



How to make freelancers a competitive advantage

STAY AGILE, ADAPTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE

BY FREE AGENTS™ & MARCHER MARKHOLT



FREE AGENTS™

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Foreword

The nature of work is changing. How it's done, by whom and where. The gig-economy is on the rise, and we want to tell you why it's time to join the ride.

The right people can make or break any workplace. The workforce is the backbone of any organization and hiring the wrong candidates can be a costly affair. Naturally, hiring is one of the most important things any company can do. But it's also challenging. It's lengthy. And it's not always so interesting. However, it will drive results in productivity, a successful employment relationship and provide you with a competitive advantage.

Looking into recent McKinsey studies, we know that superior employees are up to 8 times more productive. We're now seeing top talent steering towards complex, strategic assignments, all on a project basis, as this provides them with the opportunity to work with high complexity and avoid triviality. Freelancers aren't just for the small tasks anymore – they're part of the overall growth strategy.

The changing work environment calls for an adaptive, agile and more productive way of organizing the workforce. Gearing your organization is often the winning move when filling key gaps, scaling up or down and during busy cycles. A new permanent employee can take months to really get moving with different technologies and areas of work. In the meantime, demand, needs or technology can change. A specialized freelancer can fill those gaps immediately and help you increase competitive advantage.

The gig-economy is growing rapidly and is now the fastest-growing segment in the European labor market. There's a reason that Google at times has more freelancers than permanent employees and that it works. They find ballplayers, not those who look good in baseball caps.

Sincerely,
The Free Agents™ team



About the gig-economy

The gig-economy is a free-market system where companies and contractors (independent workers) set short-term and on-demand professional relationships that are both flexible and skill based. It accounts for flexible, temporary or freelance jobs, often involving connecting with clients through an online platform.

The gig economy and where it's headed

Statistics and workforce experts have long pointed towards the fact that the global labor market is changing, that the freelancing/independent workforce is growing significantly and that the so-called gig economy is generally on the rise across the globe.

While historically freelancing has been more predominant in particular industries and disciplines, springing to a large extent from the IT sector, more and more people find the independent and autonomous way of working appealing. So do an increasing number of companies who see the benefits of a flexible, scalable and often highly specialized workforce.

Recent numbers from Upwork suggest that a good third, 36%, of the American workforce have been freelancing over the last year. McKinsey presented similar numbers for Europe in a recent paper, suggesting that freelancers and independent workers contributed 20-30% of all jobs.

Freelancing is the fastest-growing segment of the European labor market, and more and more highly qualified people are joining the forces every year. A recent survey from the European Forum of Independent Professionals suggested that the majority of European freelancers are experienced professionals over the age of 35 and that 71% hold a university degree; many even Ph.D.'s

In short, the freelance workforce is growing, it is highly qualified and values its autonomy, and the companies are increasingly adjusting to having a more independent workforce. Thus, if you want to join the ride, this is the right time.

