

The Independent Workforce Podcast - Episode 2 with Josh Jennings

Yurii Lazaruk:

We'll need a few seconds because I learned that when I start the recording, Zoom needs some time to warm up and it's usually when I just start the podcast conversation right away, it's kind of like, yeah, you should have waited for me. So I'm usually like, you know, Zoom, take your time, warm up, we'll give you a few seconds and afterwards we'll start. So I believe we've had enough time already, so it's two seconds.

So let's do it, three, two, one. Welcome to the Independent Workforce, the podcast where we explore the now and the future of work through the lens of temporary employment, such as freelancers, contractors, fractional experts, you name it. Here we speak to CEOs, recruiters, founders, and industry leaders about how they work with independent talent, the wins, the challenges, and the lessons learned.

My name is Yurii, I'm growing the freelance market at freelancermap, an international platform that's been connecting top independent professionals with companies for over 20 years. And my guest is Josh Jennings, a freelance talent partner at IO Associates, helping consultancies and clients and platforms build high-impact Databricks teams with top freelance experts fast, with no compromise on quality or compliance. So welcome, Josh.

Josh Jennings:

Thank you. Good to be here. Yuri.

Yurii:

Super happy to talk to you and usually use a little bit of an egotistical approach, super happy to learn from you. So let's start with the first question. Tell me a little about your company and what's your involvement with freelancers?

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Josh:

So IO Associates, as you mentioned, we're part of a bigger corporation called Precision Resource Group, a global tech talent organization operating across the EU, the UK, the US, and in India as well. So very wide-reaching.

We cover a lot of different sectors in private and public sectors, but my role within our Munich base of operations, as you mentioned, it's very much, you know, working with Databricks experts in the communities across Germany, Austria, and the wider DACH region and connects them with really exciting projects and helping organizations as well solve pretty complex problems with no compromise, highly compliant solutions in engaging, you know, the wonderful world of freelancing.

Yurii:

How do you usually find and select freelancers for your clients?

Josh:

So we use a few different platforms. I would say that freelancermap is our go-to, you know, it's the platform of choice for identifying the best kind of local experts. A lot of what our clients look for is this sort of German-speaking element, particularly when they're trying to communicate with stakeholders. I think there's a high expectation around that. But, you know, we use the traditional channels – LinkedIn as well, Jing, and StepStone on occasion as well.

So we don't have any—we don't prejudice which platform we use. We always want to find the best by whatever means.

Yurii:

You know, I learned from freelancers that if there is a great project on a platform and they apply to it in like three hours, there is close to zero chance to really get this project because there are so many applications. And I believe that.

When you post a project, do you have, like, what is the volume of applications you usually receive?

Josh:

That's a great question. So I think it very much depends on what platform you're on, really. I think LinkedIn would be the obvious answer here, where multiple billions of users are currently using the platform to find opportunities. And there's also no limit to geographical locations.

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You will find that you feel up against it when applying on LinkedIn. Platforms like freelancermap and Jing, for example, are very specific to the DACH region and Germany mainly. We tend to find that applicants or those expressing interest in the project tend to be highly relevant.

And we don't tend to get as many applications because, I would say, freelancermap is considered a more specialised platform in that respect. It's less of a "just applying to a job" and more of an "I'm really interested in that project" sort of platform. So that's kind of how I would differentiate the two. But I would say, yeah, if you feel like you've been up against it, you're probably utilizing LinkedIn more so.

Yurii:

So, for example, if you got like 10 applications, how do you decide which freelancer to present to a client?

Josh:

Well, we talk to them first. For me in particular, just working with Databricks experts—and Databricks hasn't been around for a long time either—there aren't hundreds of them out there. So I tend to be quite forward when it comes to that. If you're an expert in Databricks, I want to speak to you. And likewise, with my colleagues who are looking after the Snowflake areas or different skill sets, it works very much the same way.

But ultimately, it starts with the conversation. It starts with really understanding the work that they've delivered, the true value as a freelancer, and extracting all of that information on a really detailed qualification call. That's when I'm able to really understand their suitability for projects and the level of skill they have—because they get the opportunity to sell themselves a bit, which is really important.

