

THE FUTURE IS FREELANCE

HOW TO HARNESS THE POWER OF
RELATIONSHIPS TO BUILD ADAPTIVE,
RESILIENT ORGANIZATIONS

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If you recently had to ask your Gen Z co-worker what the hell Threads is¹, then you are painfully aware that the world is changing faster than ever. Sometimes, I think it's just in my head, but then I remember that even skinny jeans aren't cool anymore, and I know it's true. (I remember this while wearing my skinny jeans because you can pry them off my cold dead body).

Advancements in technology (hello chat GPT), globalization (the next trend anywhere is everywhere in a split second), an escalation in consumer expectations (we're buying stuff we don't need and expecting it to arrive tomorrow), and a decrease in attention spans (are you even still reading this?) have rapidly accelerated the pace of change worldwide.

To keep up, organizations need to quickly adapt. But to lead us toward a better future, they need to do better than that. They have to learn from challenges to become even stronger and smarter than before. This is resilience.

1. Do you not know what Threads is either!? [It's this](#). The so-called "Twitter Killer"



ADRIENNE MAREE BROWN'S CORE PRINCIPALS OF EMERGENT STRATEGY

SMALL IS GOOD,
SMALL IS ALL.
(THE LARGE IS A
REFLECTION OF THE
SMALL.)

CHANGE IS CONSTANT.
(BE LIKE WATER.)

THERE IS ALWAYS
ENOUGH TIME FOR
THE RIGHT WORK.

THERE IS A
CONVERSATION IN

THE ROOM THAT ONLY
THESE PEOPLE AT THIS
MOMENT CAN HAVE.
FIND IT.

NEVER A FAILURE,
ALWAYS A LESSON.

TRUST THE PEOPLE.
(IF YOU TRUST THE
PEOPLE, THEY BECOME
TRUSTWORTHY.)

MOVE AT THE
SPEED OF TRUST.

FOCUS ON CRITICAL
CONNECTIONS MORE
THAN CRITICAL
MASS – BUILD
THE RESILIENCE
BY BUILDING THE
RELATIONSHIPS.

LESS PREP, MORE
PRESENCE.

WHAT YOU PAY
ATTENTION TO GROWS.

In business, stability used to be the marker of success. They used to create 20-year plans. Think about that for a minute. Can you imagine planning your business 20 years into the future? How about 10? We are lucky to predict six months ahead with any accuracy these days.² But that stability will become a liability to their bottom lines and the planet.

Today, in almost every industry, businesses must constantly learn new ways of thinking and doing their work to make the strategic, forward-thinking adjustments necessary to lead their organization and the world to a better future.

This is emergent strategy. adrienne maree brown³ describes it as how we "intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for."⁴

brown is a writer, social justice facilitator, healer, and author of

2. Personally, I'm lucky to know what's going to happen tomorrow.

3. This is not a typo - she prefers her name all lower case, and I will oblige.

4. brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, 2017, 3.

Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds. Her book is about the human relationship with change and how we can look to nature to move toward the world we want to live in. Her seven core principles have evolved my understanding of change and begun to guide my daily life.

Emergence is how we create and respond to the future through simple interactions⁵. Think of it like a river as it carves its own path. Or, as the novelist E. L. Doctorow said about writing a book, "It's like driving a car at night. You never see further than your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way."⁶ Emergent strategy is collectively building the path beneath your feet as you simultaneously walk on it and decide where to go.⁷

5. In *Emergent Strategy*, brown quotes Nick Obolensky's definition as "the way complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions."

6. E.L. Doctorow, quoted in Ehrlichman, David. 2021. *Impact Networks*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

7. In business speak, which I hate, obviously, it describes a "business strategy that develops over time as a business balances its goals with changing circumstances." (<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/emergent-strategy-definition>)

This is how nature works; humans have just complicated everything. When things change, we try to create order by grasping tighter to the present, planning harder, and predicting further. But as my favorite Buddhist nun⁸ Pema Chodron says, there is no ground beneath our feet⁹. Certainty is an illusion. If we learn to embrace the feeling of groundlessness, we can respond to what is actually happening.

Starlings are great at this. Have you ever seen a starling murmuration? I haven't either, but I've read a lot about them. It is a flock of starlings moving together, dancing, and swooping, responding to each other to create what looks like art in the sky. It results from hundreds, sometimes thousands, of starlings in relationship with each other. When a predator comes, one bird makes a decision, and the others respond, each taking subtle cues from its seven closest neighbors¹⁰ and shifting the direction of the entire flock. This is how they set out toward a goal while being prepared to change course at a moment's notice.

