

The Smart Way to Hire Fractional Leaders - Episode 22 with Jamie Jacobs

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 lessons learned.

My name is uri. I'm growing the freelance market at Freelancer Map, an international platform that has been connecting top independent professionals with companies for over 20 years. And my guest is Jamie Jacobs. The founder and CEO of gig talent where she helps companies solve their hardest leadership and transformation challenges fast without waiting for a full-time hire.

And also a trusted advisor, keynote speaker, a professor at the University of Southern California and the host of the Courageous Choice Podcast, where she explores the bold decisions that shape modern leadership. So welcome, Jamie.

Jamie Jacobs: Hi. Thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited to have this conversation with you.[00:01:00]

Yurii Lazaruk: Finally, we are here. Ever since I heard a conversation with Mattau at Human Cloud, I was like, we need to continue this conversation at the independent workers. So here we are, and before we dive into like deeper this conversation. So you've been in the HR for nearly three decades it feels like.

Jamie Jacobs: Okay.

You're making me feel really old now, but No. Yeah,

Yurii Lazaruk: no,

Jamie Jacobs: it's,

Yurii Lazaruk: it's like a good way, you know,

Jamie Jacobs: I grew, you know, I grew in the corporate world. I loved it. I worked for amazing organizations, global organizations, um, like Ingersoll Rand, Ingram, micro Ali, um, and then some fast growing startups. Uh, and it's, you know, I loved my corporate career and, and what I found in hindsight was it was always about.

You know, building and transforming, right? So it was helping companies when they were having huge m and a or they were starting up a new growth division, or they were building HR in excellence and going through some kind of transformation. And, uh, so I loved, I loved my career and it was such a great way to learn, uh, business, you [00:02:00] know, across industries.

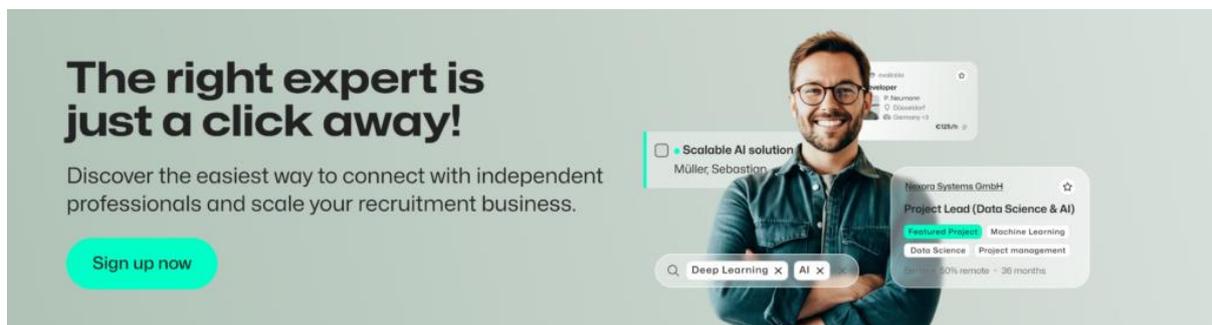
Um, and then kind of really what hr, HR excellence looks like.

Yurii Lazaruk: What were the most significant changes that you've seen throughout your career?

Jamie Jacobs: You know, it's, it's interesting. I, I think that the changes around what hrs role is, um, kind of evolved as my career progressed, uh, which was interesting and, you know, kind of learning the fundamentals, um, just around.

Laws and compliance and process and culture. I, I was really lucky 'cause I actually started my career with Four Seasons hotels and Resorts, which has an amazing culture. And so to kind of learn in a, in a, in a really effective culture was, uh, was wonderful. The, I think the, the bigger shifts now is the pace of change.

Um, and what we're seeing then is, is how do, how do you pull that through? Kind of the employee experience and, and I think that, you know, we're probably gonna dive in here, but there's a lot of tension around kind of these old organizational models and operating systems that just weren't [00:03:00] built really for the pace of change that we're facing today.



Yurii Lazaruk: When was the first time you've met this word freelancer or contractor or independent talent? Like whatever. First of all, what is your favorite word for this kind of experts?

Jamie Jacobs: Oh gosh. This is such a funny question. Uh, so I actually have one that I've been u testing lately for, um, executive entrepreneur.

That's kind of the word I'm using because at gig talent, we play with kind of the, the really experienced end of the market. Um, and so they've been very successful executives and they've just chosen to work differently, launching a practice, doing whatever it is that they're excellent at. So that's kind of what I'm using.

The, you know, it's funny, I, I, in my corporate career, I didn't have a great association with consultants. One, like, you know, you kind of had the, there was always, okay, I'll give you the association. It was either like somebody, um, wasn't that great and couldn't get a job, so they hung up with their own shingle.

Or they kind of, you know, come in and like never wanna [00:04:00] leave. So they just keep coming up with more stuff to do. Um, I could see that a lot of colleagues internally might have been kind of threatened 'cause they really didn't understand how they fit, fit in from a hierarchy or if they like, wanted their job.

It was just weird. Um, and then the flip side was, you know. Really smart people at some of the large consulting firms. Um, but then I'd see organizations pay like \$20 million and actually not affect the change. So that didn't give a great association either. So when I, it was really funny because when I first, before I started Gig Talent, I went on my own, uh, through my own independent journey.

