

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, he'll speak with CEOs, recruiters, founders, and industry leaders about how they work with independent talent, the wins, the challenges, and the lessons learned.

My name is Yuri. I'm growing the freelance market at Freelancer Map, an international platform that's been connected and top independent professionals with companies for over 20 years. And my guest is Ray Ver, a global strategist in the talent and contingent workforce space with over 30 years of experience in staffing workforce strategy and talent marketplaces, starting with leadership roles at randstadt.

Manpower and Scott Exchange to now being a founder and CEO of CW Solutions Group, helping staffing freedoms and HR tech companies design go-to market strategies across the US and Europe. And also a managing director for the Americas at Tel in Partners connecting leaders across the [00:01:00] global talent ecosystem.

So welcome Ray.

Ray Culver: Hey, Yuri, how are you?

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah, I'm, I'm great. You know, I feel like you were working in this staff and recruiting space like so much longer than I was, not as, I was alive when you, when you were a

Ray Culver: child.

Yurii Lazaruk: I was a child. I didn't, I didn't even know that. Well, the workforce exists, so I just knew that cartoons exist, some toys exist, but I haven't, uh, even thought, uh, thought about, uh, all this, uh, stuff that we are working right now about.

And you've been in this industry for decades, and I'm curious. When exactly did you start working with the independent talent and why?

Ray Culver: Yeah, and um, again, just real quick, thank you for having me on. I'm excited to have this conversation, so I appreciate it. Um, you know, I have been in the industry for probably 30 plus years.

Uh, throughout my career I was always working with, we'll call it the different parts of the staffing industry, whether it was global sales, whether it was large, complex. Uh, national accounts, [00:02:00] whether it was MSP programs, so as freelance and independent, uh, workforces continue to, to make momentum, that just kind of came into my world.

Um, when I left Manpower Group and started my own consulting firm, that's really when I started working a good bit with freelancers, independent, uh, contractors, and a lot of it was advising marketplaces. And advising founders on the tech side, uh, who were coming into market. Um, so yeah, that's kind of where, that was my entry point.

Um, you always heard, especially here in the US 'cause I am Southern California based, you always heard about independent contractors and you know, back in the day the legal issues that were around ics, that was the biggest thing that people talked about. So it's good to see that some of that's kind of, you know, gone away and we're starting to talk about the true benefits of freelancers and independence.

Yurii Lazaruk: Hmm. Some things are went away and some things are [00:03:00] coming back. So it's always like this

Ray Culver: cycle, or like one thing pops down, the other thing pops up. Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah, exactly. You know, and also you, there are so many different words. Freelancers, contractors, independent talent, contingent workforce, flexible talent.

What is your favorite.

Ray Culver: You know, I like freelancers. I think, I mean, I just think that's it. It's, it's easy. Um, yeah, that's my choice. But if we're gonna pick a word to go with for this call, let's pick freelance, run with it.

Yurii Lazaruk: When you speak to HR leaders or to company leaders and uh, people outside this kind of like independent talent bubble, what do they feel?

What do they tell you when you use the word freelancers with them?

Ray Culver: You know, I think. It is gotten more and more to where they are accepting of that type of talent. Um, and when I say accepting of, just open to understanding it better. Um, I think there's still some concerns when we talked

[00:04:00] about compliance, you know, and legalities and, and if there were to be something happening, like where does the, where does the, um.

The, the, the, the, the compliance sit and who owns it, and just those types of things. So I think it's just we have to continue educating, um, the, the hiring leaders and the executives on what is a freelancer, you know, how, how could you utilize that talent? Because again, incredible talent who has decided to either leave the workforce or, you know, after COVID here in the US a lot of the workforce left the talent, you know, I mean, there were a lot of companies who did rifts and things like that.

So at that point. This incredible talent was like, oh my gosh, what do I do? You know what I mean? I've gotta pay my mortgage, I gotta put food on the table for our family. My advice to, to so many of them were like, hang a shingle. You know what I mean? You, you have the most incredible experience. You have done so much in your career.