Yurii:

You know, when you are hiring a full time person, I heard that there are from three to seven rounds of interviews. So how many interviews do you have with freelancers?

Josh:

Oh, that can also vary, but certainly not as dramatically as permanent interviews. There have been plenty of occasions in my six-year career with this group where an urgent project has come in, or an urgent requirement has come in from an existing client of ours, or a really good client, and they need this person fast – they need this problem solved really quickly.

We're able to turn that around within the same week. They only interview once, we're able to draft a schedule within the same week, and then the offer is accepted.

On the flip side, when the needs aren't as urgent or the project itself is only planned to start in a month or two, then things can drag out a little bit. But in terms of interview stages, on average, two would be the most for freelancers to experience, really.

Yurii:

Yeah, I feel like it's still faster, but also when you have this kind of time pressure, you have to be much more precise. And I don't even know—you have to kind of take your best shot and hope that it will work. And I'm curious, from this speed approach and from the quality part, what is the hardest part of matching the right freelancer with the right project in such a short time?

Josh:

Really good question. I would say that it can come down mainly to client requirements. I think if the project is highly complex and requires a really specific skill set—not just one skill set like Databricks, but a combination of different elements—and even combining that with difficulties in finding the right level of budget, there can be complications around finding the right solution for that client.

At the same time, when you are looking for a specific skill set and you say, “We need someone who's a native German,” you're really refining that talent pool quite a lot, and that's when it can be a little bit challenging to find the right person. But we love a challenge. So we always try to ensure that we're guiding them through the right stages and understanding how they can actually get the right person, where the compromise can be—maybe even creating two positions.

These sorts of things are what we always try to look at and adjust slightly. Ultimately, we want to be able to solve these problems as quickly as possible.

Yurii:

Sounds like you are being a trained negotiator.

Josh:

Thank you.

Yurii:

So when you're in the negotiations, what part is the toughest—with the client, with the freelancer, or maybe both? I don't know.

Josh:

Well, actually, I think it can be both, because it's very much about trying to find the right medium. If things change with the client—budget is the most common example we come across—where they really want the person that we've introduced, and that consultant is not necessarily expensive, but they can't quite reach the required amount to secure them for the project.

So it's about negotiating between the two parties and finding a happy medium—securing a contract, or even offering equity shares in some cases, and those sorts of elements that could really make an opportunity more attractive. Because it's not necessarily always about the rates, right? So there can be challenges, but ultimately, it's about making sure that both client and freelancer are perfectly happy.

Yurii:

You know, I talk to many different end clients and also recruiting and staffing companies, and one of the main concerns and expectations is the availability of a freelancer.

Usually, people expect that this person will be there within an hour or something like that—because that's why they hire freelancers. And also, they are a little bit afraid of the communication part, because when you have a permanent person, you expect them to go to every meeting and sit in on every call. It's crazy. And they don't know what to do with freelancers—how to communicate with them.

So I'm curious, how do you manage client expectations around freelancers' availability and communication styles?

Josh:

Really good question. So I'll tackle the availability part first. It can very much depend on client type.

If we look at the biotechnology industry, for example, where freelancing is perhaps not as mature but is utilized in different ways, that is very fractional. From that perspective, freelancers can be made available within hours, because they have the availability.

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On the flip side, though, in more technology-driven industries like IT or logistics, freelancers tend to be full-time. So availability, quite honestly, can be no sooner than a month's notice period, because that's how their contracts work out. But what I love about this freelance market is that freelancers are really engaged in what they're doing and want to see that through to the very end.

So it's about managing that rotation with the network that I have. When it comes to helping clients understand availability, it's about showing them that we can have people available to start within a month, but it very much depends on who is actually available in our network. There could even be someone who can start tomorrow. So it can vary ultimately. That's the availability part.

As for communication, yes, I think that's one of the barriers that needs to be broken down. I think freelancers are trained in a different way, where they're also aware that they're not a permanent employee, so they need to add value from the very first day they start. From that perspective, their communication is always going to be better, because they need to be heard in those meetings.

Permanent employees always know the infrastructure and setup better. But freelancers are experts in their fields, and they're always going to be seen that way—so they're spoken to in that way. Their communication style will be different, but in a lot of ways, for the very reason you're hiring them, it's going to be better.

