

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 lessons learned.

My name is Yuri. I'm growing the freelance market at Freelancer Map and International Platform has been connected top independent professionals with companies for over 20 years. And my guest is Gaetan Van Russell, the founder and partner of CAMA and executive search firm focused entirely on HR and people leadership.

And for over 15 years he's been connecting companies like Amazon, Danon and Zalando. We stop HR talent, whether full-time, interim, or independent, helping organization build stronger and more adaptable and flexible teams across Europe. So welcome Gaetan.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: Thank [00:01:00] you very much. Fantastic introduction. Yeah, thanks for having me.

Thank you very much.

Yurii Lazaruk: It's all you, so it's your journey and I would love to ask you more and more and more questions about your journey and learn from you and highlight your experience because we are in the same field. We are in the same space. We have to grow the space together, so. Tell me a little bit about your company and what's your involvement with freelancers?

Gaëtan Vanreusel: Yeah, so, so we actually started 15 years ago, and right from the start it was very clear we wanted to focus on a function and there were different reasons around that, and I'm just gonna. Briefly detail that because we'll come back in the discussion afterwards. It's with the function, you can really focus on the people, the candidates that you follow throughout their careers.

Uh, and, uh, um, I had already been working on the hr, uh, on HR recruitment for quite some years. And there was so much going on, uh, lots of transformations. There were, there was a, a whole transformation going on with the business partnering model, et cetera. And there were very [00:02:00] low, uh, you know, a few amounts of, of, uh, universities that were actually giving studies or, or, or, or providing education programs around hr.

So it was really difficult to find in that time, 15 years ago, people that were really specialized. And so we started focusing on that HR profession. And funny enough. Right from the start, we already had those big companies, uh, that we got to actually work with. So our very first client, one of our first clients actually was actually General Electric, and they were working on a quite big project of a transformation where they were going to position all the shared services in Barreda.

And they were just having difficulties in saying, we need to find someone that has been touching so many different, uh, topics. And that's where we, uh, came in and, and supported them and to make the link with. Freelancers. How that connected is after that first year, we realized that very, very quickly, it wasn't about positions, it was about projects.

So people were, companies were saying, oh, we need to put this in [00:03:00] place, or We need to create that, or we need to work on the culture. And so these were always segments of roles. Of permanent functions that were typical of the freelance or independent markets. So we said, okay, hey, hang on. We need to actually know these people.

And that's when we started off working on that independent side. Uh,

Yurii Lazaruk: so it sounds like long time, I currently hear that people are moving from job titles to specific projects, and it sounds like it's been already on the market for a lot of a long of time.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: Yeah. Yeah. It, it, it's been very long. The, the, the, the difference is that, uh, we, we were really looking to data a hybrid model where you not only have the or as you know, not only the project side, but also the interim management.

So really linked to the function, but also consultancy. So it, it, it, it got, it matured, but in the time it was very clear and, and this was a typical profession. We might be coming back to that again actually, because really that's core focus on a [00:04:00] specific dedicated project and outcome. It's also a real trend that we are seeing today.

We might talk about that a bit later, but that's how it was back then. And we are seeing, again, a reminiscence of this, uh, in today's market is focusing on the end result. And again, freelancers are, are the best actually populations or formats you can find for that. Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: When clients are coming to you currently and tell, Hey, we have this project, we need people to deal with this project, do they tell you specifically whether they want someone full-time or a freelancer?

Gaëtan Vanreusel: So it really depends. It really depends. Uh, we have some situations where companies have been, uh, are looking at reshaping the organization and they're orientating the organization around concrete outcomes. And in that case. Uh, um, independence or freelancers can work for a year, a year and a half, two years.

We've been working on some transformation projects way even longer than that. So when it's linked to reorganization, yes. If it's linked again to specific [00:05:00] outcomes. Yes. Uh, but today we are seeing, uh, um, more and more blended environments where on one side we structuring, um, teams around delivery. That is fixed, uh, um, you know, employee, uh, uh, people.

And then you have everything that's linked around projects, outcomes, specific technologies, specific skill sets where, where we need some flexibility, where it's time bound because it's linked to specific outcomes that we are expecting. And they're, once again, independents are great for that. Yeah. Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: If, if we are talking about the blended part, so let's imagine we have like 50% of full-time and 50% of independent talent over last, I don't know, let's say five years or maybe three years.

Have you seen this percentage change in any way?

