Title: EP Your next -figure move: How Fractional Work is redefining the -figure career (A Conversation with Raquel Castillo Fractional CMO)

Natalie Fisher: Hello, hello, everyone! Welcome to the Get a Six Figure Job You Love and Thrive podcast. Today, I have a very special guest on. Her name is Raquel Castillo. We met on LinkedIn, and we just vibed, and she has some really interesting stuff to talk about today, about being a fractional COO. And Raquel, why don't you start out by introducing yourself?

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, well, thank you so much, Natalie, for having me on, and I'm excited to be here. My name is Raquel Castillo, and like she said.

Raquel Castillo: I am a fractional COO. I help, basically, experienced professionals transition from traditional full-time employment to a more flexible, rewarding career as a fractional executive. So that means they can work with multiple companies, have more control over their time, and focus on high-impact strategic work.

Raquel Castillo: And yeah, so I just help people going from Full-time to fractional work.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, I'm so excited to dive into this, because I'm really curious about how this came to be. So, first of all, could you tell us what a fractional COO is? For those of you who don't know, listen.

Raquel Castillo: Yes.

Natalie Fisher: Due to this concept.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, it's fairly new, I think a lot of people hear fractional CMO a lot, and like, oh, I know what that is, Chief Marketing Officer. But COO, a lot of people are like, what is that? And I didn't know you could go fractional. And I didn't either until a really good friend of mine who's actually in marketing.

Raquel Castillo: was like, hey, you know what you're doing you can do for other companies? And I'm like, oh, I can. And so, essentially, a COO, their chief operating officer of a company, usually they're the second in command, people call it, the integrator, you hear a lot of different terms, who's basically the right hand of the CEO.

Raquel Castillo: in any organization. And so, that typically is what Chief Operating Officers do… is they, kind of connect the dots from what sales and marketing is doing, and

Raquel Castillo: Basically manage cross-functional teams.

Natalie Fisher: And so, essentially, a fractional COO is just doing that.

Raquel Castillo: part-time.

Raquel Castillo: And we like to just use the fancy word, fractional, but it's part-time CLO.

Natalie Fisher: Oh, so I heard it said, like, it's just a fraction of the time, so, like, how many hours is that?

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, for each fractional, it may be different, but for me, and I'll share from my experience, typically I work with, one client anywhere from to hours a week, and so, that's typically how it goes.

Natalie Fisher: And you can make an impact in those to hours a week. That's awesome. And then they get the better… they don't have to hire someone full-time.

Natalie Fisher: So, how… so, you're a fractional COO, but there… I feel like lots of roles have become, the availability to become fractional has… so, like you said, CMO, like, just out of curiosity, what other roles have you kind of seen becoming fractional?

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, so that's a really good question, and there's this big debate right now in the fractional community between fractional professionals and fractional executives. So, it's a really good distinction because, essentially, fractional executives are the C-suite, right?

Raquel Castillo: You got your CFO, your COO, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, your head of human resources. So any of the C-suite can all be considered fractional, so really think about

Raquel Castillo: I mean, the organization, if you think about an org chart, you should have operations and sales.

Raquel Castillo: And human resource, you know, so all of those executive positions

Raquel Castillo: are fractional positions. You can find on there, if you look in and just type in fractionals, you'll see a whole bunch of people pop up. But also, there is something with fractional professionals where maybe you're… you've never been an executive before, but you're a professional in branding.

Raquel Castillo: And you're an expert in marketing and branding, so you can go in as a fractional professional and maybe be a director level, for a company who doesn't want to hire full-time, but also sees your expertise, and they just need you to have focused hours for maybe to hours a week. And, yeah, so…

Natalie Fisher: So, like, you're, like, a fractional expert.

Natalie Fisher: Like, you're.

Raquel Castillo: Essentially, yes. So, one of the things that I love about

Raquel Castillo: like, when I transitioned to fractional, the reason why I, like, fell in love with it is

Raquel Castillo: As a COO, you wear so many hats, and you'll also hear me use the term integrator. An integrator is just for companies running on EOS, which is the Entrepreneurial Operating System.

Raquel Castillo: And so, a lot of times you wear multiple hats from, hey, if we didn't have head of HR, guess who was that? Me. You know, especially if you're in a startup or a smaller business that doesn't have, you know, maybe all functions of the organization built out.

Raquel Castillo: then you're gonna wear, you know, if sales is out, you're head of sales, or, you know, you're kind of playing multiple roles.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah.

Raquel Castillo: And what I loved about Bring Fries…

Natalie Fisher: They're like.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, it kind of falls back on you, yeah. Salesperson leaves, that's back on you, if, you know… and so…

Raquel Castillo: what I love about being fractional is that I can go in and say, no, I'm only the COO, I'm only doing operations for your business.

Raquel Castillo: And it's so much more peaceful, and I'm more in my zone of genius about, hey, here's what I can…

Natalie Fisher: Yeah.

Raquel Castillo: I get results faster.

Natalie Fisher: You don't have time to be doing… taking on all that stuff.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah.

Natalie Fisher: really good reason to say no, like, you have to, yeah.