Yurii:

What are the most common issues that clients raise about freelancers that you've placed?

Josh:

Fortunately, none. So a good track record so far. However, there have been occasions where, as part of the process, we have regular service reviews with our clients.

That comes within the sixth week—from the first day to the sixth week—and then the third month. And then we assess: Are you happy with the way the project is going? Are you happy with the freelancer that we provided? Is there anything that we can do to help in other areas, or is there more that we can do for this project?

There have been certain conversations that needed to be had around capacity. It could be where it turned out the freelancer that we provided was actually just not enough—we needed another one. There have also been occasions where performance has come into question. Are they working to the expectation that we need?

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That's where more negotiations come in. Any freelancer running a project through us, we speak with every week to make sure they're also happy—making sure they're happy with the pace of work so there are no hidden agendas, no surprises. That, really, is what sets us apart: the aftercare element.

One example has been where a freelancer, at the six-week review, was experiencing a bit of personal turmoil that impacted their performance in the project. That kind of conversation with the client had to be carefully organized.

Whether it was about having the conversation with the freelancer first—"Are you happy for us to talk about your situation?"—we wanted to make sure that everyone was happy and that the freelancer was getting the support they needed.

We ended up having a conversation with the client, talking about the situation in some detail. They ended up having a face-to-face meeting in their office over coffee. And from then on, things changed. When he felt like he had the support, that was it.

I think that proves another point: freelancers can be treated as employees. Even if they are self-employed, they're part of your organization and part of an important project. So they can be treated very much like a full-time employee.

Yurii:

So when you have this review, tell me a little bit about the process. Do you do it as a survey that you send via email, or do you jump on a call? What are the details? How do you do this?

Josh:

It's a conversation every single time. When it comes to checking in with our freelancers, it can be a WhatsApp message or a phone call. It's consistent—checking in: Are you okay? How's the project going with our clients?

It's either a face-to-face or an online meeting. We talk about how they're finding the pace of the project. We ask very specific questions around how they found our service and the service of our freelancers. We can't just send pre-written questions via email—we only get the best value from a conversation. That's why we do it this way.

Yurii:

Tell me a story when freelancers started working and something went wrong, and clients reached out to you like, "Ah, we can't work with this freelancer."

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Josh:

I can give you an example. It kind of worked out in a way where the parties backed away on level ground. To make that point clear: the freelancer was hired for a specific project, but they were behind on the implementation they needed to do.

It was a startup, and in the startup world, there are increased time and cost pressures because you need to almost appease your venture capital investors. They were behind on one of their main milestones, which was modernizing their lakehouse in Databricks.

The freelancer took on the role, but it wasn't actually the executive team that hired them—it was a team lead. All the right people were involved, but the executive team had a different view on freelancing. Perhaps that was because they were in a startup and never really understood the model in detail. Ultimately, this difference of opinion came to a head.

The freelancer, of course, wasn't happy, which we don't like—we want our freelancers to be happy. The team lead was caught in the middle and probably a little shaken by the experience. Ultimately, I spoke to the executive team and understood that, for their company in particular, their investors just weren't going to support freelancing—it wasn't seen as adding investment value or growth. At that time, it was just not the right fit for them.

There was a bit of internal turmoil, which the freelancer got caught up in. But having the conversation with everyone on the call, we were able to level things out.

We said, "No problem—we can help you find someone permanent if you need, and we'll put that freelancer somewhere else." It turned out okay in the end.

Yurii:

What did you learn from the situation?

Josh:

I think it's really important to make sure that we're getting all the right people in the conversation, in the same room. The team was the right person to speak to about the needs of the project—they're so involved with the project. But in reality, we needed to be talking to more key stakeholders. We needed to be speaking with the wider business, particularly in a startup with increased pressures.

Those sorts of pressures are managed much higher up. In hindsight, speaking to the board would have alleviated any of those concerns from the beginning, and we probably would never have had that experience with a freelancer.

Yurii:

What criteria or skills are non-negotiable for you when you're searching for a freelancer? I mean, let's say their tech stack is perfect, they have amazing work experience, but something just isn't right. What is that criteria?