And you are so valuable to the ecosystem. Go be a freelancer. Mm-hmm. You know what I mean? Start your own thing. So it's been fun to watch [00:05:00] people who started back then and people who stuck with it. Um, to see them really flourishing these days. Sometimes it's scary

Yurii Lazaruk: as shit to start the c career

Ray Culver: when you were working for

Yurii Lazaruk: companies

Ray Culver: for ages because you leave potentially if you are leaving and you make the choice.

And the choice is not only for you. You're leaving a full-time paycheck where you know you're gonna get it every two weeks. You're leaving benefits, you're leaving, things like that to go out on your own. That's the exciting part. I think the scary part is, you know, you're constantly, you know, hunting for your next opportunity.

Um, so again, exciting. But if you're not a salesperson. That can be the scary part. If you don't like selling yourself, that's, you know, that's a scary thing to have to do knowing that you have to do it to make a paycheck,

Yurii Lazaruk: like it's overall in the world. Whenever you are doing whatever you are doing, whenever, it's always a question like how to kind of like sell what you are doing in, in a good way.

I'm not [00:06:00] telling to, you know, pitch something that nobody cares about, but exactly how to. Mm-hmm. Speak about your values, speak about what you bring to the table, speak about your qualifications, and sometimes it's not that easy, especially for freelancers. But we were talking, you told a little bit about, um, concerns, challenges, uh, sometimes even maybe blockers.

So what currently stops companies from utilizing this independent talent?

Ray Culver: Yeah, I, I, I mean, I go back to, I really think a lot of it is just not understanding. And you mentioned this earlier as we were chatting, not understanding how do you leverage a freelancer? You know, do they sit on site? Do they have to sit on site?

Do they sit on my payroll? That should be a very, for you and me, that's an easy, we should, everybody should know that. A lot of people who've never utilized them, they don't know that. So I think a lot of it is just education, um, understanding where, where does the, I. Where do [00:07:00] things sit if something were to happen?

And these days, utilizing Freelancer so much in IT and tech space, now there's ip, there's so many things that a company's having to think about and, and you know, bringing into the equation. So I think a lot of it is just the unknown. That's the biggest thing, that they're afraid of

Yurii Lazaruk: what they have to know.

What companies have to know to start working with freelancers.

Ray Culver: I think they have to know a few things. One is. This is my opinion, of course. Um, it's getting to the point where it's not gonna be a a, a choice. Like, I mean, the talent is choosing to work this way. So a hiring leader, if you're blocking that off, you're blocking off an incredible funnel of talent.

And again, the talent is going that way. So it's like you kind of have to figure out how to have a look at this because talent is choosing to work that way. Um, you know, b there are incredible consultants out there who can help to advise companies on how to really leverage the [00:08:00] freelance space. There's

incredible technologies out there who can help them from a compliance perspective to make sure that everything is.

Truly buttoned up for them. So I think there, there's resources out there that they can utilize to bring in that freelance workforce and feel totally safe and secure, that they're perfectly fine.

Yurii Lazaruk: Uh, you know, in, in one of the previous episodes, uh, Danal, uh, CEO of pro teams told this, uh, interesting thing that it's hard to find people inside the organization who are really, who are ready to start implementing this processes of working with independent talent because they are getting their paychecks.

Why should they care? They're doing what they're doing, and it's like bringing some external talent. It's a little bit of a challenge. It's something that you have to. Work with, and you don't really know if it'll work well or not. So how to find, like from your perspective, from your experience, how to identify how to find these people who are ready to bring this, uh, talents into [00:09:00] their companies.

Ray Culver: Again, this is something that you and I talked about a bit earlier, but when you look at the whole shift from role space to skills based, when you find companies who are. I consider that being progressive, you know what I mean? If you're really starting to look at and understand how are the different ways that we can, should be looking at talent and the jobs and things like that.

So identifying those types of companies, the ones who are kind of pushing the envelope a bit. Um, thinking about jobs a different way, thinking about talent a different way. If a company has a extended workforce, so a contingent workforce program. You know, that's also someone who you could start to really have a conversation with around freelancers, um, as an additional talent channel.

Um, I strongly believe that the company who's gonna win is the one who completely embraces every talent channel out there full-time contingent [00:10:00] freelancers, and. Gigs, whatever you wanna cut, just every possible thing that's out there, to me, that's the company that's gonna win

Yurii Lazaruk: a lot. When you are speaking to corporates especially, they have a little bit of, um, you know, decision making process inside.

