

Yurii Lazaruk: [00:00:00] 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 with CEOs, recruiters, founders, and industry leaders about how they work with independent talent, the wins, the challenges, and the lessons learned.

My name is Yuri. I'm growing the freelance market at Freelancer Map and international platforms that's been connected, top independent professional with companies for over 20 years. And my guest is Mina Ros, a true relationship builder and inspiring leader. With over 14 years of experience at Airbus, leading marketing, digital innovation, and now sales and customer satisfaction for major UK airlines who also bridges corporate vision with entrepreneurial Drive.

So welcome Mina.

Mina Bastawros: Thank you so much for having me. Uri, always a pleasure to speak to you and see everything that you've been working on. It's really, really inspiring.

Yurii Lazaruk: I already learned so many things from you during our freelance Unlocked conversation, and it was such [00:01:00] a period that you couldn't make it.

But you know, life happens. Who knows? At some point, I definitely believe we'll meet in real life, we'll meet in person. And now I'm still super happy to learn from you. And you already told me that you work a lot with freelancers. So I'm curious, in which areas of business do you currently use freelancers.

Mina Bastawros: Well, I currently use freelancers maybe from a graphic point of view, um, from a marketing point of view, et cetera, to get things done very, very quickly. Um, and I'm not just speaking on behalf of Airbus here, I'm doing it actually in my private life as well, just because I see the speed that you can work with freelancers.

It's very, very. But at my time in, in Airbus, I've been using freelancers, freelancers quite extensively. I've worked on with freelancers on app development. I worked with freelancers on, uh, videos, uh, renderings, uh, you name it. We've done all sorts of stuff with freelancers, and that's the beauty of freelancing is that, you know, it's over 70 million people, at least the platforms that I've interacted with.

It's [00:02:00] over 70 million people and it's undoubted that you're gonna find the nugget that you're gonna be looking for to get things done. And, um, it's always very inspiring if you leave also an end open to see what they can come up with that you may have not thought of. It's, it's always quite a nice surprise at the end.

Yurii Lazaruk: So coming a little bit back, what led you to start with working with freelancers in the first place?

Mina Bastawros: Great question. So I started in 2017. The company had asked us, so Airbus had asked us to dream very, very big. And we looked at saying, well, how can we make something quite disruptive that challenges the way Airbus does things?

And we said to ourselves, what if the aircraft of the future is made by the people for the people? We presented this to the top management, the CEO, and he said, guys, we think there's something there. Go to Silicon Valley, go and figure out how to make this happen. So we spent some time in Silicon Valley with Google, with Stanford University.

We also spent some time in with Harvard, uh, business school. Really we try to figure out [00:03:00] how can this be a business opportunity for the company. It was very ironic because when we started the journey within abus, a lot of people said to us, ah, guys, this is gonna be difficult to implement. It's not really our ways of working.

We went to Silicon Valley, we were just mind blown by the opportunity behind it, and we came to Abus and started saying, okay, can we gradually deploy this within the company? Uh, I led a startup that led this program. Um, and we drove, drove this program within the company to see how we can deploy it, and three and a half years later, this was part of the company and, and really embedded in, in the way abus was doing things.

And it was funny because from a driver of this program on the startup. To then become like a customer of it. A customer of it. So within my role within marketing, I was using, you know, all these initiatives for freelancing to get things done. Um, and within that journey we were always trying to see what else we can do, as we said, like from app development to um, marketing content, to videos, to coding to robotic arms, really.

Testing and seeing what [00:04:00] was possible. And every single time there was a very, very high chance of success. And uh, and that led us to use

freelancers within Airbus and for me also outside Airbus, even beyond whatever could have done in the company.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, many, many companies and many people are talking, uh, about, uh, working with freelancers now, they are afraid of it.

So I'm curious, how did you feel back then when you just started working with independent talent?

Mina Bastawros: I think there's not really enough much to fear because you need to frame it in such way that you still have control of the project, right? I, if you, you know, say to someone, go and development me an aircraft or go and development car, it's, it's just, it doesn't work.

You'll fail. But then when you say, go and develop. The nut that can be used on the wheel of that car. Yeah. I mean, they only know how to make the nuts. They dunno how to make the entire thing. So you as an individual within the company, you become the architect or the project manager that collects all the different pieces together and then you stitch them together.

Right? So. When we spoke that language within the company and made people feel, no, there's nothing you're risking by just trying a [00:05:00] nut, by trying a bracket, by trying a piece of software, by trying this, by trying that, ultimately you still control the puzzle pieces. And by the way, the budget that you had now you can do 10 times more with it, you know?

And, and people really resonated with that. So we have to take it baby steps, speak the language that AVAs spoke, um, deploy some stuff to show the results that they can take by doing internal versus external. I mean, it's not that the internal talent is not available and good, not good, they are not available, and they're very good.

It's just sometimes a question of priorities, which one is a higher priority in the day-to-day tasks? So while they are working on things that are really, really high priority, the things that are maybe secondary priority that you would do later on, you will start doing them earlier on now. In parallel, and then the project just moves faster and then actually because it's faster, you've saved money and because it's faster, you are not delaying opportunities, and the opportunities then are actually coming to fruition.

