

## How Freelancers Help Businesses Scale Faster - Episode 23 with Katherine Steiner-Dicks

**Yurii Lazaruk:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the Independent Workforce, the podcast where we explore the now and the future of work through the lens of temporary employment such as freelancers, contractors, fractional experts, you name it. Here we speak with CEOs, recruiters, founders, and industry leaders about how they work with independent talent, the wins, the challenges, and the lessons learned.

My name is Yuri. I'm growing the freelance market at Freelancer Map and International platforms has been connected, top independent professionals with companies. For over 20 years, and my guest is Katherine Steiner. Dicks the founder of Buzz Western Media business journalist, freelancer advocate and editorial consultant for the freelancing former, who's been covering private equity and venture capital for over 20 years while building her own freelance career in parallel and helping businesses hire right independent talent, and who definitely knows what makes freelance or business partnerships actually work.

So welcome Kate.

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** Oh, welcome. Thanks for having me.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Super happy to talk to you. You know, you have this unique blend, unique [00:01:00] combination of B and Freelancer and helping businesses to hire the right freelancers to grow. So tell me, what shift have you noticed during the latest few years on the, on the independent talent market and.

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**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** Okay. Well, I've been speaking to some CEOs of freelancer platforms, and I always wanna bring people good news for the freelancers. I mean, we saw the first big boom in the, the financial crisis of 2008. It, uh, you know, it's, it's the same thing. We're kind of seeing now, master redundancies.

People have to go somewhere. So we saw a big boom then. Then again, then it equalized. Then in COVID it went nuts again. I moved jurisdiction. I was running so many different projects, running so many different clients. Um, it was great. So I couldn't, I was the one person who couldn't complain 'cause I, you know, I was in my own business.

But, um, I think now we're in a really odd, that we had a crazy time where everyone was hiring. [00:02:00] I am speaking, a lot of this is coming from the UK market, so speaking to freelancers, speaking to, um, recruitment agencies, things like this. What we're seeing now is there's a freeze on hiring permanent staff, and usually that usually means there's gonna be uptake in freelance roles.

Unfortunately, what I'm seeing now is. Companies becoming really, really productive. They're either running, unfortunately, their current staff doing more, make them more productive. Whether that's using AI tools, um, or they're bringing in freelancers. But the big trend I'm seeing now on platforms like yours and others is that there's so much more competition among the own freelancers that.

They get, you know, these clients get quite picky. They get, they get their people that they love and they want to, you know, they might do a six month project and then they wanna work with them again. But what I'm [00:03:00] also seeing is companies, the larger ones that can afford, um, you know, the budgets to have a nice onboarding process, but they want, they want everything done.

They want to un, they want a platform that can onboard a freelancer that maybe is on a platform like yours, but they also want your company to also have the system to onboard someone who's just a one-off. So they want, they want it all, they want the contracts to be flexible based on the, you know, the work, the project, um, whether the

person wants to stay a, you know, is it independent or if they're gonna get taxed, almost like an employee.

So they want everything. So what I'm seeing is a boon, uh, you know. But it's slowing down unfortunately. And we're seeing more people going freelance in the ne in the last past 12 months. Not necessarily because they wanted this freedom and independence like they did in the the pandemic. It's [00:04:00] by necessity because of the mass layoffs in tech as competent, turning into iGen Enterprises.

So, and you'll see big companies like Salesforce, they have this idea that they're gonna be agent. Company and then their clients see what they're doing. So we're gonna see this funnel where there's less and less and less, less humans working on things. But there are some that can really call the shots and that kind of equalizes the rates, especially if you can do ai, um, in terms of not just using it on a daily basis, but building the products.

So your project managers, your ex designers that are freelancers. They are now being self, they, they have to self-teach themselves and now it's not good enough. You now need to know how to build something with an AI tool, things like that. So I guess the trends I'm seeing is a lot I'm seeing, uh, you know, people still have to be specialized, but clients [00:05:00] expect so much more from their freelancers.

They want you to be specialized, they want you to be working projects. Um. But what you have to be careful of as a client is I see these listings and they want literally, it's almost like six roles in one, and you're not helping anybody by that. You're just taking the mic as the, as the British would say.

So you have to really find out, you know what, what is a freelancer worth? And you know, is it worth, you know, put making them do so many jobs and not really be able to focus on thing?

**Yurii Lazaruk:** I feel like it's very much connected with current existing hiring process because when you hire a full-time expert, you hire for titles, skills.

Like general amount of experience, whatever. You don't hire a person for a specific task, which is very weird. And what we also see on the market, the shift from title hiring to outcomes, hiring, so you have a specific task and that's exactly what you're hiring. You know, [00:06:00] it's also, it's also interesting you mentioned that um, companies are sticky with one freelancer, someone they worked with and they keep forever working with.

And I totally get it. It's so much easier when you find someone. You trust this person, then you put them on like hundreds of projects. And also on the other hand, uh, it was a previous conversation with Mina Basta from Airbus, and I remember he told that we always make it open, make a very new project open, because it kind of like helps them to bring even better talent inside.

