



Aviation & Travel Employment Skills and Human Capital Global Challenges

What is the future of work, travel and mobility?

By April Rinne

May 7 2015

Comments

f 211 t 42 in 98

Work – what it is, how it's done, where it's done, and by whom – is changing dramatically. We see a shift from nine-to-five workdays to flexible schedules, from lifetime employment to multiple roles, from fixed offices to flexible workspaces, and a significant (some would even say alarming) increase in freelance work. In North America, 34% of the entire workforce is already classified as freelance (i.e. independent contractor or self-employed), and by 2020 this number is expected to have risen to more than 40%.

Many of these shifts are due to new technologies that allow people to connect in more ways, places and situations than ever before. It's no longer necessary to call a law firm to find a good lawyer, nor a plumbing company for a good plumber. Rather, you can find them on platforms that enable peer-to-peer (P2P) connections and are often part of what's called the sharing or collaborative economy.

For many people, these new freelance opportunities allow flexibility that was previously not possible. Rather than signing away all of your time to one company, individuals can build a professional portfolio that better meets their lifestyle needs and goals. A mother with young children can work while the kids are napping or in school. An elderly person can work a few hours here and there. And, yes, people can work full time as well. Platforms such as [TaskRabbit](#), [WoNoLo](#) and [AirTasker](#) enable people to find and provide a range of services, while companies like [UpCounsel](#) and [Pager](#) provide more specialized activities (legal and medical services, respectively).

At the same time that these workplace shifts are underway, the travel industry is experiencing a revolution powered by similar factors and technologies. P2P

marketplaces and platforms are changing every aspect of travel, from transportation ([BlaBlaCar](#), [Lyft](#), [Uber](#)) to accommodation ([Airbnb](#), [LoveHomeSwap](#)), tour guides ([AnyRoad](#)) and more. These platforms match supply and demand – hosts and guests, drivers and passengers, and so on – basically providing a centralized place for decentralized inventory and interests. The growth of such platforms is sometimes staggering: in six years Airbnb has amassed more rooms than Hilton Hotels (again, while not owning any inventory) and BlaBlaCar is transporting more people than Eurostar at less than 1% of the cost of capital.

Skills: enabling travel in new ways

When we combine these sector shifts – the convergence of new workplaces with new travel platforms – we uncover a new world of opportunities. In particular, it is now possible to travel specifically to use one's specialized skills. This brings new expertise to places that can benefit from it; it also boosts local economies and grows global connections.

In the past, with a few exceptions, such as [Doctors Without Borders](#), it was difficult for people with specialized skills to find opportunities for limited-term work engagements easily. You either had to work in a hardship zone, or travel to a location and test your luck once there. Moreover, many options were done on a volunteer basis, which also made it difficult for most people to commit more than a few days or weeks.

Today, we see new platforms like [Jobbatical](#) arising to address these needs. Jobbatical matches skilled professionals (typically in technology and creative sectors) with companies worldwide who need their skills for a limited amount of time. For example, an engineer could work in Malaysia for a few months, or a graphic designer could help a company in India, earning a salary (and possibly equity) while doing so. For people who want to experience a new place, or “live like a local” rather than a tourist, and contribute to the community, this represents a win-win-win.

At the same time, cross-border virtual mentoring and professional development platforms are also enabling more people to connect and share specialized skills. Companies like [MicroMentor](#) and [Catchafire](#) match mentors and other professionals with small businesses and start-ups. These do not require travel and are often done on a volunteer basis. Nonetheless they are breaking down barriers and enabling greater mobility and social impact of talent worldwide.

Looking ahead

Platforms that blend opportunities for work and travel have the potential to transform tourism and local economies, as well as corporate human-resources departments. As we scratch beneath the surface, we see how many people might be involved: from young professionals starting their careers, to mid-career and senior executives who are ready for a change. Freelancers can participate almost immediately, while more traditional employers can rethink how they resource (at least some of) their workforce needs, and how they might tap into international opportunities as an employee incentive.

Going beyond this, we could imagine a new range of partnerships with universities and other educational institutions, or local training courses that go beyond one company (and could reach beyond the formal education system).

Perhaps most importantly, we can bring skills – extending far beyond medicine – to places that need them. This benefits everyone: residents, companies, entrepreneurs and any city or place that wishes to thrive in the new economy.

Author: April Rinne is head of the World Economic Forum's Sharing Economy Working Group. She is an independent adviser to sharing economy companies, local governments and investors worldwide.

Image: A Google employee works on a laptop in front of a mural of the New York City skyline, at the New York City company office March 10, 2008. REUTERS/Erin Siegal

Posted by [April Rinne](#) - 17:49

All opinions expressed are those of the author. The World Economic Forum Blog is an independent and neutral platform dedicated to generating debate around the key topics that shape global, regional and industry agendas.

[Aviation & Travel](#) | [Employment Skills And Human Capital](#) | [Forum](#) | [Global Challenges](#) | [P2P](#) | [Peer-To-Peer Connections](#) | [Sharing Economy](#) | [Skills](#) | [Travel](#) | [Workplace](#) | [Young Global Leaders](#)

0 Comments

Agenda - The World Economic Forum

 Login ▾

 Recommend

 Share

Sort by Newest ▾



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

ALSO ON AGENDA - THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

WHAT'S THIS?

Why we need to make the case for freer trade

1 comment • 3 days ago



Emanuel Adam — Thanks for the article. Important to approach TTIP, TPP and TPA from a trade ...

Why the US needs to raise the minimum wage

1 comment • 10 hours ago



Anechidna — It isn't rocket science. Pay low wages and the economy suffers. Pay a livable wage and the ...

President Peña Nieto: Latin America as an engine of growth

3 comments • 5 days ago



Michel — Mexican president talking about Growth? Please, firstly he is one of the most ignorant people in ...

What can we learn from young business leaders?

1 comment • 6 days ago



Therese — Well stated and outlined. Engaging the millennials and adopting a purpose- and conscious ...

 Subscribe

 Add Disqus to your site

 Privacy

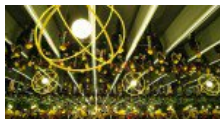
Related posts

Suggested next articles



3 ways Latin America can turn a crisis...

ANDERS BORG



5 things only disruptors know about the...

PETER GRATZKE