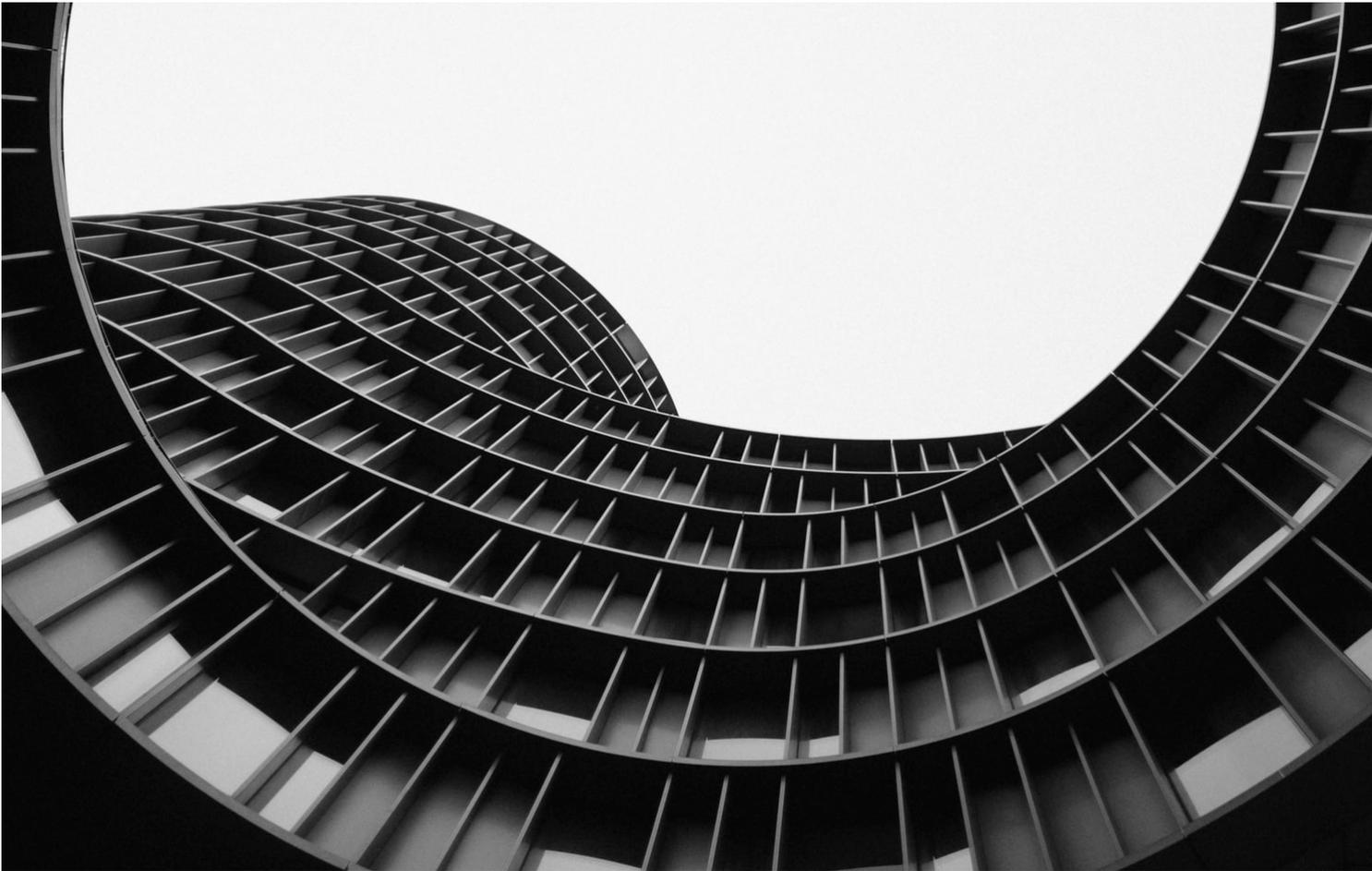


What we know about the gig-economy Post-COVID-19

According to a recent survey conducted by Upwork among its freelancer user base, despite the uncertain times of a global pandemic, the percent of the American workforce freelancing at any point over the last year has increased from 35% to 36%. A small increase but one to notice.

Since the onset of the pandemic, a noticeable share of the labor force started freelancing during 2020 – the newcomers account for 34% of the total freelance workforce in Upwork’s survey, a significant increase from the normal 10%. However, at the same time, 28% of freelancers paused freelancing as a result of the pandemic. Their data indicates that self-employment rates are going up while multiple job holding is going down in terms of shares of employment, suggesting that the composition of the independent workforce is changing towards a larger share of self-employed professionals and full-time freelancers.





This should be good news for executives looking to gear their organizations toward a more scalable or flexible workforce. And it seems that the number of businesses and organizations expecting to do so is rising as well.

According to a recent McKinsey survey among global executives across industries, two years from now, about 70% of the 800 executives indicated that they expect to use more freelancers and temporary workers in their companies or business areas. The majority expect to hire freelancers for on-site work rather than remote work, indicating that the temporary workers will play important roles in the everyday of the businesses they work for.

Again, these are good news for the freelance workforce and the professionals considering joining it in the coming years.

3 effects

of the gig economy and how to take advantage of them

01.

The gig economy enables business agility.

Smaller businesses that need flexibility in their business operations – e.g. freelancers and one-times services – should embrace the gig economy.

You can use the temporary “colleagues” for highly specific business needs without incurring the capital cost of hiring permanent employees or owning specialist equipment (e.g. for creative work).

Larger businesses, particularly those running large-scale projects, can similarly take advantage of the flexibility of using specialized freelancers for these.

