

International Interim Management

In 2012 the **Harvard Business Review** published a seminal article “**The Rise of the SuperTemp**” that tried to explain the resourcing phenomenon that had become to be known as **Interim Management**.



Although relatively new to the US at the time, Interim Management had been established some two decades earlier in Western Europe in response to the need for a more flexible resourcing model in the face of tight labour laws.

The HBR article tried to define Interim Management and the Interim Executives undertaking it.

Today the phenomenon Interim Management is established as an alternative senior executive resourcing option in use throughout the developed world.

Interim Management and the Interim Executives are now well understood and has become established as a recognised career option for senior executives that have come to the stage in their careers where they feel the need for variety and challenge that tests their experience and skills to the full.

Peter Drucker called contract work at the upper level: “intellectual capital on demand”

The characteristics and qualities necessary to successfully do this work have been shown to be:

- considerable experience working in international blue-chip organizations in the private or public sector;
- extensive line management experience at a senior executive level;
- a track record in managing major change;
- a career history that gives the Executive personal credibility as a world-class Interim Executive;
- a remuneration or fees history that puts them in the upper quartile of their peers and
- first-class leadership and interpersonal skills.

These are experienced professional managers and it is this management capability that distinguishes them from management consultants providing advisory services but no implementation capability.

Successful Interim Executives develop a chameleon like ability to change their management style to match that of the organisation they are engaged to help

Research into the behavioural characteristics of successful Interim Executives undertaken by a well-known firm of behavioural psychologists identified the chameleon like ability of Interim Executives to change their management style to suit that of the organisation they are engaged to help. They were identified as being very sociable people, rapidly gaining the trust and co-operation of the staff they are asked to manage, listening to their concerns and fears but quickly switching to a more directive approach once they are clear about the way forward, taking the organisation with them.

The type of work undertaken as Interim Management assignments is now well understood and covers managing Joint Ventures, Start-Ups, Transition Assignments, Managing Major Change, Restructuring, Mergers, Acquisitions, Disposals, Managing at a Distance, Interim Heads of Function, Bridging the Recruitment Gap and Crisis Management. All management tasks that would be undertaken by your own management were it not for a skills gap, shortage of resources or some other hiatus that prevents you from doing so.

Interim assignments typically last between six to twelve months. The issues that Senior Interim Executives are asked to deal with are unlikely to be resolved in anything less than six months and experience has shown that they should aim to resolve them within twelve months. Any longer and they may as well be on the payroll doing a permanent job.

The big advantage of Interim Executives is that they have been there and done it before. They are not going up the learning curve for the first time but are already at the top having tackled the task several times already. As a consequence, it soon became apparent that one of the key benefits, to both clients and executives, of this type of work was that experienced senior executives are prepared to undertake assignments on an interim basis that they would otherwise turn down if offered the permanent position. Interim became a risk-free option in terms of reputation and career progression whilst the clients reaped the benefit of getting a 'suitably over qualified' senior executive to solve their resourcing problem.



Interim Executives manage tasks that would be undertaken by your own management were it not for a skills gap, resource shortage or some other hiatus that prevents you from doing it yourself

Ease of engagement is another key client benefit of hiring and Interim. They get started immediately under a simple Contract for Services signed with a professional Interim Provider. These intermediaries take responsibility for finding a suitable executive, managing contract arrangements with them and monitor their performance as the assignment progresses. As such they have skin in the game and to this end professional Interim Providers maintain a register of pre-vetted executives and build a relationship with them as they undertake bigger and more difficult assignments as a way of developing their Interim careers. This approach allows professional Interim Providers to aim to have a client on your premises within ten working days. Usually time is of the essence in a crisis driven situation but if you have the time, your favourite head-hunter will conduct a retained search, as if it were for a permanent appointment and hand over to you to manage the assignment.

The ability to go into the recruitment market and at short notice, buy this highly experienced management resource for a limited duration, is now well understood as an alternative to traditional resourcing options



Each interim executive comes with their own fee level depending on experience, seniority and the level of demand for their services. This is an inclusive fee in that the client incurs no other costs of employment such as welfare payments, employment tax, pension payments, health plan, life insurance premiums, holiday pay and the other benefits normally associated with full time employees.

Over the past thirty years the use of Interim Senior Executives in this way has developed and evolved into a well tried and tested recruitment option that is here to stay.

About the authors:

Michael R Turrell is CEO of International Interim Management, a professional Interim Provider based in London's Mayfair. IIM was spun out of Korn Ferry the world's largest talent management consulting firm and prior to that he worked in the Interim management practice established by top Swiss head-hunter Egon Zehnder, for twelve years he was a senior Interim Executive. In the GCC region International Interim Management has been represented for the past ten years by IIM's Executive Director Paul Quay, Director of Matheran Talent Management based in Dubai, also a past senior client partner in the Korn Ferry Talent Management practice and CHRO in blue-chip multi-nationals.