


Building your interim career



Michael Page



Michael Page Switzerland connects Interim and contracting experts with renowned companies for short term projects. But as a one-person-business, you are often left alone with the administrative and strategic part of the service you offer. With our eBook “Building your interim career”, we aim to empower your daily life as an Interim or Contractor.

Our team of expert consultants know your challenges as a service provider and have also a deep understanding of the needs of your potential new client company. During the whole recruiting process and further ahead, our consultants offer personalized support and share their expertise with you. This service includes finding new projects, practical tips and tricks, negotiating your day rate and writing invoices.

We hope that this guide answers some of your questions regarding Interim and Contracting and helps you to maximize your career potential.

Thank you very much for your interest in Michael Page Interim!

Julien Gibert & Nicolai Mikkelsen

Executive Directors, Michael Page Switzerland

Is an interim career for me?

Are you interested in learning more about or are you considering working as a interim? We offer valuable insights such as the life as an interim consultant and required skills.

1



Make your CV work for you

With interim and contract roles, your CV really has to shine. Candidates with quantified results and achievements have much higher probabilities to continue to an interview.

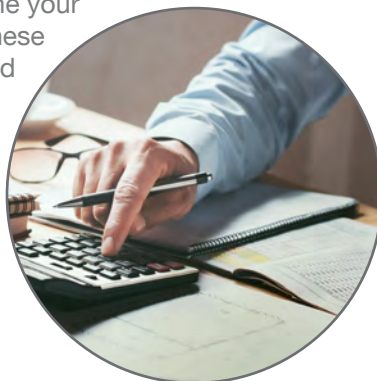
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3

Deciding on your hourly rate

How do you determine your hourly rate. Consider these factor in order to avoid overpricing or underselling your services.



4 dos and don'ts for starting interim consultants

Follow these best practices to launch your career as interim consultant and become an invaluable asset to your client.

4



IS AN INTERIM CAREER FOR ME?



Switzerland have traditionally been known for embracing employment security without too many surprises and uncertainties. But times are changing and people are willing to trade off a secure position within a company for a more flexible lifestyle that allows them living part of the year elsewhere or they are triggered by jumping into a new organisation and challenge the standard phrase “that is how we do it here”.

Life as an interim

Working as an interim can be an exciting career that offers the chance to have a real impact on businesses and work with a number of different organisations. Interims are typically highly-skilled, experienced individuals who can quickly take the helm of a project or business scenario and make a real difference. Interim consultant roles can also offer highly competitive rates of pay.

High-level interim contracts can be pressurised, as they are driven by a real business need requiring immediate leadership. A company wants to see their interim consultant deliver positive results quickly and efficiently for their business. Depending on your nature, this element of pressure could either be a positive or a negative factor. Job insecurity is normally the main drawback of an interim lifestyle.

Contractors are needed at all levels of businesses across most sectors – not just at the management level. They are brought into an organisation on a temporary basis to help out with specific project needs or to fill a temporary skills shortage. Contracting can take different forms, from rolling contracts based on daily rates to fixed-term salaried contracts. As with interim management, a career as a contractor can offer you more flexibility as well as exposure to a wide variety of companies and projects.



IS AN INTERIM CAREER FOR ME?

The skills required

For a successful interim or contractor career, you'll need to have the following attributes.

1. Adaptability and flexibility

The ability to step into new challenges and quickly get up-to-speed with the demands of the role and the methodologies of the organisation is an essential quality. An interim career is not for everyone, as many people find it unsettling to change roles on a regular basis.

2. Good under pressure

It can be stressful dealing with new people and new situations and there will be demands on the interim to demonstrate their value quickly and deliver tangible results – often in a short timeframe.

However, an interim professional/contractor will enjoy this pressure and will be confident and comfortable to get stuck in and work with new teams.

3. Strong communicator

Excellent communication skills are required to offer instruction and shape processes with clarity and speed. An interim/contractor will also be able to adapt their communication skills to fit the audience and the task.

4. Hand-over proficiency

You may not always be able to see a project through to completion and may have to leave a process or a strategy you initiated while it's still in flux. With that in mind, interim managers need to be highly proficient in handing-over to others and establishing a robust protocol for their departure.



MAKE YOUR CV WORK FOR YOU

2



With interim and contract roles, your CV really has to shine. There will normally be strong competition for positions and the client typically has a pressing need to get a suitable professional into the role quickly. All the interim experts at Michael Page in Switzerland confirm that.

Specific experience

Your CV really has to impress a potential employer at first glance. The first half of the document has to make an immediate impact, while at the same time creating the right impression. Clients will mainly look at specific experience and skills, such as knowledge of certain systems and language skills. Soft skills are of secondary importance.

Even if you don't have much of work experience yet, there will always be something in your former responsibilities that could be converted into a specific achievement.

Basic principles

Your CV may be sent through a number of different channels; either direct to the client, to a specialist interim agency or a recruitment company. Whatever the destination of your CV, a few basic principles remain the same.

