

EPISODE 1362

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:00] KP: The gig economy involves independent contractors engaging in flexible jobs. Today, gig workers often get work from centralized platforms that facilitate the process of connecting workers with employers in exchange for a fee. Some workers find this relationship between the worker and the platform to be adversarial in nature since the platform can establish and enforce rules at its own discretion.

In this episode, I interview Adam Jackson, founder and CEO of Freelance Labs, builders of Braintrust. We discussed the state of the gig economy and his vision for how Braintrust can create a new kind of marketplace.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:41] KP: Adam, welcome to Software Engineering Daily.

[00:00:45] AJ: Hey, Kyle. Thanks for having me.

[00:00:47] KP: Can you tell me a little bit about usebraintrust.com?

[00:00:51] AJ: Yeah, you bet. So the network is actually just called Braintrust. We operate primarily at the usebraintrust.com domain, but actually finally did get braintrust.com after quite a bit. But anyway, Braintrust is a decentralized talent network. In other words, a talent network that is owned and operated and controlled by the talent that make their living on the network. And it is built on the Ethereum blockchain.

[00:01:18] KP: Well, it's a strong vision. I guess, tell me a little about your background related to the gig economy. When did you first become aware of that style of work and take an interest in it?

[00:01:27] AJ: Yeah, absolutely. Actually, my background as a software engineer, I did computer science at Vanderbilt, moved out here to San Francisco right out of school. And I was sort of like an engineer turned entrepreneur. And I have been basically building and investing in two-sided web-enabled marketplaces my whole career. And so Braintrust is the most recent of those.

But the dirty little secret with web-enabled marketplaces is that they're very capital-intensive to start, right? And so they raise hundreds of millions or billions of dollars and they basically use that money to subsidize one or both sides of the marketplace. If they're lucky enough to build liquidity, i.e., critical mass of buyers and sellers, supply and demand, whether it's drivers and riders, or dashers and restaurants and consumers, or graphic designers and clients, if they're lucky enough to build that liquidity, they come out the other end investor-owned. And those investors obviously are seeking a return and deserve one rightfully so, right? They were the risk capital that got the thing started. But that return really then comes from marketplace fees. And those fees, usually some percentage of the transaction value, whether it's 30%, or 40%, or sometimes even higher, those fees really add up and they erode the network effects of that business, right? Whether it's a gig economy, food delivery, talent network, doesn't matter.

And you have this for-profit corporation operating the marketplace and their incentives are very different from the people who make their living on the marketplace. And then that causes disintermediation. It causes a lot of value to be lost, right? And so our big idea with Braintrust was, after all these years of building and investing sort of in the wrong way, frankly, of web 2 marketplaces, there's got to be a better way. And that better way is sort of manifesting itself in what we call web 3 marketplaces or user-owned marketplaces where you actually invert the playbook. So you raise very little outside money. You get your users, your community involved early and often and you get them ownership and control in the network. And that keeps incentives aligned. That allows you to, instead of trying to charge higher and higher fees, to actually charge lower and lower fees. Because if a network is owned by its users, why would its users want to tax itself, right? And so incentives remain aligned. Bigger and more interesting and more ongoing opportunities can touch the marketplace that prior would never have touched a marketplace. And everybody wins.

[00:04:17] KP: And if we go back in time to, let's say, the day before you started Braintrust, what were the opportunities for gig workers like then?

[00:04:26] AJ: Yeah. For knowledge-based gig workers, before Braintrust, you kind of had two options, assuming you don't want to go get a full-time job as a salaried worker. Your first option would be go park yourself at a big consulting firm or staffing firm and they'll pay you kind of a steady salary, but will bill you out on projects not of your choosing and at far higher rates, right? So this is sort of the accenture model, right? And those markups are are pretty hefty.

I've had folks from that world quote to me that a Java developer that'll earn \$75 an hour on a marketplace could be built out to like a large bank at \$425 an hour and the and the firm keeps the delta. So that's not a great option. And option two would be go join a site like Upwork, which is a true marketplace, right? It's a true web-enabled talent marketplace. But you're really kind of competing with the entire world. There's no vetting. The rates really just approach zero as quickly as they can. Lots of spam, lots of disintermediation and high fees to top it all off. So really an unpleasant experience there for the talent.

