Emilio Alvarez  
Hi, can you guess me? Gabe, can you hear me?

Gabriel Almeida  
I can. Hi, Jeremy.

joemy vega  
Hi.

Gabriel Almeida  
How are you going?

Emilio Alvarez  
I hear you twice. I think you're in the meeting twice for some reason.

Gabriel Almeida  
There you go.

Emilio Alvarez  
There we go. How are you?

joemy vega  
Good. Hi.

Emilio Alvarez  
Hi. Great to meet you. Thanks for speaking with us. I know that we sent you a brief email introducing us, but just, you know, like, I'm Emilio, this is Gabe. We're both MIT students, just graduated, and we're looking into the interior design space. Specifically, we're trying to better understand outsourcing of a couple different things. But before we get into that, I'll let Gabe introduce himself. Say it's a bit more. Give a bit more context as well.

joemy vega  
Sure.

Gabriel Almeida  
Thank you for the time joining me in speaking to us. We are currently in like a startup incubator for new businesses here in mit. I'm originally from Brazil, Emilio's from Mexico, and we met each other here in school. We just finished our mba, our master's in business, and we're currently out. We're currently exploring a thesis around, as Emilio said, like, outsourcing for interior design firms, specifically like for drafting talent overseas based in Latam. So that's what brings us to speak to you today. So would be great to start off by like. Of course, if you have any questions, we're happy to answer them first, but I think it would be great to start off by asking, like, how you see outsourcing today in your firm and in the broader interior design industry before we.

joemy vega  
Are you guys doing a startup right now? Is this, or is this like a school research?

Gabriel Almeida  
No, no, we're looking to build an actual business. We're done with school.

joemy vega  
Okay.

Gabriel Almeida  
So we're trying to understand if it's like, worth building a business on.

joemy vega  
Gotcha. So this is really just research because I wasn't sure because I get so many.

Emilio Alvarez  
Yeah, yeah.

joemy vega  
Weird people and I'm like, I, I mean, I like, I mentor people. I'm on a board. Like, I completely would want to like, help anybody, you know. Absolutely. I'm actually myself doing a, A bet on a new launch that we're doing for a new project. So I, I've been reaching out to people for research just to see if there's. Just to see if there is a market for the idea before you launch it.

Emilio Alvarez  
Yeah, it's a best practice for sure.

joemy vega  
Yeah, absolutely. I'm doing the same thing.

Gabriel Almeida  
Great.

joemy vega  
Okay. Yeah, go ahead and ask me. What was the question again?

Gabriel Almeida  
Yeah, so I think to start off Jeremy, it'd be great to see like, how you see outsourcing today for interior design studios, like in your specific firm and then more broadly, what part?

joemy vega  
What part of outsourcing? For what part of the entire process.

Gabriel Almeida  
Specifically for like drafting.

joemy vega  
So do you guys understand that there's an A to Z on architecture and interior design and construction? Right. So on the A to Z, the drafting can come in, you know, at conceptual, and then it will definitely come in and design development, and it will definitely be part of construction, administrative. I mean, construction documents. Right. So which part of drafting you mean like from the beginning to end or just to make the construction documents?

Emilio Alvarez  
From the beginning to the end. But more specifically, what we're trying to understand is like, are there specific stages where it's more or less relevant? If so, why.

joemy vega  
So are you guys trying to start like an outsourcing company for architecture and interior design? Is that what you guys are looking into?

Emilio Alvarez  
Is what we're evaluating? Yeah.

joemy vega  
Yeah. Okay. So I personally, I wouldn't say I outsource, but I, I work with architecture firms that do that, do my production work because I don't want to have them on their W2s. So I try to put everybody as much as possible on 1099s. So. So I guess I personally have not outsourced anything, but I have worked with companies that outsource source and it, to be honest with you, it's such a headache because they're not like, you know, the time change number 1, 2. Unless you build a relationship with a particular person, it's very hard to get through the style of how they draft.

Gabriel Almeida  
Yep.

joemy vega  
You know what I mean? And it's very particular. It's like, it's like if you're having someone write your emails, right. They need to understand the way you write in order to reply that it's something that would resonate with you and your brand. Right. So that, to me, for me, that, that. What would you call that? Discovery. Not discovery part. The getting to know that person in order to do a job. A job, to me, it's not worth it. Like, I'd rather pay the money to. For someone else that I know that's going to do the job that I already have. The relationship with and the experience that I know.

