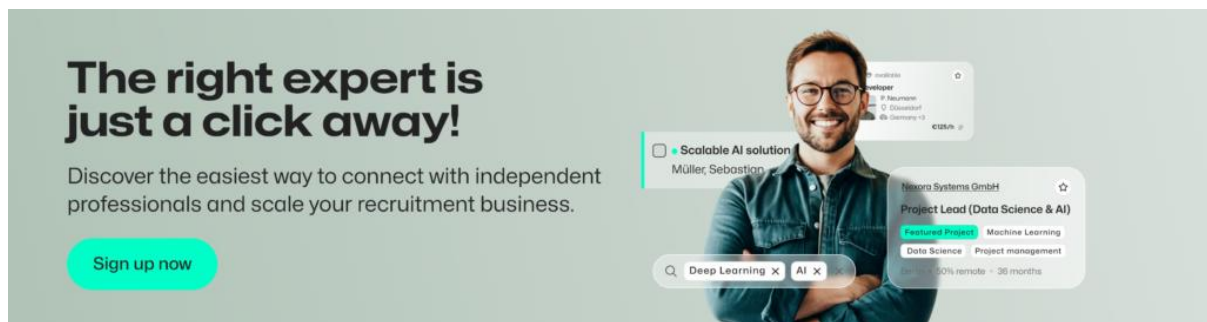


Why the next generation of talent won't be your employee - Episode 32 with Rich Parker

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

My name is Yuri. I'm growing the freelance market at Freelance Map and International platforms has been connected, top independent professionals. With companies for over 20 years, and my guest is Rich Parker, the CEO of Planet Net, the largest provider of freelance meeting and event talent globally, where with a network of over three and a half thousand weathered professionals.

Across 70 plus countries and over 200,000 hours of work delivered each year. They help organizations scale flexibly, stay compliant, and create world class event experiences. So welcome, reach.



Rich Parker: Thank you, Yuri. I appreciate you having me on and

Yurii Lazaruk: look forward to

Rich Parker: the discussion. [00:01:00]

Yurii Lazaruk: I'm happy to talk to you. I see that you are a future of work ambassador and you are basically putting it it into work.

You're not just talking about it, but you're making it happen, and it's something that. I'm still curious about, there are so many namings

and it's something that we started talking before the recording. There are so many names for experts like freelancers, contractors, independent talent, whatever. So what is your favorite word?

How do you use it and why?

Rich Parker: Uh, well, so I am a CPA is originally how I started my career, so I kind of have my view of it. Um, I never liked gig economy. People started out with that. To me, gig economy was your Instacarts, Grubhubs, you know, your Ubers Lyfts. Those are people doing gigs, they're doing short little stints and that's fine.

That's how they make their living or that's how they wanna, you know, expand what they make in the world. Um, everything to me, kind of moved to freelancers. We started using that and to me, sounds much more professional in nature. [00:02:00] Freelancers are you, you know, they're, they're just a higher level of person from our opinion.

Um, and now I've, I've always talked to clients about it really being. They're small businesses at the end of the day, and small businesses run the run, the run the world. I mean, if you really look at the percentage of small businesses in the world, it is significant. And these are people that have made the choice.

To be a small business, not an employee. They both have the same rights. I mean, employee can quit at any time. Their employment at, well, maybe not everywhere around the world. I know France has a little more, you know, regulation around it. But the us, their employment at, well, they can come and go and a freelancer can come and go and decide where they wanna work, who they wanna work with, all of that.

So. I feel like small business is really much more applicable to who they are.

Yurii Lazaruk: If we are talking from the side of, from the hiring side, from the end client who is hiring these experts when they, maybe you have some conversation with them. And how do you think they feel about the [00:03:00] word freelancer and small business?

Is there a difference on how they approach it?

Rich Parker: I will use Freelancer because I feel like it's an understood word out there. But I will also use small businesses. And part of that is because that's how we have everybody set up. Um, we utilize, we make sure they're a small business. Small businesses need have insurance requirements.

You know, they have other regulatory requirements. And so from our standpoint, they really are small businesses. Freelancer, I think has the connotation a little bit of somebody just winging it out there. And they're really not. I mean, these are professionals that have decided this is how they're gonna make their living.

They want the flexibility. Um, you know, they may decide that this is just the best thing in the way they like to work. They don't like to go to an office. It annoys 'em. It's, you know, frustrating, um, having people. So, you know, I think that, uh. You know, it, it's a combo to help kind of bridge the gap. And I, you know, I just wrote, uh, something [00:04:00] to, you probably know John Younger, well sent him an email this morning on all of this, and, uh, we're gonna have a good discussion.

We'll, probably, he will probably write something up knowing him about, you know, what's really the difference between an employee and a quote freelance. So it'll be fun.

Yurii Lazaruk: Tell me a little bit of what you are working right now. Like what is your role currently on this, let's call it small business market?

Rich Parker: Uh, well I won't talk about mine specifically 'cause I have people doing the work that are fantastic at it.

Um, you know, I'm strategy all of that and trying to grow, grow the business. But, you know, our approach really is there's a balance between. The number of freelancers we have and then the amount of work we have, I see too much and read too much about people saying they can't find work. And so our goal is to balance that as best we can, um, based on people.

Some people wanna do, you know, I don't know, a hundred meetings a year. They wanna support, some only want to do two. So we survey, we find out what they wanna do, [00:05:00] we find out their skill sets, um, so we have a good profile on 'em. Um, there's different tech, different technology within our industry, and we need to understand what they're knowledgeable in or not knowledgeable in.

I hear new technology all, you know, all the time, and I'm like, I didn't know that existed. But we have. People on our network that know it and they know how to use it. Um, Nvidia is a great case study, but I won't go too detailed 'cause they are a client. And then when I talk about the client side, at the end of the day, to me, the client, and let's just take a large company, you know, just throw one out there, I'll throw a pharmaceutical.

