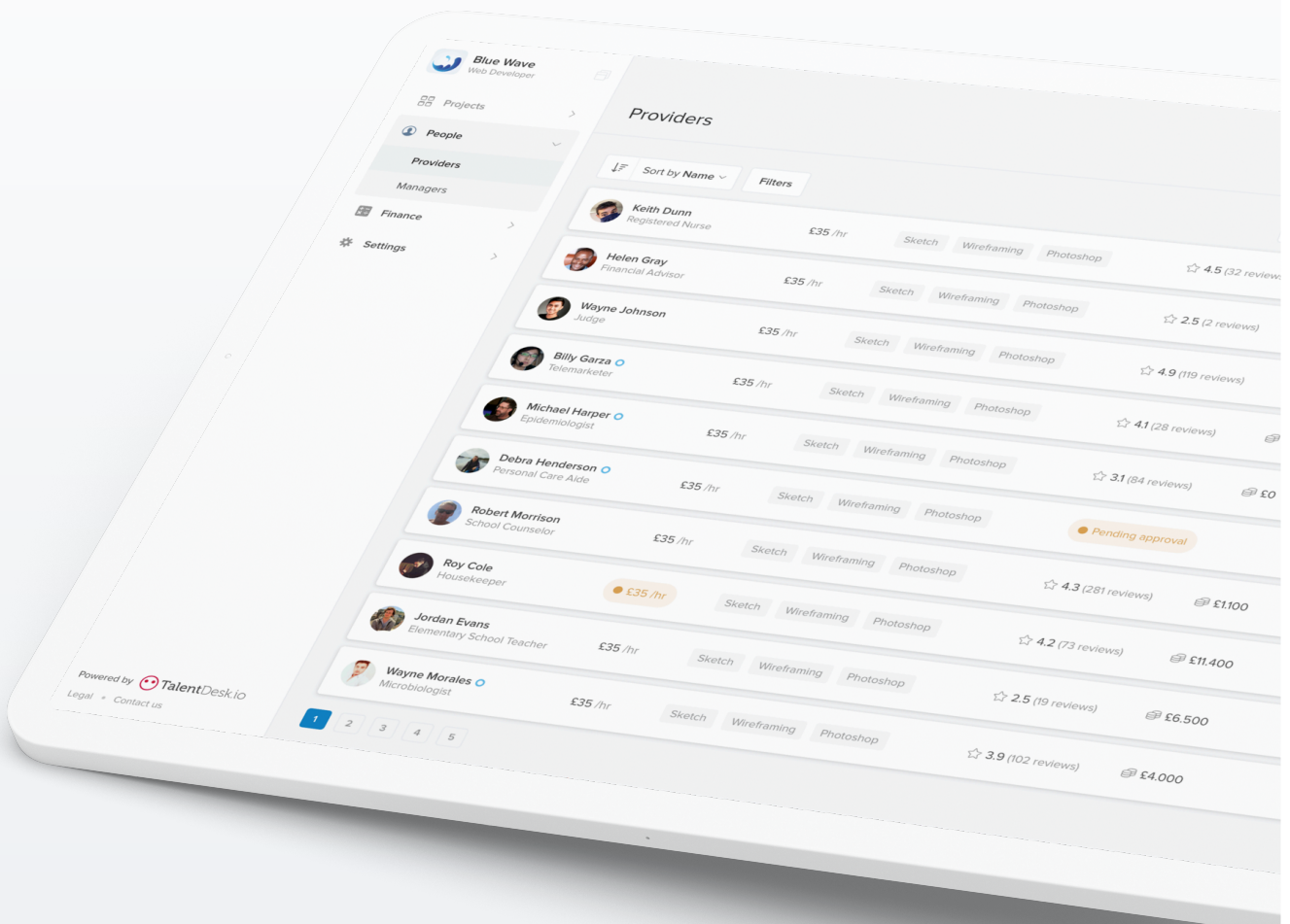


THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO HIRING A FREELANCER





INTRODUCTION

If you've worked with freelancers for a while, you'll be familiar with the benefits they can bring to your organisation. From startups and SMEs to enterprises, government agencies and not-for-profit organisations, outsourcing projects can see strategies acted upon and work completed faster than otherwise possible. But for many organisations, knowing exactly what projects are being outsourced - and to whom - becomes increasingly difficult as you start to work with a growing number of freelancers.

