

TIW42 - Mike Morris - final

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 Yurii. 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 Mike Morris, the Global Head of Platform and Talent at Randstad Digital, former CEO of Topcoder and co-founder of Torque, an AI-powered freelance talent marketplace acquired by Randstad in 2024, who, with over two decades of experience connecting companies with independent tech talent, has definitely seen the industry evolve from the very beginning and also been shaping the freelance economy long before it became a hot topic.

So, welcome, Mike.

Mike Morris: All right, great. Thanks. Yeah. Uh, [00:01:00] glad to be here.

Yurii Lazaruk: I'm super happy that John Windsor connected us. He is, like, amazing humans. I, I saw that you al- you're also, like, a board member of Open Assembly, so I feel like you're in a good company already.

Mike Morris: Yeah, no, John is, uh, John is great. He is a, a massive connector of people.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, I kind of, like, told that freelancing is a hot topic, but is it?

Mike Morris: Um, it's a hot topic, but it, it sh- it should be hotter. I'm disappointed it's not hotter, to be honest with you. Um, the freelancing market has been growing, uh, steadily and outpacing all of the work segments for, geez, over, I mean, over three decades.

You c- you could look up, you know, the exact numbers, but, uh, and I feel like it's still underperforming. It still has not reached the potential of where it should be. And, um, so yeah, it's a hot topic. It should be hotter.

Yurii Lazaruk: To get one step back, uh, so two questions that are kind of connected. So first, why do you believe in freelancers?

And second, why do you believe in community? [00:02:00]

Mike Morris: Ooh, wow. Um, so I'm gonna take that the opposite or order. Uh, community has been, uh... I've been working since I was part of the founding team of Topcoder in 2002, February of 2002. I've been working in community, and it was one of those things that I didn't truly understand it until I felt it.

I got involved with, um, with Topcoder, and it was, it was sort of a means to the end for me. Like, I was trying to build Topcoder because I wanted to go build another company. So it was like, "Hey, let me go build this and then I'll use that to build something else." Um, when I saw the power of the community model, it, it, it just, it blew me away.

And the reason why we, we figured we, we knew we had hit something special was when we got to, we were working in the [00:03:00] algorithm mathematical area, but when we got to, like, the top people in that area, they all knew each other.

Yurii Lazaruk: Mm.

Mike Morris: It was amazing. Like, people from different countries knew each other through math competitions, through computing competitions, through the, the ACM, through the, um, the International Olympiad, uh, competitions.

It, it was incredible that these, these talents. So, so we knew we were onto something, and then it just, once it started, uh, exploding, uh, the people connections and the community side of it, I, I definitely never turned back. Um, and I kind of, uh, lost my direction for that, that other company. Uh, so, uh, freelancing, I think tied onto community, it's a, it's a, it's a lifestyle, um, for, for people.

Uh, and I think that for people that are extremely talented and [00:04:00] for people that are very confident in their skills, um, it's a very rewarding lifestyle in terms of your ability to earn, your ability for flex- for flexibility, um, your, uh, ability to direct your career, kind of write your own chapter, write your own ending type of model.

Uh, and you know, that's where when I got so excited when I started to f- see all this amazing talent that we could have access to if we just opened up- our

means of accessing, right? If we, we started looking at things from a global platform perspective, from a global community perspective, um, and stop putting these, these silos that we build.

Like, like humans are great at that. We love to put things in silos and, you know, that, okay, well, everybody has to work 40 hours a week. Oh, you need to be within 60 miles of this office. You, you know, you need to have gone to this university. You know, you need to have this pedigree. You need to have this [00:05:00] many years of experience.

And you put all these, these things in, and what you're actually doing with, with every one of those, those statements is limiting the pool of potential incredible talent that you could be working with. Um, and, and that's, we continue to do that, like, as companies, as organizations, as lar- large organizations in particular.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, I, I, I still hear when we have these jokes in the freelancing community that, uh, sometimes people want to hire, uh, an AI expert with 10 years experience of working with LLMs. And I'm not talking, like, creating LLMs, because I know that they were created, like, long before we can, like, get access to, to it.

