



## WING TIPS

### *When to engage an interim*

In travelling the market to find and place senior executives into interim and permanent roles, the Directors of Intramezzo are frequently asked - is there a talent gap in the UK for senior executives?

Our reply is straightforward - at a national and macro level we find strong 'short lists' of excellent candidates in the tech sectors and for major programme management work in virtually all sectors. However at the micro or company level there is a very different type of talent gap.

It appears that almost every company is experiencing some form of gap at board level. This manifests itself by not having a director in role, a director(s) not delivering to their capability or whole executive teams not delivering to plan. In contrast, very successful high growth organisations have different demands for talent, yet at the senior executive level the individuals who provide the remedies are the same. The reasons for this talent gap are therefore very different at this micro and company level.

Inevitably the question is what to do about this 'gap'. Understanding how other companies are resolving this can provide an insight into one of the major talent pools in the UK- that of Interim Managers. This interim sector is delivering over £1bn to the UK economy each year and there are some 10,000 interim managers.

Access to this market is made possible through the advent of mobile phones, internet and email. There is also a formal supply structure of interim providers. Each supplier maintains a register of candidates which, over the years, amounts to an impressive array of searchable details. When combined with screening, short lists can normally be presented within 14 days. Yes, this is a very agile sector with an accumulation of senior executives who have immense experience gained from short and intensive periods in delivering talent into the commercial and public sectors. In many cases, business critical projects are delivered faster and more cost effectively using this option.

Changing tack, there are many similarities to be drawn between the vibrancy of a business and the health of a human being. The nutritionist will tell us 'we are what we eat'; correspondingly, the experienced businessman knows that 'you get what you pay for'. Low performance input too often equals low performance output! Occasionally businesses will slip into a critical state where immediate remedial 'intensive care' is required!

What are the symptoms of a company needing an injection of talent?

- Slow decision-making is a major sign, particularly in the area of business critical actions - this is often prompted by either too many options or too few, but either way a decision is not made when it needs to be!
- Lack of financial performance - this often reflects a lack of passion and is at the heart and general state of every business. This can be caused by a negative influence from one or a number of directors and is often caused by fear of the unknown, a sure sign that individuals are out of their depth professionally.
- Lack of investment - this is an increasingly important area particularly in the tech sector. Putting forward investable teams is essential to raising money - ask the next venture capitalist you meet and 9 times out of 10 they will say that the management team is the primary asset they back before the proposition.

During our time in serving the talent sector we have seen remarkable achievements by re-mixing the senior executive talent involving an interim. The phrase 'right skills at the right time' is a valuable mantra, particularly as interims are in place to deliver the role and come out of the organisation once this completes.

When is the right time to employ an Interim? The answer is simple: when a business needs to transition from one state to another, an Interim can bridge the talent gap. It is a quick solution and there is plenty of available talent. The key to this, however, is to find the right candidate from the many thousands available.

The following Intramezzo examples illustrate some of the appropriate times to engage an Interim:

- We have helped early stage ventures with the challenge of raising money. We say that 'money follows people' so the key is to build an investable team. In this case, a corporate venturing unit needed domain experience in the Chemical sector to confirm or challenge the efficacy of an investment by the parent company. The Intramezzo candidate performed the requisite due diligence on the marketing plan and then went on to point out that there was a whole new untapped market which could be developed in addition. This individual went on to run the company following a part time deployment to form the business.
- Other areas where we have very successfully deployed interims have been into challenging situations to deliver unusual projects such as migrating data centres. An example was a role to caretake a German company of 600, with a 10 minute change-over between CEOs. This required a good understanding of works councils and how these operate under German law while a full-time replacement CEO was sought.
- Another organisation wanted to build a programme now running in its third year to advise bid teams - the purpose of this is to parachute in domain expertise to provide efficacy and cutting edge to the bids and thus to win more major clients.

These examples illustrate the broad range of projects into which Interims are delivered and the imaginative ways in which organisations are building competitive edge using this 'agile' resource.

What about the costs of using interim executives to bridge the talent gap? These are relative to the business challenge and the yield can often be measured in ROI multiples. Interims are regarded as a safe pair of hands and they know that success in their most recent role will carry them on to their next role. There is therefore a direct correlation between salary plus bonus and the day rate charged.

An easy, fast-in package without discussions around paid holiday entitlement, equity, pensions, private health, cars and other company benefits makes the process of engaging an interim very quick and simple. Lack of interview time by the senior executives also counts for additional value and further supports this 'similar' rate comparison. Notice periods are normally shorter than would be expected by a full-time appointment at a senior level.

Therefore irrespective of role or sector it is worth considering the impact an experienced interim would bring. The right person in place at short notice can prove to be a winner and is now definitely central to many companies' plans to move faster and deliver on the business critical roles of today. Add to this other senior executive appointments such as a Chairman or Non Executive Director and a team can become more effective and investable faster....

### ***Further reading***

*Recent articles published by Intramezzo on related interim subjects are: "Beyond the Iceberg" which looks at the cultural issues; "What should my managers be managing?"; and "What should investors know about Interim Managers?" These articles look at the important elements within a business which are frequently overlooked yet increasingly used by progressive organisations.*

***Intramezzo is positioned as a leader in executive talent solutions for early stage and maturing ventures. Its reputation is based on delivering impressive short lists of executives into ventures on a just-in-time basis and with a range of payment profiles. Clients include Angel, Venture Capitalists and large corporates. For further information on Interim Managers, please call +44 (0) 7866 479 636, 07866 479 636 or email: [dhill@intramezzo.co.uk](mailto:dhill@intramezzo.co.uk) or visit [www.intramezzo.co.uk](http://www.intramezzo.co.uk)***