



Differentiating between a Consultant and an Interim

Consultant	Interim Manager
<p>Initial diagnosis</p> <p>Consultants come as individuals, local or international companies. Many consulting firms employ tens of thousands of consultants. This may give them flexibility and breadth of skills for a customer whose issues aren't yet diagnosed and therefore, the skill set required is uncertain. Most consulting firms work to a tried and tested formula of analysis.</p>	<p>Interims usually work on their own or with associates. A professional interim will have a limited company, full indemnity insurance and strong qualifications or experience in both his core skill and supporting skill.</p> <p>The Interim manager may be brought in to cover absence of a key member of staff. The growing trend is to bring in Interims to add expertise for a short and focused period of essential activity with specific short-term outcomes. This often includes a diagnostic or analytical phase to identify the key requirements.</p>
<p>Style of delivery:</p> <p>Some consulting companies identify the issue, map out a pathway to a solution and deliver a report. Some also have implementation skills. Typically consultant will protect his knowledge and skill base and, whilst giving excellent value in outcomes, will not "give" his contacts, knowledge or skills to the client.</p> <p>Whichever is delivered, the consultant normally remains an outsider who has knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>Interims delivering change also work to a strong methodology. The Interim has an objective to ensure capability and capacity of the customer organisation to continue to deliver after he has left. He will be generous with his skills, encouraging and empowering the customer's staff to develop themselves.</p> <p>The key differentiator is that the Interim Manager works within an organisation, at the required level to engage with stakeholders, to create understanding and transparency, to develop enthusiasm, skills and competences in the staff to the point that the changes are truly sustainable.</p>
<p>Flexibility:</p> <p>The consultant will specify the typical number of days/hours allocated to the customer to achieve its goals. The cost will be based on the level of expertise allocated to the contract. Much of the work from a large consulting firm is likely to be junior executive level with management overseeing the outputs.</p>	<p>The Interim Manager is senior, experienced and can turn his hand to a wide range of tasks from strategy to hands-on work. A day is a day for most Interims, whether it's a 7 hour day or a 14 hour one. The Interim mindset is to deliver the outcome – irrespective of the personal hours required.</p>
<p>Operations</p> <p>Consultants work at strategic levels in many areas. It can be left to the customer to set out the more operational or tactical details in delivering a solution. This might be the very reason why the customer needs help.</p> <p>Many consultants move on after delivering their report and their invoice. Many customers can't afford to keep consultants on to finish a project because of high day rates.</p>	<p>Interim managers are happy to roll up their sleeves and deliver. Because Interim Managers have the experience and achievement record in day to day operations, they can often cut through red tape without cutting out key operational factors such as knowledge-based risk assessment.</p> <p>Interim managers tend to build a delivery plan, involving the customer teams and working with them to support and enhance delivery.</p>

	The realistic day rates of interims may be a factor in the customer's ability to fund the project or programme to the finish.
Succession Planning: Naturally, a consultant is not looking for a successor. They will happily work with any new incumbents but their success is may be measured in contract renewals.	Interim managers have an exit plan from day one. They are looking for – or already know – their successor. Their skills in training and mentoring can help ensure a smooth transition.
Summing Up: The Consultant is an outside resource, who hires out knowledge and expertise to a client to achieve outcomes.	The Interim Manager works from within the customer organisation, identifies ways to strengthen the customer's capability and capacity to deliver its own solutions going forward.
CPD Consultants – very structured learning within company framework.	Interims – Selective CPD which will enhance their delivery credentials and keep them up to date.
<p>Interim management – The buzz of the challenge plus the excitement of finding and developing stars and the satisfaction of handing over a sustainable outcome.</p>	

Case Study

NHS Turnaround (£11m)

We were the fourth team in less than 2 years. The deficit was growing. The remedial actions were slowly but surely being watered down by the senior staff – through political manoeuvring and a lack of cohesion in delivery and monitoring of any progress being made.

Even the successes weren't celebrated, so staff who had delivered felt undervalued.

However, we were interims, the previous three were top international consulting Firms. All three reports highlighted more or less exactly the same areas of weakness and identified targets for improvements in

- Core costs
- Productivity
- Quality
- Revenue

None of the reports identified

- how the improvements would be achieved
- where the capacity and capability to deliver would come from
- how it would be governed, monitored and reported
- what the impacts on the services as a whole would be.

Our team of 4 interims consisted of

- Finance director
- Change Programme manager
- HR director
- Procurement manager

All four had extensive experience of how to find the substantive elements needed. We could also support and develop the staff, building their confidence and strengthening their resolve.

- We built a programme management office for planning, tracking and reporting on projects

- We set up a strong and accountable programme board
- We delivered training in process, negotiation and project management
- We make firm recommendations regarding capability fits in restructured departments
- We brought teams of different viewpoints together to agree common objectives
- We helped project managers to delegate work to give themselves capacity to deliver
- We supported the project managers, transferring skills wherever we could
- We celebrated their success

It was still the most difficult assignment I've ever been on because of the urgency, the pockets of 'war weariness' and resulting levels of resistance we encountered but, when we left, there was a robust programme board which believed it could own the task and take it to the finish.

I'm still in contact with several folk from this assignment. Many have gone on to much more senior posts and delivered real benefits into their organisation. They really owned the outcomes but fully acknowledge that we helped them to achieve. They've still a long way to go, but they have a pathway and a determination.

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