So this new way of kind of the users owning and controlling their own network is kind of the third new way.

[00:05:50] KP: So could we expand on that? I mean, the network has to be run. The power has to be kept on and that sort of thing. How does that take place if the users are in control?

[00:06:00] AJ: Yeah, absolutely. You can think of it like a global consortium, right? So the network itself is just open source software that has a token which represents control, voting control of the network, and then a matching engine that basically matches talent to clients based on skills, attributes, time zone, service, experiences and needs.

And so we basically have a bunch of our talent who make their living on the network also working to sort of operate that network. So we call them nodes. Almost like an Ethereum node, right? An Ethereum node runs the Ethereum software, keeps the Ethereum network up and running. Braintrust, similarly, we don't we don't have specific hardware nodes, but

we have you know different individuals or companies that are contributing to maintaining, and in some cases actually hosting the marketplace software.

[00:07:00] KP: So can you outline some of the key problems Braintrust really wants to solve?

[00:07:05] AJ: Yeah, for sure. I think a lot of talent knowledge workers, we serve kind of just the product development, digital product development, IT category right now. But a lot of these folks just don't want to be in salaried roles anymore. They want to be their own boss. They want the autonomy of freelancing. But they hate pitching, right? They hate – The least favorite part of being a freelancer or thinking about being a freelancer is having to pitch clients, market themselves, blah-blah. It's very inefficient, right? It's not a great use of time. And most people – I mean, I'm a developer myself. I sure never enjoyed pitching clients when I was a freelancer in college.

And so what Braintrust does is it collects all these talent into one place and creates like a very high-end brand for talent in Braintrust. So many of the founding members of this group, myself and many others, went and spent the last few years getting great clients to the network. So Goldman Sachs, Porsche, Nestle, Nike and, literally, like 300 others that these clients have insatiable demand for this type of talent, whether it's a designer, a product manager, a project manager or developer. And there's no great place for them to go other than being overcharged by a staffing firm.

And so we've brought these clients to the table and we have this great talent because we don't take any fees from the talent. And that was how we were able to bootstrap liquidity on this marketplace. So now a talent can sign up, create a profile in Braintrust and get approved by the community and really start submitting proposals immediately and can browse usually dozens or hundreds of open roles available like right away without having to like go pitch a bunch of times. So that's something that is sort of unique for this category of talent.

[00:09:07] KP: Yeah. So if I understood correctly, the actual worker doesn't pay any fees or anything. So how do you make money?

[00:09:16] AJ: Yeah, that's 100% correct. The fee schedule is zero percent to the talent, which is a very disruptive business model, and then a flat 10% to clients. And that 10\$ fee goes basically to the node operator that brought the business in and it's meant to basically cover costs. But here's the new part, and the very, very counter-intuitive part, Kyle. Braintrust, it's what in economic terms we would call a public good. So it's meant to make everyone in the community's lives better by bringing them more work, giving them a place to manage their reputation. They can own their own job history data, own their own reputation data, right? It's not a walled garden. It's the opposite. It's all built in the open.

The network itself is a non-profit, right? It exists to connect talent and clients. So there's a protocol for work, right? Just like SMTP is a protocol for email and is not a company. It's not a profit-seeking entity. But like so many millions of us have benefited from SMTP. Braintrust is meant to be a protocol for labor, for connecting knowledge workers. And so it is made up of many, many for-profit entities like freelancers or small agencies. And of course the clients are all for-profit. But the network itself does not need to make a profit.

[00:10:37] KP: Is that because it's essentially decentralized? You guys don't really own any infrastructure?

[00:10:41] AJ: Yeah, that's exactly right. It's not that it doesn't have costs, right? There'll be hosting costs here or whatever. Like that's where that 10% goes that clients pay that's like just kind of sustain whichever node is helping support that part of the network. Almost like a minor fee on Ethereum. But now that the network is built and the community sort of upgrades it and votes on the future roadmap, it doesn't need to be a for-profit entity. And then that's where the token comes in, right? So the network is governed by this ERC-20 token called BTRST. And this token, the only way to get it, it's an incentive mechanism. You earn it by helping contribute to the network. And that could mean dozens of things. But primarily it means recruiting and vetting more talent, recruiting, referring and onboarding more clients, the important things to growing a two-sided marketplace. And so you earn that token basically in proportion to the amount of value you provide to the network and then you use it to control the network. It's a voting token. And what this does is it allows people who make their living on the network and earn tokens by improving the network and being

good citizens. It gives them proportionate control over the network. So some corporate entity can't come in later and say, "Oh, we're raising the fees and we're going to keep it all as profit."

