

TIW41 - Elina Liehu

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 Freelancer Map, an international platform that's been connecting top independent professionals with companies for over 20 years. And my guest is Elina Yehou, the founder of Fero Wallo and best, best talent platform, where she's building a new way for companies to quickly connect with interim managers, fractional executives, and independent experts, who is also driven by an idea that progress happens when the right people connect at the right time.

So, welcome, Elina.

Elina Liehu: Thank you. It's great to be with you here.

Yurii Lazaruk: We had a little bit of a conversation here and there. I know that you are [00:01:00] very passionate about the independent talent market, and I can't wait to ask you all the questions. But let's start with, like, the tiniest, first, easiest question. So share a little bit with me your background, and what role do you play right now in the freelance market?

Elina Liehu: Uh, I have, I have been running the, the interim management business now already 10 years, so it's a decade. Mm. It's, it's, uh, quite a while. Of course, we had a COVID in between, which was- Mm ... kind of, uh, making it, uh, maybe even feeling longer than one decade, maybe feeling like a two. But, uh, and then before a, uh, before this, uh, interim, uh, management business, uh, I have been also in IT field on, on resourcing.

So, uh, I did do that about another decade, not in one company, but in, in few different companies. So I have been reading a lot of CVs in last 20 years, I would say.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah, and what do you see during this period? Like, what's changed on this market?

Elina Liehu: Uh, if, uh, [00:02:00] looking for a, uh, the, the interim management market and focusing on that because this is, this is what I'm doing today.

Uh, when I started in 10 years ago in Finland, at least in Finland, it was really, really not understood at all by the, by the, the decision-makers. So decision-makers were kind of like, "Ah, so this kind of like, are these people like that? Okay, they, they become a consultant because, uh, they are not really as good that I am in being a manager, so they're not gonna be recruited by the companies, and that's why they do this kind of like, uh, not being employed."

So it was k- it was seem kind of like a, these are the, the, the college dropouts in a way. Like, class dropouts. Like, okay, you don't get to this, like, big meeting room where we are at, at the time. Because that time also, 10 years ago, all the meetings were on site. Yeah. This is like for those who don't remember it anymore.[00:03:00]

And, and today, uh, there is even actually the same people who are in this, uh, decision-making positions, and they are like... Now they are saying that, "Ah, this is very interesting that I have this and this, my, uh, uh, previous colleague or my friend or whoever, and they have become a independent freelancer and being independent, uh, interim manager, and they seem to enjoy it a lot."

And these are people that the same people feel like that they are very capable of, and they, they look them maybe a bit upwards and all that, and then they're like, "Maybe I could become a one later on." So, and that there has been a lot of talk now that there... it is more phenomenon kind of like that a lot of people are talking about it.

Uh, how I see it, that it's still kind of a thing that there is more people talking about it when actually using a interim managers [00:04:00] as a part of the strategic, uh, processes and strategic projects and, and helping, uh, to, to be successful. And, and, and th- that's a gap still. But yeah, lot of attitude change happened in 10 years.

Yurii Lazaruk: It sounds like the mindset change. Because once again, you can't go from not hiring interim professionals to hiring overnight. You have to go through some, through some journey. You know, you have to maybe learn something, maybe you can see others doing something like that. So from your experience, like how does this curve looks like from someone who is not hiring such professionals to someone who is hiring them on a scale?

Elina Liehu: Uh, we have few customers who I could say that have found, uh, using interim managers as a strategic tool to make sure that they will be successful today and in future. And, and kind of this, like, [00:05:00] there is this term of fractional manager as well, kind of like taking people in and having them on board working with the teams to be successful in these, uh, critical projects quicker than, than otherwise.

And, uh, and this is... there is few customers like that, that we, we are helping constantly. Uh, and then still there is customers who, who are maybe thinking that, okay, interim manager is something like, okay, of course, if our CFO leaves the company, then we maybe need someone to help us if we are not successful enough to a, uh, in our hiring process.

So e- everything is still, like... And, and then there is still who haven't even heard the term interim manager.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah, that's exactly, that's exactly the case. And also, you know, when you are talking about, um, [00:06:00] C-level management or higher, like senior experts, it's, it's even harder. Because what I hear a lot, that people are hiring external professionals for some, like, smaller tasks or something that people don't want to do in their companies, or something that someone left the company and they need just to fill the gap.