This guide is the first in a series to help you create a blueprint for working with freelancers more efficiently throughout the whole life cycle of a project or engagement. By standardising your internal processes you'll gain better visibility and control over the recruiting process, the management of projects and finances.

We'll start with helping you to understand how to recruit and find the best freelancers for your organisation. Engaging with freelancers that are the best fit for your project from the start, will mean less wasted time, resources and frustration (later on). Collaboration with your human resources manager is also key, to ensure that your freelancer hiring process is aligned with HR policy. In this guide we'll cover:

- 01.** **WHAT SKILLS SHOULD YOU OUTSOURCE**
- 02.** **WRITING JOB DESCRIPTIONS THAT ATTRACT HIGH CALIBRE FREELANCERS**
- 03.** **HOW TO 10X YOUR SEARCH FOR EXPERIENCED FREELANCERS**
- 04.** **HOW TO STRUCTURE INTERVIEWS FOR MAXIMUM SUCCESS**



WHAT SKILLS SHOULD YOU OUTSOURCE

What's right for one organisation, might not be right for another. The truth is, most day-to-day business activity can be outsourced – but that doesn't mean it should. Here's what to consider:

Do you already have the skills within your organisation?

See if the talent already exists in your organisation. If you don't have the systems in place to search for internal skills, it's worth speaking with HR. Maybe someone could be seconded to your project. The benefits? Employees are familiar with your organisation, brand, product or service; they know how you work – so no need to explain anything. Plus, you'll save on outsourcing costs.

Does the project require minimal supervision?

If you need to oversee much of the activity then your project might be better kept in-house. Finding a freelancer with the right experience and skills should mean, to a greater degree, that you can leave them to get on with the project, reducing your workload and stress in the process.

Is the work time or location dependent?

Some freelancers may be prepared to work in your office at predetermined times (note: be careful with regards to IR35), but most will work remotely, scheduling your project as they see fit to meet your deadline. This means activities that require a person to be on site at specific times (e.g. a receptionist or facilities manager) are not ideal choices for outsourcing.

What deadline are you working to?

Competent freelancers are adept at delivering their core expertise to tight deadlines, particularly if they've worked with you before. But an urgent project that will take a lot of explaining to a new freelancer might not be the best choice to outsource. Alternatively, renegotiate your deadline.

Is the project a self-contained piece of work with clear boundaries?

If so, it could be suitable to outsource. Prime examples would be a company promo video or presentation slides. But if you want someone to oversee your social media activity or manage a division of your organisation, you might be better hiring an employee.

Does the project involve giving the freelancer access to personal data?

Think carefully if you're contemplating outsourcing projects of this nature and operate within the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules. If you've been working with freelancers for a while, your business should have a strict policy in place for data security.



**"YOU'RE ONLY AS GOOD AS
THE PEOPLE YOU HIRE."**

Ray Kroc
American Fast-Food Tycoon



WRITING JOB DESCRIPTIONS THAT ATTRACT HIGH CALIBRE FREELANCERS

Freelancers see many project opportunities every day so you need to catch their attention. That means selling yourself to the freelancer, whilst clearly defining the project and skills needed. To do this, you need a well-structured job description. Here are the elements you should consider:

THE ANATOMY OF A GREAT JOB DESCRIPTION

Title

Keep titles short and descriptive. Mention the role, the main skill and level of expertise. If it's a remote position, then include that too. Make every word count and keep it under 70 characters (preferably less) - if the titles appear in an email some of the text might get cut off.

Project description

Descriptions should be between 300-700 words on average, according to Textio (and in many cases shorter). Write with clarity, in plain English, tailor it to the role and use bullet points so important information stands out. Give enough information so freelancers can see what the project entails and keep the rest for the interview stage.

Here are four key points to bear in mind:

- **Avoid creating hybrid roles:** excellence across a spectrum of skills can rarely be found in one person e.g. a web developer who happens to be great at design and copywriting too.
- **Drop the buzzwords:** that means 'ninja', 'guru', 'rockstar' or anything else of that nature. According to analysis by recruitment board *Indeed* it could turn off prospective candidates.
- **Don't overlook company and culture:** despite working remotely, in-demand freelancers care about who they work with and the collaborations they decide to take on.
- **Create a clear picture of job duties:** Use the word 'you' so freelancers can visualise themselves in the role. Create a separate section for skills and break these down into 'essential' and 'desirable'.

