

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'll 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 Freelance Map and International Platforms, has been connected, top independent professionals with companies for over 20 years. And my guest is John WinDor, one of the world's leading voices shaping the future of work and executive fellow at Harvard Business Digital Design and Data Institute.

The founder and chairman of Open Assembly and the author of Open Talent, a landmark book on how companies can tap into global freelance expertise to solve their biggest challenge, and the person that I've heard about from so many previous guests and someone I can't wait to talk to. So, [00:01:00] welcome John. Hey.

Thanks Yuri. Thanks. It's great to be here. Just before the recording, you told me that you've been in this like independent talent market for I don't know how many years. I cannot even pronounce it amount of years because it's like more than I'm alive and I'm curious. Like, how did you start, what made you jump into this, let's call it freelance world?

John Winsor: Yeah, I mean, I, you know, I started because I bought a publishing company. Oh. I, I owned a publishing company and I bought a bigger magazine called Women's Sports and Fitness, and at the time, women's Sports and Fitness. This was in 1985. Um, so a long time ago. But at the time, uh, one of the issues was they had 40 people in their editorial department, editors and writers.

And I, I just thought it was odd. You know, I thought it was odd that you would have a, a writer from New York that would say, come to Boulder where I live, Boulder, Colorado, and interview a friend of mine, say Lynn Hill, who's a really amazing rock climber. And then, you know, maybe the rider doesn't really know much about rock climbing.

So they would do an article about rock climbing [00:02:00] for women's sports and fitness. But it wasn't very authentic because they just didn't know. And so I, I kind of flipped the paradigm. I just asked the really silly question. I was like,

why can't we let Lynn write her own story and be really authentic and then we'll hire an editor to actually do the editing for her story?

Um, and that worked really, really well. You know, and so that kind of started on my journey that, you know, it was an imperative I think from my, uh. For me, because I was just a, you know, small entrepreneur and I needed new ways to work with people and I wanted to empower people to really tell their authentic story.

Yurii Lazaruk: Can you guide me a little bit? From 1985, maybe like for five, 10 years, how did you see this independent market was Chenin?

John Winsor: Yeah, so I, I got really into the idea of co-creation. I mean, before there was crowdsourcing, there was co-creation, and the idea of co-creation was. That. And what we saw over and over again is that if you take kind of early adopters, there's a, you know, there's a really great book from the 1950s actually called, uh, diffusions of Innovation.

[00:03:00] And, uh, Malcolm Gladwell kind of base this tipping theory, you know, tipping a point book on that as well. And the idea is that there are, you know, innovators and early adopters, and then kind of Jeffrey Moore, who's another writer, talked about crossing the chasm into kind of the majority of people. And we found that we could be predictive if we worked with early adoptive consumers for brands.

Um, so we did that with our readers. We thought, thought of our readers as early adopters. And when I sold that company to Conde Nast, I really got into the idea. I wrote a couple books on co-creation and really got into the idea of let's find those early adoptive consumers in different areas. And it's not always the same, right?

Some people think about like, oh, that person's like an innovator. Well, I, I would suggest that it, like, if you're in a neighborhood, right, it's probably a grandma in the neighborhood that's like the very best, the innovator in getting stains outta some kind of clothing. And so, you know, we have all these.

Parts of our lives. Sometimes we're like early adopters and innovators, and other times we're total laggards. Like I, you know, there are a lot of things in my life that I, that I [00:04:00] like, you know, living in a big city, I'm a total laggard. I would never, I would never do that. I wouldn't know how to do it. Um, so, so that was the work, right?

And I started our research and strategy company, and it did, we were really successful, worked with, uh, Nike and Levi's and Intel and HP and a bunch of other folks. And, um. And then I, I kind of met a guy, I was selling the company to WPP outta London, and, uh, I met a guy named Alex Bogusky, who was a, had a small creative agency in Boulder.

Uh, he had just moved to Boulder from Miami. And we were, you know, really passionate about the same kind of things. He rode mountain bikes and so did I. And so we started riffing about putting our companies together, and we took the ideas that I had built in my books and in the research that I did, and really focused on.