[00:12:07] KP: So hypothetically, could an active group of users vote to have that 10% reduced to 1%?

[00:12:14] AJ: Oh, absolutely. I mean, now that it's in – We've essentially decentralized and publicly released the network and the token. Literally, anything's possible. I mean, one thing we did for the first three years of building it is we recruited thousands and thousands of talent users and tens of thousands more in the community, up to over seven hundred thousand now, of folks who you know believe in this movement and really want to keep incentives aligned. So that's where a lot of the tokens are held right now. But like, certainly, anything's possible if someone else were to accumulate tokens and they could absolutely change. The fees are written into a smart contract on Ethereum. They could be changed to anything.

[00:12:55] KP: Well, my example might be a little extreme. Do you have a vision for what types of things you imagine users will end up voting on? Either maybe they have done this so far. Or what kind of issues they might vote on in the future?

[00:13:08] AJ: Yeah, for sure. I mean, look your extreme examples are valid ones, right? Those are ones that everyone needs to think about. And there're some probably fun game theoretic conversations to be had there, which I'm happy to do anytime. But like some more concrete examples like the community so far has been really interested in using the token in clever ways to grow and vet the network faster. So let me back up for a second and describe kind of how it works now. So anyone can join Braintrust and get a referral code and start referring talent and clients to the platform. And then that's totally permissionless. And once those parties that they refer start transacting, that person who made the referral is going to get a token reward, some percentage of the invoices that they cause to be generated. So that's how the permissionless referral engine works.

To actually become a talent, you have to apply and then be vetted and approved by the community. And the community is made up of already approved talent. This is how we control quality basically and make sure that clients like Nike and Goldman Sachs have a really good experience on the platform. One of the ideas that's been proposed in governance, I'm not sure if it's been voted on yet or not, but is this idea of someone who's making the referral can stake some tokens alongside the referral and say, like let's say I, Adam, refer Kyle. And I know Kyle's like a badass machine learning engineer. I'll put like maybe a hundred BTRST tokens stake on Kyle. And what that'll do is actually put Kyle to the front of the vetting list so he'll get vetted immediately. And if Kyle ends up being a productive member of the community, i.e., like gets a job and starts invoicing on the platform, I get some reward. Maybe I get another 100 tokens back or something.

So it almost like gamifies the referral engine. And if Kyle ends up being like a no-show and like can't even get through the tests, maybe I lose those tokens and they go spread out to the community, right? That's the concept of just one of the many things that are being discussed to make the thing more interesting, make the token more useful, increase the incentives, etc.

[00:15:27] KP: That is very interesting. I've thought of a couple of classes of businesses that are similar. One is co-ops. Another is homeowners association. And maybe we even throw in employee-owned businesses. These are all kind of organizations that the people who operate them, own them in some capacity, yet none of them run on the blockchain. Why does your platform need blockchain technology?

[00:15:50] AJ: Yeah. That's a really great point. I think it's a really intelligent question. We've gotten this one occasionally. And the question is usually phrased differently. Your version's a bit more polite. Usually it's phrased with by saying like employee-owned businesses and co-ops have never been commercially successful. Why would they now? Which is slightly different from the question you asked, but I'll try to tackle both of them.

So a lot of times, employee-owned businesses are there to sort of align incentives and get businesses to run more efficiently. But the problem is they're very opaque still, right? You

still can't see what management's doing. You can't see the flow of funds. Code is not law. Law is law, right? And it's sort of this just kind of old school, corruption is still very easy.