TIP

Don't have a long list of skills under 'essential'; it will exclude freelancers who are a good fit.



Finishing touches

At the end of the description, mention the deadline, project duration and budget. Also include any specific technology, software or tools they'll need such as Photoshop or animation software. To ensure you attract genuinely interested freelancers you could ask questions too, such as:

- What do they like about the project?
- What issues or problems do they foresee?
- What similar projects have they worked on before?

Don't ask too many questions or it will put off qualified freelancers. Two or three are enough.

TIP

If there are particular freelancers you're keen to attract, read their profiles and where appropriate, include keywords and phrases that will resonate with them.

What you should do next:

Review and proofread your job description to make sure you haven't missed any important points (such as how freelancers can apply for the project and how soon they can expect to hear back from you). Then source your freelancers, which is the topic of our next chapter.

“IF YOU DO NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THE SCOPE OF THE WORK INCLUDES, THEN A GOOD IDEA IS TO CONTACT SOME FREELANCERS THAT HAVE THE SKILLS REQUIRED AND START UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS REQUIRED TO DO THE JOB.”

Spyros Lambrinidis
Chief Product Officer at PeoplePerHour.com



HOW TO 10X YOUR SEARCH FOR EXPERIENCED FREELANCERS

Finding high-quality freelancers can be a painful process. Whether you're scouring your network, LinkedIn, a freelancer platform or dealing with agencies, it can eat up precious time (not to mention fees for the latter). Here's a three-step process to help you speed up your search:

Get clear on who you want to hire

The job description is your friend here, keeping you laser-focused on the calibre of freelancer you're after. Keep this at hand whilst you search so you don't get sidetracked.

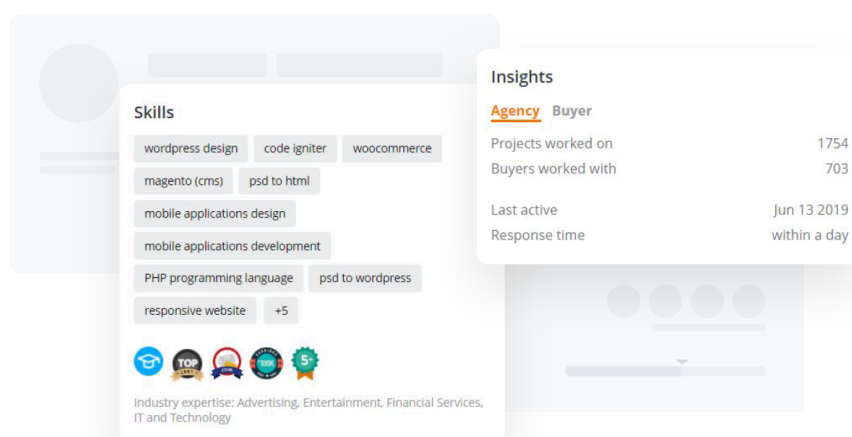
Know where (and how) to search for a freelancer

Personal and business networks: Ask colleagues in the business, or in your wider business network, who they've worked with. Personal recommendations are often the best.

Online platforms and freelancer marketplaces: Specialist platforms can narrow down your search considerably. Sites like [Kolabtree](#) focus on scientists and researchers; [Lexoo](#) on lawyers and [Advisable](#) on marketing experts. Alternatively, broad-based marketplaces provide access to thousands of freelancers e.g. [PeoplePerHour.com](#), [Upwork](#), [Freelancer.com](#), [Toptal](#), or [Guru](#). Use their search filters to sift through results faster.

TIP

Pull together a list of freelancers that your business or network uses – along with their key skills so the whole organisation can access it. This will save hours of time and improve productivity. Just make sure the freelancers are happy for you to share their details in this way.





