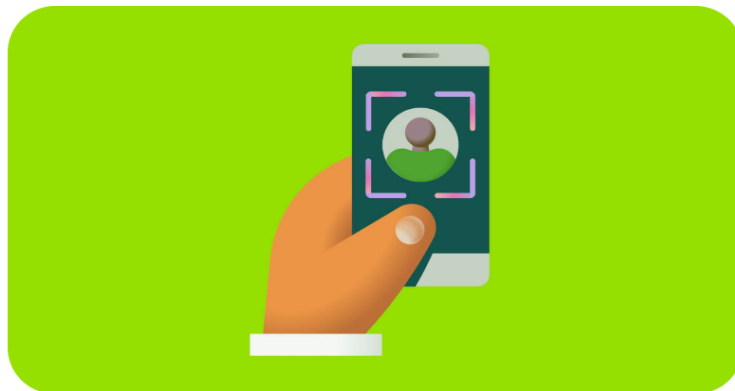


# Why More SMBs Are Building Teams With Freelancers Today

See how SMBs are using specialized talent to adapt faster and compete without adding headcount.



Small- and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) are under pressure to do more with less. Budgets are tight, timelines are short, and hiring a full-time employee isn't always possible.

That's why more SMBs are building teams with freelancers.

[Hiring trends](#) suggest this shift is gaining traction. More SMBs are using freelancers to stay flexible, move faster, and access skills they can't always hire in-house, especially as [AI is reshaping how humans work](#).

Below are the main reasons SMBs are turning to freelancers, and how this approach helps them grow without burning out their employees.

## Controlling costs without adding permanent headcount

Hiring full time is a big commitment for SMBs. Beyond salary are other concerns: benefits, onboarding time, and the risk of hiring before there's enough ongoing work.

Freelancers reduce that risk by letting SMBs [pay for specific outcomes instead of permanent roles](#). The intent isn't to replace employees. Freelancers support existing teams, handle overflow work, and bring in skills the business doesn't need full time.

That might mean hiring a [web designer](#) for a site refresh, a [Python developer](#) to debug code, or a [video editor](#) to create a product video. When the project ends, the cost does too.

## Finding the exact skills at the right time

Because freelancers often work remotely, SMBs aren't limited to their local talent market. They can look more broadly to find the specific mix of skills the work requires, even when that combination is ultra niche.

That's why Gabriel Richman, founder and CEO of [Omic OS](#), turns to freelancers: "We require specialists with both deep biological knowledge and modern AI expertise. These aren't skills we can easily find locally."

In [this video](#), Richman shares why his biotech business relied on freelancers from the start:



[See the full case study](#)

## Moving faster when timelines are tight

Freelancers are used to jumping into projects and getting to work quickly. Because the skill you hire them for is what they do day in and day out, they often need less ramp-up time than a new hire or an internal team member stretched thin.

This helps SMBs keep momentum without pulling employees away from their core work. Instead of reshuffling priorities or delaying deadlines, teams can bring in targeted support and keep projects moving on schedule.

## Adjusting capabilities as needs change

Freelancers help SMBs adjust to business changes without overhauling their teams. When priorities shift, businesses can bring in support to cover skill gaps, clear backlogs, and keep internal teams focused on what matters most.

Businesses that take this approach tend to be more resilient. A survey of more than 500 executives and directors show that [businesses that are better able to adapt](#) often rely on freelancers to access specialized skills as their needs evolve.

## Testing ideas before committing

Freelancers help teams explore new ideas before deciding what to pursue. They can be brought in to pilot a new channel, validate a product concept, or experiment with a new tool.

This approach is common in [modern growth teams](#). As Kanetha Phon at Goodness Labs venture studio explains, "We can do low-fidelity builds in under a week because we're accessing talent we wouldn't find [in Australia]. For the first time, I feel confident launching innovative ideas without being afraid. It's much lower risk."

By testing early and learning quickly, teams can decide what to build next based on real results, not assumptions.

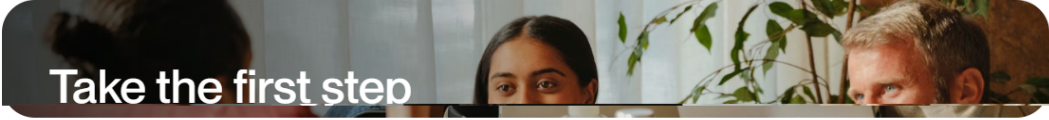
**"We can do low-fidelity builds in under a week because we're accessing talent we wouldn't find [in Australia]. For the first time, I feel confident launching innovative ideas without being afraid. It's much lower risk."**

**Kanetha Phon**

## Supporting AI and automation work

Many SMBs don't have deep AI or automation expertise in-house. Hiring full time can be expensive, and it's not always practical when tools and best practices are changing so quickly.

Businesses overcome those challenges by bringing in [freelance AI specialists](#) to help set up, test, and improve AI-powered workflows. That might include automating repetitive tasks, connecting tools across systems, or refining how teams use AI in their day-to-day work.



**Take the first step**

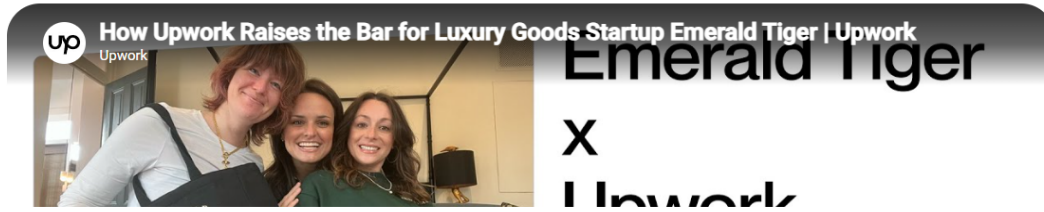
## Working with experienced, high-quality talent

For many SMB leaders, the biggest question is whether the work will meet the same standards they'd expect from a full-time hire. Freelancers often bring that level of experience, having worked across industries, companies, and complex projects.

As Kim Darlinq, CEO and cofounder of [Emerald Tiger](#), a luxury goods startup, puts it, "I can access high-caliber talent

with the same level of creativity, experience, and professionalism as the specialists I worked with when I was a VP at a large tech company.”

In [this video](#), Darling shares why she turns to freelancers first:



[Read the full case study](#)

## Protecting teams from burnout

In many SMBs, team members wear several hats. They can easily feel pulled in too many directions, especially when they're asked to take on work outside their core skills.

Freelancers can help ease that pressure by taking on specific projects. This gives internal teams the breathing room to stay focused on what they do best without constantly running at full speed.

For many teams, this also supports a healthier way of working. Expectations around [burnout and hustle culture](#) are changing, especially among younger workers; freelancers can help SMBs scale work without pushing teams past their limits.

## Building a team that can compete and adapt

As teams stay lean and priorities shift, flexibility and access to the right skills become real competitive advantages.

That's been true for companies like industrial manufacturer [Demco](#). As Brent Schuck, the company's director of marketing, explains, "People ask how we punch above our weight. The answer is by connecting authentically with our market, and we couldn't do that without help from freelancers."

For SMBs facing similar pressures, building teams that blend in-house employees with freelance specialists can make it easier to move forward with confidence as work continues to evolve.

[Explore Upwork Business Plus](#) to see how freelancers can support your team.