

## The Future of Work: Adapting Management Practices to the Gig Economy and Freelancer Culture

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**Abstract:** - The rapid growth of the gig economy and the emergence of a freelancer culture have brought significant changes to the nature of work and employment relationships. As traditional organizational structures and employment models face disruption, it becomes crucial for businesses to adapt their management practices to effectively navigate this new landscape. This paper explores the future of work in the context of the gig economy and freelancer culture, emphasizing the need for adaptive management approaches. The paper reviews the characteristics and implications of the gig economy, highlighting the rise of platform-based work and the increasing reliance on freelance talent. It examines the motivations and preferences of gig workers, shedding light on the unique challenges they face and the benefits they seek in their work arrangements. Furthermore, it discusses the shifting dynamics of organizational structures, including the rise of remote work, virtual teams, and project-based collaborations. Drawing upon existing literature and industry examples, the paper suggests key strategies for adapting management practices to effectively engage and leverage gig workers. It emphasizes the importance of building trust and fostering a sense of community among gig workers, despite their transient nature. Additionally, it explores innovative approaches to performance management, talent acquisition, and skill development that cater to the needs of the gig economy. The paper also discusses the ethical considerations and legal implications of managing gig workers, touching upon issues such as fair compensation, worker classification, and the social safety net. It highlights the need for policy reforms and social protection mechanisms to ensure the well-being and rights of gig workers in the evolving world of work. In conclusion, this paper argues that organizations must embrace and adapt their management practices to harness the potential of the gig economy and freelancer culture. By understanding the motivations and preferences of gig workers, fostering a sense of belonging, and implementing innovative management strategies, organizations can thrive in the future of work and create a mutually beneficial relationship with their gig workforce.

**Keywords:** - Future of Work, Management Practices, Gig Economy, Freelancer Culture, Organizational Structures, Employment Models, Adaptive Management, Platform-based Work, Remote Work, Virtual Teams, Project-based Collaborations.

**I.Introduction:** - The world of work is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by the rise of the gig economy and the growing freelancer culture. These transformative forces are reshaping traditional organizational structures and challenging established employment models, necessitating a shift in management practices. As businesses navigate this evolving landscape, it becomes crucial to adapt management approaches to effectively harness the potential of the gig economy and freelancer culture. The gig economy refers to a labor market characterized by the prevalence of short-term, project-based work arrangements facilitated by digital platforms. It has witnessed remarkable growth in recent years, with an increasing number of individuals opting for freelance and gig work as an alternative to traditional employment. This shift is driven by a range of factors, including the desire for greater flexibility, autonomy, and the

opportunity to pursue passion projects. Consequently, organizations must understand the unique characteristics and implications of the gig economy to effectively engage with gig workers and leverage their talents. In parallel to the gig economy, the freelancer culture has emerged as a significant force in shaping the future of work. Freelancers, who operate independently and offer specialized services, contribute to the changing dynamics of employment. The freelancer culture emphasizes the pursuit of professional autonomy, diversified skill sets, and the flexibility to work on a project basis. Organizations must recognize and adapt to this growing trend to effectively integrate freelancers into their workforce and capitalize on their expertise. To navigate this new era of work, management practices must evolve and align with the needs and preferences of gig workers and freelancers. Traditional hierarchical structures and command-and-control management styles may not be suitable for engaging and motivating individuals in the gig economy. Instead, organizations need to adopt adaptive management approaches that foster trust, facilitate effective communication, and empower gig workers to excel in their roles. Moreover, the shifting dynamics of organizational structures, such as the rise of remote work and virtual teams, pose additional challenges and opportunities for management. Remote work enables individuals to work from anywhere, opening up access to a global talent pool, while virtual teams require effective coordination and collaboration across geographical boundaries. As organizations increasingly rely on project-based collaborations, management practices should be adapted to ensure seamless teamwork and knowledge sharing. In light of these transformative changes, this article explores the future of work in the context of the gig economy and freelancer culture. It emphasizes the importance of adapting management practices to effectively engage and leverage the potential of gig workers and freelancers. Through an examination of the unique characteristics and implications of the gig economy, motivations and preferences of gig workers, shifting dynamics of organizational structures, and the need for adaptive management approaches, this article aims to provide insights and strategies for organizations to thrive in the future of work. By embracing the opportunities presented by the gig economy and freelancer culture, organizations can forge ahead and build mutually beneficial relationships with their gig workforce.