But, uh, yeah, it's, it's, like, a very funny part because sometimes even companies or recruiters, they don't know, like, who are they hiring and you don't know what you don't know. How do you know that this freelance professional who was, like, at the edge of AI, who is building, like, things, like, created the whole, like, agent team with AI, how do you know that they've got this experience through, uh, one or two years?

Because technology is moving [00:06:00] so fast. Right. But no, you have to have 10 years of experience, which doesn't even exist. So it's, it's, it's a very interesting part. And also to a point that you've said about, like, this community, I- that's something that I hear more and more from people who are working with independent talent, that knowing one person, you get access to, like, dozens of people.

Because as you've said, they all know each other. They usually exchange projects with each other. They always refer each other to other clients and, you know, tapping, like, connecting with one person, it's, like, opens the whole multiverse of other connections, which is kind of crazy and I feel like recruiting, like usual recruiting industry is not ready for that.

I'm curious, like, what do you see in, like, compared to, like, usual full-time hiring and hiring the independent, independent talent? What, what is the main difference, the number one difference?

Mike Morris: Um, uh, you know, this, uh, this 40-hour workweek structure, um, is, is one of the main differences. Uh, I think that, uh, but it, uh, it's, it's...

We still generally pay [00:07:00] people based on, um- You know, a, a, a, a 40-hour workweek structure. We pay people based on, um, the effort that they put in. And y- you know, if you look at, look at some other fields that we could compare. So, you know, I, I mean, I'm in the digital space. I'm now in, in, within Randstad, I'm moving into the professional space as well, so, so think finance, engineering, and other disciplines, uh, where we'll take our Torq platform and apply it to those businesses.

Um, but if you think about these, these disciplines, uh, they're, they're professionals. Their skills are what define, you know, their, the strength of how good they are in each one of those disciplines. Um, and if you can reward them based on their output or what they've created, the... It's a, it's a really compelling model, not for everybody, but for certain, certain people it's a [00:08:00] really compelling model to change that, um, that, that, uh...

You know, I mean, we did that at Topcoder in a massive, scaled way, right? You know, we, we were paying people in probably, you know, 40 to 50 countries every 30 days.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah.

Mike Morris: And it was, uh, it was all based on the output that you created, and people could earn... And their earnings weren't capped, right? Because it was based on their potential.

Um, but it also wasn't fixated on a number of hours. You know, hours is not, you know... I, I've always had... So my early career, I was a consultant, and I, I always had a problem. I was a software developer, and I was sitting there and I was coding, and realized that, you know- If I'm not as good as the guy next to me, I'm earning more money for my, for myself and my company because I take longer to do something.

And, uh, and, and, [00:09:00] and I also, you know, if I made more mistakes, I ended up making more money because it took me longer to do something. It was... It just never hit me as like, this is not aligned. Yeah. And, and I think, I

think that's, um, that's a structure where I love models. Um, I, you know, I, I do love, love...

There needs, you know, people need some predictability in their income, right? And, uh, but I do love models where, where you reward people for performance and allow them to be recognized for their performance. And, um, you know, that, that's something where I, I like to see more of it. Think of like, think of artists.

If you're a musician, um, you know, you, you get paid every time your song's played. You get every, every time your song is aired and somebody buys it digitally, you know, you, you get, you get paid. You get recognized. Um, an athlete, similar thing. You, you perform, you get, you get paid. You get compensated. Your compensation goes up.

You become more [00:10:00] valuable. Um, we have that same data on our professionals, right? In, in most fields, certainly in the software development and technology field, but we haven't applied it, um, like this. You know? It's, it's, and, and I, I, I... That's where I'm probably the most disappointed that we haven't come further in the last, you know, three decades.

Um, and, and I, and I hope we do. I want to see our top technical professional talent globally, um, be recognized and rewarded for what they can produce, you know? Uh, and, and I think freelancing is just the best model to do that. It's not the only model. It's really, you know, at the end of the day, it's, it's kind of how somebody's getting paid is really what's defines that more than anything else, the work arrangement.

But I think it's a great model to reward people for their, um, for their accomplishments, for their output

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, I, to, to your example of, like, making more mistakes and [00:11:00] getting paid more, that's, th- that's, it keep happening. Like, I have friends in different corporate organizations and they tell me that s- uh, sometimes they are blocked because of someone.