Gaëtan Vanreusel: Um, yes. Yes. Uh, and it's linked to quite a few factors. Um, so here I'm really focusing more on the domain that I know. So the hr, but I think it's very, [00:06:00] very similar to all the other corporates, uh, uh, functions, is that in the last 10 years, uh, we've been seeing more and more OO automization cost control or efficiency.

So doing more with less. And so it means that the, the structural part of the company is diminishing size. Mm-hmm. But at the same time, it's linked to operational, uh, um, and execution functions. So very lean and cost effective structures that are being put in place, strong processes, et cetera. But in the last, uh, uh, as we know in the last five, six years.

There's been so much going on since COVID and all the rest that came along that, um, there's a lot of unexpected, uh, uh, um, you know, contextual elements that come to play for which companies were not at all ready or equipped. So we

went from efficiency to now. Okay. But are, is efficiency [00:07:00] resilience, is it resilient to have efficient.

Teams in place and we were all working towards, uh, efficiency and now we are looking at, okay, but how can we really work more on that resilience? Okay. We need to actually maybe have a bit of bandwidth or planned bandwidth in those teams to be able to deal with the unexpected. And then we seeing so many more technologies coming.

AI, of course, the ways of work. We, we are not only employees, we've got the freelancers, but we've got interim, we've got, uh, standards of work sows, we've got outsourcing. There are so many different levels now of workforce options that companies really need to, can review and actually almost like a pallet.

Say, alright, for everything that's linked to automatization, we might have some agency work from AI, from anything that's structural or human faced. We might be having a fixed team of employees. Everything that's project linked, everything that's changed, linked, that's transformation linked or that's linked to a specific outcomes that we're looking for, [00:08:00] but it's temporary.

Freelance, again, is at the the best option. Yeah. Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: You mentioned two words, at least, freelancers and interns, and there are much more words on the market. Yeah. So I also hear contractors, independent talent, flexible workforce, contingent workers. So I'm curious, what is your favorite word for this independent talent and why?

I

Gaëtan Vanreusel: like using the word independent. Because independence is most of the time the motivation that's behind, you know, starting our own, uh, or for freelancer and independent to start. I also feel that freelancer, it can, they can, there might be an annotation of a connotation of something very short and something very execution orientated while Dependence.

It's linked to really a, um, a, a dedicated, specific business orientated around, uh, yeah, a, a, a niche, uh, um, um, you know, a, a unique value that can be offered. Um, but indeed, I mean, this, we, we started really, [00:09:00] we started really noting all the sorts of roles. You have fractional workers as well. You've got, you know, independent consultants.

You've got a. Uh, um, contingent workers, et cetera, and you've got so many different names. The, there are slight nuances with each of these, and it's interesting to, to note, uh, about them. And we can come back to that because, uh, contingency workers is a very interesting one as well. We actually worked, and, and I'm doing a bit of a, an anecdote here, but we.

For a very big pharmaceutical company in, uh, in Belgium. Well, an, uh, an uh, global, uh, pharmaceutical company, uh, they were putting in place an MSP, I dunno if you're familiar with that. MSP. So it's really managed service program. So it's everything that's linked to how are we going to actually manage, uh, follow up, um, streamline all the contingent workers.

So those are all. Independence, people that work solo for our company, for the company, people that are external consultants from the Deloitte, PWCs, et cetera. How are we gonna manage that [00:10:00] population? How much are we going to integrate them within the internal workforce? What are the security measures that we're gonna put in place?

What are, what is, how are we going to actually manage performance? Uh, how are we gonna rate these people? How are we gonna make sure we've got. Uh, even in terms of fees, a certain consistency. If they prov, they come, you know, I dunno. Uh, a certain James, James comes from a, a specific provider and that same James is presented to us in two years through another provider.

How can we keep a sense of. Tracking of who's who. While it's not linked to the, the, to the company, intermediary company, and we actually, uh, were were contacted by the American organization, uh, um, that was putting that whole MSP in place to look for their MSP director to look for the different manager.

It was a team of 20 people, so it was a proper big, uh, uh, team. It was 300 million, uh, budgets, uh, a Euro budget to really manage the, those contingent workers. And um, and you found that full pallet of everything [00:11:00] that was not linked to that permanent. Uh, or, or to that, uh, those employee, um, that employee status.

So very, very interesting. But it's a whole world out there with, with ratings, with how does that link, how do the rates link to skills, experience, et cetera. So that's also a very interesting topic. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: How long did it take them to build this system and process of managing their contingent workforce?

