

TF: WHAT'S BEEN THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE YOU'VE NOTICED BETWEEN DOING THE SAME ROLE AS AN INTERIM VS PERMANENT?

PM: The concept of a time limit is certainly the biggest difference. I've always thought of my role as a Chief Executive as linked to election cycles, if you look at New Zealand and Australia their local authority Chief Executives contracts reflect this. In the US it's more extreme with City Managers employed on "at will" contracts, they can be fired any moment. Perhaps controversially in our industry, I've always felt that CEX's in this country should be on fixed term contracts. It's tough to be a political leader, and I think all political leaders deserve to work with their choice of Chief Executive. The personal chemistry is central to organisational effectiveness. Interims are a bridge but at least in my experience they're not a time to coast. They're a time for accelerated change, and sometimes a new direction.

TF: HOW DO YOU COPE WITH THE "DOWNTIME" BETWEEN CONTRACTS, ANY ADVICE YOU'D GIVE TO PEOPLE WHO ARE IN BETWEEN ASSIGNMENTS?

PM: One of the joys of interim work is the space between contracts. If you do not want that, or couldn't live with its uncertainties, an interim career might not be for you. It's a chance to focus on other aspects of your life, and to travel. In a way, I like the uncertainty of not knowing what tomorrow will bring. It keeps you on your toes. You need to stay informed, engaged, competitive. I strongly believe you must never take work for granted and a sense of uncertainty can give you a useful edge to your wider life. You need to keep proving yourself.

TF: YOU MENTIONED YOU WERE WORKING WITH SOME CITY COUNCILS IN THE US, CAN YOU TELL US A BIT MORE ABOUT HOW THAT CAME ABOUT?

PM: Reputation and personal networks. This is an important lesson for other interims. Ideally, you have spent many years building a reputation for effectiveness and capability. This needs to be supplemented with maintaining a good network. People who hire me generally know me or have heard about me. If there's one thing I've learned, it's how important it is to have a strong reputation and a corresponding network. The people who hire you are most likely people you already know so thinking about developing your network should not be seen as an added extra, it should be a core part of your daily routine. If you don't have a good network and haven't yet built a reputation, I wouldn't advise moving into interim work until you've developed that. It's important to keep replenishing it too, people retire or move on, it's important to learn and keep meeting with newer talent too.