And, you know, when people would be like, oh, and here's our consultant, I almost had like an identity pause. 'cause I was like, I don't know if I wanna be am, am I a consultant? Is that how you think? You know, I, I always thought of myself as a. Business person, a practitioner, a partner, and the the whole employee consultant label didn't really matter so much.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, it sounds like black and white. So either you're a loser who can get a job, like, and uh, you have to do whatever you get to do, or you like have this millions of dollars and then you are just, you know, ah, [00:05:00] no, I'm not doing this, or I'm done doing that. Yeah. Or I'm doing this for like hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars and I feel like it's changing.

You know, I feel like it's already like 50 shades of gray something, something inside of here. And, uh. I'm curious, so what is the role that you currently play on this independent talent market?

Jamie Jacobs: Yeah, I think that's the biggest shift is the, the, um. The access of talent, the, the supply of talent, the, um, the amount of people who are excellent, who are now choosing to work differently.

And that, that my role is as the CEO of gig talent. Um, we founded it because I, I had a bunch of peers who were CHROs who were excellent and they were, and when I went on my own. I wanna do what you're doing, but I'm afraid. I'm afraid of sales and business development. I just wanna do the work I'm good at.

And then some of 'em, a few sentences later would say, but I hate my job. And I'm like, okay, well don't, I don't think everyone should be a consultant, but nobody should stay where you hate your job. Right. And, and so as laws in the US were changing around. [00:06:00] Um, how companies engage with independent contractors.

I was like, okay, I can, I can do something to help, I can help that perceived barrier of entry for really excellent, um, talented people to work differently, uh, and make it easy for companies to know, you know, one, you don't have to source hundreds of people. You can come to us as like an agent for experts in the gig economy.

So think of. Maybe sports and athletes have an agent, or actors might have an agent. It's the same thing with now over 50% of the workforce really playing in the gig economy in some capacity. That makes it much more one, it's wonderful. It brings tons of options and opportunities for companies to source talent differently.

But we need organization. It's a little bit like the Wild West because just like companies are struggling with full-time hires to know who really has done the work and is excellent and has the skills, it's the same, you know, as a, as for in the freelance market, how do you really know who's, who's good and what they're good at?

And so that's what we do. We, we bring organization to that gig [00:07:00] economy for experts in the, in the gig economy. And so we've now got. A collective of around a hundred, uh, coaches and consultants, um, across the us We've got a presence in, in the UK and, and growing. And we, what we look for are people who have really sat in the seat, they've done thousands of reps at whatever their experiences.

Most of them are either in HR or talent. Um, there's some operations and the, like, project management, that kind of thing, but, but they've, they've been successful and they can help companies. They can come in and have immediate impact, and so we help companies transform, transform faster towards whatever they're trying to do to, to adapt, to be effective.

Today.

Yurii Lazaruk: If we are talking about companies, who is your ideal client? Like what's your ideal client profile Looks like.

Jamie Jacobs: Yeah. Um, I love this question because I never give a great answer. No, I'm just kidding. Um, I, so we really play on two levels. We play with, with small to mid-size companies that are growing.

And so they are, [00:08:00] either they're scaling fast, they need results, they may or may not have a strategic HR leader, so we can provide a, a fractional HR leader. So that they don't compromise the skills needed to get where they need to go, but they can make an investment that's appropriate for their size and help scale with them.

And then we'll help them eventually hire their full-time person or build out their HR team. Um, and so that, or we can augment if they do have an HR leader, we can augment where they don't have skills and it just doesn't. You know, my opinion is like, you don't need a full-time role for everything, but you do need, um, certain experience and, and expertise.

And so instead of, you know, building these job profiles that everyone comes and says, this one's a unicorn. Can you find the unicorn? And, and then they ultimately end up compromising in one area or another. Why not just hire the people who are great at those things and, and get unicorns in all of 'em doing what they need at the capacity you need.

So, so that's one. And then, and then also at an enterprise level, so same kind of thing, whether it's, uh, being [00:09:00] their, their partner for coaching, uh, because we have so many and we can be kind of a one stop shop or. Augmenting those internal teams. Right now there's a ton of HR transformation and looking to optimize as they're bringing in ai.

We have a partnership with a tool that can, um, basically help assess current processes, uh, systems, tools and people, and find where there's under utilization, uh, in the system. Uh, and kind of provide that roadmap for optimization, uh, with leveraging ai, which is just a easy win. Um, but then the work that comes through that and pulling that through the employee life cycle and your culture, um, is some of the work that we're doing right now.

So we, we play at both ends, but it's, I, I guess the, the, the most concise answer would be that companies that are, that are transforming and, and evolving, those are our clients.

Yurii Lazaruk: So you call the talent that you're providing. Executive entrepreneurs, and I heard this so many times, that companies are afraid of hiring [00:10:00] like junior freelancers.

I mean like. Not junior in the way, like that they just sit and do tasks, but in a way that, uh, some, some low, low key, uh, roles or something that is not really affecting a lot of the, like, working process, et cetera, something that they really need help with. And with you, I'm talking about executive levels or leadership, like how do companies feel about hiring those people?

