

# TIW34 - Elina Jutelyte

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

My name is Yuriy. I'm growing the freelance market at Freelancermap, an international platform that's been connecting top independent professionals with companies for over 20 years. And my guest is Elina Yutilete, a founder of freelance business community and academy, who based on over 400 conversations with freelance business owners and hosting events for over 5,000 freelance attendees and running her own freelance business, helps freelancers build their business as a system, which makes them great partners for companies to trust, collaborate, and grow with.

So welcome, Elina. Uh,

**Elina Jutelyte:** [00:01:00] Yuriy, so beautiful. Thank you.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** You know, I feel like you're all over the place. You are a freelancer, you are a professional, you are helping companies to hire freelancers. So share with me a little bit of your background.

**Elina Jutelyte:** My background, for the last 20 years, my background was in event industry.

This is how I started in my early, uh, early years, uh, right during university I joined a company where I was helping them to launch events globally. It was beautiful job. I traveled all over the world, from China to US to, like, you just name it, 60-plus countries or something that I run my events, um, in. Uh, and since then, my love to events just continued, and I've been on different sides of the industry, from agency to association to corporate, uh, to actually working for a venue, uh, a golf club at some point, helping them to put events together.

[00:02:00] Um, and last 10 years, I'm on my own. Um, I stopped seeing potential working for an agency. I think it's a very classical scenario of someone going freelance. I was a bit sick and tired of seeing internal politics and being

just locked in the cage a little bit, so I went on my own, uh, secured customers, and the rest is history.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** And what, at what moment you are also started hiring freelancers? Because, you know, being a freelancer is one part, but also helping other companies to hire freelancer is another part. It's kind of like level up, so I'm curious, why did you decide to do this?

**Elina Jutelyte:** Yeah. I think it, it, it came almost instantly. Um, when you work for an agency, you see how much resources are needed to build a project.

Um, and I used to take big projects, m- million-plus budgets for events, so you can't really pull it alone. You need to have a team. So from that moment on, I started partnering with [00:03:00] other freelancers, like, hey, you know, if we need to have a graphical designer, if we need to have a web developer, if we need to have on-site support, uh, another event coordinator in the team, so kind of building the team for the client to run the project.

Uh, and I remember in- 2017, I was presenting my first presentation ever, in China, by the way, um, talking about a new business model featuring freelancers as part of the team. Some people are like, "We don't trust it. Like, working with freelancers? I mean, what is that?" And look what happened. Three years later, later, COVID hit and everyone started working with freelancers.

Um, but back then, I didn't realize that this is the thing. Um, and I remember people coming to me like, "Yeah, it's really cool. How do you do it, and can we talk about it?" But I mean, probably I'm, uh, not such a great businesswoman, uh, to pick on that directly then. But yeah, that is how I started, and this is still what I'm doing today.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** [00:04:00] I still hear this a lot, that people don't trust freelancers. They say that, "Oh my God, they will take four projects and not deliver on any. They will just take our money and do nothing, or they will steal data from our company and we will lose it to competitors or whatever." I'm like, "People, are you kidding me?"

Like, y- you're... Like, the same thing can be with your internal people. You're paying them money. How do you guarantee that they are doing a job? Or they are leaving your company, how do you guarantee that they are not taking the data or your customers with you? So it's, it's like, it's, it's such a bullshit that I hear from, from clients that I'm like, "Is this the only one thing that stops you?"

Okay, so it's not a blocker. So from your experience, what are some other blockers that you've heard from companies on, on why not to work with freelancers?

**Elina Jutelyte:** Well, you know, just to add to some what you said, I think, uh, we are handling and we're dealing with risks here, and this is how company think. Um, I guess it's [00:05:00] natural to eliminate any risk potential, uh, for your business.

So when they think about freelancers, they definitely see lots of risks associated with it. Um, and that could be true to some extent. Um, uh, not that it happens all the time, but because some freelancers indeed take lots of projects, and then they're not able to have dedicated time to the customer. So it's a little bit of a, you know, an issue on both hands.

But what else stops, um, companies from hiring freelancers? Um, I had a case, uh, like a bizarre case when I had a negotiation with a company, uh, that wanted to hire me, uh, as an employee. And I said, "Listen, I- I'm not ready for that. I can join part-time as a freelancer. Here is my rate." And they're like, "Wait a second.

Why? It is so expensive." I'm like, "This is not expensive. This is how it is calculated." They had to arrange a meeting with HR department [00:06:00] so I would explain them how this calculation is made. They had no clue whatsoever. Um, and eventually that led to nowhere. But I guess this mindset is that freelancers are expensive is still out there.

Uh, it needs to be explained. When in reality, freelancer cost comes in a different budget most of the time, and so it's not really a headcount anymore, it's, uh, it's, uh, like a supplier cost that they, that they carry, uh, on your budget

**Yurii Lazaruk:** How, how did they calculate this rate? Because, you know, it's, it's also something that I hear a lot when people see the hourly rate or daily rate, like they always compare it like to full-time employment.

And I'm curious, um, how did you explain them on these calculations?

