

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 will 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 platform that's been connecting top independent professionals with companies for over 20 years, and my guest is Rich Wilson. CEO and co-founder of Gig AI is a blended workforce platform for enterprises who, whose prior experience at Gartner and Allegis Group is reshaping how enterprises tackle skill gaps using freelancers, internal talent and ai and who's also very, very passionate about mental health, ai, and the future of work.

So welcome, rich.

Rich Wilson: Thank you, Yuri. That was a good introduction. I like that.

Yurii Lazaruk: Super happy to meet you. I listened to your [00:01:00] conversation with Mad at Human Cloud. You've already shared a lot of insight there, and I really, really want to dive into all this nitty gritty and get even, even more of your experience.

So you worked at big companies like Alleges and Gartner, and now you're leading gig ai. So what made you focus on freelancing and open talent? Like what's your story with the independent market?

Rich Wilson: Yeah, absolutely. So I am, I was a recruiter, so my, my first. Real job. I had various other jobs. My first real job was as a recruiter, um, working for religious group in 2006.

So that was recruiting, um, contractors into, into large companies. I'd done that for a short number of time, and then I quickly moved into the, the, the sales side and the leadership side. But, you know, I spent 12 years. Wasn't called open talent then we wouldn't have called it freelancers. We were really providing.

Um, [00:02:00] contractors on large digital transformation programs. You know, like Windows XP was the first one I worked on, right? So we had lots of contractors plugging in old computers. Then we obviously moved into the world of, um, more digital transformation. So building, you know, software platforms and then data and AI came, came later.

But, you know, I was involved in hiring a thousands and thousands and thousands of, of contractors. So I had done, had the experience of, you know, I've actually recruited them, I've sold the service, I've developed different service lines within, within that, you know, I spend a lot of work time in statement of work.

So really creating large scale statement of work programs where you could bring contractors under multiple deliverables. Done a lot of work on that. So yeah, my, my experience was. Was really in it, working for a large recruitment firm, doing the day-to-day work after [00:03:00] 12 years. You mentioned burnout. I was really burn out.

Um, and I decided that I wanted to, to take a bit of time out. I hadn't spent enough time with my family. I spent too much time, you know, building religious in, in the early days. So I took some time out. I learned more about data and ai. I took some board positions. I was then, then joined Gartner, where I worked with a lot of technology leaders and I learned, and one of the things that came up a lot was around talent, open talent, internal talent, AI talent, everything, all.

Most leaders, even though it was a technology advisory, everything came back to talent, it came back to people. So, you know, I had the idea for gig, probably 2018. You know, at that time, five and Upwork were obviously starting to, to grow and I had the idea, but I didn't have the, the, the physical or mental health to actually go and take, do what it takes to build a startup.

'cause it's very difficult, you know, building a startup. So, [00:04:00] but I always had the idea that there was a way, I'm not a believer that we're trying to disrupt the old recruitment company and we're trying to cheat, but there is a change coming and. There is going to be a much bigger demand for open talent than we've ever seen before.

I believe that. I think AI agents are obviously gonna have an impact on that, but I think overall open talent is gonna be a key pillar of the talent strategy for any enterprise. So, you know, so, so that's kinda where I came. Right. So, you know, I used to. You know, when I was 21 I'd be on the phone recruiting contractors, you know, logging on a very basic CRM, if there even was a CRM that's just before LinkedIn.

And, and then obviously I've moved, moved with the times, you know, so, uh, um, so I like to think I'm in a, a unique position to try and automate some of the tasks because I have done the tasks, you know, I'm not. A Silicon Valley guy

who's, who has an idea to automate, I have spent years on the [00:05:00] phones to client, on the phone, to contractors, manually doing the job.

You know, so, uh, I'm, I, I feel like I've got some experience actually in the trenches Yeah. That you can't bring into the, you know, into the world of the technology.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, the funniest things that you mentioned that some companies might think that all these platforms and all these AI technologies are removing recruiters.

And I would say kind of yes, for very, very low skilled tasks because like when you need to create a logo, you don't really need a recruiter for that. But for example, if we're talking about complex projects where you really like, it's still building human connections, human relationships, and you still, you still need people inside.

So I feel like all, what's going on in. Current, current workforce. All that is changing is not removing recruiters from the equation. It's more like supercharging them with like the better tools to identify the best talents. And I'm also curious, so what types of companies do you work with [00:06:00] at Gig ai and what are they looking for when they come to you?

