

Q3 2021 State of On-Demand Hiring

Independent Experts Continue to
Accelerate Growth for Consulting Firms



Graphite



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MARKET SNAPSHOT: ON-DEMAND EXPERTISE DRIVES GROWTH & BUILDS RESILIENCY

1

INDEPENDENT EXPERTS FUEL SUSTAINABLE GROWTH FOR CONSULTING FIRMS

We live in a world of powerful disruptions. COVID-19 has catalyzed change in many key areas, consolidating years of forecasted behaviors and technology developments into just a handful of months — forcing companies to reimagine how they think of work.

No wonder management consulting firms [cite market unpredictability](#) and managing remote and hybrid workforces as their biggest challenges. But change brings new opportunities. And in today's environment of constant and rapid flux, this opportunity is everywhere.

Spikes in demand, customers buying in unexpected ways, and the rise of remote and independent work offer unique growth opportunities.

Agility is key to capturing these new opportunities. Businesses that accept and capitalize on unpredictability as 'the new normal' will get the competitive advantage they need to grow.



234% increase YoY
in spend on hiring
independent experts

MANAGEMENT CONSULTING: A CASE IN POINT

Recent analysis found that management consulting firms that achieved significant (>30%) growth since COVID-19 have in fact adopted this resilient approach. Comparatively, firms that suffered the most losses took an inactive position and focused mainly on pandemic-related obstacles.

High-growth firms resolved day-to-day tactical challenges while simultaneously building the long-term systems and skillsets their businesses required to thrive. But most importantly, they had the right talent at the right time to leverage these assets and create smart and sustainable strategies.

As consulting companies quickly pivoted to addressing capacity and capability gaps, many turned to on-demand hiring platforms to find independent experts to solve client needs. On the Graphite platform alone, companies spent **234% more YoY in Q3 2021** on hiring independent experts on-demand.



This shift toward a new hybrid work model served as a rare moment where preferences and priorities of skilled talent coincided with current business needs.

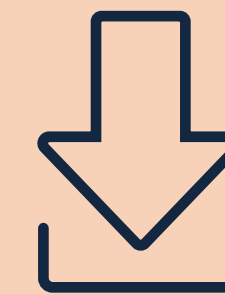
For consulting companies, aligning independent experts with high-priority projects allowed them to quickly capitalize on new opportunities — driving revenue growth without impacting company margins.

The remote independent workforce on our platform helped them build agility in their teams when they needed it most and helped them create a bench of highly skilled experts they can rehire in the future, on-demand.

On the talent front, the move toward more remote work combined with increased demand for their expertise has afforded them a new lifestyle as independent experts — a win-win for both sides.

But the benefits of tapping into the independent workforce extend beyond maintaining and increasing the company's bottom line. They also serve as a huge lever of innovation.

When compared to traditional employees, independent experts offer management consulting companies with a multitude of benefits such as:



Reduced onboarding time
as independent experts require less training



Updated worldview informed
by current industry trends and latest developments in today's educational curriculum



Increased innovation
because independent experts bring fresh perspectives

More importantly, independent experts can organically reskill permanent workers while serving together on teams. And because of the worker classification, the inclusion of independent workers enables management consultants to scale up and down according to demand.

NAVIGATING THIS REPORT

This report presents the current trends driving on-demand hiring for independent experts, focusing on the most highly sought-after functional skills this quarter: corporate strategy, marketing, and market research. The goal? To give you an in-depth view at how today's independent workforce is being used to fill capacity and capability gaps.

EXPLORING Q3 2021 TRENDS IN HIRING FUNCTIONAL EXPERTISE ON-DEMAND

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2

DEMAND FOR INDEPENDENT CORPORATE STRATEGY EXPERTISE CONTINUES TO SURGE

In times of intense disruption, high-growth businesses disrupt themselves. Currently, many are investing time and resources to reassess how they do business – and even why they do business.

