: 8

15. Are there any issues not previously mentioned that you faced on your most recent assignment?
Response Count : 16
Answered Question: 16
Skipped Question: 6

16. How did you deal with these issues?
Response Count : 13
Answered Question: 13
Skipped Question: 9

17. More generally throughout your interim career, on a scale of one to nine (with one being not at all and nine being very serious), to what extent do you feel the following factors have been an issue on international assignment?										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Response Count
Cultural barriers	0.0% (0)	23.8% (5)	14.3% (3)	4.8% (1)	9.5% (2)	23.8% (5)	9.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	14.3% (3)	21
Linguistic barriers	0.0% (0)	14.3% (3)	14.3% (3)	19.0% (4)	23.8% (5)	14.3% (3)	9.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	4.8% (1)	21
Hostility from employees from the client organisation	19.0% (4)	23.8% (5)	9.5% (2)	9.5% (2)	4.8% (1)	14.3% (3)	9.5% (2)	9.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	21
Culture shock (in relation to the particular business)	9.5% (2)	28.6% (6)	23.8% (0)	14.3% (3)	9.5% (2)	4.8% (1)	4.8% (1)	0.0% (0)	4.8% (1)	21
Culture shock (in relation to the country)	9.5% (2)	42.9% (9)	9.5% (2)	4.8% (1)	19.0% (4)	4.8% (1)	4.8% (1)	0.0% (0)	4.8% (1)	21
Response Count : 21										
Answered Question: 21										
Skipped Question: 1										

18. Have you experienced any other significant problems in trying to carry out your role?
Response Count : 19
Answered Question: 19
Skipped Question: 3

19. Which qualities do you think are most important for an international senior interim manager to display?
Response Count : 21
Answered Question: 21
Skipped Question: 1

20. If there are any other comments you would like to make please do so in the space below:
Response Count : 11
Answered Question: 11
Skipped Question: 11

Appendix 5: Full questionnaire responses.

Please note: all individual responses have been removed from the paper as a condition of being made available to the IIM Library.

Appendix 6: Contemporary list of the roles interims are used for.

The Institute of Interim Management lists that interims are now used as follows:

- *“Managing the organisation through a major change – for example, a merger, restructuring or company disposal*
- *Managing functions to fill a short term skills gap*
- *Changing business culture*
- *Business development*
- *Leading projects*
- *Implementing cost and staff reductions*
- *Turning around businesses and organisations in crisis”*

(Institute of Interim Management, 07/02/2011).

Appendix 7: IM assignment lifecycle.

Entry: initial meetings between prospective client and interim take place that cover the client’s requirements and boundaries. Through these meetings the client decides whether to provisionally engage the interim.

Diagnosis: the interim thoroughly explores the situation and forms approaches. Different issues may be realised at this point, beyond those initially discussed. This stage typically lasts several days and in some cases runs alongside dealing with immediate issues within the organisation.

Proposal: the interim presents a set of objectives and plan of how to reach them. This proposal may offer a different perspective than the client’s understanding of the situation, as the interim is responsible for proposing the most effective solution and not necessarily the one requested by the client during the entry stage.

Implementation: the interim takes responsibility for managing the proposed plan of action and gives progress reports to the client. The interim may get actively involved with the teams depending on the assignment but they still remain an independent practitioner throughout and have full responsibility and accountability.

Exit: the client is satisfied that objectives have been met. There may be some *“knowledge handover and training, determining and sourcing ‘business as usual’ successors, and ‘sharing lessons learnt’ in the process”* (Institute of Interim Management, 07/02/2011). Once these tasks, if necessary, have been carried out to the point where the permanent team can continue developing the business, the interim leaves the organisation. Sometimes they continue to engage with the client on an ad hoc basis through consultancy but normally it signals the end of the interim/client relationship and the manager moves on to the next assignment.

(Institute of Interim Management, 07/02/2011).

Appendix 8: Mars core corporate principles.



(Mars Incorporated, 2003).

“Quality: The consumer is our boss, quality is our work and value for money is our goal. Responsibility: As individuals, we demand total responsibility from ourselves; as Associates, we support the responsibilities of others. Mutuality: A mutual benefit is a shared benefit; a shared benefit will endure. Efficiency: We use resources to the full, waste nothing and do only what we can do best. Freedom: We need freedom to shape our future; we need profit to remain free” (Mars, 02/03/2011).

“We at Mars share special values about our company and the way it should be run. These values – our Five Principles – set us apart from others, requiring that we think and act differently towards our associates, our brands and our business. These principles have always been demanding and are an essential part of our heritage. We believe they are the real reason for our success; they keep us true to ourselves at times of growth and guide us reliably when we are challenged. As a new generation of the Mars family takes on the care of the principles and the culture of our corporation, we felt it important that we examine what makes us different today. This new edition shows that the Five Principles are as relevant to the global Mars community of the twenty-first century as they were in the past. At a time when change is constant, and in a business that continues to evolve, our Five Principles offer a link with our traditions and a bridge into the future.” (Mars Incorporated, 2003).