TIW44- Jessica Ortner

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 Jessica Ordner, Europe contracting and service director at Hays, who has spent over, can you imagine this, over two decades helping companies navigate recruitment and flexible workforce solution.

And also, hmm, Jessica started her career placing individual freelancers with clients, and now her work is at the intersection of strategy, product, operations, and growth. And she's also focused on the strategic question shaping the next generation of workforce and service models across Europe with [00:01:00] a very, very particular interest in how companies will access this expertise and finally organize their workforce in the future.

So, welcome, Jessica.

Jessica Ortner: Hi, Yurii. Thanks for having me.

Yurii Lazaruk: Super happy to talk to you. You know, even before the recording, we were having some conversation here and there, and I feel like we're passionate and totally in line about the same things, and we have same questions in mind as something that we are working on.

But let's take a step back. Sure. So tell me a little bit about your background and what is the specific role you are playing currently in this workforce market.

Jessica Ortner: Yeah, sure. So to be honest, you've already captured a lot, and when you say it, it does sound, to be honest, so fascinating and definitely very motivating.

So when I hear you speaking, I could definitely say, that I love my job and that I'm very passionate about my job. I would describe it maybe, in a way, of saying

I used to work in the system, and you said that by yourself, like this kind of, yep, I started definitely as a typical [00:02:00] sales rep, placing freelancers, in the Frankfurt, Germany office by myself.

so being really part of the system, with all its ups and downs. and fast-forward, yeah, 20 years, gosh, it's been a while. fast-forward 20 years, I work on the system nowadays. so, I've definitely professional-wise, relocated from Germany to Europe. , And, time has also changed, a little bit, how the market works.

yeah, and that's what's, what's currently drives me to really see how in Europe, we can get companies access the right talent when they actually need it, and also educate them a little bit how they can access the right talent. and that's what drives me, and still will, I think, in the next, maybe the next decade.

Let's see.

Yurii Lazaruk: from your perspective, from your experience, what changed on the market during the last few years? Let's, talk about, like, BC, meaning before COVID, and AC, after COVID. Oh, yeah. Like, what happened during that time?

Jessica Ortner: I would say- after COVID, so in the market itself, I would say, you can look at it from, I think, many angles.

On the one hand side, of [00:03:00] course, you have the economical, challenges that after COVID everyone... Like, first of all, we saw that big, ramp-up phase, and now we're all facing difficulties, which of course there is always a connect between, the GDB growth of countries and then the staffing industry and then the freelancer market.

So it's just a normal correlation that takes place, what we can definitely see. But to be honest, what was more interesting for me to see was the changes after COVID from a how we work with people kind of thing. So I think COVID, although there was, of course, so many bad things about COVID, don't get me wrong, but there was one thing that was interesting, and that was that it forced us to work with people nowadays not having them maybe sitting next to us, which I think influenced, from my point of view, the way how we work with people a lot.

Mm. And of course, it influenced the way how we work with our internal people. Yeah, that's always the big question that is out there. But more than that, it also influenced, from my point of [00:04:00] view, naturally how we see, how

we get work done at the end. And that helps then the freelancer market from my point of view, because we also had that conversation, before we started here the podcast.

There is still a natural kind of I want to have people sitting next to me. I want to have control about what they do. I want to control their work. which I think- The fact that we were not allowed to sit next to each other helped influence that mindset shift, from my point of view, and that was a huge shift.

I mean, just think of us two. Would we sit here and do that podcast via Zoom? Most probably we wouldn't. I don't know, but now we do, and it feels totally natural for us, not even knowing, to be honest, where maybe you and me, whether we are even in Europe or where we're placed because it's not important.

and I think that's what definitely changed for me after Corona. yeah.

Yurii Lazaruk: Yeah, I, I have this feeling- Maybe, Jen? Yeah, totally. I have this feeling that companies are still thinking about that, hey, if you are not sitting, like, right in front of me, you are not delivering. You are doing the bad job. Mm. You are working with, like, five [00:05:00] competitors, you are sharing intellectual property, and then you are not working at all, maybe.

