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Christine Pilkington is the CEO and founder of [Crisp](#), a fractional CMO and contract marketing services firm based in Vancouver, Canada.



A few years ago, a colleague updated her profile, announcing she had been hired as a fractional VP of sales and marketing for a fintech startup based here in Vancouver. It was 2015, and while I had heard the word “fractional” applied to property ownership, this was the first time I had seen it in conjunction with a job role.

It made sense: The startup needed executive leadership in this area, but they were not ready to make a financial commitment to a full-time hire and instead opted for a portion—or “fraction”—of my colleague’s time. In addition, my colleague wanted to proudly display her new role but still signaled that she was open to additional contracts. Clearly, this fractional arrangement was a win-win—and more businesses are adopting it.

Google searches for “fractional CMO” are up 337% in 2022 compared to 2021. Unsurprisingly, “fractional CFO” is up 535% in the same time period. Startups, in particular, need to prepare their business for investment but lack the financial expertise to compile the necessary paperwork to make their enterprise investment ready.

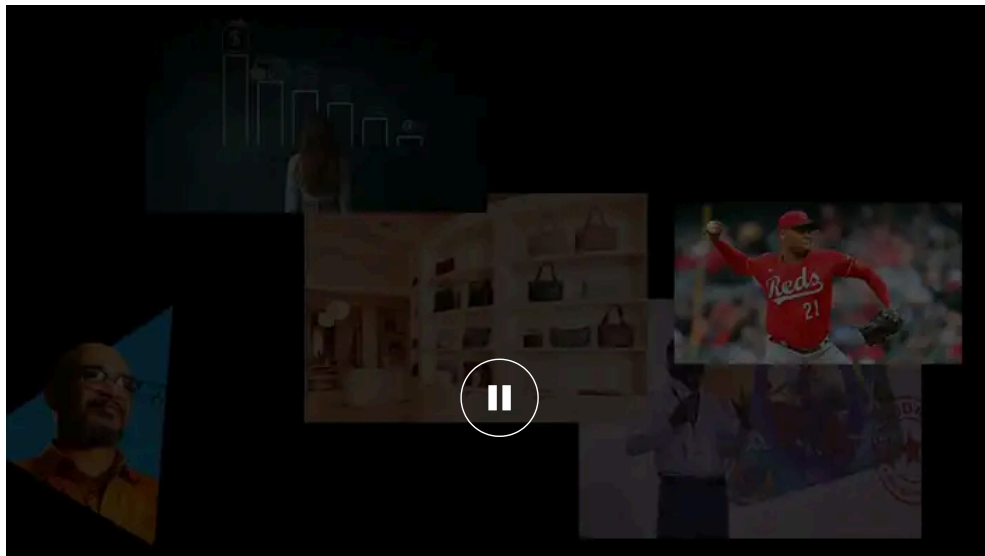
With the rise of remote work and distributed teams, hiring options are more flexible than ever.

Fractional employment or resourcing is a working relationship where a business hires an individual for a specific portion of their time rather than engaging them on a full-time basis, generally on a contract basis. Businesses are able to hire fractional workers for particular duties or projects without the obligations of a long-term employment agreement.

While freelancing has been around since the dawn of time, “fractional” as a term seems to be most typically applied to resources who are entrenched within the company rather than a resource hired to work on very short-term, one-off projects.

Fractional leaders are frequently indistinguishable from full-time, permanent team members. They usually occupy a spot on your org chart and take on processes generally reserved for internal team members: They often adopt email addresses, appear as leaders on a company’s About webpage, participate in internal operations and processes and even lead business units.

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For businesses hoping to remain competitive in these turbulent times, here’s why you should consider adding fractional talent to your leadership team to stay ahead of the curve.

Fast Injection Of Expertise

I consult a company looking to expand manufacturing into international markets. They have no idea how to do this, but their business revenue doesn't support a full-time CFO on payroll. Instead, this Vancouver-based automotive company opted to hire a fractional CFO based in Saskatoon, SK, who had the specific expertise they were looking for.

Fractional leadership can unlock specialized expertise your business might require or enhance the knowledge base of your wider team through mentorship. Whether aiming for innovation, market expansion or stability, fractional leaders can guide your team (and business) through times of change.

True Delegation

As a fractional CMO, I will often encounter prospective clients considering hiring a junior resource to handle their marketing operations. While it's rational to believe hiring a junior resource will free up time, it's often the opposite. These junior resources need training, direction and ongoing management.

Hiring a fractional leader means that you can offload meaty initiatives to an experienced resource who requires minimal onboarding. In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins describes the "Genius with 1000 helpers"—the leader who directs team members to execute her grand plan rather than hire a solid leadership team who can take up the company's mantle and act autonomously. A senior fractional resource can be made accountable—and it allows for more effective delegation, freeing up time for you to focus on running your overall business.

Cost Effectiveness

You might be wary of the high hourly cost of a fractional leader, which can easily be upwards of a few hundred dollars per hour. Run the cost comparison for a senior fractional leader, and you'll find that they often cost less than a full-time salary for a middle manager.

Costs tied to full-time employees extend beyond salaries, encompassing benefits, office space, equipment, training, software licenses and more. On the contrary, fractional hires are contractors utilizing their own tools and resources. Unlike employees who have "watercooler" time, fractional hires only bill only those hours incurred.

This significant reduction in overhead expenses provides financial breathing room, enhancing your business' stability during challenging periods.

Agility

Recruiting a full-time team member requires time and can take weeks if not months. It's wise to be cautious: A poor hiring decision can result in devastating mistakes and terminating a bad hire can be expensive and disruptive.

Fractional hires don't have the same fiduciary obligations as full-time hires, leaving you free to increase or claw back hours as work fluctuates. You even have the option to onboard additional resources, adjust work hours or conclude contracts cleanly under your contract's termination clause.

Effective Risk Management

Running a consulting firm of fractional marketers, I am in a constant conundrum of when to hire. If we wait until a contract is signed, we may not have a ramped-up team member ready to go. And while hiring ahead means we have time to train a new team member, they may sit idle until new business has been secured—an expensive prospect.

Hiring full-time employees involves a long-term financial commitment, which can pose risks during unstable periods. Fractional hiring mitigates this by enabling engagement with professionals on a project basis or specific durations. This empowers you with more control over staffing decisions, potentially avoiding or minimizing layoffs, and helps maintain business agility.

Fractional hiring is a rising work model, revolutionizing the conventional approach to work engagements. Its array of advantages, encompassing cost-efficiency and talent accessibility, positions it favorably in the gig economy and the era of remote work. Foreseeing a surge in its adoption, it makes sense for businesses to harness the full potential of their fractional workforce.
