

Covid-19 makes the gig economy even more relevant

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Thanks to Covid-19 many professionals, students and schoolchildren are constrained in their movements. This is never a problem in the gig economy because you just put-up where you are and get on with it.



Source: pixabay.com

For many freelancers who get by with data and a computer, it's a no-brainer. But there are millions of professionals who can perform their business tasks with these same resources. (Even doctors can diagnose and prescribe remotely and there are already apps doing just that). So, come on gig-it.

And now the coronavirus gives the world an even better reason not only to turn to the gig economy, but to turn on – I mean the great big switch on – to the gig economy.

Hire by hour

While definitions of the 'gig economy' remain loose, it's understood as a system of freelancing where skills are sold on a project basis. This has given rise to online work sites such as Upwork, Freelancer.com and People per Hour and many more. It has also coined the phrase 'digital nomad', now common among the lingo of remote service professionals.

So, get with the 'digital' but drop the 'nomad' as travel restrictions become part of our daily reality.

As a gigger (someone who works in the 'gig economy' – my own terminology) for the past five years, I have formed my own views as to its success and relevance in the global work structure.

As with every situation, there are pros and cons. For the independent contractor, there is nothing better than managing your own time. Work when there's work, play when there isn't. Of course, the downside is that money is less certain and one's ability to make it even less so. There's no protection in terms of labour law which means you can be thrown out at any stage of the assignment, so you always have to be marketing your skills.

However, having said that, look at our mining industry, SAA, Telkom and others. In South Africa, large scale job cuts are a daily feature of the business news. Stability is never a given.

Dull corporate structures

I recently interviewed for a job that would have me return to corporate. When I looked at the expanse of open-plan offices and dull grey walls, I made up my mind that my days of structured work were truly over. Not that it's easy.

I read just the other day that to be a successful writer, my output should be 13 pieces a month. I'm a long way from that, but it's not impossible.

Earlier this year, I was involved in an assignment with a large corporation. I was conscious of the incredible waste of time and resources. For example, high-level managers would sit in five-hour-long meetings which proved to be nothing more than a sounding board for each of the directors to push their own agendas. These meetings included a range of consultants, billing by the hour.

In the end, the project must have cost the company a fortune, paying for hundreds of hours of staff to be unproductive while consultants sat by to observe idle time. Add to this a sizeable support staff, elaborate coffee stands, high rise buildings and the associated running costs.

Both sides score

It's a no-brainer that much can be done with a computer and a phone. For the communications industry, which chiefly requires the skills of a writer, designer, media liaison person and event manager - the gig economy is definitely the answer.

Any consultant can operate from home, at any desk-hire facility or at any of the many Wi-Fi zones around the country. Any of the business owners can support their own skills with a selection of others, in relationships that are managed by mobile tools. Set-up and running costs are minimal.

For the corporate enterprise, talent management is simplified to the essential organisational needs for any given time, and specialists only need to be hired on a project base. This will go a long way to cutting costs and putting much-needed funds back into the economy. It's the smarter option.

ABOUT IZA GREK

While niche is the common buzz word, generalist also works. I have deep experience in writing about food processing and renewable energy. I have cross sector experience on any topic you can think of - and this to great effect. My knowledge of media assist my private clients in their approach.
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