

Jordan Reynolds

May 11, 2020

**Finding satisfaction in the gig economy through the internet**

Traditional corporate work has become obsolete. We live in an era where almost anything is possible due to the flexibility individuals gain from being able to work remotely. Doors are open now more than ever, and this all thanks to the connectivity and free flow of information that we all have at our fingertips -- the internet. The internet has revolutionized how effectively people can work for themselves and follow the path of entrepreneurs before them. It is important to recognize that the life of a freelancer is incredibly difficult and filled with uncertainty. For the past year, I have been working closely with an artist, Manuel Piedra Jr., to study the processes of being a freelance artist in the digital age. Through organizing art exhibitions, interviews, and clothing releases, there is a lot that goes into the craft. How do young people find satisfaction in the "gig economy" and why they are choosing to leave more stable jobs in exchange for less secure livelihoods?

What exactly is the gig economy? It can be defined as "...start-ups that connect and mediate between buyers and sellers in a range of markets..." (Joshua Healy, *Should We Take the Gig Economy Seriously?*). The gig economy is the middle man between the customers and the service. They hire individuals on their behalf and allow the customers to receive the specialized service. The gig economy provides flexibility that was previously only known to very high paying jobs. Freelancers can now work from home, but still be able to work closely and efficiently with their customers. Through the gig economy, there are possibilities to create new markets, which means more employment, "In some cases, their

influence also extends to cultivating new market niches, by bringing additional providers on-stream” (Healy). With plenty of opportunity for employment and freedom more people have been gravitating towards freelance work.

It is quite clear that there has been a steady rise of freelancers until now. The internet plays a large factor in people making the switch to the gig economy. Out of convenience, individuals may decide to work from outside of the traditional office setting because it gives them freedom and flexibility. Nobody knows the freedom that is to be had with the internet more than Millennials. Due to their internet savviness, Millennials may find more freedom in freelance work. In a study by Fulvio Castellacci, internet use with work may lead to job satisfaction;

“These findings do on the whole support the idea that new Internet-based communication platforms can enhance job satisfaction by creating a greater sense of participation and organizational commitment, and by making it possible to carry out working tasks in a more autonomous and more flexible way” (Fulvio Castellacci, Internet use and job satisfaction).

Freelance workers can multitask, earn extra income, and have more flexibility in their schedules, which outweighs job security created by traditional workplaces. In America, the traditional work hours are 9 AM to 5 PM. One advantage of a freelance job is that one can get much more work done from home -- a tantamount necessity revealing itself more and more in 2020. “[...] You can consult as a lawyer, flex your admin skills as a virtual assistant, share your hometown with tourists as a private guide or cook up a feast for paying guests—all on your own time and schedule” (Cross, Making it in the gig economy). When

working at a traditional job, one is bogged down by deadlines and managers. People feel like they are getting more productivity from their days when they have the option to work under more autonomous circumstances.

In the present climate, working at traditional corporate jobs seems less and less palatable to young professionals entering the workforce, as the true capabilities of the internet reveal themselves. The internet serves as a route for independence and freedom. A 2019 survey from the Freelancers Union and Upwork shows that there is a continuing rise of people choosing to be freelancers as opposed to working in a corporate setting, “The United States now has 57 million freelancers, up from 53 million in 2014, who make up 35% of the U.S. workforce and contribute nearly a \$1 trillion to the country’s gross domestic product” (Pros & cons of regulating the gig economy, anonymous). Freelance work is growing to become a large part of the economy. Though there is little to no job security, people seem to be flocking to this uncertain line of work. It is estimated that 39% of those in the gig economy use this source of nontraditional income as supplemental (Miriam Cross, Making it in the gig economy). As people find less satisfaction in the money they make, and the time they spend at corporate jobs they will discover ways to join the gig economy. The freedom that is afforded to those that are leaving traditional jobs for freelance work is apparent when one examines the benefits. One such benefit is on-demand employment, “Freelance and independent contract work is nothing new, but the apps and websites that power the gig economy have brought on-demand employment into the

mainstream.” Individuals have a choice over where they work as opposed to feeling like they have to be chosen. This privilege over one’s place of work has led to more people looking to be freelance.

Young people are finding satisfaction in the gig economy through use of the internet. Through the internet and freelance work there is an abundance of reasons why one would want to ditch their traditional place of work.

Internet use fosters job satisfaction by improving access to data and information, creating new activities and opportunities, and facilitating communication and social interactions. Further, the results also indicate that these positive effects are not equally distributed among different occupations and groups of workers. (Fulvio Castellacci).

When one chooses to work in the gig economy they are freeing themselves of restrictions placed on them by corporations. The internet makes it possible to be connected to anywhere in the world at any time. It seems that what professionals are looking for is the option to choose, and that is only made truly possible when they control when and where they work.

The lack of a need for higher education is a crucial part of why the gig economy is so attractive to people. The gig economy also allows people to compete without needing a formal education, “The gig economy crosses all sectors, incomes and education levels,” says Diane Mulcahy, author of *The Gig Economy* (HarperCollins). “It has infiltrated professions that were dominated by full-time work.” (Cross, Making it...). Historically, people have been required to have a certain education level to work in certain industries. Freelancing

has allowed people to sidestep roadblocks that were once in place. People can now compete with those who would have, traditionally had a leg up.

Even though there are major benefits to working in the gig economy, there are some aspects of it that are less than desirable. Many who participate in the gig economy do not have health insurance. For example if you are a driver with Lyft or Uber your car insurer may not support you, "If you are a rideshare driver, chances are good that your personal auto policy will stop covering you as soon as you log into the rideshare app." (Cross). Individuals also have to file their own separate taxes. On top of both of those seemingly minor inconveniences one has to face the largest reality of them all; work is not guaranteed. With such an unstable form of work it may be hard to understand why people choose to go into the line of freelance work. The answer can be answered with two words, more freedom.

The price of happiness in today's modern world is hefty. Many in the Millennial generation are looking for alternate routes to make a living. People, now more than ever, are seeking more flexibility in their work lives. The internet makes that a reality because people do not have to rely on higher education. Thanks to the internet people can create a schedule that works for them, they do not have to report directly to a superior, and they are in control of how much money they make. Corporate work may soon be a thing of the past, and that is all due to the growing gig economy. Through the freedoms provided by the gig economy freelancers are finding happiness on their own terms.

**Works Cited**

Anonymous. "Pros & Cons of Regulating the Gig Economy: Independent Contractor Legislation." *Congressional Digest*, vol. 99, no. 2, 2020, p. 30.

Castellacci, Fulvio, and Clara Viñas-Bardolet. "Internet Use and Job Satisfaction." *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 90, 2019, pp. 141–152., doi:10.1016/j.chb.2018.09.001.

Cross, Miriam, and Sandra Block. "Making It in the Gig Economy." *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*, 2019.

Healy, Joshua, et al. "Should We Take the Gig Economy Seriously?" *Labour & Industry: a Journal of the Social and Economic Relations of Work*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2017, pp. 232–248., doi:10.1080/10301763.2017.1377048.