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**Dustin Hostetler** • Mar. 27, 2018



“Dad, let’s just leave the bikes locked up here and take an Uber back. We can come back for them tomorrow.”

That’s a statement my 10-year-old son, Austin, made last week while we were vacationing in Florida. To give the quote some context, we were on a family bike ride, about four miles from our condo and in a fun, beachside shopping and restaurant plaza. The sky started to look like we were about to get rained on and the radar confirmed it. We needed to get back to our condo to clean up and get ready for a dinner reservation, so we didn’t have time to wait it out. We also didn’t want to get soaked.

Just four years ago, this statement would have been foreign. Now, even our kids know

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demand (CPA firms).

- According to Intuit research, 34% of the American workforce participated in freelance work last year?
- Gig economy workers are projected to be 43% of the entire workforce by the year 2020 and over half of all workers shortly thereafter?

The gig economy is already here. And hopefully your senior leadership and talent leadership are working together to develop the strategies and plan on how to take advantage of it. Because you will feel the impact sooner rather than later, and whether you want to or not.

I'd like to highlight five areas I see CPA firms needing to address as it relates to the gig economy:

## Staffing Model Impact

The convergence of technology (namely more artificial intelligence), along with the gig economy, is going to change the way CPA firms hire entry-level staff in the very near future. Basic compliance work will be automated through technology and what isn't fully automated will be sourced to the gig economy. The new staff you bring in must demonstrate the ability to grow/develop into a client-facing advisor much earlier in their careers than has historically been the case. They also need to possess more skills in the areas of data analytics, financial analysis and strategic thinking.

## Process Changes

Your firm's processes are going to have to adjust and change with the new staffing model and technology changes coming. They need to support both the optimization of technology as well as the ability to integrate outsourced contract and remote workers. The mid to upper levels of firms MUST be dedicated to client service and

much more advisory type work. They can't be spending all their time "in the weeds"

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## Training

Your HR and Talent leadership team is hopefully in the process of transforming your training programs to position your firm's current and future talent to be much more focused in the areas of client service and advisory. Core knowledge in compliance will still be needed, but our teams inside our firms need to be positioned with advanced skillsets and toolsets in advisory work.

## Employment Agreements

Do your employment agreements need to be updated with the onset of gig economy work readily available? Your staff can work for you from 8 am to 5 pm and then go prepare tax returns online via an Uber-like application in the evening. Do you want them doing this? Do your employment agreements state your firm's position on this? It's definitely something to consider.

I hope this article, if nothing else, has you thinking about ways to begin being proactive in utilizing and modeling for the gig economy. It presents a lot of potential inside our firms. But it can be scary and disruptive if we don't plan for it. The gig economy may not be needed or utilized in all cases (e.g., in the intro story to this article, my family decided to beat the rain home instead of taking an Uber and we only got sprinkled on). But it is and is going to be a valuable and convenient way to run our businesses (and service our clients), while at the same time presenting great flexible opportunities for millions in the workforce.

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Dustin Hostetler is chief innovation officer for [Boomer Consulting](#).

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