Because at some point, you know, you have a project and maybe you have one freelancer, but you are limited to the whole market. Maybe the, the moment you hired this person. Someone else was busy and now you can tap into their experience. So, and also, you know, to your point, I totally, I, I also see this like decline of freelancer projects and as, uh, Thomas master, the CEO of freelancer, I recently made a post that risk decline, but decline in some parts and grow [00:07:00] in other parts.

So it's always like, I feel like there is this, some changes happening, as you've mentioned. Because of ai and AI is like not taking humans out of the equation. Yes, they remove some jobs and still it creates new ones. And also I feel like it's a huge moment that not that many companies understand the power of independent talent.

They get used to hiring fulltime experts and they, they think that. They can remove, uh, full-time experts with ai, which is not always the case. You still need humans. So I'm curious, from your experience, what do you see as the biggest concern that companies raise before and maybe even while working with freelancers?

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** I think if they're bringing on someone who's, even if they're working with an existing, uh. Freelancer, a lot of freelancers will have worked in multiple industries, different clients, so they have that know-how on how to, you know, they're bringing all their

experience from all those clients and, and the problems I've had with those [00:08:00] clients to the table.

But I think when you're bringing on a new freelancer, I think the main issue is. They're gonna, if you are working with, you're gonna, they're gonna compare someone. So I see two different types of freelancers. The ones that kind of get the job done, do everything, tick the boxes, and then they kind of go, they're great.

They do what their job, they don't, but they don't do anything more. And now what I'm seeing with clients now is that. They really appreciate to almost be a partner. You're not just thinking of that project, you're thinking of other things, how you can bring new products on, on board. Um, but I think the main difficulties they might be comparing.

People, you know, whether individuals. So you really have to that first initial interview or talk. Um, some RS can sell themselves, others can't. So as a, as a client, you can think, okay, I don't wanna waste my time here. But you have to dig a little bit and say, you have to pose some problems to [00:09:00] them. And hopefully the freelancer that will help reveal what they know.

Because sometimes they just do a project, they go on. They forget even all the things that they've done sometimes. And you know, so I think what you need to, the main issue is making sure you really know the freelancers. You have to ask more deeper questions on the projects and the types of clients dealt with.

Um, I think the concern from the freelancers are. Is this person gonna treat me, um, like an employee? Are they gonna encroach on my time when I'm working on other clients? It all depends on what type. If you're a contract, it's like on a fixed term contract, you're not working for anybody else. That's, that's a different story.

But if you're a freelancer, like a, I have run my own business, I have multiple clients. People don't always know who my clients are because I'm ghostwriting for law firms and things like that. I think what you need to do on both sides preempt any problems you could foresee and fix that in the dialogue [00:10:00] before.

So as a freelancer, you preempt. Your terms that you might want, things like that. Or you could say, okay, if this happens, who do I turn to in the organization? You know, things like that. So I think it's comparing your experience from before, but you really need to make sure you ask the right questions. To people.

I hold hope that answered your question.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** You know, what you, what you answered, uh, about the first type of freelancers who do the bare minimum and then they out. It sounds like quiet, quitting, you know, so it, it feels like they're just doing,

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** but see, some people just like it. The command, they come out. I think within journalism sometimes you get, they, they just file the copy.

They go on to do the next thing and they may or may not be available the next time. And they're, they're great, but they just do what the, there's, there's no, um. To me that I, I think like a business, and I think all freelancers really need to start doing this. You aren't just project depro. Think like a business because you want that client.

If they're a good client, you want them to hire you again. [00:11:00] So give your feedback on stuff, on meetings. Don't just, you know, file the copy and go, you know, if that serves your purpose, fine. But if you really wanna build partnerships. Get, I would say get involved a little bit. You don't need to, you know, be an employee, but you have to give some strategic value to clients now, and they will always think of you.

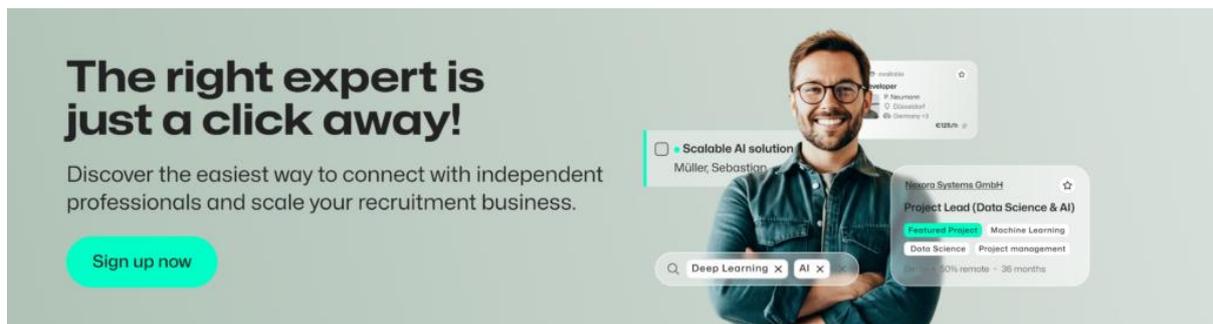
Um, and it also helps you. They will immediately think of you first for a new project or a new client that they bring on.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** I would say also one of the benefits of freelancers is that they can call shit. Shit. So if something doesn't work, they're not being afraid of saying it out loud. They can tell you, Hey, it doesn't work.

