

JUKKA WALLIANDER

CALL IN THE MASTER

Why interim expertise
is becoming a competitive
advantage for businesses



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Foreword

I have worked in executive search for well over a decade, and during that time I have both witnessed and made more mistakes than I care to count. There is probably no conceivable blunder I haven't made myself — although I hope I haven't made the same one too many times, at least not consecutively.

Machines are easy. They do exactly what they are told to do, or what they were built to do. If they don't, you fix the problem and try again. People are far more complicated, with all their individual nuances, which means there are countless ways to get things wrong when hiring them.

I became closely involved in interim management only a few years ago and quickly learnt that my experience in executive search was nowhere near enough. Interim management is a discipline of its own. You cannot learn it from the sidelines.

When interim management was first introduced in Finland, the main challenge was awareness. Few business leaders knew what we were talking about. As the model became better known, a harder problem emerged: misconceptions.

An emergency fix. An expensive alternative. Something vaguely in between a permanent executive and a consultant.

I still hear these descriptions from senior executives, even though interim management has long been part of the management toolkit in many Western European companies.

I write from my experience in Finland, where this book was first written. Some examples come from that setting, but the questions will be familiar elsewhere: how do you bring in the right expertise when you need it, especially when it is not available in-house?

My ambition is to help business leaders use interim management well and, in doing so, make their companies more competitive. That work began in Finland. This book brings its practical lessons to leaders and interim executives in other markets, whether the model is already familiar or still finding its place.

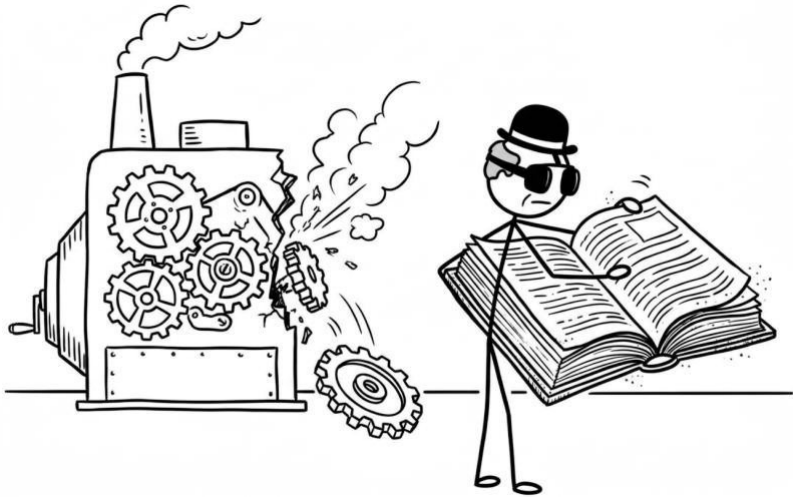
This book is part of that work.

Pornainen, Finland (feel free to use Google Maps)

14 September 2026

Jukka Walliander

Introduction: The World Won't Wait



Why a permanent job no longer guarantees stability

The CEO received the news on Friday afternoon. The production director, who had been with the company for more than ten years, announced that he was leaving to join a competitor in a month's time.

The board met on Monday. The usual options were on the table: advertise the role, start recruiting and wait perhaps six months before the new person was fully productive. Nobody questioned the list. They had been using it for twenty years.

But the production line would not wait six months. Customers would not wait. And the competitor the production director was joining certainly would not wait.

This is where many companies make the same mistake. They try to solve an urgent problem with an approach designed for a time when people stayed in their jobs for years and organisations changed

slowly. They fail to notice that the conditions around them have changed.

Elsewhere, someone was making a choice that their parents' generation might have struggled to understand. They left a permanent job by choice. Their specialist expertise was worth more when applied to one demanding problem at a time than when spread across the daily work of a single company for years.

The same shift connects these two stories.

An employment contract is no longer a reliable promise of stability. Increasingly, it is one way of organising work among several. It should be chosen when it fits the need, rather than treated as the default from which every departure must be justified.

No employee can be certain of their future beyond their notice period. Never. The morning news can turn an organisation's situation upside down. People who do not even know you exist can make decisions that suddenly change the terms of your working life.

This book is for both people.

For the leader who needs alternatives to the familiar recruitment checklist. And for the professional considering an interim career, who needs to know how to make it work.

Neither is wrong to look back wistfully at the old, stable world. But the world in which they now operate is no longer prepared to wait for them to adapt at their own pace.

Some time ago, I wrote a Finnish guide for jobseekers, *Ratkaisija – ammattilaisen pelikirja työnhakuun* (The Problem Solver – A Professional's Playbook for Job Hunting), for much the same reason. After years in recruitment, I had seen how often capable people struggled to explain what they could offer an employer.

I am not a career coach, so that book was something of a detour — largely motivated by a desire to help rather than to make money from it.

Interim management is central to my work today. I believe it has much further to go. Working life is changing in ways that make me think that, if the interim model did not exist, we would have to invent it.

The world will not wait. But now it is doing something else as well: it is changing direction faster than any organisation can turn.

What used to be the exception is now the normal rhythm of business. Decisions are no longer made because everything is ready. They are made because time has run out.

Artificial intelligence has added another layer to this. Rather than replacing leaders, AI is above all shortening the time they have to react. When a competitor can change its product, processes or pricing overnight, permanent recruitment may simply be the wrong tool. A lengthy recruitment process is of little help when the solution is needed now.

The leader's problem is not necessarily a lack of expertise. It is that there is no longer enough time to wait for it.

Skills shortages have also become more concentrated. They often affect areas where a company is particularly vulnerable: cybersecurity, data, automation, supply chains and regulation.

These are areas where mistakes can have serious consequences. Permanent recruitment may be extremely difficult or take six months. That six months may simply not be available.

Organisations now operate in shorter cycles. A five-year strategy can become a five-month plan that is out of date before it has been put into practice.

The market does not ask whether your organisation is ready.

It asks whether it is awake.

And if yours is not, someone else's will be.

Interim management can become a competitive advantage. It gives an organisation access to leadership expertise when decisions cannot wait, without requiring a commitment for years. It can also reduce the risk of an expensive hiring mistake.

This is not a trend.

This is the new physics of working life.

And you cannot negotiate with physics.

Acknowledgements

At the beginning of my own journey into interim management, I learnt a great deal from Pasi Honkalahti and Leena Salo, and I would particularly like to thank them both.

Since then, numerous client assignments and conversations have continued to broaden my perspective. I still find myself learning almost every week about the opportunities this model can create, both for business leaders and for experienced professionals.

My conversations and work with Jarkko Lahti, one of the pioneers of interim management in Finland, have also taught me a great deal.

The first-hand observations and insights of experienced interim executive Mikko Järvinen have been invaluable as well, so my sincere thanks to Mikko.

And, of course, Roope and Peppi — and my beloved Katriina.

This book is dedicated to you.

Not every leadership need calls for a permanent appointment.

Sometimes a business needs an experienced leader immediately - but not permanently. A transformation must be delivered, a crisis resolved or a new operating model built. That is when it is time to call in the master.

An interim executive joins an organisation for a limited period and a clearly defined assignment. They are there to deliver the agreed change, rather than build a permanent position for themselves - and to leave when the work is done.

Call in the Master explains when interim management works, how to select the right leader and how to set up an assignment for success.

This book is for business owners, boards and senior management, and for experienced executives considering an interim career as their next step.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jukka Walliander is a business leader and interim executive provider. He understands the situations in which businesses urgently need experience, the ability to drive change and results - and how interim management can help them move forward.



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