



# The Marketing Analytics Talent Solution for Fast-Changing Times

upwork™

# Table of Contents

**03** Answering the call

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**04** The power of possible

---

**05** The pressure is on

---

**08** The two sides of remote work

---

**10** Seeing work differently

---

**20** Shape your future

---

**22** Dial up your velocity

---

# Answering the call

Experts predict that as the economy recovers, businesses who stand out from the crowd and drive revenue at scale will become the new market leaders. And businesses are leaning on data marketing to provide a clear path.

Advancing to the front requires getting so granular with data that you gain a clear understanding of what consumers want—and just as important, deliver it when consumers want it.

But diving deeper into data and taking fast action requires extra help, special skills, and tools. Resources that may seem out of reach as businesses continue tightening their belts.

However, we've been impressed by a growing number of companies that created an efficient work-around.

This solution is how marketing and analytics teams, including ours at Upwork, are hitting aggressive KPIs and executing game-changing initiatives in record time: by using what's been available to them all along.

In the following pages, we'll show how your team can use the same solution to move from "I can't" to "Here's how we're going to make it happen."

Resource limitations may never go away. But with this solution, they'll stop holding your team back from delivering at their highest potential.



**Vijay Raghavendiran**

Director, Marketing Analytics

# The power of possible



If you're using predictive models, forecasts, and dashboards created during a more stable time, you probably noticed they may not be reliable or even relevant today. Customer behaviors are changing quickly, and it's difficult to anticipate what the economy will be like in a few months.

That's why marketers must depend upon real-time reporting for guidance on everything from identifying microtrends and knowing how to adjust messaging to shifting supply to meet fluctuating demand.

This requires your marketing analytics team to dive deeper to retrieve fine-tuned views about your consumers and provide informed suggestions for how to respond. Then marketing must immediately follow those insights with action.

That was how a furniture retailer increased sales by 60% in digital channels in about four weeks. The company launched multiple versions of a campaign to test and learn along the way.

There's no limit to what's possible when teams can act fast on

real-time data. Such as when a leading car-rental company in China saw order volume drop 95% in February 2020 as COVID-19 cases surged. The company invested in micro-level customer segmentation for personalization, social listening to track consumer sentiment by region, and geolocation analytics to identify customers who would most likely need a car. Then the company assembled agile teams with cross-functional skills to streamline work processes and launch campaigns within days, when it used to take weeks.

Within seven weeks, the company recovered nearly 90% of its business compared with its 2019 level—and did it 2x faster than its largest competitor. Viewing data with a finer lens also improved campaign messaging and strategy, which resulted in 5x higher conversion rates.

As the examples illustrate, driving rapid action may be a sound strategy, but only if you have the data, and a deep understanding of that data, to know what to do next. And of course, you need the resources to take that action. This is where many marketing teams struggle.

# The pressure is on

It's estimated that **2.5 quintillion** bytes of data are generated every day—that's 2.5 million trillions. For marketers, the difficulty around moving faster isn't a lack of data but trying not to get overwhelmed by it.

Widespread challenges make it tough for marketing analytics teams to wrangle in data from disparate sources then extract informed and timely suggestions from it. Consider the complication around executing these critical functions:

## Integrating Data

It's difficult to turn consumer data into actionable information when you're collecting metrics that don't immediately correlate. For instance, how do you correlate engagements from campaigns when one campaign's goal is building brand awareness and the other is driving conversions?

# 80%

of enterprise biz ops leaders say data integration is critical to ongoing operations

## Maintaining Data Quality

Not only is good data necessary to accurately inform strategy, but it also trains AI and machine learning programs. If you train with poor data, the programs will not be as effective, and returns may suffer.

# 60%

of leaders say they have too many data sources and too little consistency

## Obtaining Resources

In addition to the ongoing difficulty in hiring and retaining skilled data talent, teams are squeezed by budget cuts—or at the very least, budget freezes. As economic recovery remains sluggish, additional staff and data infrastructure cuts may lower marketing results.

# 46%

of teams spend so much time prepping data, they don't have enough time to analyze it

## Proving Value

A majority of senior-level marketers are disappointed by their analytics teams' results and don't see an ROI from their efforts. Marketing analytics managers are under pressure to prove that the data insights gathered are positively impacting the business and influencing growth.

# 54%

of CMOs and marketing VPs say marketing analytics didn't provide the business impact they expected

These challenges highlight a common predicament of marketing analytics teams: They must prove their value, but they don't have enough people, time, skills, and budget to deliver at their full potential.

However, they must figure out a work-around soon.

A **Gartner report** shows that with automation options and ongoing economic instability, businesses are nearly 7x (26% vs. 4%) more likely to shrink their data marketing teams if it's not clear how their analysis leads to clear recommendations and actionable results.



# The two sides of remote work

Despite feeling that analytics doesn't live up to expectations, senior marketing leaders aren't ready to give up yet. Nearly half (44%) of marketing analytics functions plan to increase their team size over the next two years. But that doesn't necessarily solve the challenges explained earlier.