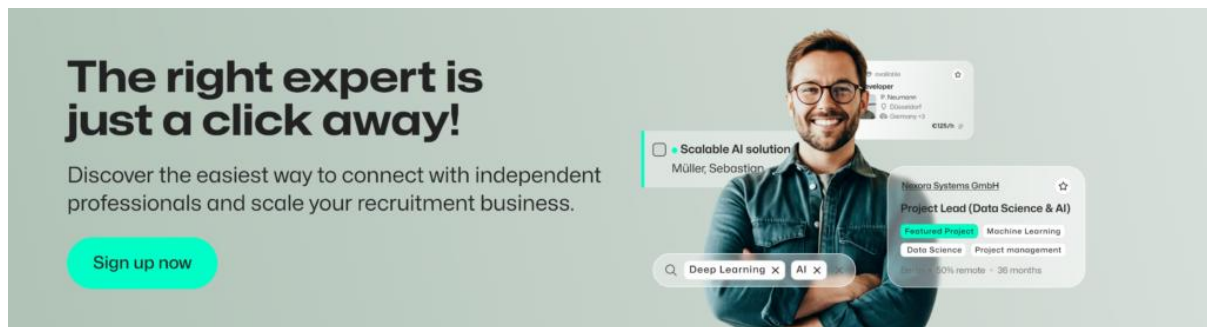
Pfizer. Pfizer doesn't wanna go in contract with. 500 different individuals. That's not what they do. And so really we're like an outside procurement for Pfizer. Um, let their procurement concentrate on what they really do, compounds, whatever, you know, all of that. And let us go find your meeting and event [00:06:00] support for you.

And it's fully vetted, you know, you can use it and it's gonna support your meetings, which is not your core. Business. Um, so to me it's really, uh, it's bringing and matching the two. You know, if you look at our, you know, kind of our motto, it's bringing large opportunities to small businesses. And that's where we sit right in the middle of that.

Um, and I think more companies need to understand that that's really what it is. It's not. You're not losing anything by using an individual that's not a quote employee in your company. You probably have bad employees in your company. I know you do. I mean, we all know. Not every employee performs. That's why we have, you know, performance improvement plans, pips, right?

I mean, so, you know, that's just an old fashioned way of getting rid of somebody that's not doing their work. Right? So a freelancer, small business, you can do the same thing with. You just happen to do it quicker. You know, you bring them in. You may not like the work they're doing, you can get rid of them [00:07:00] immediately.

Where an employee, there's a longer process. So that's kind of how we try to explain it to both sides of the, uh, kind of the engine that we're running in between.



Yurii Lazaruk: Do you play only procurement role or also managing role for this experts?

Rich Parker: Well, in the US you cannot manage freelancers that is looked at as employment.

What we do is we work with our clients on what they need. We will put together a contract with them, and then we will have a statement of work for every, every engagement that they need a freelancer for. And that statement of work, it may be consistent 'cause they do the same thing every time, but it will lay out what the client is expecting of them, the type of work they need.

And so then the. You know, the freelancer, if we're gonna call 'em, that can decide what they wanna do or not do. Um, they may take the job, they may take, not take the job. They, you know, we have a record of who's accepted and who's declined, which is [00:08:00] a big. Piece of the, the wheel here that's running. Uh, we can tell a client, listen, Rich Parker doesn't accept your business.

He only works on these pieces of business. Um, and that's, that's how it works. You know, he, he's not, he doesn't feel he is qualified to do the work that you do or somebody else. Rich Parker does feel like he's qualified, and so you're seeing him snag this up every time. Um, so it's kind of, I forget the question exactly 'cause I'm talking too much, but it, it really is, um, you know, it's, it's, it's not managed.

Yeah. It is core. It's more coordinating.

Yurii Lazaruk: That's exactly what I was asking about because that's one of the huge blockers that, uh, independent talent face when they join the company, they are, they're perceived as if they were some random person. So they get their own, uh, chair in the different table somewhere in the end of the room.

And they're not included in like team meetings and stuff, and they just [00:09:00] cannot deliver the work they do because they're not perceived as a full-time expert. They're someone from the on, from the side. And that's, that's what I was asking you about, like whether you are helping them, supporting them, whether you are guiding them in a, in a way, or maybe you are mediating like between the client and this expert.

Rich Parker: Yeah, I would say yes. We, so when we have a client that needs an expert, let's say on site at the client's office, they need to do what we call project work. You know, over a certain amount of time they're helping out a team. Um, we will send the client, you know, three to five business profiles as what they really are.

And we'll say that these businesses, we feel like meet your needs for what you want, and they can come in and work. Think about a consultant from Accenture or one of those big company or, or the big four, you know, the other big four. You know, they come in and they bring consultants in, and those consultants work for Accenture, but they will sit down in a team meeting and they will listen to [00:10:00] the problems that they're trying to help solve.

Um, no different than bringing a, you know, freelancer as we call 'em in, they're trying to help you with your business. Um, and it is a short term, short term stint. Accenture may do a year, you know, some year process or consulting on trying to figure out how you run your business better, or a certain operation or a process, or what technology would work better for you.

It's the same concept of a freelancer. They just call 'em consultants and they work for a larger business. Why can't you be a consultant of one? And there are consultants of one everywhere. And they're gonna call themselves a consultant, not a freelancer.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yes. I believe it's all about the trust because you trust and also responsibility.

Because when you are working with some huge consultancy, you're just, oh, they told me to do, it's not my fault that something didn't work out. But then you hire like one person. Oh yeah, it's like my fault. So it's, I, I believe that it's, that was a big name, you know, staying behind. And let's take a step back.

So you [00:11:00] told that you are connecting freelancers with projects and I also know that before COVID and even earlier, it was a little bit easier 'cause there were more projects than freelancers. Nowadays things are changing a little bit. So I'm curious from your perspective, how has the freelance market evolved in the past few years?

Rich Parker: Well, I think we all know that everybody that's in this, you know, this game knows that it's gone from what, 20 million freelancers to 70 plus. You know, you can decide which report you wanna read. Um, the US from my standpoint, is the significant leader. And utilizing them. I we're looking at the rest of the world is starting to come along.

Um, but you're gonna have places, you know, from my experience too, you know, Europe is always gonna be a, it's a tough market to crack because every country within Europe. Looks at themselves specifically, where in the us every state does not. Um, but it is, it's feasible. I've done it in my past jobs. Um, we're [00:12:00] working with AsiaPac a decent amount now through our client base.