For example, with PeoplePerHour.com, use a combination of keyword, category and the filters - industry, location, language, popularity, CERT, rate, 'Available Now' and 'Has Portfolio' to narrow your search in seconds. For example, type the keyword 'logo design' and you get nearly 12,000 results! But choose Top CERT - the PeoplePerHour.com algorithm that rates freelancers - along with other filters to hone the list. Then check each freelancer's profile to see if they're a good fit.

TIP

If a freelancer's profile has a high number of good reviews you could be in luck but also work out how many repeat clients they've had (the number of projects and buyers is under 'Insights' on [PeoplePerHour.com](https://www.peopleperhour.com)). Badges and test scores can also highlight high-ranking freelancers.

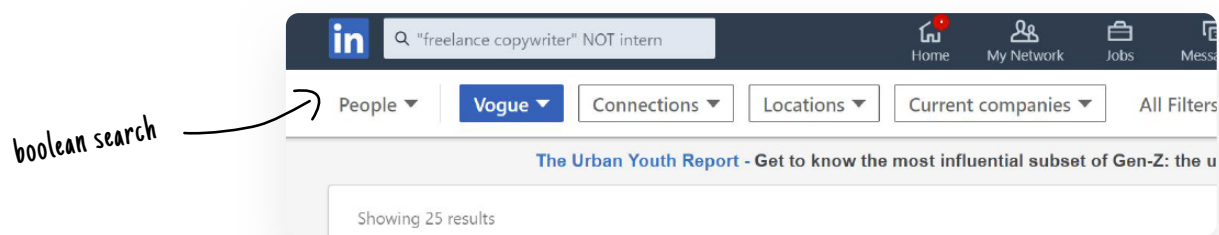
Social media platforms: Most professionals have a LinkedIn profile. But how easy is it to search for good freelancers? Here are some tips to create a targeted list:

1. Head over to LinkedIn and you'll see the familiar search bar at the top left. Type the role you're looking for in the search field (e.g. freelance copywriter) and choose 'People':
2. You'll likely be presented with thousands of results! Instead, type the role in quotes e.g. "freelance copywriter" to narrow down the results. Next click on 'All Filters':
3. You'll see a full range of filters you can apply to your search, including name, title, company and more. This powerful tool can help you find freelancers associated with your connections or, for example, have worked for a particular company.

The image shows two screenshots of the LinkedIn search interface. The top screenshot shows the search bar with the text "freelance copywriter" and the "People" filter selected. Handwritten annotations include: "1. type role in quotes" pointing to the search bar, "2. choose 'People'" pointing to the "People" filter, and "3. click 'All Filters'" pointing to the "All Filters" button. The bottom screenshot shows the "All people filters" panel with various filter categories: Connections, Connections of, Locations, Current companies, Past companies, and Industries. A handwritten annotation "Full range of filters" points to this panel. A "Reactivate Premium for Free" banner is visible on the right side of the filter panel.



Another incredibly handy tool is boolean search. In the example, we get a list of freelance copywriters who've worked at Vogue but don't have intern in their profile (for any positions). It's not perfect but it does help you narrow down the results considerably.



Boolean Search Cheatsheet for LinkedIn

" " - use to find an exact phrase such as a job title; can be two or more words in length.

"freelance PHP developer"
"freelance website designer"
"commercial copywriter"

OR - type between the terms/phrases to find

editor OR "copy editor" OR "sub editor"

multiple items to broaden your search results.

NOT - type immediately before a search term you want to exclude to narrow the results.

director NOT account

AND - type between the terms/phrases to limit your search results.

HR AND recruitment AND "human resources"

Parentheses - allows for more complex search combinations.

director NOT (assistant OR managing)

This will find every type of director except for assistant and managing. It will also exclude assistant to the director.

Tip: when using boolean search, note there's an order of precedence:

1. " "
2. ()
3. NOT
4. AND
5. OR

You can find out more about using LinkedIn's advanced search functions [here](#) .



Use your job criteria to shortlist and select

Once you have your list of potential candidates, review their profiles and portfolios (where available) to check they match the essential criteria in your job description. Pick the top three or four freelancers that look the most promising. Reach out to them, explain your project and send them the job description. Then set up an interview call. Alternatively, you could ask them to complete a paid sample, if relevant. This will tell you whether they're a good fit before you make any commitment to working with them.