If you're able to hire, you may find it's still difficult to find qualified data talent, as it's predicted that [hiring for data jobs](#) will remain strong.

What's more, you may have more competition for the same skilled people. Now that remote work is the norm, businesses across the globe are accepting that it doesn't matter where people are located. What matters is that they're qualified.

So it's possible that the SQL expert you're vetting may also be receiving offers from companies in Dublin, California, and Dublin, Ireland.

Despite high unemployment rates, competition for skilled talent remains strong

## 60%

say they're worried about retaining critical talent

## 4 in 10

executives say their top talent concern is global competition

## What if hiring isn't an option?

The upshot of accepting that people can work from anywhere is that you can also work with more independent specialists from anywhere in the world.

Maybe you've contracted someone outside of your locale before. If so, you know searching for talent over a larger geographic area makes it much easier to find the right person to help on projects when you need them and within budget.

## But that's just scratching the surface.

Now that the workplace is essentially virtual, many marketing analytics teams are taking advantage of the freedom to think differently about how they work.

This mindset shift is blowing the doors wide open to what they can achieve.

# See work differently

A common consequence of not having all the talent a data team needs is that most analysts end up spending their days managing data instead of analyzing it. The same Gartner survey mentioned earlier states that 64% of a data team's time is spent managing, integrating, and formatting data. And 38% of their time is used up generating dashboards and reports.

This leaves scant few hours each week for work that produces the business-driving insights senior leaders expect.

## 64%

of an analytics team's time is spent managing, integrating, and formatting data

It may seem the only answer is adding headcount. But that is not always possible and may take too long.

Results-driven companies realize that elevating a data team to be as responsive and innovative as business demands doesn't start by hiring. It begins with redefining your workforce.

This requires recognizing that a dedicated workforce isn't made up exclusively of employees. It may also include a Virtual Talent Bench™ of highly skilled and passionate independent professionals.

When you see your workforce from this fresh viewpoint, you naturally begin to rethink how you get things done. You realize that a team's potential isn't limited by what resources are available. Their potential is limited only by how they use what resources they have.





# How the Upwork analytics team stays ahead with virtual talent

When you redefine who's in your workforce, what you achieve is limited only by your imagination and willingness to experiment. Here's how the marketing analytics team at Upwork applies a flexible, fluid approach to getting work done by tapping expertise from independent professionals, on demand.

## 01 Problem

Analysts don't have enough time for strategic work.

"In the past, analysts spent way too much time pulling data, which isn't a very value-added position," says Vijay Raghavendiran, Director of Marketing Analytics at Upwork.

## Solution

He clarified the team's core work as informing and influencing marketing decisions. Anything outside of the core, more-tactical work, could be contracted out to independent talent.

"We engage data experts who know how to write the best SQL queries and who know how to build the best visual dashboards. This frees analysts to handle higher-value work that helps business partners make strategic decisions faster," says Vijay.

## 03 Problem

We don't have the budget to execute all of our projects

Some work, such as data cleanliness audits, is necessary, but it doesn't always make sense to lock up the budget with a single hire dedicated to such tasks.

"Data cleanliness is important, but the business size doesn't require daily audits," says Vijay.

## Solution

He contracts data cleansing specialists to perform audits cost-effectively and quickly. The savings are then used to contract several people for other projects requiring specialized skills.

## 02 Problem

We don't have enough expertise/time to innovate. Vijay wanted to tackle a very difficult problem: how to measure the impact of brand investment. But he didn't have the internal resources available to explore the idea.

## Solution

Through the Upwork marketplace, he contracted with a person with a PhD in marketing and a minor in statistics who is also experienced at building complex models

"With her solid technical skills, she could crack the problem wide open for us or not, because the nature of the problem is very thorny and hairy," says Vijay. "But I knew I had the best person on the job, so I was willing to have her try for two to three months then see if it was something we want to continue exploring." The bet paid off: Vijay was so impressed by her initial work that he contracted her for several more months.

# What rethinking work requires

Rethinking work requires two critical mindset shifts. First, don't focus on how you'll get work done; focus on what you want done—the outcome you want to achieve.

Second, let go of the rigidity around what's traditionally considered in-house versus external work. Upwork client Travis Bogard, former SVP, Head of Product at Samsung NEXT, explains:

“A lot of the thinking in the past around work needing to be done by full-time employees is old thinking. When you think about how you want to drive your employee base, it's very much outcome based: What am I trying to get done? What is the ultimate outcome I'm trying to get? Once you distill projects down in that way, you start to realize that independent work is the same as the full time.”



**Travis Bogard**

Former SVP, Head of Product,  
Samsung NEXT

Now that you've shed the traditional notions of what makes up a dedicated workforce, treat employees and external talent as one holistic workforce full of different skills. Then look at the outcome you want to achieve and ask:

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**What skills do I need to achieve it?**

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**What's the most efficient way to get it done?**

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**Who's the most effective person to do it?**

The answer may be an employee, independent talent, or even technology. It may also be a combination of the three and knowing who should handle what work.

