



WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE US FREELANCE MARKET?

The national ethos of the USA is, as we all know, The American Dream; which is why Roger Hodgson and Rick Davies wanted to “take a jumbo across the waters” to reach the land of opportunity.

The meaning of the term “American Dream” has changed over the years, starting as a symbol of frontier life in the 1700s and becoming an incentive for upward social mobility later on. To this very day, The American Dream is on the lips of every man or woman who wants to be somebody.

The change continues even now in 2019. According to [a survey](#) conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of TD Ameritrade, 60% of Americans believe that **The American Dream is to be your own boss.**

Exactly.

You, reader, are living the American Dream... or soon will be.

So, what are the market trends you should be looking out for while freelancing under the star-spangled banner?

Steel yourself for some gig economy statistics.

1. Backbone of the workforce 🧑🏻‍🔧

In 2018, Gallup found that [36% of the US workforce is in the gig economy](#), up by 2% since the [Freelancers Union's survey](#) in 2014. This is in line with a prediction in a 2012 [report by intuit](#), which claims that contingent workers will account for 40% of the workforce in the USA by 2020.

According to [the report](#) published by Upwork, a whopping 74% of freelancers started just in the last five years and they're already **set to overtake the traditional workforce by 2027.**

To summarise, we're witnessing the uncontrollable rise of the so-called gig economy, and it's coming fast.

2. Women take the reigns 🙋

Woman empowerment has never stopped being a strong topic. Female workers and entrepreneurs are being recognised more today than they were yesterday - we're getting there. It's no surprise that the freelance community has such a strong female representation!

Paypal polled 1,000 freelancers in 2017, [the report](#) showed that **69% of them were female**. So, they did what all girls do when they find themselves thrown in the same situation (like in a bathroom, for instance), they banded together.

Founded in 2017, [Freelancing Females](#) is a community of - you guessed it - freelancing women! Realising that there was no group supporting independent, self-employed women, Tia Myers devised something that became colossal, with 10,000+ members.

3. Trouble unplugging 🔌

When you spend your days, possibly your nights, sitting in front of a computer screen with about a dozen ideas swirling in your brain at once, taking time off is essential. Rest is important for your brain's health and will boost productivity when you get back to work.

Despite this, [92% of US freelancers continue working while on holiday](#). Being your own boss is tough and, although it may sound hard to believe for some, it's tricky to disconnect.

Nearly half (43%) of these tireless freelancers feel obliged to keep their holiday a secret from their clients. But how about keeping the work a secret from family members?

More women (65%) feel that they need to show they're enjoying the holiday and not working, even though they're constantly rushing off for some peace and quiet, armed with their laptops and AirPods. Could this be because of family expectations?

4. Hand-in-hand with technology 🖥️

In the aforementioned PayPal report, we can see that freelancers with more experience mainly market through word-of-mouth referrals, but how do new freelancers get their name out there?

Technology has made job-seeking easier for [64% of freelancers, increased by 22 since 2014](#). **That's 3 in 4 freelancers**. So, what are the gifts that technology has bestowed upon us?

Freelance marketplace platforms like [Upwork](#) or [Freelancer.com](#) **are stepping up their game to appeal to the freelance community**. Fiverr, for example, already [bought a SaaS platform](#)

[in 2018](#) to provide its software to freelancers for free. As wonderful as that sounds, it's not good news for traditional employers - it means competition.

Instead of leaving it to freelance workers to find their own tools, [employers will have to provide online platforms](#) with useful services to keep their remote workers satisfied.

5. Corporations jump on the bandwagon

According to the previous intuit report, a staggering **80% of corporations planned to rely on a flexible workforce** in the following years. [28% of Fortune 500 companies used Upwork](#) in 2017 and, in 2018, 63% of companies had a remote team.

It's clear as crystal that businesses want to lower overall costs and attract specific talent.

With the rising number of companies hiring freelancers, there's a **pressing need for interior organisation**. Freelance Management Systems (FMS) like [Kalo](#) are necessary to businesses with a large population of remote workers.

