



Help Your Gig Workers Become Their Best Selves: A Self-Actualization Action Framework

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ABSTRACT

With organizations moving towards a non-traditional setup, the gig economy is booming like never before. However, the psychological needs of gig workers are often overlooked and thus limited research has been observed in this area. This study explores the importance of fostering self-actualization among company gig workers to increase their productivity, motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The purpose of this study is to shed light on why and how organizations should be concerned with drawing in and keeping gig workers who want to realize their full potential by allowing them to do so on the job. Employees who choose to actualize themselves would be happier and more driven, and this would have a significant impact on the calibre of their work with client teams and companies. For this study, a self-developed survey instrument has been used to gain insights into the job satisfaction levels of gig workers. The results indicated that gig workers strongly believe that they are not adequately oriented on company values and long-term strategic plans and that most client companies are unconcerned with providing career track plans to gig workers or upskilling opportunities. The authors, therefore, propose an actualization checklist and framework that would serve to guide managers in retaining and engaging with gig workers to improve their task, team, and organizational engagement and job satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Employee Engagement; Self-Actualization; Self-Actualization in The Workplace; Gig Workers; Freelancers; Remote Workers; Remote Employees; Gig Workers' Job Satisfaction; Gig Workers' Performance; Gig Workers' Motivation.

INTRODUCTION

The Internet. Digitalization. Training Programs. Educational Platforms and Technology. Everywhere you look, the drive for a whole and well-rounded self is taking over the imagination of employers and employees alike. This has also had a profound impact on the way organizations are reimagining ways to build up their employees so that they would in turn build the organization. With the rapid growth of the gig economy, workers who are self-employed as freelancers, act as free-floating agents. Rampant unemployment also caused many traditional employees to explore the world of the gig economy (Biswas & Bathla, 2022). Studies show that actualized employees are more engaged with their organizations, more productive, and have better job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational citizenship behavior (Kumar et al, 2020; Tomic, 2011; Fairlie, 2011; Munish & Rachna 2017). Moreover, employee engagement affects their job performance which is correlated to the organization's performance (Harilal & Santhosh, 2014; Mahajan & Kumar, 2018). Motivated workers are required in today's rapidly changing workplaces. Motivated employees aid in the survival of organizations. Employees who are motivated are more productive (Bharathi, 2017). Professionals are heavily relied upon by organizations to drive and deliver performance efficiently and

effectively to achieve business goals, thus there is a need for companies and management to engage with them (Aiswarya & Ramasundaram, 2017). However, client companies have to make the effort to invest time and resources to help their gig workers achieve actualization. The study conducted for this paper was done by sending a questionnaire to freelance professionals to determine if their client companies were engaging with them to help them actualize.

For the sake of this study, actualization is defined as "the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming," (Maslow, 1970). An individual must strive to achieve their highest aspirations and be the finest possible version of themselves to lead the fulfilling life that they love. This is necessary to be motivated by a sense of purpose and meaning in existence. Kurt Goldstein, an innovator in the field of organismic theory, first used the word in his groundbreaking book "The Organism." According to Goldstein, the supreme motivation of an organism is its desire to reach its greatest potential.

In his pyramidal theory of the hierarchy of needs, Abraham Maslow expanded this idea into the context of a worker's motivation and placed self-actualization at the top. He



conducted research on various notable individuals, including Albert Einstein, and proposed the following traits as those of a true actualized:

-An acute sense of reality, awareness of others and their circumstances, and the capacity for good judgment.

-The capacity to understand people's motivations and weaknesses and to accept oneself and others for who they are.

-The ability to form decisions without prejudice and affected only by one's own critical and independent thought.

-The aptitude to form opinions independent of cultural norms and opinions and to do so critically and independently.

-A natural desire to stay loyal to oneself and resist cultural pressure.

-A natural drive towards leaving an impact on society that will outlast oneself by pursuing a "mission" that is greater than oneself.