And, uh, if, you know, if you don't know who is responsible, like what department is responsible, it'll never happen. So from your experience. Who is responsible for contingent workforce program? Is it hr? Is it procurement? Is it management? Like who, who has to say the word first?

Ray Culver: This is such a hot, hot, hot topic right now and we actually hosted a workshop last week in New York, and this was one specific panel set was around who owns where decision sit.

I think you're seeing the contingent workforce leadership move more towards talent acquisition. It's historically been procurement because, you know, very cost driven, very contract driven, that type of thing. But companies are [00:11:00] continuing to realize that this is talent we're talking about, whether it's a contingent worker, whether it's a full-time worker, whatever it is.

Um, so moving towards ta, we've asked many, many, many TA leaders. Where should it sit? And both them and procurement professionals say it should sit on a kind of a co-joined team because each of those brings a true specialization. And when you can have them working together and owning, you know, the pieces that will make the the most sense, that's kind of the ideal situation.

It is not happening, but it's the ideal situation.

Yurii Lazaruk: It's not happening. Exactly. You know, when I heard the word conjoining team, it's, it's usually like if no one owns it, if it's like conjoining, if there is no specific person who owns it, nobody owns it. So it's like, it's like the hardest part how to create these teams.

Ray Culver: There is. So let me think about who it was. There was someone last week, it was a partner of ours who mentioned that they had a client who had [00:12:00] created a chief, a C-suite officer, who sat on top of kind of the contingent workforce or the extended workforce.

Yurii Lazaruk: Hmm.

Ray Culver: And everything reported into this person. So this had dotted lines to certain TA functions, certain contingent workforce functions, certain procurement functions.

So to me, if companies are starting to create roles like that, they're starting to understand exactly what you just said. There has to be an owner and it's gotta really report into somewhere 'cause it's such a huge ticket item. Um, so given it

c-Suite leadership, uh, that's a, you know, it's a thing in the future, but when you start to see one or two or three companies doing it, you know, there's, there's potentially a movement there.

Yurii Lazaruk: Okay, so now we need a little bit of motivation to those people who are not working with, so you've been in this market for like long, long time and you definitely see what is changing. And you already touched a little bit here and there about the growing of the independent, uh, talent market workforce.

So from your perspective, how has this [00:13:00] workforce market evolved in the past few years?

Ray Culver: I go back to a statement I made a few minutes ago. I think it's evolved because the worker is choosing to work this way, and if the worker's choosing to work this way, you have no choice but to evolve. I mean, it has no choice but to go somewhere because many times these freelancers and workers are the ones who have those special skills that you need.

With the specialist. So to get that skill to bring them into the organization, the talent wants to work as a freelancer. So either meet them where they are, or you're gonna really, really struggle to find those skills. So I think that's, that's a huge motivation. Is that the companies have to follow the talent and you're seeing more and more and more and more and more talented people choosing to work freelance.

So, I mean, it's, it's a very, to me, that probably it's an oversimplification, but at the end of the day, when a large company is sitting in workforce planning and really looking [00:14:00] at the different regions of the world and really going through their skills, inventory, their skills, planning, thinking about what they're gonna need in the next 12, 24, 36, 5 years, 10 years.

And looking at the different regions, how are people choosing to work? And is the skill needed either now or in the future? Is it in the market? Is it in the full-time market? Is it predominantly freelance? That should really help to drive your decision. And if you see that, it's primarily in that freelance market.

So that's where go to external counsel, you know, go to these consultants I mentioned, go to these freelance technologies and help. Let them help you put a program together.

Yurii Lazaruk: What kind of clients do you typically work with?

Ray Culver: Me? Yeah. Um, yeah, many times it is staffing firms. So my, what I did when I was with Ronstadt and Manpower Group was built MSP channels.

So anywhere that, uh, the one of the lines of business supplied into an MSP program fell under my remit. Um, so as I [00:15:00] left Manpower, uh, my consulting firm really focuses on helping staffing firms. To maximize those different, um, streams of revenue. SP being one. Freelance has come more and more into the conversation because staffing firms know, they're having to figure out how to, how to work with this and how to kind of maneuver through this.