**Elina Jutelyte:** I... Luckily, I had a blog written on that. So I send, send that to them and also I kind of build, um, an Excel sheet with, okay, this is how much you're paying [00:07:00] your employees, um, pension funds, insurance, uh, holidays, car, whatever, whatever it is in the benefit list, and this is what I charge.

Like, I'm not asking all that. It's actually covering, uh, all your, uh, headhunt expense. In, in my case, I'm responsible for all those benefits myself. Um, but yeah, that didn't fly anyway. So there is some explanation to be done in the world.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Yeah, it's, it's always like that because, you know, and, and, and also it's all about time.

Uh, when companies are hiring someone, um, full-time, they can spend it, depending on the position, from 1 to 6, and sometimes even 12 months to hire a person, and they are paying like, um, for HR to do this job or maybe to some agency to do this job, and they are not usually including this amount of money into the general cost of the candidate.

Because once again, you know, you have to include all the costs. But yeah, I feel like it's, it's totally different topic, and we can talk about it so much more. [00:08:00] And you've told about, like in 2017, you did this in China and they're, "Oh my God, freelancers, we don't trust them," then COVID. So tell me what happened in the industry?

Like what changed in the industry within the latest, let's say, five years?

**Elina Jutelyte:** Well, obviously COVID happened. We all know that. Um, and whoever I speak with, they remark that that was such a huge wave for the industry. Obviously, remote working became a norm. Uh, people lost jobs. They needed to find some other way to work.

So that kind of became a reality at that time. What changed since then, and I also see that a lot Um, through the community, through my conversations with industry leaders, is that it kind of fades away a little bit. We, we're getting back to that pre-COVID normal that we used to have, where, [00:09:00] yeah, there should be a job from 9:00 to 5:00.

This is how we work. You have to travel to your office. Um, you have to spend your precious time just doing something, not necessarily work, just doing something, pretending you are delivering value where you spend time on whatever you do in the office. Um, a- and that's a bit concerning. Um, I wish, I wish we would...

Like, I was such a, such a huge advocate, like, yeah, yes, we, you know, we can build life, uh, work balance in a, in a better way, and that work as a, as a concept is changing, and look, we've been through that trajectory for years. Uh,

a- and now finally we found that balance that we can spend time with our families.

We still can do a good job, deliver results, and not being associated with a desk and a space, uh, in a building. So unfortunately, yeah, that's going slightly backwards. Uh, but let's see where we're gonna end up with AI and everything that's coming.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Yeah, [00:10:00] it will be robots sitting in the desks. I can imagine that.

You know, they will create... I, I can already see that China creating robots, so then you can order robots to put them sitting in the desk, uh, from 9 to 5 because, like, you know, they need to sit in our offices. That's how it works. But, you know, like, you work a lot with freelancers, and I feel like for many companies, for many businesses, freelancers are like, uh, the Pandora box.

They have no idea what the hell is going on, and they, they are really afraid to open it. And also, but before we jump into this Pandora box, um, we used the word freelancer many times during this conversation, but I also know that there are so many different words. So I'm curious, like, what are the words, uh, for this, for freelancers, for independent that you've heard, and what is your favorite one?

**Elina Jutelyte:** Ah, it's such a good, uh, question. Uh, we had a, we had a research at some point where we asked how freelancers would like to identify themselves, and the main three categories, if I'm not [00:11:00] mistaken right now, freelancer, consultant- uh, contractor

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Mm.

**Elina Jutelyte:** Like these three main categories. Less more common, but that was couple of years, solopreneur.

Absolutely not calling themselves gig worker or contingent worker. Like, what the hell is that? Uh, people don't even understand the terminology. Um, uh, fractional comes to, um, to the, um, surface more and more. I just had discussion yesterday about the fact that fractionals would like, would not like to be called freelancers because they are not.

Um, a- and right now also I hear lots of, um, conversations from freelancers I've been in contact is that, "Well, listen, I'm not really associate myself with freelancer. I am running a business."

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Mm.

**Elina Jutelyte:** Uh, and that was also my kind of take. Um, uh, depending on the seniority of your freelancing work and how long you've been freelancing, you probably migrate from, from a freelancer [00:12:00] in our typical kind of understanding where you just do some smaller tasks or project here and there towards m- more entrepreneurship where you, uh, where you s- like, y- you analyze and see what can you deliver as a service.

Is it only your time, or maybe it's a specific product that you will develop, whether it's intellectual product or a software or maybe now you've coded an app and you, you sell it or some AI automations, for instance, that you develop and you want to sell. So people migrating slightly from, like, just selling their knowledge and time towards kinda product scenario

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Which is still hard.

You know, you have to not just be an expert, but you have also to productize it, which is like the whole second level, and I feel like that's exactly what you are working, what you are helping freelancers with, to build their freelance businesses and build systems and to create this product that they can go out there in the world.

And I feel like it's also helping [00:13:00] companies out there because once again, I heard it many times and I, not just from guests on this podcast, but also, like, I talk to, I don't know how many hundreds, maybe even thousands of companies and businesses out there, and, uh, they tell me that they don't need one more individual person to manage.