-Having a few close, intimate relationships rather than a myriad of superficial connections

-The ability to see the beauty of life and have 'peak' experiences of unspoiled joy at simple things with a sense of the ridiculous and the ability to laugh at oneself.

-The ability to feel whole as an individual without the need for someone to complete oneself.

-A keen sense of empathy and sympathy for those around and for humanity, at large (Maslow, 1970).

In this study, the term "gig worker" refers to remote freelancers contracted to provide deliverables on ongoing projects. These assignments could include tasks like content creation, web page design, etc.

Theory Development

The author was able to create a "Self-Actualization Checklist" based on the traits of actualized enumerated by Maslow and mentioned above. A survey questionnaire was then created based on the checklist to assess if client companies are helping their gig workers get actualized. This questionnaire was sent to 72 freelance workers and 56 responses were received and recorded. The data showed that client companies are not engaging with gig workers as they do with traditional employees to help them actualize. The literature shows a clear correlation between a lack of actualization and the workers' disengagement with their tasks, team, and organization resulting in lowered job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational citizenship behavior (Kumar et al, 2020; Tomic, 2011; Fairlie, 2011).

Therefore, this lack of actualization should be a concern for organizations with the explosion of the gig economy and the large number of floating freelance workers working on company projects. By providing them with the tools to realize their full potential, client organizations can engage with and motivate their freelance workforce while increasing their organizational citizenship behavior.

Self-Actualization Checklist

Self-actualization at the Workplace

Customizing the Career Path: Different people will have different goals for their career trajectories. An ideal

organization will provide a customized career plan for each employee to help him stay true to his nature, capabilities, dreams, and desires. Training and skill development for the employee will increase his productivity and job happiness as well as his chances of progressing along his personalized career path, allowing him to reach his full potential in a field he enjoys. The same holds for gig workers who are employed in the same company.

82% of the gig workers interviewed for this study said that they did not receive any detailed training on the client company's values and long-term strategic plans. 76% of the respondents believed that detailed onboarding and training would have led them to engage better with their work and the client company and do their tasks with greater interest with a proper understanding of the company's strategic direction. 58% of the respondents felt that client companies should discuss career plans with freelancers and provide a career track through which exceptional gig workers can become traditional employees at the client company.

The 360 Degree Relationship Guide: An ideal organization must be able to assist the employee in maximizing all aspects of his professional relationships, including those with his boss, coworkers, subordinates, clients, and business partners. This would entail assisting him in sharpening his perception of people and circumstances so that he can comprehend the motivations of the people at work and be sympathetic and forgiving of their imperfections. Giving the individual complete creative freedom and fostering independent thought will enable him to create and be a change agent within his position, department, and business. Fostering a climate at work, where connections can be made and kept by helping the person get over their social isolation (loneliness), is also a vital duty of an organization that employs gig workers. 72% of the survey respondents said that they were not invited to social events, mixers, and after-work parties with the regular employees of the client company resulting in a lack of relationship-building and social cohesion between the freelancers and the traditional employees.

Self-actualization in Personal Relationships

Every organization can play a role in assisting the gig worker to strike the best work-life balance possible, by giving both family time and work obligations equal weight. They can also involve the gig worker's family in the workplace so they can learn about his position in the organization and begin to interact with the organization.

They can also help him to sharpen his perception of people and circumstances so that he may grasp the motivations of his family and friends, and be sympathetic and tolerant of their imperfections to form and maintain long-lasting, close friendships and intimate relationships. 62% of the respondents said that they were left out of company picnics, office parties, and family days when regular employees could bring their families to meet their co-workers and tour the offices.



Self-actualization related to the Society and the Environment

Another valuable way to invest in an employee is to give him/her the chance to volunteer for and make a contribution to social and environmental concerns about which he is enthusiastic, with the organization supporting and aiding with funds, information, and human resources. 68% of survey respondents said that they did not have any knowledge of the CSR activities and other charitable work done in their client company. 62% said that they were not asked to contribute toward volunteering or donations that regular company employees engaged in.