Natalie Fisher: That makes a lot of sense. Awesome. So, how long has this been a thing, this new term, this new concept?

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, so I think it's been around quite a while. I think it picked up in popularity after COVID hit. So, right after every… remote work got popular, and I think people were realizing, oh, I can work a different way, I can…

Raquel Castillo: get flexibility and freedom, and I think executives were like, wait.

Raquel Castillo: everyone in the world is working remote, and yet I have to be the one that comes in early and stays late.

Raquel Castillo: how come I can't do the same thing? And so, I think that's when the switch happened. For me, and I found a popularity, too, about years ago in is whenever I went fractional, and I,

Raquel Castillo: realized there was a whole group that was doing it at the same time, around October, and most of the fractionals that I'm in networking with now have

Raquel Castillo: like, started around that time, too. So I don't know what it was in the water, but it definitely kick-started something. And I was a part of a fractional group that went from maybe, like.

Raquel Castillo: people in it to, like, within that year.

Natalie Fisher: Oh, wow.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah.

Natalie Fisher: That's really good data. So, this is an off-the-flight question for you. Do you think that,

Natalie Fisher: By doing the fractional work.

Natalie Fisher: it's… it was… was it any different applying for a fractional COO job than it was for a full-time, and how do… how did the, like, you kind of find those opportunities, and is it different than if someone was gonna do it full-time?

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, it's a great question. I found that

Raquel Castillo: It's different in a little… in a lot of ways, it is different, in a lot of ways it isn't.

Raquel Castillo: So, when I first got started, you know, I didn't know how to find my first job, or like, hey, how am I gonna do this?

Raquel Castillo: And so, actually, the roles that were full-time looking for a COO, and I realized they were a smaller company, or maybe in a range that I was looking for, working with teams

that I was looking for, I would actually just pitch them, like, hey, I see that you're looking for this role full-time.

Raquel Castillo: Would you be interested in, you know, having a fractional?

Natalie Fisher: Fantastic, yeah.

Raquel Castillo: And honestly, a lot of those messages, I have a script that I would use on LinkedIn and, make it personable, obviously. And you don't know how many messages I received at what's fractional? And then it just started a conversation of them exploring

Raquel Castillo: this different opportunity, a way to think about business different, and they didn't have to hire someone for, you know.

Raquel Castillo: You know, maybe they weren't ready, maybe they were scared for that.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah!

Raquel Castillo: higher.

Natalie Fisher: basically pitching them, like, hey, we can start out…

Raquel Castillo: Try this, yeah.

Natalie Fisher: hours, I can do this for you with this time, like, what is the most important? It kind of forces them to focus on what's most important to them. It doesn't mean they have to take this really big risk in hiring someone. Yeah, so it sounds like a really good pitch, like a really good.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah.

Natalie Fisher: offer to make them awesome. Okay.

Natalie Fisher: And so, for you, as the employee, I guess you would still be considered an employee, what are the benefits of fractional versus full-time for you? I know you mentioned that you could say no to things, and that was easy. What else?

Natalie Fisher: What else kind of comes to mind for the benefits?

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, I mean, there's quite a few. I will first say, one of the most important ones to me is I am a mom, so a mom of three boys, and what really drove me to go fractional, like, you know, some people have a horror story, if I might say, of, like, oh, my visionary or my CEO was, like, very toxic.

Raquel Castillo: you know, and I wanted to get out and leave my workplace, but that wasn't the case for me. I actually, like, enjoyed where I worked. It was a manufacturing company.

Raquel Castillo: We grew from the start. Like, I was employee number when we started, and I… I, like, loved that company. I thought I was gonna stay there. I thought I would never leave, so it was…

Raquel Castillo: like, surprising for me that I did leave.

Raquel Castillo: But one of my big factors of making that decision was my kids. So, you know, being… I remember dropping them off first at daycare, am, and picking them up the last at pm. And I'm like, wait, there has to be a better way.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah.

Raquel Castillo: to do this, and I wasn't present with them, and so… really, going fractional has helped me be a present mom.

Raquel Castillo: I can still get meaningful work done.

Raquel Castillo: and, you know, pick up my kids at pm. So, I mean, that's a big win for me.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah.

Raquel Castillo: And in other aspects, emotionally, also, as an operator, sometimes when we're too close to something.

Raquel Castillo: We don't know how to,

Raquel Castillo: take a look back, and so…

Raquel Castillo: I find that, as a film.

Raquel Castillo: because I'm mostly remote, I'll see my clients, like, quarterly, or…

Natalie Fisher: You know, yearly, just depending on the cadence there.

Raquel Castillo: But I find there is less of a…

Raquel Castillo: There's more of a mutual respect.

Natalie Fisher: And that's one of my core values of, like.

Raquel Castillo: hey, it's not like, oh, I'm… they can play the owner's card all the time. It's like, no, we're partnering together. I have as much… like, you're paying me, and I'm, like, helping you. So I don't know, emotionally, I feel like it's a little bit…

Raquel Castillo: of, like, we're on the same playing field, rather than I'm an employee of yours.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, it feels kind of like you're kind of like an entrepreneur slash consultant, and instead of, like, an employee, like…

Natalie Fisher: Like, that they don't own your time -you're just, like, coming in, providing expertise, and leaving. Which is what your job.