That's why. And that's how we can fix it. And I feel like when you are building relationships with such people, you definitely getting, you

know, more than just a task done, you are getting a consultant and experienced. A person professional who is there to help you with your product builder. But once again, I feel like it's always about like the future, like [00:12:00] the build of product and not that many people think about when they, you know, hire someone at the moment.

And I feel like it's also about expectations. So I'm curious, like from, from your experience, what are the biggest misalignments between company's expectations and freelancer realities?



**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** I think lots of times if, I mean, I think 'cause I've been in this long enough, I preempt every single situation. You know, if a kid, you know, my kid gets sick, or if one of the clo, one of the, one of their team can't deal with stuff, I preempt everything.

Um, I think misalignment is usually expectations that that person, if they are not, if they're working with other clients, you have to realize. That that's they're, if they're working on other clients, it's because they are in demand and you, I think you have to respect, it has to be a dual in, dual respectful relationship.

These are not employees, even though if they're a fixed junk card, they are, you know, [00:13:00] experienced people. So give them respect of their time. But I also think if you're a freelancer and you know, for any reason that you're working. With a client, another client on this set day, you communicate that you let them know because you, you know, you let, so gonna be, ah, working this client today from this, this, this, you need anything, send me a WhatsApp if it's urgent.

If not, it has that communication, that kinda expectation. Um, but I also think what can happen, and I don't, you know, is when you get too many cooks in the kitchen, when you're working on, you start bringing

in people and you get, people are just, you know, on a. Document or a slut and people just saying there are two bits, and it's just because they wanna be seen.

And that is really frustrating for freelancers. You need to minimize the amount of people sometimes that giving the feedback not, not if it's like a pro, yeah, you're doing a meet your consumer survey, that's different. But you have to let the client, you know, know, say, okay, if we're gonna bring [00:14:00] certain people on.

Is this gonna stop things from going forward? Or do we need this person's feedback right now or later? Things like that. So, um, dunno if that, but it's, it's a lot of expectations and, and respecting the time of the freelancer if they're working with other clients, but then also as a feel, respect your client.

They're gonna be nervous that if they can't hear from you for, I mean, they, yeah, just let them know where you are, what you're doing. Um, without a sense of control, but just, you know, alleviate any of their worries.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** You know, I really like how you phrased it, that if freelancers are working with, uh, other clients, that it means that they're in demand, that it means that they are professional, they're delivering, and I feel like.

Some companies, some people have exactly the opposite way of thinking. They think if some, if freelancer works with other clients, it means that they will steal their data and they will go to all the other clients and share their data with them, and then it'll be, uh, go to their competitors and blah, blah, [00:15:00] blah.

So when, when, sometimes when I hear that, I'm like. Who are you talking about? Are you talking about some robbers or like some criminals, or are you talking about expert freelancers? I have no idea who we're talking about. So how to overcome this fear. Like what, what should companies keep in mind when they work with a freelancer who also works with other different clients?

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** Okay. I mean, if they're completely unrelated, I, I've had sometimes one client said, you are not allowed to work with any other private equity clients because you were, I'm like. That's my whole business. Can't, sorry. Can't do it. So we had to negotiate with that. So you give me an NDA on this particular thing, if that's the issue.

Or we have something in writing. Because actually in the UK, if you start having that type of control, if. If you go to a court and the, the tax authority is gonna say you are effectively an employee, you can't do that to affiliate. If you are in a fixed term contract for a fixed period of time, that [00:16:00] might be slightly different.

But believe me, if you're trading secrets or giving data, that's not good for you as a freelancer because no one's, if that find out you're never gonna be hired again. But also, why would you want that? Mess. Right. So, but I think you put it in a contract if you have something that's cybersecurity. Yeah, I totally get it.

We've seen cases of this in cybersecurity cases. People don't want the contractors anymore 'cause they don't know where they're coming from. Sometimes they're remote. You know, North Korea, we've had this issue where they are showing. Completely different profiles. If you've never met this person before, yeah, you get it.

You there? It depends on what you're doing. And you have that talk, you have that open talk. You say, what have you done before with your other clients? Have they been nervous about this? How can you reassure us? And if you need to put something in a contract. That's not saying you can't ever work for any of these competitors, but you have to put in that you cannot share a certain amount of [00:17:00] details, data, customer, you know?

Yeah. That's just, you do that. If you were, if you were outsourcing a larger company, think of them as a company and how you would. You know, think of that. I think

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your next big project, freelancer MAP can connect the right people with the right work.

No endless job boards, no guesswork. Just direct access to verified experts and opportunities across the globe. Visit [freelance.map.com](https://freelance.map.com). Start building your next success story. Today, I feel like it's all about the background check. It's the hardest part for many companies to do because when you are working, let's say with some, uh, someone in between, some hiring company, they do this for you.

So basically the people that they source to you, you can trust because like the worst case scenario, you'll go to this company and, Hey, we are a student. You like pay us this money [00:18:00] because of we got these problems. And when, when they go to just random person, they found on some platform. How do they trust, or they should spend a lot of time to do, going through this KYC process, et cetera.