Of course, there's change in, like, the companies, the worldwide companies like NASA, Airbus, Microsoft, you name it. They have the whole programs for hiring independent professionals, and those programs run for, like, decades. Mm. And they just keep using this. Yeah, they're not actually talking a lot about them, so they're kind of like keeping it to themselves.

Still they are to- dealing with independent professionals. So from, from your perspective, from your experience, if the company is on the side that they are not hiring such professionals, or maybe they didn't even hear, or maybe they, um, know, but they think that they know, they not actually knowing how to do this.

So where [00:07:00] do they start? How do they hire such experts to their business?

Elina Liehu: Mm. I, I, I think one of the things is, the first thing is to understand that, that yes, now we have a gap on, on, on either time or skills, or both. Uh, and, and this is something like, um, I, I o- sometimes use this ex- exper- like kind of a, um, ex-, uh What it is.

Example. Experience. Experience. That when there is a, um, something new that is will be done in a company, and it is new for the company, and, and they start to build something. And then they say like, "Okay, please, uh, you, uh, Jack, Jack, you have, you, you have in your previous position when you were working before you came to our company, you were doing this thing.

So [00:08:00] maybe you can run this project because you have experience in doing things like that." And Jack has been working with us already three years. What does mean is that Jack's experience is at least three years old, and now we put Jack to work to run the project as being the one who have experience about it.

So this is something that we should be, like, more honest to ourselves in decision-making, and kind of understand like, do we really have the latest experience? Do we e- really have experience on this specific task? And this is of course something that it is different, like, in really, really large companies, like you mentioned NASA or, or all this.

When you have thousands and thousands of people, it's a bit different game. But [00:09:00] most of the companies everywhere in, in all continents, most of the companies are midsize companies.

W- there is this real... And, and in that, b- because I would say that in these really big ones, the, the game is a bit different. It's, it's more kind of like, like you said, that there is a decision that it's some of the people that we take in, we do in different contract and employment, and there is different reasoning behind of it.

I do think that one of the reasons is that by hiring, you don't always get the best ones.

Yurii Lazaruk: Mm.

Elina Liehu: Because we have a increasing number of the people who are looking for flexibility, and they kind of, like, go, go around with the interesting projects, like, "Okay, I, I wanna go on this project. I'm not really into the work with this company.

This company itself is, like, maybe not something that I would feel passionate ab- [00:10:00] passionate about it, but this company has this specific project, and this specific proje- project is something I really wanna be in, but I don't wanna stay there after. Then I go another project." And this, this kind of

thinking is something that, uh- Decision makers maybe are not really yet very much kind of being there

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah, you know, I, I really like your example that your experience is three years old because it's, that's exactly what's happening within the businesses.

Uh, when you are building, when you are focused on doing one thing, like, every day for years, et cetera, of course you see what's happening on the market, uh, some new people join your team, like, full time, et cetera. But still you are kind of like, you know how the, as this horse, they have to run forward, so they have these blinders in their eyes so they don't see what's around.

And it feels like pretty much the same when you [00:11:00] are building a business. You have this kind of blinders because you see the same problems, the same challenge every day and you don't know what other experiences are and that's exactly the best way to ex- i- invite those external professionals without actually making a huge investment into building this relationship and also without actually risking.

Because when you are hiring someone full time, especially if we are talking about, like, C level management, it takes time, at least like six, eight months to hire this person. Then they need to be onboarded. So basically you will lose one year, uh, just to get someone r- up and running and then- Yeah ... when you are inviting external professional, you can hire them, I don't know.

Okay, let's, let's like, let, let's take maximum, like in maximum two months. Like

Elina Liehu: s- Yeah, no, but, but much, much faster

Yurii Lazaruk: It's much faster, but

Elina Liehu: like- Much faster ... very,

Yurii Lazaruk: very, very, very worst

Elina Liehu: case scenario is two weeks Yeah. Any, any, any, like our [00:12:00] fastest one is five days. Yeah, exactly. From the contact that, from the contact that the customer gave a call and we talking about now a CFO and it was like the person was actually on site working with the customer.