Like what, what are some blockers. That usually companies, what is something that they, um, what are the biggest concerns that companies raise before working, before starting to work with such experts?

Jamie Jacobs: Yeah, I think there's a lot, uh, there's a significant mind shift, mindset shift that's happening and it's happening at different paces.

So, you know, I think, you know, we all, myself included in hr, like in the past, we were told, you know, don't treat. Contractors or consultants, like employees, and certainly you can't have them lead people. Right. Like that, that, that was a real belief. Um, and I'll tell you, I mean, I, I, I led a HR business partner transformation with Dolby, for [00:11:00] example, um, at a global level.

I came in, um, ended up leading the team for two years, helped hire their ongoing VP and transition, and they have a, she's amazing. And the rock, they have a rockstar team. And, and, and so I think that the shift, so the, the blockers are, are, is mostly mindset. Um, it's, it's, people don't understand also the caliber of talent that now is available in this capacity, and I think, so that is a little bit different of a shift.

It's like they don't even think of it as an option because they kind of, like you said, have whatever their buckets, their version of those buckets are, um, around what they think a con consultant is, or contractor or freelancer, whatever word people wanna use. But I think that the, um, people are starting to understand it and what I'm, I'm.

I am talking a lot about is, you know, people are kind of starting to understand what like AI native might be. I'm saying, okay, so imagine your, you know, your competition that's starting now and is on your heels and they're [00:12:00] AI native, so you know, they're getting from conception to, to implementation faster than you already imagine that there are also capabilities, native meaning they, like many startups.

They have a core kind of internal team and they're augmenting with the skills that they need from experts who can help get them faster by nature, they're gonna have a more flexible, cost-effective structure, like financial structure, business model. They're in, in theory, gonna be having experts doing the work.

So, so they're moving faster from a people and a technology side and they, because they didn't build this big system kind of. Built for the old way of work. They also don't have the internal friction and waste that we're seeing in a, across a lot of organizations now. So, so. That's happening. Like companies need to know that that's happening.

Um, and so the way I say it is like, how can we optimize quickly if, if, if you believe that those things are happening, you can't just do the [00:13:00] one side with technology. We, we have to do that, but we also have to, um, think about the capability side and that's the people side. And, and so the informing people like what you do around.

Look, you have an access to talent that you didn't have before. Think about that from a variable cost perspective rather than everything being a fixed headcount. What options does that give you around how many more capabilities you can actually bring into your organization and how you can orchestrate them in a meaningful way.

And so I think painting the picture and helping people see it is, is kind of the opportunity that people like you and I have. Um. And I don't, just to be clear, I don't think it's a one size fits all for, for any company. It's not like there's a right answer or wrong answer. It's about finding the right mix for your business.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, you, you, you use this word mind shift, and of course it was a little bit of like a typo kind of, but I really like this word, mind shift, like mindset shift. It can be, can be one

thing, and it, it's something that companies are really. Refuse to dealing with for some reason. Because the [00:14:00] more I talk to different people, they're like, ah, we don't have this, we don't have that.

We don't. So it's always like, why? No, but it's never why. Yes. And I'm curious, like you told about this a Adobe transformation. So how did it start? They reached out to you or you was who pitched them? Like, tell me a story.

Jamie Jacobs: No, they were super leaning in. They're always on the forefront of, of kind of workforce innovation and um, and.

It started honestly as a three month engagement just to fill kind of a gap on a business partner level with one of their largest business units. And, but they knew that they needed transformation. And then once they kind of got to know me, they were like, Hey, let's do this. And so, um, so it became something and you know, I, I used that as ex as an example because.

I love being a part of a team, right? There's this, I think there's sometimes an assumption that if somebody is working as a freelancer or independent, that they, they don't wanna be part of a team, or they're not a good team player, or they're not a strong leader. Or [00:15:00] there was some interpersonal derailer that made them ineffective in corporate, and I think that's what, you know, is a kind of a bubble we have to burst.

It's like, no, no, no. Many people love those things, right? They also want to be able to work autonomy. They wanna have a. You know, impact across multiple organizations, they've maybe discovered a niche that they're uniquely good at. And like for me and many of our gig talent consultants, a lot of times that's transformation.

And by nature, transformation used to not be permanent. Right? So, so some of people, like if you look at my resume, I mean, some people would say, well you, you know, you'd move after three years. And I go, yeah, my attention span was like two to three years. 'cause I was coming in, doing the transformation and then.

And, um, you know, in, in large organizations, obviously there was always some, another project to go to, so sometimes it was longer. But, um, and, and now, you know, you could even argue that transformation is ongoing. So that's not even true. But, but what that allowed people like me to do is go, oh, my skill is transformation.[00:16:00]

I can just go do that. Right. And I can be great at it, and then people can get me for what I'm great at. And you know, the things that I'm not so great at, they can have somebody else do, um, that loves that. Right? So it, it's, it's just about, I think we do better at the work we love anyway. So,

Yurii Lazaruk: you know, as totally to your point, when I speak with my clients about, like building communities for their business, I tell them, look, I'm here to help you do it in like three, six months to start like the basics to start this journey.

And then you will do on your, I don't want you to be my lifetime client. Yes. I want to help you start and move on. And then of course you can reach out to me. We can have some extra calls here and there. I can guide you, but I don't want me to be your push. You know, you have to do it like I will help you still, you have to do it.

