

FRACTIONAL OPS VS. IN-HOUSE COO DECISION GUIDE



OPERATIONS
MANAGEMENT

This guide will help you decide whether your business needs a part-time or full-time Chief Operating Officer (COO), a fractional operations team, or just better systems.

Before you invest in high-level leadership, make sure your business structure is ready to support it.



1. ROLE COMPARISON: COO VS. FRACTIONAL OPS TEAM

Use this table to understand the differences in responsibilities, cost, flexibility, and typical stage of business for each option.

COO (In-House):	Fractional Ops Team:
Oversees all internal operations	Custom support from fractional operations consultants
Full-time salary + benefits	Monthly retainer (typically 20–40% of a COO's salary)
Suited for businesses with 25+ employees or \$3M+ in revenue	Ideal for businesses with 3–25 employees or scaling to \$500K–\$3M
Leads department heads and strategic ops teams	Builds or optimizes systems, team structures, and accountability
Requires strong existing systems to be effective	Delivers tangible outputs: workflows, dashboards, SOPs, training



2. BUDGET & CAPACITY CHECKLIST

Ask yourself:

- ☐ Do I have \$150K–\$250K annually available for a full-time COO hire? Or \$75K - \$125K annually available for a part-time or fractional COO hire?
- ☐ Do I currently have a department-level structure that needs strategic leadership?
- ☐ Is my team large enough that I need layers of management?
- ☐ Are my operations documented, automated, and tracked-or still reactive?
- ☐ Would I benefit more from building systems than managing people right now?



3. BUSINESS READINESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Give yourself a score from 1 (not at all) to 5 (fully in place) for each of the following statements:

- ☐ We have clearly documented processes (SOPs) for all recurring tasks.
- ☐ Every role on our team has a written job description and KPIs.
- ☐ I review weekly dashboards that show how the business is performing.
- ☐ Tasks and projects move forward without my constant involvement.
- ☐ There is a clear decision-making structure on the team.
- ☐ We follow a consistent weekly, monthly, and quarterly rhythm.

Scoring Tip:

- 25 or higher: You're likely ready to onboard leadership.
- Under 25: Consider building structure first with fractional support.



4. KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU HIRE A COO

- What exactly do I want a COO to take off my plate? _____

- Can I clearly define what success would look like in that role? _____

- Are there broken systems that would limit their effectiveness? _____

- Is my current team clear on their roles and responsibilities? _____

- Have I explored fractional or project-based support first? _____



5. SYSTEMS TO BUILD BEFORE YOU HIRE FULL-TIME LEADERSHIP

- SOP Library for recurring tasks
- Documented Org Chart and Roles
- CRM with lead flow, pipeline visibility, automations, and workflows
- Weekly reporting dashboard (KPIs, goals, blockers)
- Project Management platform with workflow templates
- Internal knowledge base for team use



WRAP-UP:

If you're ready to take the next step, but want a partner to help you get there, schedule a meeting with us.

We'd love to help.

[Schedule a free discovery session with WOWSuccessTeam](#)

SCAN HERE