How do we co-create with our cu our customers are the brands that we worked with, whether it was Microsoft or Miller Brewing, or Domino's, or um, Volkswagen. And that worked really, really well. We went from a hundred of us to 1200 of us in two [00:05:00] years, putting co-creation at the center of the strategy, and then created this momentum, um, and became creative agency of the decade.

Um, which was amazing, right? It was just this high growth. But one of the real frustrations that we had was that we had 1200 people working for us, and all the while we had a 60% turnover in the creative department. And that was super frustrating. Mm-hmm. And we won some new business and we didn't have enough creatives to do the business that was, uh, Bramo, which was a electric motorcycle company.

And so we thought to ourselves, wow, why don't we just. You know, crowdsource some creative ideas. This is back in 2008, 2009, and it was amazing. Like all the people we want to hire, you know, to move to Boulder who couldn't come, let's just say there was a great creative that, um, a woman in London who was married to an investment banker, she just couldn't afford to move to Boulder.

Likewise, there might be a young surfer from Sydney. And he just wouldn't move, you know, to Boulder. He, he just needed to be closer to the ocean. Um, but you know, if we created that work or we offered up that work on a digital [00:06:00] platform, they could do the work from wherever they were. And so worked really, really well.

And the thing that I thought that was really cool, but what I really loved about it is it really pissed off all the other agencies in the world. They were really

pissed. 'cause we were just, as you know, we just won this award from the most creative agency, having the most creative people. And we were essentially.

Kind of flaunting that and saying like, we're not the most creative. There are a lot of other people in the world that are really creative and you, you gotta do that. And so that worked really well. And then, uh, I launched a company called Victors and Spoils, which was an ad agency based on crowdsourcing principles and went on quite a, a, a really radical ride on the power of using independent talent around the world.

It just proved the idea that, you know, there's brilliance everywhere and there's, you know, brilliance is abundant and opportunities are scarce, and we just offered a platform that allowed for that, you know, the opportunities to people from all over the world. And the thing that turned me on so much was that.

You know, there would be a single mom in Cyprus that was an amazing graphic designer that could, you know, [00:07:00] slay any New York, you know, ad agency, graphic designer, and she, she would do great work for us. Or, the thing that impressed me most and the story I love to tell is we, a couple years in, we won the global business for Harley Davidson.

And when we did that. Um, it was a kind of a crazy story in and of itself, but what, what we loved about it, what I loved about it is a guy, Whitt Hiller, who was from Lexington, Kentucky, kind of a small town in the Midwest of the us. He tried to get a job with agencies in New York and LA and London, and he never even had the courtesy of, of having his emails returned.

And yet he came to our platform and he weighed, he, he, he, he did the brand anthem for Harley Davidson and he won \$150,000. The first year working for us, and two years later he, he was called by the press, by a magazine called Adweek as one of the top 10 creatives in the world. And so I love this, right?

The idea that there's somebody out there that's really amazing and they just don't have the, the opportunity to apply themselves. And so that really blew up the whole [00:08:00] ad market. And I think you can see. Dive vestiges of victors and spoils. We were the seeds of the revolution that, you know, now most a agencies use lots of freelancers to do the work that they do.

Um, I ended up selling that company to Havas outta Paris and became Chief Innovation Officer at par in of Havas. And I tried really hard to change, uh, Hava. To be able to work with more independent people, but they just weren't into it. You know, they thought of themselves mm-hmm. As the world's best.

And there's so much ego and arrogance in a lot of these big companies that they're not willing to really, you know, share in the, in the work, you know?

And I think that's, I, that's been my lifelong mission to try to break that, that trend. So.

Yurii Lazaruk: How does it work for you?

John Winsor: The what, what portion of it? How does what work? Like the,

Yurii Lazaruk: your, your mission, like how, how does it work for you right now?

