



2024 EXECUTIVE SURVEY ON ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP: INSIGHTS & RESULTS

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CO-AUTHORS



Leilani Bloomquist

Leilani is human-centered digital transformation leader. She assists executive teams in clarifying their transformation strategies and roadmaps, ensuring measured progress against enterprise goals. Her ability to bridge all functional areas is key, as it facilitates unified strategies and streamlined progress towards goals.



Benji Borner

Benji is a technology leader committed to empowering businesses to unlock value and drive sustainable growth through innovative strategies and digital transformation initiatives. He also leads the Technology Leadership practice at Ascendex Consulting, providing flexible access to seasoned technology leaders.

BEHIND THE SURVEY

Leilani Bloomquist and Benji Borner came together to author this executive survey because there was a lack of insights from leaders who hire fractional, interim, or project-based consultants to help drive change, growth, and expansion as part of their broader business strategies and to support their business goals. As former executives turned consultants and fractional leaders, we identified gaps in conversations individually and as part of the broader community. We also began to uncover executives' questions about fractional and interim leadership and how to think about it as part of their broader talent strategy.

WE'RE EXCITED TO SHARE THE RESULTS AND INSIGHTS, AND WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO THE FINDINGS ON A ONE-TO-ONE OR GROUP LEVEL.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

In today's fast-paced and competitive business environment, organizations are increasingly turning to fractional leadership as a strategic solution to fill leadership gaps, drive critical initiatives, and bring specialized expertise to key functions.

This summary document provides an in-depth analysis of the findings from a recent survey conducted to understand how C-Suite executives view and utilize fractional leadership within their organizations.

The survey collected insights from executives across a range of industries, including technology, healthcare, manufacturing, and financial services. Key topics explored include the willingness of organizations to adopt fractional leadership, the perceived barriers to its implementation, and the impact of fractional leaders on business outcomes. Additionally, the survey captured qualitative feedback on the expectations and experiences of executives who have engaged with fractional leadership models.

This document consolidates the survey data, identifying prevailing themes, emerging trends, and actionable recommendations for organizations seeking to leverage fractional leadership more effectively.

The insights and recommendations presented here are intended to guide C-Suite executives, HR leaders, and decision-makers in adopting best practices for integrating fractional leadership into their organizational strategy, overcoming common barriers, and measuring its impact on long-term success.

