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Here's a closer look at five common misconceptions about fractional leadership—and why they shouldn't stop you from considering a fractional hire.



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BY **KRIS CRAVEY** 4 MINUTE READ

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In today's dynamic business environment, rapid growth is crucial for startups and middle-market companies. However, many of these businesses face a common challenge: They need the strategic direction of experienced leaders, but may lack the resources or ability to keep a high-level performer fully utilized.

Enter fractional leaders—seasoned professionals offering part-time expertise without the commitment of a full-time hire. These leaders provide focused, strategic insights that unlock opportunities and propel companies forward.

Despite the benefits, some business owners hesitate to engage fractional leaders due to persistent myths. Here's a closer look at these misconceptions, and why they shouldn't stop you from considering fractional leadership.

MYTH #1: I NEED A FULL-TIME C-SUITE TEAM TO SUPPORT GROWTH



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One of the most common myths is the belief that a company must have a full-time C-suite team to drive growth. Many founders feel pressured to build out their executive leadership early on, thinking it's essential for scaling. However, this can be financially draining, and in some cases, it's premature.

Reality: You don't need to hire a full-time C-suite leader for every function. Instead, a fractional leader can provide the same level of expertise on a part-time basis. For example, instead of a full-time chief human resources officer (CHRO) or chief financial officer (CFO), a fractional CHRO or CFO can deliver the strategic leadership you need without the long-term salary commitment. By bringing in fractional leaders for key areas, you access deep expertise and can reinvest the savings into growth-focused initiatives.

A great illustration of this occurred when I responded to a CHRO role for a growing construction company. The recruiter emphasized how essential strategic HR leadership was for the CEO's growth strategy. Yet, they could only offer an HR manager's salary—far too low to attract a quality CHRO. I suggested a fractional CHRO who could work two days per week and deliver more value than a full-time HR manager. The CEO rejected the idea, and, in doing so, missed an opportunity to get senior-level expertise within their budget.

Key Takeaway: A full-time C-suite isn't always a prerequisite for success. Fractional leaders deliver focused expertise and can help you grow smarter within your budget or utilization constraints.

MYTH #2: FRACTIONAL LEADERS ARE JUST TEMPORARY FIXES

Another misconception is that fractional leaders are only suitable for short-term solutions and don't offer lasting value. This myth suggests that once the initial problem is solved, the impact disappears.

Reality: Fractional leaders often provide long-term value by offering strategic oversight that positions companies for sustained growth. They don't just solve immediate problems; they often remain involved for years, adjusting their involvement as the business evolves.

For example, a fractional CFO can enhance financial forecasting, implement cost-saving strategies, and streamline cash flow management, all while positioning the company for long-term financial stability. Similarly, a fractional CHRO can develop a leadership pipeline, improve talent acquisition strategies, and enhance employee retention, creating a stronger, more competitive organization.

Key Takeaway: Fractional leaders aren't just quick fixes—they offer ongoing strategic leadership that adapts to your company's changing needs over time.

MYTH #3: FRACTIONAL LEADERS AREN'T AS INVESTED IN THE COMPANY'S SUCCESS

A common concern is that part-time leaders will not be as invested in the company's success as full-time executives. The assumption is that because they aren't fully immersed in the business, fractional leaders won't care as much about outcomes.

Reality: In fact, fractional leaders have a strong reputation and future opportunities because they work with multiple companies. Fractional time executives often can't build long-term partnerships based on trust and performance.

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Key Takeaway: Fractional leaders are deeply committed to delivering value, as their professional reputation depends on the success of their work with each company.

MYTH #4: FRACTIONAL LEADERS DON'T HAVE ENOUGH AUTHORITY TO DRIVE CHANGE

Some business owners worry that fractional leaders might not have the authority to make significant changes, thinking their part-time status limits their influence.

Reality: Fractional leaders are typically brought in specifically for their expertise and are granted the authority to implement change. Because they are hired for specific strategic purposes, their insights are valued, and they often drive high-impact initiatives. In many cases, fractional leaders are given the freedom to make the very changes that a full-time executive might struggle to achieve due to entrenched systems or internal politics.

Key Takeaway: Fractional leaders are granted the authority they need to make critical decisions, implement strategic changes, and lead the company toward growth.

MYTH #5: FRACTIONAL LEADERS WON'T FIT INTO A COMPANY CULTURE

Lastly, there's a belief that fractional leaders won't integrate well with the company's existing culture, potentially causing friction with full-time staff or other executives.

Reality: Experienced fractional leaders are adept at navigating different corporate cultures. They have often worked across multiple industries and organizational structures, making them versatile and quick to adapt. In fact, their fresh perspectives can enhance company culture by challenging stagnation, breaking down silos, and encouraging collaborative solutions. Far from disrupting culture, fractional leaders often help companies build stronger, more cohesive teams by focusing on alignment with company values.

Key Takeaway: Fractional leaders can bring a positive cultural impact, driving alignment and fostering collaboration through their fresh, objective perspectives.

CONCLUSION: A COMPETITIVE EDGE THROUGH FRACTIONAL LEADERSHIP

For startups and middle-market companies seeking growth, hiring a full-time executive team might seem ideal, but is often financially out of reach. Fractional leaders offer a compelling alternative—providing high-level expertise without the full-time commitment. By setting aside common misconceptions about fractional leadership, businesses can unlock strategic insights, overcome challenges, and seize new opportunities.