So all of the different pieces actually come collectively [00:06:00] brought the business case to be very interesting for, for the company.

Yurii Lazaruk: Am I hearing correctly? So it's like when you are building a car. So your internal team usually definitely works on an engine and work on the safety systems to ensure that this car is running.

And then you can still do some interior work with freelancers. Something that makes car more beautiful, something that kinda like not affects the safety part.

Mina Bastawros: Um, I would say even more detailed than that. So let's say the engine that you mentioned, the engine would not just be done by Airbus or by BMW or by Rolls Royce or by Volkswagen.

You name it. The piece inside the engine, once more piece will be made by a freelancer and then one other piece by, by another freelancer, and another piece would be made by another freelancer. And then one is gonna be done by an internal, one is gonna be done by another company, one is gonna be their supplier, and then you bring everything together.

As Volkswagen as Audi as BMW, and then you have the machine running the engine running, right? So you didn't really take any major risks. It's just one [00:07:00] small piece and because it's very difficult to, for them to know who's worked with whom, you're the only single point that can connect the dot. And then you can get this to, to take off.

So it's not about just choosing what I'm gonna do it on terminals or the engine or the wing or the wheel? No, you can do it on entire thing as long as you control. The narrative. You control the different puzzle pieces, then you can make the puzzle, you can fit all the puzzle together.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, the funniest thing that what I hear, that it really works similar to corporate structure because in huge, huge companies, there are managers who know who.

How the system works. And then there are other teams and uh, departments who are not working with each other, who are not intersecting, not collaborating, but still this manager kind of like control different parts and then like this person kind of like creates a product. And even though different teams are working, so even like the way that you explain working with freelancers reminds me like huge corporate structures.

Mina Bastawros: Absolutely. I mean, I, I really believe if you mimic the way the corporate structure operates and [00:08:00] deploy the freelancing environment to it, then. It, it shouldn't be blocked. Right? And again, you need

to follow the procurement processes that the company's willing to accept. You need to follow the financing processes that company's willing to protect and, and, and then deploy.

'cause if you don't do that, what will happen is you're gonna make it crucial for, you know, you know, so painful for, for the freelancer, and so painful for the company. Right. So just make sure it's very clear for all parties. Hey Freelancer, this is how we operate. Hey company, this is how we're gonna deploy it.

No different to the the process. Either you follow, no different than how you've done things so far. As a result, what will happen is that the company will feel this is not a foreign object. This is not a foreign way of processes. I don't need to relearn anything. Right?

Yurii Lazaruk: How do you make it that way as a, as a manager, as a person who hires a freelancer, how do you make it that way that the freelancer, or like any independent talent, doesn't feel like if foreign an, uh, object?

Mina Bastawros: Um, I think it's about, that's, that's the role of the project manager [00:09:00] really to spend quality time explaining how the company works, the expectations, and be very, very clear on what the expectations are. And treat them nicely. You know, if you're very kind with this person who by the way is spending a lot of time to support you and, and if you treat them nicely with respect and make them understand what the bigger picture is gonna mean, like, I mean, this could be part of a car or an aircraft or this.

People get inspired by this and they're willing to do anything possible to make that success a reality. So I think by inspiring them. You will be inspired back and by inspiring the company of the results, they want more of that. So it's, it's, it's a two-way stream. Inspire the company and inspire the freelancer and both will be surprised and both will give you more.

Yurii Lazaruk: And you have to be the source of the inspiration. It looks like.

Mina Bastawros: I mean, not just myself, but I think what we've done, I mean, in my previous team, so as you said, I'm now in sales. I don't have a direct team anymore, but in my previous team in marketing, I taught them how to. Operate with freelancers, but I, we made it very clear that be [00:10:00] kind to freelancers, be genuinely excited about what they can come with and be curious and be advocates of this kind of work within the organization.

And, and they become, they became the, the exponential effect. Right, because I'm, I have enough time just to do a number of projects left and right. When they become dedicated to delivering their deliverables during freelancers where they cannot do things themselves 'cause just they don't have the bandwidth or the resources to be able to do so, it just, yeah, it was just very impressive to see what they, they came up with.

Yurii Lazaruk: So you know how to work with full-time experts and you know how to work with independent talent. So what is the main difference Why I'm asking? So there is this mindset that sometimes people who hire freelancers, they still expect them to do everything as full-time employees are doing. They still want to micromanage them.

So what, from managerial perspective, what are the main mindset shifts that companies have to make and people who works in companies have to make? To, um, work with freelancers [00:11:00] successfully.

Mina Bastawros: To me, it's, uh, it's about understanding the kind of deliverables that you're gonna get from, like you, you call it contingent worker or independent worker.

Those individuals are most likely gonna be people that you work with on site, right? Um, and. They're temporary workers and they're here for 3, 4, 5, 6 months, whatever, right? Those individuals are really integrated as part of your team, onsite, part of your team, and you understand that deliverables is not just a question of you gimme something, I just crunched the numbers and return it back to you.