Gabriel Almeida  
Right.

joemy vega  
Because it's too much. It's at the time that the, what would you call that? The, the training, like the onboarding time and. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Gabriel Almeida  
So the way we're envisioning, Jeremy, is less kind of like on a Per project basis that you just like give us a brief and us as a firm, we give you like the drawings. We're really thinking about it as like a staffing company that's near shore in Latam. What that means is if you tell us, for example, I want to have a full time drafter for indefinite time, full time in my team, right. We would go out there, we would find candidates for you. We would screen them based on like their technical like skills with drafting. Sk. We would screen them like according to like the brief of your style and like some examples that you give us our way. And they would be our employee, but they would be full time staffed with you.

Gabriel Almeida  
You would be dealing like directly with that person for an indefinite amount of time.

joemy vega  
Yeah, yeah, that might work. That might work if I'm assigned a person for sure.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay.

joemy vega  
Yeah.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay.

Gabriel Almeida  
So that like we're hoping that the. What's compelling about this driving, then you tell us if you agree or not.

Gabriel Almeida  
Right.

Gabriel Almeida  
Is that we are. Our thesis is that because we know there's a lot of interior design firms, for example in Florida already doing this, informal formally, but our theory is that there's a lot of good architecture and interior design talent in Latam, in Mexico, in Brazil and other countries in Colombia. And you can get basically the same level of junior level talent, but for almost half the cost of someone full time in the U.S. right.

joemy vega  
Well, I'll be interested on an exploring that if that's, I mean, I haven't personally done it, but I wouldn't, I, I would be, I would try it, you know, before I put it down and see how it works. I mean I've, I, I have been following or listening or knowing people that they don't do what I do, but they do more techie stuff and they do run their whole company like that. So I have thought about doing that. I just haven't really had the opportunity to look into it. I've tried to hire people from upwork and it's just been, yeah, the betting is tough and we're disappointed. Like, it's like, why are you gonna be a consultant when I have to be on top of your. Like, you should know what you're doing. Yeah.

Gabriel Almeida  
How do you do the drafting today? Join me. Do you have someone in your team that does the drafting for you? Do you do it yourself? Like, how do you know?

joemy vega  
No, I have, I, I have someone that does all my drafting. But when we get busy, like I said, I have other architecture firms that I have relationships with from years okay. That they're just super seasoned architects and you know, they get me. So we just, you know, we just kind of run. But, but like I said, I was it. It was already on my mind to do kind of what you guys are presenting. I just haven't had a chance to really explore it because you know, I'm supposed to like put an ad on upwork and hired like you know, an interview, a bunch of people. Right. And then like figured out like which who I want to hire and then.

Gabriel Almeida  
Yeah.

joemy vega  
Sense.

Gabriel Almeida  
It makes sense. But are you saying then, Jeremy, that you like, you're in a moment now that you assuming obviously it's very cost effective and like half of the cost of someone full time in the U.S. are you looking to try to bring someone full time overseas to help you with like drafting work or is that not the right.

joemy vega  
I'm. I'm in the middle of. I'm in the middle of like different faces right now. I just got done with a few. I'm pretty much like in the middle of. I'm not there on CDs yet. So I've been doing the space planning, like the basic space planning just to get approval myself. But I mean I can draft obviously it was a cat monkey back in my days, but I just don't, you know, I, I don't. That's not what I need to be doing. So. But just to get the idea through for the space planning for. Just to lock the plan. So then I particularly don't have a need today, but probably, I think as soon as I can get my schedule on some of these projects, I need to start figuring out who's going to do what.

Emilio Alvarez  
Yeah, gotcha. And so if you were to hire someone from Latam to do this, like what would be the top two or three attributes that you would want to screen for?

joemy vega  
Well, number one, that they speak English.

Emilio Alvarez  
What level?

joemy vega  
Well, I mean enough to understand. Number two, I, they need to own their work and number three, they need to be available.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay.

joemy vega  
You know, and I'm pretty flexible. Like I don't bother people on the weekends. But you know, if there's, you know, there's a commitment. There's a commitment and it's Friday night and the person said it's a commitment, then I would expect a commitment to, you know, for them to be.