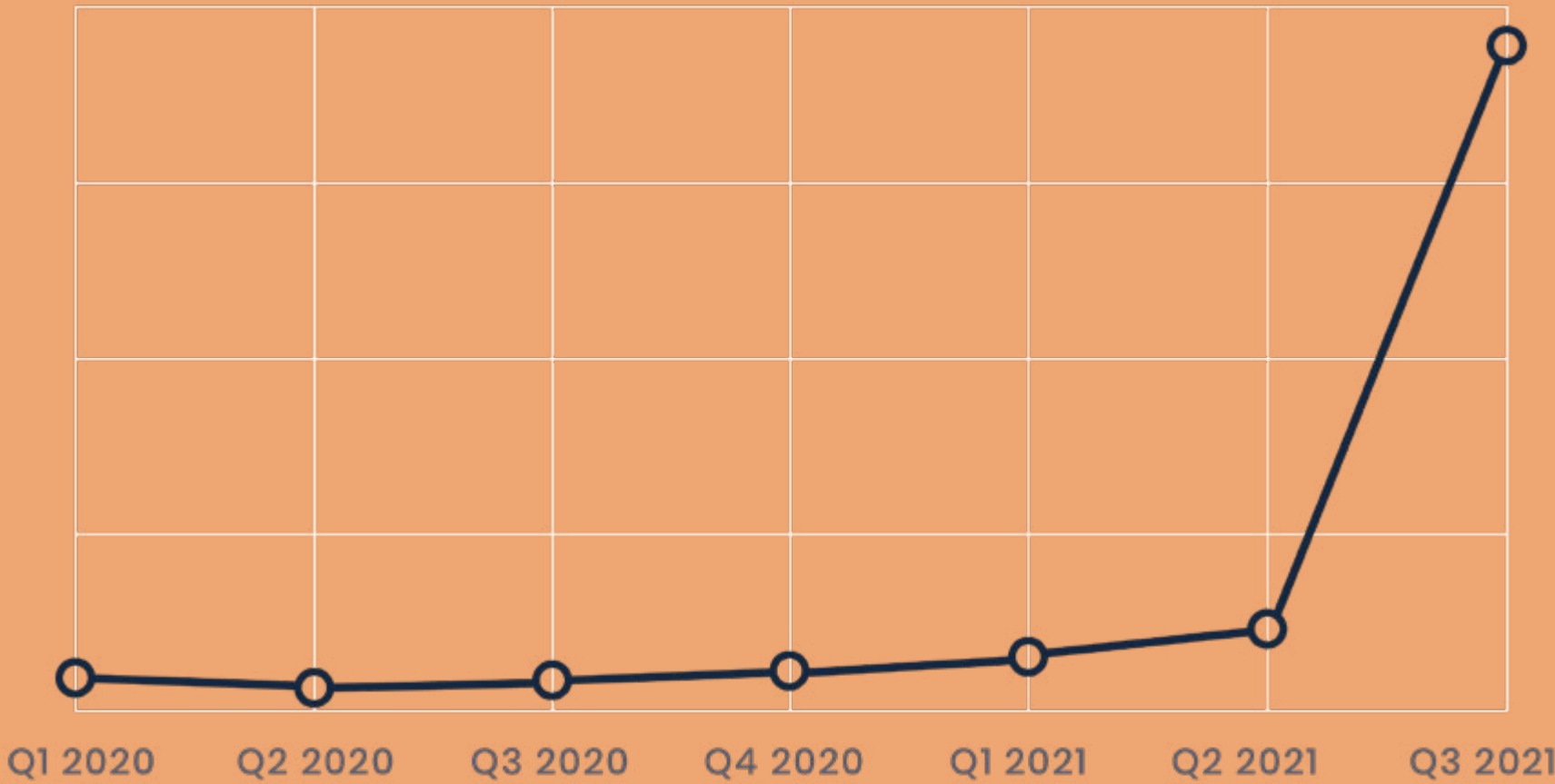
From one side, the public demand and business case for sustainability and societal purpose drives these endeavors. From the other, market volatility demands a more agile approach.