But they could be leading a project as well. They can be leading some stuff. So their efficiency is not necessarily linked to the efficiency of. Uh, a deliverable, best deficiency of the ecosystem that sat in. If you take a freelancer, at least the way we operated with them in Airbus on the outside Airbus, they are focused on deliverables.

Yurii Lazaruk: Hmm.

Mina Bastawros: Like I want to render whether that render is done in five minutes or in 10 hours. We set the deadline. We agree a price. They deliver, maybe they've done it in half an hour, the, the most talented individual in the world, and they've done it in half an hour. Good on [00:12:00] you. Go and get more business for yourself, right?

But what we've agreed was delivered and then they move on to something else. But the talent, the relationship with the talent is different. You see, one is really focused on short term deliverables and goodbye. The other one is there because there's a timeframe and you're gonna see them every day. 'cause the project requires 'em to be there every day.

Yurii Lazaruk: Am I hearing correctly that when you hire an independent person, you have some kind of a budget in mind and basically for you, uh, if you have, let's say one week timeline, it doesn't really matter if you hire someone who says that, uh, it'll be done in 10 hours, but for example, the hourly rate is 100 euros.

Or if someone will tell us they will do it in five hours, but the hourly rate is 200 euros. So you still have the budget, the two ways.

Mina Bastawros: Um. Yeah, sorry. There are two ways of looking at it. The first way is project based. Um, and the second way is looking at it and, and that entails hourly based, right? So you bill by the hour.

The second way is through a final deliverable and they set a price against it. [00:13:00] So I'll give you an example. You say app development. Uh, people bid for that app and they say we can develop the app of 5K Hypothetical. Okay? Numbers pluck that of thin air. Um, that is an agreed price, right? Uh. And in another scenario, you can simply say, look, we want an app and we're willing to pay 50 euros an hour or a hundred euros an hour.

Um, but the maximum will be this amount. Okay? And the deadlines are this. Um, then they will say, some people can say, okay, you know what? I'm gonna crunch through those hours, get it done in two weeks for you. 'cause I wanna get paid very, very quickly. Or the other one will say, oh look, I'm happy to, you know, to greet a project.

Now he decides to subcontract that out to other freelancers of his or hers. That's their choice. Right. But it, they're sort of similar, but one doesn't really care how many hours you put behind it.

Yurii Lazaruk: Mm-hmm.

Mina Bastawros: The other one does, I personally prefer, and that's my personal preference, is the project based capped price.

So we say we agreed it's gonna be 5K, you're an amazing guy. I'm looking at a price in the [00:14:00] market. This is what I think it's gonna cost. Then you can negotiate and say, look, we think maybe, um. We, we didn't price this fairly. You should be, we think maybe it's, you're right, it's 500 euros more. We'll rechange the price, it's 5.5, it's fine.

And if they deliver it because they're so, so good in, in one day, I'm happier with that because then it allows me to be faster, right? However, project based means that if you're doing it that way and the quality isn't very high. We are gonna have a different conversation because it needs to be fair on both sides.

I paid you what you asked for and what we agreed upon, but I'm expecting quality and return if it's, if I ask for a cake and then inside you haven't even baked it properly, it's gonna be not great. Right? So it's a, it's about having that very trustful and honest relationship, and that's why I prefer the set capped fee price, because then.

They can do multiple projects at the same time. They can do whatever they want, and I don't have visibility of that. I'm just focused on quality deliverables in a timescale.

Yurii Lazaruk: If you have a deadline, let's say for a project one, okay, [00:15:00] let's go for two months, and um, you care just about deliverables. Like the worst case scenario, if Freelancer is not delivering, you will just spend two months and then you have to hire another person.

So I'm curious, during this timeline, how do you track updates on the project?

Mina Bastawros: Milestones.

Yurii Lazaruk: Mm-hmm.

Mina Bastawros: So you, for example, again, this project with the capped price, I would, what I would end up doing is say I would release 10% once we reach this, when we reach this phase 15% when we reach this, another 15 when we reach this, you know?

So gradually putting together some milestones so that you could see how the project has been tracked. Very quickly. That allows you to see if the project is going somewhere or not, and it allows you to protect the business because sometimes I've had it, someone just, I'm the best videographer out there.

I can edit videos, et cetera. The video was garbage,

Yurii Lazaruk: right?

Mina Bastawros: Mm-hmm. But what that did, it wasted my time. And the person who studied expected to be paid. You can see that the person spent only half an hour on this, rushed it because he wanted as many gigs as possible. Now, this is not healthy and it wastes my [00:16:00] time, and it, it jeopardizes the trust of the system internal to the company and a company like Abus or.

You name it doesn't wanna have to deal with headaches. The reason why we're employing with this is because we wanna accelerate things. We wanna do things better, not to have to fix a headache. So I think that's a, that's allowing you to very, very quickly to realize, mm-hmm this is not going well. And then you pull the plug, you say, look, I'm gonna still compensate you for the deliverable that you've delivered, but the project is not gonna go forward.