John Winsor: Well, so I've gone from like being, you know, in the trenches of building companies, which I loved, right? It was super fun. Um, then I, after Havas, I, I joined, joined Harvard and helped with the [00:09:00] Laboratory for Innovation Sciences that we built all this stuff for nasa, right?

So, so Jeff Davis and, and Steve Rader. Um. Came to us and we helped build the Center of Excellence and, and the NASA tournament Lab and really launched it and just saw scientifically that this is a future of work. That, that, you know, projects are gonna be task ified. I think, you know, in, in the context of the work that we do now.

So I, I've gone from, you know, Lish, which is one of our laboratories to dq, which is Digital Data and Design Institute, which we now, we have 14 labs kind of studying the future of work and especially the effects of ai. But I think in this age of ai, you know, what we're seeing is AI is a further democratization of tools for the future of work.

And so, you know, you give a good coder anywhere in the world, the power of a an LLM that is, is that they can code with and they can pretty much do anything, especially if they have a, a bit of brilliance and they can teach themselves really quick, quickly. And so we're [00:10:00] really trying to study that and see what the effects of that.

But I think what, what's, what's happening? You know, just like COVID, like you said in the intro, COVID was such a huge, uh, accelerant to remote work and to this kind of stuff, and I think you're gonna see AI doing the same thing because I think. That, you know, the idea of jobs is going away and, and the ideas of like, companies need outcomes and the best way to get to those

outcomes is to task, justify that work and to apply the best humans to get that work done.

And it could be for a day, for an hour, for a month, or for full time. But that ability of kind of unbundling the tasks from the jobs and really focusing on outcomes means that you don't need people to be hired full-time to do things. You need to be focused on what the outcome you need to, you need to achieve.

So that's, that's been my focus and, and now I'm just spending my time writing books and writing and giving speeches and, you know, having a good time. You know, I've, I've done this for so long and, [00:11:00] and, and it, my heart, I'm really a dirt bag climber and surfer. And so I've had a house in Mexico. Go a long time.

Actually, I'm, I'm taking off on Sunday to go back down there and, uh, because there's gonna be a swell coming in. And so those are my priorities, and I'd rather be kind of on the surfboard or, or, you know, on the rock somewhere climbing. And, uh, so, you know, in this phase of my life, it's like, it's perfect, right?

I am a, I am a freelancer, you know, I, I freelance and give speeches. I freelance to write articles, um, and, you know. Try to create the space that I, I want for my life. And that's what I've always loved about this idea of a freelancer, what I would even call like the, the, this new age of micro entrepreneur that we all have to learn the skills of what it means to be an entrepreneur.

And you know, we have to hustle for the work, but we also have the free time to do what we really wanna do as well.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, I feel like you're already live in this future of work, so it's not like now of work already. Future of work. And once again, you know, 95% of people I talk to, they still stuck, let's call it in the past of work because they, I know, still see [00:12:00] that the only one way to work is like having purple full time.

Even they're coming back from like being hybrid. They're coming back asking everyone to sit in the offices and then people are doing this. Jobs that they can do like so much faster. Even like for me, myself, I'm freelancers, so I'm, I'm imagining I'm saving at least two hours commuting daily. So in these two hours I can do, first of all a lot of job or I can go work in a park and work on my mental health or just put my kid to school or whatever.

And once again, so how to encourage these people who are living in the past of work, like how to. Help them see this future work? Like what arguments do you usually use when you talk to such people?

John Winsor: Well, so I would say, you know, that I, I don't know if we'll be able to convince the, the current, you know, the current hi historical clients.

I think that, I mean, I've always had this question, right? Can companies from the past make it to the [00:13:00] future? And, and I don't know if that's possible. You know, I, I think if you're built in the past, like, just like if you were a buggy whip company, you know, or, or a, or a, you know, horse cart company back in.

In, in those days and cars came along, you're kind of, if you don't reinvent yourself, you're kind of toast. And I think we're in that age right now. Like if companies don't reinvent themselves in a massive way, then they're gonna be toast and, and the great thing about. The way that you know, work is going is things are, speed is a strategic advantage.