Nobody knows. So, okay, it's a little bit of fixed mindset, of course, because, yeah, we all know that, for example, if we are talking about independent professionals, like, you are not paid just to sit in front of the camera, you are paid to get things done, and usually there is a specific job description.

I'm not talking about independent, but everyone who is working remotely, you have a specific job, you have a specific task, and you have to get it done. Otherwise, like, why should anyone pay you or work with you or whatever? So it's totally clear, but somehow it's still somewhere on the back of mind of some people.

Okay, it's changing. It's totally amazing. And still, why do you think companies still struggle to move from hiring people as titles to finally getting them to get specific work done? Meaning that moving from, okay, we need to have the senior, I don't know, JavaScript developer, to actually, hey, we need to build this application.

Jessica Ortner: Yeah, I think, to be honest, [00:06:00] it's two sides. So on the one hand side, I think, I'm not a psychological expert, but I think, truly believe that it's a psychological thing that we just feel safe. and we just learned that this

is the way how work gets done. I mean, within companies, What you see is you see job descriptions, you see salary levels.

it's all tied to that. So your natural tendency when you need something to get done is, okay, I need another chair on which I can place a person. I think that's a natural tendency that every one of us has, and it's also driven by the company culture, at the end because that's just how managers are trained, and the path that they are shown.

So it's all about headcount. It's all about, increasing of the working hours. on the other hand, I think it's also not only exclusively on the companies and that they need to change, that it's not about job descriptions, and about placing a person on a chair.

so they of course need to learn how to communicate what actually needs to be done. But unfortunately, that's complicated. So like it's always easier to say, "Yeah, I just need a [00:07:00] person and then the person is here and then let's see how it goes," rather than on the first instinct saying, "Ooh, I have to actually really define the outcome and what needs to be done."

So it's a little bit more upfront work that needs to be done. It's like in project management. Everyone just wants to start with the project but no one thinks about the, hey, there is a planning phase, where you actually plan what needs to be done and no one likes that because it's always under the surface.

and it's not the phase which you can market the most, because it's just, yeah, it just needs to be done. On the other hand, because that's also for me definitely where I think you and me can also influence, the industry and the community, it's also from my point of view on the freelance community.

I mean, if you don't want to be placed on a chair as a freelancer, which you shouldn't, you need to behave like a business. So you shouldn't behave like a individual person. and I think that's also a shift. So I think in the beginning, 20 years ago, definitely it was a lot about CVs, so it was just the CVs.

And the CVs, to be honest, were pretty similar to a normal employment CV. Yeah, it was based on projects, but they were [00:08:00] pretty similar. it was when did you did what, and there was even questions like, why did you have a pause here? Like, which is totally insane. So having, freelancers also behaving like businesses and then creating that B2B relationship is, from my point of view, also crucial, that they also need to do their homework in a way.

So it's homework on both sides from my point of view.

Yurii Lazaruk: And it feels also a little bit weird when you are working as a company with an individual business, meaning like usually business with business, meaning that there are, like, 10 people on one side, there are 10 people on another, they somehow intersect.

And then for example, if there is a company with, let's imagine, thousand people inside working with one person business, like what, what the hell? Like, you are, you are just a developer, or you are just a marketer, or you are just a community builder. Like, how, how are you a business? And then, you know, sometimes it's a little bit of misunderstanding of like what exactly it means to be on the business side, because as you've said, some freelancers are still acting as, like, people who are doing the work and still they are a little bit [00:09:00] different in a way that because of their working with multiple clients, they have a little bit more experience than a person who is...

Maybe, maybe not, but there is a huge chance that they have a market overview. Mm-hmm. Because let's imagine one person sitting in one company, of course they are great, they're amazing, and then freelancer working with 10 companies during the time. Of course they have 10X experiences, maybe not that deep, but like more just this helicopter view.

And, you know, so I also, really like something that you told me before, that independence as, as a talent isn't the absence of accountability. So it's still kind of like the freedom to decide what you do and how you do, but you have to still meet what is the result that you are expected to get.