Raquel Castillo: And I do…

Natalie Fisher: Rob should feel like, too, but…

Raquel Castillo: That should be, like…

Natalie Fisher: But that's not always the culture. Our society isn't always set up for organizations to have that kind of culture.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, and one big thing, too, is, like.

Raquel Castillo: I kind of think about, like, consultants as, like, hey, you go and do it, like, do, like, you go do the work, and a fraction of it as, like.

Raquel Castillo: like, with you kind of thing. It's like, they're doing it with you. I specifically take on, like, a big goal for the quarter of, like, okay, to move towards your one-year goal, this is a task that I will take, and maybe it's, like.

Raquel Castillo: you know, pricing or strat… something strategic that I will take and run with that. So I do high-level task-taking versus, like, just doing, you know.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, and are you, like, in there working with the team as well, like, delegating and kind of organizing as well? Because you're obviously… if you're not taking on all the tasks, then you would have access to the team, where you're also…

Natalie Fisher: Getting support from the team, is that correct?

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, that's a great question, yes, and it's actually one of my favorite things of being a fractional, is working with the teams.

Raquel Castillo: And a lot of the work that I do, I realize that, yes, CEOs and visionaries hire me to help their business processes and help build… a lot of times, they're not good at accountability, so they want me to help their teams

Raquel Castillo: build structure and keep them accountable. But also, so that's… that's a lot of the work that I do is, hey, let's…

Raquel Castillo: build accountability and build strong high performers. But a lot of what I do is coaching.

Raquel Castillo: You know, the leaders on…

Natalie Fisher: Yeah.

Raquel Castillo: How to be a leader.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, so you kind of get, like, you're kind of supporting them for if they don't, like, for them not to need you anymore, or do you feel like they'll always still need a fractional COO?

Raquel Castillo: Well, that's a good question. So, for me, my goal is always to transition them into a full-time COO, so maybe I'm an interim, depending on the client, what their needs are, right? So, some companies, if they're, you know, smaller in revenue, smaller team, and want to stay lean, they can have a fractional for years. For me, my average actually working with a client is to months.

Raquel Castillo: Typically, how long I'll take.

Raquel Castillo: And then,

Raquel Castillo: yeah, usually getting someone full-time in there, but really it's teaching the teams how to problem-solve, how to find solutions, and so, you know, I have… thinking about one leader in particular who

Raquel Castillo: you know, every time we have an issue, she now comes with, hey, here are the three solutions I'm thinking through, and I'm like, yes, like, that's the way to do it, you know?

Natalie Fisher: Best way, yeah, for sure, because then you've got their thoughts, and then you can add on, and it can be a much more valuable conversation.

Natalie Fisher: Awesome. Yeah, one thing I thought we should address in this episode, for those who don't know, is the terminology of visionary and integrator. I know you mentioned what an integrator is, but I'll just do a little quick explanation here, because I feel like…

Natalie Fisher: I would… I have the experience of being an integrator, and so the visionary, and correct me if I'm wrong or add anything onto this, the visionary is the person who… who kind of, self-explanatory, has the vision, right? They're the ones who set the big plan, they have the big picture for what they want the organization to do, but they're not so good at actually getting it done. So that's why they need an integrator or a COO

Natalie Fisher: they're the person who's actually in the trenches, kind of getting everything organized, even if they're not doing it themselves, they're the ones who are making sure that it gets done. And so, oftentimes, from my experience, there could be a disconnect if the visionary has, like, big, unrealistic expectations, and the integrator's like, I don't know that that's possible, I don't know that we can get all that done, right?

Natalie Fisher: your job as the integrator is really important that you can work with the visionary and, like, manage expectations, and, like, it's a big… like, it's really important that you can work really well with them. So, would you… and also a question, would you say that the visionary and the COO would have, like, the same title? Or the… no, no, the CEO, I mean? Yeah.

Natalie Fisher: would, would that… Visionary and CEO, are they kind of the same thing?

Raquel Castillo: Yes, absolutely, %. Yeah, % of the time, the visionary is the owner, CEO of the company, and, so yeah, they're the ones driving the big vision, and, a lot of times, you know.

Raquel Castillo: Yes, they're the… you said it exactly right, of, like, they have this big, audacious dream, and you know, you'll see it in corporate.

Raquel Castillo: as well in this time, and sometimes the CEO isn't the owner, but they have some kind of buy-in to share the vision, and they're the big, like, okay, this is where we're going, this is where we're headed.

Raquel Castillo: they lay out the big dreams, and then the integrator or the COO is the one who's actually executing to make sure those things get done. And behind the scenes is, like you said, managing the relationship between, you know, the visionary or COO, right? So they're managing that relationship to say, hey, I understand you want to do things, like.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah. We can only do two.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, or, like, we'll start with…

Raquel Castillo: Priority, yeah.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, I've worked with some visionaries that have just, like, these huge things, and I'm just like, I'm the one who actually has to get that done, though, and I don't really know.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, is this realistic? And a lot of times, do we have the resources for this? Yeah. You know, that's a big question, too, is like… and so I think a lot of times, you know, COOs can be very practical, and be very, like, hey, I hear you, and, you know, for me.