You can't take six months to hire somebody and have them do something. You need the work done tomorrow, right? You've gotta get it out. And so freelance, just people that you can aggregate that are passionate about the work, that are trained, that are ready to go, um, that want that, that are really wanna do the work tomorrow or today.

It's, it is really the future. Yeah. I, I totally, um, you know, sympathize with you on, or at least agree with you on, on this idea that it's something that's been around for a long time and I, I found it so curious. Right. Because one of the [00:14:00] stories I love to tell is in 2001 I was in, I was in, um. Mexico and I was trying to figure out how to, I, you know, I had a company, but I was writing a book and I was trying to figure out how to communicate in my, our little town.

We didn't have any, uh, connection. We had like a four or five public phones, but there weren't any private phones and there was no internet connection. And a buddy of mine, Brian, had drove, driven down from Canada with, with, uh, about six big, you know, Canadian satellite dishes, um, from Hughes. And so I bought a satellite dish from him for, I think it was like 1500 bucks in 2001.

And then we actually poured cement on my roof and figured out how to attach the, the, the, the satellite dish, went to the payphones and called and lied to the, the Canadian arm of Hughes Internet, a hugs internet or huge satellites, and told

them we were in Northern Ontario, which is a province in northern, in northern Canada.

Got the codes and we were set up. And so in 2001, I had this. You know, horribly slow internet connection, but it [00:15:00] was awesome, right? I could work, I could surf all day and work at night and do whatever I wanted to do. And it was really liberating. And so when people talk about the brilliance of remote work, it's, it's just so funny to me 'cause it's, it, it was possible a long time ago, but just the tools were really hard to work with, right?

And, and it was just really slow. And so. I think what we're seeing is the tools becoming much, much more adaptive, and I think AI is gonna do that even more, give us the ability to train really quickly to get the work done. My sense is, is that things are gonna go away from being time-based and being more result-based and outcome-based and, and so this continues to push to an, a new way of organizing things.

So what I, I guess maybe I'm just getting too old, but. Uh, I, you know, and, and I'm impatient and it's like, ah, you know, I can't convince people to do this in a different way. There's so much I find what interesting, right? Is like, is companies, uh. To have this natural cycle and there's just this real big fear when they, when they're mostly successful companies, [00:16:00] that when they have something figured out and they do it in a certain way, they really focus on protecting that and they're not willing to change.

And it's like, well, change is gonna happen whether you like it or not. Right. I love that quote from, I think it was. Some US military guy had said, you know, if you don't like change, you'd like irrelevance even more. And I think a lot of companies are faced with that, right? All of a sudden you see these kind of AI born companies that, you know, um, the, the, the vision of a one person billion dollar company.

I think it's real. I think it's ability for one freelancer to be able to set up a company and, and really rock the world and change the world in a positive way.

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. Now guesswork. Just direct access to verified experts and opportunities across the globe. Visit freelancer [00:17:00] map.com and

start building your next success story today. You know, I feel like companies nowadays feel more about ai. They are more interested in like using technologies and ai, and we see a lot of layoffs here and there, like everywhere.

They're laying off full-time people and they're kind of hiring technologists, let's call them, but. How, why should they care about hiring independent talents? So you talked a little bit about the speed, about accessing like the best talents, but they will tell, no, we have ai, we don't need it. We have ai, we have speed.

We we access the best talents just by using ai. So why should they care about working with freelancers?

John Winsor: Yeah. Well, I mean, I just think you, you know, like you described it earlier, I think that when you are, there's a couple reasons I think there's a bunch of stuff, but I think that, you know, when companies set themselves up, they, they have a task to get done.

And so strategically, you know, when it's a big company that not everybody understands the Thera strategy and the, and the, and the need to change. So they try [00:18:00] to really exploit the opportunity. And so there's no time for somebody at a mid-level to do things in a new way. They're told what to do and they do it.