Okay,

Rich Wilson: so, so let me answer both questions. I'll touch on your point about recruiters first. If you think about the recruiter role, historically, you had what you would call either a 180 recruiter or a 360 recruiter. Now, a 180 recruiter would just recruit. They would, they would get the requirements and they would find the contractor to fill that requirement.

Then you have the 360 recruiter. They go out, they sell, they try and work on the, uh, find new customers, and then they will, they will then have to recruit. Now, it's a very stressful job. I both jobs are very stressful. But if you think about where, where I see the, see that job changing because of ai, that recruiter role is becoming much more customer success.

Their job is to manage relationships. Deal with issues, you know, be able, 'cause issues still [00:07:00] happen, right? A platform doesn't stop problems happening. It also, you know, also sometimes you can see things that technology doesn't see. And so I think that role of a recruiter is less of a recruiter about finding sourcing.

It's more about actually being the, the linchpin of the relationship. And then those 360 recruiters can spend more time. On sales, because right now, if you're a recruitment company, you're a platform, whatever way, adding new customers and selling is really, really tough. It's a very crowded market.

Everybody's trying to win new business. Most recruitment companies are down 10 to 20% year on year, so they are fighting for their lives to win new business. So sales becomes more important than ever. So I think that's how I see the roles evolving because of ai. The, the good sellers can sell more, the good recruiters can spend more on relationship management and less on sourcing.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah.

Rich Wilson: [00:08:00] In terms of our client base, so, so our client base has changed. Um, when we first started the company, I don't think we had a clear idea of who the client was. So we pretty much worked with everybody, startups, any big company scale, you know, anybody we could get a gig from, we would do.

Yurii Lazaruk: Hmm.

Rich Wilson: In 2024, I, I made the decision to pivot to Enterprise for a couple of reasons.

A, we've seen that to really make a business work and the platform space, you need volume, which Fiverr and Upwork Toptal, those platforms have volume built over a long time. A lot of smaller gigs, especially in Upwork and Fiverr space. But there's volume of gigs now. We are a small company. We're headquartered in Scotland.

We're trying to go globally. We [00:09:00] cannot compete on that scale, but where we could compete is focus on having higher quality gigs, much higher price gigs, focus on filling less gigs, but filling a much higher. Um, gig value, and we realized to do that we need to do enterprise. Now, I spent my whole career within enterprise, but selling a platform into enterprise is really tough.

It's really, really tough. Now we have figured out how to do it, but it's tough. And so what we decided to do, URI, was we really narrowed down our ICP and we went, right? We are gonna focus on CIOs and CTOs. We're not gonna sell to HR and TA initially. Not because we don't want to, but we found that the CIO and CTO have a lot of pain around getting talent and we provide technology, talent, data engineers, data scientists, software developers.

So, and we decided to go look and we're only gonna work with companies from about a hundred million revenue to about 10 billion. [00:10:00] Now there's a few, you know, there's a few under that and there's a few over that, but, and we're gonna focus on manufacturing. Financial services and professional services is the main industries, and so we now have 20 active enterprises.

From those industries using the platform. So, you know, it was very tough to get that enterprise adoption, but once you get it, it's obviously, it, it's, you're not, you don't need to have as many customers. So our view very much is, let's have a smaller amount of enterprises that do a lot more with us and then do it that way.

But that was a really, you know, that was a really difficult decision. It was a really unpopular decision that I made at the time. You know, my team thought I was crazy. My investors thought I was crazy. You know, I think a lot of people thought we were crazy, and I can understand why, but I said if we were going to a business that needs to be scalable, needs to [00:11:00] have clients that can continue to, to, to, um, to have repeat business.

So we, um, and we, and we also seen that enterprises were reducing their full-time headcount. The contractor programs were getting less spend, but they were spending more money through SOW and especially with large expensive consulting firms. So we thought, well, instead of competing with the platforms and competing with recruitment companies, why don't we compete more with the big, expensive professional services firms who we sometimes partner with as well?

So it's a strange relationship, but by doing that. We're able to tap into, um, a, a network which has high demand, uh, for the skill sets that, that we need. So, um, so yeah, very much in that enterprise and we won't change that. We are now very much trying to become an enterprise solution. That is where we're trying to play and that's what we're gonna focus on.

So it will see less gigs. We won't have [00:12:00] hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of gigs open at any one time, but the gigs we do have will be high value, high quality.

Yurii Lazaruk: How do you get through to CIOs and CTOs? I mean like when you meet them, what are their pain points? What are, why should they care about working with contingent workforce about hiring freelancers and independent talents instead of just going.