On the blockchain, code is law, right? And so we write our rules, our business rules, i.e., our fee schedule or maybe the referral rules of like who gets rewarded for what kind of referral. That can be all coded into the blockchain where it is, A, immutable. Can't be changed without a majority community vote. And B, completely transparent, right? There's no way to sort of defraud each other there because that's how the network runs. And it's global, right? So anyone can participate, the laws that are implemented through the code of the smart contract across all physical boundaries. Of course, it doesn't mean local laws don't apply. Of course, those always do as well. But the rules of the marketplace basically are set in stone and can't be changed unless a majority of the token holders want them to change. So a good example, like you remember a couple years ago, Doordash rolled out a tipping feature where they allowed customers to tip the dashers. And Doordash Inc. decided to just keep all of those tips in 2019 and book them as revenue. That's because Doordash's terms basically say Doordash Inc. decides all rules and can change them any time. And so they did that. It wasn't even a crime when they did that surprisingly. That would be impossible on Braintrust, right? Braintrust, the rules have to be set through the blockchain software and voted on by the community if they're going to be changed. I think two things. I think immutability that the blockchain brings and that that sort of relentless transparency. Those enable user-controlled, user-owned organizations to remain honest and actually scale.

[00:18:27] KP: Well, I know we have a number of freelancers and moonlighters listening who might want to engage in the platform. Could you talk about the onboarding experience?

[00:18:34] AJ: Yeah, absolutely. And I'll say like we have more client demand than we have qualified talent right now. So great time if you're thinking of moonlighting or taking a break from working full-time. Great time to give a place like Braintrust a try, because there is insatiable client demand right now. Basically, you go to braintrust.com, you sign up as a talent. You'll onboard. We've worked to make the onboarding process sort of more efficient and hopefully not too hard. You'll then get entered into the community screening program

where community screeners will sort of you know just verify the skills that you've claimed to be proficient at. It's not very hard. It's not like –Any person with any commercial experience is going to find it pretty easy to get through. Sometimes there are synchronous interviews. Sometimes there's not. Sometimes it's mostly asynchronous.

And then once you're approved, you have access to you know basically apply to and propose any job on the platform where you're a match. And then once you are awarded one of those jobs, you basically transact right on the platform. You can get paid in usually dollars. It's a fiat currency payment system. The token is not for payment. The token is for governance. And we don't take any fees from you. If you say your rate's 150 bucks an hour, you make 150 bucks an hour. Simple as that. So we try to make it pretty seamless.

And then anything you do pass that. So you don't have to interact with the token up at that point. But anything you do do past that to help us, like maybe you can become one of the community screeners, you'll get paid tokens for that, various marketing activities. If you want to commit code to the project, you'll get paid tokens for that. We have a bounty system, etc. I mean, there's just dozens of ways to participate and gain control. And then when you start getting invoices paid, you'll earn tokens automatically for that. So you sort of kind of join the ecosystem that way.

[00:20:30] KP: So let's say I found a gig. I complete the work. Customer likes it. And it's invoice time. Are you involved in that? Or do we do that external to the platform?

[00:20:39] AJ: Yeah, it's all built into the platform. So you'll basically issue an invoice to the client through Braintrust. And we handle all payments, tax information, all that stuff. We localize a lot of that, I mean, we work with partners there, like Transferwise and Stripe, etc. But yeah, you do all invoicing and all tokens are handled through the platform.

[00:21:01] KP: So then I, as the worker, let's say I'm a U.S.-based citizen. I've got a W2 or a 1099 or something like that, do you just send me an ACH payment after things are approved? Or how does that work?

[00:21:13] AJ: Exactly right.

[00:21:15] KP: Gotcha. And what happens in the event of a dispute of some kind? How do we get it resolved?

[00:21:21] AJ: Yeah. This topic was really important to me when we started this network, because I've been a freelancer for many, many years as a PHP developer and Java developer, and I have also hired many of them. So I've seen both sides of this marketplace and have had a dispute here and there. And usually these things are like pretty easy to sort out, but occasionally you have a bad actor, right? And real gripe I have with how existing talent platforms work is they basically automatically take the side of whoever's paying, so the client in this case. And it's like, "Okay, whatever the dispute is, client always wins, right?" It doesn't matter. The corporation in the middle sort of adjudicates usually without even a human intervening. And it's just really unfair, right? Because there are legitimate disputes.