And you've saved maybe 90% of the cost.

Yurii Lazaruk: This episode of the Independent Workforce is brought to you by Freelancer Map the Home of Freelancing. Whether you are looking to hire top freelance talent fast, or a freelancer ready to find your next big project, freelancer Map connects the right people with the right work.

No endless job boards. No guesswork. Just direct access to verified experts and opportunities across the globe. Visit [freelancer map.com](https://freelancermap.com) and start building your next success story today. Tell me a real story when something [00:17:00] went wrong with the freelancer you hired and what did you do back then?

Mina Bastawros: Um, there was, um, a video that we were asking, which is what I mentioned earlier.

There was a video that we were working on with a freelancer. Um. We had explained the brief of what we wanted and we made it very clear with the freelancer. We made it very clear the price was gonna be this amount, and based on the bidding that was happened across, he bid for this amount, we accepted the amount he was bidding for.

We didn't even negotiate. We said, well, comfortable to give you what you asked for. Um, and then he kept asking us questions for clarification and we responded. And then within. Literally a couple of hours. We received the first

draft and we said, yeah, no, this is not the quality and the the look and feel that we're asking.

I said, well, please, these are the branding guidelines. Follow these branding guidelines. Said, okay. Okay. Noted. Noted. And then came back and. Still nowhere near branding guidelines were completely messed up. Everything was just not okay. The quality was just not there. We, we said, okay, third time, and this is the last shot.

We are gonna give this, and then we're moving on. Said, look, please, just to clarify, these are the branding guidelines. [00:18:00] This is what you're expecting at this timing. This needs to happen at this time. It needs to happen. Please have a look again. And they were native English speaker. They went, did their own thing, still came back nowhere near what we wanted.

Branding guidelines. Completely broken, clearly did not even spend some time looking at this. They were just doing multiple of jobs at the same time and just hoping that they would get away with it, et cetera. So we said, look, we're not gonna proceed with this project. Uh, we appreciate that you spent a couple of days with the work.

We are, we will. You know, price 'em at this. Um, you see your hourly rate on, on your profile, we'll just compensate you just to call it the day. And, and that's, that's why we're leaving it. They didn't like that response. They wanted the full amount. They, I delivered the project. I said, look, evidence wise, you have it.

And the platform agreed with us, but it was very upsetting because we, we don't like the kind of. You know, bad relationships. Yeah. And the, the bitter taste that a relationship leaves. So we're hoping, you know, everybody's excited about this and, and the last thing you want is to be held back on a project because you wanna move quickly.

The whole purpose is we wanna move. So we've wa wasted a week. On someone who [00:19:00] really wasn't to the, to the right level. So lesson learned from that. The team we're asking always now for portfolio, we've seen some people steal portfolios of other people. So sometimes you need to be validating that. So one of the things we've requested to those platforms going forward is please give us a vetted community.

People that you have vetted that you know they're capable of delivering a level of quality. Just certain kind of. So someone that you're willing to refer, you know, put as a, or refer right. Someone that you're willing to really stick to.

When we started doing that, things really changed and quality improved quite a bit.

But there is a lot of people that just simply say, and especially in an era with ai, they just go and, and say, Google, you know, they AI logo, and they just give you any random stuff. That's not what we're asking for. We're not asking for AI here, we're asking for your. Talent, your capability and, and it's about respect and we are respecting your respect.

As Mark,

Yurii Lazaruk: how do you, like you, you told that you are working with platforms, and I remember when we had the conversation, uh, around [00:20:00] freelance unlocked, you told that, um, like big companies usually are not working with individuals, they're working through someone. And um, do you use any specific platforms, tools, or networks?

Like where do you search for those talents?

Mina Bastawros: Um, I usually work with the biggest ones, but also some of the smallest ones. Hmm. The reason why I do that, and I'm not supposed talking on, on behalf of Airbus here, I'm talking really on behalf of myself. Um, the, the big ones give you variety, um, and give you op options, right?

Um, so when you really, really are trying something generic, let's say design a poster, uh, go on to big ones. But if you're looking for aerodynamics study or you're looking for some, you're gonna go for the very niche engineering platforms. Mm. But they, they. Don't like being on the big platforms. They like to be a part of communities of Knowledge, but these individuals usually are sat in very, very small players, right?

These small platforms, and I prefer operating that way because they teach each other, they discuss between each other, they compete with each other, they wanna [00:21:00] further themselves and showcase. So it's like a thriving ecosystem, which allows them to improve, but also for us to benefit from. That collective growth.

So you have someone who's worked maybe on manufacturing, someone who's worked on engineering, someone and they teach each other, and as a result, you get something even better as a result.

Yurii Lazaruk: How do you find those niche platforms? So it's easy to find huge platforms, but how do you find those small communities?

Mina Bastawros: Um. Well, I'm lucky to be embedded part of, um, an ecosystem. Uh, it's a, it's called the open assembly ecosystem. And part of that open assembly, John WinDor is really a visionary. He has set all of this, and I hope you actually have him on, on your podcast as well. Um, but John is one of the most visionary individuals I've come across, and what he does is he brings all the different players on a call all the time.