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Josh:

That's almost an untouchable one—it's a good question. A freelancer can look amazing on paper—the projects they've delivered, their technology experience—but there's that one thing you can't quite put your finger on. I do think it comes down to how they communicate.

You always want to picture them in a room with key senior stakeholders who are spearheading initiatives and are crucial to the work they're doing. If it feels like they aren't quite at the level to communicate with C-suite or board-level executives, then you want to make sure you're matching them to the right project.

From that perspective, though, it very much depends on client requirements. If it's a traditional deep engineering role, communication with stakeholders might not be as important. But for a more senior or lead position, you want that extra layer of communication skills.

Yurii:

Have you encountered situations where a freelancer has strong writing skills—they can handle reports, messaging, and documentation easily—but when they jump on a call, they can't connect ideas verbally?

Josh:

Fortunately, no. I think there have been times where German-to-English translations have come across awkwardly, which is fine—English is often not their first language. I'm perfectly fine with translating and writing. But I've not had an experience where English was really tricky to speak, which is great because it shows the utility of freelancers and why they have to be prepared for any situation.

Even sometimes, I've worked with German freelancers who are fluent in German and English, but also business fluent in Polish, Romanian, and other languages, depending on the people they've been working with and their own interests. So ultimately, no—English hasn't been an issue from my perspective.

Yurii:

You know, I talk to end clients—those who are hiring freelancers for their projects themselves—and one of the biggest blockers is compliance. Huge corporations often won't even work with freelancers directly; they always use intermediaries to help manage compliance. So I'm curious: how do you ensure compliance for freelancers you place with clients?

Josh:

We are quite meticulous with that. When we're engaged in a project, ensuring compliance is very important. We ask the right questions, verify health and liability insurance, the correct tax number, and ensure that the freelancer is recognized as self-employed in Germany.

We also add extra layers of detail that aren't strictly necessary but make them more attractive from a compliance perspective, like additional insurance for freelancers. Additionally, we have our own internal contractor care team. Our compliance, finance, accounting, and contractor care team consists of around 15 people, giving us a large internal operations team that looks after all compliance aspects. They're extremely experienced, which is great.

Yurii:

What about payments? This is an interesting moment because, from the freelancer side, there can be a big payment window—sometimes up to a month to finally receive payment for work done a month ago. How do you manage payments and invoicing for freelancers?

Josh:

It can be tricky to navigate sometimes, but we are always upfront with our payment schedules. So, you know, for example, from the moment we invoice, it could be a 14- or 30-day payment term. So we give, like, an actual due date.

We offer different variations of consolidated invoicing as well. So if it was an engagement over three months and they wanted to pay the whole invoice at the end of three months, that can be possible. Or if it's just monthly invoices, you know, we can be flexible around that.

But ultimately, with our clients, like I said, we set up payment schedules and we have an accounts team that provide reminders of upcoming payments and any that are overdue. So we're very communicative with that, very open with that. And with our freelancers, we always ensure that they get paid.

That's important. And we're also very open with ensuring that we're getting paid as well for them to get paid. It's all connected, of course.

So I think the crucial message here, though, is transparency, you know, from the very beginning.

Yurii:

You talked about insurance. I heard the word insurance. So I'm also curious, is indemnity insurance a big question when you hire a freelancer?

Josh:

Yes, more liability, I think. But indemnity does come into question sometimes. It's one of those extra layers that can be added on freelancers that, again, make them more transparent from a compliance perspective, because, you know, our clients want to make sure that they're covered at every stage. When engaging a freelancer, they want that confidence, and that freelancer knows they're responsible for what they need to, they've been hired to do.

And in a lot of our schedules, it details that if a freelancer is unable, for whatever reason, to carry on the work but still wants to retain responsibility for the project, they can find someone else to do it. And it's their responsibility to do that, as an example. You know, in a lot of ways, we can help with that, of course, but we want to make sure that our clients feel safe when hiring freelancers.

Yurii:

How do you measure the success of freelancers' engagement for both sides, for end client and for freelancer?

Josh:

Well, project completion is probably the first sign, but I'd say measuring success is part of our service review that we do every six weeks and every three months, or the six weeks and the third month. And we measure that success by simply just talking: you know, how is the project going? What's the pace of the line? What's the next milestone that you would say to achieve that?

