

THE  
2025

rosie

report

FREELANCERS REQUIRED

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# MARKETING'S NEW NORMAL: FREELANCE TALENT REQUIRED

**CAN YOU FEEL IT?** Right now, the marketing industry is pulsing with a “blink-and-you’ll miss it” energy. Brand leaders are grappling with game-changing AI. They’re adjusting to shifting consumer attitudes—often in real-time on social media. New platforms are springing up. New digital tools are emerging. The term “speed to market” has taken on a fresh urgency.

The name of the game? Adapt now, or go home.

In this dynamic environment, company executives crave fresh strategies to win consumers’ attention. A majority are unhappy with the ROI from their traditional agencies of record. Meanwhile, many of the best marketers have left those agencies—spurning the red tape and old-school methods that tend to hold back innovation.

It’s all led to a seismic change in the way marketing work gets done. As marketing leaders face pressure to do more with less time and resources, they’ve been steadily turning to freelance talent and teams, with 74% of companies increasing their use of freelancers in the last three years.

Since 2020, We Are Rosie has been commissioning annual surveys about the overall picture of the marketing workforce. With each report, we’ve witnessed the industry gather more and more freelancers into that work. Now, with the 2025 Rosie Report, we can confidently say that this state of play is no longer a trend. It’s a paradigm shift.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the heyday of freelance marketing teams.

## THE BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS YOU NEED TO KNOW FROM THIS YEAR’S RESEARCH?

- 1.** The freelancer’s superpower is efficiency. Combine that with specialized skill sets and the ability to bring down costs, and it’s clear why marketing teams at companies big and small are increasingly turning to freelancers.
- 2.** Experienced marketers and creatives continue to choose the independent path for the flexibility it offers. A pool of brilliant talent (with many who’ve helped shape the world’s most influential

brands) is exclusively available through freelance engagements.

- 3.** Freelance is a boon to both brands and talent, but the shift isn’t always easy. A more freelance-friendly future requires tailored approaches to hiring, onboarding, and team harmony.

As business leaders adjust to this new paradigm, We Are Rosie is poised to help. Our craft is building marketing and creative teams, whether expanding your in-house capabilities or creating a “talent squad” of freelancers to tackle a specific brief. (We have a 30K+ strong community of marketing specialists to choose from.) And because we helped pave the path to this moment, we know how to smoothly transition freelancers in and out of your org, keep talent happy and productive, and ensure labor law compliance.

The flexible talent model is moving quickly, and it’s absolutely essential to the success of today’s marketing teams. How fast will you adapt?

**JEFF LEVICK**  
CEO, WE ARE ROSIE

## CAN'T-MISS TAKEAWAYS

Freelancers drive ROI and efficiency for your marketing team in ways that AORs are falling short.

Marketing leaders are investing in more freelancers as they face the rapid pace of change in our industry.

With freelance models, you unlock access to a pool of highly skilled marketers and creatives unavailable via traditional work.

Most freelancers are choosing independent work and many have said 'no' to full-time positions.

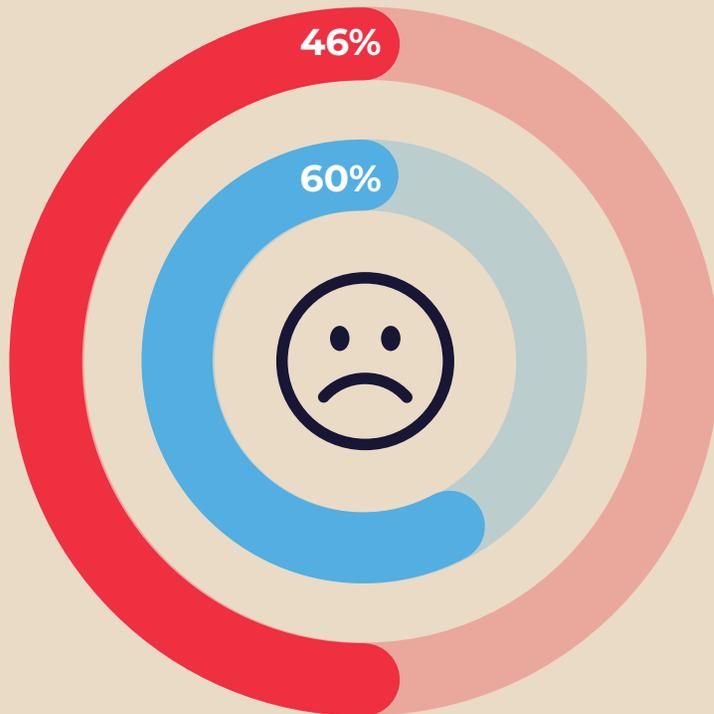
To successfully invest in freelance talent and teams, you need the right systems—or a great partner that's already built them. 😊

Standard hiring and onboarding processes are usually not freelance-friendly.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING:

Rapid-fire shifts in the marketing industry are driving a need for fresh work methods.