So you were talking about the, uh, freelancers, like external experts, and still there is a difference between internal and external experts, even though they're doing pretty much similar tasks, um, approaches different. So what is the difference? What is the main difference between internal and external talent?

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** I think what it is, is that. I can't say anything 'cause my, my husband is a freelancer. He's, he's very good at his job. He's very hungry and he's still got that gung ho I say and using. But I think because freelancers, if you don't produce, you don't get paid. You can't just, uh. You have to have a little bit of a hunger, so you have to, you know, put in more 2 cents.

He says, yes, you have these freelancers just kind of do their job and [00:19:00] go. But if you're working on a long-term project, you're gonna be bringing the expertise you've had from multiple clients. You don't have to say. X clients. Oh, when I worked in this particular industry or this particular project, this was an issue, you know, without revealing if, if it's, you know, you can't disclose it, but you're bringing multiple sec, I mean, I don't know.

I'm talking for myself because I'm a private equity journalist. I have to know about every single sector. I have single trend going on, and I

think it's, it's very important that these freelancers, they, you know, they keep open to other different projects. Not just within their industry, but over time they have to maybe broaden that skillset to another sector, um, just because you're gonna bring more information, more detail, more nuance to your clients.

So, you know, a lot of these companies now that are, you know, becoming agent, they, they, they weren't AI companies before, but now everybody [00:20:00] is becoming AI companies and they will. I find very funny that, you know, some people have strong topic like, oh yeah, we we're just gonna hire in the future people who have humanities degrees.

And I'm like, what? This is so confusing. You know what I mean? I'm like, what? You know, I'm thinking, how is that possible? You know, I've got a nephews studying data science and things like that, and I'm thinking, oh God, is he gonna be out of a job because you know they're gonna want more humanity specialties.

Well, I think everything will come around, but yeah, I think it's just interesting how everybody is. Becoming Angen Enterprise in some way. And it helps, you know, freelancer platforms that can be streamlined in certain processes. You know, clients every way they get their answers quicker by doing that. So, uh.

Yeah, it's good.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** I, I feel like it's, um, you know, the, um, it's like a snake biting its own, um, its own tail because, um, currently AI [00:21:00] is removing, let's say, junior experts. You still need senior expert to ensure that AI gives you the right results. If you cut junior experts, how will get senior experts in the future, there is no way to get senior experts in the future.

Senior experts will be retired. Or they will go freelancing. So it feels like, you know, if people are fully relate, uh, to ai, yes they might gain some, you know, small boost, some small improvement. But then it's, it's not a long term. Like for example, once again, rather different movies. Uh, there are different thoughts, ideas.

I watched Black Mirror a lot, so I know how, how it can happen. Not in a good way. Yeah. Um, but maybe it can, it can be in a good way. So it's always, it's always a question. And um, also, uh, if we're talking about freelancers, about independent expert, that's also the beauty because you still need this. People with a wide market experience, you still need to [00:22:00] know what's going on.

On the markets, what's going on in other companies, what's going on in other niches? And sometimes when those people are coming to a company, they're bringing in not just their skills, but they're bringing the whole market overview. And also they can supercharge your team, which can always be great. You know, it's, it, it, it, it'll never be worse if you get some, uh, new blood into your company.

And also share some experiences with your existing full-time experts. And if, if we talk about these companies who. Are not hiring flexible talent. So once again, I clearly see that companies are moving into this more blended workforce. Uh, it's different balance. There is definitely full-time experts. Of course there is definitely ai and they also add in flexible experts.

So from your perspective, those companies who are not adding this flexible talent, what do they miss on.

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** Scale, scale, scale. If you are, I've, you know, I'm not gonna toot my [00:23:00] horn, but I remember I've been always hired to small kind of events, publishing industry and renewables energy. We were, were pounding out whole new news channels on a different set by a month.

But we were only able to do that because we had a network of freelancers around the world to do that. So I was kind of the cushion. And we did that, built something big. We got everybody's perspective. 'cause everyone wasn't just sitting in the same uk, London office. We had someone in Dubai, we had someone in Spain.

You know, we were able to get. Immediate quick because freelancers hungry, they want, they want the work. Um, you know, we, you had to analyze their backgrounds and things if they were appropriate, but. We did it in a very quick way where if you're, you know, you're gonna

have people who maybe sit in an office that feel like, oh, I'm being pushed too hard.

You know, I'm not, yeah, I don't wanna say that you using abused your freelancers, but when it comes to [00:24:00] scale, and this is usually startups. Or VC-backed companies, they're all talking about scale and sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes they move too fast. But you will scale a business quicker, a project quicker.

Um, I even know a large freelancer platforms when they want to build something quick, they actually hire through the freelancer platform, is they have their own employee, but they're also hiring specialists to come in and fix things. Some things like that. So if you're on the fence about. Being the freelancer, it's, I'm quite surprised if you are a government organization and you, it's, everything's quite hush, hush and secret.

Um, I get it, but Ministry of Defense in the uk, they hired contractors for years. It's only tax legislation has brought these people inside. So yeah, I think you'll be getting so much more for your money. Remember, you're not gonna be paying pensions, you're not be sick pay. You know, that's, [00:25:00] that's a risk we take on.

