



...in the interim

Bored with corporate life? Tired of the daily grind and looking for a new challenge? Then perhaps it is time to look at interim management. The increasingly tight matching of needs with resources means that even small variations in activity cannot be handled by existing in-house resources and consequently companies increasingly need to be able to call on highly qualified and experienced managers to handle specific projects.

Martin Bohling, principal partner at the Courland Automotive Practice, which specialises in recruitment in the motor industry, points out that interim managers can bridge the gaps that can occur while an executive search is in progress as well as providing cover for maternity, training or long-term illness; managing one-off projects, help implement change programmes; and deliver day-to-day management support while the executive team is focused on major projects or acquisitions.

Another important area is the provision of senior executive mentors for newly appointed board executives, he says.

According to Russam GMS, the interim management sector is growing by about 10 per cent a year driven by "the beginnings of critical mass, good people coming into it and lifestyle issues."

Russam points out that, compared with life on the corporate payroll, interim management is something different. "It is not more of the same. It is also quite difficult (although it is getting easier) to find out how the sector works and how to be successful. Our view is that you need to regard yourself as a small business and not an individual."

Russam reckons the market is worth about £500m and there are currently between 10,000 and 15,000 interim managers working across UK industry.

And the earnings aren't bad - about £25 either side of £500 a day, according to Russam, "but it does vary considerably between professional disciplines and regions". Mr Bohling reckons rates can be as high as £800 a day.

A Russam GMS survey covering more than 1,000 interim managers found that the the largest proportion were working in engineering and manufacturing - some 19 per cent while about four per cent were working in the supply chain.

Very often, Mr Bohling says, companies need someone in place urgently and cost is not an issue. "We can provide effective and experienced interim managers with eight days of taking a brief."

When supplying interim managers, says Mr Bohling, the aim is to "over-subscribe" in terms of skills. For example, if a finance manager was required, a finance director would be recommended. Interim managers need to come up to speed very quickly, he points out.

Interim management tends to suit people in their fifties who, perhaps, do not want to continue in corporate life. they

can work for nine months a year and do not need to get involved in company politics.

Actually getting work as an interim manager means developing sales skills. Russam suggests a target list of 500.

"Write to them in batches of 50 a day, following them all up within five working days of despatch. Send your CV and a well-phrased letter. What you want is a meeting but what you'll get will nearly always be something different!

"None of this is easy - particularly for those with no sales or similar background - but the nearer you get to the ideal the more it will work for you.

"As an Interim Manager, you need to make the running. You need to be in control of your own working life. On the corporate payroll, it was others who were in control. If interim management has any value to you, part of it must be that, now it is you who are in control.

And Russam GMS warns: "A degree of rejection is the base on which all good salesmen build a fortune. If you treat rejection as the norm and the winning of an assignment as a victory you will find that it will help to maintain a greater degree of emotional stability."

Flexible threat to UK companies

Many UK companies will be caught short by the onset of new employment laws, introduced on 6 April, which legally oblige them to look at ways of finding flexible working options for staff.

Employee management specialist Crown Computing has come up with research which shows that 46 per cent of job-seekers choose flexible working as the benefit they most look for in their next job while in contrast 56 per cent of employers have never considered flexible working schemes, such as working from home.

Mike Hawkesford, managing director of Crown Computing says: "The new law says that employers must consider allowing flexible working if employees with young children request it. Some organisations may feel they need to open this up to all employees. This could mean offering employees staggered shifts, shift swapping or even letting them choose their own shifts.

Crown estimates that up to 75 per cent of organisations it speaks to about employee management don't have a strategy for addressing the increasing issue of flexible working.

Crown has just launched a new workforce scheduling product called Open Options Workforce Scheduling designed to help companies with fixed working arrangements, to embrace flexible working and plan and manage their workforce efficiently. This helps to ensure that employees with the correct skills are available at the right time and appropriate place.



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