Um, you know, when you, if you're a, a freelancer, a micro entrepreneur, if you're going to be relevant, you gotta be learning all the time. And I think that's one of the key, you know, successes of freelancers is this site motivation to be a learner and to be focused on the future. And so those. People, you know, freelancers become much, much more attractive to companies because they are learning, they're, they're figuring out what's happening.

They're trying new things. They're, they're pushing the limits. I think the thing that's been broken is assessment. So I would say my latest thinking is that, you know, I, for some reason, and I mean it's just, it's just a mental shift, but I think that the. That the way that we've thought about work is that the talent, the human is the atomic unit of work, right?

Like that's the, the smallest level. And I think that's wrong in the age of ai. I think it's actually assessment. [00:19:00] Assessment is the atomic unit. And what I mean by that is I think assessment needs to change so that it's real time. So that we understand, or, or, or you as a, you know, freelance designer or software engineer, understand, you know, where, where do I, where do I stack,

like how, how am I doing compared to other people comparing to the projects I did, like how successful am I?

And then building technology to, you know, AI agent coaches to help you. You know, you've got partners that are teaching you new skills every day so that you know, a client can come to a platform or directly to you. And look at a score and look at your latest assessment that happened today, real time and say, wow, Yuri's up to speed on these things.

And he ranks, you know, he's worth hiring, right? So I think one of the things that that happens. And the reason that employment went the way it did is that it was a lack of trust. It was a way to create trust in a system. It's like one way to create trust in a system for large [00:20:00] companies is to create controls, right?

I'm gonna demand that you come to the office at a certain time and you do this certain thing and I have these policies and I'm gonna control your behavior to make sure that I get the outcome that you, that I want. And I just think that's an archaic way to do it. You know, the trust needs to be built into new things that allows for companies to go faster.

How do we have a mechanism instead of this long process of hiring, of, you know, trying to identify right. And then resonate, then interviews. What, what we, we should care about is like, what's the unit of work? Like, what do we need to try to get done? Who's the best talent that can do that? Is it gonna take an hour or a day or a week or a month?

Like, and then let's figure out a way to get the work done. Let's focus on the work instead of focusing on some kind of archaic structure that tries to bake in, you know, control into the system, to to be a proxy for, for trust.

Yurii Lazaruk: I feel like many companies are still focusing on titles, not on the work because they're not hiring someone to solve the challenge or solve [00:21:00] the task to create a project, but they hire specific title that is lack in their structure, and as you've said.

If we're talking especially about like corporates, like huge corporates, there is a lack of responsibility. Someone is responsible and kind of like protecting their small piece of work and no one wants to like see the bigger picture. And I'm curious like from your perspective, like you are working with different companies with many leaders who has to be responsible inside the company for this change?

John Winsor: Yeah, I mean, I think it starts with the CEO, right? I think the CEO has to have a mandate that they're, that they're, that they wanna see change. And I don't think it's like, you can't be just, you know, like you can't just say the words, you gotta actually change. Like, like, like I heard this thing lately that I just love the paradigm.

It's like, yeah, no CO is going to adopt. You know, ai, a large company, CEO, because they have AI already, it's called an executive assistant. They just say, Hey, instead of typing a prompt into a computer, they just talk to their executive assistant and saying, here's the things I need to [00:22:00] get done. And so they're not, they don't understand the power of LLMs.

It's really hard. So I think the recommendation is, is that the top leaders need to adapt to this new world, right? It's not an adoption, it's, it's actually an adaptation. Like this is a species. You know, like level adaptation we need to go through. And those are really rugged because they have, they mean that systems, you know, need to change.

And so I think it starts with the CEO. It means usually that, you know, what we've always advocated for is setting up some kind of center of excellence so that you have a learning function inside the organization to keep up with the latest, you know, ideas and be able to apply those ideas in experimentally against some of the things that you're working on individually.

And so I. And then also just allow people to play with it and experiment and break things. I, I find it so fascinating, you know, that, uh, in my life, right, as an entrepreneur, as a surfer, as a, as a climber, you know, it's like the [00:23:00] amount of time you fail is like disproportionately higher than your success rate.

