

How Interim and Fractional CROs can add value to Series A businesses



Context for startups looking to raise a Series A

In an increasingly challenging funding environment, VCs are taking longer to do due diligence and are looking above all else for traction, e.g. revenue for B2B businesses or user growth for B2C.

Startups looking to meet the criteria for a Series A fundraise need to clearly demonstrate quantifiable traction, prepare the business for future scaling, and keep control of their costs. A sales/revenue leader therefore plays a critical role in preparing a startup for fundraising.



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Why is this a good time to consider an interim or fractional CRO?

Introducing commercial changes is challenging

Startups in the Seed to Series A phase need to transition from product-market-fit to go-to-market fit. In other words, they need to move past initial sales success to deliver predictable growth, and this means that the earlier GTM strategy and initial sales processes often need a major update. However, understanding how to introduce these changes can be very challenging and there may be limited commercial leadership experience within the existing team.

Finding the right person is crucial

Businesses looking to raise a Series A need the experience of a serious commercial operator who has “been there, done that” many times over. They need someone who can deploy best practices and guide the company through common pitfalls to help them accelerate growth. But it’s no secret that commercial leaders are often the most expensive hire a startup will make, and they have a disappointingly short average tenure. The impact of hiring the wrong person can be felt many years after that person has left.

At this stage, startups don’t have the budget for the salary that accompanies the experience they need. Finding the right person can feel like a daunting prospect.

Enter the interim or fractional CRO.

Startups can benefit from their extensive experience without the fully loaded cost. They will get results, fast: professional interim/fractional executives will have a tried-and-tested methodology enabling them to get up to speed and make an impact far quicker than the typical onboarding period of a new executive. They can also be a trusted partner for the CEO, sharing the commercial burden by taking ownership of the revenue number and reporting on this to the Board, freeing up the CEO’s time to do what only they can, like focus on the team, time with customers, fundraising, etc.

Future-proof your full-time hire

Additionally, bringing in an interim/fractional CRO can help future-proof for the full-time CRO hire in a couple of ways. Firstly, the interim CRO will help you to figure out what you need in your full-time hire. They can also help or lead the search to find the right person, and then they can onboard them into the business. There is also the potential that an interim/fractional leader might transition into becoming your full-time hire. In this instance, you both get to “try before you buy,” enabling both sides to have a chance to check for cultural fit, chemistry and more before making a bigger commitment.

Common challenges: Scenarios for startups from Seed to Series A and how an interim/fractional leader can help

Common challenge	How an interim/fractional leader can help	Expected results
Initial early sales traction but don't have a clear path to hitting growth targets.	Conduct a full audit of the commercial function, then amend strategy and develop execution plan.	Amended overall commercial and GTM strategy that the business and Board can get behind. Clear KPIs to track.
Often founder-led sales or sales team made up of generalists or inexperienced junior sales.	Design the appropriate commercial organization. Assess existing team and address gaps and/or hire. Introduce appropriate sales motion and culture.	A professional commercial organization (sales, customer success, marketing) equipped to deliver traction required.
May have tried to hire first commercial leader and it hasn't worked out.	Identify exact requirements for permanent commercial leader(s).	Help recruit and onboard commercial leaders.
Struggling to hire experienced sales talent.	Map out hiring process including JDs, interview process, onboarding plans. Reference new sales motion, culture and KPIs in the hiring process.	Sales candidates can see a pathway to success and are excited to be a part of it.