So, you know, to your point, like jumping between projects, it's totally good. That's exactly what you are hired for. And you know, coming back a little bit to this transformation, so. What were some challenges or, uh, some blockers or maybe some stigmas you had to break, [00:17:00] um, that you had to deal during this transformation process?

Jamie Jacobs: In that example?

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah.

Jamie Jacobs: Yeah. With Dolby. Yeah. I mean, so they, even though they, um, were very much leaning into elastic talent or agile talent strategies, um, this was a bit of a unique. Case a, a leader, uh, first of all, leadership role interfacing with the C-suite and, and their global teams. Um, and, and driving change and building a team, you know, and, and those kinds of things.

So there was a little bit of like. Are you gonna stick around? Right? Like there was a little bit like, how invested are you? Um, so there was that, there was like any position, you know, just a new person coming in. You need to build relationships with stakeholders, you know, cross-functional stakeholders and, and so people just needed to get to know me and that, that.

Take. That's not, doesn't always happen overnight. Um, and you know, I know you, you've been working with some German companies and, and, and, uh, other companies, Polish companies and like, we had a [00:18:00] large presence in both Germany and Poland and um, you know, and they were just a little like, who are you anyway, from the US kind of thing, right?

So, so there, you know, I think that that. There's normal things that any, any new leader is gonna have to overcome. But I think the once they realized like, no, no, I'm, I'm really committed and I'm someone who, if I'm in, I'm, I'm all in. And if I'm not in, I'm not in. And you would know it. So, um, so I think that I was able to build trust and then they, they realized like, no, she's here.

She cares. She is as invested in this as as I am. She doesn't have, and, and in fact, she doesn't have a personal agenda other than helping us achieve what we're here to achieve. And so. That that allowed, you know, things to move faster. The team to trust me, I still, I like, I'll still have one-on-ones with many of the team just informally because I care about them and we're friends.

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Just direct access to verified experts and opportunities across the globe. Visit [freelance map.com](https://freelancemap.com) and start building your next success story today. Uh, I no wonder, you know, because I see this belief behind you and you like the, it's, it's totally Ted lost away. Like, who are you anyways, that you're coming from the US and you're a basketball coach, how would you coach a soccer team?

So I totally get this, you know, like how, how they perceived. And, uh, so final question about this example. So paint me a picture before and after you worked with them.

Jamie Jacobs: So before there was a feeling that, uh, the business partner team was not. Uh, you know, seen around corners, really driving the organization to the next level of performance, maybe asking the right questions.

Um, there were questions about, they [00:20:00] were, they were very siloed, kind of not working cross-functionally either kind of within hr, but even beyond that. There was limitations around their capacity, kind of in kind of what might be traditionally called like organizational development type skills. Um, they were just a little more tactical.

Um, and some of that was bandwidth, some of it was structure, and some of it was capabilities. And so coming in and really starting to understand the business, um, and the team and, and then helping create a vision of what that role could be and helping, you know, inviting the, the, the people that were there to, to.

Envision their role in it and, and help co-create, you know, I think that that's super important today. It wasn't like, you know, I didn't bring an old playbook. I came in and, and really was curious about what they were trying to do and, and helped design the right kind of go forward team and brought some really amazing people onto that team.

And we jelled, um, beyond my direct team, but within, within. All things [00:21:00] Dolby. Um, they, they operate an ecosystem. They're amazing at it. And I think that it was really, you know, learning to, to shape a, a business, a global business partner team that could kind of operate in the same way and have that, that.

Fluid impact. And so, um, you know, I think, so that, that was the outcome was just a higher performing team. A team that felt more engaged with both the business and their internal stakeholders in all different ways. Um, that was agile and, and quite frankly, you know, able to navigate. Um, you know, continued strategies, obviously that we faced COVID and, and dealing with that.

But, but things like, um, continued, uh, location strategies and global strategies and, you know, AI and transformation. They've, they've had a ton of innovation. They're just a really amazing company. So I think that, that, that those were some of the biggest kind of, from this to that, to this high performing organization in a way where it didn't break and, and people really continued to just.

In, [00:22:00] uh, dedicate their, their discretionary effort because they felt compelled to the vision that we were trying to create. And, um, you know, George, one other leaders there said to me, you know, he, I kind of got a reputation as being the, the person who. I would just ask the question, like I was pretty direct, and I think when you're external and not, you're not afraid of your job, you're able to, you're willing to ask the difficult questions, not in a jerk way, but in a way that's really like impactful and just trying to like.

You know, make sure we don't have blind spots and, you know, let's do the difficult things. And if there's a reason not to, that's okay too, but, but at least I'm not doing my job if I don't, you know, help us at least, like have the conversation.

