Cutting Costs, One CFO at a Time

The term "fractional CFO" is now used widely. Anna Papazian, founder of K Buildz Consulting, knows this because she was doing it back when it was called "temporary" or "outsourced CFO."

Before she went out on her own, she was a Toyota executive who relaunched the company's Asset Backed Securitization Program and created its first Diversity and Inclusion Bond. Her team used woman, minority, and veteran-owned businesses to underwrite U.S. bond transactions, paving the way for many more similar deals.

"It was fun to be a part of a big company that always thinking about the future," she recalls.



Anna Papazian

Small and mid-sized businesses may not require a full-time CFO, yet they need someone to keep an eye on the numbers and provide stability, especially in times of transition. Anna Papazian founded K Buildz Consulting

She had more challenging plans of her own.

When Toyota moved its headquarters to Texas in 2015, Papazian kept her family in California. The nonprofit Boys & Girls Club of Venice hired her as its CEO and she swiftly transformed the struggling nonprofit, tightened financials, stabilized the foundation, and helped the organization run more efficiently.

When Papazian stepped away in 2018, she had a turnaround-success story to tell the world and a wealth of nonprofit experience. It was the perfect time to offer her services as a fractional CFO, one that companies could hire for a predetermined length of time to help make sense of their financials and plan ahead.

K Buildz Consulting, a name that blends her middle name and lyrics from an inspirational Imagine Dragons song, took off in 2018 with a mix of local nonprofits and LA-based startups rounding out her portfolio. She grew out her team, which today includes an MBA, CPAs, a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt, and a Salesforce certified professional.

If you're using blockchain for business applications, K Buildz handles those transactions as well.

"I love doing different things and having projects come and go," Papazian says. "I'm always learning. Consulting, to me, was always going to be doing something different."

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, Papazian never slowed down. She focused on marketing efforts and found opportunities via Zoom. After all, if a business runs accounting



in the cloud (meaning a user can log into their financial software from anywhere and no specialized desktop application is required), she can advise almost anyone and meet with them remotely.

"It's a great way to have a broader reach," she says. "By the end of December 2020, things started to pick up like crazy!"

As the economy bounces back and people are returning to the office, Papazian has a more diversified client portfolio than ever before. She says many of them have the same concerns. How can we move faster? How do we operate more efficiently? How can we do more with less? The role of a fractional CFO is to not only advise, but to directly contribute as a contracted, non-salaried partner. In other words, a less costly CFO.

It's a role that Papazian relishes. "Don't worry about the books or the financials," she tells her entrepreneurial clients. "Go and build that dream!"

Who else can benefit from a fractional CFO? It varies, but they all have one thing in common: Cutting costs.

Here are some examples:

- Small to medium-sized businesses that want the advantage of a financial strategy tailored for them. "They have an accounting department, but no need for a full-time CFO," Papazian says. "They also want to build their business; they don't want to think about it. They shouldn't have to."

- Start-ups, especially during a time of growth. "The founders may need someone to do clean-up or help with reporting. We then move into partnership and strategic finance. Sometimes, they just want to know what's going on. We create financial statements too, which they'll need to show banks for loans and of course, to potential investors."

- Nonprofits with a paid staff. Donations come from a variety of sources and nonprofit bookkeeping is notoriously challenging. Papazian's extensive nonprofit experience can get their accounts in order, set goals and plan for the future.

With this range of clients, K Buildz is one of the few fractional CFO firms that offer customizable consulting packages. What works for a tech startup certainly won't work for a community outreach program, so services and rates are designed to meet a client's specific needs.

Still, Papazian firmly believes that a healthy CEO - CFO relationship has tension.
"I tend to be more realistic. What's going to happen with inflation, the stock market, or commercial real estate? I'm going to help you withstand future economic shock."

She says clients today have more of an understanding of what she can do for them. "I see people get it right away. 'I want my KPIs, I want my dashboard,'" she says. "There's more willingness to put all of their finances in the cloud too. I can log on anytime and work from anywhere."

Finance is critical in every brand's playbook. Papazian says the modern CFO is less about the past and more about what's ahead.
"Finance was usually looking back, but now it's more forward-thinking than ever before. How does yesterday affect tomorrow? That's what makes strategic finance integral to a company's success. — By Victoria Kertz, California Business Journal.

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