Spending money on an expensive consultancy firm, or instead of just going and hiring some full-time people, why should they care? Like how do you go through that to them?

Rich Wilson: Yeah, so it's, it's a common, you know, there's a common theme within technology leaders is that most are having to deliver more with less.

That's a common theme, and when I say more with less, you're more having to deliver data and AI transformation now at scale. But their full-time hiring budgets, in most cases, not all, but in most, have been reduced so that opex operating expenditure is being [00:13:00] reduced now that CapEx is being increased.

However, there are plenty of times when you should be using, uh, an advisory or a professional services firm. However, if you're doing long tail. Delivery work. So the strategy's been defined, but you're now needing execution. You're now needing a build product quickly, and you've decided to do that with, with yourself, or you're trying to do pilots quickly.

Outsourcing it, uh, or, or giving it to professional services is hugely, hugely expensive. So if your full-time headcount is reducing. Your project spend is increasing. Well, what's the best way to get the most bang for your buck? It's to be able to cut down some of those two, 3000, 4,000 pound a day, day rates by being able to tap into different talent pools who can have the same or higher quality level, but you're not [00:14:00] having to pay a ridiculous margin, you know?

And, and, and that really is the benefit. It's been able to get access to talent quickly. But without having to pay a premium, because if you're having to pay a premium, that adds up pretty quickly. If you've got, you know, if you've got 50 consultants on an average of \$2,000 or pounds or euros a day, if you can reduce that by 30%.

That's a lot of extra budget you've got to spend on other projects. So it's not like it's an unlimited well of money, you know, even though that, that, that budget has largely increased. So it is all about I need to deliver more with less. I need access to talent. I don't have time to do bureaucracy around.

How do I hire a contractor? But also hiring an expensive consultancy isn't always the answer. So that's, that's where, where we, we kinda come in as an alternative solution and we [00:15:00] always try and be the and. Right? So

what we very much, we are not the A, right? It's not like, hey, you've got contractor agencies, you've got your.

Consultancies and you've got your platform and you can use one. That's not the best way to do it. The best way is to go right for the solution. We need a data scientist to come in for a very specific piece of work. If I use that gig ai, I can get someone at 700 pounds a day. I can have flexibility, I can get it done.

If I do it through a consultancy, it's 2000 a day. I don't really have everything I need. We do it through a contractor model, it may take too long. So in this scenario that KDI model is the best model, but there's times, Hey, I'm trying to build a 10 million pound digital transformation that's not going to be built with us solely.

You're going to use a large professional services firm or integrator to do that. Makes sense. So it's just been able to be, be there as the option when the problem presents itself.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah. And what about [00:16:00] safety? I mean, like for example, when. You hire the company, consulting company, you pay a bigger margin, but you kind of have the name behind and you think it's not always the case, but at least you think that everything will go right and you will get your project and everything will be okay.

Um, it's not always the case. Sometimes it happens, but what is the difference? Like why should companies go and work with independent talents? Whom they maybe not even trust in, like how, how to deal with this trust gap?

Rich Wilson: Yeah. I, I think the trust gap is mental than, than reality, right? So, you know, if you're hiring someone from a, you know, professional services firm.

The chances are that they, they may be a full-time employee, but the chances are they're not a full-time employee. They're a contractor from somewhere else, right? So you're, you are bringing in independent talent. You just don't know it because it's Reba. So I think that whole trust thing is kind of quite [00:17:00] an old school mentality.

Hey, nobody's ever been sacked for using IBM, kinda that old, that old mentality. So, yeah, I, I think just because you're the brand name of the company doesn't mean the quality of the resource is gonna be any higher. You

know, these companies are under a lot of pressure. They've got a lot of junior talent that, that they're having to use instead of their senior talent.

'cause they've had to let them go 'cause they're on high salaries. So I I, I do think I understand that, hey, there's a brand name and a, and a kudos a, a loan to Sure. But the reality is, is that the quality of resource. It's been proven not to be any better. So why would you pay a premium for a resource that isn't gonna be of high quality?

I, I think that's how I look at it. Now, some people, I can't change their mind on that, and that's okay. Um, but a lot of the time, once we're in, we're able to show it. But we, we can, like you, you're one of the big four. I won't mention who it is. But one of [00:18:00] our, our clients have replaced us instead of using a big four consultancy for all our data analysis.

'cause they were just paying a lot of money, paying a lot of premium. And they actually realized we can get high quality people from Gigi at a fraction of the cost and it makes sense. So they've replaced us as the, the, the, the. The, the, um, the supplier of choice within that team. So I said, it's not always the case.

