



How to Create and Expand a Flexible Talent Program

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Think Adoption and Implementation

A successful flexible talent program involves collaboration with key stakeholders, skillful communication throughout the company, and dedicated resources.

Our approach



Upwork uses a 3-phase framework. This enables your organization to work out details early on, which will help the program scale smoothly. And it allows everyone to engage critical support at the right time and in a targeted way.

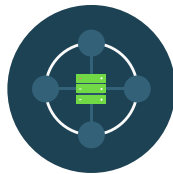


This is just one of many ways to build and expand a flexible talent program. We developed this framework through years of analyzing best practices from Fortune 500 and other clients.

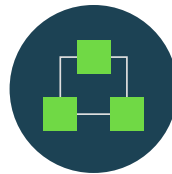
4 pillars of a successful flexible talent program



Leadership support for program implementation



Infrastructure to support and measure online talent engagements



Adequate program resources



A safe space for employees to experiment

You can apply the Upwork framework whether your company works with remote talent now or is considering it. The length of each phase depends on how you want to align the program to internal company goals.

1

Get Started



Duration: 3 months or less

You're familiarizing employees with the platform. This enables you to:

- Identify success in multiple categories
- Gather success stories and metrics that you'll use to expand the program
- Identify and build operational processes and training needs



What

In this phase, you're corralling ad hoc users and early adopters onto a freelancer platform such as Upwork Enterprise.

Identify various core categories in the business and start with 8-10 projects per category. Make sure projects have different levels of complexity so that you have enough data to compare results to goals.



How

Identify. Select a group of early adopters.

Involve stakeholders early on. Collaborate with other stakeholders to design the program processes, training videos, and other components. Their input will help you gain program support and design a model that reduces risk as it scales.

Stakeholders to consider

- Information technology
- Marketing
- Product development
- Legal
- Finance
- Human resources

Secure an executive sponsor. Executive sponsors can help unlock resources and speed up program adoption.

Allocate a budget for experimentation. Set aside a budget large enough to try several projects of varying types and sizes.

Program metrics to measure

- Average time to engage
- Spend per project category
- Cost savings
- Average project duration
- Average time to start projects
- Skills requested
- Average spend per project
- Project quality

Set metrics and KPIs. Early on, invest time identifying benchmarks and key performance indicators (KPIs) of your program's effectiveness.

2



Grow Usage



Duration: 3-6 months

You're armed with concrete data proving the program works. It's time to build upon that momentum by convincing more risk-averse users to try it out.



What

Expand by inviting other users to the platform. Aim to register entire teams instead of one or two users at a time. This will reduce training time and get team members working on the platform together.

Who you target at this phase depends on your program and business goals, such as:

- Other people within a department
- Departments that have a need
- Recurring types of work
- Work typically done by large agencies or other vendors



How

Show what's possible. Share success stories and types of projects that can be offered to flexible talent and agencies.

Provide ongoing training and support. Help new users become confident using the platform and working with remote talent and agencies.

Create a program hub. Make it easy for employees to access as much information as possible about how the program works, including best practices, training videos, and internal forms.

Program hub contents

- Program overview
- Internal forms (e.g., request for platform access, new projects)
- Internal company instructions
- Training videos (e.g., posting a job, checklists for starting and closing out projects)
- Program admin contact information
- Success stories to encourage usage
- Policies and procedures (e.g., IP, compliance, security, engagement)
- Platform usage tips
- Best practices and tips
- FAQs

Offer platform incentives. Companies find that financial incentives, such as a dedicated budget for projects, motivate employees to try programs sooner.

3

Expand Out



Duration: ongoing

You've put a lot of time and other resources into this program so far. Use the data and previous successes you gathered to prove why other people within the organization should use the platform.



What

You built up six months of internal data, case studies, and referrals demonstrating the program's ROI, and program elements are fine-tuned so that you can scale usage smoothly with less risk. It's time to get everyone else using the platform.



How

If you haven't already, now's the time to dedicate a program administrator to expand program use.



TIP: Encourage open dialogue and platform feedback by choosing a program admin who is trusted by front-line users and is well versed on internal technologies and the freelancing platform.



“ In my experience, organizations scale their programs the fastest when business leaders assist in driving the strategy. For the organization as a whole to adopt an innovative way of working, leaders first have to truly embrace it.

Pamela Marsh, Regional Sales Manager, Upwork

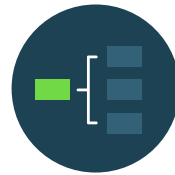
Partner with Upwork

Many large companies don't have the resources or institutional knowledge to develop and launch a flexible talent program. When you partner with Upwork, your organization not only has access to the world's largest talent pool, but it also receives the program structure and tools to implement a flexible talent program that will help you meet your business goals.



ONGOING GUIDANCE

Receive guidance that aligns with your business needs and goals. Our seasoned managers have helped Fortune 500 and other clients successfully develop and expand flexible talent programs company-wide.



A CONFIGURABLE SOLUTION

Upwork Enterprise provides your employees with the structure to efficiently find, engage, work with, and pay remote talent and agencies worldwide. You can tailor the solution to your team's internal processes to minimize friction and encourage usage.



ANALYTICAL DATA AND REPORTS

Access key data at any time to quantify success and understand how your program is performing against company goals and traditional staffing agencies. See details including average time-to-engage, fill rates, work quality, and spend.



UPWORK PROGRAM OWNER TOOLKIT

Drive adoption with tools that connect your company with training, account consultations, and marketing support.

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