

How ITN partnered with Worksuite to achieve huge time savings and stronger relation



Challenge

To simplify the management of, improve communication with, and ensure the large freelance workforce felt part of the organisation

ITN relies on a large freelance workforce. Creating excellent relationships with these freelancers is critical to keeping production schedules on track and ensuring strong and diverse production teams.

Prior to implementing WorkSuite, ITN was relying on manual internal systems such as Word documents and emails to manage the registration of new freelancers, processing of their payments, and sharing knowledge of freelance availability or new freelancers who might not have worked for ITN previously.

This was slow and frustrating for both ITN and the freelancers and was prone to error and to documents getting missed or lost in inboxes.

“When I arrived at ITN, I was horrified because they had no easy system to track who was working for them on a freelance basis, or visibility around the freelancer’s experience when it came to engaging with ITN through to completing a contract and payment.”

Freelancers new to ITN were required to download a word document, fill it in, then scan and email the completed documents back. Not easy if you’re away on location with no access to printers. If this wasn’t done in time, it sometimes held up processing an invoice relating to the completed engagement

This caused frustration for the freelancer which obviously wasn’t conducive to good company/freelancer working relationships.

“My priority when I arrived at ITN was really to just find a way to tackle that, because it was creating an unnecessary amount of work and tension”

It was critical for ITN to maintain their reputation as a good employer. They initially looked at refining and simplifying their existing freelance management processes, but it quickly became clear that it was time to look for a more robust, external solution.

Solution

An all-in-one platform that made freelancer management effortless

One of ITN's production team members was constantly looking at new software to solve their freelance management dilemmas, and this was how they discovered the Worksuite platform.

"The one thing I knew we needed to make it work and get engagement was something that was effortless. (ITN and freelancers) wouldn't have engaged with anything that was in anyway overly complex"

Members of the ITN production team met with the Worksuite team to walk through the platform and discuss how it could meet ITN's specific needs for managing and assigning their freelancers.

ITN was confident that Worksuite's software was something that could immediately help them, and was also flexible enough to grow alongside their business over time.

"We were really impressed by what Worksuite showed us in terms of building a freelance database and getting us off Word documents – which was my main concern"

ITN's production team rolled out Worksuite gradually to road test the new system.

There was instant engagement from the handful of freelancers who were initially introduced to the new platform. They saw it could reduce all the steps they needed to take from initial onboarding to managing their assignments, invoicing for projects and expenses, and ensuring they got paid quickly.

"The initial engagement for me was just the ability to have one main place which our freelancers could own. They could own their own profile and get rid of ITN's archaic system of constantly expecting them to fill in forms, or getting assigned too many things at once"

Another advantage for ITN was the security aspect of the Worksuite platform. ITN has incredibly high data security due to its news coverage, so it was essential that any new software didn't jeopardize this.

Any concerns about potential security breaches or GDPR breaches were discussed at length with the Worksuite team and ITN's Security and Compliance team. Worksuite was entirely collaborative with ITN's team to ensure that the whole system meet ITN's requirements and standards.

ITN worked with WorkSuite to implement the platform, upload their existing freelance database, and fine tune the software to suit their specific requirements before it was rolled out to their wider freelancer network, other divisions within the organisation, and finance team.

“It was a real collaboration. It was a real kind of “hand in hand” relationship. What do you want the software to do? What if it did this instead? For months, that’s how we worked side by side”

Result

Huge time savings and stronger working relationships with their freelance contractors

When ITN’s production team was happy with their WorkSuite setup, they approached the finance team to show them how the new system would help them streamline freelancer registration and subsequently with the rollout of IR35 legislation in the UK, the implementation of and compliance with that.

“They were really impressed. They liked the fact that finally there was one place to go to manage a freelance worker, find their information, and ensure they were compliant. They immediately saw the benefits it would bring..”

Using WorkSuite has resulted in significant time savings for ITN, because the production management team was no longer spending time chasing apparent missing documents and non-payments.

With every document and interaction being stored in a central portal, ITN’s teams are able to view the workflow and see instantly if documents have been uploaded and necessary information provided, which ensures the whole process runs smoothly.

Diversity across the workforce is of primary importance for ITN and one of the essential features that ITN requested from WorkSuite was the ability to access reports showing the level of diversity across the divisions.

“Because we factored in diversity, we can also quickly see how diverse our freelance workforce is. We can pull down records that tell us whether or not we’re working hard enough to make sure that we’ve got a diverse database”

WorkSuite also helped ITN manage their assignments and projects more easily. With the centralized platform, they can now post details of opportunities when they are crewing up and needing freelancers.

Freelancers in the database can now receive notifications directly to their email address about upcoming work, and can respond with their availability. This means ITN's hiring managers have access to an ever growing skilled workforce even when they need someone at the very last minute

With a network approaching 5,000 freelance contractors around the world, it was really difficult to communicate effectively with all of them about company news, policy changes that might affect them etc. But with WorkSuite, that's no longer an issue.



Each individual contractor can be contacted and notified about relevant updates and tasks, and ITN can be confident that they are aware of, and have received and acknowledged policies and compliance manuals that are mandatory before working for the company.

"If you've got a large freelance workforce, it will absolutely transform how you engage with them. And it will make your freelancers feel that they are a valued part of the workforce, because you can communicate with them easily. ITN is a multi-faceted organisation with a large number of different workflows, skill requirements, operational needs – if ITN can make this work for them, anyone can."



ITN Productions

ITN Productions is a division of the news organisation, Independent Television News (ITN). It produces long-form documentaries for both UK and international broadcasters and streamers as well as providing host broadcaster services for major sporting events for the IAAF, advertising and content for major conferences for organisations such as the CBI.



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