The Case for Freelancers

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As an industry-agnostic agency, my team and I are constantly running up against components of our campaigns that we, frankly, know nothing about. Every industry — every client, really — demands a custom campaign to some degree, and often optimizing campaigns to a client will bring up something that we weren't prepared for.

When this happens, sometimes, the best answer is to call in a freelancer.

My marketing peers seem to be split entirely down the middle on the topic of freelancers — some swear by them and have a strong corps of freelancers that make up the majority of their agency. Others have never even courted a freelancer and dismiss it as "too much extra work." Like most things, the answer is somewhere in between.

In my opinion, you need to have some solidity to run a functioning agency. If everyone working for you is there on a freelance basis, you're going to have a constantly shifting talent pool that, while composed of many capable workers, will indeed become a hassle to maintain. But then again, sometimes a job calls for some outside help, either because you need an expert or just another hand for support.

In my opinion, any potential hassle is outweighed by the benefits of working with freelancers. Here's why.

Bringing on a freelancer minimizes stress

When you're hiring a freelancer or virtual employee, it comes with the territory that you're getting somebody efficient, communicative, and capable of meeting deadlines. Freelancer's careers live and die by their ability to manage themselves – if they can't turn around quality work on time, that's going to catch up with them sooner rather than later.

Experienced and professional virtual employees and freelancers understand that you hired them with the expectation they can handle themselves. If you wanted someone to micromanage, you would have hired for an on-location position. You brought them on to have fewer headaches, not more, and to a large extent, every freelancer will understand that. If you get somebody with significant freelancing experience, they'll understand how to approach a project effectively without needing you to hold their hand – after all, their livelihood depends on it.

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Freelancers provide a higher quality of work

Because of the fickle nature of the business, successful freelancers don't mess around: they deliver what you're asking for, sometimes better than your own employees will. This isn't a knock against having a permanent staff, but rather a reason why it might be a smart idea to bring on an experienced temporary employee for projects that have a lot riding on them.

If you run an agency or any other client-based business, you'll understand a freelancer's mentality. They're running their own business, just like you are. And just like you, they

rely on renewing contracts, happy clients and recurring projects to stay afloat. For a freelancer, nothing is guaranteed, so they take nothing for granted less they risk their reputation or professional opportunities.

Most importantly, a freelancer is more likely to be a specialist in a specific area than a member of your staff. A single employee rarely possesses the skills to master several key tasks. Like most people, they probably have one specialty and a toolbelt of other skills they're decent at. So when you don't have an expert on staff, hiring freelancers puts you in a position where you can bring someone on to help finish a task, but you're not stuck with them if the need for their skillset never comes up again.

Unless you're hiring them to handle overflow tasks, freelancers usually market themselves on their specialties. They'll have years of experience in project management or email marketing or Facebook dynamic ads. Using my own business as an example, building or redeveloping a client's website is a service we offer, but not one I'm keen on and not one my permanent staff know anything about. For that occasion, I have a freelancer I use who's a UX designer that can meet the client's needs as far as websites go. He's low-touch and delivers things on time, taking any worries about that portion of the project off my shoulders.

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Freelancers save you money

Facts are facts: Bringing on freelancers instead of full-time employees will save you money – even in places you don't expect.

First, you save money through the time cycled back into your day with a freelance employee. There's minimal to no training involved as most freelancers are experts in their field, so

you save potentially weeks of time just by skipping that process. Second, you save money because you're not paying for a freelancer's benefits and they're only part of the team for a limited time.

Finally, they save you space and assets. A virtual employee will have their own setup and workspace so they won't be taking up a desk or part of what may be already limited office supplies. Especially if you're just starting out, use freelancers. It will help to eliminate the costs and inefficiencies that stand in the way of long-term growth.

Though it might be a little scary upfront to find people you're willing to bring on board, once you work with enough freelancers you'll start to build out a solid network of people you can call on for special projects. Every marketer I know puts a lot of effort into securing partners from PR companies, SEO companies, advertising companies and more. Building a relationship with different freelancers is no different – if you grow and nurture the connection, it will pay off.

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