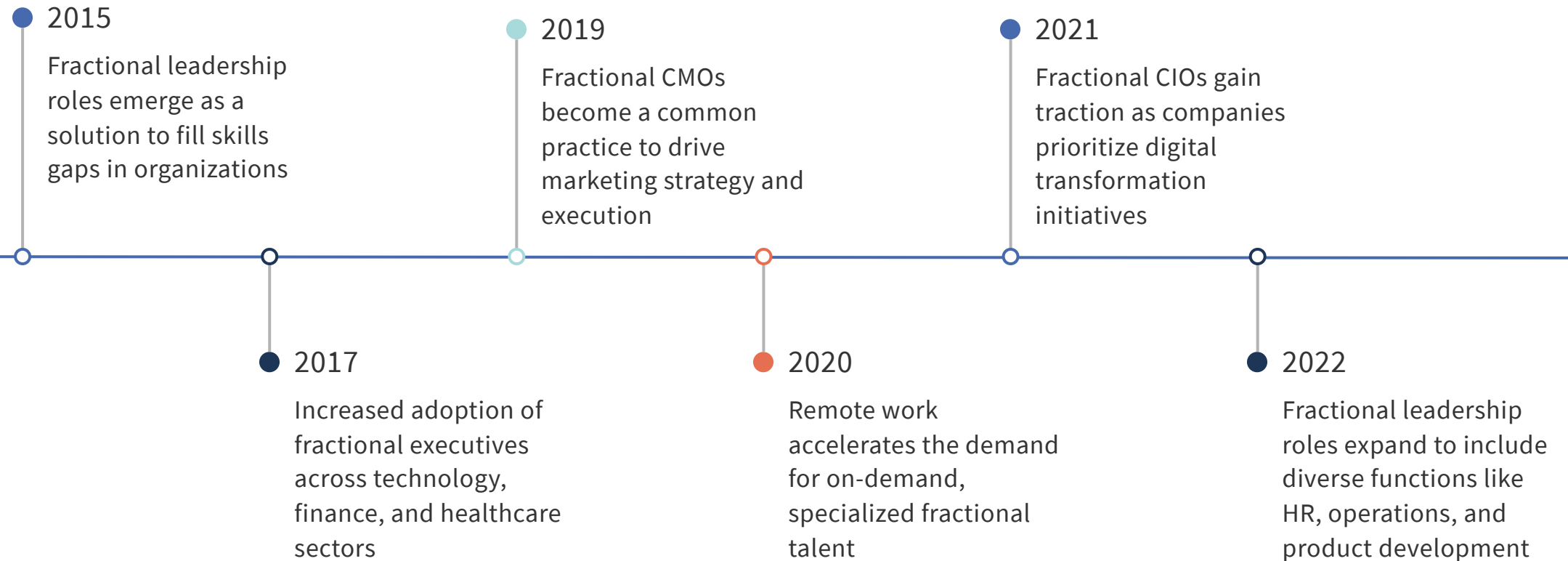


DEFINING FRACTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Fractional leadership is a strategic business model where organizations leverage the expertise and experience of part-time or interim leaders to address specific challenges or initiatives. This approach allows enterprises to *access specialized talent and skills on an as-needed basis, without the commitment of a full-time hire.*

Given the benefits of fractional leadership, we are exploring possible barriers to utilizing this alternative leadership approach.

FRACTIONAL LEADERSHIP HAS EVOLVED FROM A NOVEL CONCEPT INTO A MAINSTREAM SOLUTION FOR ORGANIZATIONS SEEKING SPECIALIZED EXPERTISE, FLEXIBILITY, AND AGILITY IN AN EVER-CHANGING BUSINESS LANDSCAPE



MACRO CONDITIONS DRIVING LEADERS TO RETHINK BUSINESS & TALENT STRATEGIES

C-Suite Concerns about Economic Uncertainty

Majority of C-Suite executives express significant concerns about the impact of global economic uncertainty on their business operations and growth plans. ([Protiviti](#)) ([The Conference Board](#))

Increased Focus on Cost Optimization

C-Suite executives indicate a heightened emphasis on cost optimization strategies to maintain profitability and operational efficiency in the current economic climate. ([Newsroom | Accenture](#))

Digital Transformation Acceleration

Research reveals a notable acceleration in digital transformation initiatives among C-Suite executives, driven by the need to enhance organizational agility and resilience. ([Protiviti](#))([Newsroom | Accenture](#))

Talent Retention Challenges

C-Suite leaders highlight the growing challenge of retaining top talent, with concerns about employee engagement and the ability to offer competitive compensation and benefits. ([Protiviti](#))([BCG Global](#))

Emphasis on Sustainable Practices

The research findings suggest that C-Suite executives are increasingly prioritizing the adoption of sustainable business practices to address environmental, social, and governance (ESG) concerns. ([The Conference Board](#))

OUTLINE



Willingness to Adopt Fractional



Sentiment Analysis



Possible Barriers for Adoption



Recommendations & Next Steps



Strategic and Operational Impact

This survey provided valuable insights into the current state and future opportunity for fractional leadership adoption among C-Suite executives.

IMPACT OF EXPERIENCE ON WILLINGNESS TO HIRE

When asked if the survey respondents had previous experience as a consultant, interim, or fractional leader, **over 60%** shared that they had.

Overall, **74.6%** of respondents shared that they were **willing to very willing to hire interim or fractional leaders** to support their enterprise strategies and goals. We do see a strong correlation with previous experience and willingness to use these alternative leadership models.



WILLINGNESS TO ADOPT FRACTIONAL

CEO

Over 47% of the executives who completed the survey were CEOs. Overall, there was a general willingness to hire interim or fractional leaders, but the executives listed below were the most likely to utilize these alternative leadership models.

CDO

The CDO (Chief Data Officer) (4%) were most likely to hire fractional leaders to support their enterprise strategy and goals.

COO & CFO

The COOs (5.5%) and CFOs (7.3%) fell directly between the willing and very willing categories in their appetite for using interim or fractional leadership to support their goals.



INSIGHT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Based on the strong correlation between the survey respondents having prior experience with alternative leadership models and their openness to using interim and fractional leadership, there is an **excellent opportunity for more education around the value and role of alternative leadership models on broader talent strategies.**

The range of respondents underscores the broad applicability of fractional leadership while highlighting the necessity for customized strategies to address the unique demands of different industries.