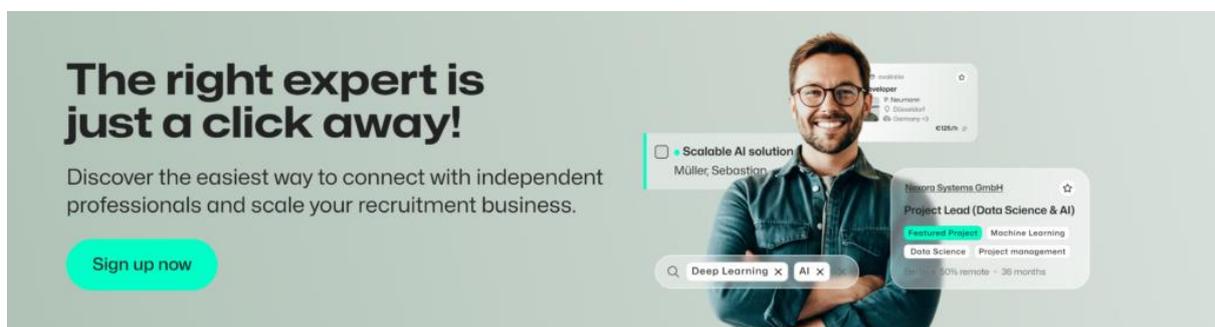
Yurii Lazaruk: And it's also amazing that you mentioned it because as a, as a, an independent expert, as an internal talent, you can call sheet sheet and not a hundred percent afraid of being fired because you can be very honest.

Once again, not in an asshole way, but like in a good way.

Jamie Jacobs: Yeah. It, it, I think, I think that's, [00:23:00] uh, one of the biggest reasons people should like, have some kind of practice of bringing in an external person because they're exactly that reason. They're not gonna be part of the, the system. Um, and so they, they just don't acclimate to that.

And so they're, they're able to see things and, and everybody has blind spots, even high performing, amazing cultures and organizations. We all have blind spots. So why wouldn't you like bring in somebody that's competent that you, you know, have confidence in? Like, just learn from them for whatever that period of time is.

Yurii Lazaruk: How do you win internal stakeholders? I mean, for example, there is someone from the team, uh, that wants to work with independent talent and they already know who they want to work, and then they have to go to their managers and kind of like win their hearts. How do they do this?



Jamie Jacobs: Uh, it's such a good question.

So I, I think that, again, I, I, I think this power of talking about capabilities and outcomes. I don't think any leader is gonna argue if you have a compelling outcome that you're trying to drive, [00:24:00] and if you have a solution that's gonna help get there faster, and either maybe it, it's either more economically or it, it might be expensive, but it's for a shorter period of time and you get there faster.

So long term it's, it's less expensive. Um, I think there's a business case for that. I think that, um. You know, that that's the easiest way. And then I think the, the idea about capabilities, building capabilities, um, you know, one of the cool things about like what we do at gig talent, for example, and what I did when I would go in like this wasn't, again, this wasn't like, here's Jamie's playbook and just do it and then you're good.

Like it was more about. Building those internal capabilities. So when I left, the team had more capabilities. They had a leader who was the right fit, who had her own vision, was gonna take them to the next level. It, it, it, it's about, um, really adding value in a, in an incremental way. So I, I think that, you know, there's, there's a business case, and then for those leaders who are resistant, I would just say ask [00:25:00] why, you know, ask yourself why.

Like, what is the fear? You know, is it an old story? Is it not understanding the, the access to talent that you now have and the options and that, that provides? Um, or is it, you know, something broader? Like more It could be internal. We, we. Have made choice. Like when I was a corporate executive, you know, my identity was very much as a corporate executive.

And, and I still think corporations are a great place to be if that's where you wanna be. And you know, it, it just, so it's not about like good or bad and, and your choice to recognize that talent comes in different forms right now shouldn't undermine. Whatever personal decisions you're making around your own career.

So I think it's, you know, it does come in different ways. Uh, but so, you know, leaders can just ask themselves like, why, um, you know, even the, you know, we, many companies before COVID would've said, no, we can never work remote. Right? That would've been the answer. And they all realize, oh, I guess we can, you know, maybe it's not ideal, but we can to some capacity and the world didn't, you know, our business didn't break or [00:26:00] whatever.

So, so whatever those. Perceived constraints, potentially. Um, I bet their solutions and companies, I'll tell you, companies are already doing them. So, um, again, you know, you can be behind if you wanna be behind, but I don't, I don't, most leaders, that's not their intention.

Yurii Lazaruk: I feel like currently the hardest part is finding those trailblazers who are already doing this.

And I recently had a conversation with a few more folks during the podcast and they told me that that out of like 10 people, only one person is driving this transformation. Only one person out of 10 has this mindset shift. And I feel like, you know, as you've said, we need more business cases, we need more sharing the stories we need, like be more vocal and then especially people who get and, and also.

In companies, sometimes you have this bureaucracy and you want to keep everything to yourself. You don't want to share your wins. 'cause if your department is winning because of independence, no way I will ever tell my secret to someone else. So they start to win. I feel like it's also like a huge, huge blocker, you know, inside.

Jamie Jacobs: Oh, that's fascinating. [00:27:00] Well. Yeah. And that, I mean, that, that goes back to like the whole operating system. You know, what a shame that if this department is winning, but the enterprise isn't, like, to me, that's the wrong decision. Right? And so, but we allow that, I mean, our, our current structures and the way people are rewarded often allow that.

Um, but I, and I, I also think people, there's just a lack of awareness and I know some of the good work that you do helping companies understand how to implement. Um, you know, elastic workforce or flexible workforce and, and the benefits to it. And again, I'm sure you have a similar approach. It's not a one size fits all, but, but, um, but opening that into, you know, having an integrated talent strategy and, and deciding what that means for your organization, I think is, is super important.