# Accomplishing more together

Understand that by redefining your workforce and rethinking how work gets done, you're not intending to replace employees with technology or independent talent.



Your goal is to strategically utilize all the resources available to enhance employees so that they can do higher-value work they enjoy and do it to greater results.

For example, machines are more accurate and faster than people at performing heavy calculations and repetitive tasks. And people are better than machines at critical thinking and creativity. So you could use AI for automating manual and repetitive tasks such as data identification and tagging.

Here's how this enhances employees: Automating data management tasks may improve accuracy when pulling queries and boost system reliability so that employees spend less time monitoring the system. Having a reliable database also enables analysts to generate insights faster and have more confidence in their business suggestions.

“Working with independent talent opened my awareness to the level of expertise available and to ways we can combine their skills and knowledge with ours to accomplish more.

For anyone hesitating to try this, I say don't be afraid to bend your perceptions of history to shape the future.”



Vijay Raghavendiran

Director of Marketing Analytics, Upwork

# Designing security into remote teams

See how the analytics team at Upwork successfully works with independent specialists worldwide to meet fast-growing business demands while maintaining security.

Download the free ebook

[Building an Analytics Team with Independent Talent.](#)



# Shape your future

As you tap into specialized skills on demand, your team becomes more agile. You can pull together and disband teams as needed. This enables you to handle highly specialized and large, complex projects without overloading your team or draining your budget.

But the extent of your agility depends on how rapidly you access all the people you need when you need them.

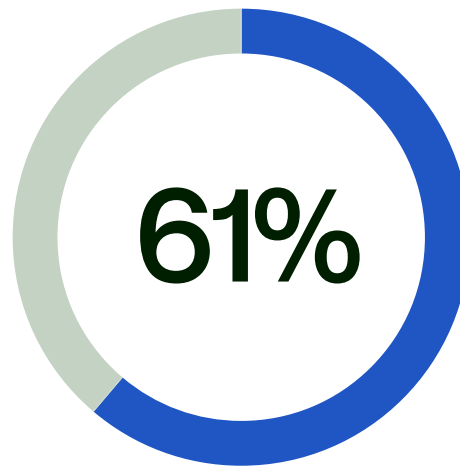
Traditionally, analytics and marketing teams turned to staffing agencies for this. But that practice was more out of habit than effectiveness. Before the pandemic struck, most hiring managers (61%) were already disappointed with their staffing agency.

So if you shift how you approach work so that your team is more responsive and innovative, how you source talent should, at the very least, support that, right?

Upwork, the world's largest work marketplace, enables you to cut out the staffing middleman. You save time and improve work quality by accessing highly skilled talent directly.

Sourcing your own talent may seem like more work, but our platform is engineered to simplify the process. This starts with providing immediate access to a large global talent pool of trusted professionals.

Finding the right person through our marketplace is straightforward. All you need to do is come up with a wish list of your ideal candidate. Then simply use the platform to post your project, review proposals and bids from awesome candidates, and reach out to the person you want to hire.



of hiring managers are not fully satisfied with their staffing firms

	Traditional Staffing Firms	Upwork
Average time to fill	20+ days	1-3 days
Costs	Up to 80% markup	Average 30-50% savings
Net Promoter Score (NPS)	28	69*

\*2019 NPS score for Upwork

We close the physical distance between everyone by taking care of everything from payments to communication so you can focus on doing great work together.

We also build in flexibility because we understand that even the best data teams can't always predict how their business or customer demands may shape-shift. Which is why with our work marketplace:

- You aren't tied to long-term contracts.
- You can engage talent just as long as you need them, which enables you to scale up and down quickly without penalty.
- If you're working with someone who isn't the right fit, you can end their contract and try someone else to keep projects moving forward and on schedule.



# Dial up your velocity

2020 proved that business and society can't move forward by clutching to outdated ways of working. As the market continues changing, you can jump to and remain at the forefront by leveraging the collective resources of this large and talent-filled world.

Together, we can help your data marketing team move from "I can't" to "Here's how we can." We already put the technology and talent in place. You just need to step in. See what's possible by visiting [Upwork.com](https://www.upwork.com).

"Upwork in the immediate term helped us fill a gap and ensure we were maintaining productivity. Then it became more about continuing to leverage Upwork to increase the velocity of productivity and being faster at everything else we do from accessing talent to building technology to launching marketing initiatives."



**El Lages**

SVP People and Culture, Flexera

# About Upwork

Upwork is the world's work marketplace connecting millions of businesses with independent talent around the globe. We serve everyone from one-person startups to 30% of the Fortune 100 with a powerful trust-driven platform that enables companies and freelancers to work together in new ways that unlock their potential. Our talent community earned over \$2 billion on Upwork in 2019 across more than 8,000 skills, including website and app development, creative and design, customer support, finance and accounting, consulting, and operations.

Learn more at [www.upwork.com](http://www.upwork.com), and join us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#).

## Trusted by top companies:

