

## Leveraging Fractional Expertise to Drive Project Success and Cost Savings

By Lisa Cozza, Principal, Tunnell Consulting and Valerie Myers, Business Director, Turesol

Many companies face the reality of rapidly depleting funds, forcing difficult decisions about pipeline programs, including the pace of development, meeting the regulatory requirements to ensure a successful IND or NDA, and recruiting and maintaining the talent required to successfully execute on the requirements. In 2023 and into 2024, many small and mid-sized life sciences companies had to make the difficult decision to lay-off key talent and shelve or pause promising programs that with proper funding would have been great candidates for the clinic.

However, there are alternative solutions to addressing these issues, and that is the use of fractional expert talent. This solution means that companies can single out the skillsets they need to select and complete important milestones and key requirements without the commitments and costs of recruiting and maintaining full time employees.



### Capitalizing On The Gig Economy

The concept of fractional talent has been around for several years. Now is the time for the life sciences industry to embrace the trend of capitalizing on the gig economy, which can provide access to a wider talent base, while saving money on salary and benefits incurred when hiring a full-time employee (FTE). Fractional talent solutions are best utilized at the expert talent level, after identifying a skilled professional that meets the appropriate time commitment required to move a project forward. At Tunnell, we define fractional talent as the placement of subject matter experts (SMEs) or expert talent to specifically meet the needs of a client, including a defined time frame and specified hours per week. Expert talent includes highly skilled SMEs that may require a degree of supervision, as well as the strategic experts that can help advise an organization on improving their performance, efficiency, and/or effectiveness.



Valerie Myers

Fractional talent allows a company to bring on one or more SMEs to meet their immediate needs. A client may need multiple skillsets, none of which require full time (40 hours/week). Using fractional talent, a client can maximize the expertise needed by a blend of SMEs/expert talent that meets the multiple requirements within the project.

An example of using fractional talent could be as follows: a company is seeking a drug product chemistry, manufacturing, and controls (CMC) expert to lead drug product scale-up, tech transfer, and manufacturing with a CDMO partner. In this case, a CMC expert might be sourced to work 20 hours per week to meet the specific needs of the project. In another scenario, a company may need a therapeutic and vaccine process development and manufacturing SME. In this role, the SME would be expected to support all CMC activities across all stages of development, requiring 10 to 25 hours of work per week. A third scenario might require bringing in an entire team of part-time SMEs to help deliver a solution for resolving stability failures, and the regulatory filings required to modify the specifications.



Lisa Cozza

### Top Talent And Significant Savings

Fractional talent is also cost-effective for pharmaceutical/biotech companies, since the company does not invest in FTEs that are not needed. The fully loaded cost for an FTE extends beyond the cost of recruiting, hiring, and onboarding, and also includes base salary, variable/bonus compensation, and benefits. An added benefit of fractional staff is when the project is complete, the expert talent concludes their role. No need to go through the emotions and expense of terminating underutilized FTEs.

The cost savings of fractional talent is also amplified when, as is often the case, such talent works remotely. The remote/hybrid model gained stature, especially for contractors, during the extended COVID shutdown, and companies learned how to work effectively within this model, often with substantial productivity gains. The use of a remote model for fractional SMEs also delivers additional cost savings in terms of reduced office space utilization, and per diem costs for meals and accommodations.

Using the scenario of the therapeutic and vaccine process development and manufacturing expert previously mentioned, the company only needed support for 10 to 25 hours/week. If the company pursued hiring an FTE, bringing on board someone 40 hours a week, the estimated annual fully burdened cost (including benefits) would be \$280K to \$375K annually; based on an estimated annual salary of \$210K to \$280K. If the company chooses expert talent in a fractional advisory role, the cost would be \$200 to \$250 per hour. Using this expert talent for one year at the identified need of ten hours per week would cost roughly \$96K to \$120K. Although the hourly rate calculates out to more per hour for the fractional advisory talent, the company is not spending money on talent that is not needed 40 hours per week, a minimum annual savings of \$230K.

# What Types Of Fractional Expert Talent Are Available?

There are three main types of fractional talent and support that companies can consider to help solve their talent needs:

1. Fractional Staffing (directed by a hiring company and usually at a lower hourly rate). These staffers typically need a minimum of 25 hours per week but will work in shorter engagements (i.e., three months, to cover an extended absence or the sudden departure of a key employee).
2. Fractional Consulting (self-directed and tactical). These talents are capable of leading an initiative or a project. The company will define the scope and deliverables. This is more like how traditional consultants are used, but not on a full-time basis.
3. Fractional Strategic Advisors (lowest required hours, typically highest hourly rate). These individuals are seasoned, experienced experts who can lead and help direct your company's strategic initiatives.

## Embracing Transformative Trends In Talent Management

Navigating the ever-changing landscape of staffing and recruitment in the life sciences and biotech industries demands innovative solutions. As organizations grapple with ongoing transformations and financial constraints, the need for specialized talent remains urgent to drive innovation and research forward. The emergence of fractional talent as a strategic tool for talent management enables companies to harness a flexible hourly workforce, thus responding swiftly to market demands without the burdens of full-time commitments.

Against the backdrop of current market trends, fractional talent plays a pivotal role in expediting project timelines and enhancing expertise to meet the evolving industry demands. Furthermore, recent market-driven recruitment strategies demonstrate how organizations are strategically attracting top talent, promoting diversity, and strengthening resilient workforce pipelines. As the life sciences sector continues its evolution, embracing these transformative trends becomes imperative for sustained success in this fiercely competitive arena. Augmenting your team's capabilities with fractional talent offers a savvy and efficient strategy for managing tight budgets, sudden talent gaps, or unexpected strategic shifts, such as last-minute decisions like opting for prefilled syringes.

### About The Authors:

*Lisa Cozza, Principal at Tunnell Consulting, is a seasoned executive with over 35 years' experience in biomanufacturing and cGMP operations, quality, and supply chain for bulk drug and final drug product in all stages of clinical and commercial production. She also has extensive knowledge of operations leadership, lean process improvements, external supplier management, CDMO contract negotiations, business development, sales and marketing and alliance leadership. Before rejoining Tunnell Consulting, Lisa was COO at Ridgeback Biotherapeutics, VP at Catalent, Executive Principal at BDO, Executive Director at AstraZeneca, and spent nine years with Human Genome Sciences and nine years with Lonza Portsmouth, all in roles that directly worked with CDMOs.*

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