BUSINESS MANAGER PROFESSION

ESN: should we continue recruiting when the inter-contract rate increases?

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When the inter-contract rate increases, freezing recruitment seems logical, but this reflex can worsen the problem. It's better to rethink your recruitment strategy to make it a targeted business lever.

When the intermission rate rises in an IT consulting company, an alarm goes off in the executives' minds. The survival instinct encourages freezing hiring, stopping interviews, and halting sourcing campaigns. This is understandable: who would want to worsen an already delicate situation by adding new salaries to an already unbilled mass of consultants?

However, this instinctive reaction is often counterproductive. It relies on short-term thinking and a partial understanding of the causes of intermissions. In this article, let's ask ourselves a fundamental question: **is it a good idea to stop recruiting as soon as the intermission rate increases?** Or on the contrary, **should we dare to continue recruiting, provided we do it differently?**

What a high intermission rate reveals

The intermission rate in an IT consulting company is a thermometer. But like any thermometer, it indicates a temperature, not the cause of the fever. A high rate may reveal:

- a lack of prospecting and sales follow-up,
- a disconnect between the profiles recruited and the needs of the market,

- poor anticipation of the end of projects,
- a mismatch between internal skills and client expectations,
- or simply a cyclical slowdown.

Stopping recruitment is often presented as common sense. But it is also sometimes a way to avoid looking at the real causes of the problem. Because the question is not "are we recruiting too much?" but rather "**are we recruiting well?**"

Recruit less… but better

This is not about advocating a mad dash forward. Continuing to recruit when no one is on a project would obviously be absurd. But the solution is not to abruptly shut off the flow. It is to regain control over the **quality of recruitment**, not its quantity.

This involves:

- Improving profile targeting: stopping the impromptu recruitment, without strategy.
- Thorough analysis of the skills in demand from clients.
- Listening to weak market signals: recurring demands, emerging professions, rising technologies.
- Close coordination between Business Managers and recruiters to align sourcing with real opportunities.

In IT consulting companies, recruitment is too often opportunistic, without considering medium-term positioning. As a result: we end up with brilliant consultants, but unusable because they are out of touch with the needs of the client portfolio. This is not an excess of recruitment. It is a lack of management.

Recruitment can also be a lever to exit intermissions

Here's an idea that may seem provocative: **what if recruiting was actually one of the most effective ways to reduce intermissions?**

Let's take three concrete examples:

Case 1: an IT consulting company has historically focused on infrastructure but notices that needs are shifting towards cloud and cybersecurity. It has about thirty consultants in intermission, who are not easily deployable on these topics. Recruiting two senior cloud experts, immediately operational, would create commercial traction, reposition the brand, and open previously closed accounts.

Case 2: an IT consulting company suffers from a high intermission rate but has never structured a true pre-sales approach. It lacks a profile capable of building offers, scripting presentations, and managing tender responses. Recruiting a pre-sales consultant can transform commercial efforts into signatures and put consultants back in action.

Case 3: a long-term project presents itself, but the technical or sectoral requirement excludes all profiles currently in intermission. Should it be refused? Or should the right profile be recruited, generating revenue, and **indirectly absorbing the cost of existing intermissions**? Because each project started, even by a newcomer, eases the burden of fixed costs. And sometimes, what saves a team is a targeted recruitment.

The trap of false relief: when the reduction of the intermission rate hides a talent drain

Another little-discussed reality: **the intermission rate can decrease... because intermission consultants leave.** On paper, this is good news: one less salary, less pressure on margins. But in reality, it is often a strategic failure.

Why? Because consultants who leave during extended intermissions are not necessarily the least skilled. On the contrary. **They are often the most staffable, the most visible, the most demanded on the market, who find elsewhere what the IT consulting company no longer offers: a project.**

As a result: the company temporarily reduces its intermission rate, but at the cost of losing its best elements. And when new opportunities arise, it finds itself lacking, forced to urgently recruit what it could have staffed internally… if it had managed to retain them.

The impact of freezing recruitment on employer branding

In this context, a **complete recruitment freeze** sends a doubly negative signal: externally, the image of a company in retreat; internally, the idea that the company is in withdrawal mode. Recruiters lose credibility, candidates turn away, Business Managers have no more room for maneuver.

Conversely, targeted and deliberate recruitment, even during a difficult period, shows that the company remains clear-headed, selective, and oriented towards recovery.

A paradigm shift

Instead of asking **"should we continue to recruit?"**, the real question is: **how to adapt recruitment strategy when the intermission rate increases?**

This requires a real paradigm shift:

- **Shift from volume to value.**
- **Turn recruitment into a business lever.**
- **Manage recruitment as investments, not as costs.**

Conclusion

An elevated intermission rate should not paralyze an IT consulting company. On the contrary, it should trigger a re-evaluation: of its commercial strategy, of the coherence of its recruitments, of its ability to anticipate. Because stopping recruitment by default is taking the risk of exacerbating the causes of the problem: loss of skills, weakening of the brand, and stifling recovery.

In some cases, **recruiting the right profile at the right time can generate margin, credibility, and even save jobs**. It requires looking beyond the numbers. And accepting that **recruiting in times of crisis is sometimes the most clear-sighted choice a leader can make.**

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