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Foreword

Dear Reader,

Welcome to this whitepaper, where we look ahead to **market trends and the jobs of tomorrow.** In fast changing times we try to stay on top of things, investigating the developments that are shaping our workplace.

At USG Professionals, we don't just focus on current challenges. We are committed to **sharing insights** because we believe that we build the future together. That's why **people are our main focus,** in our business and also in this paper.

How is our **knowledge work** transforming? How can we **flexibly engage with talent**? Which **emerging profiles** deserve our attention? How do we guide our teams towards a **new company culture**? And how can we **collaborate more sustainably**? We explore these questions with experts and reflect on an innovation culture that meets the needs of our stakeholders while getting the best out of us as professionals.

We hope this whitepaper will be an **inspiring guide** for ambitious entrepreneurs looking to grow in a dynamic market.

Enjoy your reading!

Warda El Azzouzi Managing Director, USG Professionals "In the coming decade, artificial intelligence, the metaverse, and quantum computers will shape the way we live and work."

Maarten Verschuere Entrepreneur and Al Expert



New Technology: A Revolution for Knowledge Work

Maarten, you believe that the arrival of new technologies is leading to the first industrial revolution for knowledge workers. Can you explain this?

Initially, the development of the steam engine marked a significant shift, allowing a carpenter, for instance, to rely on a machine for cutting wood rather than performing the task manually. This was followed by the introduction of the assembly line, revolutionizing car manufacturing. Subsequently, advancements in robotics and the emergence of smart factories, driven by data, further transformed the industrial landscape. With each of these revolutions, the demand for manual labor steadily decreased.

For knowledge workers, there was the arrival of computers and the internet, but these innovations did not alter the core of their jobs. The first industrial revolution for knowledge workers is happening now. With AI and ultra-fast computers, knowledge work is being significantly reduced. Tasks, such as drafting standard texts and conducting research, are now automated. As a result, many departments can be streamlined to just a few employees.

How does this impact our education system?

The way we capture and process information is changing, and so is student life. You can compare it with the difference between students who had access to the internet and those who didn't. In the 1990s, we spent a lot of time in the library. By the 2000s, everything was searched online. We're experiencing a similar acceleration now. Everyone will have a personal Al assistant and ultra-fast internet. Writing a paper or making a presentation without generative Al will become a humorous notion from the past.

The acceleration of society brings challenges as well: processing more information, working faster, becoming more productive... How far should we go?

We need to manage this efficiency wisely. The time we save doesn't necessarily have to go solely toward increased production. The 40-hour workweek was developed for the industrial age in the 1920s and no longer meets our current needs.

If we adopt a work model based on the quality of output rather than hours worked, we can, for instance, reinvest some of the saved energy into enhancing the employee experience, making the workplace more enjoyable. This could include inspiration sessions, group activities, spaces for connection and informal meetings.

Which jobs will become more important in the future?

Where new challenges arise, new jobs emerge. For systems like ChatGPT, for example, there will be a need for **fact-checkers** who can provide our information with a "verified" label.

IT professionals will no longer need to write code, so **creative concept design** will likely become more important than programming and development.

When it comes to building custom Large Language Models, there will be a need for logical data organization and people who can create classification systems for the input and output of our Al tools. We could call it a **content manager**, but **from a conceptual point of view**.

Data analysis is changing. Financial statements, annual reports, customer analyses, everything can be accessed in real-time. The **data analyst** will need to do less research but will need to ask smarter questions.

As every software tool will become an Al tool, every company will soon be using Al. Having an **Al guru** on staff who can quickly respond to workplace inquiries will be invaluable.



Agility in a Changing Market

"Companies that are overtaken by innovation must reinvent their business where necessary."

Hans de Mondt

Product Management Consultant | USG Professionals



Today, the market demands adaptability more than ever. Sometimes, you need to reinvent your business, even if you are already a well-established player in your industry. Product Management Consultant Hans de Mondt shares how he tackled this challenge together with **Pioneer**, a major player in the audio industry.

As a freelance product management consultant working through USG Professionals, Hans de Mondt collaborates with various software and hardware companies. With his team, he develops websites and apps, helping businesses quickly respond to the volatile market. "Technological change is happening very fast; you need to stay on top of it. I am constantly upskilling. Companies that get overtaken by innovation need to step back and reinvent their business where necessary. External expertise can be a breath of fresh air in this process.