And I have this, kind of like a follow-up question. Why do companies... We're, we're, again, we are coming back a little bit to this mindset, but still, why do companies feel like they need to control independent talent, that they need to kind of like micromanage them? Why can't they just let them do their job and meet the [00:10:00] requirements?

Jessica Ortner: I would say, again, it's coming back to this kind of that it's not part of the overall process. So from my point of view, the process needs to change. So when freelancers, for example, or individual contractors, whatever you wanna call them, externals, when this part becomes part of the strategic workforce planning, so to say, everything would, from my point of view, change from the beginning.

In the past, there was a tendency that, oh, I can't find an internal person. Yeah, I'm looking for an external. That is per se the absolute wrong question. so external is not a default when I can't find an internal person. that is the absolute wrong kind of thinking that you could have.

And, also with all the legislative or jurisdictional changes, it's even nowadays a difficult and a scary one, because you can't treat and there is really no way that you should treat independent contractors like your internal people. So but why is that the case?

And I think that starts because it's not part of the strategic workforce planning. From my point of view, maybe every line manager, so to say, should really think of [00:11:00] their internal headcount and then having also set aside this kind of a budget, so to say, for externals.

And it's not only just because then we are straightaway jumping to this huge IT consulting, whatever, management companies, which is not necessarily the case. There is a huge field in the middle where I think you don't need to jump straightaway to the big fours of this industry or to, as I said, management consultant companies, or IT system integrators, depending on which area where you work in. There are these freelancers, smaller B2B companies which can do the job which you maybe need to get done much better. it's also maybe better value for money, at the end. and I think that's exactly that kind of gray area between the, " Okay, I need a perm employee," versus, "Okay, I have budget, but I go straightaway to a bigger consultancy company."

that is exactly the field which should be made easier to access, from my point of view for the managers. yeah. And I think just to add another point here. There is, I mean, we're now talking about Employees [00:12:00] versus external people. But interestingly, we're still talk- talking about people, or companies, whatever it is.

But I think in the future, and you just mentioned AI briefly also when we had our pre-chat, maybe the work that needs to be done isn't done by a B2B relationship anymore by a person. Maybe it's AI. So you need to also then tell AI what AI needs to do. So that mindset needs to increase in the companies from my point of view, otherwise they will also fail in that route, because there is another, player coming in, which is AI, which is from my point of view not a bad thing. It will just again relocate a little bit this... it's another player in this workforce.

yeah, that strategic workforce management when you wanna say it like that. So, the question should be these are my perm employees, okay, these are my independent, external B2B companies that I work with, and this is maybe the task that I do with bots or with AI, and that's from my point of view, the puzzle that will come together, one point in time.

Yurii Lazaruk: This episode of The Independent Workforce is brought to you by Freelancer Map, the home of freelancing. [00:13:00] Whether you are looking to hire top freelance talent fast or a freelancer ready to find your next big project, 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.

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Yurii Lazaruk: To a point of working with, bigger consultant companies, I remember, I don't remember exactly with whom we had this conversation, but it was about responsibility and accountability. Let's imagine you are working with Ernst & Young, and you say that, "Oh, they told me that."

Mm-hmm. "So if anything is wrong, they told me that." But if you are hiring some random freelancer, basically you are taking this responsibility on yourself. You can't say, "Oh, this freelancer told me that," because management will tell you like, "But it's your responsibility." With... Yeah. Of course, but when you are paying like, I don't know, tens of hundreds of thousands of euros to a company, yeah, it's their responsibility.

It's up to them. So [00:14:00] how... Okay, I totally get it that, you know, it's something that someone might need to do, something that, uh, someone should do and something that someone is must do. Mm-hmm. And it's a huge difference between like, maybe I need it and I must to do this. So when- Yeah ... we're talking about strategic workforce planning.

Yeah. So when people are facing, people who are, have to decide who has to do this project management, when they're facing this question, where do they start? Let's imagine they never worked with independent professionals. they know that this kinda like, let's call it superpower exists, but they don't know where to go.

So what should they do? What, what will be their first step?

