



The changing world of Interim Management – are you ready to take the plunge?

The last few years have seen dramatic and rapid changes in Interim Management in the Life Sciences industries. Company Managers are enthusiastically embracing the many ways that flexible resourcing can add value to their businesses and, there are corresponding changes in the “typical” profile of Interim Managers providing solutions to clients.

Have you ever thought, “Maybe that could be me? Maybe I can take control of my own work/life balance BUT have I the right profile? How do I go about it?”

Interim Management started in the UK in the mid 1980s but for many years Interim Managers were people in the 50+ age group whose work normally only covered “gap filling” assignments in Finance or HR. Now the age range has dropped significantly and we are seeing more and more successful professionals in their 30s and 40s making a career out of short term Interim assignments. The range of work available has also changed extensively. There are now Interim opportunities accessible for almost every function across the whole value chain from Discovery through to Sales & Marketing.

So how do you know if it's right for you? Well, becoming an Interim Manager no longer depends on your age, but it still does depend upon your knowledge and experience. You must be confident in your ability and experienced with a proven track record. An employer is looking for someone who is usually over-qualified to do the work compared to a permanent employee for the same position. This is because you are expected to hit the ground running with little or no lead-in time. However, by the time you reach the age of 40 you will probably have 15+ years of industry experience and be well on the way to a senior management position or, given the nature of the Pharmaceutical and Biotech industries, you will probably have gained valuable specialist expertise.

Although skill requirements change from job to job one of the requirements that doesn't change in all Interims is a need to be, confident and socially adept. You will also need to be highly motivated and committed to each new role. You will have a “can do” attitude, thrive on change and new challenges, possess excellent time management skills and be a good team player. Remember you are your own business' greatest asset and you should be flexible and able to motivate & manage with energy and professionalism.

If this is you the rewards can be wonderful, not only in monetary terms, but, especially in the quality of life. You can be more in control of balancing your work to your life style and family commitments. If you want you can create a rewarding and flexible work lifestyle with a variety of stimulating new projects and perhaps locations as well. Interim management could take you to work

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locations across the UK, Europe or the USA with occasional requirements appearing in more exotic locations. But the key is that you are in control. No one can tell you that you have to travel. You decide whether you want to take on the assignment or not. You're working for yourself!

Depending upon what you are looking for, you may decide that you want to take on work that requires only three or four days per week. Some roles can be flexible enough to work from a home-based office. Indeed, with the advent of low cost airlines, there are several examples of Interim Managers from the UK who live in Spain, France or similar locations and commute to wherever they need to be for work during the week.

No doubt this all sounds very attractive, but I'd like to inject a word of caution here. Interim Management is not for everyone. You still have to find your assignments and this can be hardest when you are just starting down the Interim path. The more assignments you have under your belt, the more your reputation will grow and your track record as an Interim becomes easy to demonstrate. Finding your first Interim job can be just as difficult as finding a new permanent job.

If you are thinking of going down this road then do your preparation fully, preferably while you are still in a permanent position. Take time to establish a network of contacts. These could be potential clients, Interim Management providers and other Interim Managers. Establishing relationships with a good Interim Management provider is a must and it is best to look out for accredited businesses such as those who are members of the Interim Management Association (IMA), the industry body. Pick the ones that you think are best suited to your needs and call them up to discuss opportunities that would interest you. Don't take a shotgun approach and fire off emails to every provider you can find. Choose a small number and build a relationship with them. Keep in touch on a regular basis.

And if you are still wondering if it's for you the IMA offers a well-established and inexpensive workshop that is designed specifically for Executives and Managers considering Interim Management as a career choice. Full details can be found at the IMA website (www.interimmanagement.uk.com)

To be a professional Interim Manager you will need to establish your own limited company. A good Interim Management provider will not only give you contacts with companies offering this service, but can provide all the information you need to make an informed decision.

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So if you want to take control of your working life and would like to have independence and variety, why not research it thoroughly and have a go? That way you truly will be able to make all your own decisions.

Good luck with your new life!

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