Marketing leaders are showing signs of dissatisfaction with Agency of Records (AOR). They're seeing alternatives to achieve a better ROI—no surprise since the average marketing budget was cut by 15% relative to revenue in 2024.



Marketing leaders that currently contract with an AOR

Those who say they're not completely satisfied with the ROI of the AOR



Over the last three years, about three-quarters of marketing teams have increased their use of freelance talent.

Over the last 3 years ...

**74%**

of employers say their use of freelance talent has increased

And in 2025...

**57%**

of employers expect their use of freelance talent to increase

As the corporate world continues to benefit from flex work, freelancers are feeling bullish about the future. The majority plan to continue freelancing and would encourage a friend or colleague to try it.



68%

are likely to  
recommend  
freelancing to  
a friend



“Freelancing has given me the space and autonomy to figure out what I want to do next. I get to continue working, applying and learning against this discipline, but the level of flexibility that I receive allows me to shape my life and my days so that I can really take the time to be thoughtful about what I’m doing.”

DWAYNA HALEY  
ROSIE COMMUNITY MEMBER

we are rosie



## How A Global Hospitality Company Used Flex Workers to Weather a Storm

One of the world’s leading hotel companies—with nearly 20 brands under its umbrella—was facing some serious marketing challenges. At a time of industry-wide turbulence and uncertainty, its leaders needed to cut costs. Rather than pay hefty fees to a marketing AOR, they wanted to form their own team of hospitality industry creatives (including art directors, copywriters, production designers, account managers, social content creators, etc.).

But the team needed to be agile. Could they find seasoned marketers who could step in and out of projects based on the creative needs and budgetary constraints of the moment? When the company partnered with We Are Rosie, the answer was a resounding yes.

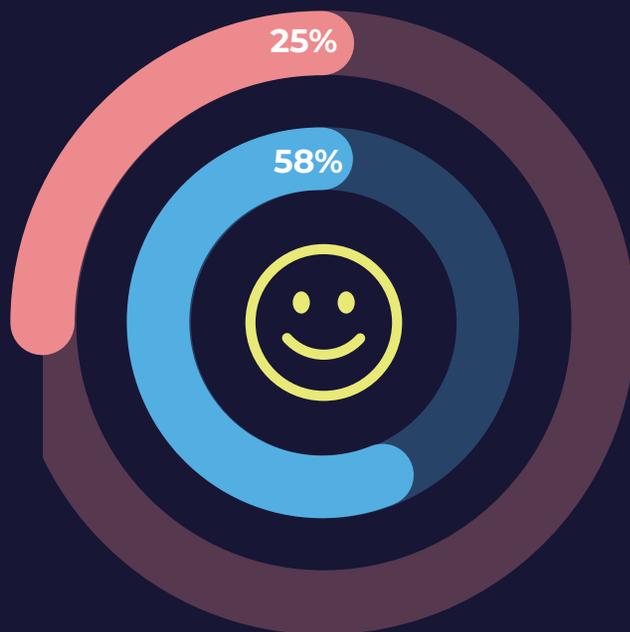
We Are Rosie’s strategists drew from their pool of 30K+ marketing freelancers to support the creation of a cost-effective, in-house creative studio. Over the course of one year, 19 freelance creative marketers offered their expertise across 17 brands. We Are Rosie flexed this team up and down as needed, responding to changing conditions. By year’s end, 29,000 assets had been nimbly and affordably created—and in 2024, that number jumped to 32,000 assets.

# WHY IT'S WORKING:

Brands are embracing the efficiency of flex talent and reaping the rewards.

As the marketing landscape changes, brands need the agility of the freelance workforce to keep up. Talent is benefitting too.

As the speed of marketing continues to accelerate, why do business leaders prefer to hire freelancers? For starters, it's easier to bring them on.



Marketing leaders that say it's easy to procure an AOR

Marketing leaders that say it's easy to hire freelance talent



## Did you know?

While business leaders find it easier to bring on freelance talent, they need to do so in compliance with labor laws. Most marketing freelancers need to be hired as employees (with a W-2 tax form) rather than through a contractor engagement (with a 1099 tax form). But the rules can be murky, because the IRS has a long list of criteria to decide a flex worker's tax status. Here are just three of the questions asked:

1. Is the function the worker performs an integral part of the business?
2. Does the worker invest in tools to perform the work?
3. Is the working relationship based on the worker being in business for themselves and marketing their services or labor to multiple businesses?