Someone is blocked because of someone, and they have, like, meetings about meetings about meetings. So of course, big companies, they have the structures, they have their way of working. That's exactly how they become big companies. Yeah. But still, I'm st- I, I'm still thinking, like, how can people who are working from 9:00 to 5:00, sitting in the office and doing nothing, get paid and trusted more than people who are at the edge of technologies, who are

continuously improving their knowledge, who are delivering the best results, and they are not trusted to be worked with?

I, I still don't get it. There is a huge misconception, so I'm curious. Like, from your understanding and from your, uh, viewpoint, what is the biggest misconception currently of working with full-time professionals versus working with freelancers?

Mike Morris: I think there's a, um, there's a risk, is the word that I would put [00:12:00] out there.

Um, and I think it's a perceived risk, and that's the problem, right? So a perceived risk is, is defined as an unknown, and unknowns scare us, and unknowns scare large companies even more. It's magnified. Um, this, this is, this is an issue for us in the industry and it's, and, and I, I think there's only one way around it.

It's transparency. It's risk transparency and understanding. It's, it's, so it's not, um, it's not a You know, it, it's an issue we have to deal with head on. Um, and the reason why I think it's been challenging is that it's different in every location. So it's one of those things where, you know, when you build a global platform like Torque, like Topcoder, um, like many others, you, you, you [00:13:00] solve your problems on a global basis.

And risk is one of those things where you have to solve it on a local basis because it's different, right? It's... And, and, and so we, we create strategies. That's what we do. As technologists, as people that build things, we create strategies and we say, "Okay, well, if we, if we solve for this risk here, that solves us for 80% of the, the market and this other 20% I'll get to."

But that's, that's where we have to go. Don't, don't go to the 95%, right? You know, go, go to the 80, solve it for that one and you can hit the rest of that market. And then, and but you have to really understand what the risk is, where it's different, you know, um, and be confident in that. So, so when large companies come in, you know, I mean, I mean, I, I, I think there's, uh, you know, somebody hears about a lawsuit or a ruling [00:14:00] or...

And you s- you're seeing it right now again in AI. And I think, you know, this perceived risk of, um... And I'm not saying it's not a risk, right? I'm just saying that if we understand it and we solve for it, we can, we can handle it. Like it, it's not, it's not insurmountable. Um, that's where I think it, we still have our biggest problem with adoption.

Yurii Lazaruk: So the risk itself has some components. I know that some people are saying that they are afraid of working with independent talent because they don't know how to control them. They are not in the office. They are not doing the work. Oh my God, what will happen if they are not delivering? Yeah. Other people saying that, "Oh, we cannot trust them because they work with five clients.

They will get our intellectual property and move it to other." Others say, "Oh, these freelancers, they are just taking money and doing nothing," et cetera. So it's always about something. So from your experience, this like unknown risk of what, like what parts inside, what it consists of?

Mike Morris: Yeah. I, I mean, a- [00:15:00] again, I think it's a, it's a fear.

It's a, um, uh... I, I actually I need to just hit on something that you said there that, that, uh, you make a, a point about, you know, these people aren't sitting in front of me, what are they doing? Right? Um, it, you know, that is, that's a 70-year-old management structure. That's like, you know, you need to have people sitting in front of you to understand they're producing.

Um, it's a 70-year-old management structure, and, and that's a, a management issue where if, if we're still having those, those, you know, if we're still having those issues, you've gotta solve that problem in your management layers. Uh, because that, that's a... You, you're not understanding what somebody's producing.

Um, you're not understanding how they're performing. You don't have the right, you know, [00:16:00] metrics and KPIs in place to understand what your workforce is, is doing, producing, what the issues are. Um, I mean, all of this data exists. This is crazy to me because, like, every, every... Take, let's take software developers, and I, I could apply this to every industry, but, you know, most professional industries at least.

But take software development. All of that code is being put into a, uh, a, a, a repository like a GitHub or something like that. All of that work is being progressed through our, um, through our, our DevOps, our platform operations from, you know, from a, uh, an idea all the way through running in production and how many cycles it runs.

