Women Who Gig

Insights
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In 2017, we saw how women across the globe have been using the gig economy as a means of gaining some financial independence. A recent report by the Overseas Development Institute even explored how the gig economy is benefiting Syrian women refugees in Jordan.

Meanwhile, women in the United States have also enjoyed earning money while balancing other responsibilities. In a study published last spring, Hyperwallet examined how American women were experiencing gig work, providing useful insight to gig companies on how they can attract, support, and retain female gig workers.

What Female Gig Workers Are Doing
The three most popular types of gig work for women—professional freelance (43%), direct selling (32%), and service platforms (30%)—highlight the entrepreneurial nature of female gig workers. Women in America have found careers in direct selling since Persis Foster Eames ("PFE") Albee went door to door selling perfumes in the late 19th century, recruiting and training other women to do the same. But now, the gig economy now allows them to do so from the comfort of their own homes.

Less popular types of gig work for women include ride-sharing (22%), home-sharing (8%), and food delivery (7%).

While the study did not explore why women prefer freelance, direct selling, and service over ride-sharing, home-sharing, and food delivery, it did find that 70% of survey respondents are the primary caregivers in their homes. Further, in addition to the general safety risks associated with driving we discussed here late last month, female drivers have reported additional gendered safety concerns, primarily revolving unwanted advances from passengers.

What Female Gig Workers Like
Far and away the most universally recognized benefit of working in the gig economy is the flexible hours. When asked to select their top three benefits, 96% of the female respondents to the Hyperwallet study selected flexible hours. After that, 40% responded that "control over earning total" was a top benefit and 39% selected "more personal time."

Fortunately for gig companies, the flexible hours and financial autonomy that female gig workers find so attractive are highly correlated to several independent contractor classifications tests. While

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find so attractive are highly correlated to several independent contractor classifications tests. While the multi-factor tests for classification of workers can vary by country and state, generally, a worker's ability to decide when and how much she will work indicates an independent contractor relationship. As a result, in attracting female workers, gig companies can highlight those aspects of the work that keep the workers outside of the employment relationship.

What Female Gig Workers Dislike

On the other hand, female gig workers reported the top drawbacks of the work are the inconsistent income (92%), lack of benefits (88%), and lack of structure/career path (46%). Inconsistent income and lack of structure are arguably the opposite sides of the "flexible hours" and "control over earnings" coins. However, gig companies and lawmakers alike continue to explore how to get benefits to gig workers. If proposed measures are successful, gig companies may have yet another perk it can advertise to potential workers.

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