Self-actualization in Knowledge Acquisition

Giving the gig worker the chance to study and pick up new abilities that may have nothing to do with his job and are in line with his personality and hobbies will allow him to learn for the pure joy of learning. Training him how to think critically so that he can develop fresh, original ideas for both his professional and personal lives is an important means by which organizations can help gig workers self-actualize. 58% of the respondents said that they were not provided with any learning opportunities in their client companies as they were not regular employees. Companies tend not to see freelance employees as permanent knowledge capital so they tend not to invest in upskilling them.

Self-actualization related to the Self

A gig worker can define his/her identity independently of other people and be whole and complete in himself. To combat sexism, racism, and other cultural biases, employers should support their gig workers in developing a multicultural and egalitarian sensibility. Learning how to laugh at himself/herself and finding humor in life is also an essential quality every self-actualized person must possess. Making the time to observe the great beauty of the world around oneself and to appreciate the basic joys of life also brings wholeness to one's perspective. Encouraging physical fitness in the gig worker through access to gyms, diet plans, and free healthy meals will help bring him/her good health.

Giving the gig worker access to prayer and meditation spaces, sacred texts, and lectures on theology and metaphysics will help him develop his inner spirituality. 72% of the respondents said that the client company offered them access to the company gym and yoga/meditation classes but only 22% of the respondents made use of these resources. The other 50% of the respondents did not either because they were working remotely, had no social networks and friends in the company, or were simply uninterested.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researcher utilized the cross-sectional study design wherein the survey questionnaire was disseminated to 72 freelance workers from Canada, India, and the USA. The author crafted the survey questionnaire based on the "Self Actualization Checklist," which aims to find out if the management of the companies who hire "work from home" employees aid their employees towards self-actualization. It involves questions regarding employee engagement activities and events that can

contribute to actualization. All the questions in the survey were dichotomous with binary yes or no answers, except the last open-ended question.

Out of 72, the researcher was able to garner 56 responses. The respondents are composed of 22 females and 34 males. They are working in education technology, healthcare technology, and information technology industries.

The participants included 24 North Americans and 32 Asians as studies have shown people from different nationalities have different attitudes toward self-actualization. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was criticized by renowned Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede as being ethnocentric (Hofstede, 1984) because people from more collectivist cultures, such as the Chinese, do not have the same needs to actualize relationships as people from more individualistic western cultures do. (Cianci & Gambrel, 2003).

After the data was gathered, the author used the percentage to analyze and present the data.

RESULTS

82% of the gig workers interviewed for this study said that they did not receive any detailed training on the client company's values and long-term strategic plans. 76% of the respondents believed that detailed onboarding and training would have led them to engage better with their work and the client company and do their tasks with greater interest with a proper understanding of the company's strategic direction. 58% of the respondents felt that client companies should discuss career plans with freelancers and provide a career track through which exceptional gig workers can become traditional employees at the client company. 72% of the survey respondents said that they were not invited to social events, mixers, and after-work parties with the regular employees of the client company resulting in a lack of relationship-building and social cohesion between the freelancers and the traditional employees. 62% of the respondents said that they were left out of company picnics, office parties, and family days when regular employees could bring their families to meet their co-workers and tour the offices. 68% of survey respondents said that they did not have any knowledge of the CSR activities and other charitable work done in their client company. 62% said that they were not asked to contribute toward volunteering or donations that regular company employees engaged in. 58% of the respondents said that they were not provided with any learning opportunities in their client companies as they were not regular employees. Companies tend not to see freelance employees as permanent knowledge capital so they tend not to invest in upskilling them. 72% of the respondents said that the client company offered them access to the company gym and yoga/meditation classes but only 22% of the respondents made use of these resources. The others chose not to because they were either working remotely (35%), had no social networks and friends in the company (12%), or were simply not interested (3%).