And, you know, the other part is like, I, I think most leaders would understand. We have, let's say it's a project or it's a, uh, it's a m and a and an integration, or it's some kind of system implementation, or it's like these [00:28:00] projects that they know aren't gonna last forever, or we need to staff up because we, you know, we're going commercial and we need to, we know we, or we just got series C and we have to grow.

They know that there's like an influx and, but if they staffed full-time headcount for that influx. Then they're gonna be o then they're gonna have too much overhead, right? So, so why wouldn't you think, oh, we know we have a blip, whatever that growth period is, and then when you, and we need people who are the builders who can help us achieve that.

And then when we stabilize a little bit, even if you need a headcount, my guess is it's different than the person who would've helped build. So, so just recognizing, you know, how you can kind of smartly use the talent available to you. Um, I, I think that it's just mind blowing for people once they get it right.

Once they get it, they're like, oh, now I can't unsee this. But they just couldn't see it before.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah. And, uh, to a point that there is no one size fits all. And still I hear that some companies, they think of independent talent as either or, so either I hire full-time [00:29:00] expert or I hire independents. They never think that they can, you know, combine this superpower that they can embed like some external talent into internal team and make them work together as a whole.

Full mechanism for like three months or six months. And they think that no, I, as, as you've said also, like either I take this person and they are disconnected from the bigger part, or I don't hire them at all. So from your experience, and uh, once again, a little bit coming back, I hear this a lot, blended workforce, this word, which means that, um, external, internal, of course, full-time experts are not going anywhere.

So full-time experts, external experts, and ai, and also people love some kind of formulas, you know, some kind of numbers, like 80 20 or something like that. Yeah. So from your experience, what is the best balance of using this blended workforce? Once again, no one size fits all, but just, just a general understanding.

Jamie Jacobs: Gosh. You know, I, I, I don't know. I mean, I, I could [00:30:00] see 80 20, 70 30, I, you know, I, I, or, you know, even more. I, I'll tell you like, um, you know, these like, I mean our, we're kind of a relatively small organization and we have a core small group and, but we have an extended amount of experts who are, who we leverage, and so it's probably more.

I don't know, 40, 60, like 40 and full-time employee. But that, you know, I have, I just have a different mindset. Um, and I like the flexibility, right? Um, so I, I think, I don't think there's a right way, but I, I know it's, it's, if, if you're not thinking about it and. You know, if, if you have more than 90% FTEs, um, you're probably not leveraging this to the extent you can.

Yurii Lazaruk: How do you see the role of freelancers evolving in the global workforce?

Jamie Jacobs: Yeah, so the data shows that more and more people are choosing to work that way. I would say, you know. Kind of, I think you said [00:31:00] earlier, like, I don't know where that's gonna land. I, my hope is that companies actually figure out how to take out some of the friction, uh, which is why many people choose to leave.

Yeah. So, so I, so I don't think the answer is everybody needs to go fractional. Um, but I think that, uh, if companies don't figure that out, then we will continue to see more people just choosing, uh, one of the jokes. That I told some of our friends, uh, Tony and, and Matt, you know, I, I'll say like, don't call, you can call me an employee.

You can call me a consultant, but don't call me mediocre. Right. Like, and, and I think that, you know, I just have this fundamental belief that people wanna be productive and want to do good work. And if you're in a company and because of. Um, old operating systems, poor, uh, leadership, uh, poor, whatever, whatever the reasons are changing priorities.

Um, if people feel like their work is not moving the needle forward, they, they do one of two things. [00:32:00] They either settle in place. Uh, or they leave. And, you know, so I'll say to, there was this old experiment at where, uh, with a, like with a rat, and if they went to the left, they got zapped, they go to the right, they get zapped, and eventually they'd be standing still.

And I think there's a lot of companies that have percentages of employees that are the equivalent of standing still, because moving forward is. Productive because of the operating system and this, this, uh, kind of tension or waste or whatever. And so, and just like logically, nobody wants to waste their time.

Right. And especially the incoming workforce who has really assessed the role that plays the work, the role that work plays in their life, they're not willing to do it. So, so if, if the companies can't figure this out, I think we will continue to see more. The supply side will force companies to shift. Um, my hope and the work that we do is to try to make companies actually great.

Um, and then it, then it just becomes more of a balance and, and I think it will be, um, other factors that really shape personal decisions around [00:33:00] that.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, when you want to have some business education, you most likely go to some MBA courses, whatever, but where do leader learn about this workforce changes.

Jamie Jacobs: You know, I think, I think HR leaders should be going to different conferences and really leaning in and understanding. Um, I, I was shocked actually. I was with a, a transformation, or sorry, a talent team last week, and, and they, they just, it wasn't really on their radar. And then once we started talking about it, they were like, oh, and it went into everything.

Not like it, not just their talent strategy, but then they were thinking, 'cause we we're talking about this. Pace of change and, and what's happening in workforce. They were talking, their learning and development leader was talking about. You know, classes like don't really do it anymore. We really have to integrate the learning into the work itself, which is again, how do we do that, right?