Like you still, we, we work with some of these large professional services firms. You still need, there's still a time and a place for sure.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah.

Rich Wilson: But, um, but I do think there's still a, there's now a time and a place to tap into independent talent. Because the quality is, is, is there, you know, we've got, you know, we've got people on our platform that, right, it's Google x, McKinsey, you know, great resource, great people who've just decided to work a different way.

Just because they've worked a different way doesn't mean they should be penalized and not be able to find, you know, work in that company. And also if you're a co, if you're a, if you're hiring and you're like, Hey, [00:19:00] look, I can access this ex McKenzie guy for this project, you know, at a price less point than McKinsey, and they're get, and the consultants' getting paid probably double what they were getting paid in their food.

It's a win-win, right? So I say doesn't work for, it's not a one size fits all, but it's an alternative model. For, for Delivering Project.

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.

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Or if we're talking about developer like Google, Microsoft and so on, and then they're getting their [00:20:00] experience and then they're moving to like create other projects and they basically have some basics already. And to a point you go to them. You have pretty much similar experience if you were going to a company itself and still you receive like much higher rate and uh, like one-to-one human to human connection.

I feel like it's also works a little bit faster than while you are having all this. Hundreds of hundreds of conversations with like cell representative, with like, uh, customer success with someone else. And then on the, like, third or fourth person is someone who you are really talking to and dealing with and to a point, um, of getting into to the company.

So, uh, like as you've said, to come into enterprise, it's a little harder in the beginning than, for example, coming to startups. But then when you just inside you work, they propose a lot of projects. They do a lot of things. When companies are thinking about hiring independent talents, freelancers, you name it, [00:21:00] what are the most common worries or questions they ask you about?

Rich Wilson: So payments comes up a lot, right? Um, payments is a big one. Um, IP is a big one as well. Who owns the ip? And, um, and, and also just around the, the speed of the opportunity. You know, how many people are gonna be. Involved in a proposal, you know, what's my chances of being successful? Because there is obviously a lot of people out at work, you know, that freelancer market has grown, especially in the UK because of people being made redundant in their full-time jobs.

So you've decided, so you've then got a swell of people who weren't freelancers before. Um, and, and they're obviously used to security and they're used to a certain level of, of pay, and that's obviously a massive. Uncertainty going from

that into freelancing if you've never done it before. So yeah, they would be the, they would be the main things.

I would, I would say, your know, payment [00:22:00] frequency, you know, quick quickness of payment. That that's what, that's where we asked the most. I think people want get paid for the work, right. And our job to make sure they get paid for the work. So, um, so yeah, that, that would be the, that would be the main one. Um, we also get, you know, like, I like.

How do I have more opportunities? You know, we, why isn't there hundreds of different gigs on your platform? Our view always is that we're just not a high volume solution. We're not ever going to be that. So just because there's more gigs doesn't mean you're gonna have a better chance. We're gonna match you to a gig that you're gonna fit your opportunity if, and, and if it don't, we won't match you to it.

So, um, yeah, I, I would say those, they're the main topics.

Yurii Lazaruk: How do you comfort them? I mean, like what makes them change their fixed mindset and work with freelancers?

Rich Wilson: A lot of the time you don't use the term by removing the word freelancer. [00:23:00] You can, you, you can, you can get 'em thinking differently. Freelancer has a.

It has a bit of a connotation around it, especially in, in the UK and even in in the US market, you know, contractor, consultant, you know, there's different terms. But the bottom line is a, a freelancer is, has historically seen as a different sort. Role. Right. And it's not, they're all the same thing, but they are, they're seen as, but I think if you use the term, Hey, this is an independent consultant that's coming out, this very specific piece of work, again, it's elevated.

It shouldn't be elevated 'cause it's the same thing. But I, I do think that the term freelancer, you know, we don't use the term freelancer marketplace. We don't use that terminology because enterprises don't. Um, don't, don't want to or don't think that that's a model for them. We use contractor or [00:24:00] consultant.

That's the terminology we use. Like I said, same thing. Yeah. But again, by saying that we will create a statement of work and we will match a consultant or contractor to that statement of work. Again, it's exactly the same as matching a freelancer to a brief. It's the same thing. Terminology is different and the enterprise.

Terminology and positioning is everything. So you need to position it differently, even though yes, it is a freelancer working on a project brief. Of course it's, but again, that terminology doesn't work in enterprise. So, uh, I think a lot of it is around, and we've spent a lot of time on the positioning of it.

