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The Careers Adviser

Should I move to a job in interim management? I would like to enter politics. How do I go about it?

I've heard about interim management (IM) - is this thriving in the current climate or is it best to stay in my job, even if the future is looking uncertain?

Interim managers are parachuted into companies to deal with specific

situations, and as more people have become available for this kind of consultancy work with increasing redundancies, it's likely to be tougher to command the best rates, even if you find an assignment. Companies have often been protective of existing man-

agers, devising ways to keep them on. But they also need to restructure, and the skills needed for this type of work aren't always available in the company talent pool. So there will continue to be demand, though the picture isn't looking good now, except in some areas of the public sector.

This is a decision about lifestyle - are you happy to work freelance, without the security of a regular source of income and guaranteed time off? Do you thrive on challenges? Can you hit the ground running? You also need to have a proven track record (no one will be interested in hiring you for your potential) with some of your work, even if these are only internal projects.

You would need to establish relationships with IM recruiters (see the Institute of Interim Management site on www.ioim.org.uk). Pick their brains about the market and back up your CV

with personal recommendations. Your own networking is vital - 70 per cent of assignments are found this way.

Join the Institute's LinkedIn group,

and ask for its advice sheet containing 10 steps to take to become an interim manager - email info@ioim.org.uk.

I am 24, have done voluntary work in my local Asian community, and am interested in a political career. But I don't know how to find out if politics is for me.

There are ways to become involved, such as joining your local party and applying for internships at political organisations. Try your MP - but bear in mind MPs are more likely to be able to find you work in a constituency office than at Westminster, and don't forget that it is sometimes easier to ask a local councillor for work - fewer think of trying this route.

Internships are likely to be unpaid (controversially so, as this doesn't enable everyone to apply), though you should be paid expenses. Work experience jobs are advertised on the parliamentary website, www4mp.org.

Attending political meetings or writing for a blog will get you noticed.

Prospective parliamentary candidates often need help with campaigning - this could reap rewards if your candidate gets elected, and will also be an interesting way to observe if you decide you want to stand yourself.

Don't forget MPs' assistants, key

decision-makers who play a vital role. If through your volunteering you've gained expertise about something locally, this could be a real asset to your MP.

Political parties are, of course, always looking for new ways to attract the politically disengaged. Do you have ideas to help? Could you perhaps link your Facebook page to their website and advertise events - be seen as an innovator, someone with a following?

If you become serious about standing for office contact Operation Black Vote (mp@obv.org.uk) and ask about their registration scheme.

Careers advisers: Carmel O'Reilly, careers consultant, Career Energy; Francine Fernandes, Operation Black Vote