

How fractional leadership and services such as managed ecommerce will take over for 2023 and beyond

Before the pandemic, there was a burgeoning notion of fractional leadership services, including part-time expertise being served by consultants and niche agencies brokering consultancy positions between companies and consultants.

Such services were commonplace in finance, although they were certainly gaining traction for those in marketing as well, with the difference between freelance and fractional leadership essentially being the level of seniority and accountability for the position.

During this time many companies were finding talent acquisition in specific areas very challenging for a number of reasons;

1. Financial cost to acquire. Headhunter or agency fees for talent acquisition, plus increasing 6+ figure salary expectations, and for funded startups, usually an equity component to the remuneration package too.
2. Time to acquire. Often, high calibre, experienced senior leaders were embedded within incumbent companies, so required a 6, 9 or even 12+

month transition or notice period. Usually companies are hiring when they need someone, so hiring and waiting for a year isn't generally practicable.

3. Suitability of candidates. Anecdotally in my network, many people I have spoken to over the last four or five years found that they had hired senior executives into their business, only to find that they had to be transitioned out again either within a probationary period, or, more painfully, outside of that company comfort zone. This was generally due to performance or cultural fit. I'm not in any way suggesting that these candidates were at fault, simply that it's often impossible to judge overall suitability from a series of interviews, however well conducted.

From this set of observations, it's easy to see why companies are now considering a wider gamut of fractional expertise.

The pain points highlighted above are generally mitigated; cost to acquire is radically different, availability is usually within days or weeks, and the risk factor for fit and suitability is lower for a number of reasons.

Critically, experienced fractional candidates usually possess strong levels of adaptability, as well as broad generalist experience, and can fit into incumbent teams very naturally.

So over the course of the pandemic and beyond, we have seen a diverse provision of fractional leadership functions, both established and emerging – CFO networks, HR providers, marketing, creative and many other disciplines.

This is a product in some ways of how industries have shedded staff during the last three economic years, leaving a gamut of talent looking at building their personal fractional provision, as opposed to searching for their next full time role immediately.

As Heur evolved through our journey, we noticed not only an increase in the desire from companies for our CMO/Ecommerce Director level expertise, filling gaps in strategy to enable and empower holistic business growth, but also an appetite for fractional support in a more comprehensive way.

Clients were actively looking for outsourced provision for their ecommerce operations, and some not even considering in-house hiring as an option any more. This modus operandi is continuing to build and gain momentum.

Our response to this at a very early point was to build our managed ecommerce service – a do-it-all-for-you combination of ecommerce and marketing team stakeholders, injected as required into a (predominantly Direct-to-Consumer ecommerce) business.

It's a perfect scenario – the expertise of our team is broad and deep, their dynamic as a team is fantastic, and they have seamlessly embedded into countless brands, sectors and operations previously through their own careers and their journey as part of *Heur*.

Not only that, but by bringing only what's needed, when it's needed, it's highly efficient and often works out between 50% and 70% more cost effective than hiring the equivalent in-house provision. Similarly, it's more scalable, and the ideation possibilities for growth and problem solving is radically increased due to the cross-sector work that naturally transpires from agency life.

A similar product we are able to deliver due to the same construct, but with growth through marketing, are our Holistic Growth Services; wrapping offline and online, brand awareness through to direct response and retention marketing together into one package from strategy to execution and optimisation.

This plays to the needs of brands where they are struggling to resource, upskill or find talent across the spectrum of ecommerce growth, at the moment the market has a glut of need from brands, a deficit of available talent and a nervousness to spend on higher salaries.

At Heur, we are already fielding more enquiries in January around these topics than in the final quarter of 2022, and this trajectory is set to continue. One thing is certain – we're ready for it!

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