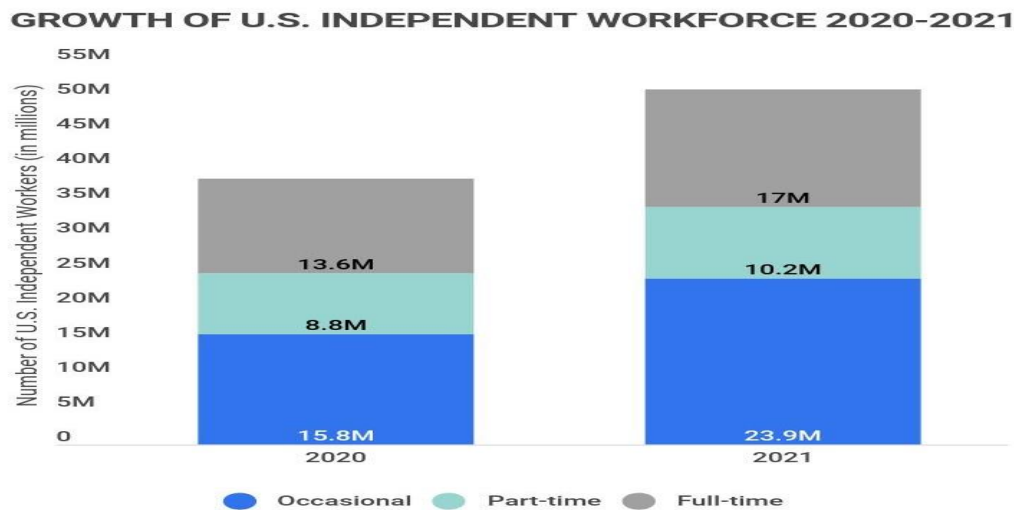


Figure 1 Growth showing freelancer workers.

**II. Literature Review:** - The literature review section of this paper explores existing research and scholarly works related to the gig economy and freelancer culture, focusing on the challenges and opportunities they present for adapting management practices in organizations. By examining a wide range of literature, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implications of the gig economy and freelancer culture for management practices and offer insights into how organizations can effectively navigate this evolving landscape.

**II. A. Characteristics and Implications of the Gig Economy:** - The gig economy, also known as the on-demand economy or sharing economy, is a rapidly growing economic model characterized by short-term, flexible work arrangements facilitated by digital platforms. In the gig economy, individuals engage in independent, project-based work as freelancers or contractors, offering their services to clients or customers on a temporary basis. This section explores the characteristics of the gig economy and its implications for workers, organizations, and the overall labor market.

**Flexibility and Autonomy:** One defining characteristic of the gig economy is the flexibility it offers to workers. Gig workers have the freedom to choose when, where, and how much they want to work. They can select projects that align with their skills and interests, allowing them to have greater autonomy and control over their work-life balance. This flexibility appeals to individuals seeking alternative work arrangements, such as students, parents, and those looking to supplement their income.

**Digital Platforms and Technology:** The gig economy heavily relies on digital platforms and technology to connect workers with clients or customers. These platforms act as intermediaries, facilitating the exchange of services and enabling seamless transactions. Examples of popular gig economy platforms include Uber, Airbnb, TaskRabbit, and Upwork. The advancements in technology and the widespread use of smartphones have significantly contributed to the growth and scalability of the gig economy.

**Diverse Range of Services:** The gig economy encompasses a wide range of industries and services. From ride-sharing and food delivery to freelance writing, graphic design, and consulting, gig work spans various sectors. This diversity allows individuals with different skill sets to participate in the gig economy, offering a broad range of services to meet the demands of clients and customers.

**Implications for Organizations:** The gig economy has significant implications for organizations. It provides opportunities for businesses to access specialized talent on a project-by-project basis, allowing them to scale their operations efficiently and tap into a global talent pool. By leveraging gig workers, organizations can reduce fixed labour costs and adapt quickly to changing market demands. However, managing gig workers requires organizations to develop new management practices, communication strategies, and performance evaluation methods tailored to the unique needs and expectations of gig workers.

