



Mission Probable: The Interim Executive in the Agile Workforce

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Interim roles often take a back seat when candidates are searching for their next career opportunity. However, interim executive roles offer up plenty of unique opportunities, such as creating lifestyle flexibility, expanding your professional network and, ultimately, enriching your career. **Steve Rosen** explains how, and why, you should consider executive interim roles in the today's agile workforce.

"Your mission, should you decide to accept it..." were the famous opening words to the *Mission Impossible* TV show and the motion picture series that followed. Excitement would build as the agent assimilated all the information on the recording to prep for the latest assignment. New contacts to engage, special skills to utilize and the latest tech to deploy—all the hallmarks of the interim executive entrenched in today's agile workforce.

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Many candidates, however, are missing out on attractive interim opportunities. They either passively entertain the concept or completely ignore it altogether. However, the traditional workplace is changing at a rapid pace and savvy



executives must change with it.

Workplace structures are evolving rapidly

The emergence of the agile workforce has been driven by the need to adapt swiftly to the changing needs in the marketplace, allowing organizations to meet the fluctuating demands for specialized talent. While the contingent workforce model deals with the sourcing of external temporary workers, the agile workforce focuses on integrating that talent into the management of the organization. Of critical importance here is the talent pool—high-cost knowledge professionals who are often in short supply and hard to retain.

According to a recent report [by Mercer](#), significant industry disruption is on its way, where “the organization of the future will be less rigid and teams will become streamlined and nimble in response to evolving strategic priorities.” At the same time, [PwC’s annual CEO survey](#) tells us that the greatest management deficit is in tech-savvy, innovative leaders with the systems and tools businesses need.

Enter the Interim Executive

These needs highlight the role of the interim executive, with the skills and expertise to deal with dynamic work structures and time-sensitive goals. As the [World Economic Forum](#) has found, businesses are expanding the use of interim management positions in order to leverage their workforce, using flexible contracts and project-based, temporary roles.

There is much to attract executives to the burgeoning ranks in interim management, with upside in the form of broadened skills and networking, specialization, engagement and even lifestyle. Here a few ways candidates can benefit from an interim role:

1. Experience, expansion, exposure

As an interim executive, each successive role enables you to broaden your skill set by applying the latest technologies to new challenges. But there is also an element of self-discovery that occurs—an opportunity to test your own attributes and find out what is personally fulfilling for you. New work environments also expand your professional and social networks, exposing an array of future work opportunities with multiple employers, contractors and collaborators.

2. Specialization

The agile workforce is all about filling uniquely-skilled positions that employers can’t fill, afford, or utilize on a permanent basis. With every new gig comes the chance to bolster your credentials in a given specialty, building your resume along the way and enhancing your value to other companies looking for specific talent. This specialization can allow for you, as an interim executive, to carve out your own niche and brand yourself as such.

3. Interest and Engagement

By definition, every interim position is different, ensuring an element of variety in work experiences. Exposure to diverse industries and work teams can keep your interest levels high, along with your level of engagement and job



satisfaction. This also provides healthy challenges—working outside your comfort zone and gaining a true sense of value creation as you'll be able to impact multiple organizations.

4. Life style advantages

Whatever job security you may sacrifice as an agile worker can be more than made up in work-life balance. As your experience and contacts build, so grows your prerogative to choose the opportunities that best suit your own schedule and priorities. That can mean more time for yourself and your family, including extended vacations or sabbaticals. It can also mean greater flexibility in configuring your job—think remote work arrangements and objectives that place deliverables ahead of logging time on a docket. Some may lament the loss of income during downtime, but the numbers suggest that specialized interim positions can pay more than permanent positions for the same time commitment.

What you'll need for the mission

Interim roles—and the agile workforce in general—don't fit into everyone's comfort zone. It's about more than just your specialized skill set. Ask yourself the following:

- can you cope with adversity and constant change?
- what is your acumen for open-minded, fluid problem-solving?
- are you comfortable acting independently, outside of a traditional team structure?
- do you have a talent for engaging disparate business units and personalities? For integrating and restructuring functional silos?
- do you have project-based experience to draw on, whether it's in ERP implementation, merger integration or due diligence?

It's no secret that temporary engagements can lead to more with the same firm, even full-time permanent roles, and that's the end game for some interim candidates. According to the [World Economic Forum](#), 38% of businesses expect to extend their workforce to new productivity-enhancing roles by 2022. Flexible work structures of the future promise attractive career opportunities to executives who have the desired skill sets—provided they also have the right mindset and personal goals that fit today's agile workplace.

If you're the right type, then it's *mission probable*.

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Our Contributors

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