That's freelancers. But you're getting more for your money and you know, if things don't work out you, it's okay. You know, it's not the end of the world, but. You know, you can bring someone else on. You should always be looking for new talent, freelance talent. It should never just be permanent because you never know when you're gonna have to scale, when you have to go, you know, scale down and just bring in specialists for specific projects.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** And you also told that you did it fast. So I feel like it's, it's also one of, one of the, uh, benefits of hiring, uh, independent talent. 'cause you can do it like in a week, maybe even faster.

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** And you do it on your own accord, you do. You do it. You know, because you've done it before or you just get on with it.

That's the best freelancers. You take the brief, you take what they want you, you always communicate if you have a question, but. You

just get on with it. Right? And you don't, that's, it's like if you've ever [00:26:00] been able to just finally give something away and you, you like, oh, they're never gonna do it. Right?

And then they do it right, and you're like, oh, what a relief. And then you do it again, and you do it again. You do again. So it's, it's this, it's this ability to lose control a little bit. But then you get so much more when you do.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** It's like everything people don't know about. It's like trying something for the first time.

You think that this will be the worst experience in your life and then it gets to be the best experience of your life. So, but you never know unless you try. And you also thought about the network of free answers and uh, I think I hear this conversations specifically from the recruiter side, like. Why should I go connect with freelancers if I don't have any projects to share with them?

And sometimes when I'm personally connecting with freelancers and I tell 'em, Hey, we are, I'm like representing the freelancer, my platform, we're building the future of work. We're helping freelancers to get more projects. They always ask the first question, do you have projects for me? And I'm like, look, I'm not a recruiting person.

I'm here to ask like, what are you need? What are your challenges? I'm here to create a space to connect all of us [00:27:00] in the one sector, in one space that we can, like freelance recruiters and clients that we can work together. And they're like, ah, okay. So to to the, to the question of network, how much time did you spend on bigger than this network and how do you do this?

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** In terms of network, in terms of my own? With Freelance Informer or

**Yurii Lazaruk:** like overall? Freelance. Freelance that you use for clients.

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** Okay. I mean, okay. I've been very lucky because I started freelancing 20 something years ago and I, I highly think

whether you are a young person getting in your first career, make a name for yourself, whoever you can, and that's what I did.

I just. You know, I couldn't just become a freelance journalist. I had to make a name for myself in a certain industry and then, then I was able to go freelance and a lot of my work is literally word of mouth. I can't remember the last time. I haven't interviewed for anything in a very long time. But yes, once you meet a client, you're kind of, you know, [00:28:00] putting your best self forward, your business.

But, um, in terms of building a community and network is if, if recruiters are not listening to what freelancers want. Because believe me, there are lots of things on LinkedIn. People are freelancers so fed up with, you know. Sometimes recruitment agencies and so they're not really helping me. There's a lot of this ghosting going on that is horrible.

Even if it's an automated messes that you could say, okay, it's been two weeks. Yes, you didn't get this job, but something had, because it is, is heart wrenching for people who are applying for. 600 jobs. I mean, I've even heard of this, but the recruiters can't absorb that either. But it's this dual respect and recruiters have to find out what's going on because.

I am, it's, it comes to a point with clients. They're getting named in shame if they don't pay on time. Um, it's coming to [00:29:00] where freelancers are like, I don't think I need to use recruitment agencies anymore. I'd rather go out on my own. Um, they have to, I feel like freelancers at the moment or feeling like the recruiters are not giving them, it's a one way.

Place right now because it is a hiring end market, not the other way around, but they always have, I mean, they have to always be on the hunt. I mean, how boring if they're not finding new people or community? If you are representing contractors, you have to know what they're talking about. You have to know what the industry is.

Issues are. Um. Because they might choose another recruitment agency over you the next time. Or they, you know, they might just get word of mouth and just direct to a client in the future and you, they

lose that sales commission or whatever because they just go direct. But, um. Yeah. I think it's so important about community because it's so many new people are coming into freelancing too for the first time, [00:30:00] and unfortunately there are some platforms that they won't hire.

Even though they've had a million years of experience, they might not necessarily get hired because they don't know how to be a freelance. When I spoke to the CEO of Freelance Club and they said, no, we only hire people who have freelance before and have years of experience, so we're getting a lot of new people coming into this world.

And they, you know, recruiters are square of choice now. They've got so much talent, they might be able to help some of these, you know, great talent come on the market, start their contracting career. But they have to do that by knowing what the issues are already with, with with freelancers.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** You know, it's interesting that you mentioned the recruiters and, uh, the way how they answer.

Because I'm currently connecting with many recruiters, um, on LinkedIn, and I feel like they're the busiest people ever. They're busier than presidents. Mm-hmm. So they never have time to answer and usually they answer to me like after a third or fourth [00:31:00] message, uh, the follow up message that I write then, oh, sorry, I missed that.

And I'm curious, like, if they are so busy, it means that everything goes right, but if everything goes right. Most likely you wouldn't be so busy. So it's always like a question

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** like, so what's really

**Yurii Lazaruk:** going on?

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** So there's too many people applying for two little jobs. That's, that's what we've got. So they're trying to do their best.