You are not position it as a talent platform? Not really. We don't really position it that way. We position it as a solution to help get work done. And even yeah, of course. Are we a freelancer? Could you say we're a freelancer marketplace? We'd be sit in that category. Yeah, we would sit in that category, but that's not a category that enterprise really understands or [00:25:00] focuses on.

So you, if you wanna sell into that category, you need to find a different way to do it. So that's what we, I said that's what we try and do. We've learned. We've learned a lot of this by, by failure, right? So I don't, I don't pretend to have all the answers. We tried different things and some worked and some didn't.

And you know, some things have failed spectacularly and we've learned from it. But this has just came from trial and error, right? And trying to figure out what, what works. When I look at our initial offering, and now it's not even the same company.

Yurii Lazaruk: I feel like it's also very important, important point that you just mentioned about finding the right wording.

Because sometimes I have this experience and I'm talking to people and I'm explaining 'em about freelancers, how it's amazing to work with them, et cetera, and they're like, no, no, no. We don't work with freelancers. We keep on conversation. And then they're like, ah, you mean contractors? Yes, of course we work with contractors.

So I feel like it's also one of the. Blockers of the market, international market, that different companies, different people use different [00:26:00] terminology like freelancers, contractors, contingent workforce, external talent, whatever. There are so many words and it's always like a question of finding like, what is the word?

The the best, the best wording. Also, the reason you talk a lot about the blend. Yeah. Yeah.

Rich Wilson: Sorry, Yuri. The reason for that though, just to touch on it, and it's not just the terminology, it's because they come out of a different budget. A

freelancer would tend to come out more of a temp budget, which most companies don't have.

A contractor would tend to come out of a contingent worker spend budget, and then a consultant would come out of a statement of work services. They're very different spend categories in an enterprise. So if. Uh, and if you're trying to sell something and they don't have a, they can't categorize it.

Because they know they're going to need to go off a sign off process, then they're not gonna do it. So it's understanding, like if you mention this word, they're going to think about it in that budget. And if they think that budget is easier to get, because [00:27:00] at the end of the day, if you're an enterprise, you need to get things done quickly.

You need to cut through bureaucracy as quickly as possible. So if it is that, you know, that's, that's why the terminology is so important. It's not about. So they can just call it something different. It's so they know how they can get budget for it and get it through procurement and get it signed off.

And you know, that's not easy. So that's a big thing. So that, that's where it, where it comes from. So, sorry to interrupted you, you were saying about the blended.

Yurii Lazaruk: No, no, you added an amazing point, and I feel like when you help people and when you speak the same language with them, you make it easier for them to make a decision because Exactly.

They already, like the moment you mention one word, as you said, they go exactly to the different categories and. They think, oh no, no, it's hard. I won't do this. Or maybe they, oh, it's easy. Yeah, I will do this. So, um, from your, from your experience, maybe, do you have some kind of a dictionary of like, words to use when talking to enterprises?

Like, uh, [00:28:00] I dunno, maybe you have some guidelines of how to go to them. Like what's, what's your internal process when you talk to enterprises?

Rich Wilson: I, I think I just seek to understand, you know, I think all, all are different. So I think some use different terminology in different budgets that I don't think it's as easy as a one size fits all.

So I think that you need to be able to try and understand when you're doing discovery. And then you can position it in a way which will align it. Um, you

know, one of our big learns initially, we, we were asked to, what were some big companies? And then they, they said, yeah, cool. We're just gonna set you up through our MSP.

And I talked to them MSPs and there was no, no issue. But the problem being MSP weren't used to working with that platform, so. We couldn't have any sort of technology integration, so they wanted us just to send CVS manually to a direct job requisition [00:29:00] out. We are not gonna do that. We don't have the resource to do it.

We don't have the functionality to do it. We're not going to do that. However. We then said to them, look, we would come through SOW and they're, ah, yeah, you don't need to work through us. You work through this route. 'cause they didn't actually want the business when we understood. So I think there is a real seek to understand and, and then.

And then understand how, you know, how they buy. I, I'm a big believer of trying to reduce the, the barrier to entry and try and make it simple. Try and make it easy to buy from you. And, you know, because enterprise procurement is difficult. Um, and, and, and that's just the case across every, every, every company.

It's hard to deal with large companies. It just is always has been, always will be because they've got regulation, they've got budgets, they've got process because they need to be a big multi-billion dollar company, so they need to have process. So I think it's [00:30:00] trying to understand that process as well as you can, and then using the right terminology and not trying to force terminology down their, down their throat.