How do we, it it requires a pretty major shift. And so I think as they, as once your eyes are opened, um, [00:34:00] then, then they start to see this possibilities for their organization. So I think if you don't, if, if you're someone who's listening and you're like, I don't know where to start. I don't know how to stand this up In your organization.

They can call you. They can call me. That's, we do that. We help companies really understand that, whether it's just sessions with HR teams or talent teams or executive teams or even, you know, helping leaders really understand and, and help them. Helping companies kind of create their own customized. Like menu of talent and, and helping leaders understand like different use cases and when this might make sense and when that might make sense.

And what are the, you know, priorities for your business and, and how should we consider this as an opportunity? So, um, I think, you know, all of the things, hopefully listening to your podcast, people are learning. Uh, but I, I think that it, like, just, there's no dumb question. And there's also no, like if everybody's, if anybody said, I have all the answers, they're just.

Line because this is something where it's, it's about evolution. It's about co-creation, it's about [00:35:00] collective experimentation and, and we're figuring out together and creating kind of what I call the brave new world of work.

Yurii Lazaruk: Now, currently it's so easy to really learn. 'cause if people want, they can just go and Google or chat your video or whatever.

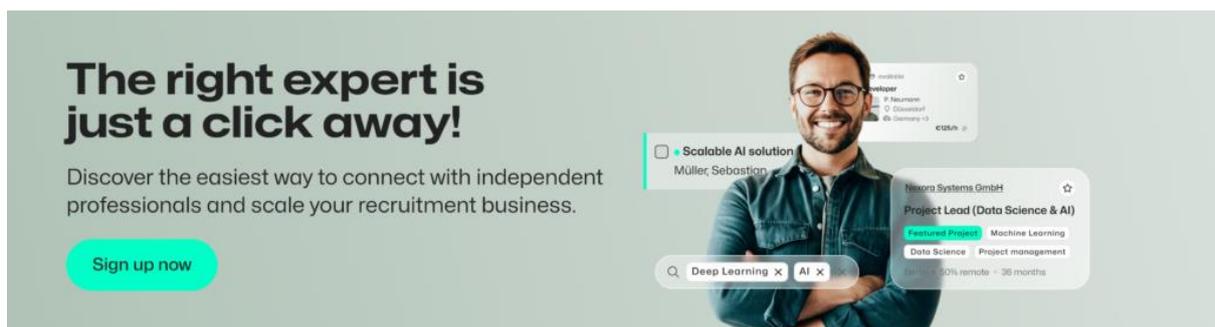
Like contingent workforce, flexible talent, independent experts.

Jamie Jacobs: That's, that's easier answer.

Yurii Lazaruk: Like it's, it's, I mean like, in a way, but I feel like it's also coming a little bit back because as you've mentioned many, many times, it's all about the mindset. And even before googling those keywords. People need to switch something in their mind that they're ready to lead.

Like unleash this power to stop caring about controlling every single person to being open to, um, you know, not being afraid that someone will come to the company and stole something from them, or that they will hire some losers who couldn't find a job, like as a full-time expert, et cetera. Yeah. So there are so many mind blockers and it's, it's like crazy and I'm curious.

What one change do you think would accelerate [00:36:00] trust and adoption of these independent experts worldwide?



Jamie Jacobs: I think it's experiencing what great looks like. I think getting a great fractional or independent person in for some impactful work and companies like now having a different association with it, uh, I think that's really gonna be the biggest shift I think. Um. You know, how you get there is, is different, but it's, what's interesting is because so many more people are choosing to work this way now, you know, someone who's maybe a, a leader in an organization, someone that they've worked with and respected or worked for and respected now is choosing to work this way.

And so they already, they have an, an association with that AI person as being a. You know, a great talent, um, first and then the consultant came second. So that might be, if [00:37:00] they do, if they engage with them, they'll be like, oh, okay. So there's probably more people like this person that I already respected who are choosing to work this way.

So I think those, those are the things that are happening. Um, you know, I'm like a super optimist if you can't tell. So I hope that, that that's what happens rather than. Them being totally disrupted by competitors who are doing it and then being forced to, or, you know, their boards and shareholders kind of coming and saying, your cost model is unsustainable and, and you've been an ineffective leader because you haven't driven the change needed.

So hopefully it comes, uh, with the carrot rather than the stick.

Yurii Lazaruk: Now also to a point when you just start working with one such expert, you are open the whole possibility of other experts, because usually these people are connected with other people from the niche. It's, it's never just, I, I don't know, a single great freelancer or like in term expert who doesn't know, like at least dozen of other experts in, in a similar niche or in complementary niches.

So I feel like, you know, just. Starting with one and [00:38:00] it's like, ah, yeah, you have this, all this Pandora box of independent experts. Yes. Right in front of your door.

Jamie Jacobs: Yeah. And that, and that's what we're trying to do at gig talent is like help bring organization to the gig economy. So helping, making it easier for or for companies who like.

If they don't have time to vet a hundred people, and yes, everybody knows somebody, but how do you know if that person really is the right person for this unique fit? So we become that one stop call, but then they have access to a huge network of people who are already vetted. We know who's good and what they're good at, and we can get you the right resources like within days.

So.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, Jamie, I wish to have the sky is the limit, but time is the limit to our conversation. So the final question, what advice would you give to companies just starting to use freelancers and to freelancers entering the market?

