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RANJIT SHASTRI: THE LEADERSHIP MINDSET POWERING X-PM INDIA

Anjali Sharma | The CEO Magazine

RANJIT SHASTRI
MANAGING DIRECTOR
X-PM INDIA

Business transformation is ultimately about perspective: the ability to see what others overlook and act when it matters most. And few leaders embody that balance better than Ranjit Shastri, who has navigated roles at Bain & Company, McKinsey, and now as Managing Director of X-PM India. "Consulting firms like Bain and McKinsey are excellent training grounds because you get to see the kinds of challenges every firm faces, and you realise that every firm has challenges," he reflects. His greatest learning, though, came from building his own consulting practice, becoming truly client-centred, putting the client's needs first, and knowing when to be acceptant, catalytic, prescriptive, or confrontational. *"I feel very lucky to have adopted that approach in my own practice and later at X-PM,"* he says.

LEADING FROM WITHIN

When a company faces a crisis, most consultants who are outsiders look for what's broken. Ranjit, however, believes the answer lies in stepping inside. "Consultants are brought in specifically to bring an outsider's perspective," he says.

> **"X-PM IS DIFFERENT BECAUSE WE EMBED OUR INTERIM CXOS INTO THE CLIENT'S ORGANISATION. WE BECOME INSIDERS, AND WE INSTINCTIVELY FOCUS ON PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS WE KNOW WE CAN IMPLEMENT."**

He recalls a client struggling with a steep fall in sales and loss of investor confidence; within days, X-PM deployed an interim CEO, drew up a plan with the client's team, secured board approval, and immediately shifted focus to execution.

Every case, Ranjit notes, is different. He explains, *"There's usually no clear precedent, but experience helps you ask the right questions and avoid surprises."* At such moments, it is all about trust: trust in X-PM's talent pool, its disciplined process, and the C-level executives capable of doing what it takes to get the job done.

REDEFINING INTERIM LEADERSHIP

Few business leaders truly understand the value of interim management. "It's an essential part of every leader's toolbox," Ranjit says. Those unfamiliar with it, he observes, often react slower to opportunities and take longer to address challenges. Instead, they tend to rely too heavily on consultants, expecting outsiders to implement their own recommendations.

"Consultants are good at providing advice and facilitating implementation," he explains, "but they are not supposed to take decisions and deliver results." That, he believes, is the defining difference between consulting and interim management, one that too many business leaders still overlook.

BALANCING VISION, EXECUTION, AND LEGACY

For Ranjit, the balance between ambition and pragmatism defines successful leadership. "Consultancies like McKinsey need to maintain their independence so that they can set ambitious targets. The objective of firms like X-PM is to deliver on those targets," he explains. X-PM provides embedded management bandwidth on demand, with a complete focus on execution. Before taking on an assignment, however, the team conducts a quick diagnostic to assess whether the desired results are realistically achievable. "We won't take on a mission if we think it's not practical," he says. That, he believes, is where true balance lies. Using outsiders like traditional consulting firms to set ambitious targets and interim management firms like X-PM to accelerate the achievement of those targets from within.

Teaching has also shaped his perspective on leadership. As a visiting faculty member at MDI, his goal was to impart consulting skills, such as breaking down problems, applying the four consulting styles, and thinking critically. That was when his focus was on traditional consulting. Since joining X-PM, that focus has evolved. *"Today, my focus is on helping business leaders implement strategy,"* he reflects.