And then because of these different calls, you see what everyone else is doing and then you say, Hmm, I wanna work with these guys. And then you just reach out to them. So really, I think this is the healthiest kind of environment because the platforms in that environment, they're not competing with each other.

They're there to [00:22:00] thrive altogether because there's a lot of work out there. There's no need to compete, there's no need to block. Right. And then I'm also very, very inspired by another individual called Steve Rader. Um, used to be an innovation leading this call, this whole program within nasa. The guy, another visionary.

I love him so much because of what he's been able to achieve, and I learn from him all the time, really. Um, he's now retired from nasa has been a way for, I think over a year now, but I'm still very much in touch with him and every single time I sit down with him, I, I just learn more and more about the different players and who he's interacting.

He's retired, but he's still very active and, and he's a real thought leader. Both of them are real thought leaders on, on this matter, so I hope you can get both of them on this podcast. You'll love it.

Yurii Lazaruk: I hope to. And it sounds like it's all about connections.

Mina Bastawros: It is. It is about the human touch. As much as we're trying to build connections with freelancers, we're building connections within the ecosystem ourselves.

'cause we have lots of work. We're working on behalf of the organizations that we work for, and we need to make the most outta the budgets that are given to us. So how do we do that? [00:23:00] Well, actually, we'd explore different ways of doing things. The Airbus way is maybe different to the VWA and the

BMW. Maybe they learn something that we can leverage and they can leverage from something that we've been deploying and and learn from.

Yurii Lazaruk: I feel like it's the best way, and it's something that I'm always talking to industry leaders and everyone who hires freelance was like, we are really not competing because if we are talking to each other, yes, on paper we are competing, but still we can always exchange experiences. We can grow the market, we can educate.

And clients, people who benefits finally from hiring freelancers and everyone will be happy. So like the more, the more people know that, the better the work is happening. And uh, yeah. So you told a little bit about, um, freelancers being inspired by the company, by like the bigger picture. And I also have like hundreds or dozens of conversations with, uh, different people and they tell that sometimes.

Internal teams are [00:24:00] boycotting, working with freelancers. They feel a little bit of pressure because they have some internal processes, and then some random person comes from the street and start to do something that. Not always aligned with what internal teams doing. So I'm curious, how do you deal with some internal stakeholders who are skeptical about working with freelancers?

Mina Bastawros: It's a very good question, and the best way to make this happen is not put this project in front of those people who will be skeptical, the areas of the business where people will be receptive to it. You put those projects in front of them. So I think freelancers will never be able to do this on their own there.

That's why they need. An internal advocate who knows the company very well. So if you get someone who's been in the company for a year, most likely they'll not be able to do this well. But someone who knows how the company works, knows who is someone that will be open-minded, who will be receptive, who would be excited about this, who's generally curious.

Those are the individuals you need to surround yourself and, and get them to be the customers of this project. And, and that's the only way for this to [00:25:00] take off. If you're gonna go to, uh, an a side of the business that are very, very close-minded, who are very hesitant to change because it's just something that we are not willing to open up and we're not gonna be touching this.

You're just wasting your time. You're wasting their time. ' cause it's just not gonna go anywhere.

Yurii Lazaruk: Now you just described the kind of people I would love to connect with. I would love to talk to, I would love to exchange experiences. So if you are this kind of person and listening to this conversation right now, please send me a message.

Let's have a conversation. Let's talk because we have so many things in, in the future together. And yeah, Mina, you are definitely one of those people. And I'm, I'm, I'm super, I'm super grateful that we are having these conversations with you right now. And I'm curious when you personally hire a freelancer.

What criteria or skills are non-negotiable for you that every freelancer just must have if they want to work with you?

Mina Bastawros: I think they need to have a good level of communication. 'cause uh, I mean, at the time when I was doing this, uh, we didn't have the automatic AI translation [00:26:00] features, which are now available, integrated in all the chats.

Right now it's a bit easier. But at the time when we were starting this really, like we had to understand each other, we had to understand each other because otherwise it gets very difficult and you lose a lot of money, a lot of time, just not being able to get things taken off. But also, I'm looking for someone who's genuinely passionate and excited, not because.

They, those who are not passionate or excited will do a bad job. I'm, I'm not saying that I'm, I'm saying it because I like the surprise factor. I like being surprised by what else they'll be able to do, and I actually always leave a close at the end. This is the kind of criteria that we set. However, if you think there's a better way of doing it, feel free to explore it.

And when they're asking us the stuff, they said, look, you asked me for this, however I think I'm gonna do it this way, if that's okay with you. And you say,

Yurii Lazaruk: Hmm,

Mina Bastawros: I like where this is going. How about we do also this? 'cause what it does, it triggering triggers a new something and and you're like, Hmm, we can take this even further.

