

Why are the Interim Manager and the Interim Provider real partners?

a white paper authored by NIM Europe,
partner of Senior Management Worldwide in France

2022

“Coming together is a beginning,
staying together is progress, and
working together is success”

Henry Ford

Partners recognize each other when they go through difficult events together, which makes their relationship more durable and more ambitious. An interim management service generally offers the opportunity to measure this partnership agreement: within a few weeks and sometimes a few days, the interim manager and the assignment director (or partner) pair can be very widely solicited.

The go between phase: the key to building mutual trust between future partners

The start of the relationship between the assignment director and the manager takes place during the selection and intermediation phase.

During this stage, the assignment director and the interim manager are not yet partners. They are stakeholders associated with a commercial process led by the assignment director. This process allows the two actors to build a relationship conducive to the birth of a partnership and to join forces with a common

objective: to take on a business and jointly win the client's assignment. At this stage, the relationship has a very short-term ambition.

However, this intermediation phase must be treated with care because it sometimes carries the seeds of assignment failure. It is a time when the personal interests of all parties can come into play:

- An interim manager may be in a hurry to contract a new assignment without really feeling like the right person for the job (oversell)
- The partner, facing the weakness of his pipeline, may defend an unsuitable candidate
- The client may withhold information that would put him in contradiction with his management, etc.

It is often the maturity and experience of both parties that allow this rapid contractualization phase to define the conditions for the success of the future partnership: vigorous questioning, limited briefing and no overselling, balanced price negotiations, etc.

It is from the moment the client has selected the interim manager and the latter commits to an audit of a few weeks that the relationship deepens.



The presentation of the action plan: the start of an ambitious relationship

This period of a few weeks allows the interim manager to write down a report which identifies both the objectives and the real context of the client. The observation of the gaps between what was presented during the brief and what emerges from the situational audit is the first opportunity for a real alignment between the assignment director and the interim manager. This is where the assignment really starts.

This repositioning shortly reverses the asymmetrical positions of both parties regarding to information, since the interim manager collects all the available information from the ground. Depending on his/her perception and his desire to be challenged, the interim manager will share what he deems necessary with the assignment director. His openness will naturally depend on the way the relationship has developed in the selection and intermediation process.

If this stage has been carried out correctly, the interim manager will be able to meet the strength of the partner's questioning. He will understand the role of the partner as a mirror effect, as a facilitator that will ease brushing up the objectives in the presentation of the action plan.

During this key meeting, the client and the interim manager/partner team jointly confirm the action plan. They agree to measure the differences between the current situation and the announced objectives, the need for the skills requested and the skills proposed, the resources and means allocated and those announced, the initial demand and the actual expectations, etc.

This progress report requires the courage of all parties. It is often on the client's side that the game is most complicated: it is not uncommon to hear of an interim manager who has been used as a "fuse" in an organization. This usually happens when the implementation schedule and the resources promised by the client are not forthcoming. It also happens sometimes because the issues of certain actors in the organization have not been assessed or addressed. Under these conditions, the situation can still be corrected if it does not go on too long. The interim manager and the partner still need to communicate actively. This is when their relationship must become stronger and more ambitious.



Progress meetings in the course of the assignment: consolidating the relationship and making it long term

Since the interim manager and the client are engaged in a high-intensity collaboration, both parties can lose their footing on one subject or another.

Monitoring the progress of the assignment is not only an opportunity to deepen a business relationship and identify new business opportunities, it is also an opportunity for the partner to play his part in the success of the assignment by defending his manager against all the many pollutions of the system (wear and tear on the listening posture due to the stress of the assignment, change of direction by the principal under non-negotiated pressure...).

It is during the long term of the assignment that the relationship between the manager and the partner becomes powerful because the latter will endeavour to help the client to make the most of the presence of the interim manager. Of course, it happens that a manager encounters difficulties intrinsically linked to his or her skills or posture, but it is also sometimes the conditions for carrying out the assignment that are degraded by a client organization that is deficient in accommodating the service.

The partner will then be responsible for re-establishing the balance of roles and responsibilities and for providing the appropriate space for the dialogue between the interim manager and the client (re-alignment) to enable the assignment to offer the maximum benefits to its client.

A partnership between the interim manager and the assignment director can also allow the client to transform its organization from the inside with the support of an interim manager truly disengaged from his personal interests.



International cooperation

This white paper is a contribution of SMW's partner NIM Europe (Anne-Sophie Peyssonneaux) from France.

Senior Management Worldwide (SMW) regularly publishes best practice examples from its partners. SMW is an international group of like-minded specialists of interim management providers. They operate in partnership under common principles and standards of excellence. Each partner helps organizations solve critical management issues and influence business outcomes. SMW offers the strongest and deepest network of leading interim executives available anywhere in the world. They combine global reach with local knowledge. With their combined reach and experience, the 25 partner countries offer a wide pool of interim and independent executive professionals across the world.

Wondering how we can help your company?
Contact the SMW partners in your region:
smw-interim.com.