Um, the other area that we work with is hr. So, uh, working with tech platforms could be a marketplace, could be freelance, you know, could be DMS, it, it could really run the, the spectrum of different technologies, but working mostly with founders who are looking to either come into market net new, so it's just being born, or they're looking to say, go from the, uh, a NZ market into the UK market, UK into the us, that type of thing.

So it's still gonna be a net new. Product in a certain market, but helping them to figure out where to go, when [00:16:00] to go, and how to go. You

Yurii Lazaruk: know, you mentioned staffing companies and I feel like they are exactly in the intersection and, uh, they're, they're getting all the backlash from two sides. They're getting, uh, negative, they're getting hate from freelancers because they take all the, our money and you are not placing us.

And also they have like a negative part from company side because. They always go there and they're talking about working with freelancers and stuff, and companies don't get in it and they're not getting enough projects and they cannot go back to freelancers and give them projects. So they're kind of like in between two fires.

So what should they do? How should they survive in this future of work?

Ray Culver: Um, again, interesting question. We, this was a topic last week. We had a workshop that was focused on staffing leaders on one day, and we had a workshop focused on talent leaders the next day. So the earlier question was on the talent leader workshop, and this question came up on the staffing leader workshop.

So staffing leaders are thinking about this. 'cause this was exactly a question we talked about. [00:17:00] Um, you know, again, if I was advising a client, I would say understand all of the different ways that talent is choosing to work

today, whether it is freelance, contractor, whatever. Understand how you engage with those particular groups.

So like, I mean, could you, if I'm a staffing firm. Does it make sense for me to start to kind of pivot and think about perhaps building a technology or doing something white, labeling a technology to be able to work with that freelance group and bring them into, you know, to to, to my type of, um, business where I can introduce 'em to my clients.

So I think it's having the conversation, understanding all the different ways that people are acquiring talent days. And is that something you can bring into your staffing firm? A, because it's the future, because the staffing firm of old is changing rapidly, if not dying a bit. Um, b you know, it's the way clients are buying.[00:18:00]

So if they're not gonna buy from you, they're gonna buy from somewhere. If they're gonna buy from an FMS, why wouldn't you somehow. White label or do something with an FMS try. You know what I mean? Try and create it where you're creating stickiness with your client and you're getting closer to the future, which is freelance.

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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, you know, I, I, I still, I still have this feeling that, um, especially if we're talking about the end clients, they have this mindset that they should. Own talent and that they should manage talent.

And the talent should sit specifically [00:19:00] in their office and do exactly what they tell us and how they tell to do them. And for some reason, once again, the market is changing, maybe not that fast, and companies are still ready to spend, I don't know, 2, 1, 2, 3. Up to six months is sometimes even more. It depends on like the qualities they're searching for.

They're ready to spend all this time to find a talent instead of just going to freelance market and find this talent. Okay, let's like best case scenarios. Okay, it can be a few days, but let's be like real up two, three weeks. It's still a huge

difference. So how to make this mindset shift from owning, controlling, and managing talent and being ready to spend all this time to find this talent into this market that they can tap immediately and get the person they want.

Ray Culver: You know, I, I, a couple of things come to mind. One is there are certain companies who are going to get it, and there are certain [00:20:00] companies who are not. There are some, but there are some companies who are extremely, you know, very traditional based and very much, they just, they don't even necessarily believe in an extended workforce.

You know, and when you think about, they don't even necessarily believe in utilizing contractors, which to me that's a very, very, very traditional firm or company who says we have to bring everybody in full time. That's the only way. Um, so that would be one, just to really understand the company. There are some that having this conversation with some of these companies, you're really wasting your brother.

I mean, you're, you're, you're fighting losing battle. So pick your battles to, to do that. I also think that. Picking the companies, picking pilots within, let's say, certain companies or clients where you can find success and find wins. That's what's gonna change hearts and minds, is if you can, you know, find a role or two where you know, a freelancer would be very, very successful, pilot that, you know, [00:21:00] get them, get your client on board, get them to let you do that, and then take that success story and leverage that across the client.

Because to me, success is what equals success. If another hiring manager sees that it worked and it was extremely beneficial and you know all the benefits to it, they're gonna be more apt to want to do it than just someone coming and selling a vision, you know, of, of something that they've never done before.

