

THE RISE OF THE FRACTIONAL CMO | 2026 REPORT

Unlocking a new model for marketing leadership

Demand, earnings, utilisation, and the
commercial reality of fractional marketing

THE RISE OF **FRACTIONAL MARKETING** LEADERSHIP – 2026

INTRODUCTION

Something significant is happening in the way UK businesses access marketing talent. Quietly, and without much fanfare, a new model of senior marketing leadership has been taking root - one that is reshaping how growth-focused businesses think about capability, commitment, and commercial impact.

The Fractional Marketing Leader is no longer a stopgap. It is a strategic choice.

At The Slice Network, we work with some of the most experienced fractional marketing leaders in the UK. People who have left the conventional career path not because they had to, but because they chose to. Until now, the evidence base for the fractional marketing market has been thin. Anecdotal. Based on individual experience rather than collective data. This report changes that.....

In April 2026, we surveyed 113 fractional marketing leaders across the UK and beyond - in partnership with Robert Half Talent Solutions. We asked them who they are, how they work, what the market looks like from the inside, and where they see the greatest challenges and opportunities ahead. What emerged is the most comprehensive picture of the UK fractional marketing market yet produced.

It is a market that is growing - progressively and meaningfully. A market that is maturing, professionalising, and attracting serious talent.

This report is for fractional marketing leaders who want to understand the landscape they are operating in. It is also for founders and leadership teams who are considering whether the model is right for them. And it is for anyone who believes - as we do - that fractional marketing leadership is not a compromise.

It is a competitive advantage.



Jeremy Laight
Founder - The Slice Network

SIX FINDINGS THAT DEFINE THE **FRACTIONAL MARKETING MARKET** IN 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fractional marketing leadership is no longer a niche career choice or a stopgap hiring solution. Based on survey data from 113 fractional marketing leaders across the UK and beyond, this report presents the most comprehensive picture yet of how the model works in practice - who is doing it, how they earn, where the work comes from, and what the future looks like.

Six findings define the market in 2026:

1. **Capability acquisition, not cost reduction, is the primary driver**

Businesses are engaging fractional marketing leaders primarily to access senior capability without long-term commitment. Cost efficiency is a secondary justification rather than the core motivation. This reframes the model as a capability access strategy, not a budget solution, with clear implications for how practitioners should position and price their services.

2. **Market growth is evident, but adoption remains early and fragmented**

Demand has increased over the past twelve months, particularly among early-growth and scale-up businesses where marketing leadership is needed but full-time hiring is premature. However, growth remains incremental rather than accelerated, and adoption is constrained by a lack of buyer understanding. The market has not yet transitioned from emerging to established.

3. **Practitioner earnings lag the model's potential**

Most practitioners are earning below £10k per month and operating significantly under capacity. A smaller cohort is already achieving £20k+ monthly income, demonstrating the model's potential. The gap is not driven by capability or market demand, but by differences in positioning, pipeline discipline, and commercial structure.

SIX FINDINGS THAT DEFINE THE **FRACTIONAL MARKETING MARKET** IN 2026 CONT.....

Six findings define the market in 2026:

4. Pipeline instability is the primary operational constraint

Inconsistent lead flow is the most commonly cited challenge, significantly outweighing concerns around competition. This indicates that the market is not saturated, and that pipeline issues are largely self-inflicted. Over-reliance on referrals, combined with weak positioning and limited visibility, is the primary constraint on growth.

5. Delivery challenges stem from engagement design, not capability

Where engagements underperform, the root cause is typically misalignment rather than lack of skill. Unclear scope and a drift from strategic to executional work are the dominant issues. This highlights a structural gap in how fractional engagements are defined and governed, rather than any deficiency in practitioner capability.

6. Confidence is increasing, but unevenly distributed

Confidence in the fractional model is growing, with many viewing it as a sustainable and attractive career path. Flexibility, autonomy, and variety are key drivers of satisfaction. However, confidence is concentrated among those with established positioning and consistent pipeline, while others remain dependent on gaining traction. The opportunity is clear, but realising it requires deliberate investment in commercial infrastructure.



Catherine Nichols

Co-Founder of The Slice Network

THE RISE OF THE FRACTIONAL CMO | 2026 REPORT

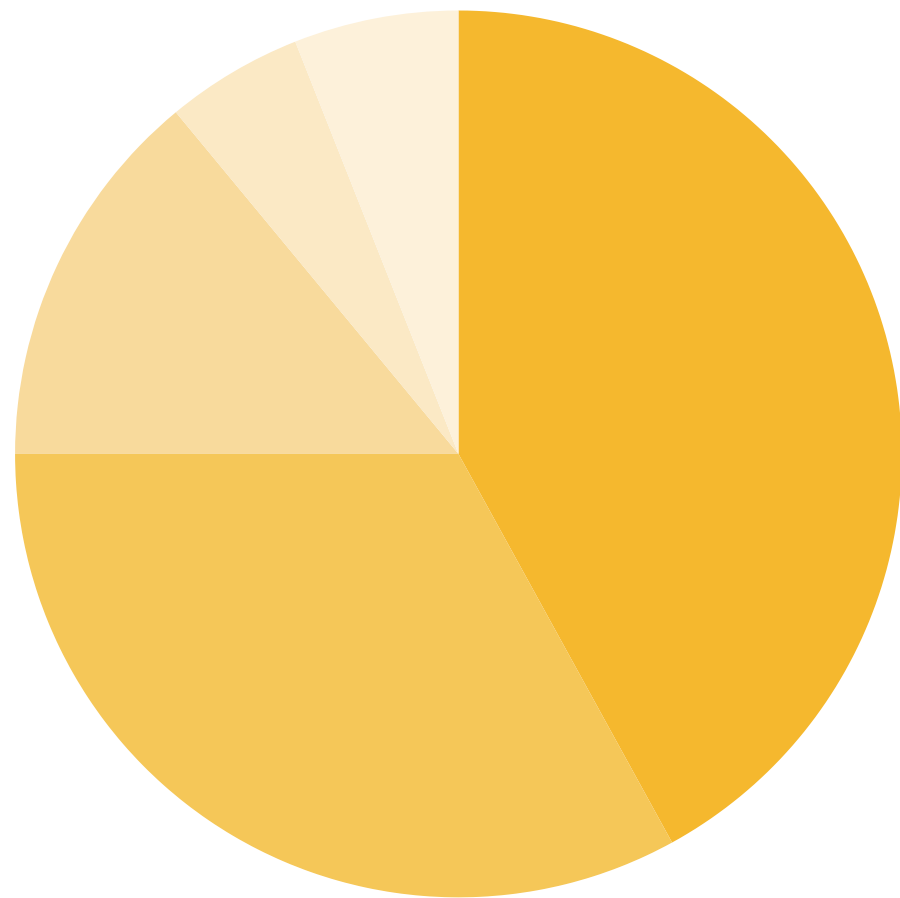
01 Who they are

The profile of fractional marketing leaders today

RESPONDERS ARE PREDOMINANTLY **UK-BASED**, WITH A BALANCED MIX OF NEW AND EXPERIENCED FRACTIONALS

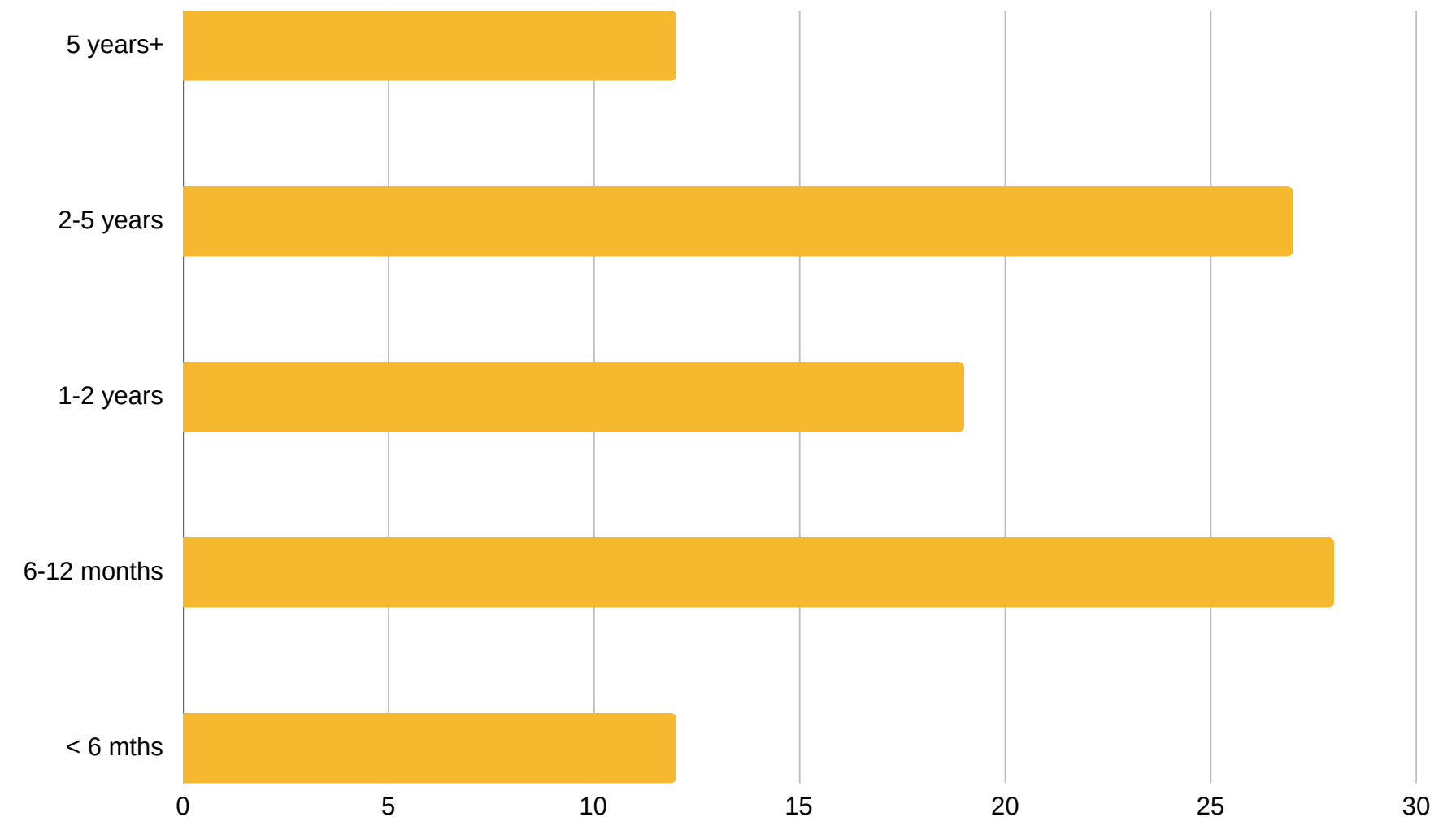
Q : IN WHICH LOCATION ARE YOU PRIMARILY BASED?

