

Work culture redefined

Gig economy, in which instead of full-time employment, organisations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements, is drawing many young and talented individuals across the spectrum to give it a serious thought as a means of livelihood

BY RAJIV DOGRA

Thirty-eight-year-old independent editor, travel writer and content creator Samarpita Mukherjee Sharma reminisces the time when she had to quit her full-time job as senior correspondent with a prominent media house in Mumbai and move to Raipur in Chhattisgarh in 2009 after marriage. “The tier-III city had nothing much to offer in the field of English journalism that would match up with the scales of a metro city. I tried to revive my contacts in Mumbai and started working on some freelancing assignments. Then in 2014, we moved to Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh and I started freelancing for a publishing house,” she says. From editing children’s book to offering error-free manuscripts for independent authors and publishers, she also started pitching story ideas to publications. “Although I have the choice of taking up a full-time job, by now I prefer to continue my freelancing stint.”

Similarly, independent public relations (PR) consultant and dance curator, 35-year-old Darshana Gupta, quit her job as assistant vice-president with a Mumbai-based PR firm in 2014 as she felt her “creativity was getting stifled”. “Everything seemed to be sorted in my life but somewhere I was still unhappy. The daily commuting to and fro from work, long working hours at times, all this was taking a toll on my health, too,” she says. Today, she is on her own and dividing time between her freelance PR assignments and her passion for dance, meditation and yoga.

On the other hand, senior graphics designer Mangesh Sawant wished to pursue his entrepreneurial spirit after working full-time with a leading newspaper for nine years and having a total work experience of 15 years in the domain. “The work routine failed to challenge my creative side. The year-on-year dull appraisal scenario and limited scope to think out of box made me rethink about my full-time work routine,” he says. The 35-year-old finally put in his papers after much deliberation and works independently now on a freelance basis.

After working with top-notch companies for seven years in the field of human resources (HR), handling end-to-end talent acquisition process, Swati Deshpande Karodi took the plunge to go independent. She is now offering her services as a freelance HR consultant.



These young and experienced individuals are part of a growing tribe who represent the India's rising gig economy. Gig or open talent economy has thrown up many opportunities for solopreneurs who are open for change and innovation. In fact, in India, 70 per cent of corporates have used gig workers at least once for major organisational issues in 2018, according to a report titled 'The Future of Work is Anywhere - Gig Workforce' by Noble House, a Gurugram-based HR consulting company.

Remote mode on

With the rise of internet connectivity, smart technology and cloud storage, individuals are able to work remotely. This means that the central office hub is becoming less important to how businesses run. Freelancers can easily work from home, and even access the office system. "Working remotely works essentially because timings are flexible. Moreover, you get to work with a larger number of people and while your exposure is more, your earnings are more, too. In the next few years, you are able to gauge that the earnings have definitely gone up. Also, there is not much travel other than perhaps for an occasional coffee or lunch meeting with a client. What is quite important for me is that I get to associate and work with a variety of clients. Today, I know of a lot of individuals who are in their early 20s and are reaching a breakdown point because of long hours of travelling and working. They have taken the bold step to quit their full-time job and are freelancing or working part time. People are now trying to achieve work-life balance," says Sharma.

Job security and long-term financial opportunities are no longer always guaranteed in full-time positions, so many professionals use freelance work for financial gains, increased flexibility, freedom over the work they do, and to open up opportunities within their areas of expertise. "I was always passionate about travelling. Today, because of travelling, I have learnt