What makes you good at doing and pushing new things on? You know, in, in, in the world of climbing on the rock is your your willingness to accept failure. In a radical way. Right? So I would say, you know, like one out of 10 climbs might be successful. And I think some of that happens in business, right? I think in the, in the VC world, certainly that failure is accepted and, and, and sometimes in some of the other financial markets, but mostly for large organizations, they're rarely really, really risk adverse, right?

They're really, really failure adverse. And I think that's where it starts, is willing to say, we don't have it figured out. We're not gonna figure it out. We're gonna try to, we need to adapt, we need to break things, figure things out. That's just really hard for people to do. Right? People like security and they like, you

know, they don't like change, and it's really, it's really a hard, it's an existential threat for a lot of people.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know what I hear in between the lines for like the kind of advice for companies like, go and fail in hiring [00:24:00] freelancers. Mm-hmm.

John Winsor: Go and fail at everything. Right? I mean, I just expect that you're gonna fail. Right. And, and, and, but how we, how do you know? Like you can sit down and write, you know, a really.

You know, uh, outcomes based job description for freelancer, for, you know, for an employee. But until, you know, viscerally where the success is and where the failures are and how to build it, you're not gonna know. You don't know until you don't know, or you don't know until, you know, maybe that's a better way to put it.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah. And the more you know, the more you don't know. So it's always like this. Oh, exactly.

John Winsor: I know, right? Oh God. The world becomes so

Yurii Lazaruk: nuanced. You are, you are talking a little bit about. Ai. So I'm curious, how are AI and automation changing the freelance market and the global workforce overall? Okay.

John Winsor: I mean, I would say that, you know, the freelancers, if they're not, you know, if they're not building AI workflows into their systems and and figuring it that out, that they're gonna be toast.

But it's just, it's no different than companies, right? [00:25:00] Companies can't build that stuff in and they're gonna be toast as well. And so there's an existential threat for all of us to figure out this stuff. And, you know, it's terrifying. It's terrifying that so much change is happening. It's terrifying and the anxiety ridden.

And so I think you've gotta really focus on what those tools are. You know. I think there's like four ways that humans are really powerful in. The sage of ai. I think it's judgment. You know, human judgment is still really important, but you get that judgment from lots of failure, right, from lots of experiences and trust.

It's the human to human trust that's really important in anything. The ability to integrate new tools into your workflows and be able to solve problems. And then brand, like you've got a different brand, I've got a different brand. You know, we all have these kind of, the way we show up in the world is, is really our brand and you know, people like to work with.

Certain kinds of people. And so it's, but we need to really lean into that instead of try to avoid that or try to try to be, you know, adopt something. We're not really, it's not who we are. So

Yurii Lazaruk: now I, I, I read a lot of [00:26:00] different researches and I listen to different experts, especially those people who are talking a lot about the future of work, about freelance and about this independent talent economy.

There are different, um, analysis and some people say that's forecasts that somewhere in like few years it'll be like millions and billions on freelancers all over the world. And, uh, some like very, very radical are even saying like, oh, everyone will be freeing. I still don't really believe that everyone will be freeing, but who knows?

You know? We don't know. We don't know. And still, I'm curious, how do you see the role of freelancers evolving in this global workforce?

John Winsor: Yeah, I mean, I think, I think that it's gonna be much bigger. I, I don't know. I, I would say, you know, take any, anybody who calls themself an expert, as you know, with a grain of salt.

'cause there are no experts, right? We, we all have our own little tiny lenses. We we're looking through this little peephole into the world and trying to understand, you know, and, and, and recognize that, I mean, I think people do have more experience and they can speak to that and that's really [00:27:00] great. Um, uh.

I believe in that, you know, I believe that that freelancers will be the dominant way that people would work, will work. I think that, you know, from a US perspective, it's quite terrifying 'cause we can't get our shit together as far as, you know, the, the ability to support, you know, our, our, our citizens with healthcare and, and, and pensions and things like that.