I think that's the, that's the best way that I've found to, to do it.

Yurii Lazaruk: If you could build the perfect setup for companies to work with external talent contractors for the answers, you name it, what would it look like?

Rich Wilson: So this kind of comes to what we're trying to build within the blended talent side of things.

So our ultimate vision is to be the blended talent platform for enterprise. So to be able to match an enterprise demand. Two different supply. So that could be an internal employee sitting on the bench. That could be an external contractor, freelancer, consultant. It could be an AI agent that they've built or someone else's built.

And you, that's the ultimate, that's, that's the [00:31:00] ultimate, you know, one kinda orchestration platform which able to tap into different places Now. The issue is that you need lots of different integrations. So you need to integrate Workday. You would need to integrate with our a TS potentially you would need to integrate probably with a VMS, potentially, you would need to then integrate with, you know, Azure and, and we've kind of ticked about half of them, right.

So we've, we've now integrate with Microsoft OpenAI, Workday, and a few others. We don't have the whole ecosystem mapped out yet though. 'cause it's very expensive. I think ideally, yeah, that, that's where we go. There is one. Kinda, there's one platform, which is the place where you de create the demand and create the matching, but that is talking, um, to all of the other solutions that are in, that are in place.

I think that ideally is the, is where it goes. Now, that is hugely difficult to do, um, in an enterprise. Because of the, because there's so many different platforms. There's so many [00:32:00] different teams, there's so many different geographies, processes. It's very difficult to do at this point. Um, but I do think there are, there are areas, if you chunk it down and bring it down to specific departments, you can do it.

I think if you're trying to do it across a whole org, it's really difficult. But if you say, right, we're gonna take the data team. And we're gonna take the data team only and we're gonna build a POC, which be able to match. Any demand to internal resource, whether that be a contractor or full-time, whether it be an AI agent or whether it be external resource.

And we're gonna do it, and we're gonna work on now that that functionality exists, we have that functionality right now. And I think doing a POC with a specific team is how you do it. And uh, and then you can start to look. I think trying to do it across a whole organization and trying to do workforce transformation across every single department is just [00:33:00] gonna fail.

And I think loads of companies have tried it. I think wholesale, all chains just doesn't work. But if you can do it in the teams where the most friction exists, then that's maybe how you get towards the total talent. Utopia. But if you're trying to do it across every single department, it's just like if you're trying to bring in salespeople and you're trying to bring in data to people, it's totally different.

It's not even the same in any way. The suppliers are different, the personalities are different. The skills are different. Everything's different. Mm-hmm. Can't have a one size fits all, but I think a word is friction exists. And I do think data, AI and cyber. Is where there's huge skill shortages within teams.

So how do you kinda deal with that over utilization and under utilization? You know, that's where we're trying to, trying to attack it.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, I feel like the future is inevitable of the blended workforce where internal, external, and ai, all the things are working [00:34:00] together in a specific, um, way. I have no idea what exact way, but in specific, I recently.

Um, read the book, the Future of Work of one of our previous guest, URI Damir, Gil Lopez. And it's, it's very interesting.

Rich Wilson: I've got, I've read that new

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah,

Rich Wilson: read

Yurii Lazaruk: that. There are so many amazing examples and once again, uh, you can read it like a fiction book and maybe like some ideas and so, but. There are not that fiction.

You know, like when I watched, uh, black Mirror, I don't know, like six years ago. So it was kind of a fiction. Now I see many of those things from the Black Mirror is coming to our life and it's a little bit of a scary, so I'm curious, from your experience, how close are enterprises at the moment to reach the level of like really, really good work in blended workforce?

Rich Wilson: There's, so there's some doing it right. So it, it definitely, you know, I think in, in New's book there's some great examples. John Winslow's book. There's some great examples. Um, there was a book [00:35:00] from guys from Mercer and um, and, uh, standard Chartered Skills Powered Organization that was called, that was a really good book.

There was a blended, uh, workforce, uh, book as well by Rochelle. So there is, there's different, there's, there's obviously books out there that get some great examples, so. There are companies doing it. There are examples that exist. We

are doing it at a small scale with some companies right now, but it is very difficult to do.

The, the, the way that I try and describe it, the technology to do all of this exists. It's not a technology issue. We've built the technology engine to do it. All those have built technology engines to do it. The technology is there. The issue is change management. The issue is being able to, to change hearts and minds and change processes within an organization, which has got a lot of work to do, and under a lot of pressure and having to do more with less.