Jessica Ortner: Yeah. Let me maybe just comment on what you just said, because that just triggered me somehow, because it's always that kind of when you think of big four companies or big management consultant companies, yes, I always hear this kind of, "But then I can blame them if something goes wrong," which is true.

and that's also, to be honest, something that they are sometimes even hired for, from my point of view. Because it's on them, it's not on me, [00:15:00] so fine. But to be honest, there is also, from my point of view, a downside to this, because when something goes extremely right, it's also on them, because you paid a fortune for them.

So of course, your line managers also know that it's, it wasn't actually your work. it was with the help of a lot of, external big names that made that happen. And that is I think where from my point of view, this superpower also for, smaller B2B companies or freelancers come into play.

Because it still lets you as a line manager shine because you are the one who said like, "No, no, no, we don't need to go for the full-blown big names. I know what I need to get done, and I can get it done, for maybe better value for money." And then it's on you. So everyone always, what just triggered me, everyone just tells the negative story when I work with freelancers, " Yeah, but I can't say the freelancer...

It was his fault." Yeah, that's true, but it's also the other way around. If it goes right, it's also that you can shine as the line manager who made that decision to not go for the big ones. yeah, and I always think that's... Just would like to mention that because that always gets forgotten, I think in the conversation.

So sorry, Yuriy. That was a totally off-topic kind of [00:16:00] thing that just triggered me. No, no, it's,

Yurii Lazaruk: that's exactly the human part. And I really like that you told that because, again, people usually are trying to protect themselves, and they are also seeing, freelancers and independent talent as kind of like the threat for their existence.

Because let's imagine there is a person who, let's imagine this marketing professional, they need to deal with marketing campaign, and they don't have time, they don't have resources. And when they hire a freelancer, someone who might be even more experienced with this, this person, they might feel like, "Oh my God, this person will take my job."

But usually freelancers are not interested in that. They are not coming there to take anyone jobs. They are coming there to deliver results, to take money and go to another client or maybe work with you on another project if you would like to. So it's totally, yeah, you are totally right, and that's a mindset shift that has to be done.

And again, it- it's so much easier to shine when you take these different people that are helping you to move faster, they are helping you to deliver best projects. But at the end of the day, you are the point who is connecting all those [00:17:00] people. So at the end of the day, you are like, you know, the laser focused, person.

And then, yeah, you have to shine. But again If, let's imagine, okay, so I, I also had another conversation with a person, and we had this difference, like, between managers who are hiring freelancers and who are not. So those who are not, they ha- have more fixed mindset, something like, "Okay, we've done this forever, so I will need someone to be sitting in my office."

And then there are these more startup-minded people who are like, "Okay, let's try this. So we have this task. What can we do? How can we move faster? How can we be more flexible, agile," and all this, fancy words, but how do we do this? And then they are trying, exploring. They are going to different companies.

They are going to different platforms, getting some people, trying. And they are also approaching it as experiments. Not like, "Okay, I will... If anything go wrong, the company will fail." No, it's just a small experiment where they try and see if everything is good. Let's, let's continue. Let's bring in more and more and more.

So again, coming back to the people who are [00:18:00] starting doing the strategic workforce planning, where do they start? If they want to put independent talent into their workforce strategy, how do they do this?

Jessica Ortner: Oh, I think there are a lot of paths that they can take. So you just mentioned, in companies, I think there is always colleagues that already have experience with independent talent.

So to be honest, it's just asking and looking around with open eyes. I'm 100% sure that, there is a, a direct colleague that has, experience with freelancers or with working with smaller B2B companies in the past. When you get that

experience from a person that you know, it's always the best one that you can get.

but then you can also, and you also just said that you can start with a pilot. I mean, we have a lot of, freelancer platforms, companies like ours, that can give you access to maybe individual freelancers, for a small project. So just start with something small. It doesn't have to be the three-year transformational kind of big thing where you need a huge team of 20 to 30 individual workers.

Maybe it's just a small two-month project that you need to get done. So just try it out. There's [00:19:00] not much that can happen from my point of view or can go wrong. so choose your battles, to be honest. but at least try it because if you have never tried it, then you can't say that it doesn't work for you.

