

Making Agile Talent Work For You



On March 14, Jon Younger and Rishon Blumberg published an article on Harvard Business Review's website titled "Whose Job Is It to Manage Freelancers?" In it they discuss how companies are discovering innovative ways to use agile talent "to augment their resources in strategic areas."

Younger and Blumberg state that few organizations "have a well-defined and structured protocol for engaging and managing agile talent" and outline a number of challenges that any company looking to effectively leverage a multichannel workforce must address, including the following:

- Building a qualified talent network – On most of the freelance marketplaces available today, it's difficult to evaluate freelancers' relative skills and build a team you can trust to produce work that meets your standards.

- Onboarding, utilizing and managing freelancers – Most freelance talent marketplaces only provide users a way to find and contact contractors; once candidates have been engaged, alternate means of assigning and managing work, as well as distributing payments and complying with IRS regulations, are necessary.
- Monitoring productivity – The more freelancers an organization works with, the more difficult it becomes to monitor assignment progress and follow up on deadlines.

Four potential solutions are presented in the article, all of which rely upon assigning dedicated internal team members the varied responsibilities related to freelancer management.

While assigning such duties to specific individuals solves the question posed in the article title, the fundamental issues of finding, managing and monitoring talent across multiple channels remain.

An alternative solution – one not yet on the authors' radars – is a talent management platform specifically designed to help companies implement an effective agile talent strategy.



Building a qualified talent network

If the objective is to streamline operations by allocating the right assignments to the right talent, the ideal solution is a platform that allows managers to better leverage internal team members' skillsets and create custom teams from a combination of experts across multiple channels.

A platform offering access to a large network of freelancers that also contains an algorithmic talent-evaluation system designed to match prequalified talent with suitable projects takes much of the burden off managers to sort through multiple applications and evaluate individual candidates.

Such a platform empowers managers and team members to dramatically boost productivity by scaling operations as needed.

In 2015, 34 percent of the U.S. workforce participated in some type of freelance work.



— Edelman Berland (independent research firm)

Onboarding, utilizing and managing freelancers

Coordinating assignments and deliverables between internal and external project contributors can exhaust a manager's time and resources. Even with a project management platform, managers often find the process of integrating teams, tracking progress and managing payments to external contributors challenging.

A truly effective platform for managing an agile talent strategy needs not only easy access to multiple talent channels, it must also feature a built-in virtual workspace.

Robust project management and communication tools allow managers to design project workflows that seamlessly route assignments between both internal and external contributors without onboarding teams to multiple platforms. And a platform that allows internal and external team members to communicate in real-time eliminates the need to jump between email, project management platforms and in-document comments to collaborate effectively.

Monitoring productivity

With remote and internal teams collaborating within the same work platform, disconnects in productivity are less likely. With all talent channels and workflow procedures managed in a central location in the cloud, managers can rely upon real-time performance analytics and quality control measures that apply to all workflows across all teams.

As the on-demand economy becomes more ubiquitous, professionals throughout the world are discovering exciting new ways to solve problems and increase productivity. Those organizations that are developing agile talent strategies may be ahead of the curve today, but the economic landscape is evolving rapidly. Opportunities to allocate work more effectively and simplify operations with the use of agile talent are essentially limitless.

Just as technological advances have fueled the advent of the on-demand economy, we can look to software innovations to accelerate a shift to agile talent as a go-to business strategy. As more companies adapt their talent models to take advantage of this game-changing approach, expect to see them embrace a new breed of talent management platform in their quest to realize their full potential.