**Impact on the Labour Market:** The gig economy has transformed the traditional labour market dynamics. It has led to the emergence of alternative work arrangements, challenging the traditional employer-employee relationship. As more individuals engage in gig work, the gig economy has influenced labour market trends, including the decline of full-time employment and the rise of independent contractors. This shift has implications for labour regulations, worker protections, and social safety nets.

**II.B Motivations and preferences of gig workers:** - Understanding the motivations and preferences of gig workers is crucial for organizations seeking to effectively engage and manage this talent pool. Research suggests that gig workers are motivated by factors such as flexibility, autonomy, and the opportunity to pursue passion projects. Gig workers also value transparent communication, timely feedback, and recognition for their contributions. Organizations must consider these motivations and preferences when designing management practices tailored to gig workers.

**Pursuit of Passion and Variety:** Gig work often provides individuals with the opportunity to pursue their passions and engage in work that aligns with their interests and skills. Unlike traditional employment, where individuals may be confined to a specific role or industry, gig work allows for a diverse range of projects and assignments. Gig workers can select projects that align with their expertise or explore new areas of interest, leading to a greater sense of fulfillment and personal growth.

**Financial Motivations:** Financial considerations play a significant role in motivating individuals to engage in gig work. For some, gig work offers a means to supplement their primary income or bridge financial gaps between jobs. The ability to set their own rates and negotiate project-based compensation allows gig workers to potentially earn higher incomes compared to traditional employment in certain cases. However, it's important to note that income volatility and uncertainty are also inherent to gig work, and financial motivations may vary based on individual circumstances.

**Work-Life Balance:** Gig work often appeals to individuals seeking a better work-life balance. It allows them to have greater control over their time and commitments, enabling them to allocate time for personal pursuits, family responsibilities, or other interests. Gig workers value the ability to customize their work schedules and have the freedom to manage their professional lives in a way that suits their personal needs.

**Desire for Independence and Entrepreneurship:** Many gig workers are driven by a desire for independence and the opportunity to be their own bosses. They appreciate the autonomy and decision-making authority that comes with gig

work. By operating as independent contractors, gig workers have the freedom to choose the projects they want to undertake, work with different clients, and develop their own business strategies. This sense of entrepreneurship and self-determination is a strong motivator for individuals who value independence and creative freedom.

**Desire for Learning and Skill Development:** Gig work often exposes individuals to diverse projects and industries, allowing them to continuously learn and develop new skills. Gig workers value the opportunity to expand their knowledge, acquire specialized expertise, and stay relevant in a rapidly evolving job market. The variety of projects and clients in the gig economy offers exposure to different work environments, challenges, and learning opportunities that contribute to professional growth and personal satisfaction.

**II.C Shifting Dynamics of Organizational Structures:** - The rise of the gig economy and freelancer culture has brought about significant changes in the traditional organizational structures of businesses. Organizations are increasingly adapting their structures to accommodate the evolving nature of work and leverage the opportunities presented by the gig economy. This section explores the shifting dynamics of organizational structures in response to the gig economy and freelancer culture.

**Remote Work and Virtual Teams:** One of the prominent shifts in organizational structures is the increasing prevalence of remote work and virtual teams. Advances in technology, such as video conferencing, collaboration tools, and cloud-based platforms, have made it easier for organizations to connect and collaborate with geographically dispersed talent. Remote work allows organizations to access a global talent pool, tap into specialized skills, and reduce geographical constraints. By embracing remote work, organizations can offer greater flexibility to gig workers, leading to increased job satisfaction and productivity.

**Project-Based Collaborations:** The gig economy thrives on project-based work, and this has influenced organizational structures. Rather than relying solely on traditional, long-term employment contracts, organizations are increasingly engaging gig workers on a project-by-project basis. This shift has resulted in a more fluid and adaptable organizational structure, where teams are formed and disbanded as projects come and go. Organizations are adopting agile and flexible project management methodologies to effectively manage and coordinate these project-based collaborations.

**Agile Organizational Models:** In response to the gig economy, organizations are embracing more agile organizational models. Traditional hierarchical structures are giving way to flatter, decentralized structures that promote faster decision-making and greater autonomy for teams. Agile organizations are characterized by cross-functional teams, flexible roles, and a focus on collaboration and innovation. This allows organizations to respond quickly to changing market demands, leverage the expertise of gig workers, and create an environment that fosters creativity and adaptability.