● UK (London) ● UK (outside London) ● Europe
● USA ● Other



Respondents are predominantly UK-based (c. 74%), with a strong concentration in London and a smaller international spread (12% are outside Europe).

Q : HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING FRACTIONALLY?



A mixed audience, slightly skewed towards those in their first year, alongside a solid cohort of more experienced fractionals (40% have > 2 years experience).

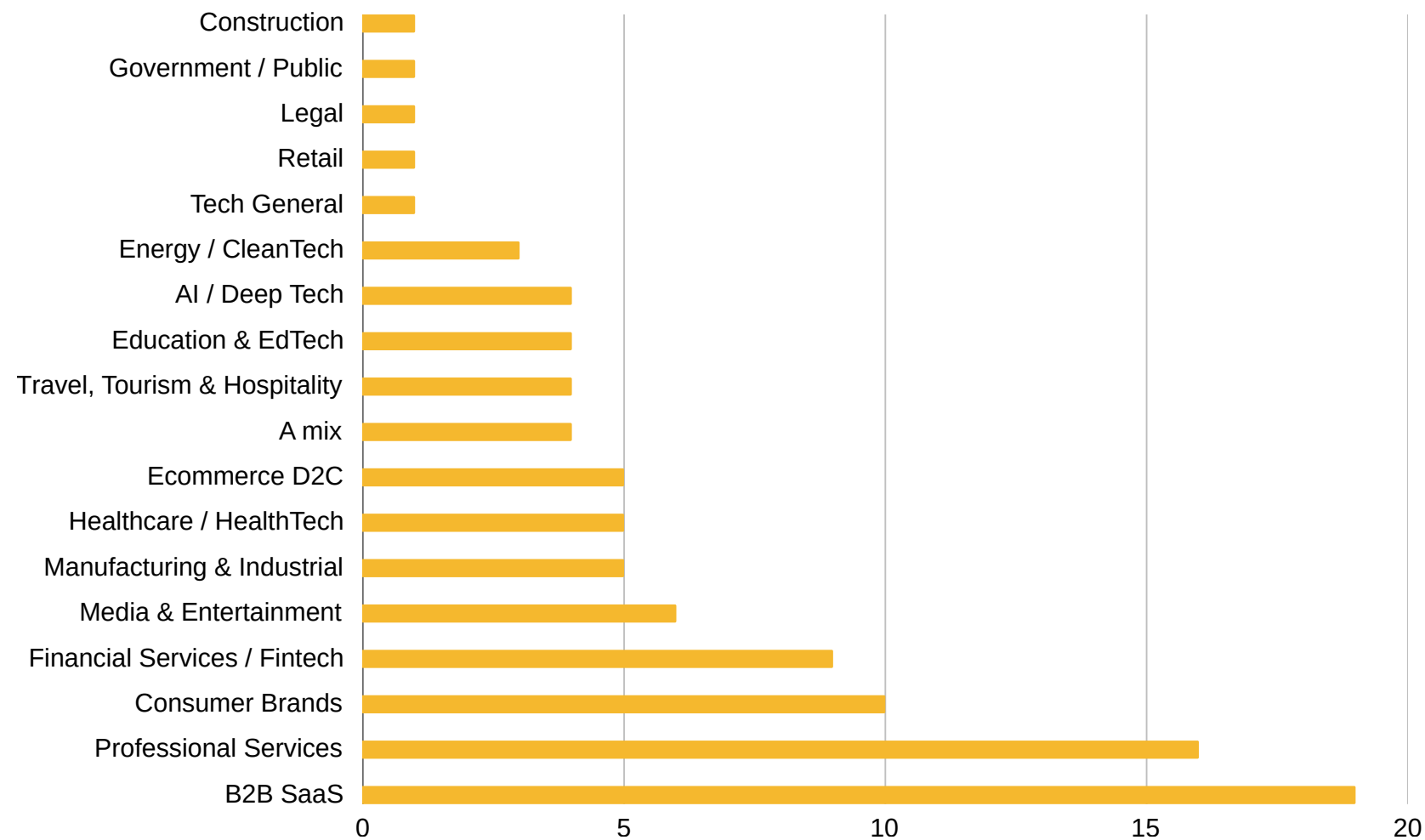


Phil Toms - Fractional Marketing Director

This is my second independent chapter. This time round, it is brilliant to see the role of Fractional Marketers better understood, with many more mature operators, with > 2 yrs experience. And to have access to these individuals, from the UK and beyond, via The Slice Network.

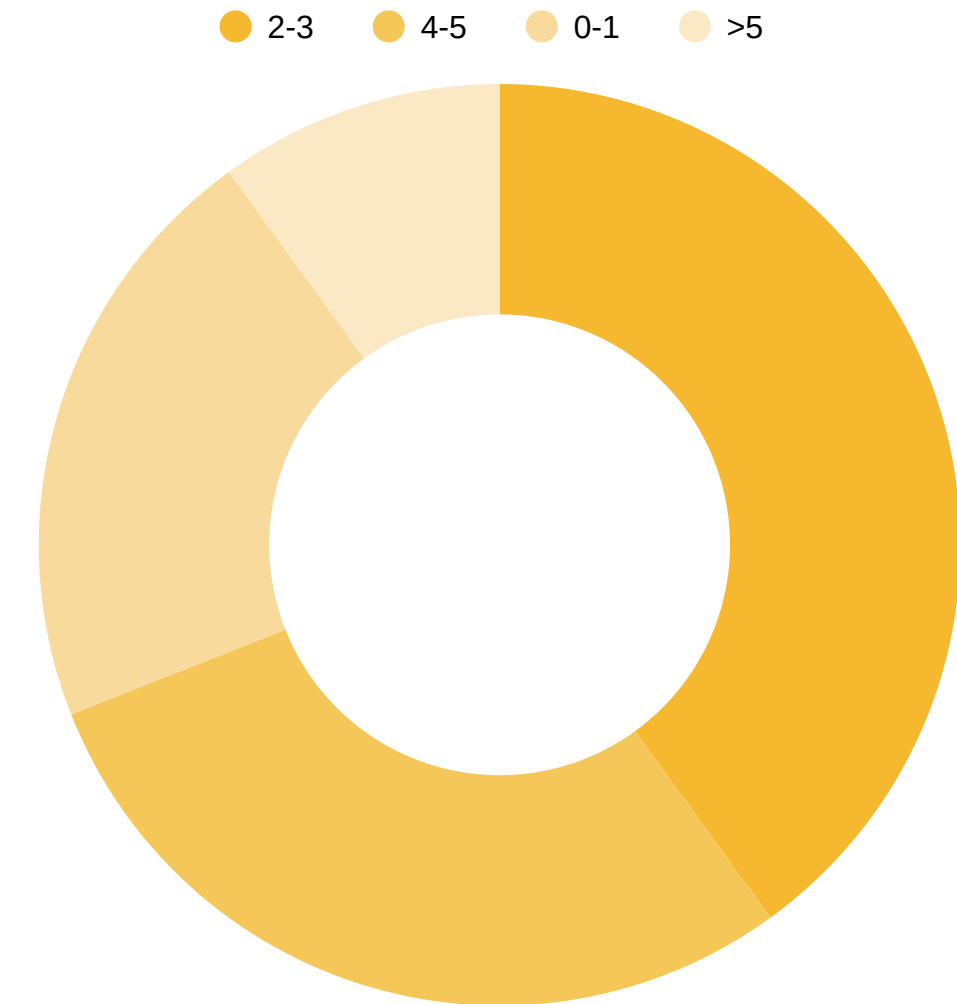
RESPONDERS ALSO COVER A BROAD MIX OF SECTORS, WITH TWO THIRDS WORKING WITH 2 - 5 CLIENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

Q : WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR PRIMARY SECTOR OF FOCUS IN THE LAST YEAR?



Respondents work across a broad mix of sectors, with a skew towards B2B SaaS, professional services, and consumer brands & fintech.

Q : HOW MANY DIFFERENT BRANDS HAVE YOU WORKED WITH IN THE PAST YEAR?



Respondents typically work with a select number of clients, with the majority (c. 69%) working with 2–5 clients over the past 12 months.



Victoria Lennon - Fractional Marketing Operations Specialist

Fractional marketers bring cross-sector and brand perspectives that in-house teams can struggle to access. They can challenge conventional thinking and raise the bar for best practice for multiple brands at once, across all sectors, and both B2B and B2C.

THE RISE OF THE FRACTIONAL CMO | 2026 REPORT

02 How they work

The commercial reality of fractional marketing engagements

THERE IS **CLEAR INCOME HEADROOM** FOR MANY - WITH A FEW ALREADY REALISING THE FULL POTENTIAL

TYPICAL MONTHLY EARNINGS FROM FRACTIONAL WORK?

Most fractional marketers are currently operating within moderate income ranges, with the majority earning below £10k per month.

However, a smaller segment is already reaching significantly higher levels, demonstrating the model's ability to unlock strong earning potential when fully optimised.

This suggests that while many are still building consistency and refining their positioning, the pathway to higher income is clear and already being realised by those who have established a strong pipeline and commercial approach.

Overall, the data points to a model with proven upside, with clear headroom for others to scale towards higher earnings over time.