Done right, it can have a game-changing effect: when corporate strategy realigns to market needs and emerging demands, it sets off a domino effect – bringing all critical functions in line with priorities and priming the whole business for growth.

It’s therefore not surprising that the shift to addressing these very real problems has led businesses to rethink their corporate strategy. At the forefront driving these changes in corporate strategy is flexible work and supply chain resilience.



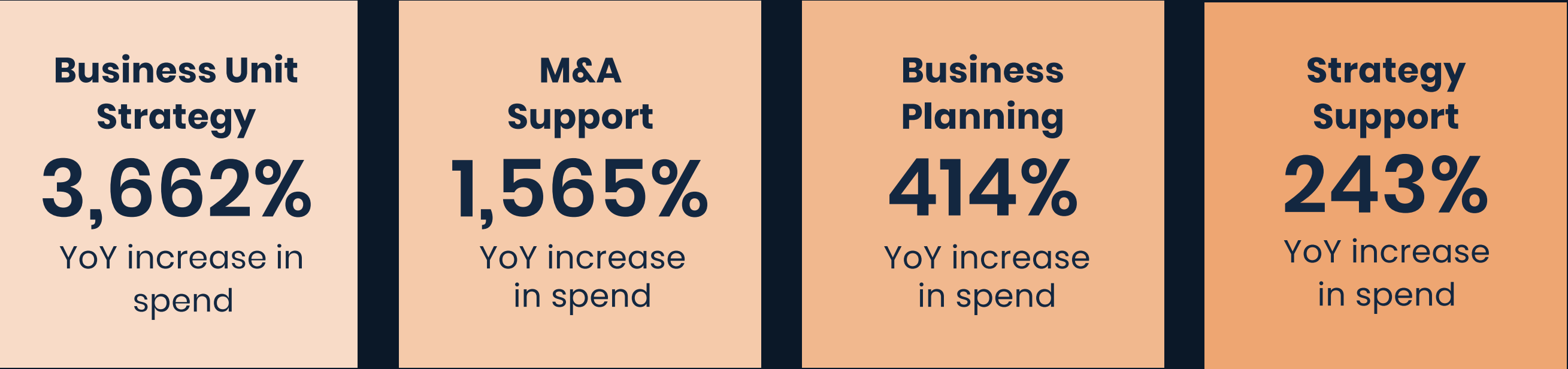
ON-DEMAND HIRING OF CORPORATE STRATEGY EXPERTISE WAS UP 1,308% YOY IN Q3 2021



Another is the surge in M&A activity with markets being supportive with a historically low cost of capital and as companies focus more on deploying capital to accelerate growth, gain scale, and digitize their businesses, among others.

In turn, corporate strategy teams turned to the independent workforce to keep up with demand while enhancing their capabilities. Based on Graphite research, **spend on hiring independent expertise for this core functional skill was up 1,308% YoY in Q3 2021.**

Four subcategories fueling this tremendous YoY growth:



ON-DEMAND EXPERTISE SUPERCHARGES MARKETING TEAMS

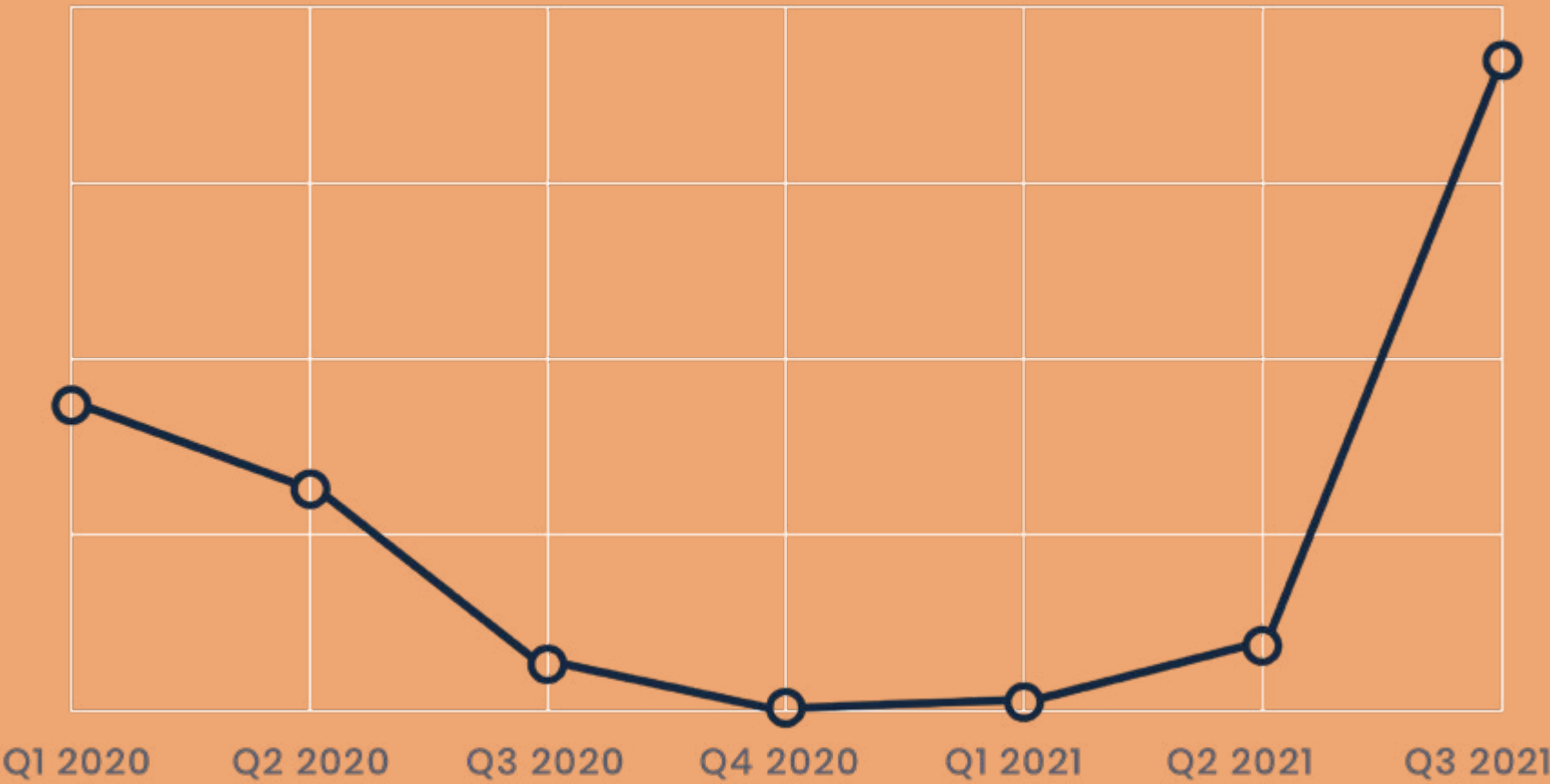
In reevaluating the corporate strategy and looking for new growth opportunities, it's inevitable that marketing activities would be impacted.

After all, acquiring or creating a new service/product line requires a solid go-to-market (GTM) strategy backed with a strong digital marketing presence to ensure success.

On the B2C front, the pandemic accelerated the shift to e-commerce and omnichannel shopping. [Based on Nielsen research](#), this trend will continue long after the impact of the pandemic has passed, with new services, such as click-to-collect, becoming the norm.

Meanwhile, B2B consumers are increasingly expecting B2C experiences as the lines between home and work continue to blur.

DEMAND FOR INDEPENDENT MARKETING EXPERTISE RISES 970% YOY



As a result, marketing executives across all industries have reevaluated their GTM strategies, with many [B2B marketers citing GTM](#) among their top priorities this year.