RESPONDENT ROLE

47%

PRESIDENT / CEO

A MIX OF OTHER C-SUITE ROLES (42%) & VP'S (11%). ALL DRIVING STRATEGIC DECISIONS WITHIN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

INDUSTRY
31%
TECHNOLOGY

MANUFACTURING & SUPPLY CHAIN (25%)

HEALTHCARE (15%)

FINANCIAL SERVICES (13%)

OTHER (16%)

COMPANY REVENUE

60%

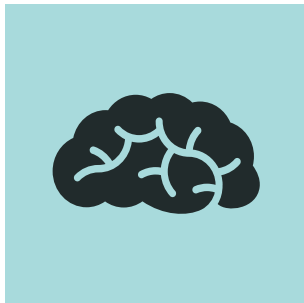
\$0 - \$50MM

\$50 - \$500MM (27%)

\$500MM+ (13%)

PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

The most frequently cited answers around a barrier to using fractional leadership are **Limited Organizational Knowledge** and **Lack of Understanding or Connection to Company Culture**. These concerns highlight the *perceived challenges* in ensuring that fractional leaders can fully integrate into and understand the unique aspects of the organization.



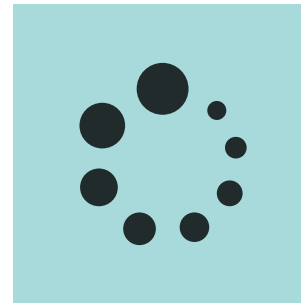
Limited Organizational Knowledge

71%



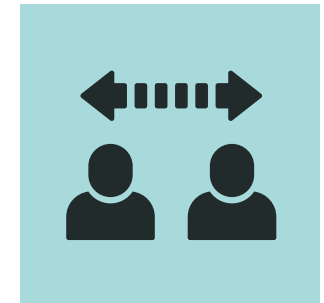
Connection to Company Culture

69%



Lack of Continuity or Consistency

64%



Reduced Commitment & Engagement

40%

Cultural Fit & Organizational Knowledge were consistently cited as top barriers across various roles and industries, indicating that *successful fractional leadership engagements may depend heavily on addressing these concerns upfront.*



STRATEGIC IMPACT

Strategic impacts are a critical focus for leaders considering fractional or interim support.

- 87.2% shared that ***Specialized Skills & Expertise*** is why they would hire fractional leaders

Emphasizing the critical need to cultivate specialized knowledge within teams to strengthen competitive advantage.

- 81.8% shared that ***Targeted Problem-Solving*** support is why they would hire fractional

Underscoring the importance of crafting tailored solutions to tackle specific challenges, promoting an effectively proactive stance in overcoming obstacles.

- 80% shared that ***Strategic Guidance & Expertise*** is why they would hire fractional

Illustrating the essential role of informed decision-making in navigating today's complex business landscapes.

- 77.4% shared that ***Managing Rapid Expansion*** & 67.4 % share that ***Ambitious Growth Goals*** is why they would hire fractional leaders

Indicating that while organizations aspire to significant growth, they may need to strengthen their strategic frameworks or refine their strategies to scale operations to realize these ambitions fully and effectively.













OPERATIONAL IMPACT

Operational impacts are a critical focus for leaders considering fractional or interim support. Below highlight the top themes for why executives would hire fractional to support specific business conditions and navigate factors around budget, flexibility and scalability.

- Allow the Company More Time to Find the Right Fit for a Full-Time Role (74.4%)
- Cost-effectiveness & Financial Flexibility (73%)
- Capacity Constraints (72.8%)
- Flexibility & Scalability, Less Risk (70%)
- Operational Improvements (63%)