Raquel Castillo: And I kind of have an empathetic approach of, I don't want to just say no, like, I don't want to, like…

Natalie Fisher: you know.

Raquel Castillo: just say no to your dreams, but at the same time, let's be realistic. How is this gonna make us money?

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, exactly. It's kind of your job to guide them and say, okay, like, and sometimes pull them back a bit, because it's like, it's a really good relationship, because it's like, you do think completely differently, the visionary is on a completely different wavelength as far… and then… but we need both of them, right? We need the person setting the vision, and we need the person who's thinking about how it actually gets done.

Natalie Fisher: Awesome, yeah, I thought we should clarify that for listeners, I'm not sure if they're familiar. And this terminology comes from the book by Gino Wickman, does it not? Where the rocket fuel and…

Raquel Castillo: Yes. The other one? Yeah, traction. Rocket Fuel, and there is traction, yes. There is also What the Heck is EOS? It's just a shorter version of Traction, if you want to read that, but yeah, I think it's good for the listeners to understand, yeah, what a visionary integrator is.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, and if you want to check out those two books, we can link those up in the show notes as well.

Natalie Fisher: Awesome. So I kind of got off track with my questions, because I knew I was going to have some other ones, but I think there's really good… that was really good discussion there. So, some common… what are some common concerns people might have if they are… if they're listening to this, they're like, yeah, maybe I… I would… maybe this is a good fit, and I think I would want to switch to, fractional. This sounds… this is sounding good. What are some,

Natalie Fisher: Common concerns some people might have about switching from full-time to fractional.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, so I actually talked to a lot of people who, you know, are fearful of

Raquel Castillo: going fractional, they want to do it, and I'm kind of helping them through how to go fractional, living that experience and done it myself. But a couple of things…

Raquel Castillo: One is fear of what their employer will say and think of them, like.

Natalie Fisher: Oh, how do I do this? Or assuming someone's in a full-time role now, and they're like, hmm, I think I want to go fractional because, you know, I would have more freedom, I can be more focused, I can make, like, all the things you talked about as benefits, and then, yeah, so we're assuming this person is in a role. Sorry, I interrupted you.

Raquel Castillo: No, no, no, that's perfectly… yeah, kind of like you talked about it, of like, yes, if you… if you already have your six-figure job, and you're like, okay, what's next? Like, maybe this isn't, like, where I thought I wanted to be, or I want something different. One of the other biggest concerns people have about going fractional, or like, is this right for me, is,

Raquel Castillo: They're very concerned of how they get clients, right?

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, and then also, like, how the employer's gonna think. Like, what, you're gonna leave me for hours a week, and what's gonna happen, right? Like, they're… they're…

Natalie Fisher: Their employer's not gonna like this, too, which is…

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, if they find out, and understanding, okay, do I do this as a side hustle? And if they find out, I'm gonna get fired. And a lot of times, what people don't realize is if they're in that

Raquel Castillo: Again, depending on what type of company it is, if it's corporate, it may be a little harder, but if it's a, you know, company where you know the owner, and, it's a, you know, maybe to employees.

Raquel Castillo: Then maybe your first client is your employee.

Raquel Castillo: employer, you know, like, maybe that's an option, too, because I have seen people that are afraid of going fractional, and then they talk to their owner about it, and then their owner's like, actually, I would support you. I, like, I love that. And then they can, yeah, and they can pitch.

Raquel Castillo: you know, hey, I can work for you for this amount, you know.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah. A week.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah.

Natalie Fisher: it's how you pitch it, right? How you position it to them. Like, when I'm working with clients on, you know, their interviewing skills or their… getting their raises or promotions and stuff, it really is, like, figuring out what is important to this person, and then being able to

frame it and position it so that you can use the language and make the points that, you know, they find valuable.

Natalie Fisher: So I think that's probably what you're helping people do as well, isn't it?

Raquel Castillo: Yes, and that's exactly… earlier you asked a question, the interview process different, or is it… yes, it is different in that sense, is you actually have to see where their pain point is, and then speak to those pain points, rather than… a lot of times when you're, you know, hiring, they're telling you what their pain points are. Here, you're trying to figure it out, you know,

Raquel Castillo: So, yes, absolutely.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, and I think it's the case with any kind of sales conversation. You want to get the information so that you can communicate the best you can to the individual, because they're going to be thinking differently than someone else, and they have different priorities in their heads and stuff. So,

Natalie Fisher: So the common concerns are they would have… the employer might not like it, or they might not be able to get enough

Natalie Fisher: People to work for.

Raquel Castillo: Yes. And another one, I think, is just, yeah, is…

Raquel Castillo: okay, once I do have my client, what does that turnover look like, or what does that contract look like? I hear so many people always, what is your contract? And I'm like.

Raquel Castillo: It's so… it's funny how many people actually, you know, are, like.

