people transforming work in the platform economy

Miriam Lueck Avery
Research Director

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“The future is already here, it’s just not evenly distributed.”

William Gibson
The Workable Futures Initiative seeks to understand emerging work patterns and to blueprint a generation of positive platforms that can create equitable opportunities and enable sustainable livelihoods.
The Platform Economy

• Transforming how we get things done and how we work
• Jobs unbundling and tasks are the new unit of work
• Algorithms and platforms, not managers or organizations, define the rhythms of work
• Platform workers span a spectrum of experience
platform economy extends digital coordination

internet = ACCESS
1980s

mobile & sensors = CONTEXT
1990s

big data = INTELLIGENCE
2000s
look ahead, design for values, act, repeat
designing for prosperity

- Positive Platforms
- 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Social Safety Net
- Regulatory Regime (at all levels)
- Services Ecosystem
Voices of Workable Futures

• Data are incomplete and don’t tell the whole story
• Give voice to the spectrum of experience
• Interviews document experience of people who choose to work on platforms or who try it and walk away from it

Few statements about platform work apply to all or even most platform workers
Spectrum of Experience

- **Skillsets**: From monetizing specific skills to monetizing everyday life
- **Level of Participation**: From a single income stream to multiple, often unstable, income streams
VOICES of Workable Futures

part-time pragmatist
harnessing assets and hedging their bets

money

entrepreneur
maximizing platforms for small business

re-entry worker
thriving on the road to recovery

full-time gig worker
earning a livelihood in an on-demand world

I can make almost as much money as I did with the big firm, but I can be at home while I do it. I can work in the middle of the night so I can spend time with my kids. I approach everything as a negotiation, and I can always hire help on the platform if I need it.

I like to have my own flexible schedule and I don’t like to go to work at the same place every day. I like to travel and you can’t do that when you work full-time. I love it. It does take the right alignment of skills and drive to get the gigs that pay what you want to make.

There are good days and bad days. Good platforms and bad platforms... and sometimes they change overnight. But at the end of the day, it’s still $20 an hour.

It started out as a way to make ends meet, but it’s opened my eyes to a whole other way of life. Out of the box. You get to interact with people. It’s easy—it doesn’t feel like work.

Money is floating all the time and work is out there, but you gotta hustle. The freedom of on-demand work is if you don’t want to look, you don’t have to. But if you stop looking, it’s really easy to fall into a hole.

Big companies better watch out. We thrive because we use platforms, but always with our own brand.

I’m just getting my act back together—it’s overwhelming. I want to change everything. I’ll start with this alternative. But it’s not very secure financially.

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Voices of Workable Futures

- **Part-time Pragmatist**: harnessing assets and hedging their bets
- **Savvy Consultants**: gaming the platforms to grow a practice
- **Hustler**: monetizing daily life
- **Freelancer**: selling skills on a platform
- **Entrepreneur**: maximizing platforms for small business
- **Re-entry Worker**: thriving on the road to recovery
- **Full-time Gig Worker**: earning a livelihood in an on-demand world
part-time pragmatist
harnessing assets and hedging their bets

entrepreneur
maximizing platforms for small business

re-entry worker
thriving on the road to recovery

clever
molding money in daily life

full-time gig worker
earning a livelihood in an on-demand world

savvy consultants
gaming platforms to grow a practice

freelancer
selling skills on a platform

WORKABLE
FUTURES
INITIATIVE
Part-Time Pragmatist

- Way to earn steady income in an obligation-free way with low barriers to entry than traditional employment
- Focus is on earning extra income, making ends meet, or building savings, not concerned with long-term future or reliability of platform economy
- Dip into platform economy and step back out as situations warrants and needs shifts
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full-time gig worker
earning a livelihood in an on-demand world
Full-Time Gig Worker

• All in on a single platform as their only source of income

• Dedicated and loyal and the closest thing to “employees” in the platform economy

• Platforms are not organizations; end up disillusioned when platform doesn’t view them the same way

• Front-lines looking for clarity on role, feedback on value, and advice on advancement
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Re-Entry Worker

• Easing back into earning income while taking care of health and well-being

• Platform work fits into a maze of short-term goals such as building discipline, getting life back together

• Platform work gets folded into health routines as they move towards recovery and healing

• Platforms are stepping stones to future self
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