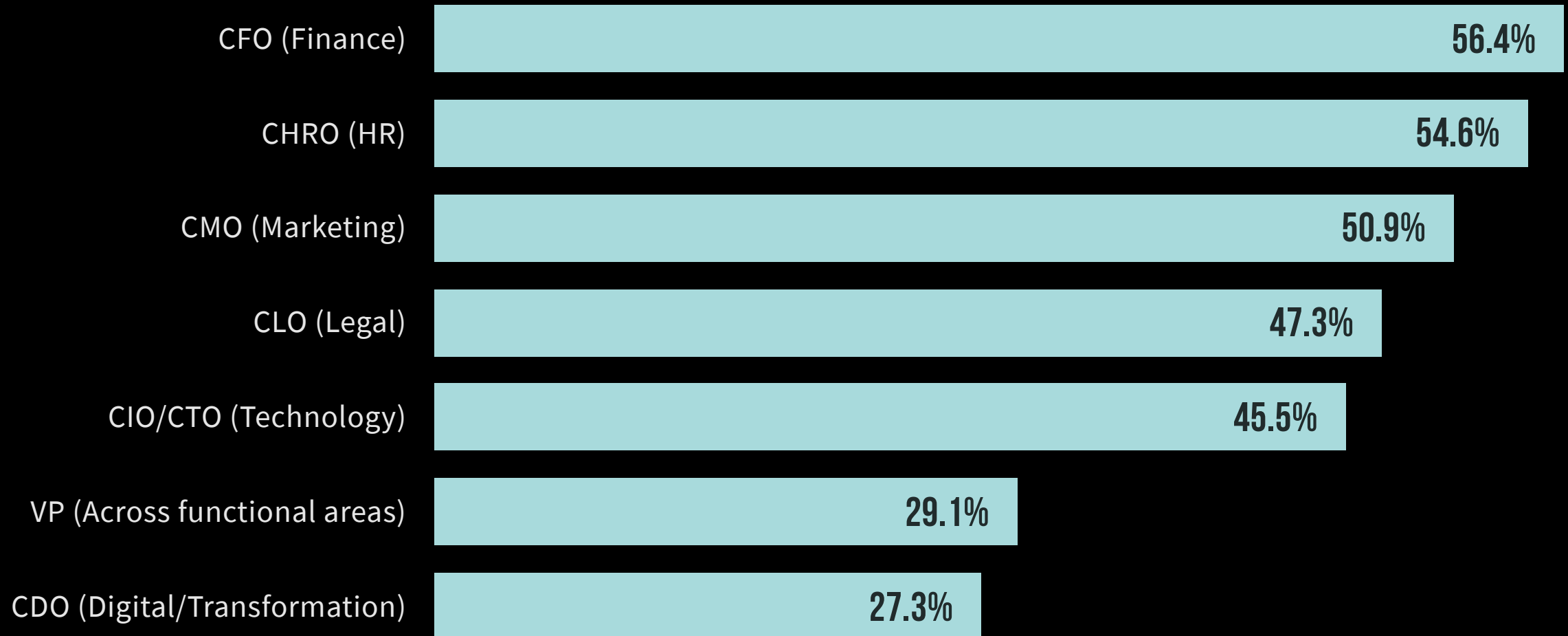
LIKELIHOOD TO USE BASED ON ENGAGEMENT TYPE

	Likelihood of Using	Fit for Need	Recommend
Project-based executives: for specific project expertise or guidance	78.2%		
Strategic advisors: for long-term planning and opportunity identification	68%		
Fractional: part-time basis, a few days per week or month	64.4%		
Interim leaders: for temporary full-time leadership needs	64%		
Ongoing support: for smaller companies needing continuous assistance	61.2%		

The project-based, strategic advisory, fractional, and interim models allow for target support, flexibility in finances, and right-sized leadership support for strategic support, growing teams, organizations in transition, and those kicking off transformational programs. Ongoing support is not recommended, as if the need is ongoing, there are likely better fits with a full-time leader in place.

MOST POPULAR POSITIONS FOR FRACTIONAL LEADERS

Based on feedback from our survey respondents, these seven categories are the most likely to be utilized for fractional leadership support.





INDUSTRY BASED TRENDS

The data analysis revealed a few notable industry trends, particularly in sectors characterized by **high complexity and more traditional industries.**

Industries with High Complexity

There is a willingness to utilize interim or fractional leadership in the high-complexity industries such as **Distributions, Electronics and Industrial** likely because these sectors often face fast-paced changes that require specialized, flexible leadership.

Traditional Industries

Industries like **financial services or manufacturing** are a bit more reserved in the appetite to utilize fractional or interim leadership models to support their enterprise strategy and goals. Possibly due to a preference for stable, long-term leadership or a higher perceived risk of integrating external leaders into their operations.

Despite some hesitation, the element that sways leaders to hiring fractional or interim leaders is **the industry expertise that these leaders bring to the table** that would circumvent the biases or perceived barriers to productivity and impact.

HOW TO INCORPORATE FRACTIONAL TO ACCELERATE YOUR ENTERPRISE GOALS

RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS



WHEN TO THINK ABOUT UTILIZING FRACTIONAL TO SUPPORT YOUR ENTERPRISE GOALS

WHY HIRE FRACTIONAL?



3

TOP REASONS TO
USE FRACTIONAL

1

Flexibility & Expertise

Fractional leadership offers the flexibility to bring in high-level expertise on a part-time or project basis, making it ideal for companies that need specialized skills without the long-term commitment or cost of a full-time executive.