HOW TO STRUCTURE INTERVIEWS FOR MAXIMUM SUCCESS

Well-structured interviews will help you obtain the information you need, make comparisons and ultimately increase your chances of hiring the right person. Here's how to do that:

Assess their skill sets

You need to be confident that the freelancer is the right fit. For example, you could ask them:

- **What skill sets do you have to carry out this project?** If they're a generalist find out their particular area of expertise. Marketing, for instance, is a broad discipline. Drill down into what they excel at and make sure those skills align with your project.
- **What previous projects have you worked on like this?** Get specific details. Ask for testimonials and view samples from their portfolio too. Other proof points could include revenue generated from email campaigns, an increase in organic traffic to a website, or conversions from direct sales calls. Think about what defines success for your project.

Uncover their motivation

Find out why they want to work on the project - and with your company. Explore their level of interest and commitment to making the partnership a success. You could ask:

- **What do you know about our company and products/services?** Has the freelancer done their homework? They should have looked at your website to get a basic understanding of what you do and the products or services you provide.
- **What is it that you particularly like about this project?** Maybe it's their area of expertise, their passion or a sector they like to focus on. All of this helps to highlight their likely motivation towards your particular project.



Understand how they communicate and collaborate

Good freelancers will maintain regular contact and keep you informed of progress. How often depends on the project. A small task might be tackled over email or a quick phone call, whilst longer projects may require milestones and regular contact. Consider asking them:

- **What channels of communication do you use?** Does this work for you? If not are they open to using different channels? Their attitude towards communication is also a sign of how they will approach their work with you.
- **How quickly do you respond to requests?** Depending on the project, the freelancer might not be able to respond immediately but you certainly don't want to be waiting days. Find out what their policy is on this.
- **How much time do you have available?** Maybe they only work certain days of the week, in the evenings or at weekends due to employment, family, caring or other commitments. It doesn't matter as long as they can complete the project, without it being hurried.

Take note of their organisational capabilities

A highly-skilled freelancer who's inefficient and can't meet deadlines could put your project in jeopardy. Find out how they approach their work by asking:

- **How long have you been a freelancer?** The number of years they've been freelancing, their career history and past projects will indicate their ability to work autonomously and on their own initiative. Once they've been briefed, they should be able to simply get the job done, to a high standard – and on time. No chasing or hand holding involved.
- **How would you carry out the project in question?** Find out the process they'd go through to complete the deliverables. Do they have good project management skills Are they consistent in their approach? Every successful freelancer will possess these skills. If they're not dependable it'll lead to frustration, wasting precious time and money.

TIP

If you regularly interview freelancers, make a list of the questions you need to ask and save it as a checklist. That way you and your team won't reinvent the wheel every time you hire. Store them in a central location too so they'll always be on hand, right when you need them.



Explore how they deal with challenges

Projects don't always go smoothly so it's good to understand the freelancer's perspective on this, how they're likely to react and also their resilience. For example, you could ask:

- **What obstacles do you foresee with the project?** Find out how they'd tackle these problems. After all, if they're an expert in their field they'll have encountered similar issues before. And that's a good thing because they'll know what to do if the same problems arise again – or be able to mitigate them before they occur.
- **What's your process for dealing with an unhappy client?** It happens every once in a while. Maybe the freelancer's work wasn't quite what a client expected. How did they resolve the situation? You want to be sure that if anything goes wrong, the freelancer will do everything they can to fix the problem. And if they complain about a client, run a mile. This is another indication of their attitude and professionalism in business.
- **Do you have any other questions?** Ask this at the end of the interview. This gives the freelancer the opportunity to bring up points that haven't been covered. Thoughtful, intelligent questions offer insight into their thinking and approach. It can be another indicator of how much they care about your project.



ABOUT TALENTDESK.IO

TalentDesk.io was built by the team behind PeoplePerHour, UK's leading freelance marketplace, so its unified platform leverages over twelve years of experience within the freelance economy. With our robust, industry-specific knowledge, we solidified and elevated all the three pillars of a successful Freelancer Management System — people, projects and payments. Our platform involves:



Sourcing and onboarding freelancers compliantly



Automating payments of freelancer timesheets and expenses



Simplifying project management and enabling collaboration



Stephanie Bailey ★★★★★

Copywriter • London, UK • £3

Project Management

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