Right. [00:27:00] And I find this very interesting because you are then. Not relying on what's in your head for that deliverable, but you're letting your imagination run wild. And I, and I always use this analogy of this team who

were looking how to remove oil from a potato crisp right from the, you know, chips. Um.

Uh, and, and, and these, these guys didn't wanna say that they were a particular crisps company because they were worried that people may then associate with the product with being unhealthy.

Yurii Lazaruk: Mm-hmm.

Mina Bastawros: And they came out and said, look, help us remove oil from wafer thin objects. And the company was fully anonymous.

A violinist was the one who came up with the, with the matching solution. And she came up by saying, if I match the natural frequency of oil. Then oil will start vibrating and as a result, I'm gonna be able to take that wafer 10 object and there's gonna be little residue of oil on it. And, and that was how she thought.

And it's because she understood natural frequency, because she's a musician. And I find that [00:28:00] incredibly inspiring because those individuals. Are the hidden nuggets that you wouldn't go for had you been in, in skill-based search? I'm looking for a chemistry engineer. I'm looking for someone who understand oil.

I, I'm, I'm looking for someone who just knows about food. Right? She doesn't, well, she, I hope she knows about food because she probably eats good food. But, you know, the, the, the reality is she, she looked at it from a different angle. And that different angle made this project very successful. And like these stories, we have hundreds of them, right?

We were not the ones behind this wake for thin one. Um, I wish we had been the ones, but, um, but yeah, it's, it's always very inspiring to see when you leave the door slightly open to the. Sometimes you get the best surprises.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, I talk to like hundreds of freelancers, um, during my professional journey and that's, that's one of the most beautiful things that I really love about freelancers that they call sheet sheet.

So if something doesn't work in a way that has to work, they will tell you. If they see that there is a better [00:29:00] way to do something, they will tell you and they're not afraid to hear no or to. To have this conversation because they are interested in delivering the best work. I mean, like of course the right people

who doesn't care about that, who are there to just to get money and do something.

But as you've said, usually nobody wants to work with this kind of experts. You might work a little bit, pay them for a few hours they've spent, and then, ah, sorry, we are not working with you. But like, if we're talking about great talents, they're really interested in. Go in this extra mile because that's exactly what will help them to build their brand.

That's exactly what will, um, empower, that will motivate you to come with them later with another project. Because if you love working with them, if they bring you extra value, why would you ever discover someone else? You will go to this person ever and ever and ever again

Mina Bastawros: to a certain degree. I agree with you, Yuri.

But also sometimes because you don't know [00:30:00] if that person is capable of delivering whatever project comes next. It's always healthy to have an open bit and say, everybody, look, I'm not just gonna go with the standard person I've always worked with because maybe there's someone else. Who can do it differently and, and you never go into the complacency mode.

Now that person may come up again. The person that you worked with in the past may come up with the best idea, the best solution for you, and by all means, they should be then awarded. And I find it sometimes risky to automatically award the right person. Because the beauty of the freelance economy and the gig economy is that it's so many different people.

And it's all about spreading the wealth, right? And all these people can do more and, and not just the same individuals that always get all the gigs. You know, I think it's healthy to to spread, spread it all around.

Yurii Lazaruk: So it's still like always open market. And you are still, it still helps you to find the best person?

I think so, yeah. So if you chose the best person, and usually freelancers onboarding is a little bit different as a full-time [00:31:00] employee onboarding. So I'm curious, how do you integrate freelancers with your internal team? Let's imagine that this freelancer is working with you for the first time. What do you do to help them get faster to work on the project?

Mina Bastawros: I don't introduce that freelancer to all the team. I introduce 'em to only the person that's working with them, but they don't face 150,000 employees. They face the one person working on this project and that's it. Um, they don't need to know that there is another 30, 40 people in that team. They don't need to know.

It doesn't really add any value. And because their relationship is remote, they just get involved when they're needed to get involved for that specific project. There's no point in you getting a freelancer to sit down, um, on a project where you're talking about the cabin, about an aircraft or a car when actually hire them for an engine.

Right. What, what's the point? You're wasting their time. They're not adding any value to this conversation. And then, as we said earlier, in the, in the, in the podcast, what we said is it's about breaking the project in multiple pieces. So they'll get involved only in that specific [00:32:00] piece. Someone else won't get involved.

And you, as an internal project manager, you bring the right people around the table when you need them. Um, and that's the best way to integrate. So they're focused on one thing and then onto the other thing. And then onto the other thing.

Yurii Lazaruk: And when you onboard them, you still have to give them some access to specific systems or to some, sometimes maybe internal documents.

How do you do that?

Mina Bastawros: We don't actually, Hmm. We share with them, uh, a copy of the, of the brief. Um, so usually they have their own software, they have their own capability. We say, look, code it in this. In this, uh, type of language, it'll be compatible with the type of software, blah, blah, blah. And then they will just send it to us via the platform.

We never operate outside these platforms. It, it's always through the platform as an intermediary.

Yurii Lazaruk: So to be safe.

