

Tips for the Interim City Manager

- 1.) An opportunity to be the Acting/Interim Manager can come up very quickly, so it is best to think about whether or not you want the temporary or permanent job before the opportunity presents itself even if it seems as though the current manager will never leave. If you want the permanent job, think about under what conditions you would take the position. Are you willing to move? Sacrifice further your leisure and family time? Be even more “in the fish bowl”? Be honest with yourself and the elected officials.
- 2.) Talk to those who were interim managers; Range Riders. Read ICMA publications.
- 3.) Establish conditions upon which the interim assignment is being performed; not only compensation and the like but also expectations and get them committed to writing.
- 4.) You aren't the assistant anymore. As interim manager, you are the first point of contact for the elected officials, not just who they call when the Manager is not available. Meet with each of the elected officials individually. It is amazing what you will learn. Treat all elected officials equally and be responsive to their requests.
- 5.) You have the ball. Don't punt it; run with it. Whether you like it or not, being the interim manager is a job interview even if you don't want the job. The council and the mayor are going to judge how you perform in your interim role against the candidates being interviewed. If they don't like the candidates, you may be asked to consider the role permanently. See Tip #1.
- 6.) If you are applying for the permanent position, approach your candidacy as if you are an “outside” candidate. Don't assume the elected officials know what you have accomplished. Tell them and tell them what you can do for them, the organization and the community. And, then show them!!
- 7.) You need to establish with the staff that you are the manager. Meet with each department head individually. You'll be surprised what you will learn. You will need their support and loyalty while interim, if you get the job permanently, and if you return to your assistant position.
- 8.) Be flexible, nimble, and ready for much longer hours and for changes in the planned day. You will attend more meetings, even if you don't receive a formal invitation. Meetings may be scheduled without your knowledge and begin without your presence, only to have the parties recognize halfway through that your attendance is necessary.
- 9.) Expect the unexpected. Department Head discipline/terminations do happen; a high profile incident (weather, crime, strike etc) can occur. They are opportunities to prove yourself.
- 10.) This is your chance (and don't be afraid) to make the organizational improvements that you always felt were needed but as assistant couldn't do.
- 11.) Don't be bashful about asking managers in the area for advice on unfamiliar issues.
- 12.) As the assistant you may have developed different relationships with each of the department heads. Some may be friends and with whom you socialize. When you are “the Manager”, relationships change and you can't be perceived as having favorites.

13.) Even if you are already well known in the community as the assistant manager, get out into the community, be accessible, and become known as “the manager”.

14.) Treat **everyone** (elected officials, staff, citizens, media, peers in other jurisdictions, business owners, contractors, consultants, developers, etc.) with respect. You never know who will talk to whom. And, you don’t know who your next boss might be.

15.) Communicate, Communicate, and Communicate some more!

16.) There is no shame in declining the offer of the permanent position if you feel you aren’t ready or you have reservations after being the interim nor is there shame in not being selected for the permanent position.

ICMA “Acting Manager’s Handbook”

ICMA, June 1996 PM Article: “You are Acting, But Not On Broadway”