



[Paul Jones](#) with the [Fractional Executive Collective](#) has graciously given [Agile Carpentry](#) permission to list this fantastic set of challenge prompts as potential breakout topics for the [Chicago Fractionals UnConference](#).

## The Dynamic World of Fractional Executives











The role of a fractional executive is as exciting as it is challenging. With the unique blend of leadership, adaptability, and business acumen required, the fractional landscape can be a maze of constant learning and evolution. Over the past year, we've delved deep into the fractional world, gathering insights, experiences, and challenges faced by these leaders across various industries.

Through countless discussions, feedback sessions, and shared narratives, we've accumulated a wealth of knowledge. This culminated in the identification of recurring themes, obstacles, and opportunities which these executives face regularly.

To ensure that this knowledge benefits the broader community and fosters a spirit of shared growth, we've distilled our findings into **52 challenge prompts**. These prompts span the spectrum of the fractional business, covering everything from client acquisition, contract nuances, and market dynamics, to personal branding, network building, and beyond.

We present these prompts as both a reflection of the past year and a roadmap for the coming months. Each one invites introspection, sharing, and collaborative problem-solving. Whether you're a seasoned fractional C-level executive, just starting out, or simply intrigued by this domain, there's something here for everyone.

Join us as we unpack each challenge, sharing experiences, solutions, and forging a path forward in the ever-evolving world of fractional leadership. Dive in, reflect, and let's collaboratively elevate the practice and understanding of being a fractional executive.

1.  **Attracting More Clients:** In today's competitive environment, what innovative strategies have you found most effective for attracting new clients? Can you share an instance where a particular strategy stood out?
2.  **Standardizing SOPs:** With the importance of consistent quality, how have you standardized SOPs to combat 'invention' fatigue on new projects? What specific practices have you found invaluable?
3.  **Managing Initial Client Expectations:** Every client engagement is unique. How do you set and manage client expectations during the initial phases to ensure a smooth collaboration?
4.  **Setting Growth Expectations:** How have you communicated and aligned growth expectations with leaders, especially those skeptical of new strategies? Share a challenge you faced and how you overcame it.
5.  **Contract Agreements:** Navigating the intricacies of contract types can be tricky. Can you share pros and cons you've experienced with different contract agreements like hours worked vs. retainer vs. hybrids?
6.  **Understanding Growth Loops:** Growth loops can drastically change a business's trajectory. How have you successfully implemented them? Were there any unexpected challenges?
7.  **Market Research Tools & Approaches:** The landscape of market research is ever-evolving. Discuss a recent 'Primary Market Research' tool or approach that yielded surprising insights for you.
8.  **Crafting Value Propositions:** A strong value proposition can set you apart. Share a story of a time when crafting a unique value proposition made a significant difference in your pitch or proposal.
9.  **Consistency in Business Development:** Maintaining a steady growth trajectory can be challenging. How have you ingrained consistency into your business development activities?
10.  **Scoping Initial Engagements:** Ensuring that initial engagements are beneficial for both parties is crucial. Can you discuss a time when the initial scope led to long-term collaboration?

11. 🤔 **Convincing Prospects:** Converting prospective clients can sometimes be a hurdle. Share an approach or strategy you've used to successfully get a commitment.
12. 🧭 **Consulting vs. Fractional Work:** The line between consulting and fractional work can be blurry for clients. How do you clearly convey the differences and benefits of each?
13. 💰 **Navigating Business Inflation:** Inflation can bring unexpected business challenges. How have you re-strategized or adjusted to maintain profitability and client satisfaction during inflationary periods?
14. 🗣️ **Dealing with Client Misunderstandings:** How do you diplomatically handle clients who underestimate the time needed to correct pre-existing errors?
15. 🤖 **Managing Outside Contractors:** Collaboration is key, but it can be challenging. Share your experience in managing outside contractors, especially in ensuring effective communication.
16. 🚀 **Business Development & Client Acquisition:** Acquiring new clients in a saturated market can be tough. What unique business development strategies have you deployed?
17. 📣 **Engaging Overwhelmed Targets:** With information overload, reaching potential clients becomes harder. How do you successfully get your foot in the door, especially when traditional communication methods fail?
18. ✍️ **Content Strategies for Client Touchpoints:** Content is king. How have you tailored content to cater to different client engagement levels, and what impact has it had?
19. 📈 **Scaling Your Business:** As your business grows, scalability is crucial. Share your experience or lessons learned from effectively scaling your business.
20. 📌 **Sourcing Administrative & Social Media Help:** Quality assistance can be a game-changer. How have you sourced and vetted assistance for administrative tasks or social media content creation?
21. ❤️ **Personal Connections in an AI World:** As AI becomes more prominent, personal connections still matter. How do you cultivate genuine relationships in a digitally driven world?