Using freelancers enables agility that allows smaller businesses to compete with the bigger ones and the bigger ones to scale their workforce to exactly their needs and the demand they see.

02.

The gig economy competes with businesses for top talent

In parallel to the growing competition for top talented permanent hires among companies, businesses increasingly compete for the best freelancers, and on similar terms.

That is, if you want to attract the best independent profiles, you have to offer them more than your competitors would in terms of remuneration and benefits. This can make it difficult for smaller businesses to compete with the bigger ones unless they think outside the box...

A reverse effect is that employees in permanent roles might increasingly expect the same flexibility and benefits as a freelancer enjoys, again pushing the limits of smaller businesses and more traditional workplaces who see themselves struggling to keep and attract the best profiles.

Adjusting to a more flexible way of working (which the pandemic has already forced most of us to) and redefining what kinds of benefits your business is willing and able to offer to permanent as well as temporary workers may in turn boost well-being, productivity and competitiveness.

Look at benefits such as flexible work hours, remote working, stipends for education, wellness activities at the office, or a less strict paid time off/vacation framework.

03.

The gig economy offers flexibility for your business, not only for workers

Besides the obvious flexibility that independent workers offer in terms of workforce scalability and costs, there are other ways in which you can get the best out of temporary employment.

Some businesses see the opportunity of getting a trial period with potential new hires; not only an advantage for the company, but for the worker as well. The company can get a sense of the contractor's skills and reliability, and the contractor can get a sense of the business' actual needs, the work environment etc. before entering into full employment.

Other companies have seen the benefits of hiring a team of freelancers for larger projects instead of entering into a contract with an agency or consultancy. The freelancers are often experienced and highly specialized profiles who get to solve exactly what they are good at, and at the exact time their expertise is needed in the project. They can leave the project and new specialists enter. This can be a highly efficient and cost-effective way of approaching large-scale projects.

It takes the right talent to make the right decisions

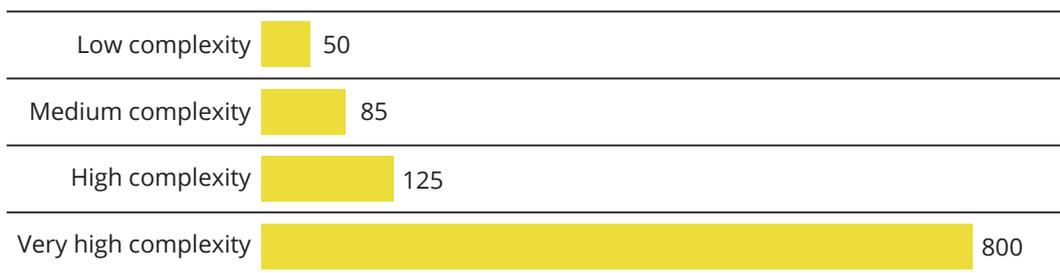
The employees are the backbone of any organization. As a result, hiring is the most important thing your company can do. Hiring is also a very challenging process, but it will drive results in productivity, a successful employment relationship and positively impact the total work environment. The right people can make or break any organization, but why is it so important?

McKinsey studies show that superior talent is up to 8 times productive - quite remarkable, but also logical. Specialized work tasks require specialized workforces.

However, great talent is scarce. Hence, the famous “war for talent” term by McKinsey’s Steven Hankin. And business is rarely static. A new permanent employee can take months to really get moving with different technologies and areas of work. In the meantime, demand, needs or technology can change. A specialized freelancer can fill those gaps immediately and help you increase competitive advantage when filling key gaps or during busy cycles.

The relationship between quality of talent and business performance is dramatic.

Productivity gap between average performers and high performers, by job complexity, %



“Superior talent is up to 8 times more productive”.

5 advantages of hiring freelancers

Freelancers bring specialized skills

Freelancers are skilled professionals who have been working on various projects and often add expertise in very specialized skills. 61% of freelancers specialize in 2 to 3 talents which are higher than the average of permanent employees. On the Free Agents™ network you find some of the most talented freelance professionals in Scandinavia. When searching for the right candidate, we can filter by skill set, location, personality type and professional competencies making you able to find just the right professional.