Gaëtan Vanreusel: It a year and a half. It took a year and a half, a year and a half. Um, to put in place the team, um, MSPs are very, um, are very IT driven. So it's actually a, a, a, a, um, a project management platform linked also to purchase. So you have the main stakeholders, HR or workforce, uh, responsible. You've got then the procurement, and then you've got it to track costs and finance to track costs.

To track everything that's linked to compliance, uh, uh, um, everything that's linked to the workforce management. Uh, this company here, I'm not gonna say the name, but they had a 2,800. [00:12:00] Contingent workers, uh, and just for Belgium. So big, big,

Yurii Lazaruk: crazy. It's great. I would love to hear their example. You know, like I, I, when I, when I will ever talk to a, uh, any kind of client, if I tell them that this project will take them one year and a half, most likely they will say no to me and never talk to me again.

Of course. Yeah. And it is the hardest part, but I really would love to hear the example and still, um. What are the blockers, what are the main blockers that prevents company from, I'm not talking about working with independent talent, but from building a good system for working with independent talent.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: Yeah, I, I, I think, I think there are different levels of maturity that companies can have towards freelancers or independence, and at first it starts with a real need. We don't have the internal, uh, we don't have the internal workforce. We don't have the internal expertise or someone's gone, or we [00:13:00] too lean to actually manage the, the, the, the increase of bandwidth.

And so it starts with a specific need. Now, once the company has tried it and it's successful, we realize how flexible it is. We start enriching the projects of, of the, this independent and the main blocking point. Is preconceived ideas that companies can have around what it means independent. It's honestly, it's not easy finding and hiring goods, uh, uh, freelancers because, um, there's a level of trust that needs to be there.

Often when a company hires someone that's independent, it's because it's important, because it's urgent and because. The stakes are high. Yeah. So, so we need to make sure we make the, that right, uh, choice. And I think there's a mix of being afraid that it's not the right fit. Uh, not understanding the whole costs that are linked, uh, to it.

I think there's also a, a [00:14:00] real, um, I think a real hesitation or mixed feelings about, alright, I'm gonna, on the corporate level, I'm gonna actually hire someone. How much would it cost me? Because we might say, yeah, but it's, it's. So many, you know, so many, so much per day. Say, okay, but how many days will it take?

And, and, and that bottom line on, okay, how much is it gonna cost and what's the output? It's not always a very clear to bring across. I think it's something by the way, that the freelancers can also do probably a better job is, is how much is it gonna cost? What's the bottom line value? What are we gonna bring?

And that creates a sense of unease. We feel it towards, uh, within companies. Uh, and the other one is the difficulty in articulating the need. They, they know what they, they know what that end result is. Ah, we need to, we've got, you know, people are not staying in the company. We need to increase the level of engage.

But what sort of profile do we need and how do [00:15:00] we find someone good as an independent while they've been maybe having five projects in a year? Yeah, but they haven't been stable. No, they haven't been stable because it's, it's project based work. How do you tell. The difference between a successful project Right.

And, and a non-successful project. So it's not the same hiring someone, uh, for your team as an employee than it is as an independent. And we are seeing now companies, or I'm seeing companies that are already having dedicated people just to hire independents within the company because of the specifics around this.

Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: No, it's interesting that you mentioned about, uh, that companies do not understand how long it'll take, and freelancers can do this, and I clearly agree with you that freelancers are businesses. They're coming to work not as employee and waiting for company, tell them what to do, but they're coming as businesses and they're coming as consultants.

They're coming with their specific knowledge and they have to ask company all the questions that they [00:16:00] need. To come up with an offer and tell like, Hey, it'll take this much time. It'll take this many days. That's how we work. 'cause otherwise it's, it's, I feel like it's a huge problem. There is this

communication part because companies do not have clear project descriptions and they come to freelancers and say, Hey, we need to do this in two days.

And freelance is like, uh, it's impossible. And then also. Freelancers have to come with clear questions and ask all those questions, not expect that someone will magically tell them what to do. So I feel like it's, it's a lot about this communication between these two sides.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: Absolutely. Absolutely. And I think that's where intermediaries.

Have a real role to play. It's to manage the eagerness that each can, you know, each may have in terms of companies saying, oh, I'm eager to find a solution. Well, I've got some. Oh, fantastic. And same thing for the independent saying, Ooh, there's a project. Exciting, exciting. And that eagerness can really create a [00:17:00] strong bias.

And I think that that's the role that all these intermediary companies have to play is to try and bring this. A certain rationale, rationality in it. And so, right. This is the need. This is what you know, this is the, the, the, the pain points. This is, this is the outcome that you're looking for. This is what you need.

This is the skillset you need. This is how we're gonna validate. These are the, the, the best options I can propose. This is how you need to interview them, because it's also very specific structure to interview these independence, et cetera. And, and I think that it's, it's, it's really the role that these intermediary companies have to play.

It's trying to temper down that eagerness and to bring really on what are the key success, uh, uh, conditions to make this work out and to make sure that there's alignment, that there are the, the, the, the key, you know, conditions to make this a success. Let's say, uh,

Yurii Lazaruk: this episode of the Independent Workforce is brought to you by Freelancer Map, the home of freelancing.

Whether you are looking to [00:18:00] hire top freelance talent fast, or a freelancer. Ready to find your next big project. Freelance Map connects 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://freelancemap.com) and start building your next success story today talking about intermediaries.

So company, if we're talking about like huge organization that employs like thousands of people, no matter how great systems they might have inside. It'll always not be possible to go and search for each freelancer independently. They will always go to some kind of vendor, to some kind of company.

Someone who does this connection, someone who builds this relationship with freelancers, and they will ask those companies to provide them with freelancers and once. Not every company has this system and not every company is ready to invest in the system, which doesn't mean that they cannot hire freelancers, they [00:19:00] still can do this.

So I'm curious if, let's imagine we have a big company, uh, I dunno, hundreds of employees and they want to try independent talent. When they come to you as an intermed, as someone who helps them to connect the dots, how do you connect these both sides? Like, what are the expectations from hiring side, from a client side, and what are the expectations from freelancer side and how do you make it work?

Gaëtan Vanreusel: Yeah. There's a lot in there, huh? I'll, I'll do my best. I'll do my best. Also. Very good one. So, so I think we need to see things really from the, the, um, the overall picture. Very often companies work with consulting firms, the Deloitte, PWC, et cetera. These are really good to give guidelines. These are really good to, uh, to actually work on the strategic level in terms of these are your options.

This is what you need to improve, what you're looking at, what it's not good at. Is how do we actually bridge that from conception to realization [00:20:00] and companies don't have the, the, um, expertise in-house and for everything that's linked to those projects or everything that's linked to how do we connect to strategic plan to, to the reality we have today and bringing us from that point A to point B.

I think independence are fantastic, uh, for that. So that's the first option. Second option. Is, um, in times of change, everything that's linked to advice that can be provided by these independents is fantastic, uh, because they've been seeing a lot of different contexts, a lot of different environments, and you can really find experts for all the fields you can think of.

Um, so very concretely when we contacted by a company, it's really understanding. The need. So what's the context? What is the structure that this independent will be working in? What are the resources? What is the expected

outcome? Uh, um, and really connecting also that to the [00:21:00] culture, the make or break component is culture.

That's like typical. Typical and, and companies. Again, this is where it's so important to have intermediary companies, and I'm biased saying that, but I really believe it is. If you hire someone that said, all right, you know, I've been doing sales for so many years, you know, commercial profiles, sales for so many years, I've been doing this, I've been doing that.

And then actually you realize that yes, the person has been technically doing that. But at a totally different scale, different sort of pro uh, pro products or, or services, totally different, uh, environment or resources, and it doesn't connect at all. So you need someone that spends that time that really understands what is the culture of the company, what works, what doesn't.

What are the resources? What is the level of sophistication? Uh, um, um, you know, what, what is the, also the, the maturity level of the organization in which phase? Growth, uh, stabilization, decrease [00:22:00] reinvention. There are so many different, uh, phases at which, you know, it also influences, uh, and then, um. It's finding the right independence.

The way we work or we approached it is we only present in independence. We already know.

Yurii Lazaruk: Hmm.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: So we don't start searching when the need is there. We actually have been doing a lot of work. We, we spent a year, it was a full-time person working a year in mapping the whole independent population for the market.

We were. Uh, launching ourselves on for the function and really just like we would do a search, we started really categorizing them, uh, structuring, you know, what are the skill sets that might offer, who are the people we want to have in our, in our, in our, in our GaN now in our, in our, in our portfolio of people and we created a portfolio and we always tap in that portfolio.