As a consultant, I help entrepreneurs rethink the needs of their target group, starting from their core business. At the same time, we work together to create a culture that makes the company more agile. I am currently working with Pioneer, a hardware manufacturer specializing in car radios. When that market began to shrink, they had to adapt quickly. We focused on their strengths: their experience and network within the automotive industry. What are drivers concerned with? What do they still need? We conducted extensive research, from the EU, trough Japan to the U.S.

At the top of the list of potential innovations was energy efficiency, driven by high energy prices and the demand for ecological innovation. So we developed an app that monitors your car's fuel consumption, engine RPM, and whether you're braking too hard or too often. Safety and tracking apps are also in demand. With these developments, the company is gradually transitioning into a data-driven software company. We have also provided them with a cloud solution, allowing them to capture and process data via the cloud, and then send usable data back to their smart devices."

From Information to Inspiration

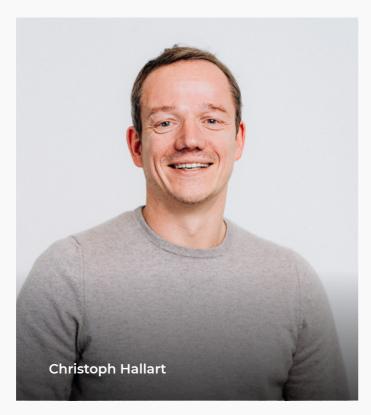
"People at the Core of Data-Driven Decision-Making"

The rise of generative AI is a game changer in the workplace. We are collecting and analyzing data faster than ever, and soon nearly all knowledge workers will engage with it directly. This milestone places the human factor at the core of data-driven decision-making. At RGF Staffing, Data Strategist Christophe Hallart and Data Lead Tom Teck are working together on transforming the company into this new business culture.

With so much technology available today, how do you choose the best custom made tools for RGF?

Tom: "That's a great and to the point question. The **shift** to data-driven decision-making doesn't start with the available technologies; it starts with concrete needs. Technology should support people and make their work easier. You need to know **what you want to achieve** and how you plan to do it. **People and processes are central** to that, not technology."

Christophe: "At RGF, we start with **use cases**: small, specific goals that we develop from start to finish. By setting up multiple use cases, you gain far more insights and results than if you start with the technology itself. This is where my role as Data Strategist comes in. I work directly with all stakeholders, both internal and external, to identify relevant use cases.



Soon, we'll be working with custom made chatbots that make company knowledge accessible to all employees. RGF Staffing is also embracing this. What is your approach?

Tom: "At RGF, we strive to make data access as easy as possible—a self-service system for data. But what data is valuable to someone depends on their role, and you can't build a separate dataset for every employee. That's why the first step is to cluster roles into different target groups. The second step is to develop datasets for those groups, and the third step is to create access to that data. With generative Al bots, we can further lower the barrier to this access."

Christophe: "A few months ago, we started using an AI bot powered by our database. We set up some small use cases. Because they are limited in scope, we can explore the possibilities and pitfalls of this technology in a safe environment. This allows us to learn which data sources we can make accessible, what the bot's accuracy rate is, and what the technology can and should do—taking legislation and security into account."

Tom: "When you consider to purchase new tools, it's crucial to **align with the right people**. At our company, every new initiative is pitched to our **advisory board**, a platform of specialists. They subject each proposal to a series of basic checks, such as legality, security, and scalability. If it passes those checks and we find it useful, it goes to the board of directors, who determine whether it can be a priority."

The goal is to motivate all knowledge workers to adopt data-driven practices; a major challenge, as this is a new way of working for many. What steps are crucial?

Tom (laughing): "In an HR organization where 'people skills' and 'intuition' are critical factors, the transition to data-driven decision-making is definitely a challenge! Every successful culture shift starts at the top of the pyramid with a **clear vision** and strategy. **Collaboration** is also crucial. The data teams are the catalyst, but they can't do it alone. All departments are involved and support where needed. Finally, it also takes time. It's an evolution—not a revolution.

To enable this transformation, you need to rethink the **data team**. We took a step back from our legacy systems to get a clear picture of the datadriven organization we want to be. We inventoried the roles we have, the skills we can further develop by training employees, and the qualifications we still need to bring in. We maximize the use of our own people because they have extensive knowledge of the organization. Every employee also has an **individual training plan**."