Fortunately, like I'll give you a stat. This won't be exact. But it's a couple weeks old. I think Braintrust process like 2000 invoices. I think only nine of them have been disputed. And so it's a relatively low rate. But to answer your question. So what happens on Braintrust is if the two parties can't resolve it, the software will actually facilitate a community run jury process. So kind of random token holders will be selected to be jury members and then the facts are collected. And the case is heard and the jury will make a decision based on the facts. And that decision is binding on the platform. And so if either party doesn't adhere to it, they'll probably face removal from the platform by the community.

And so now you have a much more fair way of adjudicating these things rather than client always wins. And like I said, it's only been used a handful of times fortunately. But interestingly, like back to your governance question, one of the things that is either up for voter will be soon is, "Hey, what if the client loses the community dispute process and is not paying and like just continues to not pay and the talent is out money," right? So some of the community members voted or proposed to create like a community, like a talent insurance fund. So this fund can be funded many different ways, but it's basically like a little insurance fund that can pay out in the case someone is the victim of a bad actor not paying them. So

we thought that was a clever idea. But that's our attempt at sort of doing dispute resolution in a more fair way.

[00:24:05] KP: And do you have any stats? I know it might be early days. This might not be totally representative. But do you have any stats on how to date people have chosen to spend the tokens they've earned?

[00:24:16] AJ: Yeah. The majority of it is governance. So proposing things, voting on things. Most people are just kind of hanging on to their tokens. The token has been live and you could withdraw it from the platform. And it's been on Coinbase for about two weeks now and had very few relative community members selling tokens. And then we're releasing a bit staking, this feature pretty soon, where you can stake some tokens along with your bid to stand out in competitive bidding environments. And the opposite will be true if clients are trying to attract more talent to submit proposals. They can put a little token sweetener in there just so you can earn tokens just by submitting. And then that kind of talent referral staking process I just mentioned, which is pretty cool. Those are all things that are kind of in development. Yeah, we're only like a couple weeks in, but you know so far so good.

[00:25:18] KP: Gotcha. I'm curious about the mechanics of that. If I'm, let's say, an up-and-coming freelancer, I want to stand out and I've got some token and I'm also confident in my abilities. Maybe I would want to stake a lot of the token on a proposal I've put in. Does that disappear if I don't get it? Or I'm charged that? Like it's a discount to the user? Or does it come back to me? What are the mechanics of how that token then proceeds?

[00:25:43] AJ: Yeah, great question. So yeah, this is something that we've had a lot of interest in. And it's still in development to be clear. It's not quite live yet. But basically, it's exactly what you say. Let's say there's a competitive bidding environment. There's a java developer position open and there's 10 people submitting proposals. Let's say like if you want to stand out here and say, "Look, I'd be great for this position. If I get it, I'll do a great job."

So stake some tokens along with your bid. And that sort of signals to the client, "Hey, this applicant's really serious, because if they end up being a no-show or like clearly a bad

actor or they lose a community dispute resolution, say, like on the first invoice, they will lose that stake. That stake will be taken from them and will go actually to the client.”
Compensate the client for the wasted time.

If you stake the tokens and are a good actor, you'll get the tokens back, right? So you just use them to grow your business, right? You use them to stand out in a competitive environment and win more business. So we've had a lot of demand from the community to build something like this. So they could use tokens, i.e., their control of the network to build their businesses faster.

[00:27:00] KP: And can you describe maybe the mechanics of how a job gets going from the point the client decides they have some work that needs doing? Do they post it and wait for proposals? Or what's the process as that goes through the system?

[00:27:13] AJ: Yeah, pretty much. I mean, there's a bunch of different ways work can be contracted on the platform. Client projects can range from like, “Hey, we just need a few weeks of like a chief architect to kind of like help us with the spec.” All the way to like you know NASA actually came to us with a project. It was like build us a web app to track packages to and from the international space station soup to nuts. And so it could be a person individually submitting a proposal. It could be a small agency submitting a proposal. It could be like a team of people formed on the fly to submit proposals. Could be small things, large things, could be hourly, could be capped, budget, you name it, right?