Yurii Lazaruk: So-

Elina Liehu: So yeah, it is, it is very different

Yurii Lazaruk: So even faster, but still I have this feeling that businesses think in this, um, way that there is either or. Yeah So there is no, like, they can work together. There is no meaning of blended workforce. So either you have a full time team or you don't have or, like, you, if you hire external professionals, you hire them to replace someone in your core team.

But no, it doesn't work like that. So I'm curious, like what is your take on this hiring workforce, all the strategy, like strategical point of view?

Elina Liehu: I, I think it's kind of a similar thing that people are having a personal trainer I- it's a bit different thing that you need [00:13:00] someone who have more knowledge on this specific topic or what need to be done, and has collected this information and experience through a various situations.

Like for example, personal trainer. Personal trainer has helped maybe hundreds of people to, uh, become stronger or become a better fit or losing weight or whatever are the, the reasons why one would have a personal trainer. And because of that, this person helps you, and you are ready to take that help in because they have this experience that they have gathered in different situations.

And it's a, in a way, same thing. So you take like a personal trainers to your company for a limited time to, [00:14:00] to help you, like if you need to get a, uh, a better running condition. So then you have a personal trainer for running, and then you need your, your, uh, physical fitness in the, the, uh, in the gym better, so you have someone helping your gym, for example.

So I, I, I see it kind of like... And, and, and this is, this is, I think one of the things is that it very easily the, the, the, especially those midsize organizations, they, they get kind of a feeling like, okay, uh, we would need help because we are not good enough So, so then it's ki- kind of like there is there, at least Finland, there had been a stigma, for example, using therapist.

Mm. Because, like, I, I should not go be a therap- uh, to see therapist. At least I should not tell about it to anyone, because if I do, then others would understand that I'm not perfect. So this is [00:15:00] a bit same thing, like, uh, the companies. We cannot take any help inside in our projects because then maybe internally and maybe even externally, maybe our board would think that we are not really doing good job in managing this whole thing.

And it is totally opposite way, in my opinion. Because when you understand where you are not good at or good enough, because you still could be very good, but you are not good enough. If you are having a certain type of a future that you have been, uh, budgeting or... and, and planning, you have some areas that need to be better in order to achieve that future.

It doesn't mean that you have been bad, uh, you have been doing a bad job. It's just that you need some help, [00:16:00] because most of us, in most of the fields We should take some help in occasionally

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No endless job boards, no guesswork, just direct access to verified experts and opportunities across the globe. Visit freelancermap.com and start building your next success story today. Let's imagine the company knows it, so they accept that they are not perfect and they are ready to get help, but still something stops them.

So what, uh, what is the next step? What is the next blocker to hiring external professionals?

Elina Liehu: I, I think it's kind of this, like, outsidersness. It's a bit linked to this, like, having this personal trainer, therapist or whatever. I [00:17:00] think this is one of the big blocks in, in many ways. And then, of course, the, the question comes, like, who would be the person?

I think that's then the n- kind of a next thing, like, where and how we can find the person, how we can be sure that this person knows, uh, more what we know or at least enough or things like that. And, and then it's kind of like, uh, of course, the question, like, how you start to then look for this, this person.

In my opinion, it's like I always say to my customers and potential customers, like, that when you are in the, your management team meeting, is it a whole company or your, your kind of division, um, team meeting and you have a table, the question kind of like, who would take charge of this? Who would start to work with this?

This is always also correct time to think about could we maybe take someone to help the team [00:18:00] to get over with this whole thing? Because one of the

things is per- so for sure, when you do some changes or transformations or whatever in a company All the people who are doing it, they still have their so-called daily job.

So it's also kind of a thing, like how much more you can always just put on to people to work on. So it, it's also kind of like issue of the, the workload.

Yurii Lazaruk: And you know, there are always different hiring processes. So, uh, when you hire a professional to be on your core team full time, you have time to get to know this person.

As you've said, you know, it's all, it's all about trust. They go through, like, five, six rounds of interviews, and they speak to people from your recruiting department to, like, management department, et cetera. And then you kinda, like, have this [00:19:00] general understanding whether this person fits your culture.

