

The 9-To-5 Workday Doesn't Work For Everyone (And How To Create A Life Of Total Freedom)

A single employer for life was the dream and long-term goal for many people in the industrial age.

Love it or hate it, the traditional job landscape is changing.

“A slow climb in a company was once the accepted career path. However, today the experiences of men and women starting their careers are closer to juggling multiple positions than steady growth,” writes Kate Taylor of Forbes.

Today, millions of people are seeking fulfilling and meaningful lives that go beyond traditional jobs.

Advancements in digital technology have made it incredibly easy for experts and professionals to build an audience, share their work, and choose to work with as many clients as possible.

A portfolio career is growing in popularity because of the flexibility it offers experts and the many opportunities people have to work on multiple projects across the world.

“My life is a vocation; I can't imagine doing anything else. I have the freedom to explore whatever idea I want, take really random gigs and projects which change my life in some way ... ” says Douglas Coupland, author of *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*.

Online digital platforms consistently deliver choice, control, and options for people who choose to build portfolio careers.”

People are choosing to make a living on their own terms.

Modern employees don't just want a nine-to-five schedule and a paycheck.

They want a job that inspires them and uses their abilities; that fits with their lifestyle, routine and future goals; and that they can grow with over time.

Compensation is still important, but other aspects of the career-life balance are increasingly becoming a priority.

If employees don't get the things that they're after, they're likely to look for opportunities elsewhere.

Many people are turning to self-employment, entrepreneurship, and freelancing to make a meaningful living.

Though this is by no means an easy path, it does give the individual a ton of freedom over their job, schedule and lifestyle.

The future is flexible. The future of work is flexible. It makes sense for both employees and employers.

As modern technology makes it easier and easier for companies to find and hire talent on-demand, millions of people around the world are benefiting from a new way of working.

With flexible working hours and the ability to control what they earn, people are creating purposeful careers that fit in with their lives, not the other way around.

In fact, just 6% of workers in the UK adhere to standard office hours.

Flexible work not only helps people do their best work because conditions are favourable, it offers employers the opportunity to retain top talent.

Practically, flexible work makes sense for employees who continue to have greater family responsibilities outside of work, and for all other workers who take hours to commute to and from work.

The option is also driven by the increasingly high costs of urban office space for businesses of all sizes.

As employers continue to explore the many flexible work options, the trend will continue to grow, making it easier for the worker/employer relationship to become even more fluid for the benefit of both.

Enter the growing gig economy

Nearly 40% of the workforce in America is made up of men and women who are making a good living in the gig economy.

Millions of people are making a living beyond just driving cars for Uber.

Thanks to advances in technology, telecommuting, and automation, it's now easier than ever to find work and talent.

From email to smartphones to video conference calls to digital advancements to cloud-based software and storage, technology is closing the distance gap and making even the remotest of team members a single click or phone call away.

The gig economy consists of completing short-term, flexible, temporary jobs that can be done according to one's individual timeline.

Harvard Business School explains: "Unshackled from managers and corporate norms, people can choose assignments that make the most of their talents and reflect their true interests. They feel ownership over what they produce and over their entire professional lives..."

As you venture into the gig economy, start by defining what success means to you. It has a different definition for each of us.

Person A might define success as replacing their existing salary. Person B might define success as being able to stay home with their growing children.

Person C might define success as creating a huge following, building a sustainable brand, and running a profitable business.

Choose your gig

A gig is a small job that can be done in a short period of time for which you are paid a substantial amount. Think of it as taking a big job, breaking it down into bite-sized chunks, and delivering them one at a time.

An IT consultant, for example, can join the gig economy by offering a small business or large corporation an app-building service, marketing services, website creation, design, coding, website migration — the list is endless.

Now is the time to choose which door to open that will lead you into the gig economy.

- Choose something you're already good at that doesn't take a huge chunk of time to complete
- Offer gigs that relate to each other and can lead to additional sales

While one individual or business might need all the services the IT pro above offers, purchasing them a la carte is an easier, less expensive way for them to begin a working relationship with you. It allows them to outsource necessary tasks and experience firsthand the quality and caliber of your work.

Crafting your gigs so that each one naturally leads into another is a smart strategy and a clever way to keep clients coming back, keep your gigs growing, and capture referrals.

Create your workstation

One of the perks of working in an office is the office, itself. Working in the gig economy means creating your own workspace.

Start by choosing a dedicated space in your home. Opt for a space that mimics the environment you're most comfortable working in.

If you prefer not to work in solitude, thrive in the company of others, and prefer the typical cacophony of an office, consider a co-working space.

If you need peace and quiet while you work, an enclosed home office will save money while you're getting started.

- Outfit your space to suit your personal physical comfort and personality
- Do invest in the equipment you need, but don't spend a fortune on unnecessary fancy equipment

Outfit your workspace with a comfortable chair, a right-sized desk, and the appropriate tools of your trade.

Buy the best equipment you can afford without overextending your budget.

You probably already have most of the things you need, and a few simple upgrades and an inexpensive addition or two may be all that's required to make the best use of your new office space.

Also, make the most of your space by choosing pieces that do double duty like printers that also scan and fax.

That smartphone in your hand can make and receive calls, stream podcasts, and send marketing text messages.