Central to ensuring the success of the GTM function is strong alignment between sales and marketing, as 51% of marketers from the same study envision the GTM function evolving into a hybrid model.

Under this new model, marketing takes the lead on digital selling and self-service across the entire customer lifecycle with equal support from sales. That is partly why [45% of CMOs](#) focused on recruiting and filling the GTM execution and operations role this year.

Graphite data supports this. Hiring independent marketing expertise increased **970% YoY in Q3 2021**. Spend on GTM strategy projects were up **715% YoY**, with digital marketing and advertising projects up a whopping **10,000% YoY**.

Digital Marketing
and Advertising

10,000%

YoY increase in
spend

GTM
Strategy

715%

YoY increase
in spend



RAPIDLY EVOLVING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT DRIVES DEMAND FOR MARKET RESEARCH EXPERTISE

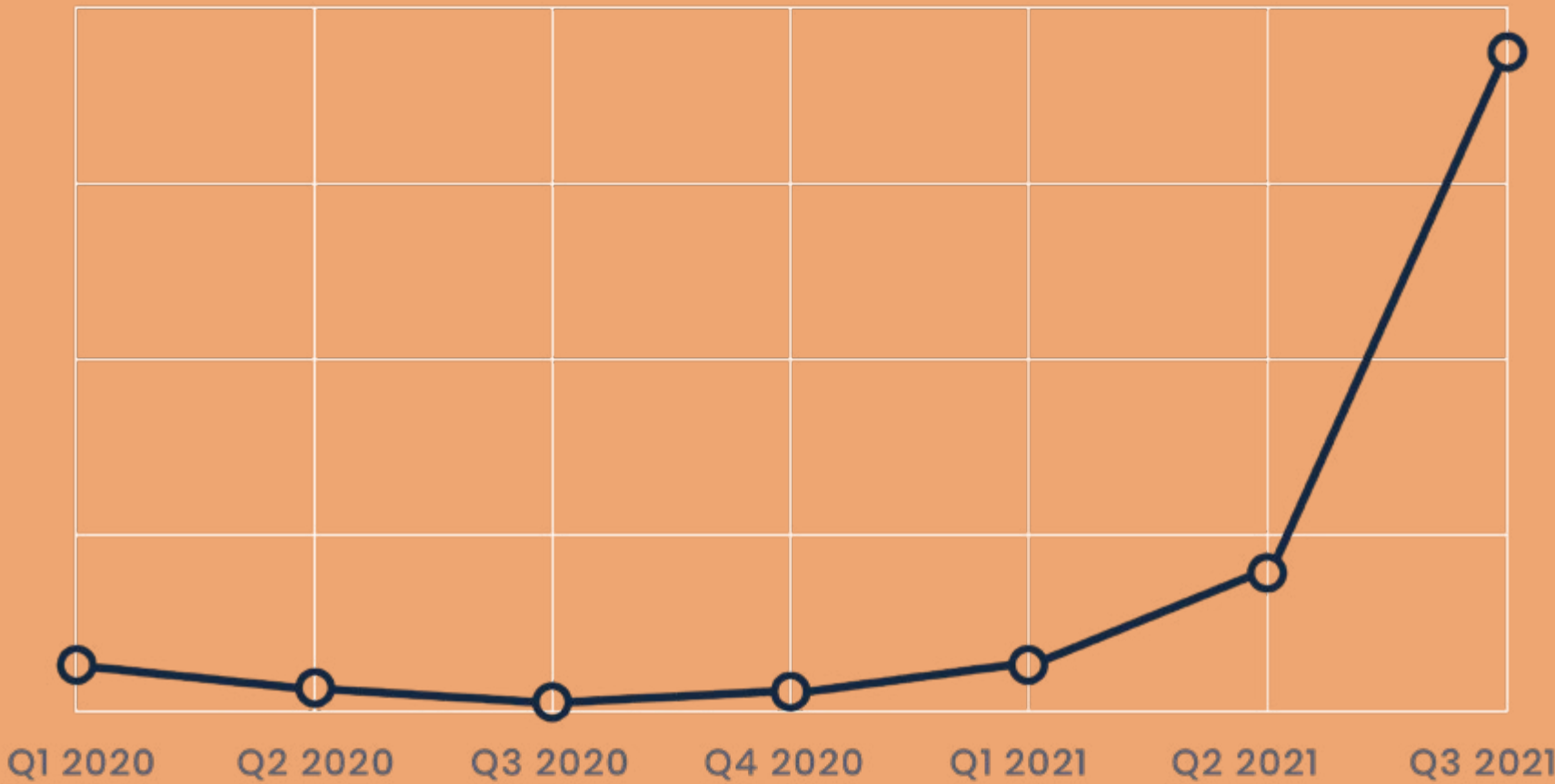
With companies revamping their marketing and strategy functions, market research is becoming increasingly crucial to positioning them for success.