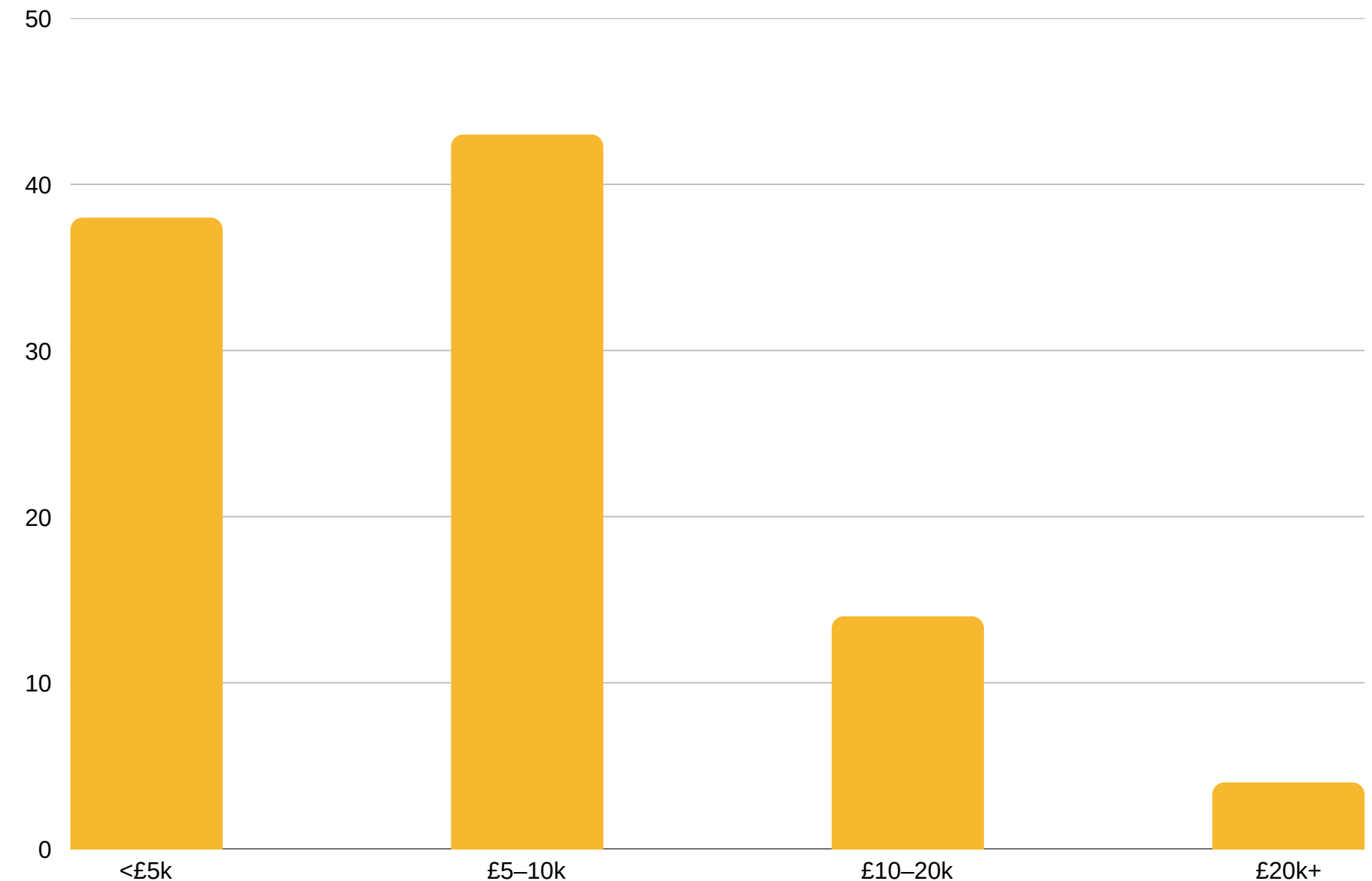
The ceiling for fractional marketers is high and not everyone has reached it yet



Edward Madden - FCMO

As well as indicating opportunity for growth, the distribution of monthly earnings likely also reflects two further factors: Firstly : fractional is a genuinely flexible model that fits a range of working patterns, from part-time to a full-time portfolio career. And, secondly : there are a wide range of client types (founder-led, PE-backed, enterprise), role requirements and fee levels to match the diversity of the fractional CMO community.

Q : WHAT ARE YOUR TYPICAL MONTHLY **EARNINGS** FROM FRACTIONAL WORK?



MOST FRACTIONAL MARKETERS ARE NOT FULLY UTILISED - WITH **SIGNIFICANT UNUSED CAPACITY AVAILABLE**

WHAT IS THE TYPICAL AMOUNT OF WORK CAPACITY AVAILABLE?

A significant proportion of fractional marketers are currently operating below full capacity, with only a minority approaching full utilisation.

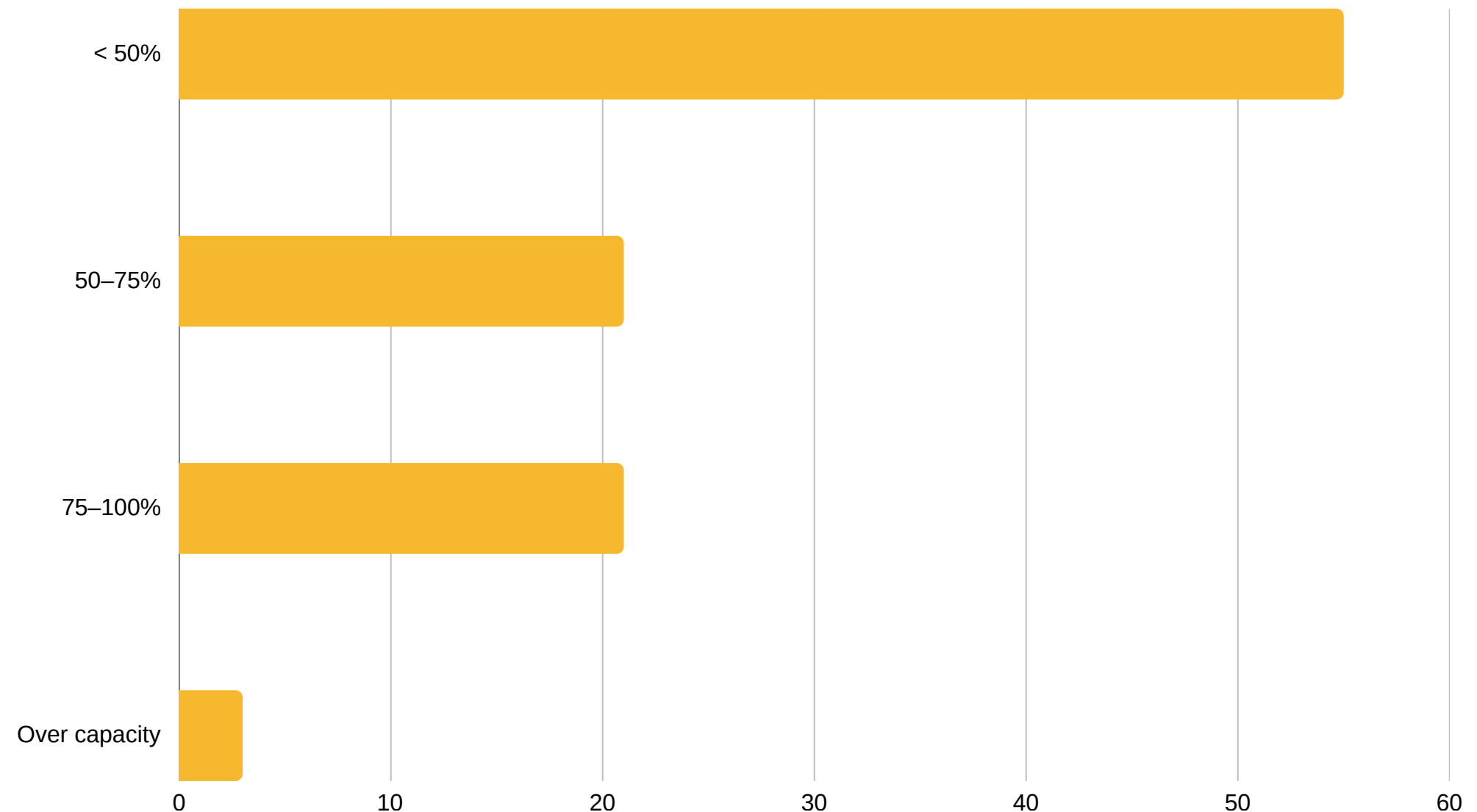
This highlights a clear opportunity within the market - not a lack of capability, but the potential to unlock more consistent, high-quality engagements.

While the fractional model is positioned as flexible and 'in demand', many operators are still in the process of building pipelines and converting availability into sustained, paid work.

Overall, the data points to significant headroom for growth, with many fractionals well placed to increase utilisation as the market continues to mature.

The capacity is there and arguably so is the opportunity to turn it into consistent, paid work

Q : WHAT % OF YOUR AVAILABLE **CAPACITY** IS CURRENTLY FILLED WITH PAID WORK?



Rehan Zaidi - FCMO

From my own experience and conversations with fellow FCMOs, there's a wealth of senior expertise available with capacity to take on the right engagements. For businesses that want to grow, the opportunity to access that talent, both affordably and flexibly, has never been greater.

FRACTIONAL WORK APPEARS TO BE **PRIMARILY STRUCTURED AROUND TIME,** NOT OUTCOMES

MOST COMMON STRUCTURES FOR FRACTIONAL ENGAGEMENTS?

Most fractional engagements are still structured around time, rather than outcomes.

