

# RECRUITING AN INTERIM LAWYER

A Hudson Legal Guide



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## INTRODUCTION

Changing economic environments, whether they are "boom" or "bust", require organisations to be more flexible with their resourcing requirements. In-house legal divisions, the public sector teams and law firms are not immune to this trend.

Herein, we cover the following topics to ensure you are equipped with information about interim lawyers and how they can improve your business, whatever the economic climate:

- Hudson Legal's Interim Division
- Why Recruit an Interim Lawyer?
- Typical Concerns
- Who is Available?
- The Working Day Trial
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## HUDSON LEGAL'S INTERIM DIVISION

To provide clients with a comprehensive legal resourcing solution, we have an have established interim offering. As one of the largest temporary and contract recruiters of qualified lawyers and paralegals in the UK, our consultants are all specialists in their particular areas and are able to advise on a range of interim options.

Our specialist areas include:

### **In-house**

In-house Legal Departments across all sectors including Investment Banking, Financial Services, IT & Telecoms, Pharmaceuticals, Retail, Manufacturing, FMCG, Professional Services, Media, Oil, Gas, Energy & Utilities, Publishing and Construction Industries.

### **Public Sector**

Recruiting into Local Authorities, Central Government, NDPBs, Charities, Associations, NHS Trusts and Further Education.

### **Private Practice**

Recruiting into the Magic Circle, Top 200, US Law firms, niche and generalist practices.

We recruit at all levels:

- Paralegal
- Newly Qualified
- Assistant Solicitor
- Associate
- Partner
- Professional Support Lawyer
- Contract Manager
- ISDA Negotiator
- Company Secretary
- Head of Legal
- General Counsel

Interim lawyers are also known as locums, professional contractors, special project lawyers or temps. Regardless of the name, we can assist with recruitment for a variety of assignments, whether the duration is a week, a year, or somewhere in between.

## WHY RECRUIT AN INTERIM LAWYER?

As more and more law firms and in-house legal teams recognise the value of recruiting an interim, the breadth and importance of these positions has expanded to cover a number of diverse roles, for an increasing number of reasons.

### **Headcount restrictions**

In some cases there may be a need to recruit but headcount restrictions may prevent you from being able to recruit permanently. The interim option allows you to work around this, as the candidate is on the consultancy's payroll and therefore not part of your headcount. Having this individual on board and adding value can also be an effective tool in convincing the "powers that be" that a permanent addition to headcount is needed, particularly when budgets are tight.

### **Specific projects**

An upturn in workload might not warrant a permanent addition, however, a major project such as setting up processes in response to new regulations, a major piece of litigation on M&A / integration activity, may mean internal resources are not enough to manage the immediate business need. In this situation an interim lawyer can avoid the need to recruit permanently.

### **Maternity cover**

Three, six or nine months can be a considerable amount of time to be without one of your key players. Employing an interim lawyer to fill the gap will mean the work is serviced properly and existing staff do not have to absorb all the extra workload.

### **To fill a gap**

If you are looking to recruit permanently, or are waiting for a new person to start, an interim lawyer with proven experience can pick up existing work and ensure it is effectively managed, thereby giving the new permanent recruit a smoother transition into the role. All too often work can build up over a period of months between permanent employees making the first weeks of work for a new recruit overly stressful. An interim can prevent this problem from arising.

### **Testing the water**

Some clients have a recruitment need but want to "test the water" before starting the recruitment process. An interim lawyer, whether it be for three weeks or three months, allows you to see how a candidate works and interacts with potential colleagues before committing to anything permanent. This process is similar to a probationary period but offers more flexibility and potential cost savings.

### **Holiday or sickness cover**

Where one or a number of employees are on leave, or where an employee is sick – for either a short or long time, an interim lawyer can fill the gaps in staffing.

### **Additional expertise**

Many senior lawyers become "professional contractors" as a lifestyle choice. This means a firm is able to reap the benefits of their seniority and experience on an as needs basis, and often with significant cost benefits normally associated with more junior lawyers.

## TYPICAL CONCERNS

Although the legal environment, whether it be in-house, the public sector or private practice, is becoming increasingly receptive to interim hires, there are still some typical concerns around this type of recruitment.

### **“We use secondees and they know our business. How do we know an interim can do the same?”**

Our in-house consultants are sector specialists who know your business and are already working in your sector - be it energy, construction, media, or any one of a number of others – and with candidates who are looking for similar roles. They are familiar with the type of people your sector requires and will take a full brief from you to ensure that your requirements as to skills and personality fit are met. Our candidates can also bring additional expertise picked up from other businesses in your sector where they have previously worked and are usually obtained at significantly lower cost than a secondee from a law firm.