8. Do you not have a favorite Buddhist nun? You're missing out.

9. Chödron, Pema. *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times*. Shambhala Classics Ser., 2000, 9.

Now, humor me for a moment, and instead of starlings, picture workers sitting in their cubicles with their heads down, working independently and diligently toward the organization's 20-year plan.

What happens when a predator swoops in? It could be a competitor, a new technology, or a pandemic. It will probably include a long process of hiring, firing, training, and restructuring that still might be in progress when the next predator comes in. It's not going to be great for them.

Neither the starlings nor the workers can see into the future. But by staying in close communication and being in relationship with each other and the world around them, the starlings can adapt quickly to change, adjusting

More and more organizations are reducing their full-time staff and using freelancers instead to save money. In fact, over 75% of business leaders said they are more likely to rely on freelancers over full-time staff, according to a survey by Fiverr¹¹.

10. Princeton University. "Birds of a Feather ... Track Seven Neighbors to Flock Together," n.d. <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2013/02/07/birds-feather-track-seven-neighbors-flock-together>.

their approach and learning from new information. That's emergence. That's the power of collective relationships.

So, what's the solution? We're not going to learn to fly, but we can learn to build relationships like the starlings — and that's the most critical part. In fact, developing strong relationships with freelancers can be a highly effective way for organizations to build resilience and adapt to change.

More and more organizations are reducing their full-time staff and



It makes sense; partnering with freelancers allows organizations to scale up or down as needed at a moment's notice. But it also allows them to hire specialized experts to

11. "85% of U.S. Business Owners Plan to Implement a Hiring Freeze during Economic Downturn, according to New Data from Fiverr Business." 2022. Fiverr.com. Fiverr® press. 19, 2022. <https://www.fiverr.com/news/fiverr-business-data-aug-2022>.



fill a specific need. It gives companies access to a more diverse array of skill sets and flexibility to remain agile. In some areas, they are already essential to businesses, but they will become increasingly important to all industries as the pace of change accelerates.

There are benefits to the freelancers too, and according to a Harvard Business Review report, 68% of independent workers feel more secure working solo than within an organization¹². The number of independent contractors has risen over the last ten years — and more than a third of the current U.S. workforce are freelancers in one form or another.¹³

But it's not all buttercups and roses; it can be a rough and lonely ride. I was a freelancer for 20 years. Now, I'm on the other side. As a full-time employee, I rely on them every day. I talked with over a dozen freelancers to understand their experience and how businesses can work with them for the best mutual outcome¹⁴.

What I learned was that organizations often make the mistake of treating these vital relationships as transactions — and this is a terrible idea. Freelancers often feel like replaceable cogs, a name on a list, or a disposable piece of a puzzle that can be tossed as soon as it is finished.

Even though some organizations say 'we treat them like family,' it's often not

the family they like, and more like your estranged uncle

12. Ockels, Carolyn, Steve King, and Gene Zaino. 2022. "Workers Don't Feel like a 9-To-5 Job Is a Safe Bet Anymore." Harvard Business Review. March 23, 2022. <https://hbr.org/2022/03/workers-dont-feel-like-a-9-to-5-job-is-a-safe-bet-anymore>.

13. "Facing Layoffs, HR Leaders Embrace Freelancers over FTEs." Accessed July 23, 2023. <https://www.a.team/mission/2023-hr-hiring-outlook-report>.

14. , You'll see their quotes throughout this piece. They are unattributed to protect their privacy and allow them to speak freely. Some have been edited for length and clarity.

that says weird stuff at Thanksgiving. Often, organizations don't even see them as people.

This transactional approach may seem faster or more manageable in the moment, but it's not in anyone's best interest because, like it or not, freelancers and organizations need each other.

Bees depend on flowers for their nectar as they provide essential nutrients, and those flowers count on the bees to pollinate them by carrying pollen from one flower to the next. This is crucial to the survival of both the bees and the flowers.

Similarly, businesses that work with freelancers rely on them to provide essential skills and services, and the freelancers rely on those organizations to put food on the table. They are interdependent, and each one only flourishes if both flourish.

Mutual success and mutual survival, means understanding that they need each other and therefore, must help each other succeed and grow. This mutually beneficial relationship between freelancers and organizations is the key to building resilient organizations.