Christophe: "During our 'proof of concept' phase, where we explore the technology through use cases, we set up a **working group** with people from different departments. They experiment with 'their' bot and we meet with them weekly to discuss the progress. This way, we work on the Al maturity of each team. This phase teaches us a lot about the **technology** and, more importantly, about how people use it. When we roll out the technology, we'll have a better understanding of how to **train** employees."



Tom, what are the key roles in your team today, and which new profiles will be important tomorrow?

"The key functions haven't changed that much. Strategists, analysts, architects, and engineers are still the foundation, and they will still be in the future. Of course, these roles have evolved in terms of content and will continue to evolve.

On the other hand, complexity is increasing, and there's a greater need for specialization. **Data Scientist** is an important new profile, as is **Expert in Data Ethics.** These are roles we insource. This allows us to make the most of our organization's strengths, supplemented with (temporary) expertise from the market. Project sourcing plays an important role in this. As an organization, we don't always have the resources and expertise to keep up with technological evolution, and these are often highly popular and expensive profiles. We bring this knowledge temporarily in-house, for example through USG Professionals."

Jobs of Tomorrow

The market is in a state of constant evolution.
Old professions fade and new jobs emerge
due to innovation and social developments. In
the coming years, expertise in **AI, data analysis, ESG and online security** will grow
significant, bringing new roles to the forefront.

Al and the Metaverse

Al Trainers and Al Content Managers specialize in feeding and training Al systems. They ensure data is checked, interpreted, labeled, and tagged with metadata to make it usable and recognizable for Al algorithms. They create high-quality and diverse datasets to help Al models learn effectively.

Al Helpdesk Specialists act as Al coaches, ready to assist with Al-related issues in the workplace. Many current IT professionals are likely to upskill in this area.

Machine Learning Engineers bridge the gap between the theoretical concepts of data scientists and their operational application. These specialized software developers focus on creating machine learning models and AI systems to make predictions, recognize patterns, and extract insights from data.

Al Ethicists safeguard the ethical implications and consequences of Al use in business applications. They ensure that Al tools align with company policies and maintain neutrality, privacy, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Metaverse Officers are VR and AR specialists who develop, purchase, and manage metaverse applications for companies. This is particularly emerging in HR, gaming, education, and healthcare.



Business Intelligence and Data-Analysis

Data Ethicists ensure the quality of sources and the correct acquisition, storage, sharing, and use of data. These are often legal experts in privacy and data management. They oversee the grounds for processing, security, and transparency in data use.

Data Brokers focus on selling relevant data to businesses. As representatives of data companies, they pitch how a company can benefit from specific data.

Fact Checkers provide AI-generated content with a 'verified label.' They verify data accuracy by comparing it with other sources, checking the reliability of sources, seeking additional confirmation, analyzing context, and discussing results with experts.

IT and Security

HR Tech Experts and Remote Work Facilitators guide the transition to an efficient hybrid work culture, specializing in HR technology, telecommuting, and virtual team-building.

Creative Concept Designers are creative developers skilled in concept design. As coding becomes less necessary for programming, creative problem-solvers will become more important than traditional programmers and software developers.

Ethical Hackers will increasingly test companies' cybersecurity by attempting to hack existing systems, essential in today's digital business environment.

Cybersecurity Analysts protect companies from online vulnerabilities and breaches in data and digital work environments. With the rise of cybercrime, the demand for robust cybersecurity is also growing.





Environment, Social & Governance

Corporate Social Responsibility Managers and Community Impact Managers ensure that companies maintain a strong focus on the social rights of all employees and positively embed the company within the local community.

Sustainability Consultants focus on making companies sustainable and energy-efficient in both processes and facilities, helping businesses to reduce their ecological footprint.

Change Management

Change Managers assist companies in navigating a constantly changing market, supporting them in fostering a culture of adaptability and continuous change. They help managers to navigate technological innovation, new processes, restructurings, or cultural shifts with minimal disruption—a future-proof career!

Isabel Declercq

The Future of Hybrid Work

The breakthrough of hybrid work was met with great enthusiasm, but what's the reality? Remote work also brings stress, a loss of social cohesion, and digital overload. The next step is sustainable collaboration, says Isabel De Clercq, author of the new book "Good Work: A Guide."