We have all of this data on what somebody is contributing to a, a, a workforce, and we don't use it. Like, we don't use it. It... I mean, the, the, you know, the walking outside and looking at a cube farm and, you know, feeling [00:17:00]

good that people are working on stuff. Like, how crazy is that? Like, how crazy is that? Um, you know, and, and I, and I see it all the time.

And I see it, I see it in sales organizations, I see it in product development organizations, I see it in professional organizations. Um, you know, that, that's a- That's a, you know, rethink your management structure, um, and rethink your leadership structure. And, uh, and, and so that... I mean, I think that, you know, companies that really wanna get serious about that need to really look internally and, and, and decide, you know, d- do they understand what companies are producing, what their, their talent is producing?

Um, so anyway, sorry, I went, I went off a little tangent there.

Yurii Lazaruk: This episode of The Independent Workforce is brought to you by Freelancer Map, the home of freelancing. Whether you are looking to hire top freelance talent fast, or a freelancer ready to find your next big project, [00:18:00] Freelancer Map connects the right people with the right work.

No endless job boards, no guesswork, just direct access to verified experts and opportunities across the globe. Visit freelancermap.com

Mike Morris: and start building your next success story today.

Yurii Lazaruk: Okay, you know, you, you, you told about this, um, management style and, uh, I re- it reminded me, I had a conversation with one of the recruiters in a huge company and I asked them, like, "How do you...

Like, who is hiring? Like, what hiring independent talent depends on?" And they told me that they are two types of management, of managers. One type is, like, fixed mindset people who are like, "Yeah, I want to see people sit in front of me." And other more like startup mindsets, uh, having this mindset of startups.

And those people are ready to try. They are want to see how it works. They're ready to share some pieces of work, uh, to someone they don't see in front of them. They can work, uh, not connected with boundaries. Like, w- they don't care whether this person is sitting, like, in [00:19:00] Poland or in Germany or in the US.

They, they actually don't care as long as it's the best talent, as long as they are delivering, everyone is happy. And I guess, again, um, I feel like this mindset thing, it's a crazy, crazy part and I, I don't even know what has to happen so that

minds... Maybe it's generational. I have no idea. But anyway, if we are coming back to what com- from the company side, from the hiring side, when they hire this independent talent, independent professional, um, let's imagine we have, like, the intellectual property risk, uh, we have, uh, not doing the job risk, we have compliance risk, we have communication risk.

Maybe they don't know how to talk to and share tasks to these professionals. We might have onboarding risk, not given this data freelancers need to deliver the job. So from your experience, what is the number one thing that companies are afraid of?

Mike Morris: I think a lot of times people are [00:20:00] afraid of what are they doing when they're not doing something for me?

Yurii Lazaruk: Hmm.

Mike Morris: Okay. So it's a small mindset. So, so think of it, think of it like, um- You know, I, I, I have an amazing data scientist that I work with, and they're, they're cr- they're incredible. I- they're in Brazil, um, so they're remote. They're, they're in Brazil, and they're fractional. You know, we, we pay them on a fractional basis And I can look at the work that we get from this resource, and it blows away what I had been doing before I found this person.

Um, what a lot of companies look at is, well, what are they doing in the other 20 hours a week, right? And what if it's for one of [00:21:00] my competitors? Or what if it's... You know, it's this, like, it's this very small mindset, um, on, on talent where it's like, "No, I just... I'd rather... I only need the 20 hours a week, but I'd rather them for 40 hours a week."

Yurii Lazaruk: Mm.

Mike Morris: Well, then you're not gonna get that person, because they're interested in the work more than they're interested in the money, and they wanna work on the things that are exciting to them and are challenging to them, and they don't wanna fill in their other 20 hours with other stuff because you want them for 40 hours.

It's... And the... And, and it, it goes back to this, this, um, this issue where companies think it's their choice. Like, "No, I... You know, I'm, I'm gonna... You, you're gonna work in a 40-hour work week structure for me." You know? It's not. You're not gonna get that person in Brazil. You're not gonna get that

data scientist in Brazil, because they're gonna choose how they wanna work and where they wanna [00:22:00] work.

