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INTERIM ADVISORY OVERVIEW

Executive Interim Talent Solutions: Leadership & Transformation

Market Intelligence, Engagement Strategy & Retention Framework

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Prepared for Clients Considering an Interim Leadership Appointment

Market Data Reference: Q2 / Q3 2026

Prepared by Executive Recruit

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Executive Summary

As organisations navigate the dual pressures of digital disruption and economic volatility, demand for high-calibre interim leadership has surged. This advisory draws on our proprietary, ongoing research and current analytical hiring data to give you a clear, defensible basis for planning an interim appointment.

Outlined within are current day rates for key transformation roles, defined scope expectations and work models (onsite / hybrid / remote), and a retention strategy designed to ensure your interim leaders deliver against agreed objectives. Executive Recruit has a proven track record of supporting clients through the appointment of interim leaders across change, transformation and AI — consistently identifying and securing top-tier talent across multiple verticals, even during periods of critical talent shortage.

Current Market Rates & Role Benchmarking

The rates below are based on real-time hiring data and our analytical review of the current interim market (Q2/Q3 2026). Figures reflect the base daily rate (outside IR35, typically) and should be treated as a benchmark for budgeting purposes.

Role Title	Mid-Point (Guide)	Range (Low–High)
Chief Transformation Officer	£1,400	£1,200 – £1,600
Chief Enterprise Transformation Officer	£1,400	£1,200 – £1,600
Chief AI Officer	£1,150	£1,000 – £1,350
Chief Digital Officer	£1,150	£1,000 – £1,350
Chief Automation Officer	£1,150	£1,000 – £1,350
Chief Digital & AI Officer	£1,200	£1,050 – £1,400
Chief Data & AI Officer	£1,200	£1,050 – £1,400
Group Transformation Director	£1,200	£1,000 – £1,400
Transformation Director	£1,050	£900 – £1,200
Dir. of Enterprise AI Transformation	£1,050	£900 – £1,200
Director of Data & AI	£1,000	£850 – £1,150
Head of AI Transformation	£950	£800 – £1,100
Dir. of Business Change & Transformation	£950	£800 – £1,100
Business Change Director	£950	£800 – £1,100
Digital Transformation Director	£900	£750 – £1,050
Head of Change	£800	£700 – £900
Director of Digital Transformation	£850	£700 – £950

Role Title	Mid-Point (Guide)	Range (Low–High)
Head of Transformation	£850	£750 – £1,000
Programme Director	£850	£750 – £1,000
Project Director	£750	£650 – £850
Head of PMO	£750	£650 – £850
Business Change Manager	£650	£550 – £750
Strategic Delivery Lead	£650	£550 – £750

2026 Interim Leadership Market — Five Key Findings

1. **AI and transformation leadership remains at a premium**, particularly where organisations need immediate delivery capability.
2. **Day rates vary significantly by mandate**, with scope, complexity and availability often more important than title alone.
3. **The strongest interim mandates are outcome-led**, with clear 30/60/90-day objectives rather than traditional job descriptions.
4. **Hybrid working requires structure**, particularly during the first weeks of an assignment.
5. **The best interim talent is often not actively looking**, making access to the market as important as the recruitment process itself.

Advisory on Scope & Role Expectations

To maximise return on investment, we advise defining the “Mission” rather than relying on a traditional job description. Interim leaders excel in ambiguity, but clarity on deliverables is critical.

– The “First 100 Days” Mandate — we recommend defining specific milestones for the first 30, 60 and 90 days. For example, a Chief Transformation Officer should be expected to deliver a Transformation Roadmap within 30 days, not merely “manage change.”

– Handover & Exit — scope must include a Knowledge Transfer and Stabilisation phase. Interims should be contracted to ensure the permanent team can sustain the change post-exit.

– Stakeholder Management — for senior roles (CTO, CDO, Group Directors), scope must explicitly cover Board-level reporting and C-suite relationship management to prevent siloed decision-making.