DISCUSSION

The data clearly shows that gig workers are not being allowed to actualize and attain their fullest potential. The majority of the respondents narrated that in-depth onboarding will lead them to engage better with their work. This is also similar to the findings of Sindhu & Anitha (2011) where detailed orientation leads to an employee's increase in job performance. Moreover, before taking on their responsibilities, employees must understand not only how to carry out their duties, but also the organization's policies, procedures, and expectations. Knowledge of the organizational structure also affects employee satisfaction (Sankar & Revathy, 2018; Pattnaik, 2014). The respondents also felt left out on company mixers and miss on opportunities to network with their co-workers. The employees' relationship with their co-workers is vital to their job outcomes and productivity (Munish & Agarwal, 2017; Kudari, 2017).

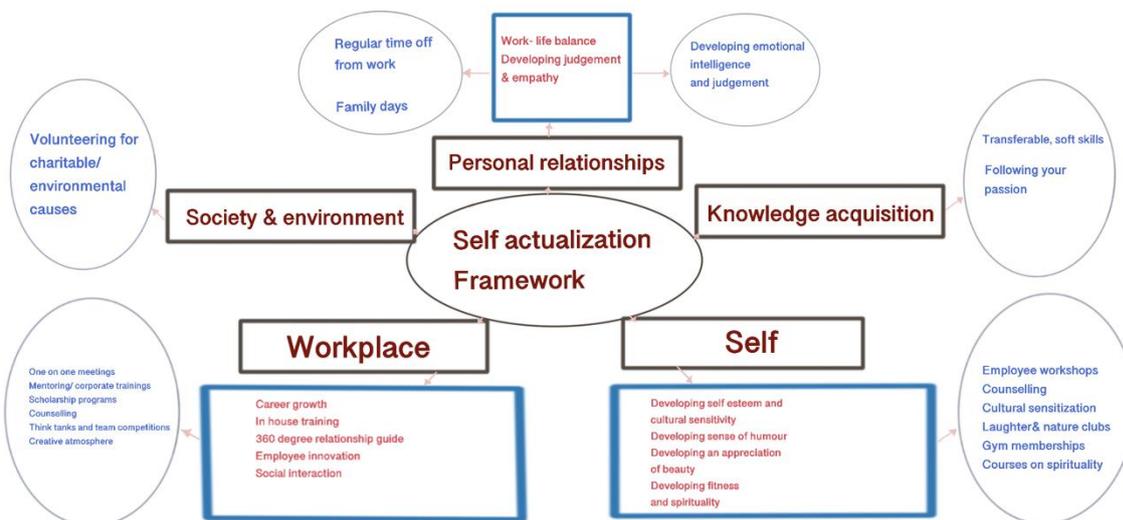
Client companies do not seem interested in maximizing the potential of freelancers who work on their ad-hoc projects. There could be various reasons for this. The most likely one

could be that companies do not wish to invest time, money, and resources in developing workers who are not permanent employees. However, this attitude is unfavorable to the company because engaging in actualization activities would improve a gig worker's engagement with the task, team, and organization so that he can realize his fullest potential and do his best work for the company. Using the self-actualization framework outlined in this paper can help increase engagement with freelance workers. There is potential here for further research to see how well the activities in the framework can help improve engagement, job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational citizenship behavior in gig workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the author has created a "Self-Actualization Action Framework," in conjunction with the "Self-Actualization Checklist," which can assist in connecting the factors from the Checklist to "Actualizing Tools" that managers can use to engage with gig employees to actualize themselves.

Self-Actualization Action Framework



Self-actualization at the workplace

Tools for Career Growth: One-on-one conversations with gig workers can help clarify professional development goals and career progression objectives. Mentors can be assigned to help guide and support growth. Organizations can even institute programs that will allow high-performing gig workers to get absorbed into the client company.

Internal Training: Organizational training and seminars led by subject-matter specialists in specialized fields can help aid gig workers in improving both hard and soft skills including teamwork, public speaking, and communication.