Why should we approach remote work more thoughtfully?

Many companies have arranged remote work practically, but they don't really know why they are opting for hybrid work. This choice should start from a **view on people and work.** It's about shaping values like trust, sustainable employability, and a mature working relationship.

But there's more to consider. The aging of the population results in a need to work longer and with more people. This can only be achieved if our **work is organized sustainably.** That's the only way to ensure the well-being and prosperity of future generations.

Where does it go wrong?

It's a complex issue with various factors at play. Let's focus on the role of technology. An interesting perspective comes from Matt Mullenweg, who describes **five phases** leading to the **ultimate** "remote work" environment.

"We need to collaborate more asynchronously, with focused time and periods of rest."

In the first phase, you work together in an office. In phase two, you replicate your office work at home digitally, meaning synchronous work with lots of calls, meetings, and messages. Many interruptions that cause stress. Most organizations are currently in this phase. In phase three, we become accustomed to working from home and start using digital tools in a better, slower way. In phase four, there's more room for a healthy mix of synchronous and asynchronous collaboration.

Asynchronous communication means the recipient doesn't expect an immediate response. You work at your own pace, bundle your questions and reflections, and send them all at once to your colleague, who does the same. This allows you to work more slowly but with greater autonomy, focus, and purpose. There's more time for rest and reflection—no more constant availability.

The ultimate goal is phase five: an environment with minimal interruptions where you can focus on tasks that create real value.

How can we take more ownership of our work?

We need to move away from endless flexibility. It's more productive to complete your work within a fixed timeframe rather than constantly changing the schedule.

There's also a need to evolve toward **greater impact**. Are we creating impact with our work, are we doing the right things, and are we staying well-organized? Or are we just present at work?

Finally, we need to place **sufficient value on teamwork and the bigger picture**. Yes, we should be able to work quietly and independently, but we mustn't swing too far toward individualism. Shared goals, common values, and the opportunity to learn from one another are the glue that binds people together—stronger than any office building.

You wrote in your previous book, "Hybrid Work – A Manifesto," that "the magic is in the mix." What do you mean by that?

The right mix enhances your balance. As a **workplace,** a good mix of locations can be inspiring: home, the office, flexible workspaces, at a client's site, etc. The right **blend of digital and physical collaboration** is also powerful. And when it comes to **synchronous and asynchronous work**, finding the best balance can lead to smarter and more sustainable collaboration.

And let's be honest: we haven't found the perfect mix yet. We're all still learning, and that is okay. The future of hybrid work is something we will write together.

Naomi Queeckers

Sustainability is Shaping the Workplace

The Green Deal outlines policy measures to make Europe climate-neutral by 2050. How will this sustainability transformation shape our jobs in the coming years? We ask Naomi Queeckers, sustainability expert and author of "Sustainable Stories."

From 2025, many more companies will need to report on their ESG policies. What does this mean?

ESG stands for **Environment, Social, and Governance.** By requiring businesses to report on these three pillars, Europe is creating transparency about a company's sustainability efforts for all stakeholders.

Currently, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) is only mandatory for publicly listed companies. Starting in 2025, this requirement will also apply to companies of public interest and to all businesses meeting two out of the following three criteria: €40 million in annual turnover, €20 million in total assets, and 250 employees.

How does this reporting impact companies' sustainability policies?

The reporting is a "baseline measurement." Only when companies understand their current position they can set specific goals. A useful approach is to align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Companies don't need to focus on all goals at once; instead, they should select a few key goals for each policy period where they can make real progress.

Why is sustainability important for companies?

There's a shift happening in the mindset of all stakeholders, so having a **strong reputation** in this area is crucial. Companies that genuinely embrace sustainability, **without resorting to greenwashing,** will gain a competitive edge.

The same applies to **employer branding.**Employees want to be part of the solution, not the problem; it's about the future of their children. And those children are **tomorrow's workforce**, who will judge companies even more strictly. In twenty years, companies that aren't sustainable will struggle to attract talent.



However, I hope that the primary motivation is an intrinsic one: to keep our planet livable and to improve it for ourselves, our children, and the planet itself.

How will sustainability influence our jobs in the next ten years?