If you've got to see through hundreds of CVs or portfolios. Um, you know, but there's also, and I've heard this many a time, this isn't like if you, there's like, you know, people, freelancers who work for BBC, you know, they've got BBC Scotland that a lot of these recruiters or projects, they pick the same freelancers.

Again, it's, they're not being lazy. Like, well, we know these guys are doing great, so they're even, they're not even. Seething through some of those other, they'll put those people first sometimes versus the new people thing. But it's, it's too, it's too much. There are, it's because of how easy it is to apply [00:32:00] now, or the onboarding process.

They're weeding through so many CVs. Um, or projects and then, or portfolios and it, it's just noise. Yeah. You know, because maybe the, the SEO or whatever they're looking through, through their system isn't picking these right people up and they don't have the time to nurture the relationships that they used to, you know, maybe like in high level headhunting days, they don't have that.

Yeah.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** It's the craziest part is that, uh, if you connect with a freelancer, you get. Like if you build a relationship with one person, you build relationship with dozens of people. Because freelancers are not usually, uh, doing things on their own. They have some peers, they are members of some communities.

They're members, they're connected on LinkedIn with like hundreds of freelancers, and they are happily to refer someone because if we are talking about full-time experts, yes, they make some, a few friends at their [00:33:00] work for, uh, workplace, they are not making. Dozens or hundreds of friends is free answer. So I feel like with a little less, um, okay, you spend a little more time on one relationship, but you get much more in bulk altogether.

And also also to the point of, um, build on this relationship. Like if you dependent on the one person and this person is constantly getting hired and rehired. Like you are missing out on so many things and still you have so many times and to a point, uh, that you mentioned. Too small, there is too small amount of projects.

So I feel like recruiters need to switch from hiring, like going through all the cvs to going into companies and like talent, educating for the benefits of hiring freelancers. Why don't they go and create more projects for people? Because it's not really hard, you know? I mean like if you are working together, it's hard when you are doing everything by yourself, but not that hard if you are doing it together.

I'm curious, like [00:34:00] if you could design the perfect system for hiring freelancers, what would it look like?

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** Well, from both sides of the thing, from the client side, it is highly. Automated yet you have, you definitely have a freelancer, a community representative in your business to keep the freelancers happy.

'cause if they're not happy, they, they talk, they talk and they might, some are really risky. They name shame on LinkedIn, but I, I don't agree with that, but. You have to have someone internally that represents the freelancers. If you are, you know, it can't just be the typical HR person. If you're really gonna build your business and you have more than maybe 10.

Relaunches any time or more than that, you know, 20, 25. You need someone who represents them, who is dealing with the onboarding process, and it can't be, the freelancing, onboarding process cannot be as clunky as a normal, [00:35:00] typical, you know, employee thing. It has to be quite quick. I mean, if you can get it done in, you know, hours, it's great.

You have to have the templates that just give you everything that you need. And you need freelancers to help you create those templates. What, what, you know, what they need to upload. And I think also, I don't know, each market is different. In the eu, UK is very difficult with, uh, taxation, you know, IR three, five and off payroll.

Um, it's not just how the contract is set out, it's how the real relationship is. If there's control, if you say you can't replace yourself with someone else, there's all these different things. So. Most freelancers don't want to be inside IR 35, which means they are pretty

much getting PAYE. They're getting paid like an employee, but they don't get the benefits.

You know, you could working for a huge mass company and you don't get any of the benefits. So it's, they don't really, they wanna be as independent as possible. And now that more [00:36:00] legislation is coming out, it is protecting the recruitment firms and the end clients, um, from. You know, these, I guess, dodgy umbrella companies that say that they're paying the tax and they don't, and all these things.

So there is more protections. But I think the perfect thing is the onboarding process is quick. It's highly automated where, you know, do you know what you're getting? Um, but also all the tax, the inside, the, uh, whatever your, whatever your, the role. Involves. 'cause each one is different. You can't have one template for each freelancer and you can't, the lake can ban, uh, freelancers who wanna run their own company and have their own limited company.

You can't do that. If you want the top-notch people, you won't get them. Um, you have to be open and have any kind of freelancer that's either consultants, things like that, and make sure all that the, you have some kind of insurance in place that. Everyone is protected by this contract and the [00:37:00] relationship.

And if the relationship starts changing something in the system alerts that, that you're like, okay, wait a minute. We're treating this more like an employee type thing. We better change the terms of the agreement. If there's, you know, project scope or creep and things like that, we need to account for that too.

So perfect thing is where it's highly automated, highly easy to communicate, and freelancers and clients don't have to worry about. Tax that is an issue that you're, you're gonna get a huge tax bill either way. Um, and everyone's kind of productive and freelancers get paid on time. I did this whole thing where people think that small freelancers can give credit to large multinationals because that's what you're doing.

I don't, why am I giving you free credit? You know, 69. No way. So I think the terms have to be. You know, be realistic. If you wanna have

these people work for you, do not. Loser invoices in the, you know, and things like that. No. You [00:38:00] have someone internally that says, no, we have to make sure that the whole relationship is smooth.

And because the CEO E is, oh, we really like that person to work for us. Where are they? And if they don't connect that these people weren't paid on time, there has to be, the relationship has to be known throughout, you know, whoever's working with them, that everything's going smoothly. And, um, but you need large.