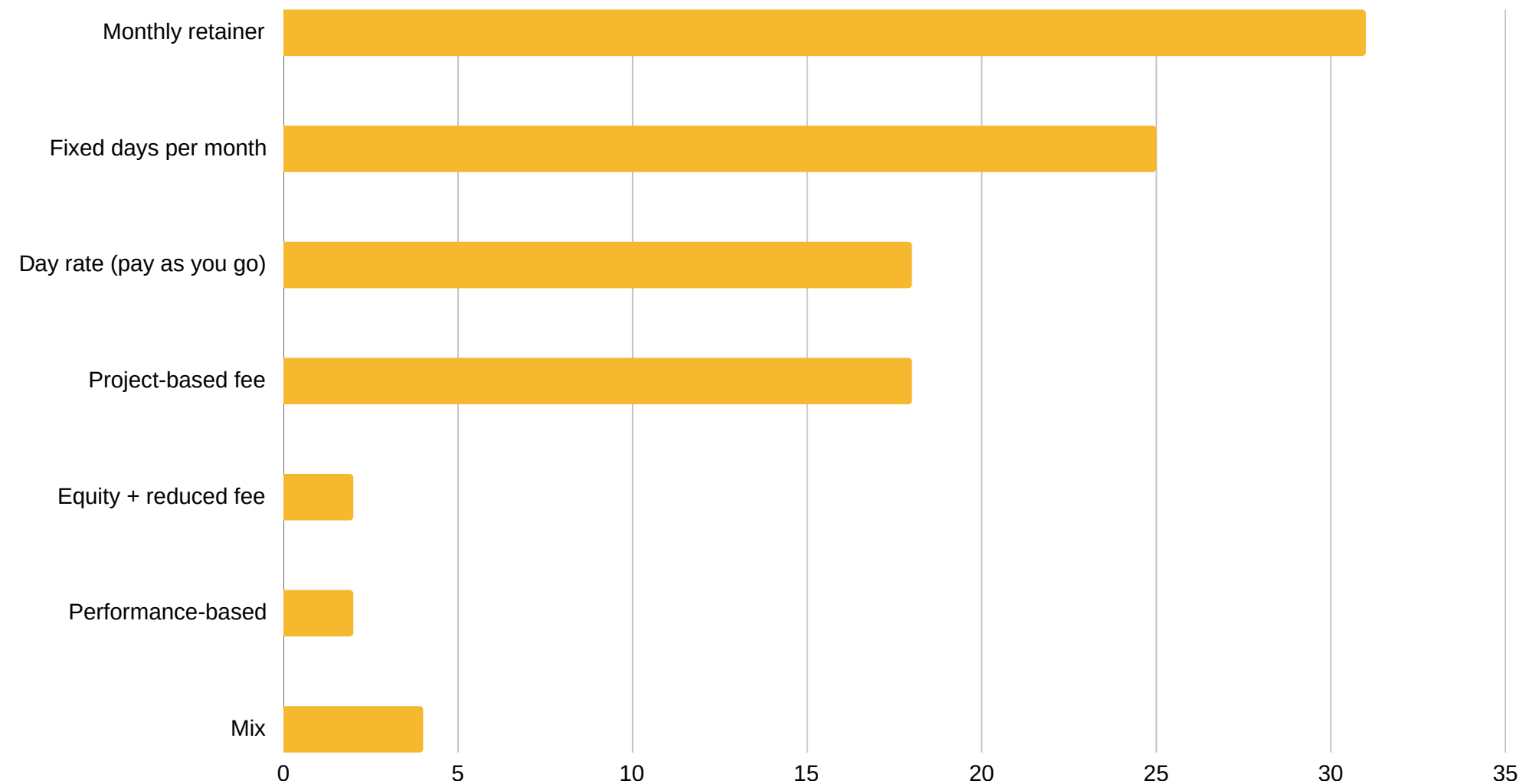
Retainers and fixed-day arrangements dominate, alongside day rates and project-based fees - creating a model that is predictable, but still rooted in input rather than impact.

Project work remains relevant, but typically sits alongside ongoing time-based structures, reinforcing that most roles are positioned as embedded support rather than clear outcome-driven engagements.

Equity-based and performance-linked arrangements remain extremely rare, highlighting a clear gap between how fractional work is positioned and how it is actually commercialised.

The market talks about value, but largely still prices by time.

Q : HOW ARE YOUR ENGAGEMENTS MOST COMMONLY **STRUCTURED?**



Celia Rizothanasi - FCMO & Marketing AI Strategist

AI is disrupting pricing models across the board. FCMOs are no exception. But AI also lets us measure and attribute impact like never before. Fractionals who anchor retainers to impact-linked milestones will lead the shift and set the new standard.

FRACTIONAL ROLES TYPICALLY SPAN STRATEGY, LEADERSHIP AND EXECUTION - REQUIRING MULTI-LEVEL FUNCTIONING

MOST COMMON SCOPE FOR FRACTIONAL ENGAGEMENTS?

Most fractional engagements sit in the middle, combining strategy, leadership, and execution, rather than operating purely at one level.

The largest segments are strategy + team leadership and a mix of all responsibilities, closely followed by hands-on execution. In contrast, purely strategic advisory roles are relatively limited.

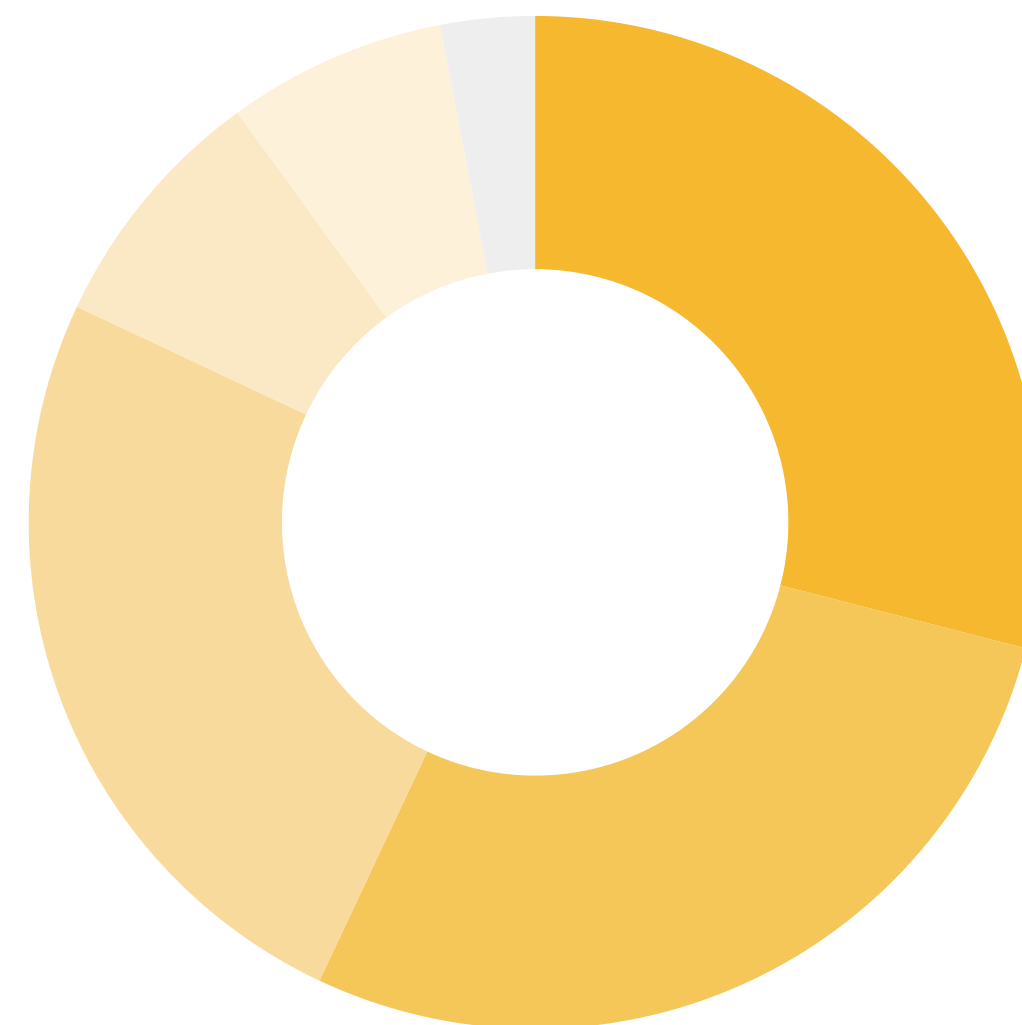
This suggests that while fractionals are positioned as senior strategic hires, in practice they are often required to span multiple layers of the organisation, from direction through to delivery.

Notably, ownership of revenue or pipeline is very low, reinforcing that most roles are not yet structured around clear commercial accountability.

Businesses want fractional marketers who can lead but also roll their sleeves up and get stuck in

Q : WHAT IS THE TYPICAL SCOPE OF YOUR MOST RECENT FRACTIONAL ENGAGEMENT?

- Strategy + team leadership
- Mix of all of the above
- Hands-on execution + delivery
- Strategic advisory only
- Special project (e.g. product launch)
- Other



Rob Bugler - Fractional FMCG Innovation Director

A key benefit of fractional leadership is quick access to experienced leaders who operate across strategy, leadership and execution - shaping direction, aligning teams and delivering measurable results with pace.

03 The Market today

Demand, opportunity, and where the fractional model is currently being used

DEMAND FOR FRACTIONAL MARKETERS IS GROWING - BUT **NOT YET BREAKING THROUGH**, WITH A MINORITY SUGGESTING IT'S DECLINING

HOW HAS DEMAND CHANGED OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

Demand for fractional marketing leaders is clearly moving in the right direction, but the growth is incremental, not explosive.

While many report an increase, it is predominantly slight - with a significant proportion seeing no change, and a meaningful minority experiencing decline or uncertainty.