And if they say, yeah, we're going to be early on this milestone, you know, success, big tick. And if it's the opposite, then, you know, we've had that conversation and we'd be ready to mitigate any concerns or issues.

But ultimately, it's very much just having consistent and open communication with both clients and freelancers. And that way, we can really assess success and any delays in the project. But ultimately, it basically is getting to that signal to come up and saying, "I'm handing over now, it's success, we're done, you know, we've done amazing work and it's all done." That's typically the best way we can measure success.

Yurii:

Yeah. You know, I talk to many, many hiring companies and staff and agency representatives and people who are always in between, and they always have some blacklists. And it doesn't only go for freelancers, it goes for end clients. I'm curious, what might make you put someone—freelancer or client—on a blacklist?

Josh:

I think that's a difficult one to answer because it would have to be something relatively extreme. From a client perspective, I think if communication really breaks down and they're not offering us the time to understand more about how the project is going, those are really important. We're ultimately taking part of the responsibility to deliver that.

And if we don't know about some of the upcoming delays or issues and we can't help mitigate them, and then it turns out that the client has told the freelancer to leave basically, or those sorts of things, then that could warrant, I guess, a blacklist.

But even then, we don't try to keep a blacklist. We always want to rectify problems, always look to find solutions. On the freelancer side, I think if communication really does break down and they're not cooperating, again, we don't blacklist people.

We're very conscious that people's situations can change dramatically and we want to make sure that we're offering a great service at all times, regardless of the situation. But my honest answer is it has to be something quite extreme for that to happen.

Yurii:

If you have different feedback from different sides—client tells one thing, freelancer tells one thing, and they kind of contradict each other—how do you deliver this feedback from one side to another?

Josh:

That's a great question. And I think the best way to do that is simply just to get everybody in the same room, or virtual room, together and really understand what the problem is. You know, of course, the first step is to really hear and try to obtain as much detail as possible from both parties and really understand what's going on, what's really going on.

And then when you get to that point, it's basically saying to both, "How would you feel about everybody sitting down together and just talking about this," really kind of laying it out and sort of hearing what is actually the issue. And the vast majority of the time, when that happens, things are very quickly resolved, and it's simply just down to miscommunication. I talk about communication a lot, and that's why it's so, so, so important.

Yurii:

And I feel like also freelancers have to understand it, because if you are being an entrepreneur, if you are doing your independent business, you must be great in communication, because otherwise who will sell you? Like, nobody will sell you except for you. And you told before that in some cases it takes like up to one week, or maybe even less, to land the client for a project. And what was the longest time that took you to find a freelancer?

Josh:

I would say almost seven weeks, simply because we had actually identified an opportunity for a new client and they had question marks over what to do next with their infrastructure, with their data, and how to extract the most value from their data.

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They weren't sure where to go. They were a small company, not necessarily the most tech-savvy. They had really good tech but weren't sure how to go to the next level. And because we have a dedicated consulting division within our group, we were able to bring on the right resources to help guide them through a strategy and understand that actually a Databricks data platform is the best for them, because they need high-frequency streaming pipelines, really strong reporting, and an overlay of really good data quality management. We were able to guide them through that strategy in a lot of detail.

And that took a good few weeks. In fact, the majority of that time was the consulting arrangement and then drafting out a statement of work to help deliver that. When it came to actually finding the people to deliver it, we needed a team.

It took a couple of weeks to find the right people, then to interview and get the team together. In that situation, our clients have the option to interview the people who will deliver on the statement of work. In that scenario, they didn't need to. They felt that they could trust us. So we found the team, and we were happy with what they were able to provide in terms of project references. And so the work started.

Yurii:

Talking about competition. So once again, no matter how hard clients, how amazing relationships clients have with some companies, they might have these amazing relationships with different companies. So how do you feel about this time restriction on hiring a freelancer, taking into account that end clients might simultaneously post the same request to five companies, let's say?

Josh:

Okay, so ultimately it's kind of managing who goes where ultimately, and what if clients have relationships with other companies that are similar. Okay, so fortunately, we have a wide network of experts, at least I do, particularly in my vertical. And when it comes to a specific requirement with five companies, we do our best in finding five people for those requirements.