Mina Bastawros: Um, it's not a question of just safety, it's a question of agility. Mm-hmm. Because for, for me to pay an individual, and let's say I want to pay you Eure, we work together. There's no way I can pay you as a company.

It's just too complicated. Okay? But I need to put you through the procurement systems. [00:33:00] I need to purchase order. It's just too complicated. But then when I onboard a platform and the platform has 30 million people on it, right? The, I've onboarded the platform once automatically. I can work with 13 million people you see, and the payment is done to the platform.

The platform pays the individual. You see, but I'm speaking to the individual directly through the platform.

Yurii Lazaruk: It's the beauty of a platform that it takes care of Everson, but also like there is another side that if you are given there a really interesting project, you can receive like hundreds of applications in one day.

How do you deal with such an amount of application? Whom do you choose?

Mina Bastawros: Um, that's a very, very good question and one of the biggest pain points that we had. Um, a lot of people just apply for the sake of applying. They post half baked cakes. Um, so that was really, really time consuming, to be honest in the beginning, like, ah, this is just taking me ages to start working with on a project.

Um, so often now what we have is a dedicated project manager within the platform. That removes all of the things that don't meet the the objectives. Now, I know a lot of [00:34:00] platforms are working on AI agents that fix that, so it's a lot more cost effective now for companies because the AI agent then says, out of all the different things, this one met 90% of what you asked for.

This one met 50%. I mean, there's no need for you even to look beyond the 90%, right. I even if they don't meet a hundred percent, do you still wanna engage? Yeah, it's okay. The met 90% are what they ask for. I think they'll be able to do the job. It, it removes the, the time wasted upfront. Um, and, uh, it, it, it empowers you to go much faster.

Okay.

Yurii Lazaruk: I, I had this conversation and usually I ask about how AI impacts your hiring process and what I hear that yes, it helps, but there is always, but AI wants to please you and sometimes it'll tell you something that you want to hear, not the reality. And also, free answers are not stupid too. They know how to adjust their applications, their series, so the AI agents will choose them instead of others.

So, so it, it's not a problem. So I'm curious. How big a part of [00:35:00] human interaction, so let's imagine you have 100 applications, 90% of them were removed by ai. So we have still 10 applications. What do you do next? Do you talk to each of these 10 people or do you have some another step to choose, like let's say two or three people?

Mina Bastawros: Um. Um, that's a valid point. I mean, I would say, yeah, I mean, it, it filters it down potentially maybe to, as you said, 10 individuals and then you can go through the 10 individuals. And honestly, a certain point I had thousands of submissions and it's just, it's not feasible. It's just not feasible. And, and then once you go through the 10 applications, you will find the person that, as you said over.

Sold themselves. When you start speaking to them, you will realize, like the guy that we're talking about, the video, right? He oversold himself as the best videographer in the world, video editor in the world. And when you start very quickly, you don't rea, you realize it's not the case. But luckily you quoted up early and now with AI I think it filters it even further.

'cause you. You can just very quickly see from the reviews they've had and all that [00:36:00] stuff and, and, and you can really, really quickly come to it. Since AI agents have start, I haven't had a bad experience to be honest. Hmm. And actually, very funny also, I wanna talk about something else, which I think is very, it's the future of this because, um, one of my friends he's setting up.

A digital twin. Hmm. Digital twin technology. And I think, you know, for your listeners, they should definitely look it up. It's called Neo, um, and Nouri. Uh, Dimitri Lopez, one of the most visionary individuals I've come across. He's done similar story to what we've done in Abu, but he's done it for Microsoft, and he decided to clone himself with a digital twin for two things.

First of all, for the companies. For the project manager, for the CEOs or the people that don't have time effectively to be in every single meeting. So he digitally cloned himself so that he can be in all possible meetings at the same time. But also for the freelancers. ' cause when the freelancers are sleeping, they can start shoring up and doing the generic questions.

Um, based on their knowledge and the beauty of this tool that he's developed, which again, I think you should speak to this guy, uh, based on the [00:37:00] tools that he's developed, he came up with the way that it's not generic. Open AI or chat, GPT positive response. If you're asking it how to make oranges, and

he's not loaded into his profile that he can make oranges, his ai, his digital channel will say, I'm not capable of doing it.

Hmm. And at the end of the week, he reviews all the different questions that were made to him, and then he says, oh wow. I. I get asked a lot of these questions, but I'm not capable of doing this. Maybe I should learn how to do it because there's a clear demand on this or a A, or I should teach my digital twin that if I actually know how to make eggs, I should be telling that I know how to make eggs and this is the process to make eggs so that when the next time this question is comes, I can respond to that question effectively.

So. It's, it's very interesting and what he is doing is putting behind a, a blockchain technology so that when someone really uploads that they can make eggs. It's verified. Mm. And I, I, I'm not gonna go and say I'm a finance guru when I have no experience of finance and then try to get gigs for finance.

No, he's really democratizing knowledge and through the digital twin technology, everybody can start making money even when they're not online or available. [00:38:00] It's very fascinating and I do believe. His product near Essentia will have a big role to play in the future, how freelancers work, because then they're not just sat down trying to bid for everything for the sake of bidding.