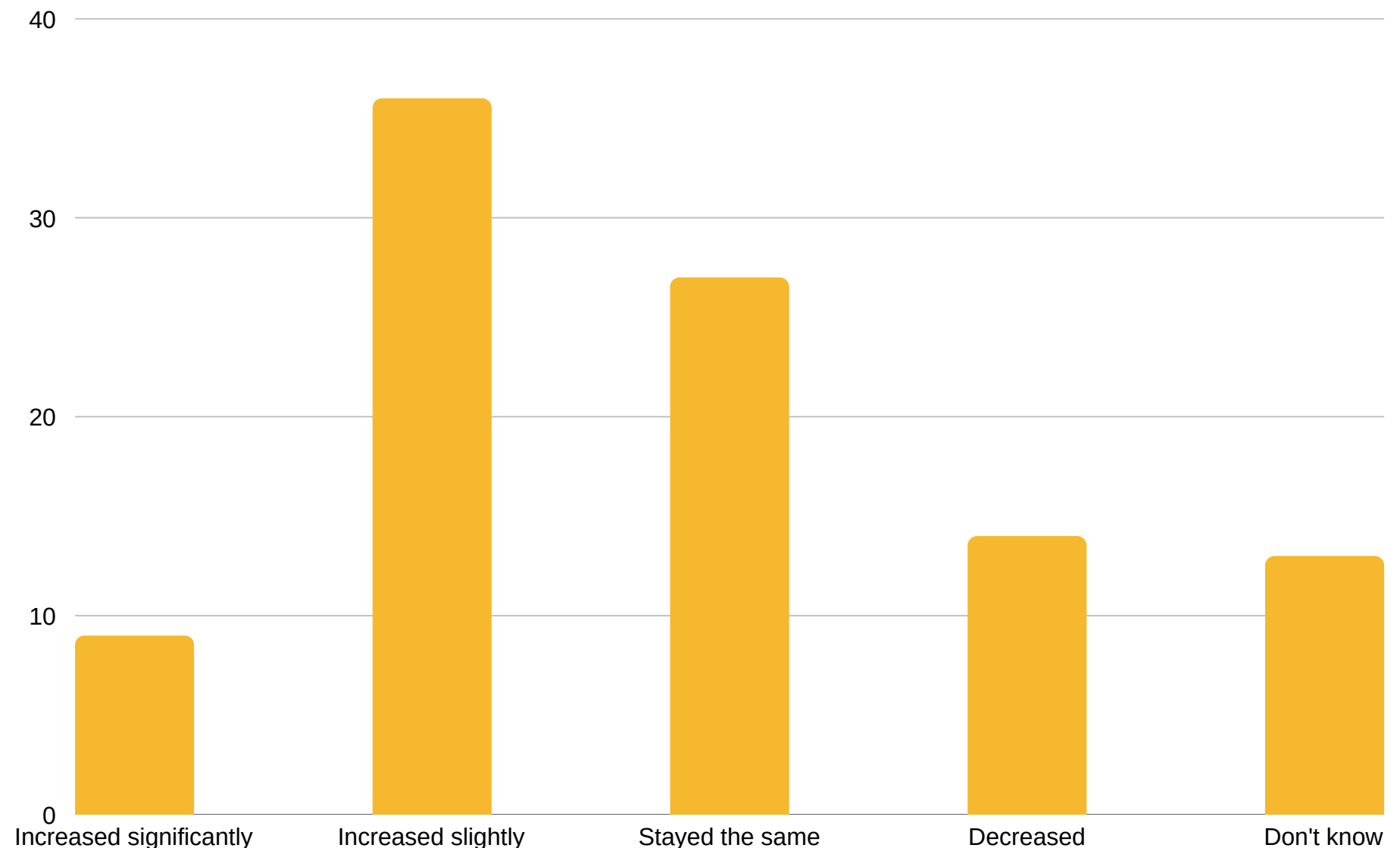
This points to a market that is:

- Emerging, and not yet established
- Fragmented across sectors and company types
- Still dependent on awareness and education

Crucially, this reinforces a key tension: businesses are exploring fractional marketing, but they're not consistently using it yet.

As fractional marketing awareness converts into confidence, adoption is likely to accelerate

Q : HOW HAS FRACTIONAL MARKETING DEMAND **CHANGED** OVER THE PAST 12 MTHS?



Claire Kelly - FCMO | Fractional Marketing Director

This feels less like a slowdown and more like the moment before the penny drops. I joined this space because I could see the gap. The awareness is coming, and practitioners like me are actively helping to build it.

DEMAND IS **CONCENTRATED IN GROWTH-STAGE BUSINESSES** - BUT PRESENT IN ALL LEVELS OF BUSINESS MATURITY

WHICH ORGANISATIONS ARE DOMINATING DEMAND?

Demand for fractional marketing leaders is being driven primarily by early growth and scale-up companies, rather than pre-revenue startups or fully established organisations.

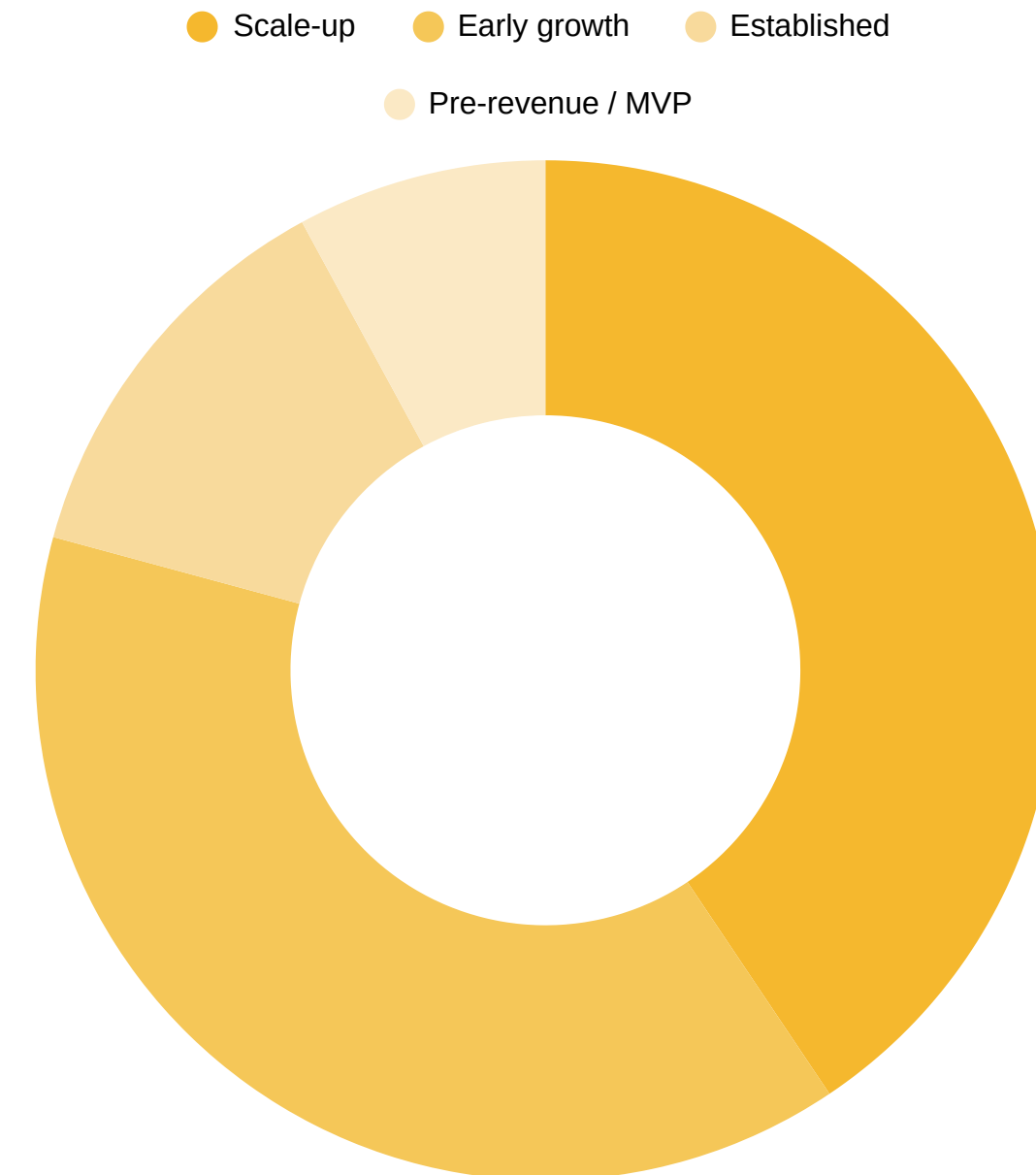
This highlights a clear pattern: the model is most relevant once businesses have moved beyond initial validation and are navigating increasing commercial and operational complexity.

At this stage, organisations require senior marketing leadership to drive growth, but often lack the scale, structure, or certainty to justify a full-time hire.

In contrast, pre-revenue businesses are less likely to invest at this level, while more established firms are typically already resourced with internal leadership, though more likely to consider fractional for interim placements.

Fractional marketing leadership is not yet perceived as a universal solution by all businesses

Q : WHAT TYPE OF ORGANISATIONS ARE DRIVING THE MOST **DEMAND** FOR FCMOS?



Michael Rhodes - Fractional Marketing & Digital Lead for UK SMEs

The data confirms what most of us are seeing on the ground. The real question is why established firms still underutilise fractional. It's a strategic lever, yet still treated like interim cover.

TODAY BUSINESSES ARE MAINLY **HIRING FRACTIONAL MARKETERS** TO ACCESS THEIR SENIOR EXPERTISE

MOST COMMON REASON FOR HIRING?