Companies can avoid risking noncompliance by delegating this tricky aspect of hiring to a partner (like a We Are Rosie) who's seasoned in tax classification issues.

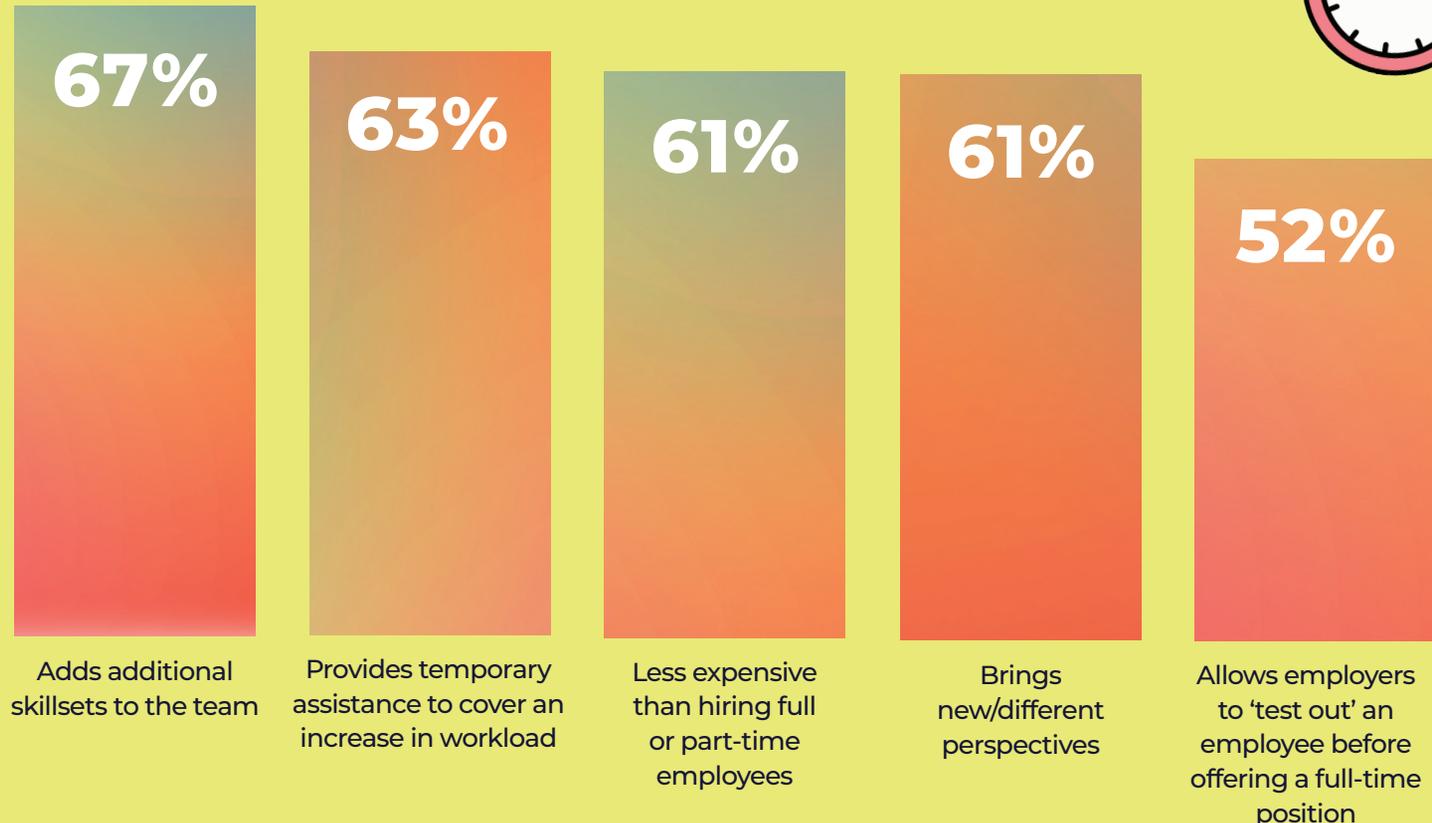
# AMONG BUSINESS LEADERS, THE MOST COMMONLY CITED REASON FOR HIRING FREELANCE TALENT IS...**EFFICIENCY.**

**81%**

of business leaders say it allows them to produce more work and/or work more quickly



Here are some of the other motivators for hiring freelancers, according to company employers:



43%

continue to freelance to have flexibility in their schedules

THE LEADING REASON FREELANCERS CHOOSE FLEXIBLE WORK IS “CONTROL OVER MY SCHEDULE.”