If we don't know someone. It's too late. We don't start searching for someone once we have the need. And I think that's, [00:23:00] uh, that's, it's, it's an important one because if you do look at the personality traits of, uh, or, or the way people, uh, you know, independents work, uh. There are things you just can't tell just over a one hour or two hour discussion.

It's really being able to follow up on people, and that's what we've been doing. It's saying. Yeah. So it's tapping into our existing pool of independence, making sure it aligns or really clearly understanding the briefing, the need, the expectations, and also, uh, checking with the freelancers, uh, what is the level of understanding that they might have in those sort of contexts.

Yeah, yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: How do you get to know those talent that you bring into your pool?

Gaëtan Vanreusel: So. There are many different levels. Yeah. And, and it, I'm, I'm going to simplify this, but, um. One is understanding the level of responsibility they had in their previous roles, permanent roles and projects, so level of responsibility.

The second is the capabilities they have in terms of technical understanding [00:24:00] or skills if you want around specific domain. Uh uh, um, so here it's really the technicality of if they start this sort of project, do have they actually already worked in that? Then it's a sort of project. What sort of outcomes have been working, which sort of stakeholders?

And then the most important, and we touched upon that, is personality. They need to be easy to work with, they need to be trustworthy, they need to take ownership, and they need to be really adaptable. Uh, and, and I think that, again, this is something that is a really core elements to really offer a, a, a, a really positive experience and to give that peace of mind to companies that say, we've got an urgent need, important, and you need someone that can actually adapt that no task too low.

So we also check in the interviews and in the discussions we have. You know, to what level of operation ability that the person is willing to do, or the variety or broadness of the skills, uh, um, that's really [00:25:00] important. Yeah. Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: We talked before a little bit of expectations of freelance sites, so the right expectations of company sites, then freelancers, so some experts who were, let's say, working for 10 years in permanent position, and then they decide to go independent and they still have this mindset of full-time employees.

What are misalignments between expectations of those independent talent who are turning independent and realities that companies are looking for in this independent talent?

Gaëtan Vanreusel: That's an excellent question, Yohi, and, and I think there's a true difference between someone that has been an employee for a few years and then someone that starts as an independent.

The way of seeing that is you, it's, it's, it's really a hard sell if you're an independent. And you position yourself as an employee and saying, look, buy my time. Okay, but in what way would you be different than the existing workforce of the company? And I think it's a [00:26:00] unique opportunity when we start as a freelance, when independent person.

To really clearly, um, um, funnel down where are our core strengths? Where are really the elements in which we are excellent, we are really strong. What sort of context, what sort of projects? What is the niche we position ourselves in? And to really go full, full on that niche to continue learning to work on, uh, um, perhaps, uh, um, educate yourself around a project management.

Around how do you manage these different projects if it's not something you were exposed to in that, in that, in that long term. And I think surrounding yourself with different, uh, um, uh, training tracks of project management of potentially ai, but really everything that's relevant for that niche that you're on is essential.

And, um, you know, a silly thing and, and, and an silly anecdote, but, you know, during the, the COVID period, um, I, I did a bit of cycling, I think, like, like many [00:27:00] people. And, um, and I started cycling. I was really a random bike, right? And, uh, started doing that more and more seriously. And at a certain moment I said, Gaetan, this is the moment you need to buy yourself a, a new bike.

Why? Because you're serious at it. And for some reason, and I laughed about it afterwards, I said, okay, but if I'm becoming specialized in it, I actually need to be in a go to a specialized shop. I actually need to go to a shop that is really does the niche, which I'm doing. I was doing gravel. I need to find a gravel shop, et cetera, and I was laughing at it afterwards.

I said, actually, this is so funny. It's exactly the same approach companies have. If it's important, you are not gonna try and find someone that can do everything. You're gonna find someone that positions themselves on, on the specific

problem they're trying to address. Someone that is credible on it, someone that is trustworthy.

And if it matters, you wanna find the best. And honestly, in my experience, [00:28:00] price doesn't matter that much. If the stakes are high, you are willing to pay, uh uh, and it's important if you're sure that that person is the best you can get. And I've got so many examples, so many examples, uh, of, you know, of that I like, you know, that I can share where, where I've seen it and, and where, where, uh, uh, independence were as a fee at two, 3000, sometimes more per day on a specific niche.

