

Why the Talent Network Model Took Off in a Year Dampened by Layoffs

While 2020 was a tough year for agencies, it was a boon for the talent network model.

Fueled by the rise of project-based assignments and in-house teams, taking a flexible approach to staffing is a hot trend, offering a compelling alternative for clients and creatives. In talent networks, clients can hire custom teams without the inherent limitations and expense of agency partners, while creatives benefit from greater flexibility and freedom outside typical agency restrictions.

This year, tighter client budgets and staffing reductions sent a wave of experienced talent into the market.

“When all of the layoffs and furloughs began, we saw a surge in community membership,” said Stephanie Nadi Olson, founder of talent network We Are Rosie. This year, the network grew its community to around 65,000 members. The company also doubled its revenue in 2020, adding new clients like LinkedIn and Microsoft.

Former TBWA Worldwide CCO Chris Garbutt and former McDonald’s svp, marketing Colin Mitchell recently formed creative consultancy Pltfrmr that uses an adjacent model Mitchell described as a “creative consultancy with a small expert core surrounded by a larger talent cloud.”

One size doesn’t fit all

Talent networks quickly connect clients that need fast results

on tight budgets or teams specifically tailored for projects.

We Are Rosie's approach, for example, allows partners to staff up or down for a given project's execution, finding the right talent to fit the solution. Fully staffed agencies, by contrast, are more likely to suggest solutions based on existing talent, Media Sherpas founder and We Are Rosie chair Nancy Hill explained.

Garbutt explained that avoiding the burdens of an agency talent structure allows Pltfrmr to find the most experienced talent. Mitchell said that the varied experiences of Pltfrmr's co-founders allow them to survey across a talent network, solving matchmaking issues few brands can accommodate while incorporating talent from outside the industry.

"There's no way a client can do that; they don't have the time, connections or interest. Agencies find it structurally hard," he said. "We're able to move with a lot more flexibility."

Garbutt and Mitchell said they designed the model around what clients are looking for. The shifting media landscape has put pressure on brands in recent years to create different marketing models for different channels. Pltfrmr's approach allows it to create bespoke solutions for vastly different brands, committing fully to each client partner without pressure to scale in a way that could become unmanageable.

"Something's clearly happening, and we see it as part of a massive restructuring in the marketing business," Mitchell said. "Brands are built completely differently from one another."

A more inclusive way to work

Olson said that We Are Rosie was built to fulfill a commitment to diversity and that 40% of the network's members are people of color. Additionally, opportunities are extended to those

hampered by traditional working environments, including caregivers, individuals with disabilities and mental health conditions, neurodiverse individuals and people limited by geography.

“Remote work is a form of inclusion. And we are a mechanism for distribution of access, opportunity and wealth for people that have been marginalized in the ad industry,” said Olson.

Pltfrmr said it’s growing with representation in mind, and its network includes around 50% diverse talent.

“Different POVs lead to strong creative answers,” Garbutt said. Pltfrmr wants to pursue a program to bring in talent from underrepresented groups through connecting to colleges, providing experiences across different clients and aspects of marketing.

Continue Reading

Pages: 1 2

Recommended articles

<https://www.adweek.com/agencies/why-the-talent-network-model-took-off-in-a-year-dampened-by-layoffs/>