And so the platform facilitates all those different kinds of jobs. And there are people in the community that will even help kind of find someone. If you need a spec built first, that can do that. But yeah, it's the proposals are – Or the request for a proposal, or whatever, the job postings, are pretty clear. Usually with their needs, our application plus like some members of the community like really try to help make that process really clear. So you'd get as many qualified applicants as possible. And then an applicant is chosen. Work starts. Invoicing happens usually once or twice a month. All payments facilitate electronically. We try to make all that back office stuff kind of just disappear for you. And yeah, it works really well. I mean, today we've processed something like 18 or 19 million dollars' worth of invoices since we started last year and growing quickly.

[00:28:51] KP: So if I'm the client and I post a job, do I hand select freelancers I want to contact? Or can I set it open to the public? How does that work?

[00:29:00] AJ: So only approved freelancers can actually submit proposals. And this is how we solve the spam problem, right? On Upwork and Fiverr, you have this just terrible spam problem of unqualified talent. Spam bidding, very, very low bids. And that's bad for qualified talent. And it's bad experience for clients. So approved talent, a community-proof talent can submit applications and then it's sort of up to the client to conduct their own screening process. And that screening process can look very different from client to client. And Braintrust can be configured to match the client's process to make it easier for both sides.

[00:29:38] KP: If I get active on the platform. I want to stand out and have clients take notice of me and my proposals. I guess my first step is to submit a good proposal with a competitive rate. I could also stake against it, as you described. But there's also, I imagine, some other mechanics in how I rank. If I want to get into the first spot, I know on a lot of other platforms that might be some quality score of my page or past success record. Do users know things like the ranking algorithm there?

[00:30:08] AJ: Yeah. There really is no ranking algorithm other than having a 100% complete profile. And the application tells you very clearly what percent you are. So having like a full work history. We help know bring stuff in from LinkedIn or Stack Overflow or whatever. But having a really nice complete profile is the best way. And having skills that are in demand, which any tech person would, that is the best way to get matched quickly. There is no sort of ranking algorithm yet per se.

The other interesting piece is we've done something kind of innovative around time zones. So if you think about like remote work, pre-Covid, like it wasn't prevalent. I don't know if you remember. Like before Covid, it was like American companies sort of had this anachronistic. Like we want butts and seats kind of thing like even if those seats are in St. Louis, or Dallas, or places where not a lot of tech workers live. And then Covid hit, right? And everyone had to go remote. And so that ended up being this huge kind of accidental tailwind to Braintrust where it's like remote distributed engineering teams is the new normal

for everybody, not just tech companies. And so that kind of leveled the playing field for the talent side.

And then the next problem we found was, “Oh, well, you have these companies that are like, “Oh, we'll only work with people in Eastern, Central Mountain or Pacific American time zones.” Well, it's like, “Okay, there's a lot of great talent in the U.S., but there's even more outside of the U.S.” So it's like sort of unfair and, frankly, inefficient to block out anyone who's outside the U.S. And so we innovated this thing where it's like, “Well, instead of asking you the talent what time zone you live in. We ask you which time zones you service.” Meaning you're willing to like be on a call like for three or four hours overlap with that time zone. Oh, okay. Well, it turns out like most of Europe is okay with like a couple hours of overlap with Pacific and a few more hours with Eastern. And so that increased our match rates. And so stuff stuff like that, being open to servicing more time zones will certainly help you rank better.

[00:32:38] KP: Well, are there any stress points or things you're working on for the vision of the platform when it scales by 10 or 100X of what the volume is today?

[00:32:49] AJ: Yeah. I mean, we need more talent. There's literally like unlimited demand for this kind of thing, especially with this fee structure, right? Like we're taking basically nothing out of the middle of this. The 10 fee to clients is absolutely de minimis. So we have the software and the infrastructure to scale. We just need the talent. So signup, get through the approval process. Get a referral code. Refer your friends. When your friends sign up, you'll start earning more and more tokens just for referring them. Every invoice actually that your referrals get paid on, you're going to get a percentage. I think it's one percent right now of that invoice paid to you in Braintrust tokens. And so it's an amazing way even if you're not planning on doing work on the platform. If you're just what we call connector, someone who just makes introductions using their unique code, it's an amazing way to earn Braintrust tokens.

[00:33:47] KP: So given some of the jobs that are live on the platform today, what types of professionals are you looking for?