2

Strategic Advantage

When implemented effectively, fractional leadership can provide a strategic advantage by quickly addressing gaps in leadership, driving innovation, and enabling organizations to adapt to changing market conditions.

3

Measurable Impact

The impact of fractional leadership can be measured through clearly defined KPIs, such as financial performance, project success, and team engagement. Regular assessment and feedback loops are how to ensure that the engagement meets its objectives.

OVERCOMING PERCEIVED BARRIERS: KNOWLEDGE



Limited Organizational Knowledge

- Foster *open communication* and encourage *knowledge sharing* at all levels of the organization to enhance understanding of processes and organizational history.
- Facilitate *collaboration with internal experts* to gain deeper insights into specific areas.
- *Leverage internal knowledge bases* (wikis, project documentation, lessons learned, and best practices) that contain valuable information.
- Have a *clearly defined onboarding plan* with milestones for quickly gaining the insights needed to be effective.



OVERCOMING PERCEIVED BARRIERS: CULTURE



Connection to Company Culture

- Understand the company's mission, vision, and core values, and alignment with the enterprise strategy and goals.
- Engage in genuine interactions among people, allowing them to *share experiences and insights*.
- Be *open and flexible in your communication* approach.



OVERCOMING PERCEIVED BARRIERS: CONSISTENCY



Lack of Continuity or Consistency / Reduced Commitment & Engagement

- *Clearly define objectives* with specific and measurable objectives.
- *Ensure that all team members understand these goals* and their role in achieving them.
- *Schedule consistent check-ins and transparent updates* to keep everyone informed about progress and changes.
- Create an environment where team members feel *comfortable sharing concerns and suggestions*.



SELECTING THE RIGHT FRACTIONAL LEADER

Define Your Needs

Clearly identify the specific skills, expertise, and experience required to address your organization's challenges and opportunities.

Research Fractional Leaders

Conduct a thorough search for fractional leaders with the right qualifications, industry knowledge, and track record of success.

Evaluate Potential Candidates

Assess the candidates' problem-solving abilities, communication skills, and ability to integrate with your team and align with your company's culture.

Conduct Interviews

Engage in in-depth interviews to gauge the candidate's problem-solving skills, strategic thinking, and ability to provide actionable insights and recommendations.

Check References

Speak with past clients to validate the candidate's work quality, reliability, and ability to deliver tangible results.

Negotiate Contract Terms

Carefully negotiate the contract terms, including the scope of work, deliverables, timeline, and compensation to ensure a mutually beneficial partnership.

Choose a fractional leader with the right expertise, cultural fit, and experience to meet your specific needs.

INCORPORATING FRACTIONAL INTO ENTERPRISE TALENT STRATEGIES

More Human Resource / Chief People Officers are looking at how and where to leverage fractional as a part of their broader talent strategies.





NEXT STEPS

✓ **Want more info?**

Reach out to Benji or Leilani; we'd love to have a deeper conversation about the insights and trends. We welcome 1:1 or group conversations.

✓ **Thinking about fractional or interim support?**

Benji, a technology leader, and Leilani, a transformation and CX leader, are here to help. With their deep expertise and extensive network, they are more than happy to connect and understand the problems you're trying to solve, and where you may need some additional support.

✓ **Feel free to share!**

Feel free to share this report with your friends, peers, and colleagues. We are happy to have the insights to help educate and foster thoughtful conversations or discuss fractional or interim leadership support needs.

LEILANI CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

I'd love to meet and learn more about you, your team and what problems you're looking to solve.



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BENJI CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

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JOIN OUR LINKEDIN LIVE EVENTS AND BE PART OF THE CONVERSATION

Join us for the live discussion or use the links below to watch a replay of our LinkedIn Live discussions with fractional leaders, a Chief People Officer, and a CEO who uses fractional to support his company's growth goals.



- ✓ **Overcoming Cultural Barriers with Fractional Leaders: September 30, 2024**
<https://www.linkedin.com/events/7242535883302686722/comments/>
- ✓ **Super-Charge Your Talent Strategy with Fractional: October 14, 2024**
<https://www.linkedin.com/events/7246347886433579011/comments/>
- ✓ **How to Accelerate Your Business Goals with Fractional: October 28, 2026**
<https://www.linkedin.com/events/7246357485723262976/comments/>



**LET'S DO
GREAT THINGS
TOGETHER.**