**Hybrid Work Models:** As organizations navigate the gig economy and freelancer culture, many are adopting hybrid work models. These models blend traditional full-time employees with gig workers and freelancers, creating a diverse and dynamic workforce. Hybrid models allow organizations to combine the stability and continuity of core employees with the flexibility and specialized skills of gig workers. By striking the right balance between internal resources and external talent, organizations can optimize their workforce composition to meet project-specific needs and remain agile in a rapidly changing business landscape.

**Emphasis on Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** With the gig economy's emphasis on project-based work and remote collaboration, organizations are placing greater importance on effective communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. Collaboration tools, virtual meeting platforms, and project management software are utilized to facilitate seamless teamwork and information exchange among dispersed team members. Organizations are creating digital platforms and knowledge-sharing systems to capture and disseminate valuable insights and best practices across project teams.

**Focus on Results and Outcomes:** The gig economy's project-based nature has shifted the focus from time-based inputs to results and outcomes. Organizations are moving away from traditional performance evaluation methods that emphasize hours worked and shifting towards outcome-based metrics. Performance management practices are evolving to emphasize goal setting, continuous feedback, and recognizing and rewarding achievements based on project

deliverables. This allows organizations to evaluate gig workers based on their contributions to project success rather than on traditional notions of work hours.

**II.D Adapting Management Practices for the Gig Economy:** -The gig economy and freelancer culture present unique challenges and opportunities for organizations in terms of managing and engaging a diverse and dispersed workforce. To effectively harness the benefits of the gig economy, organizations need to adapt their management practices to accommodate the specific needs and expectations of gig workers.

**Establishing Trust and Building Relationships:** Effective management in the gig economy starts with establishing trust and building relationships with gig workers. Organizations must invest in transparent communication channels, open dialogue, and regular check-ins to foster trust and maintain strong working relationships. Building a sense of community through virtual networking events, online forums, and social platforms can help gig workers feel connected and engaged with the organization, despite their remote and temporary nature of work.

**Communication and Expectation Management:** Clear and effective communication is crucial in managing gig workers. Organizations should ensure that project expectations, deliverables, timelines, and communication channels are clearly communicated from the outset. Providing gig workers with the necessary information and resources to perform their tasks efficiently is essential for project success. Regular and timely feedback, as well as recognition for their contributions, help to motivate and engage gig workers.

**Agile Performance Management:** Traditional performance management approaches may not be well-suited for the gig economy, where work is often project-based and short-term. Organizations need to adopt more agile performance management practices that align with the gig workers' project-focused contributions. Instead of annual performance reviews, organizations can implement ongoing feedback and evaluation systems that focus on project milestones, outcomes, and individual contributions. This allows for timely feedback, goal adjustment, and recognition of gig workers' achievements.

**Emphasizing Outcome-Based Metrics:** To effectively manage gig workers, organizations should focus on outcome-based metrics rather than relying solely on time-based inputs. Defining clear project goals and deliverables enables organizations to evaluate gig workers based on the quality and impact of their work, rather than the number of hours worked. Outcome-based metrics provide gig workers with a clear understanding of what is expected, foster accountability, and align performance evaluation with project success.

**Offering Professional Development Opportunities:** Professional development is vital for both gig workers and organizations. Offering opportunities for skill enhancement, training, and knowledge sharing not only benefits gig workers but also ensures that organizations have access to a skilled and up-to-date talent pool. Organizations can provide access to online learning platforms, webinars, and networking events to support gig workers' professional growth and encourage continuous learning.

**Addressing Ethical and Legal Considerations:** Organizations must address ethical and legal considerations in managing gig workers. This includes fair compensation practices, ensuring compliance with labor regulations, and providing appropriate worker classification. Organizations should also consider social protections, such as access to healthcare, retirement plans, and other benefits, to support gig workers' well-being and mitigate potential vulnerabilities associated with gig work.

**III. Challenges and Opportunities of Gig economy and Free lancer work:** - The gig economy and freelancer culture have brought about significant changes in the world of work, presenting both challenges and opportunities for workers, organizations, and the overall labor market. Understanding these challenges and opportunities is crucial for stakeholders to navigate the gig economy effectively. This section explores some of the key challenges and opportunities associated with gig economy and freelancer work.