I'm going to say that another way to be clear—organizations don't become adaptive and resilient simply by reducing staff headcount and making

an extensive list of freelancers. For the organization to thrive, freelancers have to be thriving too.

The principles of emergent strategy can help build strong, productive, mutually beneficial relationships that will build resilient organizations.

Here's how.

Freelancing is a form of self-employment. Instead of working full-time for a single company, freelancers work on a contract, hourly, or project basis. They may also call themselves independent contractors, Independent Workers, gig workers, or open workers. While there are differences between the terms, let's call them synonymous for our purposes here.

BUILD CRITICAL

CONNECTIONS OVER

CRITICAL MASS.

“I WOULD LIKE TO BE A LITTLE MORE THAN A NAME ON A LIST BECAUSE IF THAT’S ALL WE ARE, NAMES AND NUMBERS, IT’S KIND OF DEVOID OF THE HUMANITY THAT I THINK WE ALL NEED.”

Freelancers know when they’re just a name on a list, they can feel it. It matters to them; and that should matter to every organization. Freelancers have a list, too. So why would they put you at the top of theirs unless they feel appreciated for what they contribute?

Organizations, especially those that rely on freelancers, hate the feeling of being out of control. They want to know without a doubt that they have a solid bench of talent to pull from who will represent the company and do exceptional work at a moment’s notice. They live with the constant nagging worry that they’ll need something at the last minute and won’t be able to find someone to do it. It’s a valid fear. Leadership’s reaction is usually that they need to

build a longer list. But a longer list is meaningless if the best people don’t call you back.

Instead, organizations should focus on building symbiotic relationships with freelancers. In *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, adrienne marie brown says, “Focus on critical connections more than critical mass – build the resilience by building the relationships.”¹⁵ There’s no shortcut. You must **move at the speed of trust**, one relationship at a time.

This sounds like a lot of work, right? You’re not wrong. Why should you bother? Because those critical connections have benefits that no list ever will.

¹⁵ brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, 42.

A great freelancer has many choices, and you want them to choose you. You want them to pick your project over everyone else’s. They will be more likely to choose you if you have a close personal relationship with them and treat them well. They’ll often take on the job even if they are already booked solid to maintain the relationship and not let you down.

Additionally, freelancers who know and respect the people who hired them will work extra hard and do their best work. They’ll go the extra mile, or two, or three. After all, would you put more of your heart and brainpower into a project for someone you knew and trusted or some anonymous stranger that would send you a paycheck 30-60 days later?

And they’ll introduce you to their friends. If they genuinely can’t take the job, they are more likely to refer you to their friends and colleagues if they know you’ll be good to them. That allows you to build one more critical connection and expand your network of freelancers.

Building critical connections is simple, but it takes work. You do it by being humans together, communicating just because, and creating a sense of belonging and community.

ACKNOWLEDGE EACH OTHER AS PEOPLE.

Freelancers are humans with human needs, just like everyone else. They have families, they have hopes, and dreams, and they have dental emergencies. Because businesses pay freelancers for their time, they often treat them like an asset, not much different from a robot.

Asking them about themselves, giving them grace, and letting them know you see them, and think about them makes a huge difference.

“I WANT TO BE KNOWN, AND I WANNA BE CARED FOR, AND THAT DOESN’T REALLY TAKE A LOT. IT TAKES SOMEONE MAYBE ONCE A QUARTER JUST BEING LIKE, HEY, CHECKING IN; HOW ARE YOU DOING?”

The freelancers I spoke to agreed that they love to receive emails just checking in to say hello, even if there isn’t any work to be done. Don’t keep things purely transactional; a human can’t be bought or sold.

You’d be surprised how much a simple human acknowledgment matters. A tall latte goes a long way. The benefit of the doubt goes a long way. Learning someone’s name, checking in, and saying ‘Hi’ go a long way.

If you treat people like replaceable parts of a machine - that’s what you get. If you treat them like talented, unique individuals, that’s what they will be.

CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING.

Working to create a sense of belonging is essential when bringing freelancers into existing teams. Belonging “enables cooperation, collaboration, and the ability to work across differences. It emboldens our creativity and problem-solving

“I JUST WANT TO KNOW AT THE END OF THE DAY THAT WHAT I DID WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU. AND I WANT TO KNOW THAT YOU VALUE ME AS A TEAM MEMBER, AND THAT YOU WANT ME AROUND.”

abilities. When people feel like they belong, they can be their best and do their best.”¹⁶

Where freelancers are concerned, this often requires a shift in thinking of freelancers as “outsiders” to integral team members. Belonging will look different in every situation, but it can mean inviting freelancers to dinner with the full-time staff. It can be as simple as giving them company SWAG or asking them to the holiday party. But language plays the most significant role —avoid language that separates ‘us’ from ‘them’ and think of the group as one team.

