

O P E R A T O R G U I D E

How to Find a Fractional COO

A fractional COO is a part-time operations executive. They run the day-to-day systems, processes, and delivery so the owner can step out of the work. You hire one when the business is past the point where you can do it all, but not ready for a full-time hire.

01 You need one when

- ☐ Everything still runs through you.
- ☐ The same problems keep coming back.
- ☐ You have people, but the work does not move without you.
- ☐ You know what needs to be built, and you do not have the time to build it.
- ☐ You want the business to run without you in every decision.

02 Where to find one

- ☐ Ask operators you trust. The best fractional COOs come from other owners who have used them.
- ☐ Look for people who have run a business, not just advised one. Execution is the difference.
- ☐ Check whether they will work inside your tools and your team, or only hand you a plan.
- ☐ Ask for a scoped engagement with a fixed price before any work starts.

03 How to know you've found a good one

A good one:

- ☐ Starts with how the work actually gets done, not with a framework.
- ☐ Names the first thing that will be built and when it will be done.
- ☐ Gives you a fixed price and a written scope before they start.
- ☐ Works with your people.
- ☐ Leaves the business running without them.

A bad one:

- ☐ Hands you a plan and leaves.
- ☐ Talks about strategy before they have looked at the work.
- ☐ Will not name a price or a timeline.
- ☐ Needs you in every meeting.

Ask them to name the first process they would rebuild and how long it would take. If they cannot, keep looking.

04 What it costs

Fractional COO engagements are usually scoped by the month or by the project. The price depends on the work, not the title. Ask for the scope and the price together. If they will not give both, keep looking.

05 What to do next

Write down the one thing that is stuck. The process that keeps slipping. The system nobody has time to build. That is the starting point. A good fractional COO will tell you if they can take it off your plate, and what it will cost.

If you want Lockhold to look at it, send the stuck item. We'll tell you if we can take it, and what it would cost.