Voices
2022 Annual
Trends Report
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Intro

Each year, Voices collects insights from widespread surveys and combines it with internal data to predict future trends in audio, creative services, freelancing, and the way we work.

After connecting with more than 1,100 survey respondents and leveraging internal information, it’s evident that the future of work has been uppermost in the minds of many.

With so much change in the world over the past few years, led primarily by the global COVID-19 pandemic, the typical ways of working have also shifted. Companies were forced to adopt remote and hybrid work strategies wherever possible in the face of the initial wave in early 2020, and many of those companies have since elected to incorporate remote work into their permanent work models.

In the creative freelance world, many scrambled to transform their nearest closet into a recording studio in order to keep up with auditions or to set up a functional work space in which they could write, edit, and create from home.

One thing is clear: regardless of the industry you find yourself in, it’s likely that the way you work has changed somehow over the last 18 months.

In our Annual Trends Report, we dive into how work environments will continue to evolve, how businesses are enhancing their marketing strategies by utilizing freelance talent, and what that means going into 2022.

The top three changes companies have seen since the shift to remote or hybrid work involve collaboration, creativity, and productivity amongst team members, and not in the way you might think.

Having the ability to go into a room, corner, or nook of your home, remove distractions, and focus on work seems more effective than being in a crowded office. And perhaps surprisingly, working remotely has actually increased the sense of community for many. This approach seems like the best of both worlds.
01 Remote Work Is Here to Stay

In our 2021 Annual Trends Report, we highlighted a shift to remote work. This year, with over 90% of respondents confirming they will permanently offer remote work opportunities, it’s evident that remote work is here to stay.

It seems that the percentage of employers who plan to implement remote work as part of their permanent business model is on par with the 94% of 800 employers who said that productivity was the same as or higher than it was before the pandemic, even with their employees working remotely when surveyed by Mercer, an HR and workplace benefits consulting firm.

With statistics like these, it’s no surprise that many of our survey respondents had positive things to say about the effects of remote work:
“It simply seems to make more sense that individuals can continue accomplishing tasks remotely and not be constrained to a physical location.”

The top three changes companies have seen since the shift to remote or hybrid work involve collaboration, creativity, and productivity amongst team members, and not in the way you might think.

Having the ability to go into a room, corner, or nook of your home, remove distractions, and focus on work seems more effective than being in a crowded office. And perhaps surprisingly, working remotely has actually increased the sense of community for many. This approach seems like the best of both worlds.

“It’s simply less stressful, thus the workers feel more at ease and perform better from their own space.”

“As a video editor, producer, and motion designer, I worked remotely prior to the pandemic and will continue to do so as it pertains to each individual project. It doesn’t matter where the work is done as long as it gets done.”

“Employees generally feel happier, less stressed, and are in a better mood, thus increasing productivity and uplifting the new virtual culture.”

Survey Question
Have you noticed any changes to the following as your teams have adopted remote and/or hybrid work?

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<th>Feature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
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<td>Engagement</td>
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An increase in creativity is the top noticed change in employees since adopting remote work. Productivity and collaboration follow closely behind as the second and third most noticeable changes in employees working remotely.

2022 Prediction:
If nothing else, 2020 and 2021 have shown us that the future is largely unpredictable. However, the data doesn't lie, and we predict that a flexible work environment will continue to be implemented by many companies across an expanse of industries. What once seemed scary and unknown is now proving to be beneficial for both companies and employees.

The shift to remote work will continue to be embraced by many businesses as productivity continues to increase, collaboration strengthens, creativity flourishes, and the talent pool diversifies and is no longer dictated by geographic location.

It’s important to keep in mind that investing in the right tools will be imperative to keep teams connected. Task management systems, project management tools, video conferencing platforms, cloud-based file hosting and sharing databases, and communication and chat tools will remain crucial in assuring productivity, creativity, and collaboration as we continue down the path of remote work.

In sharing why brands should care about remote work, Voices CEO David Ciccarelli says “You’ll be able to draw from a larger scope of talent without uprooting your life or business...you can reach new customers through marketing channels that would previously have required more in-house power, time, and effort, all from the comfort of your own home or office.”
Freelance Talent Is on the Rise

In 2021, Voices saw an increase of 245% in talent sign ups, meaning the demand for freelance talent continues to rise. The flexibility to work from anywhere and set your own schedule is appealing to both talent and clients, offering a wealth of benefits that traditional work models aren’t able to match.

Skilled professionals are seeking out freelance work for a number of reasons, such as an improved work-life balance, increased control over their schedules, and reliability and stability in the face of uncertainty—75% of freelancers stated their wages remained stable at a time when traditional jobs were suffering from layoffs, permanent closures, and loss of employment.

