Quinn Cook

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Glen Green

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The Freelancing Industry

The famous American entrepreneur Jim Rohn once said, “If you are not willing to risk the unusual, you will have to settle for the ordinary.” Freelancing is often thought to be an impossible task. Some may say there are too many uncertainties, others may say it is only for the tech industry. These are incorrect assumptions, coming from either a lack of understanding, or a lack of trying. There are many different jobs ranging from construction to computer science in the freelancing industry. These jobs, while effected by many factors, are quite manageable.

Much good comes from freelancing. One pro to freelancing is the Flexibility. Freelancers can work wherever, and whenever they want. This allows them to possibly have a full-time job as well as their “gigs”. These types of workers also have many different jobs to choose from. People that have more than one skill have can find more work than they would with a normal job. They would also be able to learn more about their field by gaining experience with different kinds of people and work environments. That being said, freelancing is not a walk in the park.

There are also many issues presented by freelancing. For example, a problem that often effects gig workers is inconsistency. This can come from being unable to find opportunities for work. Workers like this also struggle with extended periods of time without pay. With this also come a complete lack of benefits. Because gig workers are not employees, they are not given any company benefits. That means that services such as health insurance come out of pocket. Those are not the only factors with a negative effect on freelancers either.

One of the main issues with freelancing is finding work, so how do they do it? With the way technology is freelancers can now find work online. That being opposed to the paper ads or trading business cards at networking events and hoping. People also do not only look for work in one place, but paper ads do also still exist and sometimes people will look for work in them. Being a freelancer also requires a person to be realistic in their expectations and actions. A gig worker must be wary of the fact that they will not get much work right away. A new worker has a small portfolio which does not attract as many people. They will still get work, but it will take a while before they have enough to quit their day job. They also have to be adaptable to the current situation in the gig industry. They must stay ahead of the competition, which means learning faster and being more flexible about when you can work. It is also important for these workers to understand that not every job is for them. Sometimes learning takes failing and understanding that a certain gig is not a good fit. Despite all these combined issues, freelancing is on the rise.

“For much of the past century, the 9-to-6 job has defined what most Americans think of as ‘work’.”(Horowitz, 1) Since the foundation of the Freelancers Union in 1995 to 2015, around one third of the American work force is made up of people who do not work 9-to-5. According to Sara Horowitz at the U.S. BLS that number has had an accelerated growth in the last decade. This is not for the lack of trying though. The government has largely prohibited the unionization of freelancers. A couple of ways to stop freelancing would be to make them a company somehow, or just outlaw this type of labor. Contrarily, it may help to just embrace them and even support the freelancer “movement”.

Technology has had a major effect on the state of freelancing. Websites like Fiverr, Uber, Airbnb, Etsy etc. are making it easier to find “gigs”. People are using new technology not only to find jobs, but to do the work as well. With web design, graphic design, and IT related problems, to name a few; being mainly tackled on computers anyway, it makes working much easier. It also makes working from long distances much less of an Augean task.

Because of the current pandemic, the number of freelance workers has skyrocketed. “The share of independent workers who earn a living through full-time freelancing is now 36%...” (Pofeldt, 5) This as opposed to 2019, when it was 28%. This was greatly contributed to by the Gen-Z workforce. Many skilled professionals have become freelancers because of Covid-19. Some even see it as a job replacement. Even with these outstanding statistics, freelancing has not been solely helped by the pandemic.

“Research found that 10% of the U.S. workforce paused freelancing, as opportunities dried up in the pandemic.” (Pofeldt, 12) Many industries, such as nursing, that require social distancing have driven away from freelancing. That being said, a little more than half, 51%, of those affected by this recovered quite well. This has also not scared many of them from the prospect of freelancing. A quarter of the current freelancers are using their positions as a type of pre-retirement program.

Many factors have effected freelancing, from something as big as an unexpected pandemic, to something as small as the strength of a person’s Wi-Fi. Freelancing has been around as a concept since the early 20th century, and even now with the global economy on the fritz, freelancing thrives. With technology growing stronger with every second, more and more people are realizing that freelancing is an option, maybe even a better one. Just like any part of the economy, there is both a supply and demand, and now the supply and demand for freelancing is at an all-time high.

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