Still, there are many wrong decisions, but, like, people are different people, so it's totally good to, you know, to... We are not perfect, as we agreed on already. And then, as you've said, in your experience, there was five days to hire interim professional from, like, the moment you received a request for such.

So you definitely have to trust very much this person. So how to build this trust in such a- Mm ... s- in such a fast timeline?

Elina Liehu: Mm. So what I do with Verovalo, uh, we have the, the, the platform, best, best talent platform. And what, first of all, what we have done is that we have Basically transferred a kind of not very open, uh, process, which is headhunting process.

We have transferred it to very transparent. So the people who are in a platform, they, uh, they register to the platform, and then there is assignment, and then they apply to this [00:20:00] Fair of Alo assignment, for example. And, and then there is a quality control. Mm. Quality control means that then I will go through, of course, all the applications what are there.

I will check the CVs. But very important thing is, and what we have taken to part of our process, that the person's references will be checked in the first phase. The references will be checked before we, I present the candidates to the customer. And of course, if I look the papers and I look the CV, and I'm not really convinced, I call first the person themselves.

Like, "Okay, sorry, but I don't really get it, like why you are applying on this? Because I'm looking your application. I'm looking your CV. I have the, the, the [00:21:00] customer request, like what, what's required, and you have to help me to understand the match. Because now your written thing doesn't give me answers."

And this is the point where there is two ways how it goes from there. The one way is that then I'm like, "Okay, sorry. I totally misread you. I understand really, really well that why you are interested in, in this, this specific assignment." And if I haven't checked the, the references of the person before, then I do the, that checking, and then I'm presenting the, the, the material to the customer.

Or the other thing is that then either the, the, the talent and myself, we both understand together like, "Okay, yeah, maybe this was not my job." Mm. "Maybe like I, I kind of like misunderstood the, the [00:22:00] assignment and, and kind of like thought that it's in a... it's okay. Like I, I look it at this different angle.

Yes, there is this five bullet points that is required and but I, I kind of thought that it's okay, like not really having exactly." And then we agree like, "Okay, sorry, but in this case, I will, I cannot, I cannot, uh, present you to the customer. But by all means, when there is something that you are really into it, like that's like really your core expertise, then next time please apply."

And, and all the information stays in a platform in a, in using to the future, both to the talent and of course for me as well to see, like, what kind of cases there has been

Yurii Lazaruk: Am I hearing correctly that before presenting a talent, you are going back, let's say, two, three, four projects and you are asking other people on how this person [00:23:00] did their job?

Elina Liehu: Yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: How, how do you find-

Elina Liehu: The reference ...

Yurii Lazaruk: how do you find references? Do you ask the talent to give you references?

Elina Liehu: Oh, the talent, yeah, of course, yes. That is, there is actually European, European law. You should not call to anyone else but what, what is given. So yeah, we ask in the application process, we ask, uh, the talent to fill in the reference information, like who to call to.

And I think it's amazing how, how easily it is to... Like, in my opinion, like, me looking for new customers and trying to call the customers, no one ever answers the phone calls anymore. This is like the world has changed. But then when I'm checking the references, of course, normally they don't answer the phone call either.

But then I'm sending the SMS message like, "Okay, here is Elina. Uh, I got your information from this and this person, and given you as a reference. When can we talk today?" Mm. Because my ti- my, my timeline is [00:24:00] very, very tight. I have basically two days to check all the references and make sure, like, the whole thing.

So typically it is like, "Okay, what about then a, uh, 3:30? Uh, you- I'm available. I, you can call me." So I usually get it for the same day. So it is, like, possible to, to do it in very fast phase because this is also those people who have given a, uh, a day, they kind of name for and, and, and the, the promise that, okay, I can be your reference.

Yurii Lazaruk: Mm.

Elina Liehu: They are people who want you to succeed. Mm. And, and they are available. Of course, I have, for example, one reference call that I made a, uh, 5:00 in the morning, and it was in the same time zone. It was in Finland. And, and I did reach this person in the, the, the previous [00:25:00] day, like afternoon or whatever, and he was like, "Oh, I'm, I'm super busy.