Need a lot of money to, to do that, to cover the, you know, the, the, the invoicing and things like that. You know, if the client doesn't pay on time, if the platform does, that's the risk they take of doing business. So I think, but not all platforms are that big. So it's, it's finding that, so everyone gets paid on time, everyone is respected.

That's, I dunno if I covered everything, but.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** I feel like paid on time is like the number one thing because it, it's, it's, for me, it's always, uh, a, a very surprising thing to hear that huge companies, like billions of capitalization are paying [00:39:00] like 60 net. Like, are you kidding me? Like you are getting things right now, right away, getting all this experience, get shit done, and then you ask to pay like two months later.

Like you're ruin on people's lives. Like try not to pay your full-time experts on time and see what will happen. You know, like they will boycott you, you will just go out of market like in a week. Uh, yeah.

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** I think the difference is, is it's hard because as a freelancer you are a business. You have to always think you're a business.

So don't Now when you buy something on Amazon, Amazon doesn't just. Ship it to you for free and they, and you just say, oh, I'm gonna pay you whenever I want. You don't do that. So you have to think like a business. But also what's very different with freelancers versus, you know, a large company business, business type relationship is it's very human.

You know, this person, you have to respect them. Where if you, maybe I think what's happening is our much analysis are treating the freelancers with the same credit terms as they would. You know, a large manufacturing company. I said, [00:40:00] no, that's not how it works. And that that has to be communicated by someone internally in the business that, no, we don't treat our freelancers this way, and freelancers have to speak up.

They say, no, I don't. I need to know the terms. And if you don't pay man time, you know, you'll get charged more. Things like that. But that's the thing I'm seeing. Sometimes these platforms, it's the platforms that write the templates and the freelancers have no say, and I think. Each contract has to be based on that working relationship for it to work.

If you could,

**Yurii Lazaruk:** if you could remove just one barrier on the company side to hiring freelancers, what would it be?

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** In the UK it would be, um, the off payroll in IR 35. I think what's happened is it's really hurt the people that are the engine of every. Um, country. I know we have this expression written, you know, you know, originally British, but it's got the white man ban.

It's the guy who's got the plumbing [00:41:00] business thing that keeps the industry in the, the whole economy going. And now freelancers have kind of in that group now. Yes, we sit on our, from our laptops in a remote, but when you limit someone to be self-employed. It hurts not only them, but the tax, you know, the tax, you know, the tax income because they're not just, they're just working for one client where if, if they were working for multiple clients, you know, the tax works out.

You know, even though they say, oh, they pay lower taxes. Well, no, you just lost on VAT. You've just lost in a whole bunch of things. So I think if you take those barriers off, I. Britain, which is going there, it's going through a really not a great economy at the moment. It's not going through, you know, unemployment.

Things are sluggish. We need to rip the, you know, we need to do something differently and it's, it's gonna take a lot of campaigning. When someone told me, you have to have at least [00:42:00] 50,000 freelancers to campaign for them to change this legislation, another 500,000 pounds to do. I'm like, whoa, okay. No, we gotta, we gotta do something where we don't have to pay too much and make politicians listen and say, you know.

Let's speak to the tax authorities. How can we fix this? So it's easier for companies to hire freelancers because there's more people becoming freelancers every single month. This is how the workforce is working. It's blended now. It's not just, you know, employees. So you're not helping the economy by stopping people from people hiring you because of a tax legislation that takes someone's 30% off their income.

It it, they can't, they can't afford to, to take that job.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Yeah. Yeah. It's, it's like, you know, I, I, I had a conversation with company about. Uh, create an event for freelancers like mutual collaboration. 'cause I don't have a room I don't need, I don't know where to do it. And I can, but I can bring speakers, I can bring freelancers [00:43:00] and I talk to them and they're like, oh, we need so much budget.

We need so much time. We need so much preparation. I'm like, look, you are doing it like 1, 2, 3 step. You don't need anything of that. Like, you just need water, coffee, and cookies. That's it. That's it for, and a room where free, where to bring free answers. And now, so they told me like, no, it'll take so much time.

But now I'm just hosting this event with another company and they are very fast and I'm doing everything and they just, Hey, here is the room. Please go use it and do whatever you want. And I'm like, thank you. And we have 100 people coming. Like it's always like, if you want to deal really with it, if you want to overcome this bureaucracy, if can find a way.

If you are just always finding for excuses, nah, sorry. You'll never find a way. So, um, well you

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** have to say, we'll handle it. And one thing I really wanna promote is, I've seen it in New York are happy hours if you know the term of happy hours, you know, you get kind of your cheap drinks, cheap nibbles at a bar, you can meet someplace and for freelancers to meet, and we have that meetup, you know, this app, they have that [00:44:00] insertion.

We have it here in Valencia, in Spain, and I think it's a great idea. Freelancers wanna just. That off some steam they wanna meet. You can start something like that. You get the freelancers going and then you sh take videos and you say, look at, look at all these people coming together. They're happy. Yes. If a client wants to say, okay, let's meet at a, you know, bar or something, I'll put so much towards the drinks or whatever, but the rest and they get to be in a relaxed environment and meet a whole bunch of freelancers.