But the stakes were so. That, you know, it's, it, it, it, it, it really didn't, it, it didn't matter. It's getting it right because it touched thousands of people because there was multiple hundreds of millions euros in, in terms at stake. So, so when it matters, you wanna find the best. And I think that that's really the positioning that's you need to, one needs to have as a freelancer is don't try to show that you can do everything, because that means you're not specialized in anything.

Show that you're actually good in something, that you [00:29:00] really understand your niche and your core skills, and that you're so strong in that, that you just keep on feeding yourself. On whatever can keep on getting you in, in bringing you at, at, you know, amongst the best in that field. And I think it's really important.

It's really important, and I know you've been discussing and talking to you on the podcast with different people that were freelancers and independents and the successful ones. It's exactly the track that they've had. It's, it's understanding the value we have, being able to say, that's what I want to keep on doing and I want to.

Obsessively keep on getting better and better at what I do, and that brings comfort in companies. That's what they're looking for. They're not looking at buying time. They wanna buy results, and they wanna make sure that the person that they're hiring will be able to bring those results. That's really so important.

Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: It's very, it's very important thing that you mentioned, if it's important. So when companies are starting, when they're just trying to work with independent talent, most [00:30:00] likely it's not very important task. So usually they will just outsource it to. Whatever. And then they do not have really like any expectations.

And when you don't have these expectations, you might receive mediocre results. And then like, ah, these freelancers, they do shitty work. Why should we ever work with them? So how to ensure when you are starting working with independent talent, how to ensure that it's important thing, how to focus it that way, that you find good talent, not just random talent, but even if you are just.

Try and even when you are just starting to work, how to ensure that you are finding a good talent.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: So, um, if I were, well, if I were a business owner, the way to look at freelance work. Is imagine you've got hundreds of people amongst the best in their fields, as narrow as it can be, you want to work on a specific, specific communication plan on the [00:31:00] development of a product on, on the follow up, the auditing, you can, you can think of anything you want on a very practical level.

If you need someone, uh, temporary for whatever task or whatever. Imagine that you have, you can tap into hundreds of competencies, hundreds of, of different, uh, uh, options, uh, whenever you might need it. And again, a side note, and I'll come back to that, you, I dunno if you heard Yuri, but in, in, in Germany, you've got certain companies that are specialized in actually just starting with an idea.

Finding independence that start developing that idea on technology side, et cetera. All these people are independence, and so you've got companies that actually go to market with a new product. A hundred percent independence. And once they find investments or they go public or whatever, uh, um, then, then they start hiring permanent.

So the amount of flexibility, the access that it gives you in terms of [00:32:00] skills, uh, um, being able to really work on projects, on geographies, uh, that, that are, that are really linked to, um, imagine that it's possible. What would, how would you define the needs that you might have and for what period of time?

And then now to come back to the question you need to surround yourself. With good, um, with good companies and good partners, and if not, find independence or freelancers that are senior enough to be almost a reflection of the position you are in that have developed a network that are, you know, are part of different, uh, uh, communities that are part, that are really well networked and that can really help you or support you in finding the right talent.

In knowing who you are, taking the time and understanding what are the specifics of your company, because yes, uh, skills can be transferable, but companies are really, really unique and you need to have companies that, that take the time to understand what the specifics are. Uh, and that's [00:33:00] also what will differentiate you as a company.

It's having access to this, to this, uh, yeah, to this expertise. Uh, and, and being able to tap into it where your competitors won't be because they might be stuck on that model. We, we only are fixed and we'll try to, to do things with what we already have, uh, or to hire consulting companies, but we have difficulties in trying to put that in place because they didn't really understand our culture.

Where we are, where we stand, are we different than an and, and again, independence, whether it's for execution. Whether it's for projects, review of processes change, you, you can tap into that for hours, days, weeks, months, years, uh, uh, but you need to have the right partners that can guide you in that process because it is very, very different than than working with, uh, um, employees, let's say, or finding employees.

Uh, yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: Where do clients find those partners? If someone want to hire a freelancer, where do they go?

Gaëtan Vanreusel: I, I, I, I think on a global level. On an [00:34:00] international level, there are no, uh, leaders in that field. I think it's linked to the geographies. It's linked to the, to the, to the, to the partners we work with or the, the companies.

I think a good place to start, it's not maybe the best, but still a good place to start is the companies you've been working with, uh, to hire, uh, people, uh, as employees. Ask them for guidance if they knew you very well, and it's been quite a few years, you can look that up. Now a few communities you can network around those communities and saying, who are the, who are the best providers for this profile, for this sort of context, et cetera.