I have no time now, but I'm reaching the airport tomorrow morning because my flight leaves 6:30. So I'm gonna be on taxi at 5:00 in the morning." I was like, "Okay." Because then I, I knew that my timeline is not... I, I cannot call him, like, because he's gonna be back, like, three days or whatever. That's, like, my timeline has gone.

Like, "Okay, I call you at 5:00 in the morning. That's fine." And I called him 5:00 in the morning. He was in a taxi and I was sipping my coffee.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah. And what, what, what are the questions that you are asking, uh, when you're asking for referrals? I mean, like, uh, yeah, when you, when... Let's, let's imagine this specific conversation.

So you called this person in, in the taxi. So what, what do you usually ask?

Elina Liehu: Uh, I usually, uh, I, I give a little brief, like what is the customer situation where they're looking for a, uh, the person. And then I'm [00:26:00] asking the person to explain, like, how they have been working together. Mm. Because I'm not interested in kind of like character type of, uh, references.

Like, oh, he's such a nice person. I'm like, if you haven't been working with the person, it's like, I think most... Our friends, hopefully all, all of them are telling that we are nice. So that's not really bringing any kind of a new information to anyone. Um, and so, so it is more like ex- please explain like where did you work together?

And usually when they explaining, uh, where they have worked together, they already giving kind of like hints like, uh, uh, that it was good way to work and, and, and how the person, what kind of a role they had and how they took the role and a bit of their working, uh, style and all that. And then I'm typically...

It depends a little bit like who is the person, like is it like [00:27:00] colleague or is it a board of director and, and, uh, and the project, uh, work? So it, it's, it depends a little bit. But, uh, then I'm usually asking like, uh, if you would now, uh, choose again for this specific role that you work together, that you would make a selection whom to take for that work, would you take this person again?

And most of... Very often the situation is already that the person is explaining like, "Oh, we first worked together there, then there was a little gap, and he was in different company, I was in different company. And then I was in this company and I hired h- this person again to work with me." So very often there is, like, continuity of the history, which is for me telling, like, okay, I do think that you believe...

I- you trust in this person, and, and, and that's how it is. And then, then I'm also asking [00:28:00] a bit, like, working style. Uh, kind of like, can you please explain a little bit, like, what kind of adjectives would you say on the person's working style? And, and then my last... I have usually only three questions, which are main questions are these.

And then the fourth one is kind of like that, is there anything that comes on the mind kind of like that I haven't asked that I should have asked? Which is kind of giving the open kind of a channel if there is something that the person have some doubts. But, uh, normally they're like, "No, no, you have asked everything."

And but, but this is kind of like... So it's very quick. It's, it's not like a in-depth kind of a re- reference checking. It's, it's more kind of like 15 minutes quick talk, and, and then I, uh With the platform, I, I put the information in the platform, [00:29:00] not anything what we have spoken about, but information that reference for the assignment has been contacted or the reference has been given.

And then I can see it in the future there as well. The, the talent can see like, yes, uh, now she has been calling on my reference such and such. Because this is also something, like Finland is f- small market. We are only about bit less than six million people. Uh, I would say that in Finland, those who are in interim management kind of a, uh, field, the, the talents, they do know that this Elina, she's calling, she's calling this.

She's, she's not only saying that she will maybe call, but she's calling this. And this also have kind of a loop back because everyone knows that there is this quality check. So it's kind of like, uh, I think that's, that's already [00:30:00] a big part of it, that process is, like always the same.

Yurii Lazaruk: Uh, also, you know, like I, I feel like it's, it's very important part, uh, that you mentioned because absence of testimonials and references is exactly the huge blocker, because how can you trust a person?

And I also see from freelancer side, they are, like many of, uh, freelancers are not working on their testimonials. They are not working on having these contacts ready. So they go to the project, they deliver the project, they out. They are not building connections. They are not, you know, like building like, uh, this network for the future.

So they ki- it, it feels like they went on a project, then they burn all the, all the bridges and like, "Yeah, I've done this, I've done that," and then there is no one actually to talk to about this project. But also I believe that not that many people are actually calling and asking, like... So usually people just ask freelancers themselves, and that's it.