They are paying attention. When they stay late to work and the full-time staff goes to dinner, it doesn’t feel like they’re part of the team.

¹⁶ Wise, Susie, and Stanford d.school. *Design for Belonging: How to Build Inclusion and Collaboration in Your Communities*. Stanford D. School Library. Ten Speed Press, 2022, xiii.

MAKE IT PERSONAL.

Mass emailed forms are to critical connections what sprinkle donuts are to weight loss.¹⁷ When you have a robust list of freelancers, reaching out en masse is tempting, but a personal email is worth 1000 BCCs¹⁸.

“I HAD CLIENTS ASKING ME TO FILL OUT THESE FORMS AND REALIZED THAT THE GOAL BEHIND IT WAS TO AUTOMATE EVERYTHING. I DIDN’T LIKE THE FEELING IT CREATED - IT’S MISSING THE HUMAN ELEMENT.”

This matters. Each interaction is an opportunity to build the relationship, and you damage it when you make them anonymous.

After each project, I send a personal thank you that includes how they contributed to the project’s success.

When I’m with freelancers on-site, I create tent cards with their name and favorite beverage. This lets everyone call them by their name and bring them a treat when things get rough. The little things matter.

You have to start small. “What we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system.”¹⁹ Each relationship you build will reflect back to you and multiply. Every interaction matters, and each relationship is critical to your ability to adapt and be resilient in the face of constant change.

¹⁷ SAT question writers, watch out! I’m coming for you.

¹⁸ Not to be confused with 1000 BC. That’s different.

¹⁹ brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, 53.

TRUST THE PEOPLE

AND THEY WILL BECOME

TRUSTWORTHY.

“ONE OF THE COMPONENTS OF TRUST IS SHARING INFORMATION. WHEN EVERYTHING IS ON A NEED-TO-KNOW BASIS I FIND THAT SO INEFFICIENT, AND IT DOESN'T SHOW A GOOD IMAGE TO THE CLIENT.”

Building solid relationships requires trust; a big part is sharing vital information. Transparency leads to collective success.

The number one complaint I heard from freelancers was a need for more information. They are usually brought into existing projects mid-stream and expected to jump right in and integrate seamlessly into an existing team.

But often, they don't have any background or actual information about what is happening. Without this essential knowledge, it's like when you're at a wedding, and everyone starts a group dance you don't know the moves to. You just stand there, kind of waving your arms and stomping around, trying to act like you know what's going on. But you look ridiculous. Not because you can't dance, you're a great dancer, but because no one prepared you for it. So I heard from a friend. This has never happened to me.

I'm not asking you to open your books or share proprietary or highly sensitive information, but you have to trust them with the relevant information you share with the rest of the team.

Remember the starlings? They stay in communication with their closest neighbors, which is everything they need. "Starlings remind us that there is a balance between having enough good information to make decisions and learning to filter out the rest."²⁰

That information is critical to freelancer success. With the right information, they can do their best work. If they're not doing their best work, that ends up doing a disservice to clients – and a waste of your money.

²⁰ "Starlings Coordinate Movements Within a Flock — Biological Strategy — AskNature."

SHARE BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

How would you feel if you were asked to complete a puzzle but only given half of the pieces and had no idea of what it was supposed to look like? How are you supposed to know what to do? That's how freelancers often feel when you ask them to do a job without giving them any context.

This makes it challenging to work together as a team and creates an imbalance in power. It's hard to feel like part of the team when you only have 10% of the information everyone else does.

“I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT FOR INFORMATION.”

You have to set up freelancers to succeed – and crucial information is the key to success. Their questions are more than reasonable. What's the background of this project? Who are the personalities? What are the goals? What have the challenges been? Why are we even doing this?

This can be shared via a one-on-one conversation, a group meeting, or a detailed document. But freelancers aren't psychics (unless you run a psychic hotline and are hiring psychics, are you?).

MAKE REALLY GOOD INTRODUCTIONS.

Freelancers don't know who everyone is and what they do unless you tell them, and it's really important that they know.