Because you have people in, in, or companies, intermediary companies in all different niches or geographies or, uh, if you have someone in your own network that you really have very high regards for, that is an dependen. Ask them their experience, who they've worked with, who are the best people to actually connect with, uh, uh, um, and, and also, uh, test them, these intermediary [00:35:00] companies.

And I could almost, uh, there, there are quite a few things I would, I would like to share. But if you are testing intermediary companies, there are key questions you need to ask. For example, explain to them who you are, what's specific around your company. Ask them to reiterate that, to repeat that. What are their thoughts of the markets?

What do they feel, you know, are, are specifics that they need to pay attention to, to, you know, in terms of company and, and, and, and, and going outside towards the, the, uh, freelance population and they need to be in a guidance position. Um, a lot of people are looking to sell something. Look for that guidance.

Selling is that second part, but you need to look for that guidance. Uh, and the rest will come automatically. Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: There is a saying, I, I've been working a lot with sales community and there is a saying, tell not sell. So basically, or, or show not sell it depends on like what, how do you do this? So it's always about like guiding, helping and giving value first.

And when you are working with a company that is ready to help you already, even [00:36:00] before you started, like with this work relationship, I believe that it's a person to go with.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: Correct. And another one when, when you're a company and you want to hire an independent. Test them. Ask them be, be mindful of their time.

So don't ask them work. And if you do, you need to pay for them. You need to pay them to be mindful of their time. But ask them, say, look, you understand our context. How would you guide us? Uh, and and to the independent? And you say, what are the the first things you would look, look for in the first three months?

How would you approach it? What are the pain points or the risk factors of the project? What are the things you can actually concretely bring, uh, um, provide us a work on? You need to pay for that because again, you need to be mindful of the time, but do a roadmap of, of your start or the induction program.

When you would start, you would start, what do you need in terms of information? Who would you. Would you be asking for what, who are the key stakeholders, et cetera. So test them. Again, be mindful of the time, but it's, it's

really an important one, [00:37:00] uh, uh, to feel at what degree or level can you connect actually with the way of them being able to, to give you the results you're looking for.

Yeah. Um.

Yurii Lazaruk: Talking about the time I wish to have. The sky is the limit, but time is the limit. So the final question, what advice would you give to companies just starting to use freelancers and to freelancers enter the market?

Gaëtan Vanreusel: Think of what your biggest pay. So for the companies, think of what your biggest pain point is.

Start searching for someone that can help you even for a few hours. And it can be on all the topics you want. Typically AI is a big one. You are looking at what are the options on ai. Try to find someone that can guide you on that before looking at different options or solutions. Ask for a freelance if that person can actually guide you on how they can, you can enhance, for example, processes.

Look at the sales, look at how you can optimize. Proceed. Think of the pain points that today you don't feel you have the actually internal competencies [00:38:00] and make that a project, which can be only a few days or a few hours, start small to test, uh, to test the, the, the return and the value can get out of that.

Yeah. Yeah. Answers. And then when we started in independence, the first thing is, I think it's so important, as we were saying, to do a real introspection and saying, if I were to, um, break down and to articulate in five points what my core value is, what my positioning is or my, the niche that I'm on or my I'm in, how can I actually articulate that to explain what I can provide in terms of value to companies?

And that becomes my pitch towards. Companies, but also intermediary organizations. Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: To keep the conversation going. Name two people I should reach out to, to talk about the independent workforce.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: Uh, I still need to ask, I still need to ask them, but I think there's, there's one person I'm thinking of that actually wrote a book.

Her name is Alison Grade. I dunno if you know who she, she, [00:39:00] she actually wrote a book that's called The Freelance, uh, the Freelance Bible.

Yurii Lazaruk: Hmm.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: Uh, and it's, it's, there are so many people out there that say, you know, become an independent, make a great living work, only a few hours per week, et cetera. She's, uh, um, Allison is one of the first persons whom I read the book.

Which is so pragmatic. It's so realistic, and I think it really walks you through all the stages of how you can optimize your value. So Alison Grade is one of them, and then there's another person that I'm thinking of. That's Edward Vanta, who's a, um, um, um, working as an intermediary company, also located in Belgium.

Uh, and I actually, do you think because I've got quite a few that I can, I can actually share, uh, URI are you interested maybe, um, I, I, I'm, I'm gonna look that up. If you want someone in France or in the Netherlands, I can. I can look up quite a few of them. Or in the uk always different markets, different maturity.