Gabriel Almeida  
Of course. And then. But when you do have that like higher volume come in, join me. Like, are you looking to hire this person like full time or you're.

joemy vega  
Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I. Absolutely. I would Want them involved in the entire project? Yeah, I don't want to be switching people.

Gabriel Almeida  
Yeah, but you just want them for that project or you want to have them in your team indefinitely?

joemy vega  
I mean, I think it's a tryout. You know, I'll start with a project and see how that works. And if it works out, then, you know, maybe I have, I can have them definitely as a. Again, I, I hire people as I get busy.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay.

joemy vega  
The less overhead I can have. That's how I'm running my business this time around.

Gabriel Almeida  
But then you hire them on a project basis and when you get less busy, you let them go. Like, how does it work?

joemy vega  
Yeah, they, they. I hire people to do a set of drawings for a particular project or two projects, you know, so when the project's done and they're done with the job and everything's done, then they're done.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay, but do you have any like full time employees in your payroll for an indefinite amount of time or you just.

joemy vega  
No, not right now. My, my right hand guy, he's on 1099 right now. So I took everything out. I took everybody out. Like I, I did like a, I'm running this a very, very low overhead and rent to further notice because I was running my overhead for no reason. Just really no reason. Like because, you know, there's no reason like to have a big office that I only use a conference table, a conference room, like hardly any. And you know, there was a lot of expenses.

Gabriel Almeida  
Yeah.

joemy vega  
And I'm trying to like run, start other businesses. So I'm trying to maximize the amount of my, my investment.

Gabriel Almeida  
No, that makes sense. So you're basically saying that you would only be interested in like trying someone out overseas on a per project basis, but like just to give us an idea like how free start to start.

joemy vega  
Absolutely. I, I need to make sure that the quality and everything. Yeah, yeah. That to me it's more important that relationship of communication and obviously the, the level of proficiency that they have. So I'd rather pay more because I already on that route of trying to be cheap and it's just, it's not worth it.

Gabriel Almeida  
Yeah, no, but what I'm hearing from Jeremy is like even if we thought we find the best drafter in like Mexico for you and amazing person, super proficient, delivers greater communication. Like from what I understand, you don't run your business in a way that you would like that person permanently on your payroll, regardless.

joemy vega  
I could. It just depends how busy I'm getting. Like, I'm.

Gabriel Almeida  
I'm.

joemy vega  
I took a little break from work. From work. So I just got back last October, and I've been like, well, and I've been going at it. So I'm just, you know, it takes a little bit to get a bunch of projects running. So I'm. You know, the more projects that I get, then, yeah, absolutely. Like, I'm gonna. I'm have to rethink. I'm gonna have to reevaluate what I'm saying about overhead and people, but I'll. I'll give myself. Every three months, I come back and do a check, you know, am I still there? And then, you know, things. Things will evolve and change, but at this point, that's where I'm at.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay, that makes sense.

Emilio Alvarez  
Got it. Understood.

Gabriel Almeida  
Makes sense. Okay, cool. And then do you mind sharing with us, Remy, just to understand, like, the. The size of your projects? Like, do you have in your mind, like, an average range between, like, the project budget that you usually work with?

joemy vega  
They vary. They vary. I can get a. I can have a resort. I can have a boutique hotel. I can have a restaurant. I can have a QSR place. It just depends.

Gabriel Almeida  
You have a. Regardless of, like, the type of project.

Gabriel Almeida  
Right.

Gabriel Almeida  
Do you have, like, a. A lower bound in terms of, like, if it's less than this budget, I'm not gonna. I'm not gonna take it. Because it's not worth.

Gabriel Almeida  
Or not really.

joemy vega  
No, not really. Because I work with. We. We, you know, we. Like, I'm working right now with franchise. With new franchises. So, you know, they. They're opening like, 10 units, and, you know, it might be a huge hit if it works. So, you know, so you. So I'm doing that part too. So I don't, you know, I don't. I don't say that. You never know. I mean, it might not be like. Like, you know, a massive restaurant, but it might be like the next, I don't know, Jimmy Jones that I'm working on, you know?

