

What is the Impact of Changing Football Manager 2012

A full version of this research will be released
by the LMA at the end of the 2011–2012 Season

Dr Sue Bridgewater
sue.bridgewater@wbs.ac.uk

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The Case of Chelsea FC

The number of managers who have occupied the hotseat at the Premier League clubs currently contesting the Champions League differs dramatically. From Manchester United, who have had Sir Alex Ferguson in charge since 1986, before the formation of the Premier League to Chelsea and Manchester City who have both seen a far greater number of managers come and go. The number of managers per club since 1992 is shown below

Table 1: Managers per Club since 1992

Club	Number of Managers	Average Tenure since 1992 in years
Manchester United	1	21
Arsenal	3	8.47
Chelsea	12	1.7
Liverpool	6	3.99 ¹
Manchester City	11	1.86
Tottenham	10	1.89

Both Manchester United and Arsenal have had considerable stability over this time, whilst at the other end Chelsea, Manchester City and Tottenham the number of managers who have been in place during this time period is into double figures and average stands at below two years.

The following data studies in greater detail the impact of changes in football manager at Chelsea FC both because this is topical, because Tottenham have already been studied above and because both Tottenham and Manchester City have both achieved a greater level of stability in recent seasons. Harry Redknapp has now been in post at Tottenham for 3.37 years and Roberto Mancini for 2.2 years at Manchester City.

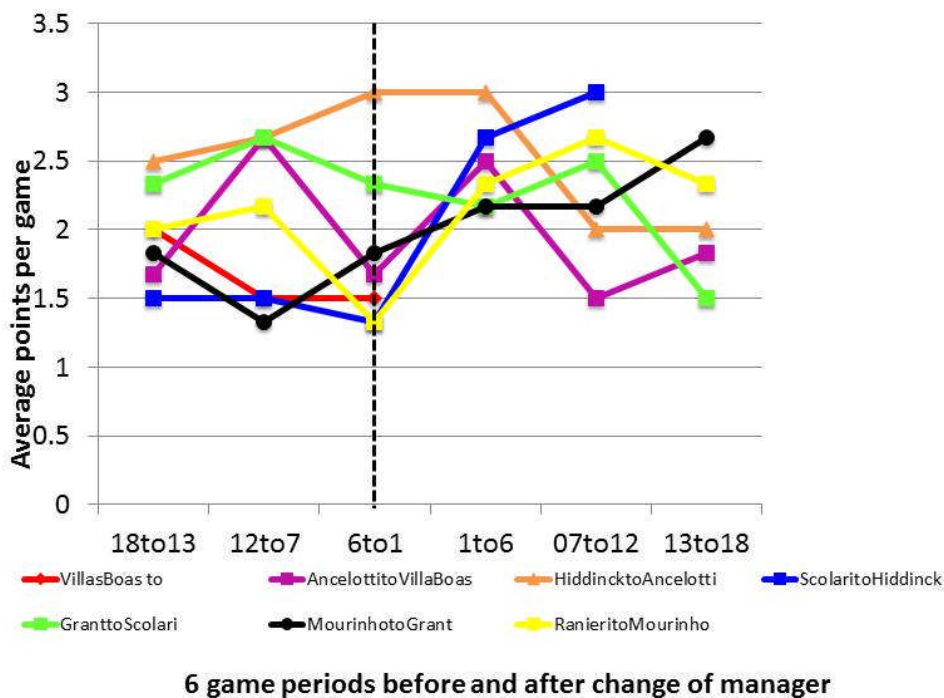
At Chelsea, whilst average tenure since 1992 has been 1.7 years, the tenure for the last seven managers (from Claudio Ranieri up to Andreas Villas-Boas) stands at 1.6 years but for the last five managers, from Avram Grant to Andreas Villas-Boas, only 0.86 years). As average tenure appears to be declining rather than increasing, the data for Chelsea are studied in more detail to below to study the impact of this instability on the club.

¹ Excludes incumbent where this is likely to suppress average eg: Di Matteo at Chelsea, Dalglish at Liverpool etc but includes incumbent at Arsenal and Manchester United where there would either be no value (Manchester United) or a much lower value is a longstanding incumbent was omitted.

As with the data for Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal, a range of different patterns can be seen in how the managers performed before and after a change of manager took place. From this, it can be seen that, whilst the average points scores of Andreas Villas-Boas were towards the lower end of the scale, he was nonetheless dismissed with a higher average points rate than either Claudio Ranieri or Luis Felipe Scolari. In terms of what impact there has been for Chelsea in changing football manager, some of the changes resulted in dramatic honeymoon period improvements in performance. The appointment of Jose Mourinho (shown as the yellow line in Figure 1), for example, raised average points per game above 2 points per game and reached 2.67 points per game between 7 and 12 games after appointment, although this had fallen back somewhat to 2.33 points per game by the 18 game mark.