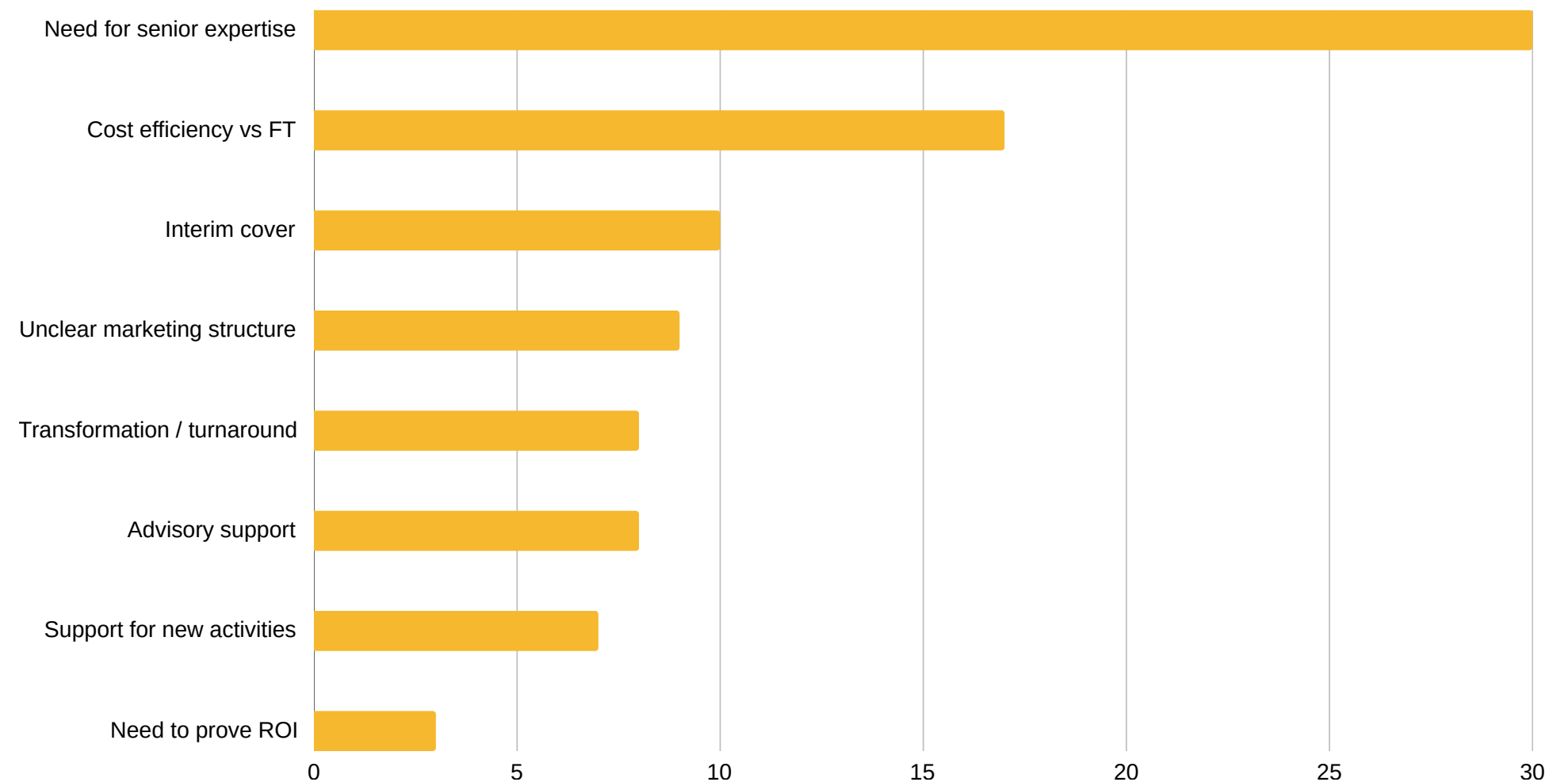
The need for senior expertise (without long-term commitment) is the standout driver by a significant margin, reinforcing that fractional resourcing is about capability and impact, not simply flexibility.

Cost efficiency is also important, but clearly secondary, appearing to be more as a justification than the core motivation.

Beyond that, the reasons fragment quickly across multiple use cases. From interim cover to transformation and advisory. Reinforcing that fractional is not a single use-case model, but a flexible solution to a wide range of business challenges.

Interestingly, “proving ROI” ranks low.

Q : WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON **REASONS FOR HIRING FRACTIONAL MARKETERS?**



However, is ROI always the underlying expectation even if its not the explicit driver?



Eva Lindner - Fractional Head of Growth

Businesses don't bring me in because they can't afford a full-time hire; they need senior expertise, yet someone embedded in the culture, invested in the outcome, and focused on leaving something that lasts. The biggest misconception is that fractional is transactional.

CURRENTLY THE **FRACTIONAL MARKET** IS OVERWHELMINGLY DRIVEN BY REFERRALS AND NETWORKS

WHERE ARE ALL THE OPPORTUNITIES?

Referrals dominate by a significant margin, indicating most opportunities are not openly competed for, but instead flow through trusted relationships and existing connections.

All other channels, including LinkedIn, outbound, recruiters and communities, play a secondary and fragmented role, with no single alternative coming close.

This suggests that while visibility channels like LinkedIn support credibility and awareness, access to opportunity is still primarily relationship-led.

Pointing to a market that is still evolving and relatively unstructured, where formal routes to market are underdeveloped and trust remains the primary currency.

The fractional market still runs on who you know, not just what you do

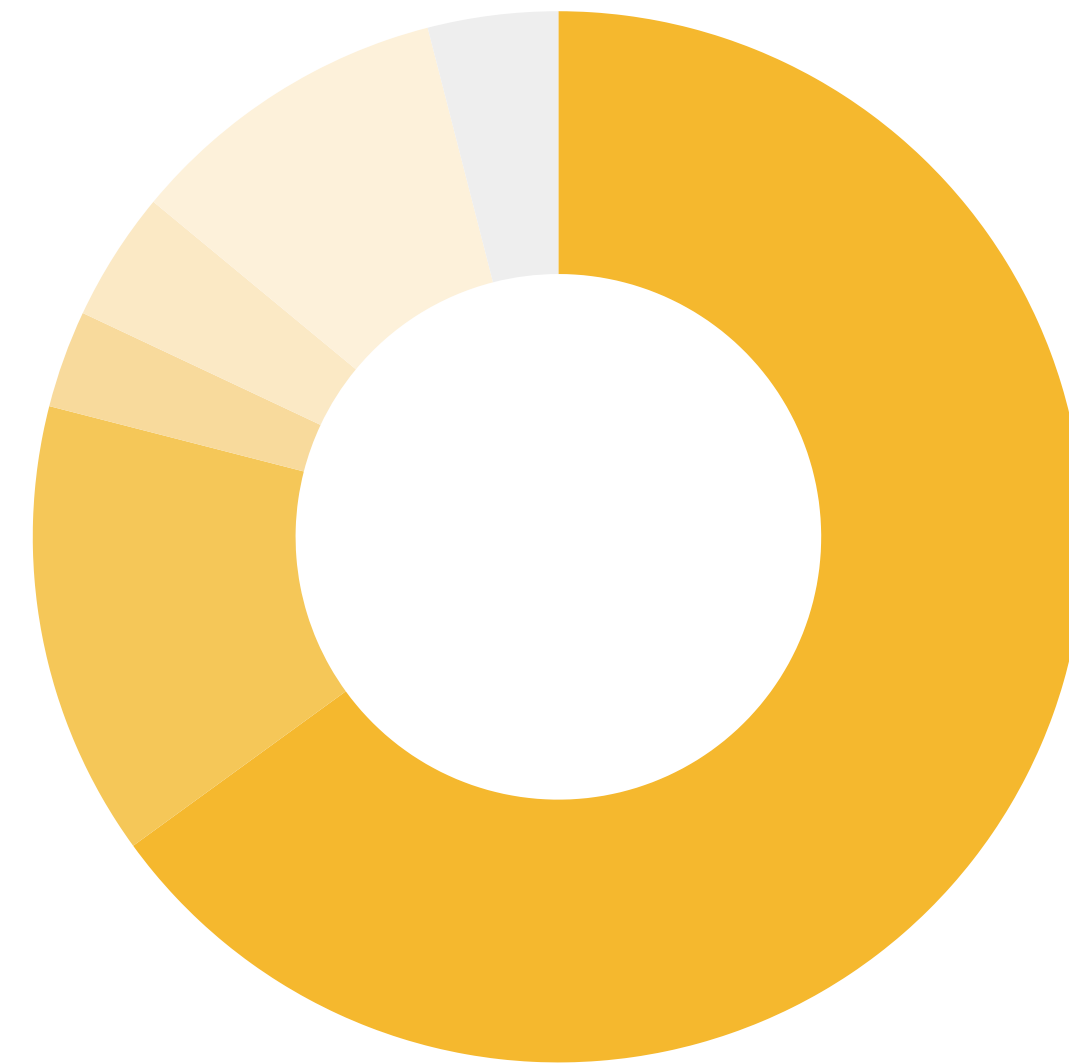


Mitch Kelly - Fractional CMO | Strategic Advisor to CEOs

Over time, the skill set, experience and qualifications of talent can change, not to mention entire industries. Something often not considered when engaging a known fCMO - this is a risk businesses need to consider before any new engagement.

Q : WHERE DO MOST FRACTIONAL MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES COME FROM?

- Referrals / network
- LinkedIn content
- Communities (e.g. Slice)
- Recruiters / agencies
- Outbound / direct outreach
- Partnerships



04 The Challenges

What makes fractional marketing hard when it comes to securing work and delivering it

INCONSISTENT PIPELINE / LEAD FLOW IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR FRACTIONAL MARKETERS CURRENTLY

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE SECURING ROLES?

Inconsistent lead flow is the biggest challenge facing fractional marketers when it comes to securing roles. Reinforcing that while opportunities exist, accessing them consistently remains the core challenge for fractionals.