They have needs there, so AsiaPac has started to expand. Latin America is starting to expand. You know, that's our view on meeting and event planning. But I also know Latin America brings a different pay scale. To the United States, and so you may use more of a freelance standpoint there as well. Um, I think freelancers, you're gonna, this is one I'm, it's a hot topic for me.

If you look at the generations that have, have taken us through to where we're at, my dad, you know, worked one job for 35 years, Loctite Super Glue, now owned by Henkel over in Germany or somewhere 35

years. I've worked four jobs in my life. He probably thinks I'm rogue, you know, that I'm just, who's this crazy guy?

This is not who I raised. He's all over the place. Um, you go down to, so I'm Gen X, you go down a generation, you know, y [00:13:00] millennials, whatever you want to call 'em. Um, you know, they, they came out of the work into the workforce at a. At a bad time, 2008 financial crisis, at least in the us Then you get COVID and that's right when they should be hitting their mid-manager jobs and looking at their career going forward.

And I think, you know, that's, that's not, you know, you kind of, they probably look at work in one company is like, this isn't really working for me. It's not gonna, I'm gonna have a income loss over my whole career, which they will. I think it's already been, you know, uh, looked into and written up and researched.

And then you look at Gen Z, they want lifestyle, you know, they really focus on lifestyle. They want flexibility, all of that. And so it's tough for them to say, I just wanna go and employee of be an employee of one company. That's not what I'm looking to do in my, in my life. And it's, it's, it's fine.

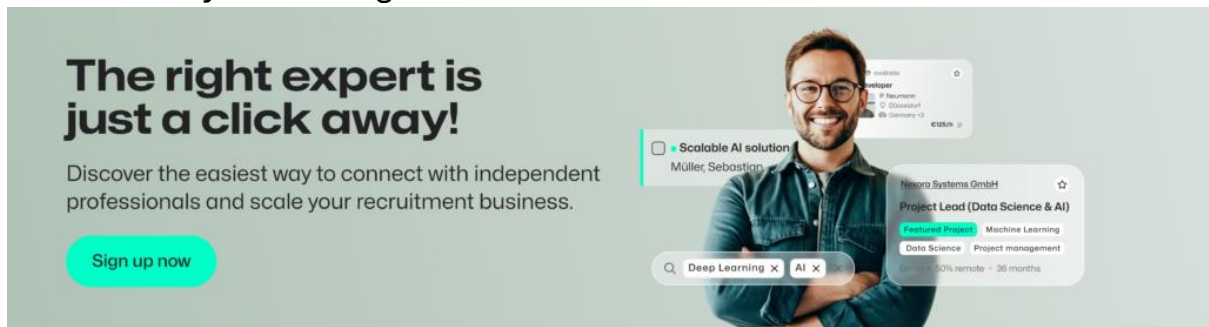
Generations change. I mean, that's reality gen a's gonna be interesting. [00:14:00] Um, they're sitting on TikTok all day. I have two gen a's two gen AERs. I mean, they're on TikTok all day. And I don't, you know, from my standpoint being a, you know, gen X I'm gonna be like. The day a Gen A person hits me with an IDK, when I ask them how the project's going, I'm gonna be like, holy smokes.

I don't know. It's probably my time to retire. You know, so I'm, I'm big on the generational flow that's happening, and I think the companies need to see it and understand it and look at everything as skill-based and how people can help them understanding that this thing already started. It's, it's going, you know, it's, it's not gonna stop.

Um, so you, you've gotta start looking at full-time, which you always did part-time, which you were using staffing companies for as well. Freelancers, AI's gonna come into play. AI's still too early, in my

opinion. What it's really gonna do to help, I think [00:15:00] everybody says they're an AI company out there right now.

Um, so, you know, I think you've got a, that middle ground of part-time and freelancer are gonna merge. And you're gonna find it's gonna be freelancer. Part-time to me is gonna go away and become freelancer, and that's how people wanna work. So that's kind of my view on how this industry is moving



Yurii Lazaruk: and believe, if we're talking about JA, is they, oh, we just hate Chad g.

Pt. Do it for me. And then if something went wrong, it's like, it's not my fault Chad G. PT told me. Yes. So

Rich Parker: I use it. You know what? I use it for a starting point. And then I'm like, all right, it's like using, you know when you use Google?

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah.

Rich Parker: You clicked one blue, you clicked one blue thing, it gave you more, you clicked another one to go deeper and another one to go deeper.

If you're not using chat GPT like that, you're, you're not, you're not being smart.

Yurii Lazaruk: I, I believe many people are using Google in the way that they get the first answer, that currently you have this AI answer and then they trust it. I know. So it's like the craziest part. And also, so you mentioned that, uh, freelance economy, like going from 20 to [00:16:00] seven to million free answers.

And what about projects, like what is the growth of businesses that are hiring these freelancers?

Rich Parker: So we're actually seeing a significant amount. We used to back in, you know, 2015 through 2019 and we'll, you know, we're meeting an event so I don't wanna talk about 2020. They, um, you know, the usage was really through agencies.

Um, you know, there's some big meeting and event agencies out there, and it became too ma too big for them to handle Excel sheets, couldn't handle it anymore, and they needed companies to do it, which we have our own proprietary technology. We have customer service, which I think is huge and we should talk about that in a, in a second.

And then we have our talent pool, right? So it was a lot of agencies. Post COVID. Um, we have seen a lot of companies come to us direct, so we have recently have started working with LinkedIn Zoom, which we're on right now. Um, fidelity, all those types [00:17:00] of companies. I think they're starting to come direct now.

From our standpoint, we're meeting and events. They're probably not rehiring their full meeting and event team. Um, but they're probably also understanding it is meetings and events ebb and flow like by time of year. Um, spring and fall are typically your high time, at least in the us And then, you know, you hit holidays.

At the end of the year, nobody really wants to get a lot of work. January's slow because everybody's foggy from the holidays and the summer hits. Kids are outta school and you're taking vacation. So, you know, but we are seeing a lot more companies coming to us directly as opposed to going through an agency and then the agency coming to us.