And so I think those, those countries that have set kind of social safety nets up that allow people to take risk right, are gonna be way, way more, way more

successful. Um, I, you know, and I've, I've spent a ton of time in Mexico and, and around the world doing the things I love to do, and I'm always so.

Blown away by the other, other places. There's so much more entrepreneurial than, than in the US I'm sure in Poland in a way. You know, there's, there's kind of this existential threat. You gotta figure out a way to survive, so you gotta be a hustler and you gotta get it done. And so, you know, that's a big thing.

You can't just sit back and be in a big corporate job. There just aren't as many corporate jobs around. And so there's [00:28:00] less security from that perspective. Kind of a balance, right? There's more social security, but there's less kind of corporate security.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah, it's something that people still have in their mind that it's secure, that it's like guaranteed that you will have a job tomorrow, but no one knows, you know, like it can be just laid off like very, very fast and sometimes you won't even see anything.

Yeah, yeah. Maybe if you're lucky, you'll get some severance package, but it's not guaranteed once again. And you also told like before the change. Whether you like it or not, and I'm curious from your perspective, if companies that currently are not working with flexible talent, if they don't adapt their processes for flexible talent, what are they risking?

Like what risks do they face? What they will lose in, let's say like few years and maybe like five years?

John Winsor: Yeah, they're just gonna be left behind, right? I think it doesn't matter which company that you have that just like there's an existential threat. I mean, there's some. That have built over a long period of time structures and, and, and kind of, uh, you [00:29:00] know, systems that allow them to be really successful.

Companies like Coca-Cola companies, you know, like Amazon, that, that really, you know, that focus on a few things that are, that are kind of their strategic advantage. But those are really rare, right? I mean, that those are, are, are real, you know. Um. Did, you just don't see many of those for, for the average company, it's, they have to, they can't you like, I, I, I feel like companies like Amazon, they bend the future, you know, they, they, they have the ability to kind of bend the arc of, of, of history.

But, you know, for most companies, they don't have that ability. They have to be adaptive and they have to figure out where the world's going, and the world's shifting really, really quickly. And so. You know, you've gotta, you've gotta be willing to admit that you don't know, right? And, and that's the hardest thing for leaders to do.

They, and most people don't know what the hell's going on. And so you gotta be, uh, you gotta have a learning mentality. And I think that there, there's, you know, a. When I do see CEOs that say, I don't know what's, you know, what's happening, I wanna learn and I want to be involved and I want to surround myself with the best and smartest [00:30:00] people.

It tends to be, uh, a system that's very much freelance oriented, right? Like a bunch of independent workers that have independent point of view that challenges CEO in a certain way that create that kind of really good momentum. So,

Yurii Lazaruk: you know, I wish to have, the sky is limit, but time is limit to our conversation.

So it is the final question. What advice would you give to companies that just start in, to use freelancers and to freelancers who are just entering this independent market?

John Winsor: Yeah, that's a great question. So I, I, let's take the freelance side. Uh. Mina to begin with, I would say freelancers have to have the mentality that they're a CEO, they're a CEO of their own company.

They have to not just do the work, but they have to sell the work. They have to, you know, much more broad view of what it is that they do. And so, you know, all those things that everybody suggests, building a brand, you know, communicating their ideas, being out in the world. It's not, it's not just [00:31:00] about the work.

For the company side of things, I think just taking more risks that, you know, in this age of AI and this age of independent work, that it's very apparent to me that most companies that don't have more modern structures and can't go fast, that they're gonna be, they're gonna be, you know, out of business.

They will be out of business in the next five years. And so it's really incumbent to get in the game to use independent. Workforce be able to build that kind of momentum in a really powerful way, and you'll be successful. I think, you

know, you'll, you'll get a chance to try and, and maybe, you know, I think it's, it's also.