360 Degree Relationship Guide: Counseling sessions with licensed psychotherapists can assist in addressing office disputes and learning more about the personalities and working styles of coworkers, managers, and team members. Psychotherapy and counseling sessions with managers and regular employees on the team will help in better team and relationship building.

Employee Innovation: Internal competitions to cultivate creativity can motivate staff to develop creative answers to operational issues. The establishment of internal think tanks will encourage innovation. Gig employees should not be forgotten in initiatives like this. They should be encouraged to contribute their ideas.

Social Engagement: Establishing clubs for hobbies and sports within the organization will aid in promoting social contact. To encourage introverted gig workers to open up and create social relationships, peer and mentor support groups can be formed.

Self-actualization in Personal Relationships

Work-life Balance: As most gig workers work from home, it would be beneficial to provide them with a desk and workspace to encourage them to work in the company premises whenever possible so that they have more physical proximity to the company's physical spaces and regular staff. This would



enable gig workers to feel like they belong in the organization and team and improve their emotional connection to the client company. The freelancers should not be forgotten at social events and family days at work so that they too can bring in their relatives to meet their co-workers and learn about the work that they are doing. This would improve organizational loyalty and citizenship behavior by improving bonding.

Developing Judgement and Empathy: Through training seminars on interpersonal abuse and toxic relationships, employers can train freelance staff to acquire a judgment in understanding individuals. Educating them to recognize bad tendencies like narcissism and megalomania in themselves and others while teaching them to build emotional intelligence and empathy will build greater emotional intelligence across the organization.

Self-actualization related to Society and Environment

Encouraging gig workers to volunteer for a range of environmental and social initiatives that personally interest them may prove useful in helping them bond with full-time workers with similar interests within the organization.

Self-actualization in Knowledge Acquisition

To properly prepare exceptional gig workers for career advancement as permanent employees, funding should be provided for courses that enhance transferrable abilities in critical thinking, critical reading, numeracy, etc. To promote a culture of learning, workers should be encouraged to do courses and seminars on topics that individuals are personally interested in, even if they are not immediately linked to their place of employment. This investment by the client company would encourage freelance workers as it demonstrates that the company has faith in their abilities.

Self-actualization related to the Self

Developing Self-Esteem: Gig workers can be encouraged to attend motivational speaker-led workshops and seminars to help them develop their sense of self-worth. Counseling sessions with qualified counselors can address and resolve issues related to low self-esteem.

Developing Cultural Sensitivity: Increasing cultural sensitivity involves educating gig workers about various cultures

and holding workshops where they can learn about the history, cuisine, lifestyles, and customs of their coworkers' cultures. Lectures on how to converse with people from different cultures by being aware of slang, cultural allusions, and verbal and nonverbal clues can also help create bonds within the team.

Developing Humor: Creating clubs for humor and laughter throughout the organization is a great way to bring out the confidence in workers. Encouraging a sense of humor by posting jokes in the company newsletters and putting up posters with funny stories in the cubicles and on the intranet can contribute towards a positive work environment. On the other hand, educating workers about the hazards of crude, unpleasant humor can significantly decrease opportunities for misunderstandings and disagreements.

Developing an Appreciation of Beauty and Simple Pleasures: The company should encourage the creation of nature groups and regular employee outings to picturesque beauty locations to appreciate nature. Establishing art organizations and promoting frequent trips to local exhibitions and galleries will foster a sense of and appreciation for beauty. These activities can also serve as team-building exercises to promote cohesion between gig workers and employees.

Developing Fitness: Fitness development involves giving gig workers equal access to company gyms and other exercise facilities as well as training in diet and lifestyle choices.

Developing Spirituality: Companies can invite lecturers and experts to discuss spirituality and religion to develop worker spirituality. Encouraging staff to ponder existential issues and delve into spirituality would serve to help them discover their life's purpose and to get inspired to pursue it.