Beyond that, challenges are more fragmented across

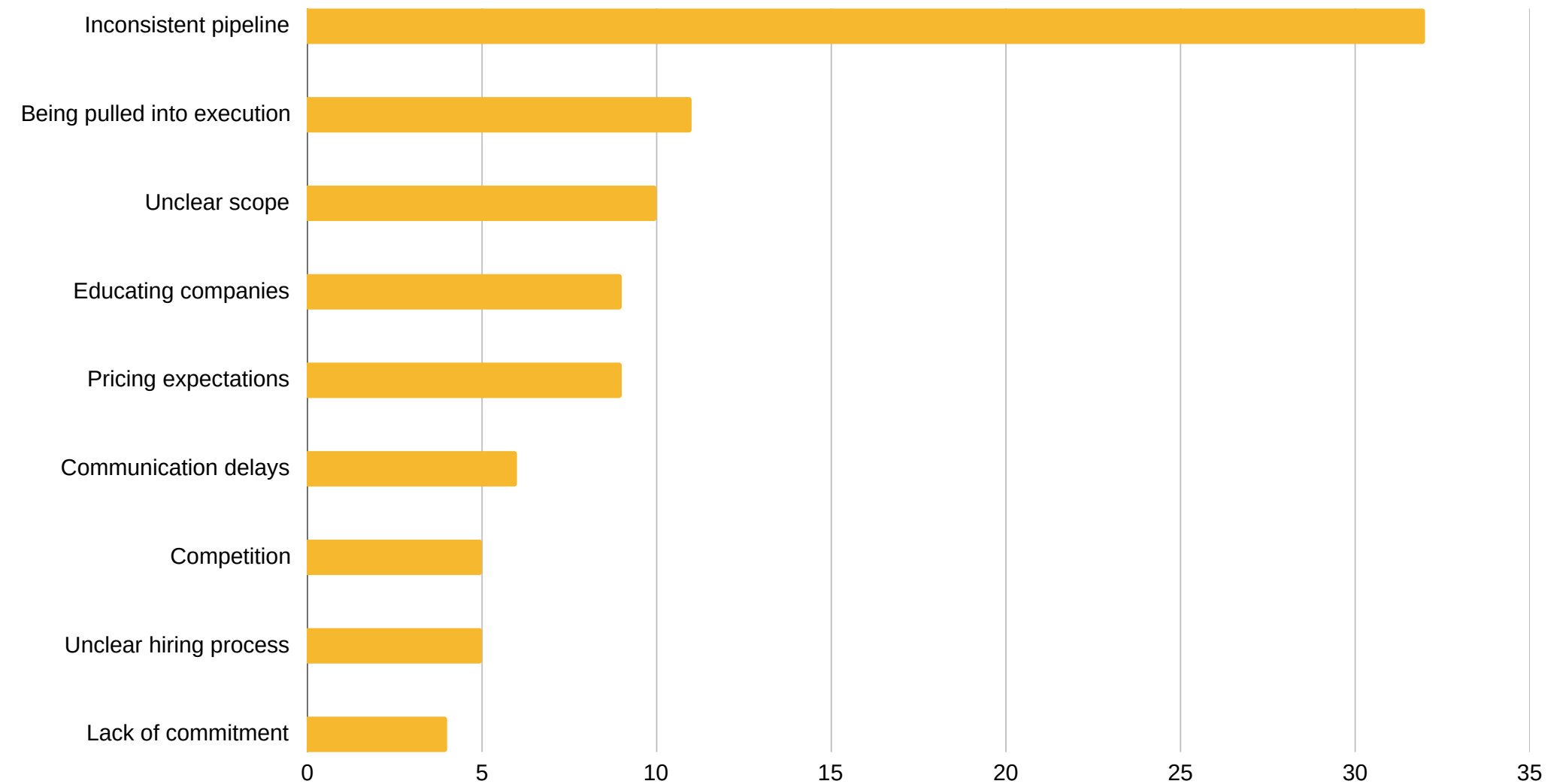
- Unclear scope (and expectations)
- Being pulled into execution (vs strategy)
- Pricing expectations

Suggesting the challenge isn't just finding work, it's also structuring and defining the role once engaged

Factors like competition, hiring understanding, and long-term commitment rank relatively low.

The issue is less about market saturation, and more about clarity, positioning and pipeline

Q : WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHEN SECURING FRACTIONAL ROLES?



David O Riordan - Fractional Chief Growth Officer

Early on as a fractional I treated my own pipeline as an afterthought. Protect time for it every week or you'll always be reacting.

FRACTIONAL MARKETING ASSIGNMENTS DONT FAIL BECAUSE OF TALENT - BUT OFTEN BECAUSE OF MISALIGNMENT

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST DELIVERY CHALLENGE?

Unclear scope and expectations are the biggest challenges facing fractional marketers when delivering. Closely followed by being pulled into execution rather than operating at a strategic level.

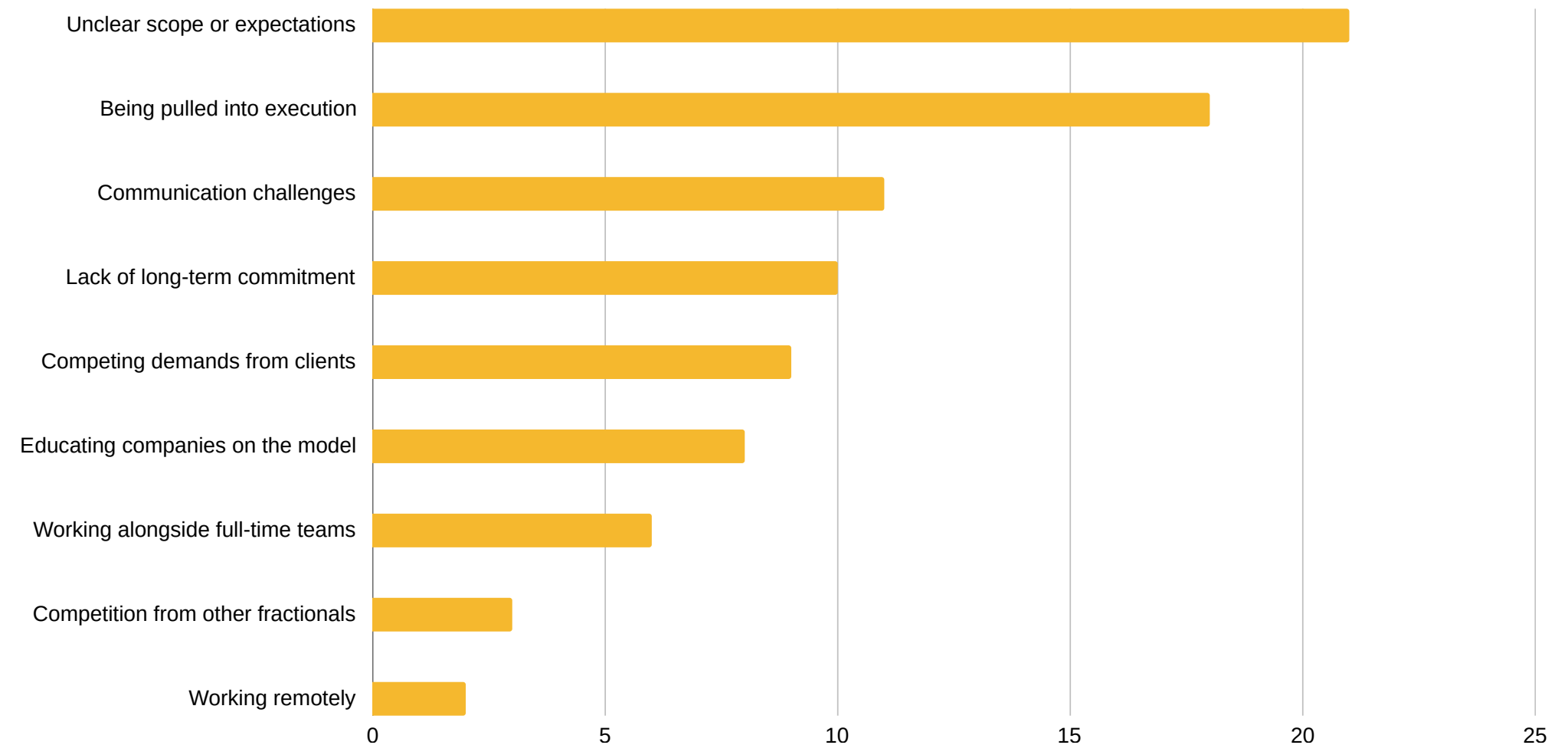
Together, these reinforce a core issue: while demand for fractional talent exists, the model is still not consistently understood or structured correctly by hiring businesses.

Beyond this, challenges are more spread across communication, commitment, and managing multiple clients - suggesting the issue isn't just delivery, but defining and maintaining the role.

Notably, factors like competition from other fractional talent and remote working rank very low.

Fractional marketers must focus on engagement structure and managing expectations

Q : WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHEN DELIVERING FRACTIONAL ROLES?



Nicola Lawton - Fractional Marketing Leader | Mentor

This research resonates. In my experience, the best fractional assignments start with a clear brief and a defined statement of work. Without it, scope creeps and strategic value gets lost in execution. That foundation changes everything.

05 Looking ahead

What are the prospects and upsides for working fractionally both now and in the future?

FRACTIONAL MARKETING ENJOYMENT IS DRIVEN BY FLEXIBILITY, VARIETY AND AUTONOMY - NOT FINANCIAL UPSIDE

WHAT DO FRACTIONAL MARKETERS REALLY ENJOY THE MOST?

What fractionals enjoy most is not the potential financial upside - it's the day-to-day experience of how they work.

Flexibility, autonomy, and variety dominate, indicating that the satisfaction in fractional work comes from control over time, exposure to different challenges, and ability to be independent.

Financial factors and longer-term career outcomes, such as earning potential or brand building, rank noticeably lower. This suggests that while these matter, they are not what defines the ongoing appeal of the model.

The implication is important: the fractional model delivers most strongly on working experience, not necessarily on commercial optimisation. What makes it enjoyable is how it feels to operate within it - not just what it returns.