So smaller pilots wins successes and be prepared to share those successes and sell that.

Yurii Lazaruk: It's the hardest part to make a pilot, to make the first step. And because it, it seems like that every row is super important and you cannot delegate it. But then the person is ieo or the person going to a mother leaf or something like that.

And then. You have to deal with this, you have no choice. And somehow companies are dealing with this. So how, how do they know? How can they pick this specific role to delegate? How do they, I [00:22:00] understand that they should delegate specifically this part and not that part.

Ray Culver: Um, you know, I think that comes with really understanding what the role.

What roles make up the project that you're needing done and like, how can that work be done? Some things you do need someone to sit on site. So I mean, some things are like, you know what, for this particular project I do my, I need my project team to sit on site, work together every single day for whatever reason.

You know? So are there roles that don't necessarily have to sit on site? Are there roles that can be much more of that freelance, you know, kind of economy? Um, so understanding that, and then once you understand that. Again, I, I strongly, I go back to just taking the chance to be able to, to, to do a test and see if it works.

Some companies are gonna do it, some companies are not. Um, if you look at some of the extremely progressive senior leaders on kind of the [00:23:00] TA side, you know, and, and internal in-house. Um, those are also some of the, the folks who I would approach, you know, if I was a staffing company or if I was a a, a, a company who was trying to sell freelance.

Again, I would look very strategically at the companies who have used it in the past and understand. I'm gonna totally make this up. I'm just gonna call it a BC company. Understand a b, C company, understand how it worked and why it worked. Understand the success stories, and then look who are the competitors to a b, C company.

If it worked at A, B, C, it's probably gonna work at their competitors because they follow the same business models. So it's like, you know, start there and I'm gonna be very strategic in how you're selling this freelance. 'cause not everybody's gonna buy it. And if you go out trying to sell it as part of your normal bag, you're wasting your time.

You know, you're just, you're not gonna get the results that you want. So you have to be pretty strategic in who you approach.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, it's so interesting that you mentioned that. Uh, go to competitors. Uh, I have this [00:24:00] experience when there is a staffing company in one country that is like hardly using freelancers and helping their clients to get freelancers.

The same company, it's the same brand in another country. They don't really want even to have the conversation about contingent workforce. It's so weird. I didn't know that. Different same brand operates differently in, even if we're talking about the Europe, like different countries, so the Europe, like separately different understanding of the contingent workforce.

And it's so weird to me. And then, you know, like going to competitors, you still have to have someone in the team, in the company like kind of progressive person, someone who. I don't know, reads the news. Someone who listens to podcasts like this, someone who follows people like you and listening to what they're talking and really seeing that it's happening.

It's not like some, I don't know, like crystal ball and everyone is like, oh, it might be, but it's really happening. People have to know and you know, to your point, you also told that now some companies will never use the extended workforce. [00:25:00] Some company will struggle with in this, it, it, it reminds me how, what happens currently with ai.

You see some companies are. Hardly investing in the AI building their own LLM systems inside and like millions and millions of dollar put inside. And some companies are staying somewhere on the side, like, no, no, no. We are just looking around. We are. We'll never implement ai. So from your, from your experience of the workforce professional, how can you compare AI adoption and extended workforce adoption?

Ray Culver: Uh, I think that the extended workforce is much further along than ai, obviously, just because of the, the number of years. Um, I do see the similarities that you're speaking of, though. I mean, there are so many companies who are just terrified of ai. They're terrified of bringing anything like that into their company.

Um, we see it a good bit like in financial services and banking, where they're like, you know what? We, we've created our own LLM, which. You know, many could argue that it's not great because you're, it's only getting what you're [00:26:00] teaching it. Um, but they're, you know, they don't want anything going outside. Of their four walls.

So I think the level of apprehension around AI is, is not near the level of apprehension around the extended workforce. Now, when you start to talk about, and you know, when you start to peel back the extended workforce, because that is contingent workers, that is contractors, that is freelancers.

Contingent workers and contractors. There's a lot more comfort with that piece of the extended workforce than there is the freelancers, because the freelancer is still, I don't wanna say new, because it's not new, new work. And there's still a lot of kind of areas where, again, I just don't think we as an industry haven't done a great job of educating the client on there are ways to protect everybody involved.