Raquel Castillo: what I put in my contract? And again, it's a valid concern. It was a valid concern for me. But a lot of times, these CEOs or owners, they… they really don't care about the contract, you know? And so, but it is a valid concern to say, okay, once I'm with this client, if they only need me for months or a year.

Raquel Castillo: what's gonna happen then? So you're always… you're kind of a business owner at this point, and so a lot of times that's hard for someone to be, like, going from being an employee to now I'm a business owner, and I have to build out business development.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, I also feel, though, like, it's a bit more within your control as far as what you recommend. Like, you could be like, like, I recommend that I stay here for months, or, like, this is what we'll be doing, and after a year you'll have this, like, because you're more in, like, the expert position to kind of recommend that for them, and you can show them why you think that and all that.

Natalie Fisher: But I feel like it would be more within your control versus in a company where they've hired you to do a job for a certain amount of time, like, it kind of feels like they're… they decide whether they extend your contract or not. And of course they do, but, like…

Natalie Fisher: you would still have more control to say, I recommend this, because you're in a… kind of in a position of power there. They can't really afford to not have you unless you say it's… it's okay, and you've set everything up so it's okay for them.

Raquel Castillo: Yes, absolutely. I do feel like you have more control, and that's a great way to look at it, Natalie, because I think a lot of people think the opposite, right? The fear, because they haven't done it yet, is like, oh, they're still in control. And actually, you have a lot more control and autonomy than you realize.

Raquel Castillo: And when you're, you know… a lot of friends that have gone fractional, they've went fractional because they got laid off from a job, and that… they didn't expect that to happen. And then they stumble upon fractional, and it's like, wait, now I can…

Raquel Castillo: you know, it's on… it's on my terms, on, you know, my conditions, like, this is different for me. And so I think there's a lot of…

Raquel Castillo: you can control the controllables going on here. Yeah. And…

Raquel Castillo: even that, like, I just got back from maternity leave. Before I went on maternity leave, I graduated two clients, and they knew it was coming, obviously, and they were like, you know.

Raquel Castillo: Begged for me to stay on, essentially.

Natalie Fisher: Mmm.

Raquel Castillo: Congratulations.

Natalie Fisher: them, you mean, you let them go. It reminds me of saying, like, we're done.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, me alone.

Raquel Castillo: like, nine months before, like, what I… after my first trimester, I'm like, hey guys, I'm having a kid, I'm going on maternity leave, I think this is gonna be the time that we can work together. And I… and I knew it, and so…

Raquel Castillo: One of my clients actually paid me through maternity leave.

Raquel Castillo: And I have that client still. Yeah, and the other client,

Raquel Castillo: actually, we… again, I graduated or let them go, and again, it was a great opportunity, loved them, great reviews, but at the same time, it was like, okay, I'm ready to go on to something new, and I… the work that I did here, I feel good about. You guys were in a good position, and so.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, it makes your work a little bit more meaningful and intentional. Yeah. Did you do any, like, setting them up with anybody else, or did you, like, was it really they didn't need you anymore, like, the team was running, and…

Raquel Castillo: actually, I did set them up with someone else. So, it was a company in Austin, and I basically had somebody come in who was also running on the Entrepreneurial Operating System EOS, and helped guide them. So, yeah, they did great work and kind of made that transition, and so…

Raquel Castillo: A lot of times, if you're ready to graduate a client, you can bring in additional help and have referral, you know, partners that you work with, and that's one way that you can get new clients, is building a strong community networking of

Raquel Castillo: Hey, let's… referrals, or, you know…

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, and just the way that you talk about it, it really does sound like you are the one in control. You're like, okay, I called them up, I told them I was going on maternity leave, and now I'm graduating them, like, just the way… you're like.

Raquel Castillo: We're working.

Natalie Fisher: for them, but, like, really, you're the one making these decisions.

Raquel Castillo: Yes, yeah.

Natalie Fisher: It feels like you are in the power seat, because you know so much about their organization, and you know, like, what they need, and you know what's gonna make them successful, and if they've trusted you, then they're gonna keep believing what you say, right?

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, even the hiring process, right? So, like, even bringing somebody in to cover for me. So, when I was on maternity leave for one of my clients, I had somebody filling in the seat for me.

Raquel Castillo: On this client that paid me through maternity leave. So they also brought in somebody to cover, and obviously I want personalities, I know the company, I know what works for them, I know that they need

Raquel Castillo: candor, but I also know they need kindness, so I need somebody who has that, like, hey, tell me how it is, but also with empathy.

Raquel Castillo: And so I was able to find somebody who I knew would work for them, right? Because I know how the owner operates, and giving all the back details, right? And so, it was a success, just because all the history that you… the knowledge that you do have of what's best for them,

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, it…

Natalie Fisher: Yeah.

Raquel Castillo: It's a… yeah, you do have a lot more control than you think you do.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah. And so, with the… with layoffs happening all the time, and the…

Natalie Fisher: Fractional being more… kind of… being more of a thing.

Natalie Fisher: do you think that, like, you said you were in a group that went from people to people wanting to be fractional COOs, or fractional executives in some capacity? Do you think that this'll eventually be, like, how things work more and more of the time, or do you think the full-time

Natalie Fisher: The full-time person will still be a thing.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, you know, it's kind of one of those things that, like, when you're out of a bubble, you realize, oh, this, like, the universe just got so much bigger, and that was true for me. Like, once I got out of full-time

Raquel Castillo: job or employment, I was like.

