

# The Interim

**Many Pharmaceutical Physicians work in the industry on an interim basis.**

In this special insight, Bart Bierman explains the inner workings of this area.

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There are many kinds of interims, varying between outsourced employees or self employed contractors to expert consultants on expert hourly fees. Positions vary between simple gap management (pregnancy leave, vacancy filling up), long term (clinical) project management and/or clinical study monitoring and specific expertise professionals on a freelance contractor basis, like sr. clinical project managers, medical advisors etc. These are the types of interim professionals I would like to focus on.

Being an interim requires a lot from a professional. First and foremost the interim needs to realise that satisfying the client's needs goes beyond meeting or exceeding employer's expectations. Often the interim will only be invited when other internal and/or external solutions have failed, the project – often not the easiest or most popular kind of work – is under serious time pressure and expectations are high, whilst the possibilities of leaning on a team are relatively low. In most organizations, colleagues will be watching you, discuss your attitude, your cost, your car and your deliveries. Therefore, professionalism, commitment, cost-efficiency and motivation are essential elements. One simply cannot be the average colleague.

An interim has to invest in a company which will pay him for his delivery, without much of an exchange of loyalty between parties. It is a mere business transaction compared to the marriage kind of relation which characterises permanent employment. There is much less room for learning from mistakes, leaning on colleagues, or smoothing out errors by the simple progress of time. Employment is characterised by an optimal match between employer and employee – and a lot of time is taken to find such a fit.

In case of contracting the interim this is not always possible. To start with; in order to fit into the many situations, one needs to have an easily accepted personality, open and friendly – or the ability to act in a convincing manner. Quality always matters, the interim needs to be able to adapt quickly and be client oriented. It is quite common to have a different position in each client company, so leveling position and discipline needs to come naturally. Understanding the assignment's "real" goal, often not explicitly specified or documented in briefings is an essential part of the decision to accept an assignment or not. Not understanding the goal between the lines or neglecting will impact upon the assignment's success. Above all, good results come from working hard and being goal oriented, a keyword here is flexibility. Being flexible not only in working hours and location, but also in the ability to adapt swiftly to changes and to go the full mile to satisfy the client is paramount.

Having stated all of this, you would think the interim manager is a kind of super human. This of course is not true. The interim knows about the above characteristics and expectations and is able to manage these, often only timely. In many cases – after a while the "magic" is over, the interims solutions are known in the organisation, and slowly but certainly he/she is moulded in as a normal colleague – though with the well known high fee.

**Bart Bierman**  
(25+ Years experience in the Pharmaceutical Industry)