Introducing them to the team and being clear about who is doing it

helps bring the team together and gives the freelancer an idea of how they fit into the big picture.

“WHO DO I TALK TO ABOUT THIS? WHO DO I TALK TO ABOUT THAT? OFTEN, I'M NOT SURE WHO IS DOING WHAT.”

Also, it helps them be more effective and efficient by knowing who to go to for what. A one pager with names, photos and roles can go a long way to help independent workers feel informed.

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS.

“I'D LIKE TO DO A GOOD JOB. I'D LIKE THE CLIENTS TO BE HAPPY. I'D LIKE TO GET MORE WORK. BUT, AT THIS POINT, SOMETIMES I'M LUCKY TO KNOW WHAT EXACTLY I'M DOING BEFORE I GET THERE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.”

It's easier to do a great job if you know what you're supposed to do. This happens to freelancers all the time. Again, not psychic. You will set them (and thus yourself) up for success if you give them a clear understanding of their role, responsibilities, and expectations

Trust can be scary, and it can feel vulnerable, but as adrienne marie brown says, "If you trust the people, they become trustworthy,"²¹ and everyone benefits.

²¹ brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, 42



**NEVER A FAILURE,
ALWAYS A LESSON.**

A culture of continuous learning is essential to adaptation. Brown says, "If we release the framework of failure, we can realize that we are in iterative cycles, and we can keep asking ourselves - how do I learn from this?"²² Organizations and freelancers can continually improve and grow by learning from each other.

FREELANCERS ARE GREAT TEACHERS.

"I THINK COMPANIES NEED TO KEEP THEIR EYES AND EARS OPEN TO WHAT FREELANCERS CAN BRING BECAUSE WE ACTUALLY BRING A LOT OF INTEL ABOUT YOUR COMPETITION AND WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE INDUSTRY."

Organizations tend to assume their way is the best way. But to thrive, they must constantly learn and evaluate, thinking ahead to see what's next. What worked well yesterday may be obsolete today. Freelancers are excellent sources of new information, new ways of doing things, new ways of thinking, and new perspectives - after all, they work for your competition.

Don't be weird - that's great news. You're stuck in your bubble, but freelancers know what's happening outside. They experience what's working in other places, use different systems and technologies, and have insights that might surprise you.

Don't miss out.

22. Brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, 105.

USE THEIR EXPERTISE.

"I REALLY APPRECIATE THE RARE OCCASION WHEN A COMPANY SAYS, WELL, HOW WOULD YOU DO IT?"

If you hire freelancers and then put them in a box and micromanage them, you're missing out on all they can offer and teach you. Let them do it their way, within reason, and learn from them.

Take advantage of their experience and ask them for suggestions: "What do they see that would be helpful? Is there a better way to do this? What do you think about this approach?" And as an added bonus, asking for their input will strengthen the relationship. Everyone wants to feel that their opinion matters and they have something to contribute.

ASK FOR FEEDBACK.

"IF THEY HONESTLY ASKED ME, I'D PROBABLY GIVE THEM FEEDBACK ABOUT THE PROCESS; BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN INVITED TO A DEBRIEF TO DISCUSS WHAT WORKED OR DIDN'T WORK."

There's one often overlooked way to find out where you can improve - you ask. Freelancers want to be asked; I promise you they have things to say, but they often need to know if it's welcome. Take the time to ask them for feedback about their experience with you. Ask them questions like, "How are we doing?" or "What could we do better?" These

are essential questions - and if you're not asking them, you miss out on the opportunity to learn. It's important to regularly ask for feedback and foster a culture where they feel comfortable offering it without being asked. By simply asking your freelancers, "How can we better support you?" you'll create a stronger bond and hold yourself accountable for making positive changes.

DEVELOPING FREELANCERS BENEFITS EVERYONE.

"I WANT TO KNOW, HOW CAN I GET BETTER? WHAT DO YOU NEED ME TO DO DIFFERENTLY TO MESH WITH YOUR STYLE? BECAUSE I DO WANT TO BE OF USE TO YOU. I DO WANT TO MAXIMIZE MY OPPORTUNITIES."

Freelancers are essential to the future of work. It's good business to help them be the best they can be. Did you know you can create more great freelancers simply by helping the 'ok' freelancers improve? I believe developing freelancers personally and professionally is in an organization's best interest. When your freelancers do better work, your organization does better work. I know what you're thinking. Why should I spend the time to help them improve, learn something new, or become a better team player if they'll just do better work for my competition too? They most certainly will. But so what?