Your tablet can play music while you work, serve as a mini-television, and allow you to download productivity and other small business apps.

Choose your clients

The gig economy depends on one factor above all others — finding clients.

The key to finding clients is to let them know you exist and that you have the solution they need.

That's covered in more detail in the section below on marketing.

In order to get the ball rolling, though, and secure that first client, start by making your gig and its description crystal clear.

Potential clients are more likely to order if they know exactly what they're getting.

- Highlight the solution you offer
- Identify potential clients who need your specific solution

Make it easy to order from you as well by choosing sites that have prominent Order Now buttons.

Do something that makes your gig stand out in what is sure to be a crowded marketplace.

Use bright colors, prominent calls to action, and easy to remember logos.

Also, potential buyers will place more stock in what satisfied clients say about your service than they will on anything you say, so knock the socks off your initial clients, then request testimonials and referrals that lead to additional work.

Finally, don't be afraid to ask friends, family, and colleagues to help you get started by ordering gigs that are relevant to them.

Put a price on your skill

Because you'll be selling services versus products, you'll find at least a dozen formulas online telling you how to price your services.

Don't make the mistake of pricing your service so low that people view it as cheap. You also can't price your gig so high that you price yourself out of the market.

The real key to effectively pricing your services is knowing what the markets will bear.

The word market is pluralized in the preceding sentence because there are two markets for your service, no matter what that service is.

- The budget-conscious shopper
- The high-end client

Research what others in your gig-niche are charging and create a three-tiered payment system based on going rates — good, better, and best.

The budget-friendly customer will be on the lowest end of your pricing tier, high-end clients will be on the highest end.

Most people will fall into the middle tier, therefore, you need to assess your monthly budget to determine what you need to bring in each month.

Price your gigs so that X amount of clients from each gig level will allow you to meet your monthly budget goals.

That includes rent or mortgage, food, utilities, car payment, insurance, and any miscellaneous items.

Market with purpose

Determine your monthly budget and use that number to determine how many sales you need to make each month in order to make a profit that allows you to live comfortably.

Remember that living comfortably means creating both an emergency fund and a savings account.

Once you've established your income need, decided on the gigs you'll offer, and established a pricing structure, it's time to market those gigs and get dollars rolling in.

Simply put, marketing is anything you do to let your ideal client know that you have the best solution to their problem.

Social media, email marketing, referral marketing — all these are low and no-cost marketing methods with a proven track record.

- Identify your ideal client and their pain point
- Go where they are and speak their language

The very first part of marketing is identifying your target market and ideal client. The next part is identifying their pain point.

If you skip these first two steps, you'll find yourself throwing marketing dollars into the wind.

Ask yourself who needs the service you offer, why they need it, and where they spend their time online.

Where they spend their time is where you should spend your marketing dollars.

While pricing is important, don't make the error of competing on price, alone. Compete on the solution you provide and the value you add.

Set your schedule

It's important that you set a workable schedule that allows your gig to be delivered on time because the gig economy thrives on reviews with many of the reviews favouring on-time delivery.

Be careful, though, to avoid making it so stringent and inflexible that you don't have time for a social life.

One of the best parts of the gig economy is that each gig is bite-sized.

That gives you the freedom to work in fits and spurts that fit around your schedule.

Once the gigs start rolling in, though, you'll need to establish a schedule that lets you get each job completed and delivered on time.

- Create a schedule that works for you
- Choose productivity tools that help ease your workload

Routines are a good way to ensure your gigs are delivered in a timely fashion and organized accordingly.

There are a plethora of productivity tools that help keep your gigs organized, your timeline workable, and your day running smoothly.

Productivity tools are software and apps that allow you to create, view, modify, and deliver each job.

The good news is that most of the productivity tools you'll need are free.

Google productivity tools and choose one for each of the following categories: time management, social media scheduling, time tracking, bookkeeping and invoicing, CRM (customer relationship management), and email marketing.

Hone your reputation

You've started your gig economy business, established monthly income goals, chosen the gigs you'll offer, and set up an appropriate workstation.

You have the tools you need to identify and locate your ideal clients, choose the best productivity tools, and determine what to charge per gig.

Now is the time to turn one-time gigs into ongoing gigs. That means building a brand your target market will love, appreciate, and recommend.

- Building a brand starts with a logo/name
- Your brand thrives on your reputation

What's in a logo?

Everything.

Create a logo or hire a fellow gig worker to create one for you. Y

our logo sets your gigs apart and increases the odds of clients recognizing you at a glance.

A logo makes it much easier for happy clients to refer you to others using screenshots, social shares, and good, old-fashioned word of mouth.

Make sure you use social media to market your business. It's one of the least expensive forms of marketing and a simple way to build your brand, enhance your client base, and increase your income.

Establishing a schedule that fits your lifestyle and peak productivity hours, marketing with a purpose, and building a solid client base are strategic ways to leverage the gig economy and work for a living without ever having a traditional job.

The best thing about working in the gig economy is that it comes with built-in flexibility that lets you maximize your time and income.

Work in a coffee house from time to time for a change of pace and scenery, get dressed to your own comfort level, and enjoy time with family and friends.

Just remember — the best way to thrive in the gig economy is to create a loyal following — and the best way to do that is by doing your best work every day.

Credit: <https://www.theladders.com>