If they hire an independent talent, they expect them to work as a partner, to work as a business. So they give them the task and they don't do anything else, and then they d- th- th- this experts are delivering on tasks. You know, it's funny how you, uh, told that people don't want to call, to be called gig workers because, like, it's, it's something like Uber driver or, I don't know, like a boat food delivery or whatever you call them.

"No, I'm not doing that." But also I, I, I met recently a person, uh, on LinkedIn who mentioned that they are working in Uber and I was like, "Oh, you're

working Uber." And they're like, "Driver." I'm like, "Yeah, okay. It makes sense." Uh, yeah, it's true. You [00:14:00] kind of work, but yeah, y- you're not really inside the company. So I feel like it's an evolution, like gig worker, then, like, freelancer, and then, like, this independent expert running a business because there is still some kind of connotation with the word freelancers because people don't really understand this.

They think that, yeah, it's some, I don't know, make me a logo for 100 bucks or whatever, and it's freelancer. But no, some freelancer runs so complex projects that, you know, sometimes it's like, ah, ju- just crazy. So let's a little bit, like, switch table. So usually I ask people about what are importance for freel- for companies, uh, why companies should hire freelancers, et cetera, but you work a lot with freelancers.

So what are the red flags for freelancers when they decide whether to work or not with a company?

**Elina Jutelyte:** Let me think. Um, I guess we have to start with, um, kinda looking at interpersonal relationship, right? So whenever [00:15:00] request comes for a freelance assignment, you deal with a person, and I think that's the first connection you make, and that's kind of gut feeling whether it's gonna go well or not in the first place.

Um, now since I teach business skills to freelancers, I always say there has to be, um, a qualification of the customer in the first place. Um, it's, it's helpful for the freelancer to understand first you learn about the business of that person. Uh, uh, let- let's, let's say it's small, small, medium business that you're dealing with.

Um, secondly, you evaluate, like, okay, what exactly is the problem? And if there is even fit for what you do. Uh, lots of freelancers taking assignments just because they have to, um, you know, for financial reason, and unfortunately, that doesn't help building their expertise and their positioning in general.

I mean, nothing [00:16:00] wrong, and I'm not against of taking project. Please do so if you need to. But if you are conscious and strategic about people you wanna work with, you probably will have that qualification and, you know, some kind of, um, um, uh, um, how to say it? On- onboarding Yeah, yeah ... questionnaire or whatever it is.

Um, the first deep dive with the customer. Um, and from there you will find red flags, uh, the way they structure the discussion, um, whether they imposing

something on, on you. Like, I had a conversation where potential customer, luckily, uh, was not the case, said, "Well, I know how much people are paid for your job."

I'm like, "Uh, hmm, okay, then find them. Uh-huh." That was the end of the story. Or like, "I know how many hours that takes." "Okay, that's good. Then why don't you do it yourself?" Um, and some... I, I had discussions with freelancers [00:17:00] where they had to refuse project for ethical reasons. For instance, industry is not aligned with the values, and that brings us to your values.

Like, what are your values in the first place? Like, who do you want to work with? Who is your ideal customer? What kind of vibe you want to create with people? Sometimes we just don't fit each other psychologically, you know? Someone is, is extrovert and expecting you to be the same, but you're introvert and like to kind of, you know, sit behind laptop and not joining, uh, multiple meetings a day.

So, um, I think that comes first of all from understanding what you want, uh, in the first place, uh, and then project that into the, um, potential clients. Um, so red flags could be also if we talk about a bigger company, mm, like you feel there's a mess. One discussion, one call, another call. It's just a complete mess, uh, nobody knows what's going on.

There is no one responsible for that. You will end up being just in a deep shit [00:18:00] to be honest. I try to refuse those if I, if I feel like it's just going nowhere. Just drop it like, "Hey, let's, let's resume maybe in three months when you kind of align on what you want." The, the, because another thing I always recommend freelancers, don't lose your time in endless negotiations.

Um, sometimes I hear people spending years and years, uh, just talking about the thing, and that actually, um, that type of scenario very common for senior freelancers who kind of, "Oh, let's build a business. Like, we have this idea. Let's group with other people, and we're gonna create a product, and we're gonna sell the customer," and nothing is moving.

Like, they're discussing this for a year. The senior consultant's time costs lots of money, and they still keep doing, going to that direction without actually doing things. Like, just drop it. I mean, um, it has to happen quick, or it doesn't need to happen at all. Um, these are probably the red flags. Uh, probably there are much more than that, I'm pretty sure.[00:19:00]

Um, I would say for freelancers, if you can define for yourself what is a red flag for you, that would be helpful. Like, you know, uh, lots of advices can be shared, but if you don't have that system for yourself, it's pretty difficult to follow.

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

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You know why, why I ask you about this red flags from freelancer side? Because, like, for some sense that companies have to avoid. And what I also see a lot and, like, a- as working f- as a freelancer myself and also, like, uh, talking to other freelancers, that companies are having two things. First of all, corporate [00:20:00] language, when they speak and you can't really understand what they are talking because they are using these crazy words and they are not, uh, calling things, things.