So an agency to us is really a sales. Engine for us. They go bring in the clients. Everything comes through the pipeline right to us because we're already engaged.

Yurii Lazaruk: This episode of the Independent Workforce is brought to you by Freelancer Map, the Home of Freelancing. [00:18:00]
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Tell me more about agencies, like, do they afterwards manage freelancer? I mean, like, you cannot manage freelancers, but do they afterwards kind of like resell them to their clients or how, how does it work?

Rich Parker: No, that's our job. It's our, it's our job to make sure we're getting the right people or the freelancers that are, you know, wanna be, their profiles fit, what the end client needs.

So the agency in the middle is trusting us. To help meet the end client's needs. They're telling us what they are and we are posting them to the freelancers. And the freelancers have to decide whether they're capable of the [00:19:00] work or not. Um, you don't wanna be a freelancer that's not capable of the work.

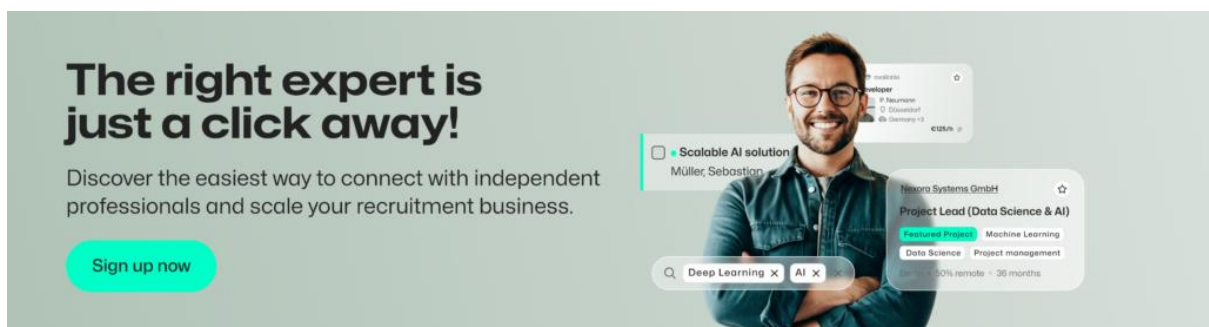
'cause that's not a good image to portray out there. So if you were doing something for Bank of America that you weren't qualified, bank of America's gonna say, I don't want to use you again, but let's be realistic. It's the same thing with an employee. If you can't do the job you were hired for, bank of America is gonna tell you, I don't wanna use you again.

Bye-bye. You know? Yeah. So it's, it's really all the same, in my opinion.

Yurii Lazaruk: I truly believe the same. And, uh, when people are saying that, yeah, we cannot trust freelancers because we cannot control them and manage, sometimes they're not sitting in our office. Like whatever those people are sitting in your offices, can you trust them?

Like you just spend much more time hiring them, onboarding them, like uh, this trial period and then you spend like nine months to understand that this person is not fit in your business. Like, are you kidding me? Why don't go and like try three freelancers and use the person who is like, bring the best market experience to you in like [00:20:00] a month's, like maximum, maybe even faster.

And then like just go. Ah, but it's, it's, it's a totally, it's, it's, it's a different rabbit hole.



Rich Parker: No, I'm gonna jump, I'm gonna jump on this real quick. You can't help me because the cost of hiring and firing employees is significant. Um, it's not cheap to find them, and it's not cheap to fire them. So I agree with you completely.

Why would you not? Look at somebody with that says they have the skills, bring them in. If they don't work for you, you just get rid of 'em. You don't have all that cost to hire, fire, hire. Um, and I, and I just think, you know, you can go to the old days, Jack Welch Welch, uh, he wrote a great book. He's like, you gotta fire 10% of your workforce every year.

And, you know, do I believe that or not? I may, I may be somewhat convinced ha you know, having, you know, being my age and going through working and running companies. Um, so I just think there's this freelancer world can bring a lot of value to you.

Yurii Lazaruk: And I also know that sometimes [00:21:00] freelancers, you love them so much that you are ready to continue your conversation on a full-time scale.

And sometimes those freelancers are also open to. More stability because it's not for everyone. It's always like ebb and flows, ups and

downs. Not every freelancer is ready to be freelancer forever. So it's always like a changing world. Very flexible world. And you told, you told it like very important towards trust.

Yes. So I'm curious, how do you build trust between your clients and freelancers at Planet Net?

Rich Parker: Uh, whew. What a great question because it's probably a few levels below me. But I will tell you as best I can, it's our customer service. It's in the middle. And so when you want to talk to somebody, not just the freelancer, so if you think about everybody's hanging a shingle up saying that they have a freelance system, they do.

They don't have any business on it, and the freelancers go to it and they don't wanna use it. Or a [00:22:00] client goes to it and they can't find somebody. So when you start talking about, like you said earlier, you know, 3,500 plus. Freelancers and we vet 'em and we go through the concept of how we vet 'em and they understand it, how we contract with 'em, how we work with you on your statement of work, and we're gonna present it to the freelancer.

There's an immediate trust that starts, you know, we've been doing this 35 years. I don't know how they did it 35 years ago. You know, quarters in your pocket fax machine, phone call. I don't know. I don't wanna know. I would, my head would explode. Um, but there is a trust factor you need to trust. The company that is helping find you freelancers.

Think about procurement not in your day-to-day business. Don't even understand your day-to-day business. Almost never do put out an RFP. They get five companies that respond to it. It goes back to the operational side of the house to say. That makes sense. That doesn't make sense. Yes. No. Yes. [00:23:00] No pricing doesn't work.

And then, you know, you narrow down your RFP or you might start with an RFI, you narrow down your RFP, you go back to the two or three, you know, procurement's, negotiating again. And listen, I have no problem with procurement, but I'm just trying to go through how it typically operates when you do go through 'em.

Because we, you can imagine when we contract with LinkedIn, there's procurement involved. Um, so it's, it's kind of this. You know, it's, it's kind of this approach that it's really, is there trust in that process or is there more trust in our process? Because we understand directly both sides of the house very quickly.

