

Interim & Fractional CPO — The Executive Guide

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

Triple-A Strategy · triplea-strategy.com · wes@triplea-strategy.com

Page 1 of 2



A practical guide for CEOs, CFOs, and Boards navigating procurement leadership decisions

Organisations often hit inflection points where procurement leadership becomes mission-critical — and a permanent CPO hire is months away. Interim and Fractional CPO models give boards immediate senior capability, without slowing down delivery or exposing the business to unnecessary risk.

HOW AN ENGAGEMENT BEGINS

Step 1 — Clarity call (25 min): We map your situation 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 **3 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
Diagnose & Orient <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder mapping complete• Spend & contract analysis done• Supplier risk identified• Quick wins scoped• 90-day plan agreed with CEO/CFO	Deliver & Reset <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First savings delivered & evidenced• Critical negotiations re-opened• Team structure assessed & adjusted• Contract risk register live• Board / ExCo update presented	Embed & Transition <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Procurement cadence embedded• Category strategies documented• Capability gaps resolved• KPI dashboard operational• Handover pack for permanent CPO ready

4 Typical engagement structure

COMMITMENT

3–5 days per week — on-site or hybrid

COMMERCIAL

Day rate agreed at engagement — no hidden advisory fees

DURATION

3 to 12 months; extensions by mutual agreement

EXIT

Transition timeline agreed at outset; extended if permanent hire is delayed

Engagements across manufacturing, industrials, 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 a clean handover to a permanent appointment.





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5 What is a Fractional CPO?

A **Fractional CPO** provides senior procurement leadership on a part-time, retained basis — typically **1 to 3 days per week**. The organisation gains C-suite calibre thinking, strategic direction, and supplier negotiation capability without the cost or long-term commitment of a full-time executive hire.

A Fractional CPO is not a consultant on retainer. They hold an accountable leadership role, attend relevant leadership forums, own key supplier relationships, and deliver measurable commercial outcomes — compressed into fewer days each week.

6 When does a Fractional CPO make sense?

- **Scale-up or mid-market business** — procurement spend is growing but doesn't yet justify a full-time CPO salary
- **No current procurement leadership** — the function reports to finance or ops; strategic direction is absent
- **Between permanent hires** — a bridge is needed while the executive search runs, without losing momentum
- **Specific programme support** — a major contract renewal, supplier rationalisation, or savings programme needs senior oversight
- **Board-level cost discipline** — procurement improvement flagged but full-time headcount not yet approved
- **Capability mentoring** — a developing internal team needs senior guidance and coaching alongside delivery

7 Typical engagement structure

COMMITMENT

1–3 days per week — fixed or flexible cadence

COMMERCIAL

Monthly retainer — predictable cost, no day-rate variability

DURATION

3 months minimum; often an ongoing retained relationship

EXIT

Scope adjusts as need evolves; transition planned collaboratively

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8 Interim vs Fractional — which is right for you?

	Interim CPO	Fractional CPO
Days per week	3 – 5 days	1 – 3 days
Typical duration	3 – 12 months	3 – 12+ months (ongoing)
Best for	Leadership gap / transformation	Growing / mid-market orgs
Cost profile	Full-time day rate	Part-time monthly retainer
Speed to impact	Immediate — full immersion	Strategic, builds over time
Function ownership	Full executive ownership	Shared / advisory
ExCo attendance	Regular / standing member	As needed / agreed
Exit	Handover — timeline agreed	Planned wind-down or handover

Questions your Board may ask

How do we know which model is right for us?

Urgency and scale of the problem. A leadership gap or major transformation needs full immersion. A growth-stage business needing strategic direction is better served by a Fractional model.

Can the model change during the engagement?

Yes. A Fractional engagement can flex to Interim intensity during a critical period, then step back — agreed at outset.

Not sure which model fits your situation? In a 25-minute clarity call, we map your circumstances to the right engagement model — or will tell you directly if neither is the right answer.

Who this is not for: If your procurement function is stable and adequately led, neither model 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.