They are, like, have an extra, extra build-up on this, and you don't really get it and, like, what, what, what do you really want to say to me? Like, can you just say it in human words, because I need to understand? And the second thing is bureaucracy. Because you might have a great relationship with your, let's say, person who hired you, but then you have problems with paying department because to proceed your invoice, they have to receive, like, 10 approvals, and it takes months, and you are, like, crazy because you like working with the person, you are delivering projects, and then you cannot get your money for, like, two months or something like that.

It's, like, two main thing, like corporate language and bureaucracy. So what companies has to do to remove this barrier, to avoid, you know, like, this, uh, to, to easier collaborate with freelancers?

**Elina Jutelyte:** Yeah, that's interesting, uh, how you put it. I would [00:21:00] say If your customers are in that corporate world, you probably have to get used to that.

I would not expect corporations to change for a freelancer. Like, totally not. Um, if you h- if they hire freelancers at scale, probably they have these

processes already aligned, so they kinda understand the necessity of having that running smoothly. Otherwise, they're in a big mess. But if you're dealing with corporate world and you pitch them directly, like, "Hey, you know, can I do a training for you, or can I do this and that?"

I, I would say you have to accept the fact that they act like this. Um, if you don't understand their corporate jargon, you probably don't have experience working for corporates. That's another indication. So I don't know if, if you're a good fit for that, actually. Um, now understanding how their procurement works, yes, they need to issue a PO, so that will take a couple of weeks.

Yes, they're not gonna pay you directly, [00:22:00] but they will pay, so you need to learn about their payment, um, uh, schedule, probably f- 30 days. I had unfortunately a scenario where corporate paid, like, on paper on the contract was 75 days. Right. They even paid, like, 120 days later, but there's nothing you can do.

You can stress, you can send controllers, you can do whatever. That means spoiling relationship. But the fact, you will be paid, just very late, unfortunately, yeah. Um, so, uh, if I can give advice to companies, um, now, if you're serious about hiring freelancers and working with them, just sit together with a team and think, how can you treat those people as part of your team, as humans, not as furniture, right?

So can you improve the processes that it goes smooth, starting from onboarding and explaining, integrating in a team as much as possible, uh, just making sure that they have [00:23:00] all the background about a company that you can, um, that they can service you better. I have a good example. Recently I was working with a co- uh, with a company.

It was a very short assignment, but I was just dropped like, like this. No background, no explanation whatsoever. I had to pull all this information out of them. Luckily, I have all the onboarding documents on my side ready. I just go through this checklist and get that information that I need. But it was kind of painful, you know, not having that information in the first place.

Uh, so yeah, just align the processes, uh, and make sure that people get the information.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** But you know, it sounds like freelancers are in a very weak position because you have to wait for 120 days because you can't do anything.

You have to accept that you don't have the information. Like, how do you work, you know?

Like, if you don't have all the things, like, I, I, I don't really, I don't really think that it's a right way to actually do this. And once again, as you've said, [00:24:00] if companies think about working with freelancers constantly and this independent talent, they have to implement some processes and systems to make it easier.

But it doesn't look like many companies think about this. They are still hiring freelancers, but they don't really systematizing it. So why are those companies are not doing this even though they are hiring freelancers?

**Elina Jutelyte:** I can't answer that. I don't know why they're not doing that. I wish I would be in that company in the HR department or whoever, um, whoever hires freelancers.

And most of the time, the hiring can happen in kind of different ways. One, you can be hired by the project lead, for example, or director of department or, you know, whoever needs that resource inside their department. So that's kind of direct hire, and that's probably the most interesting. The another way is that you're going through the HR departments, and that happened to me once when I was hired as [00:25:00] a freelancer via HR applying for a job.

A freelance job it was. Um, and that was a super nice collaboration. The company really knew how to do things. Um, if you... And, and that was a big company, to be honest. If we talk about the small company, probably they will be less prepared. Um, but I always s- um, yeah, thinking, um, how we can help companies to do that.

Well, I always say freelancer is the one who has to guide.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Mm.

**Elina Jutelyte:** So you, you in the lead. Like, i- it's up to you whether you want this job or not. Like, if you, if you feel it's a mess, like I mentioned earlier, you don't need to do it, and nobody's forcing you to do that. And it comes also to the fact, like, okay, who is your customer?

If you work, if your goal is to have this corporate brands and, you know, like the brand portfolio complete, then you would accept it no matter what because you need to have those logos on your portfolio, for example, and then you have

to go through [00:26:00] these processes. If you decide that your customer is small, medium enterprise, you probably have to admit that the process is gonna be messy, and your role is to help them Uh, to help them, to help you to do your work better.

So that's kinda guiding them and explaining and da, da, da. Um, and quite a lot, um, quite a lot of time I hear that freelancers are afraid to kind of push their process. For instance, we discuss a lot about testimonials and feedback and how it is important, and a lots of, lots and lots of freelancers are afraid even to ask.

And then I say, "Okay, what, what prevents you from having this first initial discussion with them and say, 'Hey, this is how I work. Um, that will help us to run smoothly. I need your feedback, like, in a month's time, in three months, at the end of the project, so that I can recalibrate and deliver even better next time.'"

Just a matter of con- conversations and communications, um, from my perspective. If

**Yurii Lazaruk:** you like, to your point, as you've said earlier, some [00:27:00] freelancers are not doing this because they might be, uh, desperate for projects. And when you're desperate for projects, you are not asking anything. You're just like, "Oh, yeah, give me this project.

