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How Worksuite helped Westchester Education Services achieve greater visibility into the skill set of their freelance talent pool

Westchester
Education Services

To find a user-friendly platform that enabled seamless organization and management of an extensive freelance talent network

When Kevin J. Gray began his role as President and Chief Content Officer at Westchester Education Services in 2017, he knew there was an immediate need to find a robust software platform to manage their contingent workforce of several hundred freelancers.

> "At previous companies we really struggled with having a sense of who we were working with - who was good, and who wasn't. I'd been at a couple of places where we tried to build our own freelancer databases, and it was kind of a mess. So I started thinking – things like Yelp and TripAdvisor exist – there has to be software out there for freelancers that does what we're trying to do."

After considering a few different technology solutions, the team at Westchester decided to move ahead with the Worksuite platform. This was due to Worksuite's intuitive front end that made it simple for non-technical users to navigate and work in – and also the competitive price point of the platform.

> "We needed something that behind the scenes had a really powerful database, but with a front end that was easy to use, and relatively intuitive. I thought that Worksuite was the best of the solutions for interface and usability, and it could be set up pretty easily."

"Worksuite has really changed how we work with our freelancers. It's made a world of difference to how we vet resources and understand the talent pool we are working with. It's mind boggling compared to where we were. I'll never go back – it's awesome."

Kevin J. Gray
President and Chief Content Officer, Westchester Education Services

A platform that provided greater visibility into the skills and backgrounds of their freelancer talent pool

Westchester and Worksuite began implementing the platform and customizing elements based on the specifics of Westchester's existing processes – including onboarding workflows, data capture and reporting, and issuing master services agreements and SOWs.

> "The onboarding workflows have been really helpful in that we have been able to use that as a way to bring folks on board, get to know something about them, and then screen if this person is going to be a good fit. We have tags and reviews we can associate with them"

In the Worksuite platform, the Westchester teams can assign internal ranking "medals" for each individual freelancer, so they can easily search and obtain a granular view of who will be the best available contractor for any given project.

> "What we do is set up some rules. In our world, a gold medal means they are an A-list freelancer. If they're available, we should use them on every project. Silver means this person's vetted. We use them on projects, and they're good. Bronze means they've gone through the steps, or they've been referred to us by someone who we know, but we don't know enough about them to put them in an A or B list category yet"

As Westcher's contingent talent covers all disciplines, being able to find the closest match freelancers for any project means they can save hours of time sourcing the right person to assign. It has also given them the ability to search for very specific project needs and find ideal talent quickly.

> "Say I am going to start a math project. I want to be able to go into Worksuite and type in "math sixth grade writer". And then I want to be able to get 10 names and see who's on the A list, who's in the B list, and who are the folks who are promising that we've never used."

As well as their top talent, it was equally important for Westchester to be able to flag freelancers that they don't want to work with in the future. With Worksuite, they can easily tag individuals who aren't recommended - to ensure they aren't brought on for future assignments.

───── **Result**

Simplified workflows, compliant onboarding, and the ability to source and assign tasks to the perfect freelancers based on performance, background, and lived experiences

Worksuite has made life a lot simpler for the accounts and editorial teams at Westchester Education Services. Their onboarding flows now ensure they capture all the information needed for compliance, tax, and payment before any contractor is assigned work.

If any legal agreements need to be updated, Westchester can now easily push them out to every freelancer in their talent pool with a few clicks.

> "The paperwork associated with the freelancers all goes through Worksuite. And that has been so nice, because it used to just be a hodgepodge collection of files on a server somewhere, and you hoped that the leads working on the project remembered to get people to sign stuff. It has really simplified things – and protected us"

Westchester places a focus on diversity, equality, and inclusion when it comes to sourcing and assigning talent. Worksuite has enabled them to create educational materials that better reflect the needs of their clients in a way they weren't able to do before.

> "A lot of our recruiting efforts have been centered around trying to make sure we're bringing historically marginalized voices into our freelance pool. Worksuite has been really important in that because it's given us a solid place to store and highlight these profiles, and the diverse lenses that people are bringing to their experiences."

Westchester has also used the RFI feature in Worksuite to source freelancers that match their clients' requirements in terms of specific lived experiences and backgrounds. This has enabled them to go directly to their talent pool and reach out to potential matches in order to get the requisite number of contractors for any given project.

> "We might have a client saying "Hey, we want to create a series of Spanish readers, and we want them to be written by people who are of Latin descent, who can help retell the stories of the Latinx diaspora."

"So we could go into Worksuite and say, okay - who are folks who self-identify with that lived experience? Then we're able to reach out to those freelancers because they have the skill set, and have self-identified as having this experience. That wouldn't be possible just using spreadsheets. It's been really helpful to diversify our freelance talent, and to bring new voices into the pool."

Worksuite highlights for Westchester Education Services

Westchester Education Services now partners with Worksuite to manage the end-to-end management of their contingent workforce – including recruiting and onboarding.

- Westchester uses Worksuite's Talent Pool hub for freelancers around the country. They stay organized by using the onboarding module to successfully onboard freelancers within their environment.
- Worksuite supports Westchester in sourcing new talent and creating opportunities to enhance their external workforce.
- Westchester's talent pool works closely with Worksuite to handle any support requests they may have.

"I would tell anyone working in a gig economy-based environment with a large pool of freelancers, that Worksuite gives you greater ease of communication with teams, and greater visibility into the skillset of your talent."

Westchester Education Services provides educational publishers and ed-tech providers with content development, art and design, production and project management services – including content creation for student and teacher-facing materials, original illustrations, photo research, page design and layout, and post-development editorial and pre-press production.

Their vetted freelancer talent pool includes several hundred writers, editors, illustrators, designers, photo researchers, page layout artists, and culturally responsive educational reviewers.

See how easy it is to onboard, manage, and pay your freelance network with Worksuite's centralized, user-friendly platform.

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