And then, how you wanna do it is a little bit, from my point of view, an individual choice. and I think that's also where, and we also talked about that earlier, where that, freelance or external workforce ecosystem comes into play. so nowadays we have platform providers where you can search for yourself.

you have companies like Hays, for example, where you can go to and they advise you which way to go and maybe assemble more than one freelancer, wrap it around in a service though, so that you can give away more responsibility maybe to the service provider when you don't feel comfortable.

so there are a lot of options from my point of view on the market. and as I said, I think the first thing is, how far you wanna go. so is it just a small pilot or do you wanna go, all in? That's a little bit like the decision route I would take.

Yurii Lazaruk: Let's imagine person from the hiring side, from the business side, they have a ta- job description.

So they have [00:20:00] a specific task to be done. Okay, done. Go. Checked. Then they chose a company of choice. For example, they work with Hays. They went to you, they gave you a job description, you present them a freelancer. Good. Match. Let's do it. Mm-hmm. What is the next blocker? What is blocking usually companies from hiring freelancers?

Jessica Ortner: So the first thing I would even already change, to be honest, Yurii, is don't come to us with a job description, because it's not a job description. It's not a chair. Come with me with a problem statement or a problem description. That would be great, and that's what I would definitely would like to see in the future. Because then that's really the mindset shift, that I

think we all need to influence. And then it's not about send me your CV, it's more like send me a pitch how you would solve that problem. because it's actually not like, it's... yeah, the CV is again not saying anything that you are able to solve that problem. It tells me that you maybe can write Java code or have project management skills. Yeah, okay. But that says nothing about my specific problem, and how you would solve that. So to be honest, I would start immediately at the [00:21:00] beginning with this kind of a...

It shouldn't be the engagement form. So it shouldn't be like, oh, I tick the box, I need a freelancer, or I need an... No, I've a problem that I need to solve. And if that's a permanent problem, it's pretty simple because it should go in a permanent placement. But if it's a temporary problem or a problem that maybe my internal skill sets, can't solve and which I also don't want to build up, it's also an external problem.

So I would first of all change the beginning slightly. But when you then let's say, yep, we have our problem statement, we found a freelancer or a business that is able to solve that problem, I think now where we definitely, have to admit that things are not always that easy is, just talking about Europe, for example.

you can think of Europe as a great one talent market. I mean you, me, we could work tomorrow in, I don't know, Poland and Spain, wherever, it would be easy. No work permit problems whatsoever, but it's definitely not one engagement market. So the problem that unfortunately companies will face immediately is, okay, where am I [00:22:00] located?

where the freelancer or the B2B company I work with is located? what kind of jurisdiction does apply? what is the reclassification risk or what are the measurements that I need to be aware of? What are tax requirements? So unfortunately, and that's I think where we also, can influence the industry heavily that this is definitely still a nightmare for companies and where of course we try to help them maneuver that compliance petrol field in the best way we can.

But also, I can tell you for us, also not easy because jurisdiction change so quickly. Unfortunately, they are not always black and white, which you would wish for, because then you at least know how to behave. They are always grayish, so it's always a little bit of what do I wanna do?

yeah. So not sure- But- ... you have also faced that kind of, like, sometimes is there a checklist that's what I need to do to be a proper freelancer? and that doesn't exist, so, Yeah, I- ... that certainly doesn't make it easy.

Yurii Lazaruk: I'm curious, like-

Jessica Ortner: lie about that. That's really the, that's just the way it is.

That's the market we need to [00:23:00] maneuver.

Yurii Lazaruk: I- if you are talking about compliance part, what are, what is the number one hardest thing? Why I'm asking, because let's imagine I'm, I have a b- B2B entity in Poland. So for example- Mm-hmm ... I'm working with a company from Germany. Mm-hmm. There is no problems. Mm-hmm.

So they give me the task,, "Hey, you have to do this." They do not control me. They do not send me a laptop. They do not send me anything. Basically, they just send me a paycheck after the results are done or some milestones that we agreed on. Yeah. There is nothing inside. We have this VAT Eurozone, so I have my numbers, the company has its numbers, so it's all about accounting.

So what, what's the hard point from the company side or maybe from the freelancer side that you see that has to be changed in the compliance question?

