HR's Guide to Scaling Marketing Without Adding Headcount

HOW TO UNLOCK GROWTH WITHOUT COMMITTING TO FULL-TIME HIRES



Wheels Up
COLLECTIVE

HR'S ROLE IN DRIVING SCALABLE GROWTH

As a Head of People or HR leader at a growing company, you do more than manage talent. You're the force that makes it possible to turn strategy into execution. And you know better than anyone that hiring decisions directly impact business outcomes.

When the leadership team says they need a new Head of Marketing, you're the one reconciling ambition with budget, timelines, and reality. And while hiring a full-time marketer might feel like the default decision a lot of the time, you know it's not always the smartest one—especially when speed, flexibility, and focus are key.

You understand that:

- Headcount is costly
- Lengthy time-to-hire slows momentum
- Mishires drain capital and morale

The good news? There are modern, scalable alternatives that let you deliver a bigger marketing impact without adding headcount.



3 COMMON MARKETING PROBLEMS YOU DON'T NEED TO HIRE FOR

MARKETING CHALLENGE	TRADITIONAL RESPONSE	SMARTER ALTERNATIVE
You need a GTM strategy or campaign plan	Hire a Head of Marketing	Fractional CMO or senior strategist (10-20 hrs/month)
You're behind on content or need executional support	Hire 1-2 marketers	Use a marketing agency with a flexible monthly scope
You need to show traction before raising your next round of funding	Try to hire fast (and often miss)	Use a sprint-based marketing partner to accelerate testing and learn fast

COST COMPARISON:
FULL-TIME HIRE VS. A FRACTIONAL OR AGENCY OPTION

SUPPORT TYPE	APPROX. MONTHLY COST	APPROX. ANNUALIZED COST	ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS
Full-time marketing leader	$15k ($180K salary + approx. $30K in benefits)	$210k	Requires approx. 3-4 months to hire and ramp
Fractional CMO	$7k-$10k	$84k-$120k	Strategic leadership can be achieved in as little as 10-20 hrs/month
Executional support (agency or freelancers)	$4k-$8k	$48k-$96k	You'll need coverage for content, email, paid ads, etc.
Combined fractional CMO + execution support	$11k–$18k	$132k-$216k	Flexible, scalable, and ramped in weeks



Bottom line:
For the cost of a single full-time hire, you can stand up an entire marketing engine (with executive-level strategy and execution support). And you don't carry the long-term headcount

WHEN TO RECOMMEND FRACTIONAL OR AGENCY SUPPORT

Consider investing in a combined fractional leadership + agency support model when:

- **Speed matters.** You need traction in 30-60 days
- **Budget is tight.** You can't afford $200K+ in burn just to test a marketing direction
- **Scope is unclear.** You need to figure out what works before you staff a team to manage it
- **Pressure is high.** Leadership is expecting visible results across meaningful metrics
- **Your founder is still leading marketing.** A plug-and-play team can free up their time

Fractional support works best when you're experimenting, testing markets, or trying to get to the next inflection point quickly.

HOW TO PITCH THIS TO YOUR CEO OR FINANCE LEAD

You've weighed the options, scoped the needs, and found a smarter way forward. You just have to get leadership on board.

Whether you're speaking with a budget-conscious finance lead or a founder still wearing the marketing hat, the key is to frame your recommendation not as a workaround for hiring delays but as a *strategic, low-risk way to accelerate results.*

Here's a simple, confident way to pitch the idea:

> "Instead of committing to a full-time Head of Marketing, what if we start with a fractional marketing lead and flexible execution support for the next 3-6 months? I've done the research. It's lower cost, faster to impact, and gives us real data to decide if and when we need a full-time hire."

Other helpful talking points:

> "We can revisit hiring once this proves ROI."

> "This approach helps us de-risk the marketing function while still moving fast."

> "We get senior expertise without the long-term cost or onboarding delay."



ACTION CHECKLIST: WHAT TO DO NEXT

Start with these simple, strategic steps:

- [ ] Clarify the outcomes marketing needs to achieve (GTM, content, lead gen?)
- [ ] Assess internal capacity and time-to-hire timelines
- [ ] Talk to finance about available budget for the next 6-12 months
- [ ] Explore fractional or agency options (we can help)
- [ ] Present two paths to leadership: Full-time hire vs. fractional approach
- [ ] Recommend the path with the best near-term ROI
- [ ] Reassess in 90 days with real performance data

A REAL-WORLD CASE STUDY IN FRACTIONAL SUPPORT

Wheels Up Collective helped a founder-led SaaS company transform marketing from an afterthought into a key growth driver—without hiring a full-time marketing executive.