And when [00:36:00] you're running a hundred miles an hour and you've just been asked to run 110 miles an hour, it's very difficult to look back and go, right, actually, how do I stop running for a bit and actually think about the best way to do this? Because I'm, I'm just running, I'm just trying to run faster and faster and faster and faster, and at one point I'm gonna fall, but I'm not able to think that way because I'm just running.

And I think that's where the organizational change bit comes in, because you need to take every stop. Let's just think, are we running in the right direction here, or are we running in the wrong direction? Because if we're running the wrong direction, running faster means we're gonna get to the wrong destination quicker.

And I think that that is the way that, that, um, I try and think about when we get asked, when we are doing a POC, we're like, Hey, what do you need from us? We always get asked that. And they always think it's gonna be a technology integration, but it's not. I always say, I need a senior owner on this POC, I need a change [00:37:00] manager.

I need, I need someone that's got some seniority and can work across departs to unlock friction that can make decisions and is empowered to make decisions. Because like when you're putting in a, like you need to decide a taxonomy. You need to decide what integrations you're gonna have. These decisions need to be made, and none of these decisions are one way door.

They can all be reversed, but the decision needs to be made by someone. So I always say to 'em, I need someone to own this and to push it forward. And if I have that, the chances are this will be a success. But technology alone will not be a success because technology without successful adoption. It doesn't work.

So again, it, it goes back to, and this is why I don't think we're going to get rid of every single person anytime soon. You still need people to make things

happen. I don't believe an AI agent can do change management properly. I don't think it can do hearts and minds. I don't think it can get people to change [00:38:00] fundamentally their behavior.

But, and that's where I think the blockers, the blockers come, you know, like I always think well. Even with Jenny I tool, if you think about, you know, if you put a new tool in, in any organization or even personally, you know, you could use it for like two or three days and you're, oh, this is really cool. But see if it hasn't actually done something for you, you'll forget about it.

'cause you've got a lot in your brain. And you forget about it, you, but whereas if that tool was actually fundamentally got into your operating rhythm and into your psyche, you'll keep using it because it adds value. And you kinda like, yeah, this is just in my, this is my habit. Now my habit is to use this product or use this technology.

But if you don't create that, that, um, adoption, there won't get used. So, um, again, this is old. None of this is new, right? None of this stuff is new, but it's more important than ever.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, dealing with habits, [00:39:00] replacing habits, and uh, making some changes. People are afraid of changes and it's very, very hard to really make them do something.

So from your experience and from your perspective, what is one small step to take right away to ensure that those changes are coming, to implement those changes in within your mindset and who needs to take this step?

Rich Wilson: Good question. Like I, I think. I think it comes back to. If you've got a team of people, I think it's understanding what skills you have just now, what skills you need.

I think it's as simple as being able to, whether it's technology or whatever, but being able to to know, Hey, here's the current skill inventory that I have in my team, and here's the capability that I don't have that I'm going to need. That way you can then make some, some decisions on, Hey, I need open talent models.

I need maybe internal talent model, you know, but then you can really know. And see, like I actually, you know, I talked to a [00:40:00] customer last night and they're like, yeah, look, I've just had the request for 10 ServiceNow developers. I don't need 10 ServiceNow developers. We got a budget for 10 ServiceNow developers.

So I need to understand very quickly who has ServiceNow capability within our organization that can help with this problem, because I cannot hire. People with that skill. 'cause I don't have the budget to do it and I might not have the demand long term. So what they're now going to do is they're looking internally and then they've realized that hey, there's, there's a few people with a skill, but they don't, so they've then went out and they're gonna hire some contract resource to then, so they're gonna supplement it.

But the request initially was business, you need to go and hire 10 full-time ServiceNow. I mean, you step back and go, well wait a minute. Do we have that resource? Do we actually need that resource? How long do we need that resource for? So I think it comes down to the, the delivery managers, the hiring managers to be able to, you know, be able to push back and be able to look, [00:41:00] have a very quick mechanism to be able to understand how they, how they understand what they've got and what they don't have.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, I feel like that's exactly why we see all those many layoffs here and there, because people overhired, they thought they needed more people and they're like, uh, technology is coming, things are coming. Like, we don't need all those people. So they're kind of like trying to understand, reevaluate what's happening.

And then we see so many layoffs. But who knows in outreach. Wish to have the sky as the limit. I still have so many questions for you, but time is the limit. So the final question, what advice would you give to two categories? First companies starting to use contractors, freelancers, uh, consultants, whatever you name it, and to freelancers, contractors, consultants, entering this market.