You know, there are ways where everybody, um. It feels good with the way that this work is getting done. The work getting [00:27:00] done itself will be brilliant and beautiful. So it's not concerned about the work. It's, it's the contractual pieces that, that, that I think employers just don't, you know, they don't fully understand and they have legal in their ear and they've got risk in their ear.

You know, who are trying to protect the company. So I think that's where we just have to do a better job of educating.

Yurii Lazaruk: You already told a little bit of, uh, um, inspiring stories of why they should go in into this, uh, contingent workforce and why should companies work with freelancers. But let's, uh, go a little bit in this scary part.

So what, what are companies missing if they are, if they won't adapt their process for flexible talents, what do they risk?

Ray Culver: You know, you risk missing talent and, and again, I mean I hate to, this is gonna be the common thread that you will, will thread throughout this entire conversation. Talent is choosing to work this way, period.

And if you are [00:28:00] not open to looking at every possible way that talent is choosing to work these days, you are going to. Out on a lot of really great talent and, you know, finding talent these days is getting harder and harder and harder anyways. So I don't know why a company would throw up additional roadblocks or additional hurdles, you know, when you're, when you're trying to find something that's already getting to be very, very difficult.

So I think that's where the talent is gonna continue to dictate. How they wanna work and how the buyers are gonna have to buy. I think you're always gonna find certain industries or certain sectors where maybe has less adoption. You know, we'll pick, we'll go back to financial services. Within financial services.

You might have an IT department who is open to freelancers, but overall the, the firm's stance is probably not gonna be. Open armed. We love [00:29:00]

freelancers. Bring them all. Probably not, but that's also a sign of that IT department is following how they know the talent is choosing to work. They have to have the skill.

The talent is only saying, I don't want to be full-time. I don't want to be, you know, a W2 contingent worker. I wanna be a freelancer. So I just think you are gonna continue to see that where they're following the way the talent wants to work.

Yurii Lazaruk: From your assessments, personal, maybe market views when this will happen.

Like really that company wants to hire talent. Talent is saying like, Hey, I want to be a freelancer. And they say them, okay, we'll work with you as a freelancer because currently what's happening company say, we want to hire you. Uh, on a full time, the person says, no, I don't want, they, oh, whatever. We'll find another person.

So when do you see it's like really, when do you see the companies will see? This on the market,

Ray Culver: you know, I would hope within the next, [00:30:00] I think 12 months, 24 months, I think that's too short. I don't think that's enough of a runway. Um, I would hope within the next three to five years that companies really start fully embracing, you know, that, that this is a true option of how you can look at talent, uh, bringing talent into the organization.

I think that there are some voices within the industry, um, thought leaders within this space. I think they need to keep screaming loud, yourself being one. Um, that's also, that breaks down walls, you know what I mean? Like, I mean, that, that continues to have that conversation. I think there has to be large companies who continue to be very progressive in thought and are open to going out on that limb, you know, and understanding and, and trying it and implementing it and showing that it does work and it, you know, it is just a brilliant way of doing it.

The freelancers, not necessarily themselves, but whoever is, is trying to, to grow the freelance [00:31:00] economy, they need to be able to take that and package it up. And use it as success stories. So selling it, you know, whether, again, whether it's you, whether it's, you know, John Younger, I mean, whoever within the space, but those types of people have to continue taking those success

stories and pushing it out through all their channels for other companies see it and hear it, and wanna ask questions about it.

Um, so I would hope the next three to five years, I hope as long as we all keep screaming as odd as we're screaming today.

Yurii Lazaruk: Let's see. Let's see. And I also believe that people from companies who are hiring freelancers needs to do that also, because I, I, I had a conversation recently with a person from Microsoft and I was amazed of how amazing system they have inside the Microsoft of working with freelancers.

And I didn't know about this. I was on this market for like over three years. And like being able and talking to freelancers, no one told me, Hey, by the way, do you know that Microsoft has this amazing program? I didn't know that. Like, how, why on the earth are you keeping such secrets inside the [00:32:00] company? I have no idea.

Do you know why they keep this as a secret? I,

Ray Culver: I don't. I mean, now that you say that, if I am Microsoft and I have a really, really, really, really incredible thing. Do I wanna share it with the world?

