



Who's Really Driving The Gig Train: the Young or the More "Mature"? How About Both?

Insights

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I couldn't help but be struck by two recent headlines which appeared to stand diametrically opposed in answering the question of who is driving the gig economy.

One headline from World Finance touted the driving force of the Millennials – "As more Millennials are choosing to freelance, employer must evolve to suit employees' needs." The tagline for the article then issued the following proclamations: "Millennials are going freelance in their droves. Companies will have to transform beyond recognition to lure modern workers away from the freedom of being their own boss."

On the other hand, the other headline from HR Dive gave the nod to those among us who have been around a bit longer, stating: "Older workers – not millenials – are driving the gig economy." The article went on to say that "while millenials are frequently noted as favoring flexibility, contingent worker benefits have skewed toward those with more skills and work experience."

So who's right? I'm not here to try to settle that debate. The reality is that both articles speak truths about why millenials and older workers are oftentimes pulled in the direction of the gig economy rather than the more traditional workforce. And for readers interested in the factors cited by each author, you are encouraged to read directly from the articles.

The underlying theme that I found more interesting within the divergent headlines and the points discussed in the articles is that while the different sets of workers might be attracted to the gig economy for differing reasons, they nevertheless are both attracted to the model.

That means that businesses who are utilizing contingent workers must be cognizant of the likely reality that they are missing the boat if they assume that one age demographic is more their target than another. While that reality would impact recruitment methods, it should also be top of mind once gig workers are in the fold. In other words, just as the "one-size-fits-all" treatment of employees – regardless of their ages – usually doesn't work in the traditional employment model, it is not difficult to argue that it will likewise not be the most productive strategy with the contingent workforce. So good luck keeping everyone happy ... the young and the more seasoned!

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