Rich Wilson: So for the companies, yeah, I would say just. Have an open mind to having different supply models. I say that do [00:42:00] having a list of recruitment agencies and then just a list of service integrators and then just doing it that way is like 2008. Yeah, it doesn't need to be that way anymore. You can have lot, you can have a good supplier network that link into different categories that do different things.

It doesn't need to be as linear as it used to be, and I think having an open mind to that. You know, as I said, I think there's, there's crowdsourcing platforms. You could have one or two of them. You could have one or two SOW platforms like ourselves. You could have yourself, your systems integrators, you can have some recruitment agencies, but doesn't need to be just those two categories that we've traditionally been programmed to use, you know, historically.

And then I think as a, as a freelancer contractor, consultant, I think the biggest thing for me would be, I. Around building your brand, building your personal brand, using LinkedIn, using different, um, ways to be talking about the project successes. I think one [00:43:00] thing a lot of people open talent don't do very well is they don't like if I've just done, delivered a project for someone and I've delivered these outcomes, like that's a great post.

Hey, I've just delivered these X three outcomes for this enterprise. I may, you know, maybe you can say who it is, maybe you can't, but it doesn't really matter. You can say, Hey, I've just rolled off a financial services organization and the, you know, the, the outcomes I achieve was this. You know, being able to explain the, the value that you're adding to organizations and regularly sharing those stories is so important.

And I think there's this view. A lot of people, especially as they join, you know, they, they become a, you know, an independent worker or a freelancer. They, they stay quiet, more quiet than ever. They think they need to go onto the radar where it's the opposite. They need to build that brand. You now, you know, you're now an entrepreneur.

You now have your own company. Your job is now to land business.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah.

Rich Wilson: So as well as being a data [00:44:00] analyst or software developer, you now need to develop sales skills. Scary for a lot of people. The best way to one work is through word of mouth, is through building your brand. It's through through building that so.

You know, every time that you, you, you finish, get our, the hiring manager, ask them for a a one paragraph post that on LinkedIn, right? Then ask them, is there anybody else you think I should be talking to? You know, so I said, I know these sound, these things sound really simple, but they're really, really effective.

So. Yeah, that would, that would be what my advice, for sure.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah. I feel like that's what people are missing, especially who are like great experts who just start on their individual journey, that they're forgetting about the business part. They remember about freelance part, but the business they're missing, so they think that they still will go and do all the stuff and then they don't think about sales, marketing, personal brand, reaching out, contracting, et cetera.

And yeah, to a point, there are so many hats and. Last but not least, name two [00:45:00] people I should reach out to to talk about the independent workforce.

Rich Wilson: I dunno. That's a good one. I, I, you're obviously talking, you know, a lot of the names I would mention. I know you're already, you're already talking to, um, you obviously mentioned, uh, you mentioned John Younger, you mentioned Matt Mottola.

Um, you mentioned John Windsor, other names, um, Connor Heney from CXC. Definitely. Again, Connor's got a podcast. He speaks a lot of sense. The other one that a lot of people won't know who is but is a really interesting leader in this space is, uh, g Gavin McLarty. From sub C seven. He, he's, he, he's worked with Steve radar in the past with certain things, but again, he's someone who's really leading open innovation and, and, and is a real thought leader in this space.

Maybe not as well known as, you know, John, John Winsler or John Younger. But again, a really knowledgeable, um, [00:46:00] knowledgeable guy on that. So those, those two would be, would be, um. Would be, uh, really interesting conversations.

Yurii Lazaruk: Got it, got it. Rich, thank you so much and how to connect with you.

Rich Wilson: Mainly LinkedIn, I'll be honest, I'm always on LinkedIn.

I'm a big, LinkedIn is my favorite, uh, tool. Um, so yeah, just connect with me on LinkedIn. Drop me a message, I'll reply. Eventually,

Yurii Lazaruk: rich, thank you so much for, first of all, sharing your knowledge so openly. I was very interested in what you've shared with Matt Matto at Human Cloud. I just love that conversation.

I'm super, I learned already so many things from you at this moment, especially when you were talking about like how different wordings starts, different processes in minds of decision maker. Like, wow. I, for me, it was like. Really. Okay, let's, let's, let's talk about it more. So thank you so much for being here.

Uh, and also from, from my personal side, thank you so much for investing your time and passion into grow in this independent workforce. So yeah, [00:47:00] thank you for this conversation. No,

Rich Wilson: thank you.

Yurii Lazaruk: And for listeners, thank you for joining us on this episode of The 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.