You will perform your job more sustainably, and sustainability will become an integral part of your role. The legal department will incorporate sustainability into contracts, communications will partly focus on sustainability, suppliers will be screened for sustainability, and HR will use sustainability as a selection criterion, among other things.

Sustainability will become part of the corporate DNA, and therefore, part of every job, job description, and evaluation interview. If you work at a sustainable company, that company will hold you accountable for sustainability as well. This sense of personal responsibility can be encouraged and supported by Sustainability Managers, Corporate Social Responsibility Managers, and Community Impact Managers, who help ensure that the company makes progress.

What is the role of education in this context?

It's much easier to raise children with the right mindset than to change the existing mindset of adults. Therefore, the real success lies in upbringing and education. It's our responsibility as adults to take the lead and simultaneously engage our children. I firmly believe that our children can grow up with the ideal work mentality: ambitious, yet fully aware of their impact on the planet.

"Projectsourcing is a smart move for future-oriented Business." Warda El Azzouzi General Manager of USG Professionals

Flexible with Talent

Outsourcing is booming like never before. Interim work was ten years ago often limited to short-term, administrative replacement roles. Today, the number of freelancers across all sectors is on the rise. Expertise is now more valuable than the type of contract, sharpening the potential of companies.

Ultimately, it's all about projectsourcing, whether for small or structural projects. The possibilities range from short-term support to long-term interim management, and even to a complete transfer of a company's structure. "If we look at growth by sector, IT is, as usual, leading the way. But management roles in niches like HR, legal, finance, facility management, life sciences, and engineering are also experiencing remarkable growth," Warda notes. "Today, this growth is extending into operational roles as well.

The COVID-19 pandemic was certainly an accelerator. The need for support, regardless of location, suddenly became widespread during that period. This opened up the market really fast, creating an irreversible trend. Even Personal Assistants are now being outsourced. The demand in the job market is so high that the form of the contract becomes secondary. It's the skill set that matters, and rightly so, because talent knows no boundaries. Our northern neighbors have long been more progressive in this regard."



Agility and Expertise On Demand

Of course, the tight labor market isn't the only factor making outsourcing attractive. "The expertise you bring in is on point" says Warda. "These are individuals with niche expertise and extensive experience across various projects and organizations. For this reason, they also possess a high degree of flexibility. These are profiles that combine multiple skills and are difficult to find for permanent hire."

Additionally, freelance consultants are increasingly finding each other at critical intersections, such as HR and Legal, or IT and Facility Management. The ability to collaborate with professionals who are multiskilled and have extensive expertise and experience remains the primary reason to rely on outsourcing. "This fits into the business model of more and more companies. They realize that a partner like USG Professionals is specialized in finding and training talent and can meet needs quickly and efficiently.



We go to the extreme to recruit external talent. The power of networking is crucial for this. Networking events, targeted content outreach through the right channels, or innovation meet-ups that reach a broader audience from a creative angle—these are just a few examples of our approach. We also offer training with an emphasis on change and agility. As a consultant, you never know where you'll end up, and your assignment often involves driving change.

We believe in the power of connection. Our database contains 40,000 candidates, and we don't waste that talent. Our recruiters are experts in various niches, each with their own network. They stay attuned to their sector, identifying trends and developments that are valuable for trainings and events."

Unified Towards a Clear Goal

What is the critical success factor in projectsourcing? The key, as always, lies with the people, says Warda. "The company culture is very important, but the crucial element is setting a clear, common goal. When everyone is aligned, it doesn't matter who has which type of contract as long as the right skills are at the right place.

We also work with external talent, and often you can't tell who is external and who isn't. Everyone contributes to our challenges and growth within a warm and empowering work environment. This is also the vision we want to share with our clients and consultants."



Agile or Waterfall

Getting the Best of Both Worlds

In today's business landscape, two methodologies dominate: **agile management and traditional project management.** Both approaches have their merits, each offering unique advantages. However, these methodologies often appear to be at odds, presenting a false conflict between 'traditional' and 'modern' practices. This is misleading, as they are not conflicting forces.

The agile methodology is on the rise, and for good reason. Businesses increasingly opt for technology-driven products, entering rapidly evolving markets. Economic uncertainty also compels companies to respond more swiftly to customer demands. Originating in software development, agile provides a fitting response to these challenges. However, who concludes that traditional project management is outdated, misses the essence.