And with the time restrictions, we try to, at all times, manage those expectations a little bit, particularly if the requirements are really specific. But at all times, we keep a constant monitoring of the active network that we operate in. For me, Databricks, I'm always speaking to people that are in or out of contracts, even if it's not through us, I'm always speaking to these people so I know who to go to.

If it's not that person for those five, it's four other people that I can find for those five. And if it is that case where a client is very specific, I'll be very transparent and say, look, it's going to be hard to find that person, it could take a bit of time. So I want to tell you that now before you have these funny expectations of me to find one person in three days.

So, again, the transparency piece comes in, you know, transparency and communication.

Yurii:

So coming back through some blockers or some things that we were discussing during this conversation. So it was compliance, it was communication, it was speed. And also it was one more thing—it was what I missed. Oh my God, it just slipped out of my mind.

So all those blockers that are still in place for companies hiring freelancers—if you could remove just one barrier to smooth freelancer collaboration, what would it be?

Josh:

I think from our client's perspective, it's two things. So the compliance element—I think a lot of particularly larger clients of ours tend to feel like they need a really complex and dedicated framework internally to have a freelancer on board. When actually, if we present the right credentials, the right level of compliance for our freelancers as a registered company in Germany, they don't need to demonstrate that.

All they need to do is demonstrate that they've hired this person as a software consultant, and these are their details. Ultimately, that's all it takes.

And then the second thing I would say, which kind of ties well with the compliance side of things, is almost the culture barrier of engaging a freelancer. It very much is breaking down those initial apprehensions or hesitations in finding a freelancer or engaging a freelancer because it's complicated, or we're scared that we're going to get bitten by tax or employment law. And actually, it's much simpler than that.

You know, it's where we can demonstrate our own compliance—for us as a company and for our freelancer, who is also business-to-business. Things can change for our customers very, very quickly, and it becomes much easier, surprisingly, for a lot of people, as I found out.

Yurii:

From your perspective, what is one mindset shift that companies and people on the hiring side have to change in order to get the most benefits from working with freelancers?

Josh:

To get the best out of working with a freelancer, it's understanding what you need. So if the need is, "I need to get from A to B in this project," or "I need someone to come in and extract all of this data for us because it's really complicated and we don't have the manpower for it," once you understand what you truly need, then you understand who you need to find.

And making that connection means you're able to get the most out of that particular freelancer, because not only then are they there to do a specific task for you, but they're also specialized in that specific task as well.

And the other thing I would say as well is just allow them to do what they're best at. You don't need to monitor them like you would in a permanent team. They're there because they are an expert in their field and they know exactly what they're doing. If they don't, they'll tell you—they'll tell you, "I'm not sure about this, not within my area of specialism."

Consider them a T-shaped consultant. They're really specialized and deeply involved in what they are experts at, but they're very good at communicating across all levels. So if you think of them in that way, then those sorts of initial concerns around the value of freelancers just melt away.

Yurii:

I feel like that's something many, many clients are missing, exactly because they got used to full-time employees who are working and get paid like for hours a seat, not usually for the projects they've done. And they think, "Oh, what's the difference? How can this person complete a project in one month when our team is working on it for six months?" It's impossible. But yeah, it's possible.

So, and yes, once again, new technologies are coming. So I'm curious—how are AI and automation changing your approach to freelancer selection and management?

Josh:

You're right. I think in this sort of era, things are changing quicker and more rapidly than ever before. And AI is a perfect example of that.

A lot of the questions I really like to ask freelancers I work with are, you know, "You might be an expert in Databricks, you might be really knowledgeable in other areas, but what is it that you're doing as a passion project? What are you training yourself in to make yourself better, or is there other technology you want to get involved with?" Those sorts of questions really open up answers like, "Well, I'm actually training myself better in agentic AI models. Not something I've been able to do yet, but I'm aware that that's going to be a big thing, so I'm going to train myself in it."

And that's how I'm able to really understand freelancers a lot better—their passion projects. But I think, you know, as a message for clients and freelancers really, it's so important to monitor the evolving landscape within your technology stack. Things can change very quickly, quicker than ever, as I mentioned. So it's important to stay in touch. And that's how I really assess high-quality freelancers—their awareness of what's going on.