Scaling is easier and freelancers encourage innovation

Maintaining a competitive edge is crucial for many companies. The latest tools and technologies change rapidly, and it is clear that it is essential to keep up with these to stay competitive. Freelancers are experts in scaling a business as they are skilled in gig-economy trends and the latest technologies.

Project is temporary by nature

Most projects have a start date and an end date, or they have specific objectives. When the workload temporarily increases, it's better to hire a freelancer than a full-time employee as it might not be necessary for the long run.

Freelancers add agility

The future of work is freelance. Companies want access to specialized talent while decreasing their costs and risk. Freelancers make it easy to respond swiftly to any market changes and provides the ability to balance flexibility and stability.

Freelancers are cost-effective

While they might seem more expensive on the hourly rate at first glance, research suggests that employers can expect to save 20 to 30% a year with a freelancer compared to full-time employees. Considering the absence of various benefits as well as office space, supplies, etc., this makes good sense.

Do you need a freelancer or a permanent employee?

Sometimes it can be very clear that the team needs to be expanded or that you need help for specific projects. What is not always so obvious is the smartest way to do it. Below you'll find a number of factors that can help you get to a conclusion.

	If you answer YES, choose a...	If you answer NO, choose a...
Are you hiring for a project?	Freelancer	Employee
Would the person you're hiring need company specific training?	Employee	Freelancer
Are the tasks needing to be done long-lasting and on-going?	Employee	Freelancer
Are you in need of specialized competencies?	Freelancer	Employee
Do you have a small budget?	Freelancer	Employee
Do you want to "try before you buy" to mitigate risks involved?	Freelancer	Employee
Do you need to hire quickly?	Freelancer	Employee
Do you have the competencies in-house already?	Employee	Freelancer
Do you want control over, and transparency of the work being done?	Employee	Freelancer
Do you need someone with their own tools, technology or equipment?	Freelancer	Employee

The freelance projects of this time

In a report examining independent work, McKinsey Global Institute finds that up to 162 million people in Europe and the United States engage in some form of independent work. That's 30% of the population. Freelancing is rapidly evolving, and many skills are perfectly suited for this kind of work. Here's a look at some of the hottest projects at the moment.

- E-commerce
- Digital Marketing
- Programming & Software Development
- Graphic Design
- Digital Project Management
- Product Management
- Web Design & Development
- Writing & Translation
- Social Media

The CMO perspective

Why is it important for you to hire freelancers?

Basically, it's important for us to recruit freelancers as we need external input. We simply need some fresh energy, fresh blood and people who can walk in with a completely different take. Everyone believes they're so unique, and we also believe that about ourselves at Interflora – therefore, it's nice to have someone come in to pull us down and guide us back on track.

Has it given you a certain amount of flexibility to use freelancers?

It's provided us with the opportunity to move way faster. Likewise, that we don't have to be dependent on internal resources – if the need is there and we need something to be solved, we've been able to have many tasks working at the same time, so that we could solve them all. That provides an enormous freedom, because even though we plan our operations, we're not dependent on overloading our employees with too much work. We're now avoiding the core staff to actually work 12-13 hours a day so that they have a normal work-life. That provides an enormous happiness for the employees, because they know that they can always get help, that we can solve the tasks and be flexible. So it heightens the work morale internally, and it gives our employees some extremely strong professional external input.

The use of freelancers in the future

If I should mention something that is a great middle-thing between insourcing and outsourcing, it's freelancing. We often simply do not need a permanent employee, but a specialist, and we'll see that need become way bigger in the future.



Zvi Goldstein

**Chief Marketing Officer,
Interflora**

Zvi Goldstein is seated as the CMO of Interflora's Danish department. With a visionary talent, he's got a brilliant hang of the roots in the marketing discipline and is known for not only being on the cutting edge of digitalization but also being one to shape the future for it.

The CEO perspective

How do you see the demand for freelancers in the agency-industry develop in the future?

If you take a look into the agency-industry which has become way more versatile and with a lot more competencies than previously, I definitely believe that the use of freelancers is going to increase substantially in the coming years. COVID-19 will probably accelerate as the mobility of the workplaces is under pressure, and thus, there will be a bigger demand to stay mobile, so you can bring people aboard with different competencies when the need arises. Many agencies do not have the need for the same competencies all the time, so this way you can go shop freelancers along the way.

Do you see a difference of the need and maturity of freelancers in NoA in Denmark vs the rest of Scandinavia?