Work Models: Onsite, Remote & Hybrid Strategy

Our current market view is that a hybrid-first approach, with clearly defined onsite requirements, provides the best balance between stakeholder access and focused delivery.

- The “Splash Zone” (Onsite) — for the first 2–3 weeks, interim leaders should be onsite 4–5 days a week to build rapport and understand the organisation's unwritten rules.
- The “Execution Phase” (Hybrid) — after onboarding, we advise a 3-day onsite / 2-day remote model for strategic directors, balancing leadership access with deep remote planning time.
- Project Managers (PMO / Change) — these roles typically require heavy stakeholder mapping; we suggest 4 days onsite to facilitate rapid workshops and impediment removal.
- Exceptions — for highly specialised AI / Data roles, where talent is scarce globally, we recommend a remote-first policy with monthly “Sprint Weeks” onsite to widen the talent pool.

Retention Strategy: Securing Interims to Project Completion

One of the highest risks in interim management is poaching or early exit. To ensure continuity, we propose the following Retention Framework be included in the Statement of Work (SOW).

- Objective-Linked Bonuses (OLB) — rather than standard daily rates alone, allocate 10–15% of total contract value as a Project Completion Bonus, paid only on successful achievement of the Phase 1 or Phase 2 Gate Review.
- Contractual Notice Period Alignment — we advise a 30-day reciprocal notice period, preventing sudden departures and providing a safety net to find a successor.
- The “Dedicated Partner” Approach — interims often leave due to isolation. Executive Recruit assigns a dedicated Account Partner to conduct bi-weekly Pulse Checks, managing burnout and ensuring the interim feels valued.

The Executive Recruit Advantage: Our Live Network

Our success is built on a proprietary, pre-qualified network of interim executives who are currently “live” and available. We do not rely solely on job boards.

- Proactive Talent Mapping — we maintain a Hot List of passive leaders who are currently employed but open to mission-critical projects, ensuring options even during acute talent shortages.
- The “Under-the-Radar” Candidate — 67% of our placements come from leaders who are not actively looking but are listening for specific high-impact roles, giving you access your competitors cannot match.
- Industry Agnostic — our network spans Financial Services, Retail, Healthcare and Technology, allowing cross-pollination of ideas (for example, a Retail transformation methodology applied to a Healthcare AI rollout).

Our Track Record: Identifying, Qualifying & Securing Talent

Beyond the CV — assessing interim leadership capability is where most placements fail. Our rigorous vetting process mitigates this risk.

- The “Whiteboard” Assessment — shortlisted candidates complete a 30-minute Strategic Whiteboard exercise with our consultants to prove their methodology before you interview them.

- Cultural Agility Index — a proprietary assessment of an interim's ability to navigate corporate politics and resistant stakeholders, a major factor in project failure.
- Handling Talent Shortages — between 2022 and 2026 we placed 92% of mandates within the first three candidates presented, maintaining an 85% fill rate through our Retained Search model.
- Securing the Deal — our closing rate is 98%. We manage the negotiation of rates, expenses and notice periods to secure a seamless “Yes” from the candidate.

Next Steps

The interim leadership market is moving fast. Rates for AI and transformation roles are projected to increase by 6–9% over the coming quarters and further through 2027, driven by sustained demand and a tightening talent pool. Waiting to act means competing for a shrinking pool of available leaders at a higher cost — organisations that move decisively will secure the talent that defines their transformation success.

At Executive Recruit, we don't just fill interim roles. We provide the market intelligence, the pre-qualified network, and the retention frameworks that ensure your project succeeds — backed by a rigorous vetting process that means you only meet leaders who are ready to deliver from day one.

Whether you need a Chief Transformation Officer to lead a complex turnaround or a Business Change Manager to embed new ways of working, we are ready to support you.

Need a view on the market?

If you are considering an interim AI, data, transformation or change appointment, Executive Recruit can provide a confidential view of current talent availability, appropriate engagement models and indicative market rates.

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