Yeah. But once again, it depends on different assignments, on different [00:31:00] style. But also one, one small detail that I wanted to ask you, um, when you do this reference check, do you do this specifically for a person when you already have a project lined up? Yes. Okay.

Elina Liehu: Yes.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah.

Elina Liehu: Yes.

Yurii Lazaruk: Because, because I was thinking that maybe you do it like before, so the- No

person is applying. Okay.

Elina Liehu: No.

Yurii Lazaruk: Go

Elina Liehu: ahead. And, and, and this is, this is like how I see the platform. I would... I, I call it math.

Yurii Lazaruk: Mm-hmm.

Elina Liehu: Because, uh, when you have a platform, uh, and, and this kind of a process, I, I would say any kind of a pool of the talents in a way, if you want to have more than like few hundred.

But, uh, but the thing is that, uh... And, and what we offer to the customers, we have like all different areas of, we have a finance people, we have a, uh, the, the HR people, we have a

factory builder who can design and build and whatever, factory and things like that. So- If you do a checking [00:32:00] pre-order people are in your pool, the problem is, uh, against what you are doing the checking because you don't have that assignment

Yurii Lazaruk: Mm-hmm

Elina Liehu: So this is the... I think this is very important because, because s- one person could be perfect on certain type of assignment, and at the same time, not at all good in certain type of assignment.

And that's why I think it's very important that it is a specified for the assignment. And of course then if I'm, if I'm having like the same person, for example, is, uh, applying to a position that is very, very different that person has been applying before, I would need to, uh, recheck other, uh, the, the, the reference because it is very different type of an assignment.

Mm. And, and [00:33:00] this is exactly like, like when I said that, uh, the, like sometimes it is that for, for example, there was a one case, not quite recently actually, uh, kind of factory development thing. And then there was this person who has been in interested in, in quite different type of assignments earlier.

And I kind of thought like, okay, this is... Like, I have put this person on this kind of like certain box like. That this, this is, this is like his field and what, what he knows of. And then he applied for this position, and I was like- Mm ... I, I don't get it. I really don't get it. And I called him up and I was like, "Okay, can you please explain?"

Like, because... And of course the timelines for applications also is very, very fast. So people maybe not always have like, uh, enough time or, or adequate time to a, to create a [00:34:00] very, very good applications. So that was maybe something. Because I, I was not able to catch the thing from the, the written application.

And then he was like, "Yeah, I've been doing this and this and this and this kind of things." And, and in the similar kind of project that, that this customer need was. I was like, "Yeah, my problem. I'm like, I stand still. That, yeah, I thank you very many. Now I, I believe you. It was just that I didn't get it." And actually what did happen that there was like two people on the final.

Customer did have a several interview roles. So th- there was two people in the finals, and he was one of those who in the finals. Mm. So like it... I think it's also very important, like to me being agent and being the kind of in a selection, I have to be of course careful, and I have to take care of the, the, the quality and all that.

But I have to understand that- [00:35:00] These people who apply for these positions, they are always a experts on their own field. And this is kind of the whole thinking behind the process itself, that I believe that these people who

apply for these positions, they know the best. They understand the, the, the better the customer need than I do.

I, I'm generalist. I, I understand little bit about everything, but not a lot about anything, which is a different thing

Yurii Lazaruk: Now I, I have, I have one personal question. So you have such a great process- Okay ... of identifying people, but I'm still curious, why are you focused specifically on this independent talent?

Why are you not focused on hiring full-time professionals?

Elina Liehu: Ah, that's a good question.

I don't know. I, I kind of like, [00:36:00] um, um, I think I'm kind of, like, very result-oriented myself. And of course, I, of course it is result when person gets hired by the, the company and all that. But, uh, uh, what I, I, I kind of like this fast movement matching type of a thing. When, when, when it is, like, uh, the headhunting and the, the, the re- the, the, that kind of, like, employment for C-level, I would say it's more like a marriage counselor.

Mm. Kind of like that, okay, now you start your journey together and, and, a- and I, I don't know. It's, it's a good que- some people have asked me, some customers have asked me, like, "Why you don't do a recruitment?" And like, it, it's a different game. It's, it's a different thing. But then at the same time, using the platform, uh, I would say that it would be [00:37:00] very...