We use freelancers here all the time on all sorts of things. Some are almost permanently hired, some are here for 3 months and some on a project. If you look into or compare the other Nordic countries, especially Sweden, the Danish market is relatively mobile. It can be more complicated in Sweden as they have different working conditions. Therefore, I believe the freelance business is bigger in Sweden. But freelancers have come to stay as it is super important to have the right people do the right work-tasks. Nowadays, our line of business demands a lot of different competencies – from data-analysts to the more traditional disciplines, and there's a lot of these you need to bring in and out of projects you did not have before.

What are you looking for when hiring freelancers?

We want the best of the best. Our goal is to be positioned as one of the three best agencies within our categories in the geographical areas we're operating in. The demands us to be elitists as we want the best candidates professionally, but also some good people that are nice to work with, and that fits into the culture we pay such a big tribute to. As a freelancer, you have enormous professional integrity you want to contribute with, and we want to buy that.

What is your best advice to successfully use freelancers in an established organization?

Firstly, it's always important to make sure the freelancer you're hiring actually have the competencies they promise. Then, it's important to make sure that they fit into the culture you exert in your organization. And lastly, you need to define how the hiring can be measured as a success.



Mikael Jørgensen

CEO, &Co

Partner / Country Manager,
The North Alliance

Mikael Jørgensen is seated as the CEO of the award-winning agency &Co and Country Manager at The North Alliance Denmark. As one of Denmark's most talented agency CEOs, he's known for spotting the best growth opportunities in both Denmark, Scandinavia and internationally.

Scale-up perspective

How do you predict the development of using freelancers in the future? How has COVID-19 changed this?

As a result of the technological components that are available to us today, but weren't just 5-10 years ago, we have much bigger opportunities, but also increasing requirements for the people working to utilize these opportunities. If you want to exploit these opportunities that now exist in the market, you need to be good at attracting and hiring the right people - both permanent employees and freelancers. Historically, organisations have mostly focused on classic employer/employee relationship but we have seen things change to be much more flexible in structure over the last years and Covid-19 has only accelerated this tendency even more. We have learned very fast and effectively to work together remotely and in many new constellations, which again brings new opportunities including a more advanced and sophisticated use of freelancers.

Covid-19 has also shown us how important it is that we're articulated about our company culture and values and our purpose and reason for being. If we want to use freelancers, we need to consider how we can enable or utilize the know-how they bring to the table without breaking up the culture that already exists. Freelancers should add to the culture and clear the 'no assholes allowed' rule even if they are just at the company for a limited time. If you manage to do that you avoid the us and them challenges. Instead everybody is on the same team and you can then much better use freelance specialists to fill out any resource or skill cap that you have in the company.

When is freelancers an asset in an organization like Goodiebox?

In the start-up phase, we used a large number of freelancers, as it can be very difficult to attract the competencies you need. In the beginning everything is new so having the agility of a freelancer set-up helps you faster do experimentation and test out what you need and what works and what doesn't work without risking both lost resources and broken hearts because you made the wrong hires because you didn't fully understand the skills needed. When moving from a start-up to a scale-up you even more dependency on the right accelerates because you are still going at full speed but at the same time adding significant complexity to the operation. If you can't afford or find the senior people needed in this transformation then freelancers can be a very clever choice helping you reach the next level.



Nikolaj Leonhard-Hjorth

**CMO and Co-Founder,
Goodiebox**

Today, Nikolaj is the Co-Founder and CMO of Goodiebox – a company selling subscription-based beauty boxes. Goodiebox has grown to be an international player with more than 200.000 members across 9 countries.

Today, we have a very experienced tech team in place but for the first approximately 7 years we heavily depended on freelancers. When we considered a new technical set-up or did our first initial planning for our data warehouse we would hire a freelancer to help us develop and validate the setup and architectural outline. We used the freelancer in a very specialized setting and their competencies proved to be so decisive that we could theoretically pay an undreamt-of fee for that input. Based on this input we could then go back to work, and re-iterate with the freelancer on the project again later in the process.

Which factors are important in recruiting for a scale-up like Goodiebox?