I don't care about it." And then you're finding yourself in, um, not a very nice situation, and company finding themselves in not a very nice situation. And that's when we start having these biases about freelancers working for jobs or whatever, because you didn't start with the right communication firsthand.

And afterwards, yeah, of course it's, like, getting messy if you don't agree on the surface, like, how to deal with it. Yeah, in the open ocean, you'll deal with a lot of troubles, and you have to get ready for that. So sorry, not sorry, but it's a reality. And also talking about realities, where do you see the biggest misalignments between company expectations and freelancer realities?

**Elina Jutelyte:** Have to think on that one. Um, misalignment

on expectations, um, it's probably gonna come in the field of deliverables

When someone hires [00:28:00] a freelancer, that is with the intention that the work will be done, uh, will be done with quality and on time. And I think the most misalignment happens when the quality is not adequate or it's delivered

late or whatever, or the, there was miscommunication in some part of the process.

Um, that is what concerns deliver- delivery, delivery. Uh, the probably misalignment on the pay side, uh, if some, if a company is new to hire a freelancer, they would probably have different expectations in term how much that person should be paid, um, because the freelance culture and freelance economy was slightly damaged by reputation of some of the players who was providing, uh, wo- work very [00:29:00] cheaply, but not with the good quality.

So I guess the freelance saying, "Oh, it's just the freelancing," comes from that era when we used to have logo for five years. Um, but at the same time, I see companies realizing, like, if they wanna have, uh, an exceptional talent, that costs money, and they're ready to pay for that. Uh, and I'm happy to see those companies.

There are still a lot who wants, who wants exceptional talent and not to, to pay a lot, but that's a different story. Yeah. So I would say two misalignments, yeah, on the quality and on, uh, on the pay side.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** You mentioned exceptional talent and, uh, I feel like once again, as, uh, f- for working for full-time experts or we're working for external experts, there are always exceptional talent and there is always mediocre talent, and you have to find them.

And where do you usually find exceptional talent?

**Elina Jutelyte:** Where do I find exceptional talent? [00:30:00] Um, in your network, I would say. Um, well, again, if, if your job is a recruiter, that's technically all what you do day and night. You have access to exceptional talents. If you are just the owner of a company, uh, you either hire recruiters to find those people, or you go into exceptional platforms like, like, uh, um, You represent, for example, to find, uh, talents over there, or it's just via recommendations.

Um, I hear that is the most common way to find talents, via recommendations. Um, that also show- showed in our research that we did a couple of years ago, uh, that word of mouth is the main kind of, um, source for clients. Sometimes what happens within the companies is that the exceptional talent that used to be a full-time employee leaves the company, and this is how that [00:31:00] exceptional talent becomes your, um, your freelancer.

That's also one of the ways that happens. Mm-mm. But otherwise, I would love to, I'd love to learn myself where to find exceptional talents.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Yeah, it's, it's, it's always a question about to, to a point, it's always about, um, personal network, and you have to build it somewhere. And what I hear a lot that people are going to LinkedIn, they're going to freelancemap, they're going to UpLink, they're going to 9am, they're going to different places.

Usually, it's like, um, maybe it's a specific platform. I, I hear people are not going to, like, bigger platforms that are, uh, making freelancers compete for money because, for example, if you have a project and then you get someone who propose you the lowest rate, um, you kinda might find good persons there, but definitely not an exceptional.

Uh, it depends on what the task you have. If you need, once again, if you need a logo, there definitely will be a designer who does [00:32:00] this logo, like, in five minutes because they have a ton of experience, and they will charge not very, a huge rate because it will just take them five minutes, and they have, like, 100 of other clients, so they don't care.

But if you are really, like, curious about a great project, you have to build those relationships. And it's something that I still, um, very, very surprised that, uh, many recruiters and HR people, they are building their network of full-time experts, but they are not building their network of external talent, of freelancers, of contractors.

And I'm like, "Why would you like to do this?" If we're talking about the turnover, let's imagine you hired a full-time person. You hire them. There is a huge chance they will stay in the company for, like, one, two, three, I don't know how many years, and then this person is blocked. They're not going on the market, so basically you got one time paid for that, for your recruiter of this high full-time expert, and that's it.

But if you are sourcing freelancers, contractors, their average, like, [00:33:00] uh, amount of months that they work, like, three, six months. So it means that every three months, you can resell this talent to another company, and you can get and get and get and get your commission. And I'm like, why do you, like, put all your professional network into full-time experts when they are mostly blocked instead of, like, getting these external professionals into your network and build your network with them and also advocate for it to other companies who are asking to hire?

I still, I still don't get it, you know, and I feel like we're moving in the right way. Everyone is talking about the future of work, about, like, we see all these reports and not just by, like, you know, some platforms, uh, who are working with freelancers, but there are reports from, uh, like, uh, European Union.

Uh, there are reports by, like, Ernst & Young and, like, huge companies, et cetera, telling that this freelance economy is growing. Which is nice, which is always nice. And once again, you know, to your point, I think that it's, we still have to build this [00:34:00] human connections. Uh, otherwise it doesn't work. And I believe that companies have to message you, because you have a ton of freelancers.

