

How Flexera Overcame Security Concerns When Engaging Independent Talent at Scale



flexera

INDUSTRY: Computer software
EMPLOYEES: 1,300+
CATEGORIES: Development, HR, Data science, Marketing & Creative

Fast growth required hiring specialized skills at scale

Jim Ryan lives by the motto, "If you don't like something, change it." When Ryan became CEO at Flexera, he accelerated its growth, but the company couldn't keep up with the resulting rise in hiring needs across all functions as the job market tightened. So, Ryan decided to change how they got work done. That is, by leveraging independent talent through Upwork.

Ryan is so committed to adopting an independent workforce that he wrote it into the company's goals. But first, the company had to ensure tools were in place to maintain data security. And they must overcome employee fears that remote talent would threaten work quality and their jobs.

Begin by building a safer sandbox

Elizabeth Lages, SVP of people and culture, and Jennifer Matsuoka, director, project management office at Flexera, led the charge to implement and drive adoption in their organization. The first step: lay infrastructure for maintaining security integrity. They began by working with IT who, at first, were skeptical. Conal Gallagher, CIO and CISO at Flexera, says:

“When we first considered Upwork, we had some general concerns around security, but they were a result of our traditional processes not being aligned with a distributed workforce model, instead of just Upwork itself.”

Gallagher says, "We're a growing company bringing in a globally dispersed workforce, so we have to adapt to people working from within the four walls of our offices and outside of them. When we stepped back and saw the security challenges from that perspective, we clearly saw the path to

RESULTS

1 system

Created for a distributed workforce

24x

Faster time to engage

60%

Saved over traditional sources

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“ Jim Ryan
 CEO
 Flexera

safely and securely get people onboarded and offboarded, and provide the granular access to resources necessary, whether they are full-time employees or professionals engaged through Upwork.”

Critical to providing secure access included building a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI). The VDI protects Flexera’s applications and data by insulating them. Then staff can assign people specific permission levels to only access the applications they need. So that no matter what device an employee or talent uses, and no matter where they’re working from, the connection remains secure.

Evolving internal policies

Managers were used to working with remote contractors, but not to the extent they’d be working with talent through Upwork. So, they couldn’t do work the same way they’ve always done it. With help from their Upwork account manager, Matsuoka updated processes to improve security and made it easier for hiring managers to know when and how to contract talent:

- Built a decision tree: What type of work is needed, ongoing or project?
- Added systems access level into talent request
- Tightened contractor systems access policies
- Integrated a talent request process into their ERP
- Customized their non-disclosure agreement (NDA) to cover all functions
- Added Upwork into new manager training

Setting the example

Instead of forcing adoption as a dictate from the CEO, Matsuoka inspired usage through example. Her function, HR, was the program’s first user. Rather than start with a small project, she chose a large, important project that required talent work with highly sensitive data. This underlined the company’s commitment and proved safeguards were established. The project’s success “lifted the veil of uncertainty and showed other teams they can trust Upwork.”

From there, functions with immediate needs, like marketing and engineering, began experimenting with Upwork. Matsuoka gained more users within teams by socializing their success stories. “By sharing use cases relevant to Flexera and business leaders, people could see what could have happened if we didn’t have Upwork in place, the losses we avoided, and the gains we got,” says Matsuoka.

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Elizabeth Lages
SVP of People and Culture
Flexera

New mindset, new approach

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Lages says the market is shifting so quickly and furiously that the only way Flexera can stay ahead is to think differently about how they leverage talent. As if underscoring their new mindset, they rebranded talent acquisition to talent access. Lages explains:

“**When we think about accessing talent today, it’s not just about full-time employment. Access is about finding talent to help us bridge gaps, whether that’s a skillset, project, or how we approach work overall.**”

Ready for the future

Addressing security concerns upfront and strategically showing employees the benefits of utilizing independent talent paid off. To date, Flexera engages talent 24x faster and saves 60% over traditional sources. One reason why they achieved such high results is that the program began from the top down. Having the CEO’s backing gave the program momentum and resources, plus it convinced managers to give independent talent a try.

CEO Jim Ryan says:

“**In talking to other C-level executives, my message is clear: Using Upwork isn’t so much about cost, as it is about fast access to ready-made, cutting-edge talent. Having access to an unprecedented pool of super talented professionals enables us to increase our velocity, and as a result, our competitive posture in the market.**”

From the outset, Ryan intended to integrate the use of Upwork so deeply into Flexera’s business strategy that it’s “part of the water supply.” They’re well on their way as employees have the skilled help they need. And just as important, instead of seeing independent talent as a threat, employees understand how these professionals can help them meet and exceed goals. That’s something anyone can get behind.

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