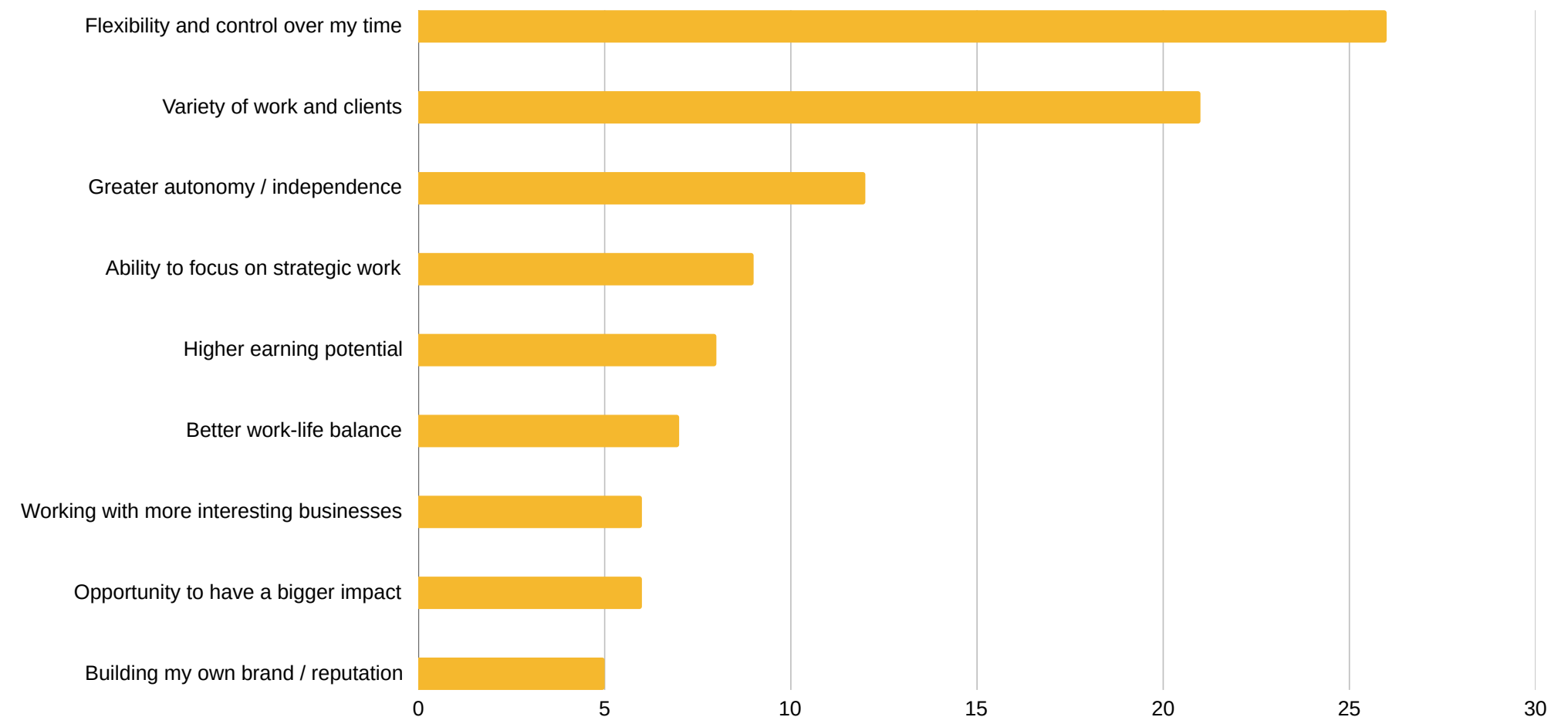
Enjoyment is driven by how fractionals work not just what they earn



Dan Cardwell - FCMO

Working across multiple clients at once means you're never solving a problem in isolation. The challenges overlap, the thinking transfers, and each client quietly benefits from the others. That's not something a full-time role gives you.

Q : WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT WORKING FRACTIONALLY?



FRACTIONAL MARKETERS ARE IN A CONFIDENT MOOD, WITH THE MAJORITY CONFIDENT ABOUT FUTURE DEMAND

FUTURE DEMAND FOR FRACTIONAL MARKETERS ?

The data suggests the market has crossed an important threshold: confidence now outweighs concern.

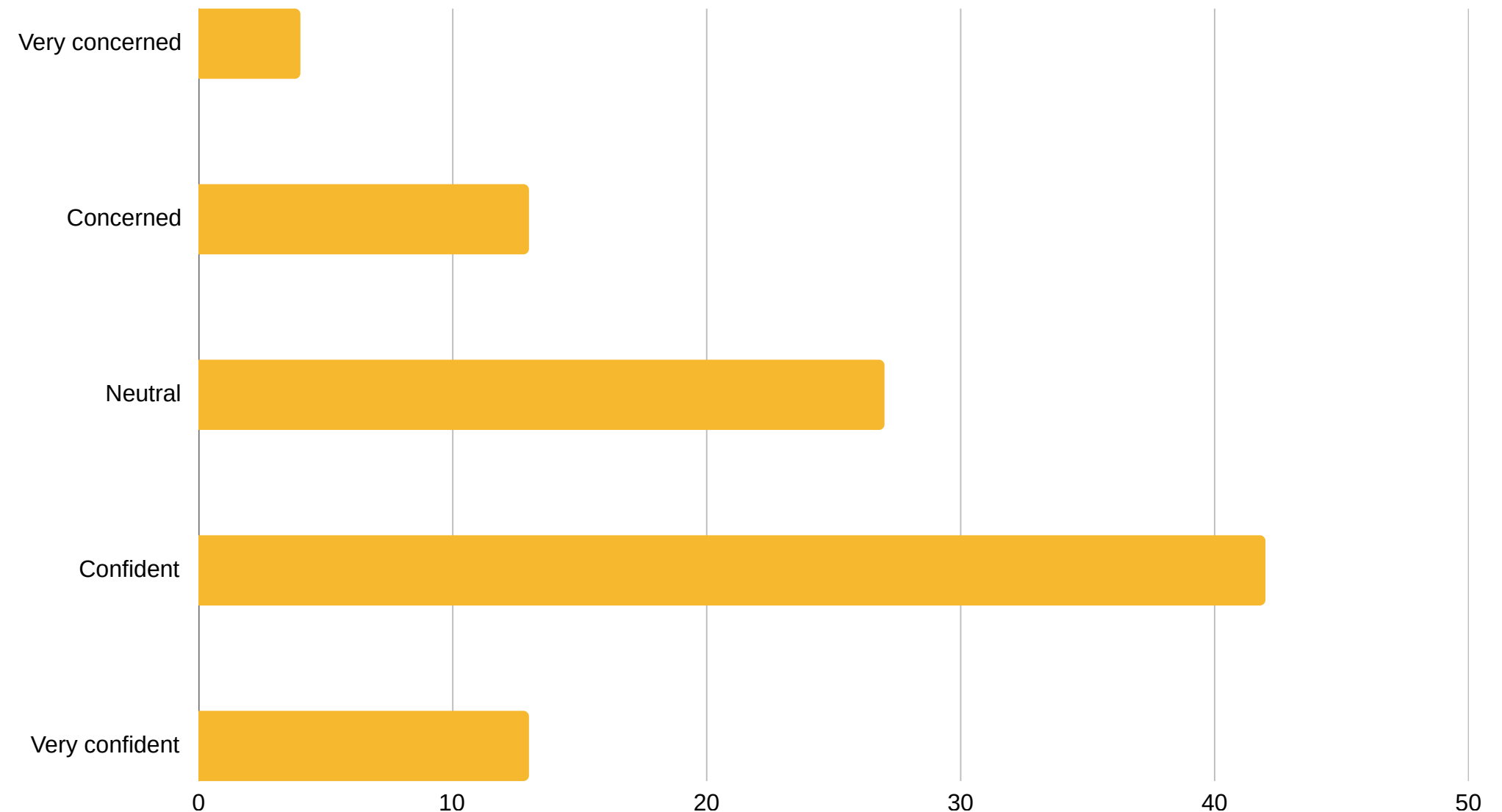
With over half of respondents feeling confident about future demand, the model is no longer seen as experimental - it is increasingly viewed as a viable and sustainable way to operate.

Crucially, the remaining neutrality is less a sign of doubt and more a reflection of uneven experience across the market. Confidence is forming, but not yet evenly distributed - typically concentrated among those with stronger positioning and more established pipelines.

The implication is clear: the market opportunity is real, but confidence is still earned through traction, not assumed.

Confidence is now outpacing concern, signalling a market shift

Q : HOW CONFIDENT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT DEMAND OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?



Becky Epton - Transformation & Performance Consultant

Being a Slice member has certainly made me feel confident in fractional work. The community is so supportive, with the latest techniques, trends and fractional opportunities freely shared, as well as having access to first class learning that helps me build my business.

THE RISE OF THE FRACTIONAL CMO | 2026 REPORT

06 Conclusions

Unlocking a new model for marketing leadership

THE FRACTIONAL MARKETING **MODEL HAS ARRIVED.** NOW THE REAL WORK BEGINS.

CONCLUSION

The data in this report tells a clear story. Fractional marketing leadership is growing, maturing, and gaining the confidence of both practitioners and the businesses that hire them. A majority feel positive about the next twelve months. Demand is rising, the talent pool is diversifying, and the model is proving itself across sectors and stages.

But the data also highlights where the biggest gains are still to be made. Most fractional marketers are not yet earning at the top of the model's potential, and many are not fully utilised. The strongest outcomes are coming from those with clear positioning, consistent pipelines, and commercially structured engagements. The biggest issue is not competition - it is clarity. Very few cite competition as a challenge. The real friction is inconsistent pipeline, unclear scope, and educating buyers on how the model works. These are not market problems - they are positioning and communication problems.

Hire for capability. Structure for outcomes. Integrate for impact.

The data should be reassuring. Fractional marketing leadership is no longer experimental, it is a credible, maturing way to access senior capability without the cost or commitment of a full-time hire. But the same data that signals opportunity also signals where engagements go wrong. The most common failure points aren't talent, they're unclear scope, undefined outcomes, and treating fractional leaders as outsourced execution. The businesses getting the most from the model brief tightly, define commercial outcomes upfront, and integrate fractionals as part of the leadership team, not as suppliers.



Madeleine Barnes - Director, Robert Half
- Marketing, GTM & Revenue Talent

What happens next?

Fractional marketing is no longer a niche conversation. It's becoming a credible, commercial, and increasingly mainstream model for growth.

At The Slice Network, our mission is simple: To help fractional marketers connect, collaborate, and build stronger, more sustainable portfolio careers. So in partnership with Robert Half, we'll continue to track this market, challenge assumptions, and share fresh insight from those shaping it.

To find out more, or discuss findings please get in touch

hello@theslicenetwork.com | theslicenetwork.com