### **“We are able to cover internally, so there is no business case for recruiting.”**

The short-term solution of longer working hours for existing staff can have long-term implications of reduced retention rates and productivity. As workloads are increased to make up a temporary shortfall in staff there is an increased likelihood of people leaving a firm or company to join those boasting a better work/life balance, and replacing them can incur new hire costs. Employing an internal resource to manage a shortfall can also mean a company is not making the best use of its resources (e.g. using a senior lawyer to cover the work of a much more junior lawyer).

### **“If the interim hire may be working on a short-term basis how can we guarantee confidentiality?”**

Qualified contractors are usually members of The Law Society or hold current Practising Certificates, and as a result understand the nature of the business and the environment in which they are working. However, for peace of mind and should the need arise, we can and will draw up confidentiality agreements to ensure your business is carried out efficiently and confidentially. Alternatively, you are free to ask an interim lawyer to sign your own confidentiality agreement.

### **“Interim staff might affect client continuity.”**

Job life expectancy is shorter than it once was, particularly in difficult economic times, and companies no longer expect their staff to stay for good, which means there is no guarantee of continuity even for a permanent hire. Furthermore, many interims go back to the same client time and time again, partly to allow client continuity.

### **“Due to the lack of notice period, how can we be sure they will not leave us in the lurch?”**

Although both clients and candidates are aware of this worry we are able to build notice periods into short-term contract hires, which means peace of mind for the client and the candidate. As a professional consultancy, we maintain contact with our candidates throughout assignments. This ensures that any issues on their part can be communicated and dealt with at an early stage.

Completion bonuses, either as an additional payment or a retained proportion of the salary, also assist in the retention of interim staff.

### **“The cost of recruiting an interim member of staff can be disproportionately expensive.”**

When the need for an interim lawyer arises, companies often take on a secondee which is usually a more expensive course of action than recruiting an interim through an agency. The reality is that interim lawyers work on market rate salaries, but their cost is pro-rated and can be spread across the duration of the assignment if its length is undetermined.

## WHO IS AVAILABLE?

As more firms and in-house legal teams look to explore the interim option, so too do the number of candidates, which in turn increases the breadth of experience and expertise available. It is worth noting that many of Hudson's permanent candidates have also expressed an interest in exploring interim opportunities, particularly at the senior end of the market.

Candidates who make the choice include:

### **Senior private practice and in-house lawyers**

These lawyers may decide to move to an interim position because they have had enough of the 'pressure cooker' environment, and are seeking a better work/life balance. Candidates such as these bring a wealth of knowledge and experience, want to be able to choose when and where they work and have the financial security to do so.

### **Lawyers with interests outside the law**

After a successful period in employment some lawyers decide to pursue other career-related interests. For some this can mean taking the next step on the career ladder, while for others it can mean a change in direction. This may involve undertaking further study, which in turn requires increased flexibility in their current position.

### **Those returning to the job market**

Candidates who have taken time off to go travelling, or those back from maternity leave and now looking for long-term job security, may decide to test the water before embarking on a permanent role within an organisation. These candidates often decide to try an interim position before making a long-term commitment.

### **Lawyers who have been made redundant**

The current economic climate has unfortunately resulted in the redundancy of a number of quality lawyers of various disciplines and levels of qualification. This has resulted in a more flexible workforce that is prepared to look at a range of options in terms of their employment and can bring quality experience to the table for interim periods.

### **Newly qualifieds**

Candidates who have been offered a position upon qualification but want to try different areas of the law may decide to move elsewhere, rather than taking the first role that becomes available. Working on short-term assignments allows them to do this. Candidates not kept on by their firm due to lack of work/insufficient positions are keen to gain as much post-qualification experience as they can and will happily do this on an interim basis.

### **Professional support lawyers**

Interims looking to stay within law but without the pressure of fee earning, and those looking for more regular hours, may decide to try an interim career. In this case the candidate's experience and expertise would be invaluable to a potential employer and allow the interim to manage their personal lives.

### **Paralegals**

Career paralegals and those looking for work whilst applying for training contracts can be a real business asset on an interim basis. Utilising experienced interim staff avoids the need to use trainees or qualified lawyers to do the work of a paralegal.

### **Overseas lawyers**

Overseas lawyers are typically from leading firms or corporates in Australia or New Zealand. For some, coming to the UK is the next logical step in their career development, whilst for others it is a chance to travel and earn money while they are here. They all possess law degrees from these common law jurisdictions and have sufficiently similar training and experience to adjust quickly and add value. They are also a value for money solution, as their salary expectations tend to be lower in many skillsets than UK qualified lawyers.

