



**7 Focus Areas for Your
Corporate “Brand” to be Ready
for the “Gig Economy”**





“In a world of ubiquitous information and advanced analytic tools, logic alone won’t do. What will distinguish those who thrive will be their ability to understand what makes their fellow woman or man tick, to forge relationships, and to care for others”

Daniel H. Pink, A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule The Future

As we all know, Corona virus will change the world of work forever, we are going to see a lot of companies now shifting to having a majority of their employees working from their homes. With the world economies’ already in a recessionⁱ, it is going to have an impact on the job market, with business organizations not being sure of what the future will hold for them, at least temporary. Which means a “hiring freeze” for some organizations and reduction in hiring for others, at least till the downward spiraling economies bottom out and we have a clearer perspective on the global economic future. But as the saying goes: “Every cloud has a silver lining”, we should see a spike in the hiring of “Gig Workers” as firms use contingent talent to meet requirements, while waiting for the mist to clear.

What is a Gig Worker? Enter Wikipedia: “Gig workers are independent contractors, online platform workers, contract firm workers, on-call workers and temporary workers. Gig workers enter into formal agreements with on-demand companies, for example Uber or TaskRabbit, to provide services to the company's clients.”ⁱⁱⁱ I think this is a good comprehensive definition and

will be applicable to “Gig” or “Contingent Workers (CWs)”, terms that I use interchangeably in this article.

With the increase in demand for CWs, there will be added competition and organizations will have to get their value proposition for the Gig Workers right. But for that “Value Proposition” to make an impact, Business Organizations globally will need to understand the world view of a CW. I am of the belief that unless business organizations around the world get this right, they are going to have a very hard time surviving, with more and more knowledge and blue collar workers preferring contingent assignments.ⁱⁱⁱ In order to connect with them, the messaging should be in a language the CWs understand, and the message should be what they want to hear, its only then organizations get and keep the CWs attention.

“The status quo doesn’t shift because you’re right. It shifts because the culture changes and the engine of culture is status”

Seth Godin, *This is Marketing: You can’t be seen until you learn to see*

Today, the reputation or the “Brand” of a firm is not what it advertises, a firm’s brand is what people say to each other about the organization in person, on social media, via WhatsApp and so on. For a firm to attract the right CWs, like attracting full-time employees, an organization should be able to help people become what they dreamed of becoming. This is so important especially in the cases of the CWs, as they usually cannot avail of the benefits and perks that are made available to a firm’s full-time employees.

Gig Workers want to feel as a part of the team, in a survey by Ernst and Young, 40% of the CWs responded that they feel like outsiders as compared to the full-time workforce^{iv}. In the same survey, CWs have mentioned that they like the flexibility gig work provides, along with the ability to work from home (which is a necessity now because of Covid-19), greater variety of work and the flexibility of taking time off when required.

“..., one of the central principles of human-centered design is that you empathize with the end user...empathy is a gateway to better and sometimes surprising insights that can help distinguish your idea or approach.”

Tom & David Kelley, *Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All*

Everyone has an “internal narrative” and acts in accordance with that. Your value proposition should resonate with their internal narrative, only then will your organization can attract the best and the brightest of the gig economy workforce. Globally, people take up contingent work for varied reasons and one business organization cannot possibly meet all of the requirements.

“You can do homework from now until doomsday, but you will never win fame and fortune unless you also invent big ideas. It takes a big idea to attract the attention of consumers and get them to buy your product. Unless your advertising contains a big idea, it will pass like a ship in the night.”

David Ogilvy, Ogilvy on Advertising

Keep in mind that besides the social media channels that your organization will have to employ, there is also a middleman to deal with in many cases: the Supplier or the Vendor. Many CWs are direct employees of the suppliers or are payrolled by them. In most of the cases, CWs are first informed about the role by the supplier, and the supplier is one who forwards the CWs profile to the client or the Managed Services Provider (MSP), managing the CW Program. The client brand then is in the hands of the social media broadcasters or managers, the MSP and the supplier. The model below encapsulates the message that the brand should be able to convey to prospective contingent employees, via various different social media platforms.

The Workspend 7 Step Model for Developing an Organization’s Contingent Worker Value Proposition



Sense of Belonging

All of us need to feel wanted and part of a group. It is no different for CWs, they also need to be treated with respect and be part of a team, feel as one of valued contributing members.

Personal Mastery

A number of CWs choose to work as contractors because they are looking for challenging projects across different clients and industries. The projects they are working on should make them feel that they are contributing to the firm's success and allow for personal mastery: getting better in their area of focus.

Working from home

Now, more than ever, CWs have to be allowed to work from home. It is not only because of the current conditions, but it will also show the CW that there is trust in the relationship. This will also serve as a great motivating factor.

Competitive Pay Rate

A fair market pay rate (what the Supplier pays the CW) is necessary in order to find the best CW talent. In most countries, keeping the risk of "Co-employment" in mind, firms cannot give CWs

similar benefits to full-time employees. Therefore, in order to get the best CWs, it is imperative that a fair market pay rate is established and offered. A fair market rate requires the pay rate to be in line with the position skillset requirements while also being competitive within the geographic location that the work is being done.

Upskill

CWs know that unless they are made an offer for a full-time role, they will be moving on to another role at a different firm. For a lot of the CWs it means that they need to upgrade their skills and learn new technologies, methodologies and also further improve their business communication. If the CW is able to achieve that actively in their current role, it serves a huge shot in the arm. Firms should focus on this area, as not many organizations are actively doing this today.

Future Opportunities

As an assignment comes to a close, CWs and Suppliers alike are usually on the lookout for new projects. It is of great benefit to the CW if they get access to new roles that might be coming up with the current firm. It gives them a level of comfort to continue in an organization where they have been working, plus the client also has seen their work and will be more comfortable in offering a new role.

Work with other smart people

This is quite a neglected area in my opinion at many organizations. We tend to learn more from our peers than teachers, bosses etc. It is just human nature. CWs also appreciate this fact and realize the benefits of being teamed with other stars in the client firm. They feel appreciated and this also serves as another great motivating factor.

Your Organizations Value Proposition for the Gig Worker must then focus on the key areas that we have mentioned here and use the right medium to reach out to perspective CWs. The downtime right now is a great opportunity for firms to rethink their message and methodology, as there will be a scramble for contingent talent as soon as things settle down globally. More than ever now, the world belongs to those organizations which learn the fastest, but at the same time, the innate features of human nature remain the same. David Ogilvy encapsulated this very well in *Ogilvy on Advertising* where he says:

“Human nature hasn’t changed for a billion years. It won’t even vary in the next billion years. Only the superficial things have changed. It is fashionable to talk about changing man. A

communicator must be concerned with unchanging man—what compulsions drive him, what instincts dominate his every action, even though his language too often camouflages what really motivates him. For if you know these things about a man, you can touch him at the core of his being. One thing is unchangingly sure. The creative man with an insight into human nature, with the artistry to touch and move people, will succeed. Without them he will fail.”



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ⁱ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/27/imf-chief-georgieva-says-the-world-is-in-a-recession-containment-will-dictate-strength-of-recovery.html>

ⁱⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gig_worker

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/insights/focus/technology-and-the-future-of-work/redefining-work-workforces-workplaces.html>

^{iv} https://www.ey.com/en_gl/tax/how-the-gig-economy-is-changing-the-workforce