

# With ‘Fractional’ C-Suite Advisers, Midsize Firms Balance Expertise With Expense

By Amanda O'Brien

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## What You Need to Know

- Some midsize firms looking to leverage Big Law experience for a lower price point are taking advantage of a ‘fractional’ leadership model.
- This entails outsourcing marketing and strategic needs to industry veterans.
- Services offered under the fractional model range from specific projects to stop-gap work as a new hire settles into a position.

How do you compete against a rival multiple times your size, with a far larger budget and seemingly limitless resources?

For midsize firms, you get smarter about spending on your own business resources, with some opting to take advantage of a “fractional” C-Suite model balancing expense with, in some cases, Big Law levels of expertise.

The “fractional” C-suite model does, admittedly, sound similar to the consulting model: a firm brings someone in, at a lesser cost than bringing on a new permanent member of staff or a new department, to offer advice, enhance

efficiency, or take on a specific project.

Yet “fractional” professionals focus on smaller firms and boast a more hands-on approach to their work, according to fractional chief marketing officer and CMO2Go founder Erika Steinberg,



**Erika Steinberg**

and are integrated more thoroughly into the law firm throughout the duration of their stay, per fractional chief financial officer and Oxford Strategic Legal Advisors founder Jeffrey Grossman.

“When you are inside of a firm, whether fractional or full-time, you get a different view or prism from which to look at the firm,” explained Grossman. “When you’re consulting, you get to advise, support and counsel ... some consultants talk about [how] they’ve given advice but then they never get to follow it through.”

Both Steinberg and Grossman boast Big Law backgrounds, with Steinberg serving as director of marketing operations at Sidley Austin and

Grossman holding chief of strategy positions at both Proskauer Rose and Cooley.

“You get the benefit of decades of experience, but you don’t have to pay that full-time salary,” Steinberg said. “When I think about agencies and consultants, in my opinion a lot of them are more geared to the big firms like those in the Am Law 100...I see other fractional services providers focused on the smaller to midsize firms.”

Realizing these cost savings is key to firms taking advantage of the ‘fractional’ leadership model, such as Steinberg’s and Grossman’s mutual client Morrison Cohen, based in New York.

“In Big Law, you have a lot more resources [and] a much bigger appetite to take on more professional management resources,” said Morrison Cohen chief operating officer Jenni Eastman. “Although we are highly profitable, we don’t have the revenue of a larger law firm. Going outside and doing this as a fractional resource is much more cost efficient for a midsize firm.”

“You get all their resources from outsourcing instead of having to hire all the varying headcount to cover all those varying [areas of] expertise,” Eastman concluded.

The fractional model also takes into account the individual needs of midsize firms with Steinberg in particular emphasizing the amount of “stop-gap” work and overflow work she performs for clients, filling a newly-vacated position while a firm finds a new hire and helping “stress test” the responsibilities of that position or else taking on one-time projects.

“When a firm has one or two or three people in the marketing department and somebody leaves,

we can just slot right in there like a relief pitcher,” Steinberg explained. “Right now the competition for hiring at a senior level is pretty fierce, especially if a firm wants someone with only or mostly law firm experience, so usually that’ll be a few months...[and we can] stay on while that person builds out their team.”

“We’re trying to create an environment where [we address] whatever [a firm] needs, even for a short period of time. They’re not signing a contract with me to work with me for the next months. We ask, ‘What do you need in this moment for this project?’ and when we’re done we’re done,” she continued. “I wanted to cater to smaller firms and wanted it to be incredibly, incredibly flexible.”

Grossman’s model, meanwhile, eschews more project-based work and instead finds flexibility in “helping the firm with everything, from looking at them from a strategic point of view to looking at how they drive financial results including through reporting and through the types of reporting dashboards [they use].”

“I’m helping them to become more efficient and making sure that the services that the staff provides supports the mission of the firm, as opposed [to providing] task-oriented support,” he said. “They get the level of support they need right now as the firm continues to grow and evolve.”