Their twin will be looking for the gigs where they can maximize their profit, where they will be a good fit with the manager, where they can actually start responding to the conversation and seeing if the manager thinks they're a good fit or not. And if not, it'll go into the next opportunity. And I think that's super, super cool.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, like going even a step forward. I can imagine one person managing like the team of digital twins and they can even like work on 100 projects simultaneously because usually it's rather the same things in different projects. And you don't always have to be there. Who knows, who knows,

Mina Bastawros: who knows, who knows.

But um, very fascinating, very fascinating times in which we live.

Yurii Lazaruk: Did you try digital twin yourself?

Mina Bastawros: I don't have my digital twin, but I've been using his digital twin. I mean, um, I wanted to, to talk to him about something, but he was on holiday because his wife had said to him, you're not allowed to get on your phone because actually we need to spend some quality time together.

So I was on Microsoft Teams [00:39:00] and I just said At New Bot, and I just started speaking to him and, and, and then we hopped on a call and then there was just. Literally, it was his voice, but it's his twin and we were just having a conversation he was answering to me. It's just so crazy the times we live in.

It

Yurii Lazaruk: reminded me of some, uh, black Mirror episodes, but yeah, hope, hope it'll be for the good. Uh, it, it is,

Mina Bastawros: I do believe it's for the good. Honestly, sometimes when I was asking a question, just I'm not capable of, and he's designed it in such way that it's, it's very compliant, very ethical. Even if you try to.

Push the certain questions to it, it wouldn't, it wouldn't entertain it because it, he, he's really put some strict guardrails around what it can and can't do. As I said, yeah, I black mirror is, is a distant, distant reality, but I hope, um, I hope this more ethical one will, will take off.

Yurii Lazaruk: Okay. I, I'm definitely adding in a, uh, finding out the digital twin on my wishlist.

So, um, I'll definitely talk to them. So, um, and you know, Mina, I really wish to have the sky as a limit, but time is limit to our conversation. So [00:40:00] the final question, what advice would you give to a company considering hiring freelancer for the first time?

Mina Bastawros: Um. Be open-minded and be curious. Um, be open-minded because doing it in internally isn't always the right way.

Maybe it is, but you never know. There could be that 1% where you'll be very, very surprised that there's another way of looking at that problem. The second thing, be curious. I'd be curious because when you're, when you have that excitement about looking at the, at the problem from a different perspective, you can be very, very surprised by different ways of doing things.

And the third thing I would highly recommend is be kind. Be kind with the people that you work with, because when you're kind to them, they'll be kind back to you. And, and this economy thrives through kindness, through honesty. And it requires us to be a united front for this, for this wealth, as we said earlier, to be shared.

Um, you're not doing it for charity and there freelancers are not, they don't want your money for charity. They're doing it because they're very passionate of what they do you have [00:41:00] cool products? You have cool challenges. Give them the opportunity through an open mind, be curious about their results, but also be kind to them.

Yurii Lazaruk: Last but not least, you already named so many people. Still name just two people I should reach out to to talk about the independent workforce.

Mina Bastawros: I think I'm gonna repeat those two names to you again, John WinDor, Steve Reda, but a third person, Nuri Deci Lopez,

Yurii Lazaruk: basically everyone who you mentioned. So it's hard.

And what is the best way to connect with you?

Mina Bastawros: To me, you can find me on LinkedIn. Um, I might not be responding very, very quickly to you, but I promise I'll try to read the messages. Um, don't try to sell me anything because I'm not gonna be able to buy your products on behalf of the company I work for.

But if you're genuinely interested in knowing about freelancing or uh, curious about this economy, I'm more than happy to hop on a call.

Yurii Lazaruk: And it feels like very, very soon when you will have your own digital twin, you can answer so much faster. So who knows? Absolutely. And you know Mina, like the first time I've met you during our Freelance Unlocked pre-conference podcast, I learned [00:42:00] so many things from you.

And today you gave me even more food for thoughts and, uh. You sound like very curious and open-minded person and it's no wonder that you are telling people to be open-minded, curious, because I totally feel this energy from you and um, I really love that Cez are such people as you are in the world who are open to try things, who are open to work with different people who are, who know that there is more than one way to be right.

And who are basically with what you're doing moving this freelance economy forward. So thank you very much for that

Mina Bastawros: math. Thank you for having me, Yuri. Always a pleasure to, to be speaking to you. As I said, I, I love how inspired you are and inspiring you are. Uh, you push boundaries and, and you're trying very hard to get this economy to flourish.

So keep doing what you do. Uh, I'm sure. This, uh, this industry is gonna, is gonna take off. And good luck with everything that you're working on.

Yurii Lazaruk: Thank you very much. Will do. And yeah, see you in the freelance world. And for listeners, thank you for joining us on this episode of The Independent Workforce. I hope you've [00:43:00] taken one step closer to working smarter with freelance talent.

If you enjoy this conversation, subscribe to, learn even more, and share it with your colleague. And remember, the future of work is now.