Use actual statistics where possible (and applicable) to back up your achievements and make your successes more tangible.

- Tailor your CV for the job and company in question
- Put your most recent, relevant experience near the top
- Include up-to-date contact details
- Include a brief statement about yourself beneath your contact details outlining what you do and what you offer
- Keep it short, concise and well-structured
- Use bullet points where possible rather than paragraphs
- Make sure you describe your experience in detail and use the appropriate industry terminology



MAKE YOUR CV WORK FOR YOU

Overqualified

With large volumes of CVs to trawl through, the reader will want the key information to instantly jump out at them at first glance. Ensure that important details (such as your seniority, experience and functional knowledge) are immediately evident.

If you are applying for a job with a fixed contract it's usually enough just to meet the requirements. However, as an interim consultant you should be overqualified for the job. In order to convince a client, interims must have extensive experience in their field of expertise, preferably within a similar organisation or a direct competitor.

Keywords

Some recruiters may search via keywords. That has a practical reason: they have to deliver a shortlist of suitable candidates within a few hours. Suppose a client is looking for an interim accountant who speaks German and has extensive experience with IFRS, annual accounts, SAP and Cognos; in that case, a recruiter will search for those specific keywords in system. It is therefore important to use the right keywords in your CV. If you don't you might miss out on a contract.



DECIDING ON YOUR HOURLY RATE



When working in a permanent role, your salary and benefits package is set at the start of your period of employment. This is the case for most professionals; their salary is calculated every month by their employer and will typically be the same amount every pay day.

If you're an interim consultant or a contractor, you'll be in more control of the rates you'll accept for your services and the way in which you are paid. However, it's important to have a good understanding of the value of the services you can offer – don't price yourself out of the market. Speak to your consultant for more information on the going rate.

When setting your hourly rate, it's important to remember the costs that will need to come out of your earnings.

- Tax.
- National insurance and employer's national insurance.
- Benefits that are part of a package - such as private healthcare, car allowance.
- Funds to cover your own sick pay and holiday pay.
- Travel expenses.
- Business expenses, such as professional indemnity insurance or necessary equipment.

With all this in mind, a seemingly good daily rate may leave you with insufficient take-home pay.

A few other tips

- Contractors may consider setting their rates higher than that of their permanent, salaried counterparts.
- Analyse the market you are working in and the rates competitors are asking for.
- Make note of all your expenses and keep all receipts.
- Depending on your situation, you may not get paid for holidays, so make sure you budget for this when planning a break away from work.
- An umbrella company can provide payroll services for you.
- As an interim manager, it may be necessary to set up as a limited company. For more information, [State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO](#) has put together a guide to setting up as a limited company.

Each interim and contract employment situation is different, so we'd encourage you to consult a financial adviser or consultant for in-depth information.



4 DOS AND DON'TS FOR STARTING INTERIM CONSULTANTS



If you want to launch a career as an interim consultant, there are few best practices you need to take into account.

Maybe you will be one of them. Maybe you've reached a point in your career where you think: what next? What other challenges are there for me? If the answer is that you feel restricted in your current position, if you are looking for more freedom and flexibility, then it's worth considering joining the growing number of super temps. If you do, keep these best practices in mind:



1. Don't play hard to get

Interims need to be very clear about their availability; when will they be able to start; whether they will be available full time or part-time and which specific hours, days or weeks they will not be able to work, for example because they need to pick up their children from school, or because they have a vacation planned.

It's a gentleman's agreement that interims only go for an interview with a potential client if they are interested in the job, and will be able to start at the expected date. It's not done to refuse an assignment or to take some time to think about the offer, once a client has decided to hire you.

2. Be flexible

One of the perks of working as an interim, is your flexibility. However, be aware that clients expect the same flexibility. During the project interim consultant should be available whenever is needed, unless you've agreed otherwise beforehand. The same goes for the kind of work that you will be doing. Sometimes you will be asked to do work that is much more operational than you are used to, and below your level of experience, but a good interim consultant understand that sometimes that's necessary.

4 KEYS AND DONT'S FOR STARTING INTERIM CONSULTANTS

3. Expect the unexpected

If everything in organisation was peaches and cream, there wouldn't be a need for an interim manager. More often than not, they are hired to manage crises and big changes in the company. That's why interims always should be ready to deal with unexpected situations. Maybe will discover that the same manager that hired you to solve a crisis in the organisation, is the one that's causing all the problems. Good interim consultants should know how to deal with these kind of situations.

4. Create an open atmosphere

When we see a problem, our initial response is to immediately suggest possible solutions. As interim consultant, that is not the best approach. You have to be aware that other people might feel intimidated, and even feel threatened by you, because interim consultants usually have much more experience. That's why it's important not to give your opinion immediately, but remain neutral, and spend to first weeks just listening to what people have to say.

Your advantage is that you have the view of an outsider. Therefore, you need to create an atmosphere in which people feel free to give their point of view, to get the full picture. Only then, you will be able to come up with a solution that will tackle the challenges.



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