[00:33:53] AJ: So we have kind of five main categories right now. It's developers, product managers. There's huge demand for those. People write specs, etc. Designers, either graphical or UI/UX designers. Endless demand for those. Project managers, PMPs. These are folks that kind of keep everything running, keep it organized. And then what I call kind of infrastructure DevOps, security people, endless demand for those. If you can get you know the AWS instance, the Docker instance, whatever, security audits, all that kind of stuff, there's just endless demand. So those are kind of our five main categories.

And then eventually I think the network will expand in other categories. This sort of user-owned knowledge worker network can really work for any knowledge worker field. We've talked about finance professionals and legal professionals and you name it.

[00:34:52] KP: Yeah. Do you have a vision for growth in that regard? It makes sense to me all the software needs. What's the horizon in other types of professionals that might be brought in?

[00:35:02] AJ: Yeah. I mean, IT outsourcing right now is a 1.5 trillion dollar annual category. So we're not even scratching the surface right now. So my head will probably stay there for a while especially when you see like the massive margins and markups in these IT consulting firms, right? It's just a natural for that business to migrate to a protocol like Braintrust. I think there's plenty of growth here left in this category. But as people from other categories, like accounting are legal join our community and start proposing things, like it's not up to me, right? It's very possible we'll be in those categories soon.

[00:35:46] KP: Makes sense. And do you have any advice for freelancers who are interested in the platform? What does it take to become successful?

[00:35:54] AJ: Yeah, absolutely. I would say like it's kind of a pain, but like do the work up front to like make your profile look good. It really goes a long way. I know it sounds dumb, but like take the 20, 30 minutes and like put in all the cool stuff you've done and links and whatever. It really, really goes a long way to getting through the approval process quickly and getting matched to gigs quickly. And it's an awesome community. It's really fun. Like you join our Discord, there's like really amazing people who are leaving the corporate world

and doing freelancing on Braintrust. And it's cool. It's like a really awesome community of professionals that are all excited to be owners of this platform instead of being extracted from and have tokens and be able to propose and debate the future instead of like being told from the top what to do by some nameless corporate entity. It's a really unique community.

[00:36:50] KP: Do you have a vision for what work looks like maybe five to ten years out? There seems like there's an opportunity for knowledge workers to change the way they interact if they want to. What's the demand?

[00:37:01] AJ: Yeah, a hundred percent. I mean, look, I think this is a huge trend that Braintrust definitely didn't start, but it's certainly a part of now, where I would call it kind of the unbundling of corporate America, where corporations 100 years ago formed so you could roll talent up into this monolith and the monolith goes out and generates revenue. And hopefully its job is to extract enough profit between revenue and expenses and do everything it can to grow. And the side effect of that is like these massive corporations sort of warehousing talent, right? And like these staffing firms are just a great example that. But even the tech companies as well. We have tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of knowledge workers kind of sitting around probably utilize like 15%, 25%, which is like intensely boring, right? Aside from being inefficient, it's just boring, right? I don't know anyone in those jobs who thinks it's a fun job. And you're like dragging into an office and not doing things. There's no autonomy, right? You're sort of trading doing fun things on your own terms for a steady paycheck.

And so I think we're seeing now like what they're calling the great resignation where like people are leaving their corporate jobs. And we've been calling sort of the unbundling of corporate America where people will split off and they'll specialize instead of like sitting and being told what to do for a paycheck. You're really not doing anything 80% of the time. Take that 80%, like go live where you want. Be a digital nomad, travel, pick up gigs here and there and then like work intensely or work as hard as you want to for as long as you want to from where you want to earning probably a better market rate and no one taking any of it from you, in Braintrust's case. So it's a dramatically different way to think about work, I think, than what we've seen in the last five or six decades of corporate America.

[00:39:11] KP: Well, it's an exciting vision for sure. For listeners who want to explore whether that might be the right fit for them, where can they learn more about how to get onboard and engaging in this marketplace?

[00:39:22] AJ: Yeah, just go to braintrust.com. That's kind of the project's core website. You can also find us on Twitter @usebraintrust. Or hit me up on Twitter. I'm @adamjacksonsf.

[00:39:35] KP: Well, Adam, thank you so much for coming on Software Engineering Daily.

[00:39:39] AJ: Kyle, it was a pleasure. Thanks so much for having me.

[END]