Customer and employee preferences continue to drive the economic environment, with market research expertise being used to:

- Monitor trends
- Evaluate opportunities and threats to the business
- Ensure future strategic focus areas are based on customer insights

As more companies re-evaluate the marketplace, demand for market research expertise is increasing.

HIRING OF INDEPENDENT MARKET RESEARCH EXPERTISE SOARS TO 295% YOY



Similarly, the work-from-home reality has had an unprecedented impact on how businesses operate and make business investment and purchasing decisions.

Because business travel continues to be at lower levels, B2B companies are reimagining how they can better engage their customers and employees. These disruptions have created a need for companies to conduct in-depth market research to identify the best approach.

Data from our platform supports this narrative with projects posted for **market research up 295% YoY.** In Q3 2021, that growth was driven by the following areas: **market mapping, primary, and secondary research** — experiencing growth between **40-100% YoY compared to Q3 2020.**

Market
Research
295%
YoY increase
in spend

Market Mapping,
Primary & Secondary
Research
40-100%
YoY increase
in spend



MAINTAINING THE MOMENTUM IN Q4 AND BEYOND

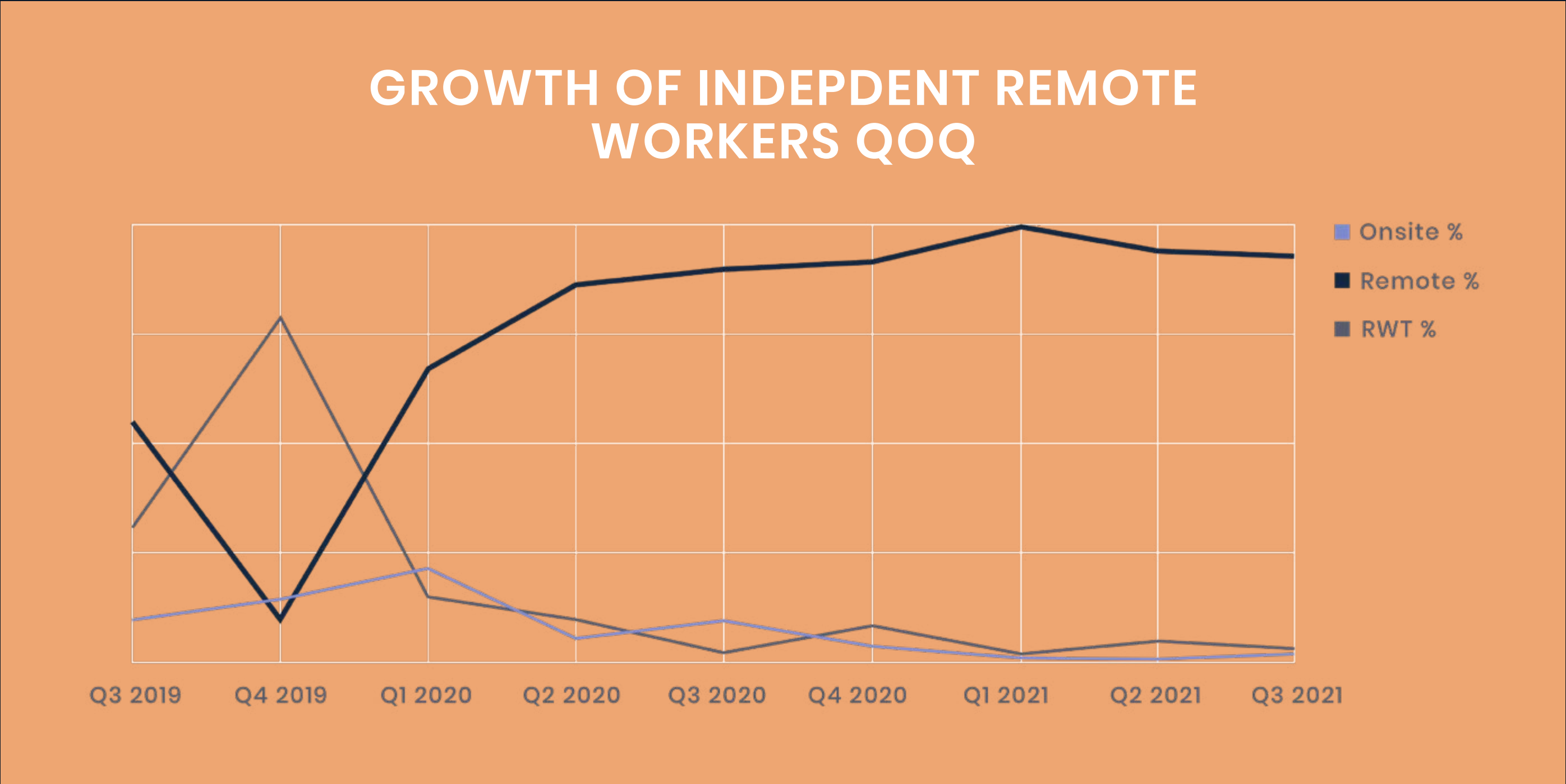
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A SUSTAINED MOVE TO A REMOTE INDEPENDENT WORKFORCE

Trends from earlier sections shed light on how leading consulting firms have scaled their investments in on-demand hiring. While reliance on remote work at the start of the pandemic was born out of necessity, it's clear that consulting firms realized the value of bringing outside expertise.

Data from our platform paints a clear picture. A trend of hiring independent experts to execute completely remote projects, which started up during Q1 2020, has remained for several quarters. In Q3 2021, 92% of projects hired completely remote independent workers, while 5% expected some travel to the workplace.