Gabriel Almeida  
Of course. Of course. And is there any other part of your business, Jeremy, that you would be interested in, like, outsourcing, either, like, in a. In like, indefinite or, like, temporary manner, like beyond?

joemy vega  
Yeah, I'm foreseeing that if this thing that I'm doing, if it works out, like, I'm gonna need a lot of help with. I. I need someone that's very AI savvy to be able to run like. Like. Like all the stuff that we're doing that I've been handling, mainly me, but I can not, I, I, I, I, it's just too much. Like I, I got involved just because I needed to make sure that I understand, you know, and I'm learning. But there's a lot of like, I don't know, what would you call this? I don't know. Everything that we're doing is pretty AI based.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay.

joemy vega  
Most of it, you know, except like the drafting, you know, like obviously that's not, but Got it. Yeah. And, and I need some help with my marketing part, you know, and I need somebody that can understand editing and video and making like a half my, like I have my avatar and you know, for my marketing and like editing all that and using different types of AI, you know. You know what? Like.

Gabriel Almeida  
Yeah, yeah.

joemy vega  
You know what I mean? Like there's just like, you know, to get a brick, to get a, a post out, there's like six things were running through a different AIs to get there.

Gabriel Almeida  
Absolutely.

joemy vega  
So I just need somebody to understand all that because there's a lot of editing and clipping and posting and adding things and I don't know, I don't even know what description of that job would be right now.

Emilio Alvarez  
Yeah, no, I hear, yeah, like your AI. Yeah. Like analyst or. I don't know.

joemy vega  
Yeah, I don't even know. I don't even know what to call it because then I'm running all my projects through, you know, all my projects on AI. So like I'm trying to establish like almost like my network that way.

Gabriel Almeida  
Yeah.

joemy vega  
With my clients. Yeah.

Gabriel Almeida  
Can you tell us a little bit more about that? Like when you say that you're running your business on AI, like what, what do you mean by that? Jeremy, are you like, what types of.

joemy vega  
Tools are you like right now? Like as it stands right now, like I'm doing, I'm still using now open AI, so chat GPT. So there's like projects. But I think I'm going to switch to Gemini because I was just listening to somebody and so each client right now has like a project base. So all my information is getting fed into there. So whatever I need from that client, like even plants or anything, I just go to the project and I ask the question and I get all the information that I need.

Gabriel Almeida  
Great.

joemy vega  
You know, instead of like, you know how before like you go to like your network and you look for the file and you look for the product.

Gabriel Almeida  
Yeah, that's great.

joemy vega  
I feel that information to that project.

Gabriel Almeida  
Great. Great.

Gabriel Almeida  
So let me ask you this, Jeremy. Like here's what we're envisioning specifically, right? We're envisioning like kind of like an HR department for you overseas that manages talent, top level talent in Latin America for your needs.

Gabriel Almeida  
Right.

Gabriel Almeida  
And like specifically we're thinking more drafting talent because we think that's more like the bread.

joemy vega  
Yeah.

Gabriel Almeida  
Any interior designer, but it could be for other purposes.

joemy vega  
Okay.

Gabriel Almeida  
And then we would charge like a slight premium on what you would pay if you randomly found someone overseas because that's how we make money as a company.

Gabriel Almeida  
Right.

joemy vega  
Yeah.

Gabriel Almeida  
Is that something even if it's like in a full time but project based scale for you, is that something that you'd be interested in?

joemy vega  
Yeah, no, I said I would earlier. I said that it was in my to do list to look into it. Just because I've seen more techie people. I haven't met anybody in my business that's doing it, but hey, it's still a business, right? You're still running a business, so.

Gabriel Almeida  
Great.

joemy vega  
It's just a different particular.

Gabriel Almeida  
Yeah.

joemy vega  
Industry, but it's still a business. So I was like intrigued. I'm like, well, these people are running all these different, you know, and I'm trying to like start another, like I'm, you know, I'm trying to start other businesses. So I'm trying to figure it out like how they, how to set them up, you know, so that if it works, that'll be great.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay, interesting. And then let me ask you this. One of the things that were thinking about, Drew, I mean, it's going to be super valuable because you know everything about this and we know nothing. We're trying to learn.