And we're in our own vertical. We stick in it. We don't try to go general going general to me is you're just asking for trouble. You're not gonna find enough freelancers, you're not gonna find enough clients that need you to provide enough work to those freelancers. Stick in a vertical, stay in a niche.

And those are the, that's the freelance companies you wanna work with.

Yurii Lazaruk: You talked about wetting [00:24:00] freelancers. So I'm curious, how do you wet freelancers? Let's go for like three must haves from freelancer side to join your network.

Rich Parker: Uh, we will look at their profile and expertise and experience. They may have been an employee at a company.

They did in our standpoint, you know, from our standpoint, they, you know, they may have been a director of meetings, events, whatever, and then they decide they want to go out and be a freelancer. Um, so experience is a big one. Uh, you've gotta match. Ultimately, and this is a good one, you cannot take somebody from New York City that is used to walking through Manhattan with a blue or black suit and bring 'em over into California and have 'em work over there.

So we need to understand, you know, what that fit is for you as well. And then we do the same thing as this. We do, you know, discussions, briefings to really understand you, um, and make sure that. You're gonna be a fit for the types of clients that we're working with. So that's, listen, [00:25:00] we have a whole, we have a whole vetting team that does this.

I'm giving you the very, very high level. They probably would tell me I oversimplified this.

Yurii Lazaruk: No, of course. You know, it's always about like when we're talking about building human relationships for, for someone who'll be, yeah, just go and talk with the person and then you understand that it's connected with all those small details, some small touch points, some small message, and link it in some personal call, like, uh, congratulations them on their birthday or whatever.

And then that's how I build relationships. So I totally get what you're talking about and I'm, I'm curious about your personal experience and. For you, what might be the number one red flag to not work with a freelancer?

Rich Parker: Uh, really a client. If a client says they have not done the work or level they expected, or they weren't professional in the vetting process, I don't know.

I mean, I'll be very honest with you. I, I don't know. Um, and we have more and more people that want to. Be on our [00:26:00] network. Um, it's just unbelievable what's happening right now. Um, but if we get client feedback that says they don't really wanna work with them, we'll assess it because they may be a fine fit for another client.

It just didn't work. It's like any employee manager, they may just not work well together. And so that's, you know, from my standpoint, that's what I typically see. And, you know, that makes it up to my level to talk about, um, how we vet 'em and decide if they're a fit or not. I think typically we're gonna find 'em a fit, you know, that they're a fit somehow, but only on certain types of work that comes through.

We don't wanna waste anybody's time on either end. It doesn't make sense. Then you might as well go to the. The guy that hung a shingle or woman that hung a shingle and said, we have a freelance system, which we all know, AI could probably create a freelance system in 10 minutes right now. And so you're not really a freelance system and you're not doing that.

Our customer service works between the two. [00:27:00] Uh, make sure both sides. You know, have, and know the information that is required. Make sure that it's working well together. Um, you know,

make sure the requirements are met and we'll let the client know if there's questions or things that, you know, do seem a little unique.

Um, so it's really, I think that's a reasonable answer for you from my level.

Yurii Lazaruk: You just touched one of the biggest pain points that people who are working with freelancers have, or those who are just. Starting to work with freelancers because they're always afraid what will happen if this freelancer is not a good fit.

I don't know why they ask, because what will happen if a full-time expert is not a good fit? Yes. You just go and find another person and somehow people are afraid of freelancers. So in this experience, when clients tell you that a per freelancer that you placed with them is not a good fit, what happens next?

Rich Parker: It, it really is. We find a new freelancer forum, you know, it's just like, here's, here's somebody we think then based on the feedback you gave us, [00:28:00] we understand it and we will go find another freelancer for you. The funny thing on the fit that you bring up, um, I used this example one time and maybe not the perfect example to use, but.

Everybody's got a copying machine somewhere, right? Or used to in an office. And the the thing is, Xerox sells you a copy machine. And the reality is they want the toner, they want the, the residual, residual toner. Um, well, you can find out that they're, they're late delivering the toner every time. And so they're a business, right?

You look at Xerox, you're like, oh, they're a business. I don't even know if they exist anymore, but I'm gonna use it as an exam. Shows you how old I am. But you can go switch to another company and get your toner. Like, it's just, these are all businesses. At the end of the day, we're all a business. I've left three jobs with no other work.

You know, I didn't leave for another job. I just realized my time was up, or I didn't like what I was doing. That's a business decision I made for myself. I found another job quickly. [00:29:00] I was lucky enough to, but I mean, it's really it. It's just the same concept of you can switch

suppliers anytime you want and it doesn't matter where or when in your business.

And so I do think companies need to look at it that way, that they switch suppliers all the time. You know, go to a manufacturing company that's not getting the part they need either on time or the people are screwing up the part, they're gonna go find somebody else that can create that part for them.

Boeing abus, which one you gonna hire to, to be your plane, your call, your decision. They're both businesses. Um, so just, there's some examples that I would throw out that this is not a new concept for end clients. They do it all the time. They're just looking at it more as human capital and in individuals.

They're not looking at them as businesses, which I think I mentioned earlier.

Yurii Lazaruk: If we're talking about hiring full-time, it takes at least three to four months to hire senior role, [00:30:00] sometimes even more. And if you make a mistake, sorry, but you will spend a year filling this role. So if we're talking about freelancers specifically, if, for example, you placed one person and they are not a good fit for the client and you need to place another person, how long?

All this process usually takes. And what are some milestones?

Rich Parker: So I'll tell you, our turnaround time is two days.

Yurii Lazaruk: Okay.

Rich Parker: That is how quick we do it and we measure it. It is un and, and everybody will tell you that's an unbelievable stat out there. We have a large enough network that we can go work through and run through.

Um, when you tell us your first need, you know it's a two day turnaround. Um, if you tell us it didn't work, we're gonna find somebody else for you within two days, and that's where you get your customer service component. Anybody, again, anybody can put out a

system, but if you don't have customer service, you've gotta go figure it out on your own.

You're gonna get 10 people applying call. We won't call it applying. You'll find 10 [00:31:00] people respond to the job request you put out there, the work you need. Now you gotta go figure out, let, let's use this example. You and I drive the same Uber. I take a ride, I rank at a five. You take a ride, you rank at a three.