## THE WORKING DAY TRIAL

Whether you decide to commit to a fixed term or hourly rate contract, Hudson recommends its Working Day Trial (WDT), either in place of, or in addition to an interview.

The WDT enables you and your colleagues to spend a longer period of time with a potential candidate as well as providing you with short-term assistance with your workload.

Hudson is able to arrange WDTs at very short notice, usually within hours. During the trial the candidate goes into a business for a day and will usually work on existing files or projects, while there is someone at hand to monitor their progress.

The Working Day Trial provides the opportunity to ensure a potential candidate is the right fit for an organisation and also allows a potential employer to check the quality of their work. It also prevents a candidate interviewing elsewhere, which can prove to be an added benefit in a tight, candidate-driven market, such as the one we are operating in now.

If the WDT is successful the organisation will be charged for that day and any days thereafter. Should they decide not to take on the candidate, no fee is payable. Ninety-five per cent of Working Day Trials are a success.

## OUR INTERIM PRODUCT

Unlike other recruitment and consultancy firms, Hudson is able to offer a range of bespoke interim solutions that meet the needs of each individual client. We have a proven track record of delivering high quality candidates on an individual or team basis, while ensuring our clients exacting standards are met.

### **Interim Solutions**

Hudson is a market leader in the placement of interim legal staff across a number of areas, including:

- In-house
- Public Sector
- Private Practice

We place interim staff from paralegal to partner level.

Candidates can be placed on Hudson's payroll on an hourly or daily rate and the client invoiced weekly (temporary staff) or on a fixed-term contract where a pro-rata up-front fee is payable (contract staff).

### **Interim Senior Counsel**

As law firms and corporates continue to evolve they are increasingly demanding specialist skills and experience to assist in specific projects, an overflow of senior level work or need to temporarily fill senior roles while a permanent person is sourced and recruited.

Hudson is able to supply senior lawyers with enormous breadth of experience in order to assist our clients during the following periods of change:

- Senior Counsel Stand-Ins
- Specific Project Management (eg. Data Protection/Outsourcing)
- Merger/Integration Team Management
- Business Turnaround/Change Management
- Establishing or enhancing New Business or Legal Specialisms

### **Legal Project Teams**

Over recent years there has been increasing pressure on law firms to deliver quality legal services to their clients at lower rates. Similarly, corporate entities are under pressure to reduce spend on their support functions, such as the legal department. One way in which they are able to take control over their costs is to commission Hudson to provide a team of professional contract lawyers or paralegals in the event of, for example, large scale litigation or M&A activity.

Hudson works in partnership with these clients in staffing a legal project to ensure they are provided with the most cost effective legal team, on many occasions significantly reducing the legal costs associated with a trial, acquisition, merger or review. Quality Management is maintained by strict vetting and reference procedures and the teams work with, and under the management of, a senior lawyer recruited by Hudson specifically for the project or a senior lawyer on the permanent staff of the client.

## **ABOUT HUDSON LEGAL**

At Hudson, we understand that successful working relationships are the key to the success of both the organisation and the individual.

We understand this because we employ 3,300 professionals serving clients and candidates in more than 20 countries globally. Hudson Legal is one of the world's largest legal recruiters, giving us the broadest understanding of the ever-changing dynamics of the global legal marketplace.

In this day and age, it is vital that a global network is combined with in-depth local market knowledge and capability. In the UK, we have Legal recruitment consultants, the majority of which are legally trained or qualified, based in London, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow, providing national coverage to address your recruitment needs.

Our Private Practice team has vast experience recruiting for all sizes and types of firms, ranging from Magic Circle through to niche boutique firms. Our In-house team is segmented by sector so you can be sure you get the depth of industry knowledge required to provide you with highly tailored recruitment advice.

We work with our clients on a retained, contingent, temporary or contract basis; offering flexibility to recruitment solutions reflective of individual requirements and fluctuating economic environments. Our Temporary & Contract recruitment capability is fully integrated within both our Private Practice and our In-house teams, so that you can be certain you get the most effective interim solution should the need arise, whether you are client or candidate.

We can advise you on the best advertising solution for your recruitment needs, and also offer substantial discounts on both online and offline advertising with leading media.

In conjunction with our talent management offering, we partner with our clients to select the right people, engage and retain talent, and develop and shape potential.

Most importantly, we create long lasting mutually beneficial relationships, so that you can be certain we have the future in mind when working with you. We think this is a refreshing approach in a time when too many people are focused on short term transactions instead of long standing business relationships. That is why we will never offer you a standard service and insist on a personal local service but with a truly global reach.

We're different because you are.

For more information about the services Hudson Legal provides, or for contact information of the consultant dedicated to your business type, please go to [www.uk.hudson.com](http://www.uk.hudson.com)

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