You've r- created all these events for them, and you definitely know a lot of experts, and you can connect them. And as you've said before, because the word of mouth, it's also the word of mouth. If you are getting a connection w- to one person, you're getting connection to all their network, because they will be happy to share those projects with other freelancers.

And once again, you know, I feel like I'm talking too much, so I better shut up. But how do you see the role of freelancers evolving in this global workforce? So we talked about, like, the last five years, but how do you see, like, the future five years for freelancers?

**Elina Jutelyte:** The future five years, so that would be 2031.

It looks very close to me. Um, how it is evolving, well, all the trends show that there will be more and more freelancers. So freelance economy is growing, [00:35:00] uh, regardless of the slowdown, maybe less actively than before. Um, and it will grow for several reasons. Um, one, the work-life balance situation is critical.

Like, people are not ready to spend, like, 40 years, like in the case of my parents, just sitting in office, uh, missing the most beautiful and the most wonderful years of the children growing up. Or, you know, um, I think the, the, the work concept as we used to have is so outdated, and it only fits put in brackets normal people.

Like, what, if you have disability, if you have some obligations towards your family or your children or elderly pa- parents, you instantly removed from that equation. You cannot have a normal, normal work. Yeah. So why that should be [00:36:00] normal when it only fits a category of people on the planet?

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Yeah.

**Elina Jutelyte:** Um, if you take remote locations, there they don't have even access to the normal job that we used to have, and why not to allow freelancing be a norm of work?

Like, I had a trip to Uzbekistan where almost 80% of population just remote. Uh, they live in the mountains in the middle of nowhere. All what they have there is internet. So what government has decided, they said, "Listen, we have people, enormous amount of people. We don't have industries as much. We have a little bit of travel, so what can we do?

We can sell brains." Mm. So the entire economy focus is on multiplying these brains and selling them to the rest of the world, so they're kind of building the Silicon Valley of Uzbekistan to be able to achieve that, and that's beautiful. I think that's all what you need to have a stable internet connection.

I'm in Belgium, uh, like 20 [00:37:00] minutes from Brussels. I don't have a stable internet connection. I don't even have a fiber line here. I mean, what is that? And that's the, the, the epicenter of, uh, European Union. Uh, you, you go a little bit further in the forest, and you lose cellular connection. You don't have in- uh, mobile phone anymore.

I mean- Yeah ... is that a reality where countries like Uzbekistan is investing heavily in, um, internet infrastructure? Um, so what's gonna happen in five years is that we'll see those remote locations, well, remote, um, according to my location, European location, is coming more rapidly. So the, uh, workforce, um, surface and offering their brain and talents at a affordable, very affordable price.

I had a discussion about that with someone from South Africa where, um, she mentioned that, "Listen, we service [00:38:00] international markets. We have fantastic skills, and we do it at a fraction of the price." Uh, not because, um, you know, because we want to compete, because okay, they have some expenses internally, but they still can afford to charge less.

And that's a little bit of a danger for those like myself who has almost 50% tax-

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Mm-hmm ...

**Elina Jutelyte:** plus all the rest of the tax that comes whenever you go to the shop or whenever you buy a car and all the rest. You're just technically squeezed. Um, so what I would like to see in the five years that small business is more supported so that more freelancers and solopreneurs could run the business risk-free, so that we sustain the competition that's coming from different regions, but also that we sustain our lifestyle, uh, and support our families without we, the need to be squeezed again in this 9:00 to 5:00 because I hear lots and lots of freelancers actually switching because they're just not able to [00:39:00] sustain that pressure any longer.

Um, what else in five years? Um- I think we'll see more experienced freelancers coming to the economy as well. Um, that is also the reason why there are lots of fractional communities all of a sudden. Um, these are the senior consultants who don't want to be called freelancers, but technically they do just that.

They do consulting work and join companies on retainers for a longer period of time, which is a great model actually. Um, and younger population as well, uh, I think they would join freelancing. Um, I know there are lots of efforts done in UK by Matt Bowling, who is investing lots of time and effort in building educational programs for students so that they're more confident in going into solo business from, uh, from universities straight away.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Yeah, I know. I can remember when I [00:40:00] was going out of university, it was like 95% chance that I have to go to work to the bank or to whatever company, uh, like some- somewhere, like, to have a full-time job. I didn't even think about, uh, being an entrepreneur or freelancer or whatever. And now when I speak to students, they have all this access to all these tools, to all this ChatGPT, like, all these lovable things, et cetera.

They can build business in, like, I don't know, like few weeks, and they don't really need to go and ask some mentors about this or, you know, have some experience, et cetera. They can just go do the research, learn from YouTube videos or podcasts. Like, try, try, try, build some MVPs, like, deliver it, ship it.

Yeah, fuck something up here and there, but that's how you learn. And I feel like the, the pace of work is so much faster, and if people can do this, why the hell on earth would they change their freedom and, like, openness or to build and, and, and the speed of how they c- how fast they can deliver the things, uh, into, like, [00:41:00] sitting in this kind of, kind of golden cage where you kinda get stable payment, once again, which is not guaranteed because you can be, like, left away in, in, in, in a day or something like that if company decide.