Trying to define what success is, right? I, I, I've sold a lot of companies and I don't know if that's always been, I mean, it feels like it's a marker of success in the context of what the world expects success is, but I don't know if I felt successful in that. So I think it's redefining what success is and what it means, and, and, and how you kind of view your company a lot of times.[00:32:00]

I mean, nothing's forever. So the company that you're building might be a stepping stone to something new and birthing kind of something new that is more, uh, AI native and, and freelance native. So, we'll see. The world is a, you know, is a wild and wooly new place. So we've all gotta be prepared for the ride.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, I'm just talking to CEOs of some, I'm not talking about like huge companies, but maybe like medium sized companies who were working the same way for like 20, 30 years. And if I'm saying to them like, Hey, here's the future of work here. Like you are getting like skill shortage. You are getting less access to talents if you want them.

You have to go through answers and they're like, ah, no way. What are you telling me? I don't trust you. What would you say to someone like that?

John Winsor: Well, I just point to case studies, right? My own case studies, the case studies at nasa and just say, you can believe that. But be when, when we, when we've taken the time to do the work that we've done at NASA or at Victors and spoils and all the stuff we've done at Harvard, we know that, you know, using freelance talent, um, is, is [00:33:00] is as good or better work four to five times faster, eight to 10 times cheaper.

And I'm not talking about paying somebody eight to 10 times cheaper. I'm talking about all the systems around that person. The, the friction of hiring managers and HR people, it's just like so expensive. Instead of allowing a hiring manager or allowing a software engineer to hire a freelancer to help them out to be more successful, cutting all that bullshit out and just really getting to, to focus on the work and the outcomes.

Those who want to find those case studies, where

Yurii Lazaruk: should they go?

John Winsor: I, I just think, you know, look at our, look at my book, open Talent. I have a lot of those. And then I think just, you know, follow, there's some great stuff. Matt, Matt's done some great stuff at Human Cloud and you know, I, I write a bunch, uh, all the time.

And so there's a lot of ways to, to do that and just be a part of the conversation. That's the biggest thing.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah, sometimes they're staying away, but they are having, we are not leaving them any chance to stay away because if you want to grow, be a part of a conversation Otherwise. You'll be missed. Maybe.[00:34:00]

Yeah, maybe not. Exactly. And last but not least, name two people I should reach out to to talk about the independent workforce.

John Winsor: Oh, man, that's a great question. I mean, I think you should definitely talk to Mike Morris from Torque, who, you know, he, he's an og I, when, you know, I think he started, uh. At Topcoder in 2001.

So he's seen it all knows, knows it all. I think that's a really important one and I would definitely, uh, reach out to Carol Chang, um, at Andela and I think she's doing some really, really amazing work. And the reason she's doing such amazing work is 'cause she spent a. 10 years, uh, driving the, the kind of ri uh, the, the, the driver experiences and, and, and operations at Uber.

So she really gets the idea of independent workforce and, and the power of brilliance is abundant and opportunities are scarce. Got it. Got it. And what is the

Yurii Lazaruk: best way to connect with you?

John Winsor: Uh, just, you know, the best thing to do is just follow me in anywhere like LinkedIn or [00:35:00] I, or, or through Harvard. Um, or just, you know, go to my website, john windsor.com or, or my company website, open hyphen sem

Yurii Lazaruk: assembly.com.

Got it. John, thank you so much, first of all, for what you are doing in growing this independent and freelance market. And you know, when I was talking to you, you made it feel so easy that I was even like, you don't even have to, it's,

it's like non-negotiable that you have to work with freelancers because like you just phrase it in in this way, like you either do it or you die.

There is no other way. Yeah, exactly. And I was like, my God, I think that's it. God, it's

John Winsor: so

Yurii Lazaruk: easy.

John Winsor: It's so easy. Right? Well when you know, when you're pushed up against the wall, there's just your, your choices are limited. It's easy to make a decision.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah. And thank you so much for this conversation. It was a lot of fun and yeah, I learned so many things and you are real OG here, so thank you for being the amazing you.

Yeah. No thanks. Thanks for, thanks for having me. And uh, yeah. See you in the freelance world. And for listeners, thank you for joining us on this episode of The [00:36:00] Independent Workforce. I hope you've 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.