6. Importance of all skills

Skills are important, but are they more important to freelancers or regular employees? In the 2018 [Freelancing in America](#), Upwork found that 70% of freelancers had participated in skill training in the previous six months, compared to just 49% of full-time employees. **Skills are essential to remaining marketable.**

Not just technical skills, soft skills such as time management and communication are becoming more desirable as skill levels rise. In addition to that, as AI enters the picture, [skills in empathy become more valuable](#) too.

I cannot stress how important skills are, so I'm going to repeat it: **Skills are crucial to marketability**. Stock up on them.

7. Portable benefits

The most important pros of being employed full or part-time by a business are the benefits and steady income.

In [Freelancing in America 2017](#), 53% of moonlighters (freelancers who have a side gig after their 9 to 5 job) claimed that they weren't making the jump to full-time freelancing because of income predictability.

Among the top 5 worries for both freelancers and full-time workers were affordable healthcare, retirement, debt, and savings.

Unsurprisingly, portable benefits are becoming a hot topic. With the growing gig economy, independent workers find themselves living without the aforementioned benefits.

Lawmakers in California, for example, have noticed and are [introducing a bill](#) to ensure minimum wage, overtime, and other benefits that gig workers miss out on. This would result in workers becoming official employees, which would cost companies millions and could reduce worker flexibility.

In 2017, Senator Mark Warner had already [introduced legislation](#) to test portable benefits to see if they're a viable solution to the freelancer issue.

To counter, many businesses are pledging to provide gig workers with more benefits that would help them worry less about unpredictable situations and more about finding clients. Uber, for instance, is supporting an [Independent Drivers Guild](#).

Of course, Uber drivers are gig workers and not all gig workers are freelancers, but extended family is still family and portable benefits apply to all of us.

The USA is going to ensure its freelancers' peace of mind.

8. [Freelance cooperatives](#) 🤝

So, we have an army of talented freelancers scattered across the USA, free from the usual responsibilities and loyal to no master. Just like sellswords.

We've already touched upon how the two terms are related: [the word freelancer comes from free lances](#).

Independent warriors. But that doesn't mean independent people shouldn't join forces to create better working conditions and possibilities, just like mercenaries created **free companies** or **companies of adventure**.

A free company was an army of sellswords in the 12th century recruited by private employers to fight wars. The mercenaries remained free, but they could also bring more brawn to the fight.

In the US, the same phenomenon is repeating itself. Freelancers are joining forces through the use of online platforms to connect workers to potential clients, offer financial services for independent workers, and to act as a stable pillar for the development of new gig economy.

Member-owned platforms like [Loconomics](#) let you keep your projects in the same place your community is. Even now, The Freelancers Union, which has been around since 1995, continues to support self-employed workers.

9. [Freelance-friendly towns](#) 🏙️

This will sound appetising to the digital nomad community.

Large cities used to be the only place for careers with potential for growth, but now we don't even need to be present to carry out our work.

The result? Small towns around large cities are beginning to be repopulated by remote workers.

Some of the freelance co-ops we talked about in point two are playing on this, determined to give freelancers the best services. That's how Oneida, a small town in New York, is becoming a freelance-friendly town.

Low crime, low housing cost, and just a short drive from larger metropolitan areas, the business community in this town have created the [Freelancer Co-op](#). Their Oneida coworking space, which opened in May, offers collaboration centres, workshops, experts, software, and much more.

This town definitely sounds like one of the best places to work remotely, will other small towns take advantage of their position and become freelancer burrows?

10. [Flash teams](#) ⚡

What does a company do when it needs talent that it lacks in-house, but cannot hire a team of professionals? It turns to flash teams!

Flash teams are groups of freelancers with specific skill sets that band together to work on a temporary, yet complicated, project for a business, then dissipate when the project is completed.

Freelancers with complementary skills and similar work mentalities can get together to solve a complex problem quickly and effectively.



Companies benefit from a no-strings-attached relationship with a super-team, and freelancers can work alongside people they work well with.

Organising freelancers and ensuring that they work like - and excuse the cliché - a well-oiled machine is no small feat, it's expected to be seeing more of these as freelancer numbers rise.

You are your own boss and, as such, you should be keeping your eyes peeled for the latest news and trends in the freelancing universe. Luckily for you, we're here to keep you up-to-date!

♥ **Happy Planning!**

From Emma at immerj

For more great resources, tips and tools, sign up to immerj for free now at www.immerj.io