Raquel Castillo: my whole world just expanded, right? And so, I do feel like

Raquel Castillo: The future is companies are always gonna hire fractional.

Raquel Castillo: I… when I was a… so, funny thing is, when I was a full-time COO, we hired a fractional CMO, so Chief Marketing Officer.

Raquel Castillo: And when I left, he was still a part of that full-time… so he was there for almost years.

Raquel Castillo: past that. So, again, I think it's one of those things at this opportunity, it's only

Raquel Castillo: gonna get… have more opportunities. You know, there's a million businesses out there who need help.

Raquel Castillo: And,

Raquel Castillo: So, in my mind, I think it only grows. I think there's enough to go around. My mindset is, like, abundant mindset. Like, if you find the right people to work with and who understand and appreciate your skills, % this can be a career for you.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, and then it is essentially contract work, right? So, but you said one of your clients paid you through maternity leave, but you wouldn't get the regular benefits that a full-time role…

Raquel Castillo: gets you. Is that another concern? That is correct, yes. You are a contract employee, and that… this is where, I don't want to get too logistical here, because I might bore some of your audience, but, yes, you are a contractor. However, some…

Raquel Castillo: fractionals.

Natalie Fisher: Like, they want insurance as far as, like.

Raquel Castillo: pay this liability, or things like that, but yeah, you don't get any of their, health insurance, things like that. So, I mean, you're operating as a entrepreneur, essentially, a contractor.

Natalie Fisher: But overall, if you have, like.

Natalie Fisher: full… like, how many clients would you take on at a time? You said, like, or max?

Raquel Castillo: So for me, my capacity is at a time, and, from experience, I do not recommend onboarding clients at once. So, I had an experience where I had a client

Raquel Castillo: on board in January, one in February, one in March, and I do not recommend that. So, is my max if I am, like, been working with one, for instance, now, like, months. Okay, I'll bring on another client, because I know this company, I've learned a lot, there's a cadence going on. So, again.

Raquel Castillo: that is different for every, you know, fractional. I will say, for fractional COOs, I think there is, a limited capacity versus fractional CMOs or…

Raquel Castillo: any other fractional CFOs, I know somebody who is a CFO and has, like, clients.

Natalie Fisher: Oh, wow.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, but a COO, they're typically cross, like, leading the team cross-functionally, so they have to be a lot more ingrained in the day-to-day, where a CFO typically has a COO who reports to them. It's just, like, one. Does that make sense?

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, for sure. And so…

Natalie Fisher: I don't know if you're comfortable talking about money or whatever. Yeah. If you're not, we don't have to, but I like to talk about it openly if I can, for everybody, just to… for transparency. So, I wanted to ask you a few questions about that. If you had… were, like, full… you had like, your… that was your ideal setup, you have companies you're working for as a fractional COO,

Natalie Fisher: Do you get to charge more overall, like, for the… than you would make in, like, one full-time role?

Raquel Castillo: Yes, so, my… for my… and I'm… I will be open about this, because…

Raquel Castillo: you know, when I first went fractional, I interviewed so many fractionals who had done it before me, and I would ask them, like, what are you charging? Like, I need to be realistic, how much money do I need to make for my family?

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Raquel Castillo: and…

Raquel Castillo: honestly, a lot of people didn't tell me what they were making, and it was so frustrating to me. I'm like, okay, so am I gonna be making, like, under, you know, six figures? So at the time, when I was a full-time COO, I was making six figures.

Raquel Castillo: I was comfortable. Again, I loved my job, so I'm like, why am I gonna disrupt this? I'm having a good, you know, paying income.

Raquel Castillo: And so my first client replaced my income.

Natalie Fisher: Essentially.

Raquel Castillo: That I had. Yeah, and so…

Natalie Fisher: You, you pitched that, like, you, you set that up to ask for that, right?

Raquel Castillo: Yes, %, and it's scary, and all the things, right? But yes, I set it up to be like, okay, if I get one client.

Raquel Castillo: I can replace my income.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, and I feel like it should be like that, because one of the concepts that I teach in my program and with my students is that the value outweighs what you get paid, right? And so, if you presented that to the client, you're like, well, this is the value I'm going to bring in the to hours a week, this is what we're gonna accomplish, and then this is how much I'm going to ask to get paid, and it exceeds what you're asking to get paid, it really should be a no-brainer. So if you did a good job of that, I don't see why you wouldn't have been able to.

Natalie Fisher: replace your income with one client, and I'm so glad to hear that.

Natalie Fisher: So then… so then if you replace your full income with one client, and then you have three, and you're able to do that, then you're able to make up the money that you needed for benefits, and you're doing well, correct?

Raquel Castillo: Yes, absolutely. So you're able to then go… and again, so…

Natalie Fisher: Hmm.