So yeah, it's, it's a, it's a, it's a interesting question. So who knows? Let's see, let's see what will happen. You know, to your point of the internet connection, at least you are not in Berlin, because when sometimes when I speak to people in Berlin, yeah, they have even worse. But I believe it's life, life-work balance.

It's all about that. You have to spend less time on the internet and go out in the woods or whatever. So that's, that's the beauty, that's the beauty of it. And you know, I wish to have the sky is the limit talk conversation, but time is the limit. So what advice would you give to companies just starting to work with freelancers and to freelancers entering the market?

**Elina Jutelyte:** Yeah. To companies, definitely try. Um-

But probably the first step in [00:42:00] trying would be understanding what freelancers can do for you. And what I mean by that is one of the reasons why, and I've seen that with my customers also, why... One of the reasons why they decide to hire someone, because they have so much to be done, they're like, "Listen, it's easier for me to have this, um, full-time equivalent who would be just sitting day, night, doing this nitty-gritty, and just," you know.

So they don't really know what exactly needs to be done, or they cannot outsource that part of the task to someone. Um, it's also a little bit of a comfort zone for folks, uh, in, in, in companies. Uh, like, okay, I have someone, so I don't really need to think upfront. I more or less know what they need to do, so let them just figure it out.

So it just, uh, not maybe fully understanding the scope of work that that person has to perform. I think if they start with understanding exactly [00:43:00] what needs to be done, that outsourcing to freelancers would be much easier in that case. And this is how freelancers can help those companies, that you guide them as the expert.

Uh, like, hey, this is the process you'd like to improve. This is what we can do. This is actually what I can do as a senior, but the rest can be done by junior. So why don't we build a team around that process so I still can manage that team for you, uh, but you know, it's gonna be off your plate completely.

So this is one of the things I do actually for my customers. Um, for freelancers that are coming to the, um, uh, ecosystem, um- Okay, a few things I've done differently if I would start from scratch, uh, on my own. I would focus on what is essential for my business. Like, you're gonna, you're gonna laugh, uh, when I

tell that when I launched my freelance business, [00:44:00] it was, uh, under company name Endo Exo.

That was the company name, uh, that I invented. There is a story behind it, but anyway, and it was we. Like, I was acting as I am building empire of event management and marketing, like we, my team that I don't know yet gonna help you, blah, blah, blah. And this is, was so bullish because, like, why wouldn't I, already been an expert in my, um, in my industry, would not come out as Alina Utilitia, the expert in that, and build my company around my name?

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Yeah.

**Elina Jutelyte:** So I lost I don't know how many years just trying to figure out whether I should position myself as a company or go and pitch myself as an expert to the people. So that was lots of time lost, and if I would do it again, I would really reverse that, and I would just talk about myself all the time and build personal brand around my expertise.

And then second to that, I would [00:45:00] go madly after projects and clients that I worked with and ask for testimonials and case studies. I would build that social proof like a complete lunatic. Like, honestly, the more the better. Just throw at me all what you have to say. Even if a project was bad, it's great feedback to learn from and improve, and secondly, it's just such a great leverage to your next client.

Um, it's also part of the positioning that I teach. It's just one of the most crucial elements in your business. Like, if you don't have that, you're losing big time to all the rest who has that proof already. Um, and last thing I would say, and probably that goes a little bit, mm- And the contrary to what I normally say, but try to do as much because you can't really figure out neither your niche nor your ideal customer, [00:46:00] nothing what makes your positioning stronger unless you try lots of things.

It's only by trying and figuring out we learn what we do the best, what we enjoy the most, um, and how can we actually pack that in a, in a package. Um, the mistake of many freelancers is that they haven't tried a lot, and then they're still stuck in one single thing and like, ah, but what do I do? So yeah, try as much as you can so you can be stronger in, in one little thing that you want to feature out there.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Now, I recently read a study about, um, how the... So it, it was an experiment. They took three groups of people. First were kindergartens,

second were CEOs and founders of companies, and third were some scientists. And they had some macaroni and some, like, stuff they, and they had to build a tower out of it. So the most successful were kindergartens because they didn't know all, like, how to make it.

They didn't overthink. They were just [00:47:00] trying. They were just sticking things in different way and then, like, uh, as long as it was, like, stable, it was good. So they tried so many times, and then they come up with a project. Yes, of course, it was not perfect, whatever, but we are not kindergartens anymore. So I feel like you definitely have to try things, and that's by working by client, by client, by client.

That's how you refine your offer. And also companies, when you are working with freelancers, you are not getting your understanding from working with one person. You need to try. You have to... And once again, you have to be open to be educated by good freelancers because they will show you the way of how to hire farther and farther.

And I remember it was, like, my first conversation on this podcast with John Younger, and he told that, "Create a committee of freelancer." They hire freelancer as an advisor who will tell you how to hire other freelancers because they know it, and, like, companies are not doing this. They have to do this. But anyway, to keep the conversation going, [00:48:00] name two people I should reach out to to talk about the independent workforce.