Yeah, you'll get somebody, but you won't fill the seat with that person, and, um, and you're gonna... Y- and, and you, you, you're very likely going to miss out on... You're definitely gonna miss out on a segment of talent. You're most likely gonna miss out on the high-end segment of that talent, because they're in the driver's seat.

They can decide how they wanna work, when they wanna work, who they wanna work with, what's interesting to them, how... And, and you know, guess what? That means that you've gotta have a relationship with that per- person where there's a loyalty built out of more than, "Hey, I cut you a paycheck every two weeks, and without my paycheck, you're in trouble."

Like, you know, that's not loyalty. Like, that is, that is a, that- that's a structure. Um, but what is loyalty is like, "Hey, I work with this guy in Brazil. He does amazing things for me, and I give him more amazing things because he produces amazing things, and we have an incredible relationship." And I've had these types [00:23:00] of relationships globally with talent for, like, uh, five to 10 years at a time.

Like, that long. Like, that, that is true, um, trust and loyalty, and, um, and that's a complete win-win. Uh, he- that person's loving what they're working on. I'm loving the output that I'm getting. We're creating new things to work on based on, you know... But not locking it into, "Well, it has to be at 40 hours a week," or, "It has to be..."

Um, so- I think, uh, I, hopefully that answers your question, but, you know, you can tell that I'm, I'm pretty passionate about this. I've, I've been in it for so long. Um, and, and my, my passion has always stemmed from how, how do we continue to move the needle at democratizing opportunity to the amazing talent that's i- in the, in the gl- in the world today?

Um, I really, I don't care where you sit. I don't [00:24:00] care, you know, and, and I'm, I'm, I'm causing a little, little issue here because I know it's important to understand, but, you know, hey, if you're gonna, if you're gonna move... We had one talent that he, he, he lived six months in one place, moved to another location, six months in another place.

Yeah, he had to do it legally. He had to be able, he had to let us know so, you know, we could understand export laws and IP transfer and all that stuff, but we

figured it out. He lived a great, you know, he lived a great lifestyle. And, uh, and it, there's tons of those digital nomads, you know. There, there's, there, that's a great structure for people in a certain period of their lives.

I wish I did it, you know? I missed out on that. Um, so, you know, companies have to open up their minds, and they have to understand that it is not their decision, right? It is the talent's decision. So if you want certain talent, if you want the best talent, you've gotta be willing to work in the, in the way that they wanna work, um, and open [00:25:00] yourself up to that flexibility, that, that different, those different ways of working.

Um, it is one of the things I truly love about Randstad is they can handle all work models, right? They, they can handle freelance, they can handle contingent, they can handle fractional, they can handle, um, SOW, they can handle permanent placement, and they can, they can m- move within them. It's truly an incredibly powerful infrastructure.

We, as a company, Randstad, have to continue to teach our clients how to make the most use of this flexibility in work models. Um, it's so powerful if you can figure out how to do it. And I, I, I, I used to use this analogy. Um, you know, fantasy football or fantasy sports in general is very popular in the United States.

I know it's very popular, um, globally as well, you know, in, um- In, in the other type of [00:26:00] football. Yeah. And in, uh, cricket and in other, other sports. Um, well, you can manage your work team the same way. Like, you could be building up teams, like these fantasy teams, um, if you open up your mindset to you're working in these flexible work arrangements, you know, and allowing yourself to let the talent choose how, how they wanna work.

Yurii Lazaruk: You, you reminded me of the stories that Steve Rader shared with me some time before when they needed a person for NASA with specific experience who was working at the time for the US government, and they just couldn't hire this person because this person was working for the US government, but they needed the, their experience at NASA.

And they, they got them as an open talent, uh, in this model. They got this person, they got the results, and everyone was happy. This person was still working for the US government. They delivered the results for NASA, and that's it. They continued their ways, and everyone got what they wanted. And you also...

But again, it's about this high-end talent segment, as you, as [00:27:00] you also mentioned. But what I see personally, and this is my personal feeling and opinion, that companies are okay with hiring, like, medium talent and filling the gaps here and there. And as long as it's well-oiled machine, it's good enough. So they don't care a lot about high-end talent, uh, maybe for now.

