

ACTING & INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVES

This approach is not nearly as common as the appointment of an acting or interim executive for a shorter term, but it can be a good strategy in the right circumstances and with the right leader.

	ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE	INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE	TRANSITION CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Period of service	Bridge leadership, 4 – 6 months	Bridge leadership, 4 – 6 months	Extended service, 12 – 24 months or more
Internal candidates accepted?	YES	NO	YES
Typical candidate	<p>A senior manager or other insider who is appointed to provide bridge management during the interim period, with a temporary salary adjustment.</p> <p>In larger organizations, the person serving in the chief operating officer position often is elevated to the acting chief executive role.</p>	<p>A seasoned executive from outside the organization who, like the acting chief executive, provides bridge leadership during the interim period.</p> <p>Interim executives often are former chief executives who are retired or who may have a consulting practice.</p>	<p>An executive from inside or outside the organization who is appointed for an extended period.</p>
Can temporary executive be a candidate for the permanent position?	<p>In some cases, the acting executive is a candidate for the permanent position. If not offered the position, he or she typically will go back to the previous role on the staff when a new chief executive is appointed.</p>	<p>As a rule, the interim executive should not be a candidate for the permanent position.</p>	NO
Important responsibilities	Handles day-to-day affairs of organization	Helps prepare the organization to work with the incoming permanent CEO. A good interim executive deals with the day-to-day affairs of the organization, while at the same time building the platform for the permanent successor.	Turn around an organization experiencing serious problems or realign an underperforming organization.

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Key points to consider when hiring a temporary chief executive:

- Look for management experience, not just familiarity with the organization's programs. The interim chief executive's role is not a job-training opportunity. Typically, the most successful interim executives are mid- to late-career professionals. Management experience is paramount; experience in the organization's particular program area is often less essential.
- Don't look through the same lens the board will use for the permanent executive's position. Look for a match between experience and transition priorities. The board may want to look for a temporary executive who has particular strength in an area of need as well as the capacity to bridge the leadership/management role.
- Consider cultural competency. Boards should consider hiring an interim executive whose background and demographic profile reflect the community served by the organization. Such an individual can bring cultural competency and important insights to the organization that can help ensure the success of the transition.
- Look for a leadership style that matches the dynamics of the transition. Successful interim executives tend to be action-oriented but collaborative in their approach, with well-honed listening skills. They help the organization pursue its change agenda, but always in close collaboration with the board and in consultation with the staff. The interim period typically is not a time to take on bold new initiatives, nor is it a time for the interim executive to pursue his or her solo agenda or vision for the organization.
- Look for flexibility. Executive searches often take longer than anticipated. Boards should ensure that the interim chief executive is available beyond what might be an optimistic timeline.
- Think twice before appointing a board member as the acting or interim executive. Sometimes a board member will throw a hat into the ring, or the board will actively seek the candidacy of a board member believed to have the time and interest to lead the organization on a temporary basis. But as the board considers what it needs in a temporary executive, familiarity with the organization should not supersede the executive skills needed to manage and lead during a time of transition.

Resource: [Chief Executive Transitions](#)