But Edward Vanta, um, is working on a, uh, started a company called Beam and he, he brings that right balance also in hr, but he brings that right [00:40:00] balance between um, how can you work on speed and quality. And it's really someone I've got high regards for. So I can put you in touch with him. He's gonna, he is the top guy.

Uh, um, so there, there are quite a few out there, Alison. Great. She's a, she's, she's excellent. Um, she's top. Yeah. You know,

Yurii Lazaruk: first of all, I'm really in this book myself. I need to, I need to learn it, you know, I've never heard about it, but I will definitely check it out. And yes, of course, I will ask you to connect me with every person you think that are moving this industry forward.

Okay? We need to talk. We need to create these use cases. We need to be loud about what's happening so that more and more businesses can tap into this value of independent talent and move forward. And last but not least, what is the one question that I should have asked you about the freelance market but didn't?

Gaëtan Vanreusel: How is the market today?

Yurii Lazaruk: Ah, yeah. How is the market today?

Gaëtan Vanreusel: You still have like half an hour?

Yurii Lazaruk: Half, [00:41:00] half, half a minute. Half a minute.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: I, I, I, I think the market, uh, is, um, today freelancers need to be really good in the positioning, in the value that they offer, uh, um. The market is pragmatic focus. Um, and for companies as well focus on what is the end value you want to offer. And we were talking about it a bit earlier.

It's not about how much time am I gonna buy or how much time is the company gonna buy of my services? It's fundamentally what is the offer I'll be bringing to the company and the end results that they can, that they can bring. And it, and it's something that needs to come across in reports, uh, in the way we, uh, candidates or, or independents are presented in the way they articulate their positioning.

Because today, more than ever, it's a project market. It's, there's a clear need and, and for the ones that are still like, okay, but I can offer you the same as a employee, but as an independent. [00:42:00] It's, it's, it's, it's a tougher sell. And, and it was very, uh, it was really top on the agenda a couple of years ago when companies had difficulties in finding, uh, you know, uh, people for permanent roles, et cetera.

But this is not at all the topic today. Today, companies are really, uh, battling to be more efficient, to be, uh, future proof. To look at how they can optimize their resources on how they can do more with less or better. And I think that the freelancers, it's an amazing market for the ones that can actually read that and can actually understand the level of pragmatism that is needed.

In saying, this is what I can do. If that problem is yours, I'm here. Here's how I'm gonna help it. So the market is, uh, challenging, but it's transforming and it's really important to read that, uh, uh, at, at, at all levels. And I think I see it. Every day companies are looking for pragmatic solutions and this is one of the topics that, that, that freelancers or independent can really offer again.

Yeah. So big fan as you

Yurii Lazaruk: more with [00:43:00] less. More with less. Exactly. That's how freelancers are working because they have a ton of experience and they're just usually one person and they bring in you more with less and, uh, you don't have

to pay all this extra expenditures that you have on top of them, like insurance, like laptop, or like some extra payments, whatever you just.

Get their hours. Yes, they might be higher than your like usual full-time people, but overall you are hiring them for a project as we've been talking about. You're not hiring them to sit in your office, you're hiring them to deliver value. So yeah. Let's see.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: And on top of that, and on top of that, you also important to note.

You'll be able to actually attract and to have the services of someone probably you wouldn't have been able to afford if it were for a permanent and full-time position. So you really have access to that experience and expertise. Uh, um, right away. Yeah. Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: By the way, it's very interesting thing that, um, I believe it was, by the way, Anna.

Who told about that, that sometimes, um, companies want to work with a [00:44:00] freelancer in a full-time way and they are ready to hire this person. And then when they are hiring them full time, they understand that they cannot afford them full time. So it's also like this, this very, very important topic and you know.

Gaetan, thank you so much. First of all, I love your energy. I love talking to you. Thanks. Very nice. So it's very interesting conversation and you definitely have a ton of experience. You are moving this market forward, not just full-time market, but like this independent talent because you clearly understand what the blended workforce is like, how's the future looks like, and then up to your point, that more with less, and also being more flexible, being more adaptable.

That's exactly what independent talent gives you. And thank you so much for sharing your experience with me.

Gaëtan Vanreusel: You are welcome. You're welcome. Thank you for having me, Auri. Thanks a lot. Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: And, uh, yeah, seeing the independent talent 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 [00:45:00] even more and share it with your colleague. And remember, the future of work is now.