Raquel Castillo: I typically charge, like, retainer fees, and so most fractionals, they either go retainer route. There are some fractionals who, like, charge per day, which… I don't understand that, but I'm really big on outcomes versus hours, so while I say in my con… literally on my contract, it says to hours, I have a…

Raquel Castillo: good conversation with the CEOs and say, hey, look, I'm all about outcomes.

Raquel Castillo: So in one week, if it takes me, like, especially in the beginning, let's be honest, it's an… you're gonna put in more hours because you're learning the company, you're learning the team.

Raquel Castillo: I'm not gonna charge you for that. Like, you know, the next week, it may be hours. The week after that, it may be hours. So, I'm really big on what's the thing that we're trying to…

Natalie Fisher: Yeah.

Raquel Castillo: accomplish. Let's put some… let's put some metrics towards it, and then let's execute on that.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, that's the best way to think about it, for sure. I've always been… like, I remember I was interviewing at a company one time, and they said… I was like, okay, well, how many hours am I expected to be in the office? Like, what's the setup? And they just said, this is a results-based environment, we don't care when you do your work or how you do it, we just want… we just expect you to get it done. And I was like, music to my ears.

Raquel Castillo: I love that. I will… I will get the results, so that's fine, right? I love that, and I wish…

Natalie Fisher: Yeah.

Raquel Castillo: That… I wish that was more, like.

Raquel Castillo: said in the, you know, corporate world of, like, hey, I care about results, because then it frees up your space to not feel like… especially with working from home, like, you feel like you have to be on -Oh, you get an email at night. Oh, you get this. You gotta put some boundaries in there.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, for sure. And I think we need to just coin that term, like, the results-based mindset, as far as employees, because there's a lot of employees who are not results-based. They're just, like, hours put in the time-based, like, oh, I work so many hours. It's like, well, what did you do in those hours? A lot of people are working a lot of hours and getting no outcome or impact.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, %.

Natalie Fisher: It's a different way of thinking. Yeah, and that's why you've been successful and been able to get to where you are and make this transition, because you're results-based, I feel like that's a huge part of it.

Natalie Fisher: Amazing. So, do you think that…

Natalie Fisher: this is a question I've had, is… do you… do you ever get, like, confused as to, like, oh, I was working on this thing for this company, and then… and, like, do you ever mix them up in your head, as far as, like, what's… whose… whose company's work you're working on?

Raquel Castillo: For me, no, surprisingly. I will say you do have to be organized. Like, I'm not saying if you're type, you know, B or Type C, whatever you want to label yourself, that it can't work. I will say that you just have to understand, like, the bad…

Raquel Castillo: business has to have systems, processes, like, if you're gonna do that for somebody else's business.

Raquel Castillo: You should probably have that for yourself, too. So, for me, how… again, everyone does it different, but practically, like.

Raquel Castillo: get an email address, like an inbox, like a Gmail from their own company, and so it's easy for me to just work out of their inbox and, like, organize work that way. But no, I mean, it's so funny. Another thing that is, like.

Raquel Castillo: Very rewarding as a fractional.

Raquel Castillo: And a lot of people, like, may be thinking to themselves, like, oh, that sounds amazing, but I don't think that I have the skills, or I don't know how to do XYZ. Like, you have the skills, trust me. Or, like, what a company is doing… I worked with a company with employees, and a company with, like, employees.

Raquel Castillo: They all have the same problems.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, you start…

Raquel Castillo: And so it's good to see that as, like… it's actually helpful, like, oh, I did this for this client, and this client is now dealing with the same situation. May not be exact, but.

Raquel Castillo: this same thing I created over here, I can actually bring over here.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, and then you get more valuable as you take on more clients, and you can raise your prices, because all that stuff is just value that you've accumulated over the time of looking at the same problems and getting really good at solving the same problems.

Raquel Castillo: Yes.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah. Yeah, that was actually gonna be my next question. What skills would you say someone would need?

Natalie Fisher: To go this route.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, I mean, again, it depends on their… are we talking, like, fractional COO, or, like, just fractional in general?

Natalie Fisher: Answer for both, if you can.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, okay, so I would say fraction OCO, if… You have led teams.

Raquel Castillo: That's my biggest thing, is have you been a COO? A lot of people, you know, there's this conflict of actually haven't had the role of COO,

Raquel Castillo: If you have had the role of a COO, then yes, you can do it. You know what that entails. If you haven't had the role of COO, and you're like, I think I could do this, and you've been at a high level of operations, or director of operations, DOO, anything like that, if you've led a team.

Raquel Castillo: then you can do this. If you've…

Natalie Fisher: Yeah.

Raquel Castillo: organized, you know, operations, strategy, structure, so I think those are a lot of, like.

Raquel Castillo: things, and I would say soft skills is…

Raquel Castillo: Empathy is, like, a big one.

Raquel Castillo: under… like, intuition, I don't… are you familiar with the Working Genius Assessment?

Natalie Fisher: No, I haven't heard of that one.

Raquel Castillo: Okay, well, I mean, it's just another assessment, but I think a biggest thing is

Raquel Castillo: you're partnering with CEOs, so you have to understand, have discernment of, hey.

Raquel Castillo: is this, you know, something we should do now, should do later, priorities? So I think a big skill set is having discernment on what things to say yes to, what things to hold onto, and that's like any kind of muscle, it kind of grows, right?