**Challenges:** -Income Volatility and Financial Insecurity: Gig workers often face income volatility and financial insecurity due to the unpredictable nature of project-based work. Fluctuating workloads, irregular income streams, and lack of traditional employee benefits such as health insurance or retirement plans can make it challenging for gig

workers to maintain financial stability. Income uncertainty can lead to difficulties in budgeting, saving, and planning for the future.

**Lack of Social Protections:** Gig workers typically lack access to social protections such as unemployment benefits, workers' compensation, or paid sick leave. This absence of safety nets can leave gig workers vulnerable in times of economic downturns, illness, or injury. It highlights the need to explore ways to provide gig workers with appropriate social protections while maintaining the flexibility that attracts them to gig work in the first place.



Figure 2 Challenges of Gig Economy

**Limited Career Growth and Professional Development:** Gig work, by nature, tends to be short-term and project-based, which can limit opportunities for career growth and advancement. Gig workers may face challenges in acquiring new skills or building long-term professional relationships. Without the structure and support of a traditional organization, gig workers must take proactive steps to develop their skills, seek new projects, and build a professional network.

**Unclear Legal and Regulatory Frameworks:** The gig economy often operates in a gray area regarding legal and regulatory frameworks. Determining the employment status of gig workers, defining rights and responsibilities, and ensuring compliance with labor laws can be complex. The lack of clear regulations can lead to legal disputes, ambiguity, and potential exploitation of gig workers.

**Opportunities:** **-Flexible Work Arrangements:** The gig economy offers flexibility and autonomy, allowing individuals to have control over their work schedules and choose the projects they want to undertake. This flexibility can provide opportunities for individuals to balance work with personal commitments, pursue passions, and enjoy a better work-life balance.

**Access to Global Talent Pool:** Organizations can tap into a diverse and global talent pool through the gig economy. By engaging gig workers, organizations can access specialized skills and expertise from anywhere in the world. This access to a wide range of talent enables organizations to scale their operations, meet project-specific needs, and drive innovation.

**Table 1 Comparison of Gig Economy v/s Talent Economy**

Gig Economy	Talent Economy
The platform is the differentiator, the talent is an enabler	The platform is an enabler, the talent is the differentiator
The work is commoditized	The work is differentiated
Talent is commoditized	Talent is the central value point
Downward wage pressures are high	Skill gaps are high
The platform controls the talent's experience	The talent controls their experience
Limited growth potential for the individual	High growth potential for the individual

**Cost Efficiency and Scalability:** The gig economy provides cost efficiencies for organizations. Engaging gig workers on a project basis can be more cost-effective than maintaining a full-time workforce, as organizations only pay for the specific skills and services required. Additionally, organizations can scale their operations up or down quickly, depending on project demands, without the need for long-term commitments.

**Innovation and Diversity of Ideas:** Gig workers bring fresh perspectives and diverse ideas to organizations. Their exposure to different projects, industries, and work environments enables them to bring innovative solutions and approaches. This diversity of thought and expertise can fuel creativity, problem-solving, and drive organizational growth.

**IV. Future trends and implications of gig economy and freelancer work:** - The gig economy and freelancer work are expected to undergo several future trends and have significant implications for workers, organizations, and the broader labor market. Understanding these trends and their implications is crucial for stakeholders to navigate the evolving landscape of gig work effectively. Here are some key future trends and their potential implications:

**Growth of Platform Economy:** The gig economy is likely to become more entrenched as online platforms continue to facilitate connections between gig workers and organizations. These platforms will expand to cover a broader range of industries and occupations, creating new opportunities for gig workers and enabling organizations to access specialized talent easily. However, this growth may also lead to increased competition and potential issues related to fair pay and worker protections.

**Table 2 Future trends in Gig Economy**

Trend	Description
Upskilling and Lifelong Learning	Gig workers will need to engage in continuous upskilling and lifelong learning to adapt to technological advancements and evolving industry demands, ensuring their competitiveness and market relevance
Impact on Traditional Employment	Some traditional jobs may be replaced by gig workers, while others may be redefined or transformed. Organizations will need to navigate this shifting landscape and find ways to effectively integrate gig workers into their operations.
Gig Work in Various Industries	Gig work will penetrate various sectors such as healthcare, IT, consulting, creative arts, and professional services, providing opportunities for gig workers across a wide range of fields

