

# WHAT DOES AN AGENCY COO DO?

AND DO YOU NEED ONE?

September 8, 2023



## OVERVIEW:

- The Role: What does a COO do?
- The Trigger: How do I know if I need a COO?
- The Impact: How will a COO impact the life of a CEO?
- The Skillsets: What type of person is successful in the role?
- The Right Fit: Operations in a service business?
- Structure & Compensation
- What Next? How do I onboard an operational leader?

## THE ROLE:

### Defining What an Agency COO does:

A COO serves as an executive leader and business partner, focused on action.

- Managing day-to-day operations
- Streamlining productivity
  - People
  - Process
  - Systems
- Implementation of strategic direction
  - Measurable progress toward achieving goals

## THE AGENCY COO ROLE:

### Managing day-to-day operations

- Can vary greatly depending on agency
  - Skillsets
  - Size
  - Complexity

Where is your agency today and where do you want to be in 5 years?

## THE AGENCY COO ROLE:

### Managing day-to-day operations

- Complementary to owner/ CEO role
- IN the business versus ON the business
- Business development
- Client support
  - Strategy & planning
  - SOW & proposal review

## THE AGENCY COO ROLE:

### Streamlining productivity

- Resource management – human centered
- Tech stack
- Gap analysis
- Process mapping

## THE AGENCY COO ROLE:

### Strategic direction & implementation

- Turning ideas into action
- Agency financial management
- Strategic business planning

## THE AGENCY COO ROLE:

### Strategic direction & implementation

- Operational strategy & structure
- Agency approach
- Policies
  - Expectations
  - Consistency
  - Accountability
  - Reduce risk + improve performance



# THE AGENCY COO ROLE:

## Strategic direction & implementation

- Human resources
  - Employee benefits
  - Recruitment
  - Retention
- Performance management
  - Agency-wide approach
  - Often directly manages leadership team
- Culture

## THE TRIGGER:

How do I know if I need a COO?

If your team has wonderful ideas, but struggles with implementation, it might be time for an operational leader.

## THE TRIGGER:

How do I know if I need a COO?

Lifecycle of the business

- What is happening in your agency?
  - Rapid growth
  - Additional service lines/product offerings

## THE TRIGGER:

How do I know if I need a COO?

More people, more services, more clients

+

more decisions = more challenges

**Scaling = complexity**

More complexity = greater need for operations

## THE TRIGGER:

How do I know if I need a COO?

### Areas to Assess:

- CEO/Owner role & skillset
- Leadership team skillsets

Is the team equipped to handle the next chapter of the agency?

## THE IMPACT:

How does a COO impact the CEO/Owner?

### Complementary styles

- Visionary + operator
- Differing perspectives = stronger approach
- Decision-making support

## THE IMPACT:

How does a COO impact the CEO/Owner?

Ask yourself:

What do you want your next chapter to look like?

## THE IMPACT:

How does a COO impact the CEO/Owner?

### Support for CEO/Owner

- Visionary leaders benefit from operational support
- CEO goals:
  - Do you want to stay in the business?
  - What are your gifts?
  - Where do you want to focus?
  - Are you ready to step back?



## THE IMPACT:

How does a COO impact the CEO/Owner?

Integrate vision – implementation

- Assess ideas
- Engineer a plan
- Implement
- Evaluate

## THE SKILLSETS:

What type of person is successful in a COO role?

### Hard Skills:

Strategic planning  
Financial management  
Operations management  
Project management  
Data analysis  
Process improvement

### Soft Skills:

Strong communication  
Emotional intelligence  
Conflict resolution skills  
Negotiation skills  
Leadership skills  
Time management  
Empathy

## THE SKILLSETS:

What type of person is successful in a COO role?

- Curious + investigative
- Solution-focused
- Detail-oriented
- Committed to action
- Comfortable with conflict = addressing problems

# THE SKILLSETS:

## Experience & Background

Helpful experience (and often the same skillset)

- Project management
- Client services
  - Similar traits
  - Exposure to budgets, resources, etc.

## THE RIGHT FIT:

- The person who naturally takes the role of the team leader
- The project wrangler
- The person who can take an idea, create a plan and make it happen

## THE RIGHT FIT:

### The kicker: leadership

- The type of person other people want to follow
- Leadership by example
- Collaborative
  - Ability to balance the people and the business

## THE RIGHT FIT:

We can't overlook:

Operations in the service business = managing people

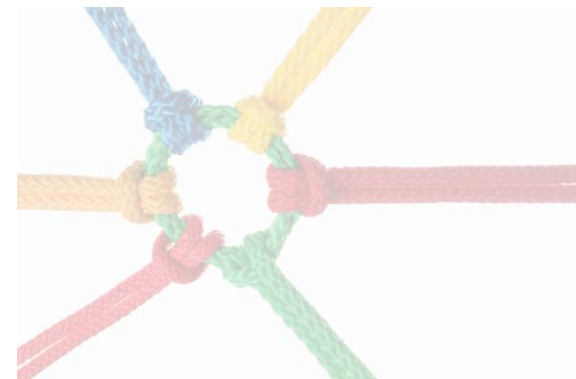
Don't underestimate the importance of emotional  
Intelligence

## STRUCTURE & COMPENSATION:

### Structure:

Role dependent on leadership team skillsets & agency size

- Director of Operations
- VP of Operations
- Chief Operating Officer





## STRUCTURE & COMPENSATION:

Compensation:

Varies between levels (Director, VP, COO)

2023 AMI Study – ranges from \$110-\$160K

COO:

Based on where the market sits and the size of the agency/role, can range from \$180-\$220k

## WHAT NEXT?

### Assess agency needs and goals

- CEO goals
- Operational gaps
- Cultural considerations

## WHAT NEXT?

### Identify a recruitment strategy

- Job description
- Structure
- Consider a recruiter

Assess staff for the opportunity to develop and promote from within

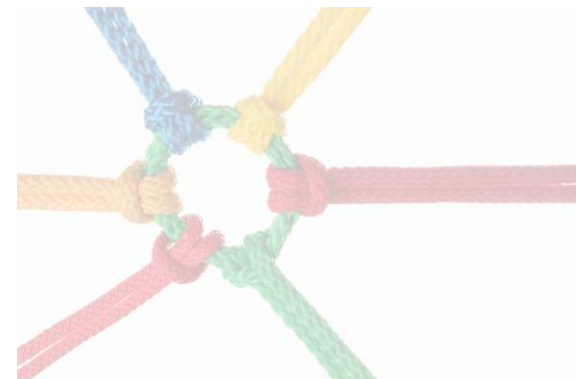
## WHAT NEXT?

Develop an implementation plan

- Timing
- Expectations
- Communication

If you are a visionary leader – get some help with this!

QUESTIONS?



# NEW OPERATIONS PEER GROUP

Kicks off in November

The group will meet once a month to connect and collaborate.

[More information](#)

Reach out with any additional questions!

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