

Fads are an avoidance of common sense

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

What was your favourite management fad? Who preferred power-napping to having meetings standing up, or buzz-pods to wearing an "I'm busy" hat in the office? What price mission statements, values, or the street-fighting cachet of a Six Sigma black belt?

Of the current top 100 FTSE companies, half of them did not exist before 1972. The axiom that change is the only constant is especially pertinent to business. Indeed, it is relevant not only to the fortunes of companies but also to the fads to which the managers in those companies can often succumb.

Why do so many management innovations fail to stand the test of time? In 21 years working in management development, Kevin Yates has seen fads come and go. "New methodologies usually fall out of use because they are too complicated for a time-pressured manager to remember in a real life situation," he says, "or because they are forced onto the culture of the target organization. A corporate body is just that – something fluid and organic, composed of people not cogs. So when a mechanical process is superimposed on that body it is usually rejected, just as the human body's immune system naturally rejects unknown invaders."

In which case, why are management fads so attractive? "They are seductive because the overall responsibility of a manager is to govern change," explains Yates. "Change is by its nature unpredictable, so managers are constantly searching for tools to help them deal with it, or to give them the edge over their competitors. But the fact that one fad is adopted after another suggests that they don't have a lasting impact."

Instead of reaching for the acronyms (TQM, BPR, IIP), Yates advocates taking a practical, common sense approach. He argues that if a manager's role is to govern change – "if everything in a business was predictable, we wouldn't need managers" – then they need something unchanging with which to approach their task. "What you are doing throughout your company should be based on timeless principles which build the culture from within rather than superimpose structures onto it, and link everyday actions at all levels of the business to the company's overall strategy."

Won't the idea of using timeless principles itself go out of fashion one day? Since 1988 Yates' company Mitchell Phoenix has run leadership and management development programmes for some of the most demanding organizations in the world. According to Aalco's Steve Garrett, they have "the stay with you forever factor, that you re-use time & time again, building on each & every time." John Kay, HR Director at Johnson Controls, agrees, "Mitchell Phoenix are excellent business partners and helped our senior leadership teams identify and adopt robust leadership practices that have endured over the years. Many of the leaders that participated in [these] programmes have gone on to senior, VP level positions within our company." If you recognize the need to

govern change for your organization and understand the latest management
fad is not the solution, call Mitchell Phoenix on +44 (0) 20 8334 8042.