

## Management fads

### Checklist to reflect on before adopting a fad

Use the checklist plus comments in the table below to take stock before plunging into fad adoption. If there are more 'yes' answers to the eleven questions than 'no' answers it may be in order to go ahead. If there are more 'no' answers than 'yes' answers think very carefully and assess the risks before committing to adoption.

1. Has the fad been around long enough to have a proven track record for performance and measurable outcomes in other similar companies facing similar challenges to ours?

Do some due diligence before investing. Without impartial and evidence based metrics of success it is taking a risk to be the testing ground for untried and unproven fads.

2. Does the goal of the fad complement the needs of the organization?

Understand what problem, issue or opportunity is expected to be addressed by adopting the fad. Assess the likelihood of success against the resources invested.

3. Does the fad address problems or opportunities that are a high priority for our company?

Know what is a high priority for your company. Do not invest in something that is not a high priority just because it seems like a good idea to follow the masses.

4. Does implementation of the fad mesh with the organizational culture?

Check that the new fad meshes with the current organizational culture. Consider whether the culture can adapt quickly enough if the fad/organization fit is not good. (For example, a fad for self-managing teams will not mesh well in a command and control hierarchy where people expect to be told what to do)

5. Will adopting the fad help the organization remain competitive?

Fix on the competitive advantage that fad adoption is expected to bring. If there is no competitive advantage think carefully about adopting it.

6. Does the organization have the capabilities and resources needed to implement the fad?

Determine what the total direct and indirect resource investment is likely to be in terms of introducing, implementing, and embedding the fad.

7. Do the expected benefits of the fad outweigh the direct and indirect costs?

Develop a soundly argued, fact and evidence based business case for fad adoption. Lay out the assumptions, limitations, and risks of adoption.

8. Can the fad be implemented in small sections of the organization to test the new concepts with minimum risk?

Conduct a pilot or test the prototype before launching into enterprise wide fad adoption. Review progress. What works in some parts of the organization may not work in others. Learn from the test experiences.

9. Has the organization's track record with previous fad adoptions been positive?  
Review past fad adoption experiences. What happened? What worked well? What needs to be done differently in introducing this new fad to raise its chances of success?
10. Can you wait for the long-term benefits from fad adoption?  
Limit expectations of instant results. Fads take time to implement and embed. They are not a quick-fix.
11. Can organizational inertia **and** resistance to change be managed to successfully implement the fad?  
Ensure that organizational policies, infrastructures, technologies, and readiness are supportive of the new fad. People and organizational systems must be aligned to support successful fad adoption.
12. Are you conscious of the different context between your organizations and others who have adopted it?  
Take care that the notion of fad adoption is not just a 'copycat' response to what other organizations are doing.
13. If you were to adopt the fad are advocates for it in possession of a mental model of how this change could benefit the organization or not and have a program to measure it in some way?  
Make sure that the reasons for adoption of the fad are clear, agreed and transparent, and that the intended benefits of it are measurable along points in time.
14. Do you have a choice?  
Examine the level of political or other pressure that is being brought to bear to adopt this fad. Some managers want to jump on a bandwagon to look good, up to date, or progressive. Be realistic about motivations in adopting the fad.

Adapted from:

Gibson, J., & Tesone, D. (2001). Management fads: Emergence, evolution, and implications for managers. *Academy of Management Executive*, 15(4), 122-133.