**Elina Jutelyte:** Oh, gosh. Um, there are so many actually, and I think you have them, you had them all already. Um, okay, it doesn't need to be on my own record. Can I send it to you on LinkedIn?

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Of course. You know, please, please, please, every time that you meet a person who is either hiring freelancers in a company or building, helping companies to hire them or creating a business for freelancers, send them my way because we need to build this ecosystem.

It's all about network. It's all about creating these connections, 'cause at the end of the day, that's, that's the future of work. Sorry, not sorry. And last but not least, what is one question that I should have asked you about freelancer market but didn't?

**Elina Jutelyte:** One question you could have asked, why- When we talk about freelance economy we're mostly talking about platforms

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Why, Elina? Why we [00:49:00] talk about platforms mostly?

**Elina Jutelyte:** Yeah, such interesting question, Yu- uh, Yuri. Um Yeah, we actually had a full forum, I think it was a few years ago, um, in the European Commission with politicians and policymakers and everyone who's involved in, uh, freelance ecosystem in the, in the EU bubble, as they call it.

Um, and one remarkable, um, comment, uh, or takeaway was that- We don't have data in the first place. That's the problem. We- the only data we have is coming from platforms. So platforms can tell us how many freelancers are registered there. Whether they're actually businesses or not, we don't know. They're registered there, so they're freelancing.

They can give data, um, about transactions that was, was coming, and that's also representative. But if we wanna look at the broader freelance economy, which is not only those on the platforms, but consultants, fractionals, [00:50:00] uh, smaller businesses who are registered with a single or maybe two people, but do consulting work, this data is so hidden.

It's in between the reports of whatever. Like in Belgium, for instance, if you wanna extract freelancers from the reportings that they have, you have to look at the specific codes. But these codes combine, uh, farmers, fishers, um, maybe like, um, butchers, um, bread bakers, and all that, which is great, but we just different type of businesses.

Yeah. So it's rather difficult to extract. I heard the same is in other countries. I believe Germany is, is very similar. So we don't have really data about the impact of freelancing to the economy, and to my perspective, impact is significant. And it's not only monetary, it's about less pollution because we don't drive back and forth.

It's, uh, we are typically happier, thus healthier, so less a burden on the healthcare system. [00:51:00] Um, we support our family and children, so there is less need for creches and kindergartens and all that, a- and many, many other things. I, I've, I've made a report at some point. Uh, so I would love to see, again, in five years as we discussed, that we eventually come to clear data about how freelance economy is evolving with everyone who is in that field and not on the platforms.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** And do you know if there are any initiative of how to actually calculate this amount?

**Elina Jutelyte:** Well, um, part of that discussion was also how do we call them? Mm. Because according to some staffing agencies, there are two types of people in the world. They're either employed or unemployed. So who we are? Are we employed or not?

We're self-employed, so does it makes us better, like more employed or less unemployed? I don't know. Uh, then according to others, um, I, I think it's actually European Commission documentation and, uh, legislation, we belong to small and medium [00:52:00] businesses And small-medium businesses is, if I'm not mistaken, up to 10 people and some kind of millions a year, which is also not very representative.

Um, to others, it was, again, platform work or not platform w- worker, so categorization is, um, categorizing is very different, uh- Yeah ... in that field. So there is a need to come to one definition so we can speak about the same thing, which is mega difficult.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** Yeah, I f- and I feel like nobody's interested in that.

Okay. They are keep talking, but, uh, not doing anything, because it's easier to get, like, all the taxes from corporates, and who cares about others? But anyway, let's be more positive, and hopefully seeing that more and more people, especially more and more experts, are also entering the entrepreneurial journey, this freelancer journey.

They're getting fed of working with a company, and I remember it was, um, a conversation with Catherine Steiner-Adix who told that one of people, um... Or, [00:53:00] or no, it was, it was, by the way, Una from the Indie Hackers, and she told that one of people who became a freelancer, he was let go by companies for three times, and he was like, "I'm not going through this anymore.

I'm going to take care of my personal professional growth, and I'm not relying on the companies." Because in current economy, you know, as you've said about your parents that were working in, in, in a company for 40 years, you are, you're not having this kind of security anymore in the world. You cannot work for a company for 40 years, even if you want to.

There is a huge chance that you'll get fired because of AI or because of something, whatever. So yeah, investing in your own brand, building your own connections, and becoming a great B2B partner for other companies, yeah, might be the right way. And yeah, Elina, thank you so, so much for this

conversation, for all the things that you are doing by growing this freelancer, like, real businesses, because once again, uh, it's also something that, um, [00:54:00] I hear a lot from experts, that freelancers are having, like, high expectations for companies.

But as you've said before, if you're working with corporates, you have to speak the corporate language. So thank you so, so much for preparing freelancers for the reality of the world, and to grow in this industry, and to invest in your time, and to helping people to grow, and of course, for this conversation.

Thank you very much.

**Elina Jutelyte:** My pleasure, my pleasure.

**Yurii Lazaruk:** And, uh, yeah. For the invitation. See you on the freelance world. And for listeners, thank you for joining us on this episode of the Independent Workforce. I hope you've taken one step closer to working smarter with freelance talents. If you enjoy this conversation, subscribe to learn even more and share it with your colleague.

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