Yurii Lazaruk: No.

Ray Culver: You know what I mean? I mean that's, you know, I mean, if I have an, so it's one of those things where, I don't know, it's kind of a, like a catch 22 because, you know, Microsoft, if they've really cracked the code and they go external and they start bragging about it, you know, when other companies gonna be like, I'm gonna take that and use it myself.

So it's like one of those things where, Hmm, that's a good question. Competitive advantage. You don't want Gary

Yurii Lazaruk: competitive advantage, you don't want to share

Ray Culver: with anyone. Oh. Which is unfortunate, you know, because that type of competitive advantage, that type of success story will truly help to further the freelance economy and the freelancer and the way that, that way of work.

So, I don't know. We just need to, you know, continue to think of how can, how can that story be shared and shouted [00:33:00] about without. You know, giving away kind of any secrets, you know, that Microsoft obviously has developed, but it's very important, you know, I mean, they wanna keep, so like, how can you still share the story and get com people comfortable with it without feeling like you're giving away a secret sauce?

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah. Yeah. If you could design the perfect system for integrating freelancers into the full-time workforce or the general company workforce, what would it look like?

Ray Culver: Yeah. I have always thought, and there's a few out there that have tried to do this, but I have always really thought that the best piece of technology would be one where if I'm a hiring leader, I go in and I know I have, uh, a requisition, uh, a need, something that I need done, and I go through just a series of decision trees and it pushes me in one direction, whether it's permanent for whatever reason, whether it's a contingent worker for whatever reason.

Freelancer for whatever reason, you know, [00:34:00] so you kind of go through these decision trees and ultimately it pushes you into, this would be my recommendation for what it is that you need done. And it really goes in depth on, you know, if you need teams built, part of it could be a contingent part, could be freelancer.

Consider this, consider that if the company's open to working with people, you know, and this is, you're getting pretty deep here, but you know. The strongest area for this skill in the world is going to be in South Africa. Consider going there to find talent. Get to that level of truly giving a hiring leader a global view on what type of worker do I need, where can I find the best worker, and then how do I engage with that worker?

If someone could develop that to me, that is truly the future of work. And I would, I would bend a knee to that. Like that would be, that would, that's a rock star right there. [00:35:00]

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah, I, I, I have a strong feeling that we have to do this together because, you know, every, everyone would love to see it happening and everyone is waiting for someone else to make it work.

And I think How cool would that

Ray Culver: be though?

Yurii Lazaruk: Uh, yeah. It's, it's always, you know, like everyone, like no one knew how could, like the things like LinkedIn or Facebook or X or whatever, how, whatever you call the social media. How cool it might be before they created this. So it's,

Ray Culver: but if you think about what I just mentioned, you're incorporating every, almost like every different piece of the talent ecosystem into one type of a system.

It's helping you to decide what type of worker do I need? It's helping almost educate on, have you thought about that? This different work arrangement and then it is telling you around the world where are the global pockets of the most best talent for these types of roles. So it's like, it, it's kind [00:36:00] of tapping into the entire, you know, global talent ecosystem.

Again, I know that's a big, big dream in the sky, but we as. We as a world, we have the technology. This can be done. It's just a matter of, um, somebody really buying and doing it.

Yurii Lazaruk: Know, it's interesting. I had a previous conversation with New Rudy GI Lopez and, uh, he wrote a book about the future of work and he described a very, very interesting system inside also including ai, including flex flexible workforce and how you just, uh, go to the meeting with your full-time team.

You have like 30 minute conversation. Then you decide who you need, you make two clicks, and then in an hour you already have a conversation with a talent exactly who you need to build this project. And then in two hours you're already starting working. It's looks like a fantasy, but I truly believe that we are moving there.

And you know, Ray, I really have so many questions and I wish to have the sky is the limit, but [00:37:00] time is the limit. So the final one. What advice would you give to companies just starting to use freelancers and to freelancers entering the market?

Ray Culver: I'll start with the second part. So freelancers entering the market.

Good for you. First of all, um, congratulations. Uh, the market is going in destruction. Um, stick with it, you know, because, I mean, again, I think so. I've seen so many freelancers, consultants. Who go back into a full-time job because

they just can't stomach, you know, the, the, the whole having to kind of hunt for your next meal and things like that.