We are a happiness company so it's exceptionally important for us to hire for culture add and not just culture fit. We want great people that can make Goodiebox even better and who treat everybody in the team the way they want to be treated themselves. So, culture is extremely important. On top of that is of course the individual skill set that needs to fit the fast growth of Goodiebox and an appetite for growing with Goodiebox. We really want our team to see every challenge or task as an opportunity to create wow by exceeding expectations and spreading happiness. That means doing above and beyond what's expected and always insisting on the highest standards.



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There is not a lack of talent in the gig-economy

The gig-economy isn't a trend that will eventually fade away. The amount of specialized talent freelancing is bigger than ever, and companies are fastening their grip to get their hands on the talents. When the advantages seem to outweigh the disadvantages, and some of the biggest talents choose to go independent, the reasons to get in on the action seem obvious.

Looking at the statistics, the gig-economy is only going to grow. Research conducted by SelectHub shows that more than 80% of Millennials and Gen Z workers are interested in freelancing. Companies are now fastening their grip on the gig-economy, and those who aren't rolling with the punches are losing out on the best resources. 30% of Fortune 50 companies are already hiring freelancers knowing that they can bring a lot to the table. They are specialized experts within their field, and that allows companies to access top talent without heavy costs, geographic limitations, abiding recruitment processes as well as long and exhausting training and acclimation.



MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z SHOW INTEREST IN THE GIG ECONOMY

More than 8 in 10 millennial and Gen Z workers are interested in working as freelancers part- or full-time.



INTEGRATION PLAYS A KEY ROLE

With so many applications used across the employee lifecycle, companies will emphasize integrations in order to break down silos and facilitate seamless data sharing.



In 2019, a PwC survey showed that 8 out of 10 top managers indicate that the lack of qualified talents will become a threat to their company's growth opportunities (<https://www.pwc.dk/da/presse/meddelelser/2019/otte-ud-af-ti-danske-topledere-mangel-paa-talent-vil-paavirke-vaeksten.html>). They believe it is harder to find the right talent and that the demand for specialized competencies has changed.

However, there is not a lack of talent – only if you're fishing in the same pond as your competitors.

The gig-economy is growing rapidly and can be characterized as the fastest-growing segment in the European labor market.

At Free Agents™, we're experiencing the same. We're seeing some of the very best talents on the market within digital, tech, marketing, communication and commerce signing up at our network. We've surpassed 2500 freelancers on board our network across Denmark and Sweden, and this has e.g. led to large OMX companies in both countries to hire freelancers through Free Agents™.

Matching your challenge with highly skilled freelancers.



Why Free Agents™?

Free Agents™ is Denmark's new, serious platform for matching the best freelancers within digital, tech, marcom and commerce, and businesses with exciting and challenging freelance jobs. Without blinking, we promise our Free Agents™-profiles projects that match their qualifications and ambitions, and our clients that they get top shelf freelance services and consultancy.

We can make these promises because job posts and freelancers alike are quality-assured by experienced headhunters, who follow the recruitment process as closely as our clients need.

Algorithms are only part of the solution

We let our automated recruitment platform do part of the job. There, freelancers are matched with relevant jobs in the second the job post is released on the platform, and we can thus ensure that our clients are presented with highly qualified and available candidates for their freelance openings in less than 48 hours. Thus, Free Agents™ is just as efficient as other automated recruitment platforms, but we ensure the quality of the job match further through in-depth personality tests and video interviews with all freelancers. We believe this is the only serious way to handle recruitment of top talent for top businesses.



Who's behind?

Free Agents™ is run by Marcher Markholt, a headhunting agency with more than 10 years of experience finding the best talent within digital, tech, marketing/communication and commercial development.

We stand for efficiency, agility and quality in our work with finding amazing new employees for our clients, and believe that this philosophy is applicable to the freelance market as well.