Jamie Jacobs: Ooh, I love it. Okay, so for companies, I think, you know, do do pilots, right?

Like just tip tiptoe your way in. You don't have to necessarily, [00:39:00] um, go to a 30% freelancer or whatever. Today it's, it's finding use cases where it makes sense, where you can have small wins and, and prove to. Leaders in the organization and your teams that, uh, these can be really valued team members. Um, and, and think about how do you, you know, integrate them?

How do you make them successful, set them up for success. Um, I, I think that just start, you know, and, and, and you'll find what's right for you, and then you'll kind of build that trusted ecosystem that you're talking about. And, and for freelancers or people who are considering entering, entering the market, I, I, I always say like, look.

This is about everybody really finding your own authentic journey. And people have different motivations, right? Some people are like, I wanna make as much or more than I was making internally. Uh, now we have a huge demographic of people who are in what, you know, you might call your second act, I call it preferment, where you do what you prefer, but they're hugely skilled, right?

Most of them. And so, [00:40:00] um, so there's lots of different motivation of why people are making that change. And I think getting to know yourself. Doing the, the work to understand really what, where you bring, um, significant impact and, and immediate impact and not be like, sometimes we underestimate because something comes easy for us.

We think, oh, like I remember going, oh, you're gonna pay me just to do that. That doesn't even feel like work. But what comes innate for some of us is not innate for others. And, um, and so if you can figure out what that, what your superpower is and do more of it, it's not gonna feel like work. It's gonna feel like fun.

And um, you know, for some of us you kinda get that pit in your stomach of fear. Um, and I would just say, do it anyway. Do it anyway. Uh, you know, I used to tell myself the worst, I can always take another job, right? So, um, so there really, there doesn't need to be fear.

Yurii Lazaruk: I remember someone said, I don't know who exactly that, uh, if you love your work, you won't will, you won't work a single day in your life.

Yeah. So I feel like it's exactly what [00:41:00] it is, you know, to tap into what you adore, what you like doing, and then yeah, you just getting paid for something that you are having fun for. I feel like sometimes it's, uh, definitely, uh, very, very. Um, and fairy tale ish picture still. I know way to go. Way to go. And,

Jamie Jacobs: you know, I, I'll just say this, so I, on my recent podcast, my sister was interviewing me and, and she told me like years ago, this was like related to personal relationships.

She had said, you know, when it's right, it just flows and it's easy. It doesn't mean it doesn't take effort. It just flows. And you know, quite frankly, I was like, you're full of shit, you know, but, but she was right. She was totally right. It just flows when it's right, it flows. And it's the same with work. It doesn't mean you're not, I mean, quite frankly, the people I know and myself we're working our tails off.

But we love it. We love it and, and, and we're having, you know, better outcomes and impact for the people we work with because we're doing something we enjoy.

Yurii Lazaruk: Last but not least, name two people I should [00:42:00] reach out to, to talk about the independent workforce.

Jamie Jacobs: Oh goodness. That's fun. Um, oh, okay. So while you're talking to a lot of people, I think that we already know, um, gosh, I kind of wanna come back to you on that, but let's think.

Okay. You could talk to, um. I think it'd be interesting actually, like a, a talent leader on who has leaned into that. So that could be interesting. Um, like either, uh, George Hudgens at at Dolby or, or Nick Fitzpatrick at Dolby, both of them, or instrumental in standing that that program up within their organization and they could share things that worked and things and maybe challenges that they overcome came or are still facing.

Um, so that would be one. Those would be two. Those would be two. And uh, I'll have to come up with some more and send them to you direct.

Yurii Lazaruk: I'll definitely follow up and ask you much more questions and, uh, what is the easiest way to connect [00:43:00] with you?

Jamie Jacobs: Well, thank you. So LinkedIn, of course, Jamie Tiano Jacobs.

Um, our website is gig talent agency.com. Um, I'm just starting a, a substack so you can see that. Or, uh, listen to the Courageous Choice. Join me, uh, for that podcast. I honestly, I view this whole thing as as co-creation. So I welcome feedback, input questions, tell me if I'm full of it, you know, all of it. Uh, you know, I, I just, I like to hear the impact and, and the stories and continue to learn.

'cause I think this is the most exciting time we could be doing this. Work. So thanks for having me. I'm really, it's been a pleasure.

Yurii Lazaruk: Now, Jamie, I met you first at Human Cloud and while listening to your conversation, but then I was like, this is a person I want to talk to. And then we finally connected on LinkedIn and we are having this conversation and I see a lot of passion and energy in what you are doing, and I feel like that we need more and more people who are like you, who are really passionate about what they do.

And as you've said. It's not easy and things, but you can clearly see you liked what you are doing. And it's, it's a [00:44:00] bad thing. And as, as long as we are like being in this bubble, I think this bubble is getting bigger and bigger and who knows what will happen. Maybe at some point it'll be like, not like 2080, maybe it'll be like 50 50, who knows?

But since we have people like you who are making this industry better, I'm sure it will go off. So thank you so much for sharing your experience here.

Jamie Jacobs: Such a pleasure. Thank you so much for having me, and I'm really glad we've, uh, become friends. So thanks so much.

Yurii Lazaruk: Thank you. All right. And 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 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.

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