Although the popularity of hybrid projects is showing a slight increase, completely onsite projects remain near all-time lows.



ON-DEMAND HIRING WILL CONTINUE TO BECOME A STRATEGIC GROWTH LEVER FOR CONSULTING FIRMS

Companies started 2021 in a cloud of uncertainty. But as the economy and consumer confidence bounced back, it opened up the floodgates for pent-up project demands as companies sought to make corporate goals a reality.

A surge in projects soon resulted in consulting firms rethinking their workforce strategy amid the Great Resignation. Many turned to independent experts through platforms like Graphite to fill capacity and capability gaps in their teams and build a bench of highly skilled experts they can consistently rely on to deliver on client expectations.

With 2022 fast approaching, it has become obvious that consulting firms have recognized the benefits of the on-demand hiring model and have implemented it in their strategic plans.

By utilizing on-demand hiring, companies can adapt to the changing needs of a rapidly evolving business landscape. In doing so, they can avoid the time-consuming and costly process of attracting and retaining top talent and instead build a pool of experts that can be deployed at any time.





Graphite is shaping the future of work by enabling seamless access to the world's best independent talent.

It's home to 7,500+ leading independent experts that can enhance various areas of your organization. They're masters in their field, possessing deep functional and/or domain experience. Interested in learning how you can build a pool of high-caliber independent professionals that can help you execute and win more projects? Connect with a Graphite specialist to learn how.

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