I, I would be very happy to see a partner in our platform who would be doing this different way, different, new digital process, put the talents on a driver's seat, and still it's a different and open applications, uh, kind of a service. I would support them fully if someone would do that, if this is for someone's field.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, out of our conversation, I also had this feeling that you're kind of building relationships with these people that you put on projects. And since, uh, when you hire independent professionals, it's, like, not as you've said, you know, like, it's not like this marriage, uh, consultancy that you married people and then you never see them again because, uh, you...

Okay, may- maybe you see them again at, at, at five years. But it's like y- sometimes it happens that you marry them and you never see them again. But in this case, you kind of, like, can put the same person on different [00:38:00]

projects, and you kind of still build these relationships, and you keep them warm continuously.

So you surround yourself with great humans that you know, and then when people are coming to you, you can easily continuously put them, you know, and help more and more people out there. That's, that's my personal feeling, so.

Elina Liehu: Yeah, yeah. And, and, and I think that, like, with the Bestest Talent platform, of course it is a digital platform, but our idea is that we want to build it, build it as a community as well.

Yurii Lazaruk: Mm.

Elina Liehu: So we have been har- carrying on, like, monthly meetings on, uh, on, uh- First we had them on site in, in Helsinki. Now we have had it in the, the, the webinars basically, or kind of like... And we have had a matchmaking, uh, service so people can, can send a message, like if they wanna meet someone who is independent manager and, and, uh, and then we put them together and they can meet, and then we write little articles about it and things like that.

So it's kind of [00:39:00] like that I, I, I see it kind of like community thing. And of course it, there is some people, there is some, uh, some interim managers and, and, and fractional managers who really wants to have that community. They really want to have belong to some kind of a, a peer group. But then there is a people who doesn't care less.

So, but it's okay. It's okay. Like if you don't like, like it, then it's kind of like that everybody have on this structure, those parts that they, they kind of feel like it's good to them. And of course, like I don't remember all of the, the talents, and I don't remember all of the people, but it's also maybe that like I have always been kind of people person in a way and like I, I, I like to connect with the new people and, and, and, and try to remember those that I have connected with.

But, um, yeah, it's, it is lot of networking and it's lot of kind [00:40:00] of like, uh... Because also it's sort of networking in a sense that, of course, sometimes we may have a very, very kind of complicated the customer need, meaning that I do know that there is not gonna be many of those in Finland or in Europe or whatever.

And then what I do is that I'm using my network. I'm starting to l- check like, okay, does anyone know? And with our platform, when we have a complicated, uh, assignment and people receive an email like, okay, now there is this and that

kind of a new assignment, I write an email right away that I know that in this kind of this specific, uh, assignment, I will not have a lineup.

If you know someone, please forward this. And this is what happening. People are using they, their network to find a, uh, and to, to he- and it's also to help their friends and [00:41:00] their network to find a great assignment. And, and of course this is a, something that our customers benefit the most Because there is the pool of 2,000 plus extended network where to find the, the suitable talent on their needs

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah.

It's, it's one of my previous guests, Brian Penny, told that the best, uh, mantra to hire independent professional is, "I know someone." And I feel like that's exactly community driven world because people know people and the more you are working, the more people you meet and the stronger connections you create, the better the, the higher probability that you will find a project in the future.

So that's exactly, uh, one of the differences between like also full-time professionals and independent professionals because they are still more connected. There, there are not that many independent out there, but they're more community driven overall because they totally understand that their next project will come not because of some platform, yes, it might be, but [00:42:00] there is a huge chance that their next project will come exactly because of some human that they met before.

And I feel like we can talk about this forever, about all these human connections. And you know, I wish to have the sky as a limit, but time is limit to our conversation. So the final question, what advice would you give to companies just starting hiring independent professionals and to independent professionals entering the market?

Elina Liehu: Um, let's start from this one, the independent professionals, uh, entering to the market. Uh, I, I think one of the thing is that, uh, to be independent professional, you have to have a, uh,

kind of a strength maybe. I don't know if that's a good word on that one. But you have to kind of like, uh- Tolerate the, the uncertainty. That's the main thing. Although, like, if we are saying, like, [00:43:00] today's work environment and all that, it's never certain either. But it is very, very different kind of a game.