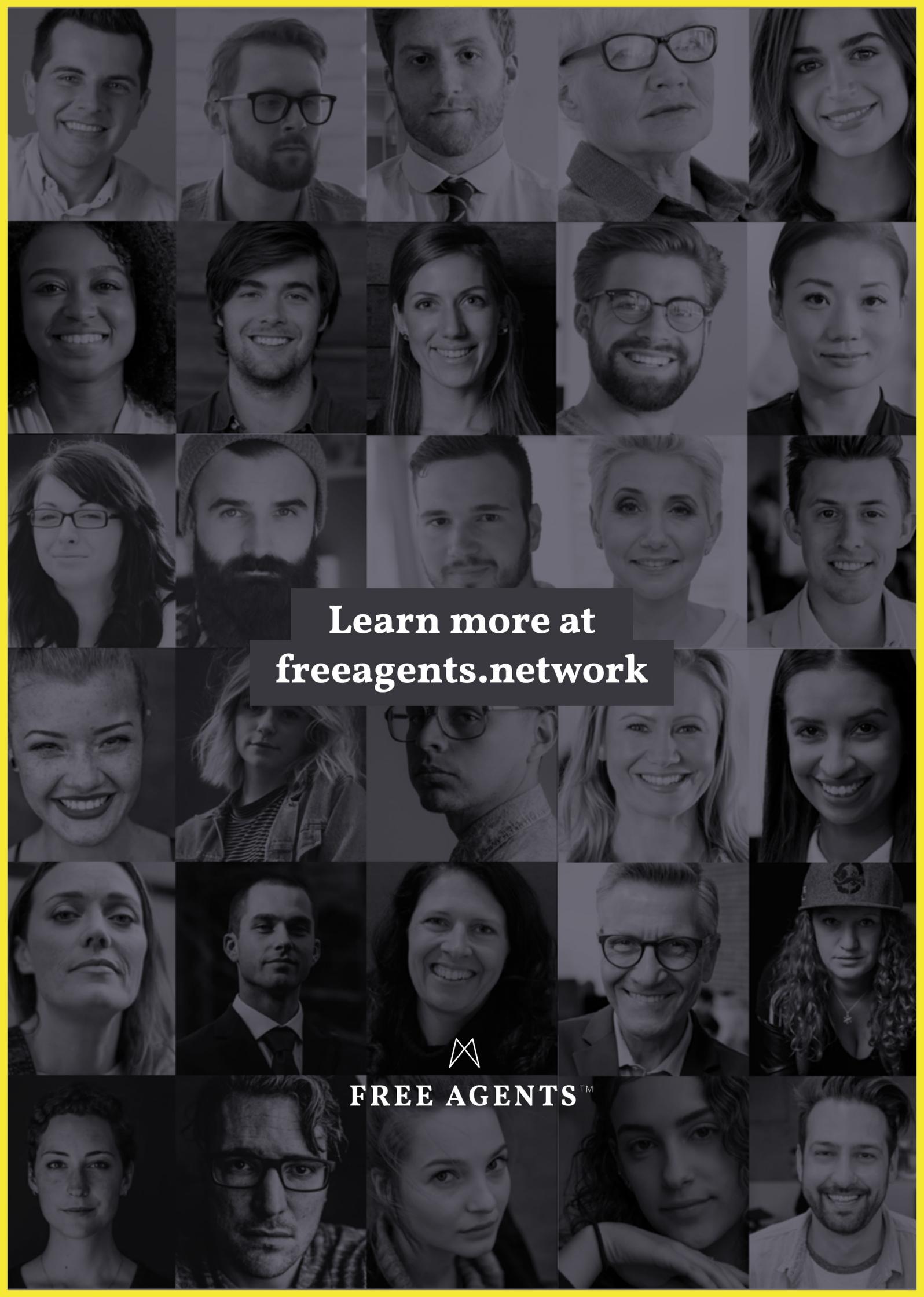
With Free Agents™, we merely speed things up.

We find talent within fields such as...

- Interim Management
- Communications
- E-Commerce
- Digital Marketing
- Project Management
- Consultancy
- Video and Animation
- Data Science
- Developers
- Graphics and Design
- Product Management
- Copy & Translation

Trusted by

The logo for Orsted, featuring a stylized power symbol (a circle with a vertical line through the center) to the left of the word "Orsted" in a bold, sans-serif font.The logo for Accenture, featuring the word "accenture" in a lowercase, sans-serif font with a small grey chevron symbol above the letter "t".The logo for Interflora, featuring the word "Interflora" in a serif font to the left of a stylized silhouette of a person in a dynamic pose, possibly a dancer or athlete, with a circular element around their head.The logo for nets, featuring the word "nets" in a lowercase, sans-serif font followed by three small grey dots.The logo for VELUX, featuring the word "VELUX" in a bold, uppercase, sans-serif font inside a black rectangular box, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to the right.



Learn more at
freeagents.network



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