

## Five Reasons to Hire an Interim Executive

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A hospital or healthcare organization can be plunged into disarray and disorganization with the sudden (or even the planned) departure of an executive or manager. With staff feeling a lack of direction and perhaps experiencing low morale, an immediate remedy is needed. The best solution is often to bring in an interim leader to quickly re-establish order and focus. Here are five circumstances that illustrate why interim leadership is a good option.

### **1). Specialized expertise in temporary situations**

When an organization has unique

circumstances such as being audited, affiliating with another group, or experiencing a situation that is out-of-the ordinary such as a software or system conversion, special expertise and skills are often required so that the situation can be handled properly. An interim that can be on site quickly can work with executives to develop implementable strategies to handle the specific issues and maintain the overall health of the organization. Bringing in an interim in this instance makes good financial sense since the special skills required are usually not needed long term.

### **2). Filling roles resulting from sudden departures**

Unexpected departures due to illness, a job transfer, termination, resignation or sudden retirement, are the main reasons why hospitals and healthcare organizations seek interim leadership. With executive searches taking an average of six months or longer to complete, quick departures leave little to no time to find a permanent replacement. By hiring an interim, an organization's leaders gain time to identify and vet a permanent replacement. In addition, the transitional time between an interim and permanent leader can be opportune for hospitals to clean

up lingering issues, reevaluate strategies and create proactive change for long-term success.

An example is a not-for-profit-community hospital in California's Central Valley which was undergoing an acquisition process. During that time, the controller and accounting supervisor resigned on the same day. The hospital's vice president and CFO hired internally for the accounting supervisor position. However, because of the acquisition, the controller position was difficult to fill, so an executive search and interim management team was hired to seek an interim controller.

The experienced interim that was hired to fill the controller position successfully stepped into the position and was able to keep staff settled, focused, and also effectively communicated with them while a permanent replacement was sought.

### **3). Determining if re-organization is necessary**

For hospitals or other facilities considering adding a new position or service to the organizational chart, but not ready to fully commit, an interim can be a trial run to see if the new role is needed and

meets expectations. It can also help executives determine the right skill set for the position. An interim that is a good match for the position can positively impact the hospital's future. On the other hand, if the position or service doesn't work out, then a costly mistake is avoided.

#### **4). Handling heavy lifting for difficult tasks**

Downsizing, ending a service line, closing the doors, or dealing with a labor issue are examples of unpleasant and unpopular tasks for someone to take the lead on. Having an interim handle them and do the heavy lifting, including being perceived as "the bad guy," can avoid long-term negative feelings. The interim takes on the role of Chief Transition Officer and then departs once the issue or problem has been resolved.

#### **5). Too much work to handle**

In cases such as implementing

electronic medical records or other computer system implementation where the workload is overwhelming, quickly finding and hiring an experienced interim executive can ease the load and offer a fresh, impartial perspective of the issues at hand.

#### **Conducting an Interim Search**

Searching for and hiring an interim executive brings forth the question of whether to handle the search internally or to work with a firm that handles interim placement. There is considerable time involved in vetting and interviewing candidates, as well as understanding the qualities required for the job.

A successful search usually means that a seasoned executive is brought in quickly and is capable of getting up to speed and bringing a situation under control. The answer to who is the best team to find that qualified person may be determined by who has the time to devote to the search

and has access to highly qualified candidates with considerable experience in the positions that need to be filled.

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