Jessica Ortner: Yeah, I mean, you're, no offense, but you work with a freelancer company, so they should know how to do it in a way. So, the company that you're describing, is really, like a kind of a that's how it should work.

It's like a role model. Yeah, they should [00:24:00] know, because I think when companies can't maneuver that, compliance battle field, they're also heavily limiting their talent pool because then they are afraid and they say, "Ah, no, I don't want with people that do not live in the country where my subsidiary is."

And they limit their talent pool, just, like, they just cut- I don't know, X thousand possible candidates of their pipeline, which I think is, again, insane. But I think where it comes from is, also the problem that this difficulty that we are facing has still no clear ownership within the companies.

So I've seen so many big corporates where external workforce, is maybe sitting in procurement, so it's treated like a procurement asset. all of a sudden it just

becomes about price negotiations, which is something that, we also don't wanna have, but that's their main focus.

Then I've seen when it's part of the business. So when we talk about IT professionals, it's part of the IT department, which is from my point of view, great because then it's really about the problem, and what actually needs to be done. but they of course have no [00:25:00] idea how to set up maybe contracts and how to deal with this B2B relationship, which at the end it is.

And the third party I think that I've also seen a lot involved, of course, is HR. And when it gets to HR also, it's just different. They have a different focus. So now all of a sudden it becomes that kind of a, yeah, but why is it not an internal person? Why do we have to take externals? how can we make sure that, we have the reclassification risk under control? And don't get me wrong, all of those three parties from my point of view, have very, very valid stakes in the game. Unfortunately, there is not that one party that balances out these different asks and priorities, and that's what I think makes it complicated. because that's also where we as Hays sometimes come into play because we are the one, or we feel like the ones who are we're the ones that are balancing that out, and saying, "Yeah, dear HR, if you don't want to work with freelancers because you have identified the risks, I can understand the narrative behind it, but the [00:26:00] downside is you will limit yourself to a huge talent market.

Is that really what business wants?" and then business comes into play and says, "No, but I need access to that talent market." and then procurement comes into play, "Yeah, but we just want to work with, multinationals, and have you frame contracts with long payment terms, but..." So that, that is from my point of view, the problem that, that these...

And that's maybe just the three obvious or dominant ones, that you have to deal with all of them. and no one is, yeah, as I said, balancing them out, which makes it, from my point of view, difficult.

Yurii Lazaruk: No, y- y- you reminded me, I remember when I was a kid, I was reading a tale with some, like, classics of literature about dove, cancer, and fish.

And they are decided- Okay ... to move in the same direction, so they kinda, like, created a kind of business together to do something to move their, their stuff together. But then- Yeah ... dove goes up in the air, fish goes down in the water- ... and cancer goes backwards. So they never are in the same direction, and they [00:27:00] always like...

So they're moving nowhere. Yeah. And it's totally reminded me, because as you said, procurement want one thing, business wants another, HR wants another. And am I understanding correctly, so for example, when they come to you, so you are basically helping them to balance it?

Jessica Ortner: Yeah, exactly. Because I think, as I said, everyone is doing what they do for a reason, and it's a good reason. But it needs to be maneuvered, it needs to be balanced out, it needs to be talked about, and I think that's also a strategic decision that then a company need to make.

Do I, want to take the risk, and mitigate it in the best way I can when working with external talent, because there is always everything that we do risk is involved, but can, how can I mitigate it? How can I make it visible? How can I, educate my line managers, not to invite all of our independent contractors to the Christmas party?

and if they do so, then just do it for a different reason than we want to mingle around with our internal employees. So these typical things where you just need to be a little bit more careful on your day-to-day [00:28:00] life. They need to be educated. And I think that's what we are trying to influence all of those three parties, because what we've seen in companies is that always one party is in charge. and then that's the loudest voice. But the other two still need to be heard. yeah. And still, I truly believe that external talent is needed in companies to fulfill all of their transformational efforts and all of their, future-looking projects. So that problem needs to be solved from my point of view.

There's no way around.

