



Temporary Staffing Does the Gig Thing

Insights

7.26.18

When you think of the gig economy, many of us think of Uber, Task Rabbit, or some other gig shrouded in an entrepreneurial-type aspiration. You think of a person setting their own hours, working for themselves, maybe stringing together several “gigs” to make that ideal work schedule and being their own boss. Well, Wonolo, and companies like it, may be changing this paradigm.

Wonolo takes the gig platform—utilizing an app to connect willing workers with consumers—in a different way. Instead of the individual consumer being the end-user consumer, the Wonolo app functions as a temporary staffing agency, connecting the willing worker to a temporary employer—largely in the blue collar arena.

Touted as a “tech company that addresses a staffing problem” Wonolo and companies like it are more worker focused and attract workers who may already have a job, but are only being offered part-time hours. Wonolo helps them get the number of hours they need. Workers’ praise for Wonolo mirrors that of more “traditional” gig workers—flexibility being the best part of the company.

Focusing on the labor pool for this market, rather than on the client, is what is said to differentiate this company as a staffing firm, but it also is a slightly different take on the gig economy as well. Or is it?

Digitizing the temporary staffing model—at its core—is still taking a willing labor market and connecting it to a willing consumer through an electronic platform. However, with Wonolo, the person on the other end of the app is no longer an individual consumer, but a company. The labor market is still made up of individuals who may be piecing together different “gigs” to make a living.

Nevertheless, utilizing a temporary staffing company in this way may introduce a concern about joint employment into the gig economy. Countless cases tie a temporary staffing company and its clients together as joint employers for purposes of liability under various federal and state statutes. Now, you wouldn’t necessarily claim Etsy and Uber to be joint employers in a traditional gig sense, but, a staffing company and its widget-manufacturing client—could that potentially be a closer question?

As we continue to see how the gig economy demonstrates that traditional notions of employment may be unworkable in this arena, the entrance of companies like Wonolo into the Gig Market will continue to push that envelope.

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