So think about somebody going through a marketplace. I, I don't know what I'm getting. I don't know what your expectations were when you ranked them a three. You don't know what my expectations were when I ranked them a five.

Yeah,

Rich Parker: you need customer service in the middle of that to help connect. And make the right connections.

So our turnaround time is 48 hours and that's what we hold ourselves to. Obviously we'll miss it occasionally and we'll work with a client. Um, it depends their lead time. If they're like, we don't need somebody for 45 days, then we may take a little longer because the client's okay with it. They don't, you know, they don't need to spit it out in two days.

Um, but yeah, for the bulk of our work, it's 48 hours.

Yurii Lazaruk: I believe it can be unexpectable, uh, amount of full time [00:32:00] for some of people, especially if they get used to hire full-time experts. And, uh, it's, it's, it's huge. Like, it's like, yeah, it's a, it's a big, big, big gap in between and I feel like it's the same in fire and freelancers.

So, for example, let's imagine some business work with Freelancer for a month and something is not working right. How much time does it take to fire a freelancer?

Rich Parker: Immediate, unless you want to have a transfer of knowledge, right? I mean, there may be a transfer of knowledge,

which an employee, you may do the same thing, but if you don't need a transfer of knowledge, it's immediate, they're out.

Um, so it's just a, uh, yeah. And so that's, I'll let you ask the next question because I, I have so many thoughts. You know, I do.

Yurii Lazaruk: So we removing. Uh, hiring and firing. So it's not a question anymore. It's not on the table. What are some other concerns? What are some other blockers that prevent businesses from working with freelancers?

Rich Parker: Um, [00:33:00] it's interesting. Well, there's compliance involved. You, you've gotta make sure, because you have, in the US you have federal compliance, you have state level compliance, you have local compliance. So you go from, you know, the federal. It kind of means something. The states definitely mean something in the, in the localities in the US we're doing, a lot of freelancers aren't free acts.

So they've gotta know that, you know, when they're trying to control their rogue spend, that they're gonna do it the right way. And I think some companies put out a mandate. You can't use independent contractors or freelancers just because, Hmm, they don't understand all this. We track over 400, 500 compliance, um, requirements.

They can be lawsuits, they can be. Um, you know, class action suits, they can be a regulation that comes out. Uh, we have a pretty cool map of it where it connects all of these to, like, north America shoots you out to [00:34:00] California and all of this. Then you can shoot even deeper. It's. I love it. It's kind of a it, you know, a mapping of all of 'em, but I think some clients can put that out as a mandate and not want to utilize 'em.

I also think that clients do use 'em and won't tell you, um, it's a low enough level of spend where a low level person can spend \$10,000 in this large billion dollar company. Doesn't even know. Mm-hmm. Um, but that they're at risk doing that. 'cause they may not engage 'em properly. And then you go up to a hundred thousand, a million, like there's different levels that'll, that'll play out there.

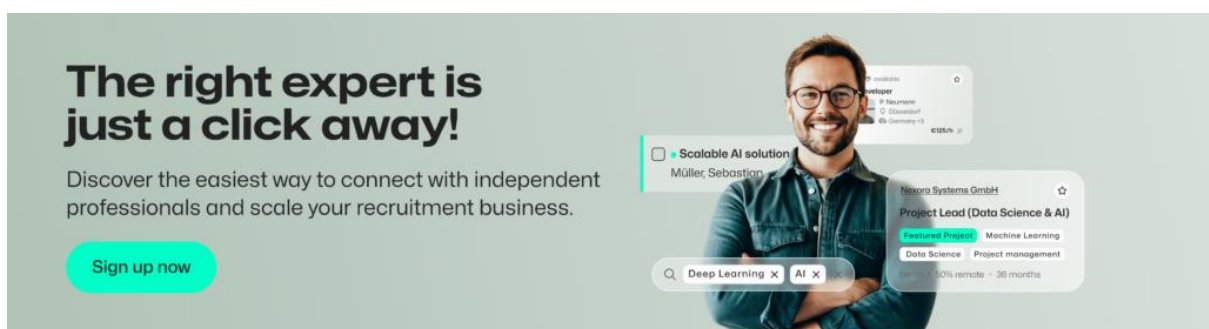
So it really depends. And then who owns it? That is the biggest problem I see. Does HR own it? Which I will tell you, I think they probably should because this is labor. When it's all said and done well they should potentially, it could be procurement because they're small businesses. Or is it Operations?

Operations because they've been approved, should be able to use the, use the [00:35:00] quote freelancer. So I think there's really gotta start to be a team that works together on what your program's gonna be, um, and realize. It, it, you know, common employees are decreasing quickly and you better get this team together.

That figures out, you know, kind of an SOP. How are you going to engage and approve the usage of these freelancers, small businesses?

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, I speak to different experts out there. I speak to recruiters, hr, procurement, vendor management, also like, uh. Higher management and all sort of operations. And it's always a question who owns it.

And uh, as you've said, there is no one answer. And still for someone for a company, we need to start somewhere. Yes. So if someone is just trying to tap into this independent talent world, who must own it in the ideal world scenario?



Rich Parker: Yeah. In the ideal world. Wow. [00:36:00] Um. Again, I think it's a committee. I mean, I don't think there's one individual.

I think HR should own it from a labor standpoint. Um, because freelancers typically are labor. I think procurement may or may not get involved. Depending on how large it is, it may not be large enough

for them to get involved. Um, operations, definitely they're the ones that are gonna use the freelancers.

Whatever piece of operations. Could be ops, could be accounting, could be whatever. I think legal should get involved. Because there's so much compliance and regulatory around it, which AI is coming. They're gonna put guardrails on ai. It's, it's, it's coming. It's already started. There's lawsuits in California.

It's gonna have the same regulatory environment. So who's gonna own AI as a, as a regulatory? Item as well. Is it just legal? Is it legal with it? Because it is the one doing it? Is it, I don't know, [00:37:00] procurement, finding the right AI company, like all these things are running a bi. The concept is running a business and you know, go back to the RACI charts, right?