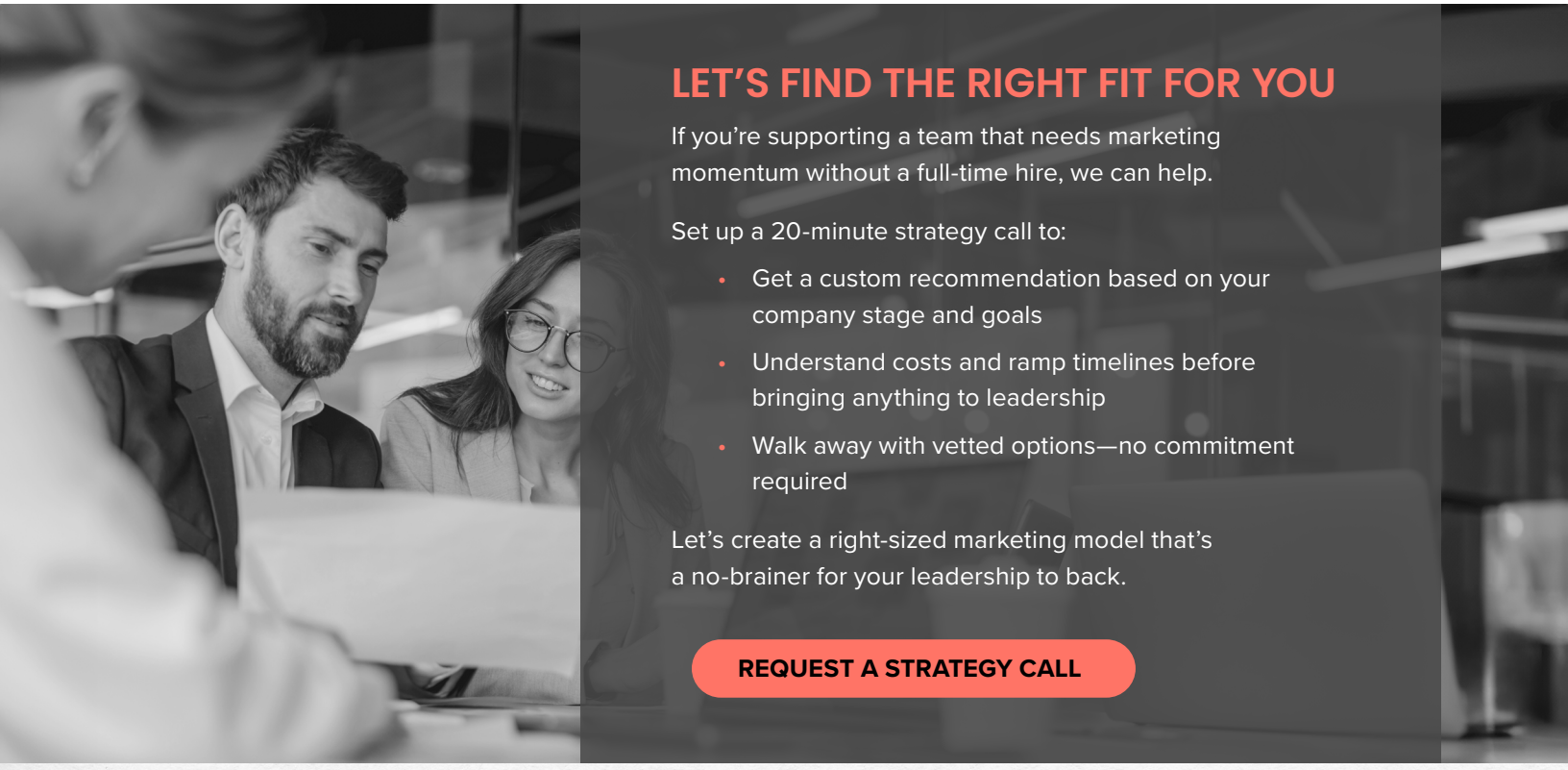
By embedding fractional leadership and execution support, we built a lean, scalable marketing engine from scratch.

Results:

- Increased MQLs by 250%
- Grew marketing-sourced pipeline by 70%
- Grew SEO traffic by 200%
- Implemented a full MarTech stack
- Produced 50+ content assets in 10 months

Estimated cost savings: Over $100,000 compared to hiring a full-time marketing executive and team over the same period.

This flexible model helped our client move fast, prove ROI, and lay the groundwork for long-term success, all without the cost or delay of traditional hiring.



LET'S FIND THE RIGHT FIT FOR YOU

If you're supporting a team that needs marketing momentum without a full-time hire, we can help.

Set up a 20-minute strategy call to:

- Get a custom recommendation based on your company stage and goals
- Understand costs and ramp timelines before bringing anything to leadership
- Walk away with vetted options—no commitment required

Let's create a right-sized marketing model that's a no-brainer for your leadership to back.

REQUEST A STRATEGY CALL

About Wheels Up Collective

Wheels Up Collective is a boutique agency helping small, medium, and startup tech companies drive growth through strategic marketing. Whether building your first strategy or complimenting the team you already have with instant, on-demand bandwidth, Wheels Up is able to deliver results faster than the traditional agency model and usually for a fraction of the cost. For more information, visit wheelsupcollective.com or find us on LinkedIn.