

Choosing the Right Procurement Leadership Model

Interim CPO · Full-time executive leadership to stabilise, transform, or rebuild your procurement function.

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A practical guide for CEOs, CFOs, and Boards choosing between interim, permanent, and consultant procurement leadership

Organisations often hit inflection points where procurement leadership becomes mission-critical — and a permanent CPO hire is months away, or not yet the right call. Interim, permanent, and consultant models each solve a different problem. This guide sets out what each one is, when it fits, and how to tell them apart.

HOW AN ENGAGEMENT BEGINS

Step 1 — Initial conversation

We map your situation by email or call and confirm which model fits.

Step 2 — Scoping conversation

Objectives, constraints, and success measures defined.

Step 3 — Proposal within 5 days

Scope, timeline, and commercial terms — no ambiguity.

1 What is an Interim CPO?

An Interim Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) is a senior, experienced procurement executive engaged on a fixed-term basis — typically 3 to 12 months — operating 4 to 5 days per week. They step in when an organisation needs immediate functional leadership and cannot wait for a permanent hire.

Unlike a consultant who advises from the outside, an Interim CPO attends ExCo, owns the function, sets direction, and is fully accountable for outcomes — from day one.

2 When do organisations need an Interim CPO?

- Sudden leadership gap — the CPO departs unexpectedly, or a permanent hire is delayed beyond tolerance
- Transformation programme — a cost reduction, ERP implementation, or category reset requires dedicated senior ownership
- M&A activity — supplier negotiations, integration of supply bases, contracts, and teams demand experienced leadership
- Performance crisis — supply chain disruption, supplier failure, or cost overrun requires urgent executive intervention
- Capability rebuild — the board or CFO needs the function rebuilt professionally before appointing a permanent CPO
- Board or investor mandate — procurement savings have been committed; delivery risk too high to leave the function unled

3 Outcomes delivered — 30 / 60 / 90 days

DAY 30	DAY 60	DAY 90
• Stakeholder mapping complete • Spend & contract analysis done • Supplier risk identified • Quick wins scoped • 90-day plan agreed with CEO/CFO	• First savings delivered & evidenced • Critical negotiations re-opened • Team structure assessed & adjusted • Contract risk register live • Board / ExCo update presented	• Procurement cadence embedded • Category strategies documented • Capability gaps resolved • KPI dashboard operational • Handover pack ready, if transitioning to permanent

4 Typical Engagement Structure

COMMITMENT

4–5 days per week — on-site or hybrid

DURATION

3 to 12 months; extensions by mutual agreement, or transition to a permanent appointment

COMMERCIAL

Day rate agreed at engagement, plus expenses — no hidden advisory fees

EXIT

Transition timeline agreed at outset; extended or converted to permanent if that best serves the organisation

Engagements across manufacturing, industrials, chemical & packaging, professional services & distribution supply chains — trusted by CEOs, CFOs, and Boards during moments of transformation and disruption.

Questions your Board may ask

Why not just promote internally?

Internal candidates often lack the seniority or bandwidth for the role — and may be a flight risk if unrealistic expectations are created by stepping into an interim position alongside their current responsibilities. An Interim provides immediate capability while you develop the right long-term solution.

How quickly can someone start?

Typically within 1–2 weeks of agreement. No lengthy recruitment process, no onboarding delays.

What does success look like?

Defined at engagement: savings targets, risk reduction, team capability, and — where relevant — a clean handover to a permanent appointment.

Permanent CPO & Consultant Support

Long-term leadership, and advisory that stays outside the function.

5 What is a Permanent CPO placement?

A Permanent CPO is a direct, long-term executive appointment — the organisation's own hire, recruited and onboarded for the role, not engaged on a fixed term. This is the right destination once the organisation knows what it needs from the role and is ready to commit to it for the long run.

A permanent hire is a commitment to a long-term operating model, not just a person. Getting the timing right — appointing once the function, priorities, and reporting lines are clear — matters more than appointing fast.

6 When does a permanent hire make sense?

- The function and its mandate are stable — the organisation knows what it needs long-term, not just for the next 6–12 months
- Continuity matters — deep, ongoing supplier and stakeholder relationships benefit from a single leader over years, not a handover
- Culture-building is a priority — growing and retaining an internal team benefits from a leader embedded for the long haul
- The business has outgrown interim support — procurement is now core to strategy, not a fix-and-transition problem
- A clean handover point has been reached — an interim engagement has stabilised the function and defined the role the permanent hire will step into

7 How does Consultant support differ from both?

A consultant typically delivers analysis and recommendations from outside the organisation, then leaves the decisions and delivery to you. Both Interim and Permanent CPOs take on executive accountability instead — making

decisions, leading the function, owning supplier relationships, and being responsible for outcomes. Consultant-style advisory support has its place: focused, time-boxed input (a negotiation, a category review, a board question) where full executive ownership of the function isn't what's needed.

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Interim vs Permanent vs Consultant — which is right for you?

	Interim CPO	Permanent CPO	Consultant
Commitment	4–5 days/week	Full-time, ongoing	Project or advisory basis
Typical duration	3–12 months	Open-ended	Weeks, or a fixed brief
Best for	Leadership gap / transformation	Stable, long-term mandate	A specific question or decision
Function ownership	Full executive ownership	Full executive ownership	Advisory only — no authority
ExCo attendance	Regular / standing member	Standing member	As invited
Commercial model	Day rate + expenses	Salary, bonus, benefits	Day rate or fixed fee
Exit	Handover — timeline agreed	N/A — ongoing role	Ends at brief completion

Questions your Board may ask

How do we know which model is right for us?

Urgency and scale of the problem, and how long-term the need is. A leadership gap or major transformation needs full immersion now — that's Interim. A stable, long-term mandate is better served by a Permanent hire. A single decision or negotiation may only need Consultant input.

Can an Interim engagement lead to a Permanent appointment?

Yes — this is a common and deliberate path. An Interim CPO can stabilise the function, define the role clearly, and either hand over to a Permanent hire or be considered for it directly, depending on fit.

Not sure which model fits your situation? Get in touch and we'll map your circumstances to the right model — or tell you directly if none of them is the right answer.

Who this is not for: *If your procurement function is stable and adequately led, none of these models is likely to add meaningful value at this time. We would rather say that clearly than take on an engagement that doesn't serve your organisation.*