So stick with it. Um, if there are pieces of the, the process that you don't like, like business development, you know, find maybe a partner, you know what I mean? Like, partner up and find someone who does enjoy business development, because then you can deliver. So just don't think that it has to be this, or it has to be this, like, have conversations with your peers.

Have conversations with your fellow freelancers and just stick [00:38:00] with it because there's, the freedom is incredible. The stuff that you get to do is so cool. Um, the money can be incredible. Um, so that would be to freelancers, to companies who are just starting to use it. Be very open to

the talent, be very open to looking at this as a true talent. Um, channel, um, ask a lot of questions. We touched on this throughout the call. You know, lean on consultants, lean on people within the industry, maybe at a different company who have utilized this before. Ask questions. There are technologies out there.

There's people like yourself. You know, there's a lot of people who are more than happy to answer any questions and help you get through. Uh, maybe the initial startup. Um. Yeah, just don't stop. I mean, it's the way of the future, you know what I mean? Like if you're, if you use a freelancer for position A and it goes, well, consider using a freelancer for position B, C, and D.

You know what I mean? Like, [00:39:00] don't stop, keep, keep the momentum going.

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

Ray Culver: Yeah. One is Rich Parker. He is the CEO for planner net based here in the us. Um, they are a freelance marketplace who works with the meeting and event space globally.

We've used them in Australia, um, for an event that we did down there. Brilliant. And it was just so seamless. So he's, and he's a thought leader when it comes to the freelance work workforce. Um, second would be Jeff Nugent. Uh, Jeff's been around for as long as I have. I'll, I'll be kind. Um, he, uh, was one of the founders of People 2.0 and of course that's, he's left 2.0 and he just recently started a, a tech platform called Independently.

Which works with freelancers and independent contractors to make sure that they're compliant and that type of thing. So he's a, he's a true thought leader within this space. He's in Canada.

Yurii Lazaruk: No, I, I, [00:40:00] I promised it to be the last question, but just one question went to my mind right away. What is one question that I should have asked you but didn't?

Gosh.

Ray Culver: Um, do I have a dog? No.

Yurii Lazaruk: Do you have a dog?

Ray Culver: I do have a dog.

Yurii Lazaruk: Okay. Okay. What kind of a dog?

Ray Culver: A pug.

Yurii Lazaruk: Got it. Got

Ray Culver: it. O one.

Yurii Lazaruk: I did, I didn't see him on a call, which is very strange. But you, I'm

Ray Culver: surprised you can't hear him snoring down here at my feet.

Yurii Lazaruk: Uh, no. No. It, it's just, just a zoom feature of like, you know, so removing all the

Ray Culver: Yeah,

Yurii Lazaruk: yeah.

Exactly.

Ray Culver: Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah. Okay. Okay, Ray, thank

Ray Culver: you.

Yurii Lazaruk: Thank, I think

Ray Culver: super quick 'cause that, you know, that was a serious question you asked. Um, I think, you know, asking about what was the one question, where do I see the freelance comic going in the US specifically with me sitting here, um, I do think that there is an uptick.

I think people are starting to. To understand it more. Um, I think that hiring leaders are starting to push [00:41:00] a bit more internally on their leadership. Um, I think that the freelancers and the way that freelancers find the work are, are getting better at answering legal and risk questions and things like that.

So that education that we talked about is starting to happen. So in the US I think you're seeing an uptick and I think that will continue to go on.

Yurii Lazaruk: And I, I believe that it'll go on not just in the US but in the whole world. Of course. And, uh, yeah. Ray, thank you so much, first of all for what you are doing because it's super important to have people like you are, who are being leaders and moving this, pushing this contingent workforce through answers forward.

And as you've said, educating companies on getting better and better and better and using this, like, using it in a good way, but still kind of implementing these experts. And, uh, thank you so much for. Um, painting, hopeful Future for this niche. And once again, it's a huge pleasure. I was happy to meet you at Full, like 2025.

Who knows? Maybe see you this year again and [00:42:00] Absolutely. Yeah. Thank you so, so much for this conversation.

Ray Culver: Thanks, Jerry, I appreciate it. We'll talk to you soon.

Yurii Lazaruk: 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.