Yurii:

You know, there are some platforms out there that propose, "Yeah, just put your project and then put your CV from the freelancer side, and we'll build the best match ever. You don't need anyone, and you can start working in a few days." But for me, it sounds like utopia.

And still, as freelancing is becoming more mainstream, more people want to work independently, and technologies are growing, more and more algorithms and proposals are out there. How do you see the role of staffing companies evolving in such settings?

Josh:

I think the role of staffing companies has already evolved. Well, I think if you haven't already, then you should think about changing your approach. So, particularly for us over the last few years, as we've rapidly expanded from a global perspective, we've recognized that our approach to staffing, for the most part, hasn't changed in 15—sorry, 16 years of doing this as a company.

The traditional approaches to recruitment and staffing have never changed for us, but our approach to our clients has. We offer—I meant to give an example already—providing detailed consulting around strategies. We even do consulting arrangements around marketing launches and product roadmaps. We help companies with mergers and acquisitions from an HR and systems perspective. So we have a lot of feathers in our bow, if you like.

And the way we've evolved around that means that we're able to adapt to any challenge. It's no longer just about finding the right person for the right seat. It goes beyond that and helps our clients. And that's how I think staffing companies should consider evolving too—toward being more of a consultancy-led organization.

Yurii:

It sounds like you are becoming more of a business expert—not only lending a freelancer for the project that was requested, but also analyzing the project, giving ideas on how to improve it, and also putting the client in the right place if they are not hiring the needed freelancer. If you have, like, title one, but you really need another person, it sounds like you are helping those businesses.

Josh:

Yeah, I totally agree. I think it's probably the reason why I have the job title of consultant, because, you know, yeah, I'm a recruiter, but I'm so much more than that. We're trained to ask the right questions, and the questions we ask our clients are focused on understanding problems that we might not have uncovered when just qualifying a vacancy, for example.

Yurii:

So if you could change just one thing about how the freelance market works today, what would it be?

Josh:

I think it goes back to a couple of things I've already mentioned. The one thing that is probably worth highlighting is that the demand for freelancers has always been really high. But actually, there is becoming a more limited number of freelancers now, combined with an aging population, but also younger people not going through vocational training and becoming experts in certain fields.

You know, this presents a very limited opportunity to engage freelancers from that perspective. And from a younger professional perspective, I encourage people to consider freelancing. Both permanent careers and freelancing careers are equally attractive in their own respect.

Permanent careers offer you a trajectory to get to a certain level—if you want to become C-suite in your field, then fantastic. Freelancing gives you flexibility. You earn great money, and you also get the opportunity to work on loads of different projects, loads of different types of companies, and engage with loads of different people. There are so many benefits.

And I think it's very much around understanding that freelancing has always been a really specialist profession. The availability of freelancers is changing, so the time to act is now. Let's say that.

Yurii:

You know, Josh, I wish the sky was the limit, but time is the limit to our conversation. And I feel like you've already answered this question a little bit. Still, what advice would you give to a company considering hiring freelancers for the first time?

Josh:

OK, so if it's your first time hiring a freelancer, or you're stuck with options, you've tried to solve a certain problem a few times, or there's a complex project that you have no idea about—a freelancer could be a great opportunity.

And the best advice I can give you, if you are unsure of where to start and unsure of how to look for the right person, is to ask someone like me—someone who speaks to freelancers every single day, someone who knows how this particular fashion works, and how you can extract the most value out of that.

We have the luxury of using multiple platforms to find the right people and connect the right people to the right projects, so just use the resources around you. Look outside of your box—that's what's important.

Yurii:

Yeah, Josh, thank you so much for this conversation. We went through the ups and downs of working with freelancers, and not just freelancers, but also jumped a little bit into the client's perspective—how it works from their side, and especially why it's super important to have an expert on your side who knows how to deal with freelancers and this freelance market, especially when you're starting to work with them for the first time. So thank you so much for sharing your experiences.

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Josh:

Thank you, Yurii, it's been great. Thank you so much for your time. It's been really good.

Yurii:

And yeah, see you in the freelance world.

Josh:

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