22. 🚧 **Setting Client Boundaries:** How do you maintain professional boundaries with clients, ensuring they respect the difference between a full-time employee and a fractional exec?

23. 🌐 **Online Visibility & Brand Presence:** In today's digital age, online presence is crucial. Share strategies you've implemented to boost your online visibility and reach a broader prospective audience.

24. ⚖️ **Balancing Current Clients & Business Development:** Striking a balance is essential. How do you ensure current client satisfaction while also hunting for future business opportunities?

25. 🏆 **Closing Competitive Deals:** Competition is fierce. Can you discuss a time when your strategies or approach made a difference in winning a deal?

26. 💼 **Pricing & Billing Structures:** With varying client needs, flexible pricing is essential. Share your insights on developing adaptive billing structures for fractional engagements.

27. 🧠 **Efficiency Tools & Automation:** Technology can be a game-changer. What tools or automation systems have you integrated to streamline work processes?












28. 📉 **Navigating Economic Downturns:** Recessions pose challenges. How have you strategized to stay afloat and even thrive during economic downturns?

29. 📖 **Understanding Client Businesses Quickly:** Time is of the essence. Share techniques you've used to rapidly understand a new client's business, challenges, and areas for value addition.

30. 🖋️ **Handling Client Tweaks & Modifications:** Client inputs can be a double-edged sword. How do you manage clients who frequently want to modify collaborative deliverables?

31. 😊 **Collaboration with Other Fractional Executives:** The fractional world can be competitive. Share how you've collaborated with peers without letting competition hamper relationships.

32. 🎁 **Offering Productized Services:** Transitioning to productized services can be transformative. Discuss your experience and the benefits you've seen.

33.  **Creating Adaptive Pricing Models:** Clients come with diverse needs. How have you built pricing models that cater to various demands while ensuring profitability?
34.  **Network Referrals & Introductions:** Growing your network is vital. Share strategies you've used to ask for and receive referrals without seeming pushy.
35.  **Technical Setup for New Clients:** Onboarding can be tedious. How have you streamlined the technical setup process for new clients to ensure a smooth start?
36.  **Leveraging LinkedIn for ABM Campaigns:** LinkedIn can be a goldmine. Discuss strategies you've implemented for ABM campaigns, especially with dormant connections.
37.  **Converting Full-Time Opportunities:** Not every opportunity fits the fractional mold. Share a time when you successfully converted a full-time job prospect into a fractional gig.
38.  **Communicating Strategy Value:** Demonstrating value can be challenging. How do you articulate and emphasize the significance of strategic oversight to stakeholders?
39.  **Avoiding Mission Creep:** Maintaining clarity in roles is essential. Share your methods to ensure that you don't overextend beyond your agreed-upon responsibilities with clients.
40.  **Productive Networking:** Building meaningful relationships is crucial. What events, platforms, or organizations have you found most beneficial for genuinely productive networking?
41.  **Team Management Decisions:** Growing your team is a big step. Discuss your journey and the indicators that signaled it was time to expand.
42.  **Maintaining a Client Pipeline:** A steady flow of clients ensures business longevity. Share strategies you've implemented to keep your pipeline healthy and consistent.
43.  **Producing Online Content:** Content can bolster personal brand and outreach. How do you balance your schedule to consistently produce impactful online content?

44. ✨ **Differentiating as a Fractional Exec:** Standing out is vital. How do you differentiate your skills as a Fractional C-level executive versus the myriad of solopreneurs out there?
45. 💡 **Introducing Non-Traditional Fractional Roles:** Innovation can be met with resistance. Share the challenges and rewards you've experienced when introducing unconventional fractional roles to clients.
46. ⌚ **Strategies for Part-Time Client Acquisition:** Diversifying the client base can be beneficial. Share insights on acquiring part-time clients and the advantages this brings.
47. 🌱 **Securing the First Client:** The first step is often the hardest. For those just starting out: How did you land your first client? What lessons would you share with newcomers?
48. 📈 **Share-Based Remuneration Contracts:** Equity deals can be tricky. Share your experiences navigating contracts that heavily lean on share-based compensation.
49. 💼 **Articulating Strategy & Management Costs:** Not all value is immediately tangible. How do you articulate and bill for the strategic planning and management layers of your services?
50. 🌍 **Starting Over in a New Market:** New beginnings bring challenges. Share your journey of breaking into a new market, building connections, and establishing trust.
51. ⌚ **Creating Client Urgency:** Speeding up the decision-making process can be crucial. What methods have you employed to instill a sense of urgency in potential clients?
52. 🚪 **Accessing Senior Business Leaders:** Gatekeepers can be a challenge. Discuss your experiences and strategies in business development, especially when trying to engage senior leaders in target companies.

Emojis can provide a visual cue and make each prompt feel more relatable and engaging!