Raquel Castillo: But that ability to be kind and candor with someone, especially a CEO, right? Like, you have to be able to push back a little bit, and it doesn't mean that you have to be an extrovert, it doesn't mean that you have to run over anyone, it just means that you have to be…

Raquel Castillo: concise in your communication, and so I think those are some other things that are helpful as specifically a COO.

Raquel Castillo: And then, if you're wanting to go fractional.

Raquel Castillo: in a profession, or maybe some other route, I would say if you've been in that expertise for… I call it the % edge.

Raquel Castillo: if you know % more than, you know, maybe someone at a lower level, then you're ready to go. You know, you may not have it all figured out, but if you have that % edge of, like, hey, I could teach somebody this.

Raquel Castillo: or I've been doing this, you know, plus years.

Raquel Castillo: then I'm pretty sure you have that expertise, the knowledge inside of you.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, absolutely.

Natalie Fisher: And then, what do you think they would… do you think people, like, once they go fractional, they kind of never want to go back to full-time kind of thing? Or do you feel like some people might decide that they want to go back?

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, that's a great question. So, a lot of times, again, I don't…

Raquel Castillo: for me, I'm a go-all-in or not person. I couldn't do it as a side gig, because it would have just been a side gig. Yeah. But when I went… once I went fractional, for me specifically, I don't think I could ever go back, but I never say never, right? If the right opportunity, like, approached itself.

Raquel Castillo: Then I would… maybe I would go all in. You know, maybe I… one of the clients that I have now, they're a phenomenal client. Their culture is amazing, like…

Raquel Castillo: I would % be a full-time COO for them.

Raquel Castillo: It's just not what I want currently, and so I think…

Raquel Castillo: like, that… it doesn't have to be, oh, if I go fractional, I can never go back to full-time employment, but I do think that once you taste that freedom of, like, oh, on my terms.

Raquel Castillo: I can determine my revenue in different seasons of life. For instance, right now, I'm a mom of three, I just… my… my third boy just turned months. I only have one client right now, and that's okay for me. Like, that's what my family needs, and…

Raquel Castillo: it's sustainable for me with having, you know, in my life right now. So, I think, but on the flip side, I have met… had a friend who

Raquel Castillo: Went fractional, and went back to full-time.

Natalie Fisher: Hmm.

Raquel Castillo: Because she found a perfect fit, and they offered her something. Again, her value also went up, right? So she was able to…

Raquel Castillo: then come and say, hey, here was what I was making as a fractional. If you can pay me, you know, XYZ, then…

Raquel Castillo: I'll be on your team. And so, she had that negotiating

Raquel Castillo: Factor, and also her presence, the networking that she had built, was also a help to the company that she worked for.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah.

Natalie Fisher: And I guess it can go, like, you can be fractional, and then you can decide to go full-time. It, like, it's all about.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah.

Natalie Fisher: finding that right fit and, like, what feels good for you. But yeah, I agree, it's like, if you're gonna do it.

Natalie Fisher: give it an actual try for a while and see if it's for you or not, because you'll know. But yeah, I'm pretty sure it's more like an entrepreneur experience than it is an employee experience, but it's kind of like you get the best of both worlds in a way.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, absolutely. And there's still structure, right? Like, I like that I'm working for companies that, hey, there's still structure, I still have to show up at certain times, like, certain times, certain, you know, meetings, things like that, where it doesn't feel like…

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, so you do get the best of both worlds, yeah.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, well, amazing.

Natalie Fisher: Well, thank you so much! Those are all the questions I had. Was there anything else you wanted to add or to share? And please tell people where to find you, and a little bit more about, like, what you do, like, what you would be able to help people with if they were interested.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah.

Natalie Fisher: Hearing more from you.

Raquel Castillo: Yeah, so the best place to find me is on LinkedIn. Me and Natalie met on LinkedIn, and I'd love to connect there. If you message me and just tell me you heard this podcast, I'd love to connect and just, be… anyone who is friends with Natalie is friends with me. And so, one way I can help is if you're thinking of going fractional, I actually have a

Raquel Castillo: custom GPT that I made has a fractional assessment.

Raquel Castillo: And so you can take that fractional assessment and see, hey, am I ready, financially, like, education-wise? And so that's something I can leave with your team, and I'll give you a link to that as well.

Natalie Fisher: Awesome, awesome. That'd be great. We'll put it in the show notes.

Natalie Fisher: Yeah, and then anything else you wanted to leave people with?

Raquel Castillo: No, again, if you connect with me on LinkedIn, I also, if you're like, yes, this is what I want to do going fractional, I also host fractional masterclasses, and so, you can check out when my next masterclass will be, and if you message me that you've listened to this podcast, I'll go ahead and give you a discount for the next masterclass.

Natalie Fisher: Amazing! That sounds great. Okay, everyone, message Raquel on LinkedIn if you loved this podcast.

Natalie Fisher: Alright, well, I'll leave it there. Thank you so much for coming on, and I'll talk to you soon. Bye-bye.

Raquel Castillo: Thank you, Natalie.