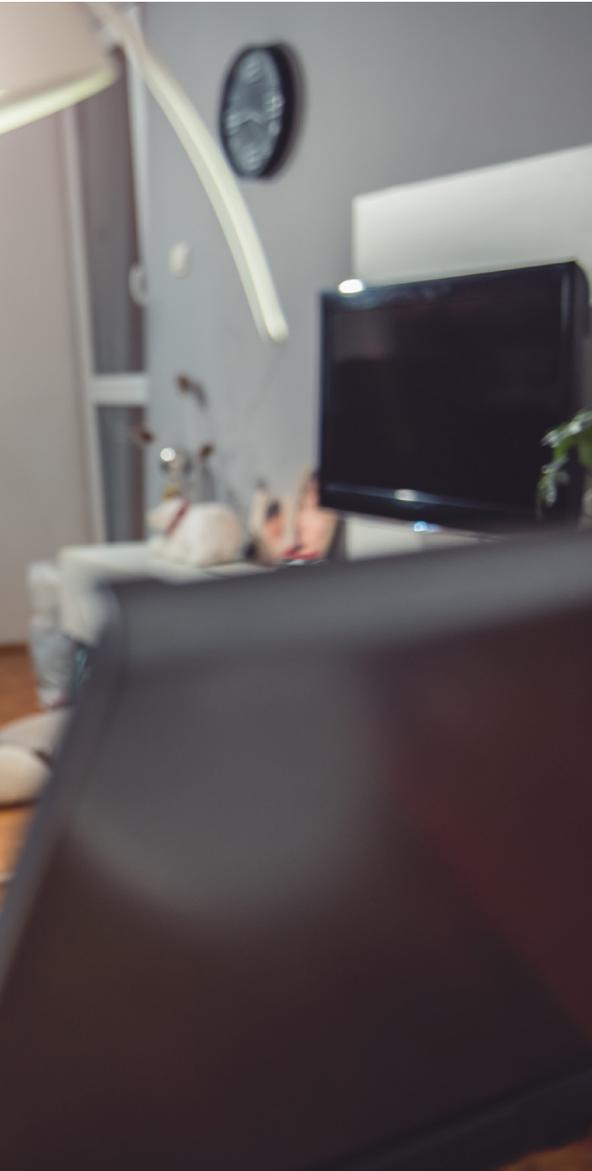


how to utilise my time affectively," says Gupta. "I start my day by having a good breakfast. Also, I have started taking care of my overall fitness. I get to spend quality time with friends and family. As a way of giving back to society, I have also started teaching people meditation and yoga," she says, adding that she is experiencing freedom as there is no pressure to report to a superior on a certain time on any given day.

Industry speak

The advent of start-ups is also responsible for giving a push to the gig

economy in India. "This is the trend of the future," says Maxson Lewis, co-founder and managing director at Magenta Power Pvt Ltd, who set up the company in 2017 which is focused on generation, adoption and utilisation of clean energy solutions. "I call it leveraging of the intellectual capacity over multiple platforms. It is an open culture system. It is also the best way for good ideas and concepts to get leveraged across multiple entities. Also, it is the entrepreneurial spirit among the experienced people who are moving towards this trend," says Lewis who



quit his role as a global management consultant in a leading multinational company, in which he worked for 14 years.

Speaking about the trend, he says that there are basically two paths to the trend: First, is the self-realisation concept whereby every individual is starting to believe that they can do a lot more as a freelancer and have the ability to manage a spectrum of work beyond a single organisation. Second, this intent is being enabled now by the technology which is available. “This means earlier if a person wished to

undertake freelancing assignments it was difficult to do so as there was no medium of communication. Today, the technology aspect allows anyone to do that. There is efficiency in the market place for such freelancers,” he says, adding that they have hired the services of freelancers in the field of HR in setting up the company policies, corporate communications and for designing and conceptualisation of a particular brand.

Akshit Mehta, founder, Vorq Space, says, “This is the age of entrepreneurs and freelancers. Individuals with an active imagination are reimagining the world. There is a huge potential as overall market research states that in the recent months, the numbers of home-grown start-ups and entrepreneurs has exponentially increased. The exponential growth of co-working spaces in metro cities such as Mumbai means that the world is adapting to changes in the way of work.” The company is engaged in creating co-working

spaces designed to bring together diverse ideas, skills, and people under one roof.

Similarly, Manoj Sinha, co-founder and CEO, Husk Power Systems, whose company is engaged in the rural areas of Tanzania and India by powering them with 100 per cent renewable energy, through one of world’s lowest costing hybrid power plant and distribution networks, says, “The gig wave is democratising the workspace in India at a rapid pace. The rise of the concept of co-working spaces, increase in crowdsourcing platforms, efficient blockchain-based payments, steady flow of work opportunities in the market are some of the driving factors contributing towards this transformation. Overall, the future of gig economy in India is quite bright.”

In the long run, an organisation’s ability to engage with talent on an on-demand basis could truly reshape the way businesses work in the future with consultants and specialists. □

Speaking biz-wise

Here’s a primer on few of the terminologies that remain buzzwords:

Gig economy: A gig economy is an environment in which temporary positions are common and organisations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements.

Open talent economy: It refers to the currently evolving workforce, which is a mixture of full-time employees, contractors and freelancers. The term was coined by Deloitte.

Platform economy: The platform economy comprises a distinctly new set of economic relations that depend on the internet, computation, and data.

Networked economy: The inter-linking of business processes and economic activity through the use of information technology.

Sharing economy: Sharing economy, also known as collaborative consumption, is a trending business concept

that highlights the ability (and perhaps the preference) for individuals to rent or borrow goods rather than buy and own them.

On-demand economy: The on-demand economy is defined as the economic activity created by technology companies that fulfil consumer demand via the immediate provisioning of goods and services.

Peer (or peer-to-peer) economy: It is a decentralised model whereby two individuals interact to buy or sell goods and services directly with each other, without an intermediary third-party or without the use of a company of business.

Freelancer: He or she is an individual who works under the gig economy structure, typically on a task-by-task or project-by-project basis.