Seriously... So what?

A) You get major brownie points because you cared about them enough to invest in them, be patient with them, and give them feedback. That builds the relationship and the connection. That means they will probably work for you first and go out of their way to help you and your organization.

And #2) Your competition getting better isn't all bad.²³ It just means you have to keep getting better too. It's like a fractal²⁴, a never-ending pattern created by repeating a simple process over and over²⁵. You develop your freelancers, they help develop you, and you create an ongoing positive feedback loop in which freelancers are pushing organizations to grow, and organizations are pushing freelancers to grow. That means your organization, and your entire industry, becomes more valuable. If a rising tide lifts all boats, then freelancers look a lot like water.

How do you develop freelancers? Just like you develop everyone in your organization. You're doing that, right?

23. This is a bold statement, but I truly believe it, but that's another essay.

24. Did you know broccoli is a fractal too? And Cauliflower. Also delicious.

25. brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, 51.

GIVE HONEST FEEDBACK.

“IT'S HARD FOR ME SOMETIMES WITH AGENCIES BECAUSE I DON'T GET FEEDBACK. AND IF, IF I DO GET FEEDBACK, IT'S LIKE LATE AND TWISTED.”

Freelancers want to know how they're doing. Giving them honest, kind, unsolicited observations allows them to address any concerns and make adjustments and improvements. Often, they get nothing.

They want to know so that they can do better work for you. It's in your best interest to tell them where they're strong, where they can add more value, and what they can learn to bring more to the organization. This helps you. YOU.

Those can be hard conversations, but they are worth the awkwardness, and I promise they get easier.²⁶

26. I'm terrible at these. They are not getting easier.

LEARN FROM MISTAKES.

“I'VE HAD THAT HAPPEN TO ME WHERE I HAVEN'T WORKED FOR A COMPANY IN, LIKE, EIGHT MONTHS. IT'S LIKE, WHAT DID I DO WRONG, YOU KNOW?”

Of course, even the best of us make mistakes. Freelancers make mistakes, too (often because nobody gives them all the information they need.) They usually fall to the bottom of the list and only get called again when desperation sets in. The worst is when you stop calling them, and they don't know why. I talked to freelancers still haunted by clients who stopped calling years ago. They want to know, “Did I do something wrong? Is there just no work? Do you not like me anymore?”

This hurts everyone. The secret is to learn from mistakes so everyone can make better decisions the next time, and that requires addressing them and talking about them when they happen.

ASK MORE OF THEM.

“I THINK A LOT OF FRUSTRATION ON THE SIDE OF A FREELANCER IS NOT GETTING FULLY UTILIZED AND CHALLENGED 100% BECAUSE YOU JUST GET PIGEON-HOLED.”

The best freelancers, just like the best staff, want to continually get better at their craft. They want to be challenged and engaged in what they are doing. They will gravitate to the organizations that give them opportunities to grow. If you're not challenging them, they're going to go somewhere else, and you'll be left with the mediocre talent that's fine doing the same thing over and over again. Those super-fantastic freelancers who want to grow don't want to do stuff the way things have been done before. If you want the best freelancers and their best work, you have to earn it by constantly improving yourself. You have to step up your game!

Respect each other, learn from each other, and you've just entered the hall of mirrors, and there's no end to how much you can learn from each other.





**THERE IS ALWAYS
ENOUGH TIME FOR THE
RIGHT WORK.**

Resilience isn't optional anymore. Organizations must build resilience by cultivating mutually beneficial relationships with freelancers that allow them to adapt to the harsh conditions and rapid change ahead. This symbiotic approach leads to thriving organizations and independent workers.

As a community, freelancers are crucial to the future. Nurturing relationships with them through human connection, clear communication, and continuous learning is vital to resilient, prosperous organizations.

There's no doubt that your organization's success is important not only to your customers and staff but to the global economy. And that can be enough. But the reason to care for your freelancers and treat them like valuable individuals and community members is because it's the right thing to do. And, the great news is that the right thing is also the most strategic.

But this is bigger than freelancers. Everything is connected. Organizations are connected to their communities, staff, and the environment; if those aren't thriving, organizations won't either. That's why it's essential to apply the principles of emergent strategy to intentionally change in ways that allow us to create the future we envision.

No one said it would be easy, but adrienne marie brown reminds us that there is always enough time for the right work.