Yurii Lazaruk: No, in the perfect world, I totally believe that procurement, business, HR inside the, bigger companies, they work together, they have things done. Mm-hmm. They have all the processes, and hiring independent talent is easy. But we are living in the real world, not in a perfect one.

So when we are

Jessica Ortner: But it has become better. I have to say, like, working 20 years in the industry. When I started, it was really one party was responsible, not even talking to the other party, or not even being aware that the other party wants to say anything about that topic.

I think that really changed, over the last couple of years. But yeah, [00:29:00] as you said, like, we're not yet there that it's a perfect world.

Yurii Lazaruk: You know, still I totally believe it's when there are companies like, hey, it's so much better to go and work with you because you've been here in the market for decades, you know both sides, you always balance different departments inside companies, so it's something that you are doing professionally.

You know, so they have to create this from scratch, they have to take responsibility, they have to, I don't know, go ask ChatGPT how to do it, blah, blah, blah, or... So there is a lot of work. Sometimes it's easier to pay money for professionals to do it and then get business results and move faster, in, in your, in your niche.

So who, first of all, who is your client? So you told that you see that one of them are coming to you mostly. So who is your main client out of these three, key players? And before coming to you, what should they have to have prepared?

Jessica Ortner: So I would say definitely the main client is the business. because at the end, we want to help the business To get that problem [00:30:00] solved, get work done, whatever it is that they need to get done.

everything that has to do with procurement, whether it's setting up the right contracts, whether the company wants to have master service agreements in place because it's a big one, I mean, there is always these kind of regulations internally that you need to follow, maybe also especially when you work with bigger companies. That should have all been done, to be honest, before that. And that's what we take care of. I mean, of course, that's where also I see, as I just said, I see this external workforce market really as an ecosystem, and with Hays, I think where we are really good in is having that client relationships for years.

So we have already that contracts in place. We have already that kind of relationship with the client. so the pre-work, so to say, with HR, with procurement should have been done. so the main client that we are actually having is then the business, and, he or she, as I just said, also should come with us, thinking about what capabilities he needs, not the capacity itself.

So it's not about the job description. It's not like, "Oh, I need another Java developer. Look, that's what he should do." Or worst case [00:31:00] scenario, it's even an internal job description, "I couldn't find an internal person.

That's what I need a freelancer for," which is just from a mindset perspective. No, no, no. Freelancers are not there to replace internal people. That's not how it works, and that shouldn't be the case. So, you just mentioned ChatGPT. Use ChatGPT to challenge yourself, what is the problem statement I need to solve?

So think of it really as a business pitch. if you want someone to pitch a solution to your problem, what do you want him to pitch? What should it look like? that's what would be the greatest scenario, and that's what we are getting. And then we're of course going to the market.

and also, I can tell you it's an education on both sides, and then asking freelancers, " How would you solve that problem?" And of course, we also have a lot of freelancers who then say, "Oh, here's my CV." No, that doesn't answer my question. so but that's the educational part, I think, that we are taking.

But that's how it works.

Yurii Lazaruk: And also, it's so much easier because, again, this person doesn't have to do all the jobs. They have to have a real clear vision of what they need to be, to get done. Yeah. They don't need to do all this, like, recruiting parts. They don't [00:32:00] need to think, like, who is this person that I need, because they als- also have, like, this specific result in their mind, and then you'll do all the rest.

Exactly. Exactly. So basically everyone is happy, you know?

Jessica Ortner: Everybody's happy. So we can even, like, we've of course a lot of people internally trained that can, is exactly help businesses with changing that or with being very clear on what is it that you actually need.

because I think that's also, a kind of a thing, we're talking a lot about independent talent. but maybe sometimes a perm position is maybe the right one. I don't know. or maybe a temp position. We're not even talking about temp work. I mean, there is also a lot of temp regulations in place or jurisdictions like Germany, for example, that have a very specific, temp engagement form. Is maybe temp the right thing for you rather than going to a B2B relationship? So rather than having the client decide the engagement form, we would love to say that greater clients just care about the problem and we sort out the rest so that we at the end also make sure that it's compliant, and in line with the local jurisdictions.