With almost 35% of the global workforce self-identifying as freelance talent, the freelance economy is bound to expand greatly in the coming years. This is good news for both freelance talent and for the buyers who require their services.

When asked what the biggest benefit of freelance work is, the Voices talent community continuously comes back with one answer above all: freedom and flexibility.

68% of freelancers share that flexibility in their schedules was the main draw for pursuing freelancing. With the ability to choose which jobs they do and don’t want to take, the hours they want to work, and the holidays they’re able to enjoy without worrying about time off requests or missing days in the office, being able to make their own schedules is widely regarded as the number one perk of working in the freelance world.

Beyond work-life balance, workflow improvement, and employment success, the lucrative possibilities that come with freelancing are also a draw for the millions of people who have turned to freelance work. For some, freelancing is a full-time occupation, while others utilize freelance work to bolster their regular income. Either way, freelancing offers abundant money-making opportunities, attracting skilled talent from around the world.

2022 Prediction:

As the COVID-19 pandemic has likely forever altered our world as we know it, it has also favorably changed the landscape of the freelance economy. With the tremendous opportunities for freedom, flexibility, and financial gain, there is no better time to delve into freelance work than the present.

In 2020, the United States saw 59 million people doing freelance work—just over one third, or 36%, of the entire U.S. population. But it’s not just North American and European freelancers who are getting in on the expanding freelance economy.

The uptake of freelancing as a professional is global. In India, there was a 46% increase in new freelancers joining the gig economy between Q1 and Q2 of 2020 and a wave of new freelancers in Pakistan contributing to a 47% increase in monthly freelance revenue in the month of June 2020.

The freelance economy will continue to evolve, inviting more talented individuals with a variety of skills to turn to freelancing and carve out their own unique niche in the freelance industry.
The Benefits of Hiring Freelancers Are Clear

The freelance industry will become an even more integral part of the economy, especially considering that freelancing was responsible for contributing **$1.2 trillion USD to the US economy** alone in 2020.

There are **plenty of reasons for brands to care about and utilize freelancing** in their business strategies, not limited to expanded talent pool options, quick turnaround times, access to niche industry expertise, and the ability to scale up and down rapidly with no risk due to avoiding a lengthy recruitment process or entering into a long term contract with health benefits and vacation. Saving time and money is a direct result of working with freelancers.

With over 2 million registered talent eager to start their next project, we wanted to know what types of jobs our clients are hiring for. Voices saw an increase of 22% in Voice Over for Internet Video projects compared to 2021. This data proves that online audio advertisements will continue to rise in 2022.

2022 Prediction:

In 2022, the freelance industry will continue to rise as companies look to freelance talent and online marketplaces to meet their project needs, with a particular nod to online audio advertisements.

**42% of small businesses** in the US and **33% of Fortune 500 companies** are already turning to freelance marketplaces to outsource their work. We predict that those numbers will continue to rise as the need for flexible staffing, almost immediate turnaround times, and niche creative expertise grows, fuelled by the uncertainty the COVID-19 pandemic has made a staple in many industries.

Brands who are already capitalizing on the benefits of freelance services will continue to do so at a higher rate, while those who have not yet incorporated freelancers into their business and marketing strategies will begin to do so.
How often do you hire freelance talent for creative work?

- Once per week (50+ times per year): 31%
- Once per quarter (4 times per year): 29%
- Once per month (12 times per year): 26%

31% of companies surveyed are hiring freelance talent once per week, 29% hire once per quarter, and 26% hire once per month.

Survey Question
The number of internet jobs on Voices increased by 22% in 2021

In 2021, Voices saw a 22% increase in Voice Over for Internet Video Projects.

Voice over continues to dominate the type of freelance talent companies are looking for. With audio being a core component to our clients’ marketing strategies, it’s no surprise that 40% of respondents are incorporating online audio ads into the mix in 2022.

Over 50% of respondents rely solely on Voices to find their next freelance talent, meaning they trust in Voices’ ability to connect them with professional and skilled freelancers quickly and reliably.

A long-time Voices client shared “Voices generally provides us with casting options for new shows within a matter of days, which speaks to the size of their talent base. We haven’t yet found a role that we weren’t able to cast through Voices’ network.”

Not only are we seeing more freelancers being hired going into 2022, but the frequency in which our clients are hiring talent is increasing. When asked “How often do you hire freelance talent for creative work?” we saw a 13% jump in “once per week” and a decrease in longer timeframes, such as quarterly. This tells us that companies are seeing the benefit of hiring freelance talent for their projects and trusting Voices to connect them with the right freelancer at the right time.

