

WHO GETS HIRED

AGE GROUP: 20-35
EDUCATION: X-XII standard
NEED TO HAVE: A bike and a smartphone
SHOULD BE ABLE TO:
Ride bike and read English
SALARY: ₹10-24K (the higher end with incentives)



GROOMING DOS AND DON'TS

- 1 Wear covered shoes
- 2 Trousers can be formal or informal; no embroidered or torn jeans, no track pants
- 3 T-shirts can't be crumpled
- 4 Clean-shaven
- 5 Nails have to be trimmed
- 6 Spiked hair is okay but not dirty hair
- 7 No chewing tobacco, gum, or smoking before the customer
- 8 Use deodorants

those who doled out liberal hikes may have died an untimely death.

"Yes, there was a period when there were a number of hyperlocal start-ups with a million dollars in venture funding. They blew it all up by hiring delivery boys at ₹20,000 a month," says Barua of Delhivery. "Most of the older companies in the space realised that you don't need to pay ₹20,000, because you have to run a company as well."

Wages are likely to moderate in 2016, as the e-commerce industry goes through a churn. Jobs will be lost. Indeed, companies may be planning to lessen the impact on its employees. Nevertheless, salary surveys are yet to reflect any such impact. Aon Hewitt's annual salary survey, released in February this year, pegs salary increase in the e-commerce sector to be at 15.6 per cent in 2016, the highest among 19 industry segments and ahead of life sciences, media, and hi-tech.

But, is the industry creating net job growth? The higher pay has created incentives for lateral shifts. But TeamLease's Sen also thinks there is a net growth in opportunities. "Between September 2015 and January 2016, a minimum of 50,000 additional opportunities were created in this segment alone," he says. Often, the delivery boys are today sourced from semi-urban and rural areas to cater to the demand from metros.

A Good Life

Sandeep Shinde is 21, but hasn't studied beyond standard X. His father is a sugarcane farmer in Kolhapur, about 376 km from Mumbai. Shinde migrated to Mumbai a year ago, saw a newspaper advertisement by delivery company Russsh, applied, and landed the job.

This writer meets him at Bandra station. He has to deliver a hairdresser to an address in Varsova. We take the local train to Andheri West, before board-

ing bus no. 251 to Varsova. It is a stop by the sea. A brisk walk of seven minutes will take us to Arshie Complex, the delivery address. "This is the fastest way to reach Varsova from Bandra," Shinde explains. He doesn't ride a bike. So far all his deliveries, which include cakes, clothes, and cheques, have all been by travelling on public transport.

The delivery is uneventful. A lady in a black top and black pyjamas receives the hairdresser, pays ₹200, smiles, and shuts the door. Not a word is exchanged.

"We don't need to communicate too much," Shinde tells this writer as he picks up his black and red backpack, and leaves the complex. He plans on completing standard XI and XII. With the money he earns and saves, he can restart his education next year.

Shinde isn't exactly using the money in his pocket to buy televisions and refrigerators. But there is a possibility better pay can fuel consumption from those at the bottom of the pyramid. Right now, many delivery boys, like Shinde, are using their rising pay cheques to pursue higher education, educate their children, and spend on family health care.

Amit Jindal, for instance, is using his pay to help fight his father's tongue cancer. He explains the nuances of a good conversation to this writer as we go for a delivery on his bike, this time in Delhi's South Extension. Jindal works for Roadrunner and has picked up an order from McDonald's. He will deliver it to a house in the area's P-Block. "Saying 'Madam, khana laya hoon' (I have got food for you) isn't polite. We say 'I'm from X company. I have come with your order.'" Jindal must be good at what he does - he makes up to ₹23,000 a month.

The burgers are for a house on the third floor. Jindal, who is wearing a dark blue and yellow