Responsible, accountable, consulted, you know, and all of that. It's like go to a race or informed, like go to a RACI chart. On a committee and decide who owns which part of it. And I don't know why companies would not stick to that. Those have been around for years on all of these big decisions. So it's almost like they're going away from how they've always operated as a company to look at freelancers as a dirty word and a dirty concept.

And you're like, this is no different than anything you've done in your business ever.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah. It's uh, as you've said, sometimes people, when they hear the word freelancer, they think about some. Low gig stuff, something like, yeah. Making some very, very, I don't know, like three social media posts or,

Rich Parker: yes.

Yurii Lazaruk: Uh, like just one picture generated by AI or whatever.

So, uh, and they are very, very. [00:38:00] Not right. They very, very wrong. So

Rich Parker: we've, we've gotten out of the low end of meeting and event planners. Our, our meeting and event planners are higher end and we did it on purpose. 'cause we wanna be a professional organization that when a client comes to us, they understand we're not just grabbing anything we can out there and throwing it at you.

We have our own requirements. Um, so I agree with you. Freelancer can be a dirty word. Uh, I do think gig economy is its own, its own, you know, definition. That people need to understand.

Yurii Lazaruk: If we are talking about who starts the process of working with freelancers, should it go top down or from the bottom? Like where, who starts the process of engaging a freelancer into the work?

Rich Parker: I think it's the same as an employee who needs the employee. Typically, operations need something. They need to expand. You know, the workload, you win a new client operations has to deliver. They probably have [00:39:00] to go to finance and get approval on the dollars. You know, there's some type of, you know, p and I on the client financial case.

So I think operations starts it, depending how big it is. It goes up that chain of command. Operations then probably works with, typically today, I would say, hr, if it's labor, they go to HR and say, I need this. HR may go to their staffing company that they're used to using. You know, there's the big guys out there and then there's the small specialist boutique firms.

Um, and procurement may or may not get involved. I think it would typically go from the operational need to hr, like, like an employee does. Um, and then, you know, HR may kick it over to their staffing supplier. Um, I don't think it really starts anywhere else. It starts in the department that needs it.

Yurii Lazaruk: If you could remove just one barrier from client side to smooth freelancer collaboration, what would it be?

Rich Parker: Wow, that's an interesting question. I think we do [00:40:00] it. I, you know, and, and of course I'm gonna say that, but I

think we do it with the technology, you know, so we have kind of the circle. We reference technology, which we are always enhancing. Our technology is proprietary. It's not ai. There's probably a little bit of pieces that we could say our ai, but we're not gonna put ourselves out there as an AI company.

Um, it is the talent pool and it's the customer service. I think that. And I don't know if I've answered your question well, Yuri, um, but I feel like Can you remove that? No. Um, I think when you try to remove a piece of that, you're asking for trouble. It could the client go direct to the freelancers?

Probably once there's a relationship established. Yeah. Um, I know, so here's, here, I can answer this a little better for you and give you an example. We have, we tier our clients. 1, 2, 3, 4. For somebody that's transactional and uses us a couple times a year, I allow it [00:41:00] 'cause it's share of voice, in my opinion.

It's a marketing piece and we probably have 90 of those companies every year. They come in, they come out, they come in, they come out, and I know what happens. Um, somebody needs somebody in Chicago and we send over Cindy as somebody you might want. They say, yes, I'll use Cindy. Why are they gonna come back through Planner Net next year?

They're gonna go to Cindy Direct, they're gonna backend us. And so that's when it works that way. I don't care. Good luck to you, Cindy. Great. You should have more business. You're also gonna work for us. You know, if you're gonna run a business, it's fine. That company's gonna go direct. They found them through us.

Do I like end arounds? Yes and no. I don't like it with big clients. If you're gonna end around us on big clients, that's not fair because we're bringing you a significant talent pool. Um, but if you're gonna be a small client, you know, and people move around jobs. They're gonna remember planner net. So I look at that [00:42:00] as kinda share a voice out there.

Um, and that's where the direct relationships can, can start and hold. There's also talent pools that companies like we do have talent

benches for certain companies. Um, it's just the reality. They like these 200 people. They're familiar with 'em, they see 'em at the same conference every year. They know who they are.

It's a two day stint, three day stint, whatever. We all go to these conferences and they want the same people every year. If they can have 'em, we can't commit to it because they may not be around, they may be an employee somewhere now, um, or they may have retired from the workforce. Um, but the client can dictate, not dictate, but say, these are the people that I like and I'd like to use them.

What does that do for us? We sit in the middle because of. The simplicity we give the client the reporting we give the client to see everything going on. The compliance we bring to the client and the freelancer who's familiar with us and knows exactly how we're gonna help. You know, you [00:43:00] work with the client directly, so there are end arounds and there are, there's value to, you know, somebody sitting in the middle,

Yurii Lazaruk: you know, when you tried something and it works, why change it?

Yes. Especially if both sides are happy and you know, I remember it, it was Matt motto who told me. If there are any blockers for companies working with freelancers there, there is most likely already a solution for that. If you're afraid about compliance, there is a solution. If you're afraid about procurement, there is a solution.

If you're afraid about invoicing, contracts, and. There is a solution there. Solutions. Yes. And it's like there are always a solution and you know, I wish to have, the sky is the limit, but time is the limit. So the final question.

Rich Parker: Okay.

Yurii Lazaruk: What advice would you give to companies just starting to use freelancers and to freelancers just entering the market?

Rich Parker: I think for companies just starting, I think they've gotta look who they're working with, that what. What makes it easiest for

them to use? The freelancers? Accept that you're gonna use [00:44:00] freelancers. It makes sense if you go through everything I just said, except you're gonna use them, but find companies that are going to hopefully be almost a full solution or an actual full solution.

Don't try to piecemeal it. It's not gonna be successful for you. And understand this is labor and pay 'em on time. These are small businesses. Pay 'em on time. Don't, every time I read this crap about not paying them on time, I'm like, you pay your employees on time, pay, pay this labor on time. Um, and I'll make those comments.