Like, okay, we are now in beginning of September, that you most likely know that next March, uh, you will get a salary paycheck from this same kind of an envelope that you get in this September. Compared that, okay, uh, I have now a two months assignment. I have no clue to which... whom I working with on a next March.

And I think that's, that's kind of like the, the main thing because then after that, if, if, if this kind of a, uh, uh, uncertainty is fine for you and, and you think that it's fine for you, it may be that then when you try it out, you realize, oh no, this is not my game. But then it's totally fine to just go back [00:44:00] employed.

Fine. But, but if it i- it is actually very quickly that the, the independent talents, they, they know themselves that, "Is this my thing or not?" And I think this is the main thing because then the, what you do and what kind of customers you work with, then that's, that's basically depending, like, what is your skills, your expertise and all that, and that's, that's a different thing.

So that's, that's about entering the market for a, for a new, new talents. But then a, um... Then for the customers, I actually I do say this quite often. Uh, very often the, the talents interested in the customer's assignments are actually overqualified for that position if you compare the employment. And then so- actually, quite often, not only sometimes.

[00:45:00] But, uh, customers are so like, "But Elina, how come this person with this kind of a background is interested in, in this hour, three days a week, a six months project? Like, what is thinking about?" And my, my reply always is that this is something that this is not our, our thing to think about. We talking about a grown-up people who are typically on their 50s or even 60s.

Uh, they have a 20-plus year career in very often, uh, in, in very, uh, kind of a positions that they have been part of the decision-making and all that. If they think that this is interesting project for them, be happy. You get them. Don't question why.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah. It's, uh... I feel like it's, it's very important thing because when you [00:46:00] start overthinking and like, "Oh, you are too good for me.

It's not you, it's me, blah, blah, blah," like that- that's how you lose talent. Like, why do you do this? But,

Elina Liehu: uh- Yeah. A- a- and I think we, again, we get back to that personal trainer kind of a issue. That personal trainer has to have more experience what kind of, uh, weights I should lift at myself.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah.

Elina Liehu: Otherwise, I don't need the person.

So this is kind of like that, kind of the part of the whole structure typically is that you... Because the, the interim manager, they, they have, they have maybe 100 hours. It's not 100 days that they... But, but if it said like, okay, new manager comes in, then it takes 100 days to, to, to get in. Interim manager is 100 hours, sometimes it's 100 minutes.

And, and in order that you can kind of get into that quickly, it does require that [00:47:00] you have been very similar situations more often than once or twice

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

Elina Liehu: Oh my God, you did, did, did you have this question for me, like, uh, about...

First of all, I'm very bad with the names. Uh, I don't know.

Yurii Lazaruk: I will follow up.

Elina Liehu: Ah, I, uh, the, I don't know if you know this, uh, this, um, Swedish guy, Glenn.

Yurii Lazaruk: Glenn Hodgson, yeah.

Elina Liehu: He,

Yurii Lazaruk: the cryptocurrency- Oh, of course you know

Elina Liehu: him.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah, it's like the small world, the small world. But yeah. I will ask this question. I will definitely find you afterwards, uh, on LinkedIn.

Yeah. I will send you a message. So think about it, and, uh, I will definitely ask you to introduce. And any time that you see amazing humans who are growing this independent talent market, please, please, please connect us, because we need their experience. We need to share it more openly with the world, exactly as you [00:48:00] just did.

So thank you so, so much for, first of all, having your deeply human process where you actually call people, and sometimes even at 5:00 PM in the morning when they're on the taxi to airport. Yeah, it's fine. And thank you so, so much for keep on trusting and believing in the independent professional, and also changing mindset of businesses and helping them to understand that there is more than one way to be right.

And sometimes you can hire amazing experts and don't question why do they want to work with your project. If you see that they're a great fit, if you see that they exactly what you... Just work with them and be lucky that you are doing this. So Elina, thank you so, so much for this conversation.

Elina Liehu: Thank you.

Thank you. Have a nice week.

Yurii Lazaruk: And, uh, yeah, see you in z- Yeah ... independent talent market. 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 [00:49:00] learn even more and share it with your colleague.

And remember, the future of work is now.