Gabriel Almeida  
Right.

Gabriel Almeida  
But one of the things that seems to be kind of painful for designers because we know a lot of them that have informally found people overseas that do drafting for them. But apparently there's a lot of back and forth in the drawings, right? There's a lot of versions, there's a lot of iterations and they send versions of files through email, through WhatsApp and there's like annotations that are lost. Sometimes mistakes are made more than once. So one of the things that were thinking of coupling with like this talent management service is a very simple digital tool, like a software where you can upload in a very organized manner different like drafts of different versions of the drafts with the comments and everything. So everything is kept like more organized, more efficient, less errors are made, sign.

Emilio Alvarez  
Up for approvals, those kinds of things.

Gabriel Almeida  
How valuable do you think something like that is? You think there's value at all in, like, a, A digital tool like that for someone like you? If you're, like, managing that talent overseas or not really, it's kind of like, whatever.

joemy vega  
No, to be honest with you, I mean, I've had issues with software and people because, you know, you, you might design it. Whoever, you know, whoever's designing it might think it's going to work one way, but everybody has different ways. So to me, I'm, I, I know my. Know my crap pretty well, so I don't really have issues, but going back and forth with people because I pretty much like, he. I know what to do. So I, I give them everything that they need to run with, and they should just be able to come back and me go back again maybe three, four times. That's about it.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay.

joemy vega  
I don't have issues like that. Like, I keep it pretty organized. You know, if you give it everything organized, it should just go.

Gabriel Almeida  
I mean, what about, like, someone that we could also staff on a project basis for you? Join me. That's not necessarily doing, like, the drafting for you, but is doing all the procurement control for you.

Emilio Alvarez  
So.

joemy vega  
Yeah, that would work. Like I said, I'm, I'm open, like I said, because I'm trying to, like, build older stuff that I'm trying to figure out. Like, how does this run by itself as much as possible. Right, right.

Gabriel Almeida  
So.

joemy vega  
I want to have less overhead as possible then. That, that.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay.

joemy vega  
I haven't, I haven't experienced it. So I can't tell you if I'm gonna, you know, again, it's. My experience has been upwork, and I did not like it. Like, all the people I've hired has been just horrible. Like, I have to be on top of them. Like, I have to check their stuff. Like, I'm like, why are you even a consultant? Like, their level of skill, saying, they're here, and they're like, here.

Gabriel Almeida  
Yeah. So it's very clear to me now what you're envisioning. Join me, like, on this, like, point that you mentioned that you want to make this lower your overhead as much as possible and make this, like, interior design business of yours run on its own as much as possible. We talked about drafting. We talked about procurement control. Like, what else would you want to service, like, what we're envisioning and doing to do so that your goal is accomplished?

joemy vega  
Well, I just need, like, the drafting people. Right. Which I would, the 3D renderings, we can outsource that. I mean, that, I, that's whatever. I guess that too. And then it would just be basically, you know, someone to, in between to help. Well, I don't know. Like.

Emilio Alvarez  
Yeah. What do you mean by in between?

joemy vega  
Yeah, like. Yeah, I don't, I, I, I don't know what to tell you because I, I, I have a system going, but then I'm trying. I'm, it was running and now I'm shifting it and now I'm, it's like I'm doing like a new batch right now. Right. I'm, I'm trying different things. So in the past, you know, I just give it to my right hand person and he ran with everything. So I just came in and said, oh, yeah, no, whatever. But now I'm not doing that. So, yeah, I don't know, I'll probably need like an assistant in between.

Gabriel Almeida  
Yeah, yeah.

Gabriel Almeida  
Like a personal assistant.

joemy vega  
But that's what I'm saying. Like, I need somebody that's kind of AI savvy, besides interior design, that can assist me with all those things.

Gabriel Almeida  
Got you. Marketing, Procurement.

joemy vega  
Yeah.

Gabriel Almeida  
Billing, Accounting.

joemy vega  
Yeah. I mean, but things have been, I mean, I'm experiencing like, you know, I was just doing a job that was seven hours and I just did it in 10 minutes with an agent, so. But things are getting shorter.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay.