Figure 1: Changing Managers at Chelsea FC from Ranieri (Sept 2000) to date

Impact of Changing Manager on Average Points per game at Chelsea Ranieri to date



The most significant shift in average points per game – and indeed the highest overall average points per game – can be seen during the tenure of Guus Hiddinck (shown as the blue line in Figure 5 above). This is perhaps not surprising as Guus Hiddinck was not dismissed for a poor run of results, but left as planned to return to international management. Note that the blue line stops short before the 18 games after appointment mark, as Guus Hiddinck was not in post long enough to reach this mark. The change from Hiddinck to his successor, Carlo Ancelotti, shown as the orange line in Figure 5, shows that the change (indicated by the vertical dotted black line at the point at which this occurs) happens when Chelsea are achieving an average of 3 points per game.

The detailed data can be seen in Table 2 below. Whilst we might infer differences from these upturns and downturns in performance over time, it should be noted that we might have made similar inferences about managerial ability from the Arsenal data in Figure 4,

although we know that Arsène Wenger, beyond the timescale shown in that chart, went on to achieve the highest average points per game of the managers studied. This might be taken as a cautionary tale for reading too much into performance over a short time horizon.

Table 2: Average points per 6 games before and after change of Manager at Chelsea FC

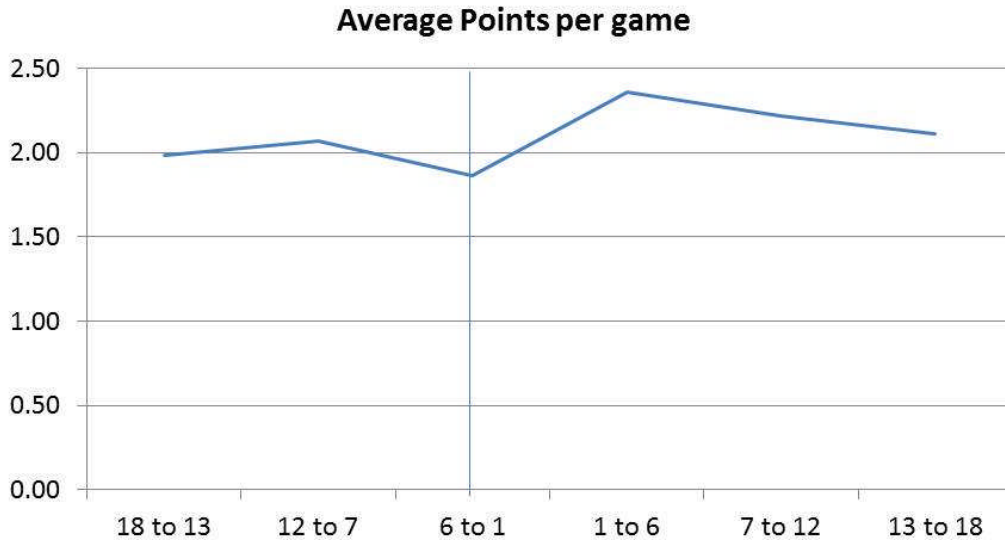
Chelsea Managers	Average Points per 6 game period before change			Average Points per 6 game period after change		
	18to13	12to7	6to1	1to6	07to12	13to18
VillasBoas to...	2.00	1.5	1.5			
Ancelotti to VillaBoas	1.67	2.67	1.67	2.5	1.5	1.83
Hiddinck to Ancelotti	2.5	2.67	3	3	2.00	2
Scolari to Hiddinck	1.5	1.5	1.33	2.67	3	
Grant to Scolari	2.33	2.67	2.33	2.17	2.5	1.5
Mourinho to Grant	1.83	1.33	1.83	2.17	2.17	2.67
Ranieri to Mourinho	2	2.17	1.33	2.33	2.67	2.33
Vialli to Ranieri				1.66	1.67	2.33

Note: these data are based on league games only

It is perhaps more interesting, then, to look at the broader patterns in the data and see what the average impact has been for Chelsea FC in changing its football manager.

Figure 2: Average Points impact of Changing Chelsea Manager

Average Impact of Changing Football Manager at Chelsea FC 2000 to date



From Figure 2, there is an average increase in points during the honeymoon period, but given that this is from a high base – Chelsea have averaged above or just below 2 points per game even during the periods in which they are adjudged to have gone through a downturn in performance – and has fallen back to 2.11 points per game by the 18 game mark, the difference of 0.11 points per game from steady state before to steady state after change of manager may not appear worth the many millions of pounds in costs of changing football manager.

Conclusions

There are a number of possible explanations for this. The first is that leadership has little impact on organisational performance. Lieberman and O'Connor (1972) suggest organizational performance is more influenced by other aspects of the organisational context such as resources. So perhaps performance might be affected by the quality of players, injuries or just bad luck.

The second explanation is that switching to a different leader brings with it disruption which, in itself, can have a negative effect on performance (Grusky 1960, 1963, 1964). Hope (2003) suggests that there are different phases in a football manager's lifespan – some in which he may have a run of bad luck or a blip and others where performance may take a downturn whilst the manager is rebuilding for the longer term.

This research is not suggesting that a club should never change football manager. As in other organisations, sustained decline in performance is often addressed by changing manager – and this may arrest and turnaround performance. The data would

suggest, however, that clubs may pull the trigger during a minor blip in performance rather than a sustained decline. Moreover, the level at which they do this, and the benefits gained from the switch may be less significant than they anticipate.

References

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