Um, but yeah, I think to convince people, just you have to say, I got this. You don't have to, you don't have to hire anybody. You don't have to give this job to anybody else. I'll handle it, and you'll just see the results later. I mean. It's again, taking that problem off their hands is what freelancers do.

And you have to do that with the events too.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** No, Kate, I wish to have the sky is the limit, but time is a 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? [00:45:00]

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** Okay, so I think what you need to do is speak to your current.

People, you know, say, have you ever worked with freelancers before in your previous job? If you, if you've never worked with them or immediately. Go to your podcast, go to the Freelance Informer. We, we were showing what the freelancer is doing, what they're capable of, um, and just, or just, just alone, go to the VC backed company, support for their companies and find out.

Speak to them. Say you've, you've probably built your business using freelancers. What works, what doesn't work? You know, you need kind of people who've done it before. You don't need to go through anything elaborate. Just speak to people that, you know, hire freelancers, um, maybe not recruitment agencies just yet.

You can't. Or you speak to people like yourself or Matthew and Knight in, um, the UK or someone like myself who is, I've been promoting [00:46:00] freelancing and remote working for 20 years before everyone knew what it was. But if you are a freelance, someone who's, you know, whether you've decided to go freelance for whatever reason could be because you, you've lost your job and people aren't hiring people over 50.

And it's a real, it's a common problem. Um, they, they, okay, I need to make, I don't wanna retire yet. I want to use semi-retirement, or I need to set up, they will set up a business, but I think don't get cut off too much in, oh, I have to build a website, have to do this. Go on LinkedIn. Start making comments in things on industry, things that you know about.

Make yourself known that way. Give it, give tips and advice. If you see some trend, talk about it. Get people engaged in it. But you have to realize it's unbelievably competitive right now, and you have to really pick, uh, which avenue you wanna go through if you wanna [00:47:00] go. Very niche, if you wanna, you have to self-teach yourself skills that your company may not have taught you.

Start using AI tools all the time in your own business. Say, I wanna do this for my clients. Do it for yourself first. See if it works. Um, but you have to put your business cap on. You are no longer an employee. You can be let go. You can work for a client on and off for how many, and then next day, sorry, we changed direction or other just, yeah, your whole life will change overnight.

So think like a business, um, but expect some competition. Just because you have 20 years experience in something and yes, maybe you might get hired, uh, but a lot of, you know, you're gonna have to maybe do that direct contact consulting first and then build your, your way up from there.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Yes. But not least name two people I should reach out to, to talk about the independent workforce.

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** Oh, I see. Who have you [00:48:00] talked to before? Um, I. Uh, well, I mean, I've got actually, um, person I I partnered with, with Freelance Informer, um, Nick, he's great. He, he has multiple software companies. He's in recruitment tech. Um, yeah, look up. I can sign up with him. He is someone who. He is like absorbed so much and he's thinking 10 steps ahead and he's always building new apps for dealing with contractors, making life easier for everybody.

Um, yeah, Nick Woodward's a good person to start with and he said, and um, oh, I have to see, I mean, there's so many different people, but Dave Chaplin for someone in the UK. If you wanna find out the ins and outs of tax compliance. You know, he's a real advocate for freelancers and [00:49:00] letting them the ones that truly wanna be independent.

So he, uh, he's a good person to speak to. Um, but yeah, but I, I could put some more names out there. Uh, I don't wanna embarrass anyone. You know, I

**Yurii Lazaruk:** will definitely ask you some follow up questions and what is the best way to connect with you?

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** Best way to connect with three is through LinkedIn. Um, or, um, my email, which you'll find on buzz.com.

Um, yeah, so, uh, but yeah, through, through LinkedIn, find me through, I'm always commenting on the freelance economy. That's the third thing I do. I, you know, I write for many other clients, I go to their, I just, I've been very lucky to just say, Hey, wanna bit a whole news channel? Take it, run with it. So yes, if you, you are a business that's looking to have a news channel based on your industry.

Yeah. I'm more than happy to help and please gimme a budget to hire more freelancers too. So.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Great. Exactly. That's how it has to be. Kate, thank you so much [00:50:00] for investing. Oh, thank you so much of your time. And specifically for being a freelancer yourself for such a long time because you are, uh, you are very like inspiration that okay, maybe market is moving forward.

If people like you are, keep on being here for so many decades and still moving forward, forget, and still, and still sharing this experience with the whole world and advocating about hiring influencers, independent talent, et cetera, it means a lot. So thank you so much for doing it. So open land.

Thank you Aton, for sharing your experience with me.

**Kate Steiner-Dicks:** My pleasure. You take care and I wish your wish your business, all the luck and oh, by the way, Polish, um, anyone who's in Poland, freelancers, it's a lot of work gonna come from you. Recruitment agencies I've just heard in the UK are now four UK freelancers, but they're going to Poland to hire people there so that.

That could be good positive news for, um, the freelancers there. That's, I wanna ahead and on a, on a positive [00:51:00] note,

**Yurii Lazaruk:** super amazing and, uh, yeah, see you in the freelance world. And for listeners, thank you for joining us on this episode of The Independent Workforce. I hope you've taken one step closer to working smarter with freelance talent.

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