Continued Growth		The gig economy is projected to experience ongoing expansion, driven by factors such as technological advancements, globalization, and changing work preferences.
Integration of Technology	of	Advancements in digital platforms, artificial intelligence, automation, and remote collaboration tools will further facilitate the connection between gig workers and organizations, streamlining processes and enabling seamless remote work
Expansion of Specialized Platforms	of	Dedicated gig platforms catering to specific industries or skill sets will continue to emerge, providing tailored opportunities for gig workers to showcase their expertise and connect with organizations seeking specialized talent
Enhanced Social Protections	Social	Efforts will be made to address the social protections and benefits gap for gig workers, with governments, organizations, and labor unions working together to develop innovative solutions that provide gig workers with adequate protection, healthcare, and retirement plans.

**Increased Emphasis on Remote Work:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work, and this trend is expected to continue in the gig economy. Remote work provides flexibility, cost savings, and access to a global talent pool. However, it also poses challenges in terms of collaboration, communication, and maintaining a sense of community among gig workers. Organizations will need to develop effective remote work policies and strategies to address these challenges.

**Gig Work in Traditional Industries:** The gig economy will extend its influence beyond traditionally gig-oriented sectors, such as transportation and hospitality, to more traditional industries like finance, healthcare, and professional services. Organizations in these sectors will increasingly leverage gig workers for specialized projects, on-demand expertise, and temporary staffing needs. This trend can lead to greater agility and cost-efficiency for organizations while providing new opportunities for gig workers in diverse fields.

**Skills-Based Hiring and Gig Work Portfolios:** As organizations rely more on gig workers, the focus will shift from traditional resumes to skills-based hiring and gig work portfolios. Organizations will seek workers with specific expertise, verified through past project work, rather than solely considering educational credentials or long-term employment history. This trend will enable gig workers to showcase their skills, competencies, and track records, providing a more accurate representation of their capabilities.

**Rise of Hybrid Workforce Models:** Hybrid workforce models that blend full-time employees, gig workers, and independent contractors will become more prevalent. Organizations will seek to optimize their workforce composition by leveraging the benefits of both gig workers and traditional employees. This model offers increased flexibility, access to specialized skills, and cost efficiency. However, organizations will need to develop effective strategies for managing and integrating diverse types of workers to ensure collaboration and cohesion.

**Policy and Regulatory Developments:** The gig economy's growth will drive policy discussions and regulatory developments. Governments and labor institutions will grapple with issues such as worker classification, minimum wage, benefits, and social protections for gig workers. Striking a balance between promoting innovation and ensuring fair treatment for gig workers will be a critical challenge. Policy changes may include the development of new employment models, innovative social protections, and worker rights frameworks tailored to the gig economy.

**Shift in Workforce Expectations:** The rise of gig work will lead to a shift in workforce expectations. Workers will increasingly seek flexibility, autonomy, and purposeful work. Organizations will need to adapt their management practices, compensation structures, and workplace policies to attract and retain gig workers who prioritize work-life balance, meaningful projects, and personal development opportunities.

**V. Conclusion:** - The gig economy and freelancer culture have ushered in a new era of work, characterized by flexibility, autonomy, and diverse opportunities. As the future of work continues to evolve, it is essential for organizations to adapt their management practices to effectively navigate the gig economy and freelancer culture. This paper has explored the challenges, opportunities, and future trends associated with gig work, highlighting the need for proactive adaptation and innovation. The future of gig work lies in the integration of technology, the blurring of traditional employment boundaries, and the shift towards skills-based hiring. Remote work will become more prevalent, requiring organizations to develop effective strategies for collaboration and communication in virtual environments. The rise of hybrid workforce models will require innovative approaches to managing diverse types of workers. As the gig economy continues to grow, it is crucial for organizations to rethink their management practices and adapt to the



changing dynamics of work. This includes implementing flexible work arrangements, providing opportunities for career growth and development, and ensuring fair treatment and social protections for gig workers. Organizations must also foster a culture of continuous learning and upskilling to remain agile in a rapidly changing landscape. In conclusion, the future of work in the gig economy and freelancer culture presents both challenges and opportunities. By embracing these changes, organizations can harness the benefits of gig work while addressing the associated complexities. Adapting management practices, developing innovative policies, and fostering a supportive environment for gig workers will be key to thriving in the future of work. The organizations that successfully navigate the gig economy will position themselves for success in an evolving labor market.

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