### WHAT DROVE YOU TO BEGIN FREELANCING?

More flexible work schedule 53%



Remote work preference 44%



Independence 42%



Opportunity to earn a higher income 33%



Variety of projects 30%



Loss of job 27%



#### MISCONCEPTION:

Most freelancers work this way because a job loss has pushed them into it.



#### TRUTH:

Most freelancers choose to work this way.

The industry has actually reached a point where some marketing talent is only available via freelance projects. About one-fifth of freelancers (19%) would give a hard “no” to working full-time, even if existing clients requested it.



## FREELANCE OR BUST?

Parents and caregivers lead busy lives that often don't fit neatly into a 9-to-5 schedule. Not surprisingly, they are among those most likely to fall into this “freelance-only” group.

### Who's likely to be freelancing three years from now?

Parents/caregivers 73%



Nonparents/noncaregivers 60%



### Who's likely to recommend freelancing?

Parents/caregivers 77%



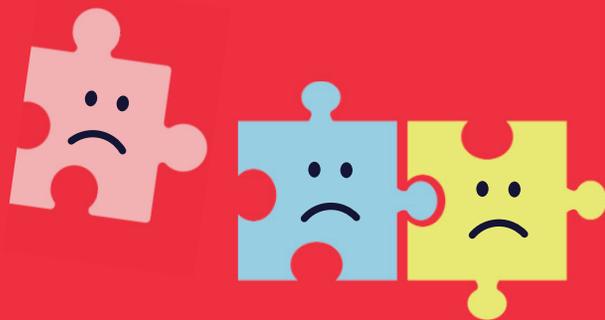
Nonparents/noncaregivers 58%



## The Stakes for Working Mothers—and for Companies

The need for adaptive schedules is particularly salient for working mothers. According to McKinsey's 2023 Women in the Workplace Report, “38 percent of mothers with young children say that without workplace flexibility, they would have had to leave their company or reduce their work hours.”

Companies that don't have a flex talent strategy risk losing some of the highest-performing workers. A study published in The Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization showed that after experiencing a drop in productivity for a brief period when their children were small, working mothers proved to be highly productive—more so than peers without children.



# THE MISSING PIECE

Business leaders and marketers have a pressing need for freelance-supporting infrastructure.

As freelance hiring surges, brand leaders and talent would like to see more systems in place for hiring and onboarding.

## WHAT MARKETING LEADERS NEED

Today's marketing leaders are bogged down with tasks related to team leadership, which is taking away from important creative work.

**60%**

said they spend most of their time on team leadership and managing employees

**62%**

said they'd rather spend more time on creative development

**We asked marketing leaders: if you could improve one thing about working with freelancers right now, what would it be?**

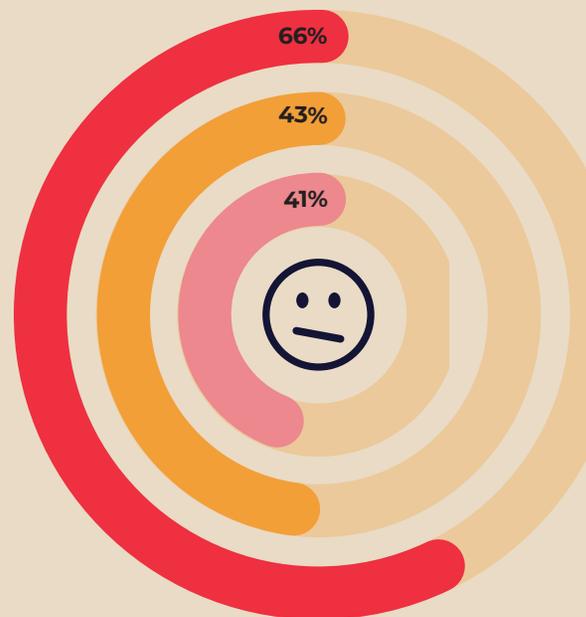
"A better, more efficient way to have a pool of freelancers to pull from."

"Better filtering for finding the right freelance candidates."

"Finding the right fit for the job needed."

