

The value of working with a skilled partner

By Dr Vernon Harten-Ash, chief executive officer, Harten Group, Specialist Pharma and Biotech Consultancy

WHETHER you are facing a difficult challenge in your business or want to optimise an unexpected opportunity, you may need skills or resources that you don't currently have in-house.

Harten Group can help - whether it's a multi-disciplinary consultancy team, individual specialist interim managers or finding someone for a 'difficult to fill' permanent role.

With over 16 years of providing professionals for pharma, biotech and medtech companies, Harten Group has a network of 2000 experienced specialists based across Europe to draw on.

The global financial crisis, increasing cost pressures and the constant need to reduce overheads means it's never been more necessary to outsource and harness the benefits of using external expertise.

These include tapping into highly specialist areas as and when needed, to cover unforeseen events - both good and bad - or to fill important knowledge gaps within a team. Expertise can also be used to meet demanding project deadlines or managing new relationships, such as VCs or joint venture partners.

Maybe there is a need to freeze - or reduce - headcount resulting in critical skill gaps suddenly emerging in a team? Anticipating these problems early on and covering them quickly by parachuting in outside support offers a quick and effective solution.



Using interim expertise can also reap dividends in terms of seizing a new high-value business opportunity which would not be possible with the in-house skill-set available.

Control of overheads

For early stage biotech companies, interim expertise can be invaluable. Where funding is tight and overheads need to be kept to a minimum - and carefully controlled - harnessing specialist advice through using an interim can provide the solution required.

One key role could be augmenting the

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team 'virtually' to present a strong case to investors when looking for venture capital funding. Having a highly experienced and knowledgeable team can significantly increase the chances of success both in securing funding and delivery of outcomes.

A team of consultants or individual interim managers can literally hit the ground running and also deliver focused effort, concentrating on the task in hand and not spending time on staff or management issues.

Fresh approach

Consulting teams or expert independent individuals can undoubtedly bring fresh perspective to a business, without being constrained by what has happened in the past. Project teams have a lot invested in the programs and consequently are not always best placed to see their work objectively.

A new pair of eyes can be extremely valuable, as one CEO summed up: "An objective viewpoint is very helpful and with an interim we used recently, we benefited greatly from a fresh approach and the respect that person commanded as an authority in the field. Internal staff can be more likely to listen to someone from outside. Externally, the interim was also successful in managing the relationship with our investors, my sense is that his presence gave them confidence in our ability to stay

focussed and deliver."

If you have decided that outsourcing is the way to go, how can you access suitably qualified professionals who will be able to carry out the required tasks within the project you have in mind?

Tap into the network

The 'quick-start' solution to bringing in an interim manager is to approach an established provider and talk to them about your needs. These people will understand the industry, 'speak your language' and be able to define quickly what combination of skills and experience you need and crucially what type of person will complement your in-house team and fit into the company culture. Often providers will have worked in the pharmaceutical or biotech industry themselves, perhaps even as an interim consultant which reduces the learning curve.

Give them a brief for the role and let them do the rest. Reputable providers will have access to a network of highly qualified consultants enabling them to quickly provide a qualified shortlist for consideration.

Not only does this approach ensure quality and experience, it also delivers a rapid response to often urgent requests. Instant access to a network of experts means that the search is carried out for you. Even if you know people personally, using an established provider gives you wider reach across the industry with the added benefit of being able to form multi-disciplinary teams.

Harten Group is a leading provider of consulting, interim management and executive search for the pharmaceutical and biotech industries.
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