In enterprises with diverse stakeholders, many projects require a stable and value-driven approach. Not every situation is unpredictable, and certain processes and products demand precision within a well-defined framework. Consider infrastructure projects or vehicle manufacturing, where strict specifications and adherence to safety standards are crucial.

Yet, the same vehicle manufacturer might adopt agile methods for developing software for their vehicles, staying aligned with market trends and maintaining a competitive edge in a rapidly evolving environment.

The question then becomes: which approach makes your company stronger for future challenges? The magic is often in the mix. By integrating the agile methodology's quick, adaptive response with the careful, sequential precision of traditional project management, you can get the best of both worlds. Complex projects frequently benefit from a hybrid approach. Absolute thinking creates false contradiction and unnecessary conflicts. The key is to understand the needs and base the approach on them. This does not always require restructuring; agile principles can also be implemented within a traditional organizational framework. Breaking down communication barriers, enhancing transparency, or forming cross-functional teams can also foster agility, regardless of the terminology used.

It is time to approach both methods with the necessary flexibility. As the market is evolving, so are organizations. A deep understanding of needs and potential solutions enhances effectiveness. One thing is certain: **adaptability** will remain crucial beyond 2024, and we must stay vigilant in this regard.



FUTURE-ORIENTED ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- Six Valuable Insights -How can we effectively embrace change today? These are the key pillars from our discussions:

Agile in a Changing Market

Adaptability is more crucial than ever. Markets evolve rapidly, and sometimes reinvention is necessary. Key questions will include what customers will want tomorrow, what knowledge and tools are needed to meet these demands, and whether your company is optimally organized. Stepping out of your comfort zone is essential, even if it means investing in new products, structures, or methods. *Think outside the box.*

2 Data-Driven Company Culture

Al is here to stay and is revolutionizing knowledge work. Everyone will engage with data; this transition is only beneficial if your team understands the technology and its value. In this cultural shift, people are at the center. Knowing your goal and how technology can support it is the first step. Subsequent training, coaching, and collaborative testing of new tools will foster 'data maturity'. The result? Corporate knowledge is shared across departments, making them smarter and more efficient.

Hybrid Work for Sustainable Employability

To ensure **healthier and longer** employability, we must rethink how we handle hybrid work. This choice should be guided by a clear vision of people and society, and by **trusting** your team. Key elements include results-oriented focus, autonomy, rest, focus time, and asynchronous collaboration.

Agile Management

Project and organizational management can also be hybrid. Understanding your company's needs and how to address them enhances decision-making and improves outcomes. Whether it's agile, scrum, lean, or waterfall, each methodology has its merits. The magic can be in the mix.

Sustainability in Your Company DNA

The Green Deal places sustainability at the heart of efforts towards a climate-neutral Europe. Operating in an environmentally friendly, socially responsible, and ethical manner provides a competitive advantage. Stakeholders expect not only profit but also social and societal ambition. This is particularly important for the younger generation and is crucial for your employer branding.

Flexible with Talent

The knowledge and profiles you need evolve as quickly as the market. The answer is not just training and hiring; often, outsourcing is more efficient. External consultants bring precise expertise, limited investment, and significant sector experience into your company. Expertise is more important than the contract type, sharpening companies' potential. Therefore, a flexible mix of internal and external talent is a key component of future-oriented strategies.

About USG Professionals

USG Professionals, part of RGF Staffing, is one of the largest HR service providers in Belgium. We facilitate the outsourcing of consultants, freelancers, and experts in Change Management, ICT, Engineering, Science, Finance, Legal, HR, and Facility Management.

USG Professionals guides companies to tomorrow's workplace

As a trusted business partner with more than 30 years of experience, we place the right skills in the right positions. We support both small and large companies through the changes they face. We provide training and inspirational sessions and deploy over 400 multiskilled professionals daily to tackle significant challenges together.

As a **partner to independent experts**, we accelerate talent development. We invest in training for best practices and future-proof skills. Through USG Professionals, you can access assignments with top companies and receive coaching for a sustainable career. With the **USG Easy app**, you gain full control over your freelance career.

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Want to know more?

+32 (03) 800 40 20 info@usgprofessionals.be Frankrijklei 101 2000 Antwerpen www.usgprofessionals.be