So when, when they will feel it? When they will feel that they are missing out on this high-end talent if they are not working with independent professionals?

Mike Morris: Yeah, I mean, it's y- your workforce needs to be a mix of a lot of different skill sets. And a, and, and diversity is one of those... You slice diversity in any way you want, right?

There's diversity of thought, there's diversity in skill, there's diversity in, um, in cap- in capability. There's diversity in, you know, uh, e- equality, right? There's diversity in backgrounds, in pedigree, in, um, uh, you know, all sorts of different [00:28:00] types of, of diversity. And, and as you're building your workforce, you need to be thinking about that.

Um, so what percentage of... And, uh, this is a, this is an... I believe this. Which percentage of your workforce do you need to be that top-end talent? Um, it isn't, it isn't all of them, right? There, there is a, there is a place for, you know, you should, you, like, you need to have talent that you're growing that's gonna, you know, someday become that top talent, right?

And, and I... This is where I love this type of model because, um, I missed out. I, I was probably the generation that graduated right after, um, you know, it was, it was ending right as I was coming out of university where, you know, you go into a, a giant, a giant company and you start your 20, 30-year career. And, like, you'd be on this path and, like, you know, it's like, "Hey, you- you've been chosen.

You're on this leadership path, and it's a 20-year path. And you're [00:29:00] gonna get all this exposure." And, like, those, that they don't exist anymore. Like, like loyalty has eroded on both ends of that corporate spectrum in many, many places. Um, and I, I really sought for a long time to build that type of model, uh, at, at Topcoder and now at Torque where we can be your career partner.

Like, we can take you through... Yeah, maybe, maybe it's, maybe it's 26-month projects, right, that you work on. Maybe it's 300, you know, uh, five-week projects. Like, you know, um, it, like it could be different structures. But we

could be a platform that is with you along that journey. And, um, and I wanna do more in this area, like the career development and the learning and upskilling.

You know, we, we do this. It's b- it's a core part of the Torque platform and Randstad's commitment to its talent. Um, and I love [00:30:00] this part of our business, and we mean it. Like, we mean it. Like, tr- truly mean it. We believe in, you know, equality across our, our talent base. We believe in upskilling and creating a better future for our talent.

Um, we believe in rewarding them and, and... But I wanna do more of it. Like, I wanna do more and find more. So in, in companies though it's like, you know, um, like I- We used to say a top coder, 'cause we were really at that like, you know, one, two, 5%-ish, you know That's where a lot of amazing things happen. But if you don't have the rest of the, the...

You need to have the rest of it to make it, to make it as, uh, one of our, our great professors at, um, Harvard Business School, Karim Lakhani, would say, it has to be, um, it has to be as, as uncomplicated as air. Like, it [00:31:00] needs to be something we just need. And, and, like, you can create these incredibly incredible problems, incredible solutions, but then how do you bring it across the entire workforce?

Like, you know? And, and that's where, like, a work- you- so that's where you need. Like, yeah, okay, maybe you need a lot of more fractional talent up in this top-end cycle, less fractional talent down here. Not, not none, less. Uh, maybe it's more rotational talent, me to know. Um, and then you do have some people that are just, they, they, they want, they, they just wanna be in this position for three years, and they, they like it.

But you have to understand that, and you have to build your organization around, around that, um, and, and be flexible at the way you look at it. One size does not fit all.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, I, I still, I still see your passion just through the way that you articulate and, uh, how you share your, uh, experience of working with [00:32:00] independent talent and how you say that you believe in this.

And I... It's not just words, you know? I can see it in your eyes, which is amazing. And I have so many questions, and I really wish to have the sky as the limit, but time is the limit. Mm-hmm. So the final question. Yeah. What advice

would you give to companies just starting to use freelancers and to freelancers entering the market?

Mike Morris: Well, the advice that I would give to companies is that solve for the... Listen to your, listen to your talent, understand what's important to them, allow them to choose different work models, give them options. You... The, the payback will be incredible. Like, so how much ha- you know, ha- have you asked your talent base...