**With their freelancers, marketing leaders desire faster onboarding and more intentional team cohesion.**

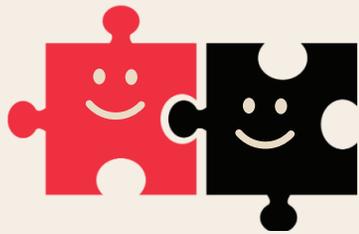
Here are the other drawbacks that need to be addressed:



There can be a learning curve for freelancers when they come onto a project

I don't always feel as in sync with those who don't work in a full-time office capacity

It's hard to feel like a team when everyone has different schedules



## **We Are Rosie: Your Perfect-Fit Partner**

Our team delivers marketing solutions fast without upfront costs by casting the best specialist talent and teams, vetted specifically for your brand and project. With a diverse community of 30k+ marketers at our fingertips, we make it easy to access unexpected talent that's in tune with your target audience, in agile and innovative ways. Since 2018, our team of magic-makers has partnered with 200+ companies, leading the shift toward freelance talent and teams in the marketing industry.



### **FINDING THE RIGHT FREELANCER OFTEN COMES DOWN TO EXPERIENCE.**

Marketers in the Rosie community tend to be more seasoned in flex work than those in the general pool of marketing freelancers. When they join new projects, their extensive backgrounds make onboarding and team cohesion smoother and faster.

**30%**

of the Rosie community  
has 10+ years of  
freelance experience

**11%**

in the general pool of  
marketing freelancers  
has 10+ years of  
freelance experience

THE ROSIE ALCHEMY

**Strategy + Casting + Community = Rosie Magic**



**What we offer:**

- Talent strategy and workforce compliance always included
- Whole-human approach to casting talent from our inclusive community of 30k+
- Expert marketers who love your brand and know your target audience
- A complete back-office partner that handles pay and benefits
- Onboarding, offboarding, and resource management support
- A model that flexes and flows, with no retainer required
- A partnership that helps you get to the big idea, fast

**CONTACT US**



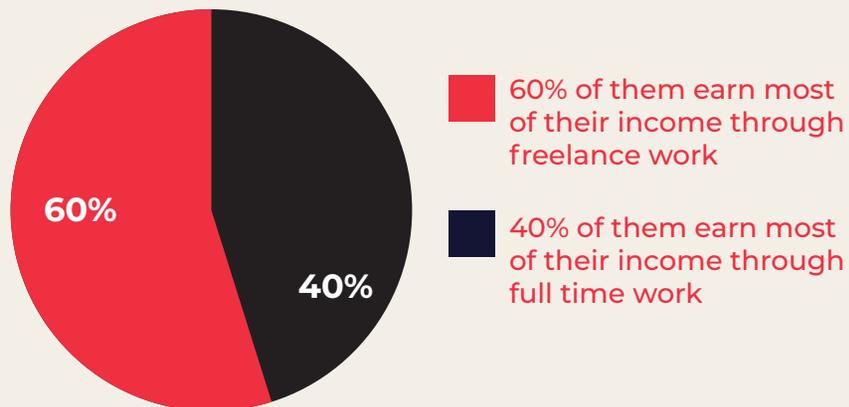
# METHODOLOGY

Research was conducted on behalf of We Are Rosie by Harvest Insights, an independent woman-owned research firm.

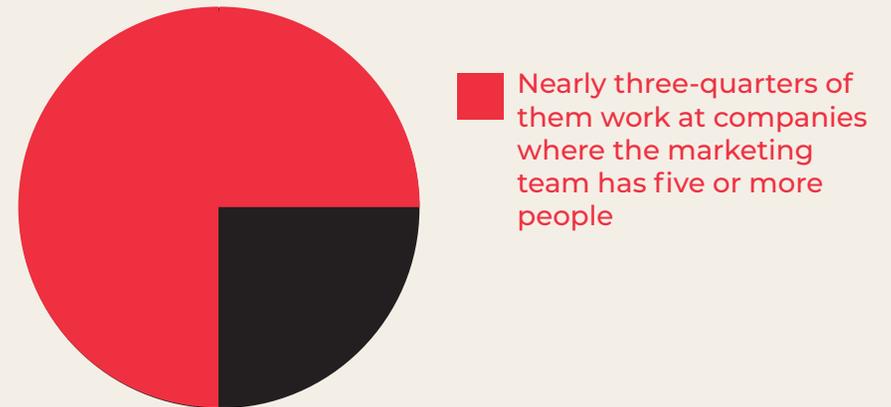


Who'd we talk to?

## 200 MARKETING FREELANCERS



## MARKETING LEADERS AT 204 COMPANIES



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 [www.wearerosie.com](http://www.wearerosie.com)