“There’s a lot of benefit that accompanies this shift to gig work; there will be more flexibility and opportunity to bridge any gaps that exist within a team, a project, or a company as a whole through utilizing specific freelance service offerings.”

David Ciccarelli, Voices CEO
Audio Presents New Opportunities for Authentic Marketing

In addition to implementing new ways of connecting digitally amidst the remote work revolution, many marketing strategies have also shifted to incorporate more audio-focused projects, often completed by skilled freelance talent.
Over 50% of respondents are hiring voice actors to bring their projects to life, making it apparent that audio continues to make a noticeable impact in this digital world. And with 35% of respondents stating they have a goal of ‘Brand Awareness’ in 2022, choosing the right voice actor to represent your company is an essential first step in ensuring your sonic branding is poignant and consistent.

This year, Dunkin’ Donuts focused on their digital audio advertising strategy and piloted a symphonic ad campaign that was hugely successful, growing engagement by an impressive 238%. Keith Lusby, VP of Media at Dunkin’ Donuts, stated the symphonic ads created “a seamless, personalized ad experience” and contributed directly to the success of the campaign.

Spotify has even presented research that shows “a staggering 81% of listeners have taken action after hearing audio ads during a podcast. These actions include researching a product online, connecting with the brand on social media, and talking about the brand with others.”

2022 Prediction:

Audio-first experiences will continue to play an integral role in our digital world and are changing the traditional landscape of both social media and marketing.

With the average person spending 145 minutes on social media each day, we are craving real connection to one another. This need for genuine interaction often cannot be met by traditional, visual-first advertising strategies, so consumers will be looking for authentic ways to not only connect, but to better understand brands on a more personal level.

Brands—this includes but is not limited to companies in every industry, influencers, authors, celebrities, and more—will need to meet consumers’ needs and desires for more candid, honest, and human-feeling interactions and advertising in place of the standard highly-polished and perfectly poised content we’ve grown accustomed to. And the best part is that your target market is already available to you through audio spaces.

While 82.4% of podcast listeners spend more than seven hours each week listening to podcasts, a further 22% listen to over 22 hours of podcasts per week and 35% listen to more than 10 different podcasts per month. Podcasts are being readily and happily consumed by listeners at an astonishing rate, and the audio landscape is clearly rife with opportunity for audio advertising that will bring a more well-rounded approach to business strategy.

Audio-first experiences, like podcasts themselves, podcast advertisements, and Clubhouse chats, will help to bridge the gap and lead us into a new, more authentic age of social media and marketing while providing ample opportunity for effective advertising.
What Does This Mean for 2022?

In the process of assembling the 2022 Trends Report, we’ve learned a few things:

1. **A remote workforce is not only highly productive, creative, and collaborative, but it is largely preferred by both employees and employers.**

2. **People everywhere are prioritizing work-life balance, freedom, and flexibility more than they were prior to the pandemic and the new remote and hybrid ways of working.**

3. **Marketers are discovering specialized freelancers.**

As a result, many people have either sought out opportunities within companies that allow them to work remotely to maintain their work-life balance or have turned to freelance work either as a side hustle or as a replacement for their traditional job.

The future of work is undeniably both remote and freelance. The general opinion of the freelance economy—historically referred to as the gig economy—is changing to a more positive one, bolstered by the abundance of benefits for both freelancers and their service buyers.

The world has likely been permanently changed by the Covid-19 pandemic. This trickles down to everything, including the way we work, how people consume content and advertising, and what your audience wants from you (hint: it’s more authentic content and advertising).

As a brand with creative gaps to fill, this immense shift works in your favor by saving you time and money while supplying you with almost limitless opportunities in the talent pool. If you haven’t yet used a freelancing marketplace to meet your project needs, there is no better time to start than now.
Methodology

Voices deployed a qualitative survey targeting registered client users of Voices, ranging in industries from advertising, broadcast media, entertainment, film, education, and training. The survey looked to understand current market trends and how the landscape of the audio industry and freelance talent has changed over the last year.

1,112 survey respondents answered the survey that consisted of 22 questions. 484 respondents completed the survey in full. The survey opened on October 7, 2021 and closed on October 26, 2021. There was an incentive of the chance to win one of five $100 Amazon gift cards for the completion of the survey.

About Voices

With over two million members, Voices is the largest audio marketplace connecting talent and clients in the world. Since 2005, the biggest and most beloved brands have entrusted Voices to help them find their voice. Headquartered in London, Canada, Voices helps service clients and voice talent in over 160 countries.