I do this because, um, I grew up in this area, but hey, I'm often... I, I will ask somebody, "Hey, you, you know, you, you're a freelancer, would, would you [00:33:00] prefer to become a full-time employee?" Um, and oftentimes they'll say, "No, I prefer this, this model, and these are the reasons why." Um, you know, and, and, you know, it's different, and I'm always curious about it.

But companies, like, understand that, what's motivating your, uh, your talent, and how... What's the best work structure for them? And you're gonna learn something. You will learn something, I guarantee it. Like, "Well, no, you know what? I'd, I'd really like to be a freelancer and, and work 30 hours a week because I, I have this other passion, and it's so important to me, and it drives me, and, and I wanna do it.

And, um, and right now I can't do it, so maybe this opens up." Like, that's a li- that, that's a really, that's a groundbreaking conversation between two people. You get, start to under- understand people. Uh, but it starts with options. So, you know, provide options to [00:34:00] people. Be more flexible in the way that you engage your talent.

If there is a risk... I'm giving you more than one, sorry. If there, if there, if there's a perceived risk, drill into it. Understand it. You know, at the end of the day, all these perceived risks are, okay, well, what if that happens? What's the impact? Like, explain it to me, and, and, um, and just, you know, be a little bit more curious in that, that part of it.

And on the freelancers, um, confidence. So in life, confidence comes first. Comes before everything else. If you're not confident in yourself, um... So you need, you need to be confident. And, uh, and it, and, and, and what I mean by that for a freelancer is, um, your, your skills, be confident in your skills. Be confident in your ability to choose, and, and don't, you know, don't be [00:35:00] afraid to, to choose what's best for you.

Um, you know, and, and I, people- You know, uh, it starts with confidence. Be confident in yourself. And, uh, and if you, if you have a lack of confidence, understand why. You know? Like, like I, so I, I, I love it when I see somebody who, you know, is, is at the, you know, they're, they're, they know they're great at what they do.

They're confident in what they're working on. They love the work. They wake up in the morning and they love what they do. You see that in somebody's, in eyes. I mean, it's 7:00 AM right now. I love what I do. I'm here because I, I wanna make this a reality for as many people on the planet as possible. And, but, you know, it, it, it starts with understanding that you have a choice and you have, um, and, but you need confidence.

You need confidence in yourself to do it. So I think that that is where I would, that's my, my [00:36:00] number one suggestion for freelancers.

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

Mike Morris: Yeah. I think, uh, so an interesting, uh, you got my perspective where, you know, from the digital and, and professional, um, Greg Pagliari is a CEO of Soliant.

So, um, he's in a completely different space. Um, they predominantly will staff, uh, uh, um, skilled nurses for, uh, for, um, schools I think that would be a great place to, like, get another perspective. And, um, and the other person that I would say is Adam Moorhead. So Adam and I grew up together in Topcoder, so we, we cut, we, we, uh, we cut our teeth in, um, uh, building that, that company.

And then he went off and became, uh, CEO of another platform company out in, uh, London and, um, [00:37:00] and he's a great person to talk to. Um, he comes from the creative side. I come from the technology, you know, ones and zeros. He comes from the creative side. I'd say those two people would be good for you to talk to.

Yurii Lazaruk: And Mike, thank you so, so much for, first of all, sharing all those people, and also for bringing your passion and lighting up this morning for you and this, um, lunchtime for me. But, you know, I, as you've said, and as I can clearly see it through the way that you talk about the independent talent, through the way that you think, I can see it, like, in your eyes that you're clearly, clearly passionate.

I'm so, so happy that people like you exist and bec- and, and you are working, uh, in companies like Randstad, that such companies are also exist. And it's super amazing that there are people in the world who truly believe in what they are doing, who truly believe that there is more than one way to be right, that the workforce is not just one solution, that there are so many different things to try on, and who are bringing their passion to the work every [00:38:00] day, just as you are doing.

So thank you so, so much for sharing your experience with me, and thank you so, so much for this conversation.

Mike Morris: Thank you.

Yurii Lazaruk: And, uh, yeah, see you in the independent talent world. And for listeners, thank you for joining us on this episode of The Independent Workforce. I hope you've taken one step closer to working smarter with freelance talents.

If you enjoyed this conversation, subscribe to learn even more and share it with your colleague. And remember, the future of work is now.