You'll see 'em all over LinkedIn every time. I think for a freelancer, I would say understand you are going into business for yourself. And there is work to be done. Uh, back in my days of being a CPA, I had a small client, two guys, two partners, uh, they were going into the printing industry and I remember I went to their, they weren't much younger than me, and I went to them and they said, you know, we, it's, this isn't making enough money for us.

All of that. And I said, how? How much are you guys [00:45:00] working every week? And they're like, 40 hours. I'm like, you're not gonna have a business at 40 hours a week. You went into business for yourself. You gotta work harder. Like you've gotta make your decision on how much money you wanna make or not make. Just like I can as an employee.

I, I've found jobs that have paid me less than my previous job, but I see the upside and I know if I do the right work and the company's doing well, the upside's there for me. So I think freelancers themselves need to understand they are really starting a business and they can't expect that work is just gonna come at them.

They need there. There's the unfortunate part of, you gotta put in the right time and effort.

Yurii Lazaruk: You have to wear different hats. Sorry, not sorry.

Rich Parker: I agree.

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

Rich Parker: I'm gonna name 'em and you already know 'em.

We have an advisory board. Um, John Younger. You already know John. I know that Alina Judite, [00:46:00] uh, if I said it correctly, you know her. Um, Ray Culver? I think so here's why. Can I give you a quick explanation on each one? I mean, John's the godfather of freelance. Uh, John just wrote an article on us. He sits on our board because we absolutely love, there's a little craziness into how he thinks and all that.

That brain definitely clicks differently, but it's fantastic. I mean, he's got a lot of experience. Alina, from a European standpoint. She started a community. She's trying to figure out how to make that a business. I think it's a tough one. Um, community's fantastic. It brings these individuals together. Um, and they learn from each other.

But how does Alina make that a business? And then Ray, as you know, I think Ray sees what I see. Um, and we've had a lot of conversations that staffing is not in a great place right now. The staffing companies, they are struggling. If you look at their bottom lines, which you can through SEC filings, at [00:47:00] least in the US they have a small, small bottom line.

And I think they, they're trying to figure out how to get into this freelance space, and I don't know if they know how to do it. And I feel like they need to go look at freelance companies and start to understand there are talent platforms that already exist out there. How do I engage with 'em? Do I buy 'em?

Do I try to build it? Build's gonna take longer than buy. Um, or do I partner with them? So I think there's a, that's the, I'm giving you three people that I, I really, I value, you know, quite a bit.

Yurii Lazaruk: Ray was here recently, John Younger was by the way, the first episode I've done on this podcast. And Alina, get ready.

I'm coming for you. Uh,

Rich Parker: yes, you gotta come for her.

Yurii Lazaruk: And last but not least. What is one question that I should have asked you about the freelance market but didn't.

Rich Parker: Um, wow. Why are there so many regulations around employees versus freelancers? So, [00:48:00] and I'll give you a quick one on this. In California there is the a b, C test, and that is around are they doing what your business does?

What does that matter? An employee does it or a freelancer does it, does it really matter? Because an employee is in business for themselves. They can, you know, you can hire fire, whatever a freelancer can work for you, stop working for you. It's all at will. Both sides. Um, are they, you know, do they have financial risk?

Same answer. Everybody's got financial risk. You know, I could be fired tomorrow, or I, you know, I can have financial risk. I left jobs, I had financial risk. Why is there any difference than a freelancer? Um, and I forget the other one I was gonna bring up, but it to, to me, the, in the A BC test, it's kind of like, it, it's, we're throwing regulation in to throw it in.

Um, you're gonna get your, you're gonna get your taxes. Don't worry about it. A business pays taxes. All a freelancer is, is a small business. They'll pay [00:49:00] taxes. So I would say that's the one question I, that I'm really trying to start getting across is we're putting all these things in place in this area and AI's gonna have 'em too.

And you're just starting to jam up businesses, um, small businesses from operat.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah, I feel like it's a really good question to ask and also to ask government because I feel like they have no idea who freelancers are. They know about corporates. The companies hire like hundreds and thousands of people.

They know about businesses that hire maybe like two, three people. But anyway, they hire and they have no idea how is it possible that one person is running a business and like. Uh, no, we don't believe in

that. Maybe they're faking it. Maybe they want to not pay us taxes, but yeah, it's, it's a really good question to,

Rich Parker: well, so in that, in that question too, I would say, Yuri, that, I mean, how many times do we talk about all the large companies finding tax havens?

And I mean, at least in the US, they go find tax havens. Ireland's a [00:50:00] great one, I think. And they don't pay us taxes. And so Warren Buffett's made a great point on that. He is like, if all these billionaires paid some taxes, it, it would change. And so you've got all these, you know, all, all these regulations trying to get taxes out of every small company.

When the reality is they don't have the ability to go find the tax havens. And you've got billions and billion, trillion Nvidia, trillion dollar companies out there that you know, and I don't know their tax situation, but you know, go after those guys. Stop going after the little guys. Let the little guys make a living.

You know, don't pay the taxes.

Yurii Lazaruk: I, I believe it's a different episode of a podcast. We can totally, we can totally do another one different one. And, uh, yeah. Rich, thank you so much for this conversation. First of all, thank you for building Planner net and for connecting this independent free answers with clients and for making it work.

Making it. People trust each other and making them to really collaborate and see each [00:51:00] other as like partners, not just someone who hire and like to work and whatever. But as you've said, some companies are coming back and returning and they want to continue business. Yes. Those people they work with. So thank you so much for what you are already.

And thank you so much for this amazing conversation, and I'm happy to see what the future of work is waiting for us.

Rich Parker: I agree, Yuri, thank you for having me on. Thanks for, uh, well thank you for the acknowledgement of what Planner Net's doing

as well. I mean, we're very proud of what we do, so, and listen, I look forward to doing another one of these if you want to.

It's been fantastic.

Yurii Lazaruk: Will do. Will do. And uh, yeah, see you in the freelance

Rich Parker: market. Yeah. Have a nice day, man. Thank you.

Yurii Lazaruk: And for listeners, thank you for joining us on this episode of The Independent Workforce. I hope you've taken one step closer to working smarter with freelance talent. If you enjoy this conversation, subscribe to, learn even more, and share it with your colleague.

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