# At Least the Millennials Aren't Killing the Gig Economy

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Over the past few months, many essays, blog posts, and articles have lamented over the apparent homicidal nature of Millennials. From brunch to wine corks, the "things" Millennials have killed is far-reaching. The formula is simple: pick a thing and then say "Millennials" have killed it. Mashable compiled a fairly thorough list of these such references. As a Millennial, I take some offense to this list, but that is another topic for another day.

It seems nothing is safe from this Millennial killing-spree. However, a recent study from Fast Company provides hope that Millennials won't kill the sharing economy. More than 4,000 members of the freelance marketplace ProFinder were surveyed, revealing that three out of four full-time freelancers are aged 41 and older. The results are said to provide a snapshot of people who earn a living working for themselves – members of the sharing economy being within that group. That's right, it seems the Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers are driving the freelance train, not just Millennials.

Sure, the benefits of freelancing go hand-in-hand with the Millennial mindset, but this survey provides some hope that if freelancing should suddenly fall out of vogue with the Millennials (as things are known to do), the sharing economy may not go the way of diamonds and wine.

If you think about it, the Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers were the ones who taught the world how to "gig." From bands to writers, members of these generations paved the way for freelancing. It is not surprising, then, that they would set the standard for living as a full-time freelancer. Moreover, as the article points out, "the desire to work independently actually goes up with age" with those over 50 and older being roughly two times more likely to want to work independently than those ages 18-34.

According to the article, freelancing works for Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers for some of the same reasons it works for Millennials: autonomy and freedom to choose. However, two other cited reasons – networking and purported ageism – may show why Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers have a stronger affinity to the freelance work model than Millennials.

With regard to networking, the article suggests that Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers are better at this particular skill. With strong professional and personal networks, Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers use word-of-mouth tactics and other networking strategies to generate their work. Arguably, the use of apps and social media should surmount this hurdle, obliterating the need for word-of-mouth

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connections when your next business prospect is merely a button away.  Recall, however, that this survey was freelancers in general, not just the gig economy.

Ageism presents a far darker reason for Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers to turn to freelancing. AARP researchers found that 64% of adults have experienced age discrimination in the workplace. Freelancing and working in the gig economy can help alleviate these concerns for Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers.

Regardless of the reason, one generation may be more or less attracted to freelancing – and by extension, the sharing economy – having an attractiveness that spans generations will help ensure that this work model is not killed by Millennials… I mean, that this work model will continue to flourish and thrive.

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