Yurii Lazaruk: that's something that when [00:33:00] I'm talking to businesses, I'm always saying, "Hey, you don't actually have to be by yourself here. You are not alone. There are so many businesses who are doing this for you, who can help you.

Like, you just need to write, ask the right questions." And, Exactly ... that's, that's how business done, you know? You don't have to do everything yourself. You are professional in something, and other people are professionals in something. That's why you have to collaborate. And, you know, Jessica, I really have so many questions, and I feel like we can go on and on and on.

Because I really wish to have the sky is the limit, but time is the limit- Yeah ... for our conversation.

Jessica Ortner: Time is the limit.

Yurii Lazaruk: So-

Jessica Ortner: But we are close to Christmas, Yurii, so maybe we should, like, spare one of our wishes, like, for that, so

Yurii Lazaruk: Nah, let's hope for the best. So the final question.

Jessica Ortner: Yes.

Yurii Lazaruk: What advice would you give first to companies just starting to use independent professionals and to freelancers or independent talent entering the market?

Jessica Ortner: So let's start with the freelancers, maybe. I would really advise them to think of themselves as a small startup, as a business. think of that as if you would establish a company. and think of all of the ups and downs [00:34:00] of it, because when you start thinking about yourself as a business, I think all the other stuffs comes automatically. You will talk about your own value proposition. You will talk about your own market appearance. You will think of what happens when maybe there is a month where I don't have a pro- project, because there is no income, or no turnover that I have. So really think of yourself as a company. When you think of yourself as a company, I think everything else comes a little bit more natural from my point of view as when you think of yourself as just a person. And to be honest, maybe the same thing would apply to companies. So first of all- I think the biggest advice would be, just be open-minded and don't focus so much on the risks and rather on the

opportunity, on the huge talent market that you can access, on the immense external talent that you can get to get competitive advantage. But also personally for yourself that can help you maybe as a line manager shine, get promoted, get your next project, absolutely, on budget, in time and as expected. so think about of the good things, [00:35:00] rather than just on the complicated ones. and that may be that lets companies like ours or the workforce, just in the workforce ecosystem, we will figure out how you can access that.

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

Jessica Ortner: Actually I thought about two internal people lately. You're already in touch with my colleague Julia from Poland, I guess. So yep, she's definitely an expert on the Polish market, and I would definitely also direct you to my colleague Dave Elliot Smith, who is an expert on the UK market.

so if you want to deep dive, maybe one point in time you want to do deep dives on countries, and how countries differ, Julia would be definitely your person for Poland and Dave would be your person for the UK. because I think that's also a thing you need to have deep- Country expertise.

Yurii Lazaruk: Of course.

Even though, okay, UK is not in the Europe already, but- Yeah, yeah, exactly ... Poland is in Europe. Yeah. It's still possible to work with multi- multi countries, and it's still not that hard, actually, if you want to do this. It's a question whether companies want to do this, [00:36:00] and it's always- Yeah

good to have su- And you connected me with Julia already, which is amazing. So then I will definitely ask you to connect me- Do so ... with Dave. And-

Jessica Ortner: I will ...

Yurii Lazaruk: yeah, Jessica,

Jessica Ortner: Yeah, UK is a really interesting market, I mean, it's the biggest workforce staffing market that we have on the European continent, but it's also a very different one.

So, that's also where the struggle comes from a little bit because the European market is definitely different to the UK one,

Yurii Lazaruk: Jessica, first of all, thank you so much for coming to Freelance Unlocked and sharing your experience there this year, because that's exactly how we met, so I'm super happy that we made that.

Exactly. And thank you so much for this conversation. You know, I totally believe that this market will be growing. I totally believe that people like you will make it happen. They will put this information to the right ears, to the right minds, to the right hearts.

And I believe that, you know, we're moving in the right direction. So thank you so much for all the passion and all the, I can even say love, that you're putting in what you are doing. So yeah, thank you so, so much for that.

Jessica Ortner: Thank you. Thanks for having me, Yuriy.

Yurii Lazaruk: And, yeah, see you in the independent talent workforce.

And for [00:37:00] 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. And remember, the future of work is now.