Emilio Alvarez  
Yeah.

Gabriel Almeida  
Got you, got you.

Emilio Alvarez  
And are there any parts of the design process that you think are going to be, are more likely to end up being done by AI and you just let it run and are there some that we're like, this is never going to be done?

joemy vega  
Yeah, I'm actually working on automating everything that I can through AI except the drafting part. That's not there yet. So I actually wrote a program that allows me to do my conceptual and mood boards. Know that through AI. Working on it. I'm still working on it.

Emilio Alvarez  
Yeah. And would you, do you think that AI is ever gonna like, replace 2D in renderings or do you think you're gonna need to like the actual process of making the drawings, or do you think it, like, it's gonna require the human touch?

joemy vega  
No, no, we're not there yet. Right now. It could just probably launch the first part of schematic and conceptual. Anything that has to do with an LLM that can do. But drafting is not there yet, obviously, you know, so schematic, conceptual, anything has to do with words and images, but you still need somebody. It's basically, it's really a, a workflow between AI and a person.

Gabriel Almeida  
Got it.

Gabriel Almeida  
And then you mentioned that you have kind of like a right hand person join me that you activate on like a 1099 basis.

Gabriel Almeida  
Right.

Gabriel Almeida  
Could you like just understand like, kind of like how much that type of like labor costs in the US like how much do you pay that person, like per hour? I imagine it's per hour.

Gabriel Almeida  
Right.

joemy vega  
Now I pay, I mean, I like yearly. I don't really want to talk about that.

Gabriel Almeida  
That's fine.

Gabriel Almeida  
No problem.

Gabriel Almeida  
And what we're trying to accomplish, you, I mean, just to give you contest to why we're asking this, like, we're trying to understand like how much we would have to like charge to create like 50 savings for you based on you hiring this talent, like nationally in the U.S. you know what I mean? Want to be able to create that amount of value for you to see really that this is like something that's worth taking a shot on.

Gabriel Almeida  
Right.

Gabriel Almeida  
Because we know that it's going to be remote and by definition that has its own challenges. Right. Being someone that's not like, can't be in a studio with you once in a while.

joemy vega  
Right.

Gabriel Almeida  
So we would just want to make sure that we're creating enough value in that like labor savings for it to be worth taking that shot.

Gabriel Almeida  
Right?

joemy vega  
Yeah. Well, I mean, you guys can circle back up with me here or I'll let you know as soon as, you know, I get this stuff that I'm waiting on that I'm gonna need help and then we can sit down and talk about numbers.

Gabriel Almeida  
Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely.

Emilio Alvarez  
When should we, when should we circle back with you?

joemy vega  
I would say give me like, like four weeks. Like I said, we're launching this new thing and I'm waiting on some stuff from other projects that have been on hold for some reason and some stuff that I'm still in conceptual schematic, so. But if this thing I'm doing works, I'm gonna need a lot of help, so.

Gabriel Almeida  
Okay, awesome. You're talking about like the franchise project, right?

joemy vega  
No, I'm doing a new launch coming up of a new of like an AI slash like multi unit restaurant people.

Gabriel Almeida  
Awesome.

Gabriel Almeida  
Great.

Gabriel Almeida  
And Remy, look, thank you so much for your time. Like, we're just trying to learn as much as we can where it's at such like an early stage. So it's super helpful to get like insight into people that like, know a lot about the industry, like yourself. Last thing that I wanted to ask Remy and completely fine if you're not comfortable with it is if you have any friends like that you could potentially like refer us to have just conversations like to further our research that would be like super helpful.

joemy vega  
I don't, I can't think of anyone on top of my head but if you guys want to like shoot me an email with like, I don't know, like an intro or a link or something and I can like, I can keep that. We can do that.

Gabriel Almeida  
Absolutely.

joemy vega  
We can definitely shoot me an email with your stuff so I, I can circle back up with you guys here if you don't call me because this would be really helpful. So I'm glad that we get jumped on this call and thanks for reaching out.

Gabriel Almeida  
Awesome. The pleasure is ours. Best of luck in your ventures and we'll talk soon.

Emilio Alvarez  
Take care and happy stutch. Have a nice rest of your day.