Using the aforementioned framework and checklist, managers can endeavor to attract and engage the best gig workers by allowing them to achieve self-actualization while on the job.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

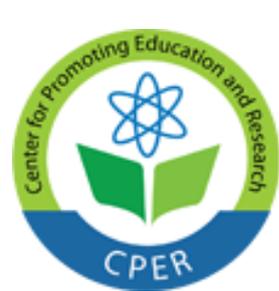
The author has no conflict of interest with regard to the conduct of the study.

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APPENDIX:

Self-Actualization Action Framework

Self-actualization Checklist Factor	Actualizing Tools
Self-actualization at the workplace	
Career Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One on one meetings with employee to discuss career growth plans and interests in professional development. - Assignment of mentors to guide and facilitate growth. - Corporate scholarship/ grants programs for highly performing employees to go back to university to gain new skills.
In- house Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate trainings and seminars by subject matter experts in areas of interest so employees can upgrade both technical and soft skills such as communication, public speaking and team management.
360 Degree Relationship Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Counselling sessions with trained psychotherapists to resolve workplace conflicts and gain understanding into the working styles and personalities of co- workers, managers and team members. - Counselling sessions with mentors/managers and psychotherapists to understand the personas of clients and business partners.
Employee Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In- house competitions to foster creativity to encourage employees to come up with innovative solutions to business problems. - Creation of think tanks within the organization to foster innovation.
Social Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating an atmosphere that fosters social interaction through the creation of hobby and sports clubs in the company. - Forming peer and mentor support groups to help introverted employees to open up and form social bonds.
Self-actualization in personal relationships	
Work-life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging the employee to take regular time off from work and work from home when possible to spend more time with his family. - Having family days at work and socials so family members can meet colleagues and understand the nature of the employee's work.
Developing Judgement and Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training employees to develop judgement in understanding people through educational seminars on abuse in relationships and toxic relationships. - Training them to develop Emotional Intelligence and develop empathy while learning to identify negative traits like narcissism and megalomania in themselves and in others
Self-actualization related to Society and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging employees to volunteer for various charitable and environmental causes that is of personal interest to them.
Self-actualization in Knowledge Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing funding for courses to develop transferable skills in critical thinking, critical reading, numeracy etc. to better equip employees for career progression. - Encourage and fund courses and seminars in subjects that they have a personal interest in even if not directly related to work so as to foster a culture of learning.
Self-actualization related to the Self	
Developing Self Esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging employees to attend workshops and seminars conducted by motivational speakers. - Counselling sessions with trained counsellors to deal with and overcome issues related to low self esteem.
Developing Cultural Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educating employees on different cultures and conducting culture workshops where they can experience the history, language, food, lifestyles and customs of the cultures of co-workers. - Conducting seminars on how to communicate with people from different cultures by understanding slang, cultural references and verbal/ non-verbal cues.



Developing Humour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forming humour and laughing clubs in the company. - Fostering a culture of humour by hanging posters with amusing anecdotes in the work cubicles and posting jokes in the employee newsletters etc - Educating employees on the dangers of crass, vulgar humour that can be offensive to various groups of people.
Developing an Appreciation of Beauty and Simple Pleasures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging the formation of nature clubs and regular employee outings to areas of scenic beauty to appreciate nature. - Forming art clubs and encouraging regular visits to local art galleries and shows to develop an understanding and appreciation of beauty.
Developing Fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing employees with gym memberships and other exercise facilities and educating them on diet and lifestyle choices.
Developing Spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inviting speakers and trainers to talk about spirituality and religion. Encouraging employees to ask existential questions and explore the realms of spirituality to understand their purpose in the world so that they are motivated towards it.

Survey Questionnaire

1. Were you given on-boarding and training on your client company’s values, vision and strategic direction?
2. Do you think training on the company’s overall strategy and vision would have helped you engage better with your project?
3. Were you given any encouragement to transition to a permanent employee role in your client company?
4. Were you invited to social events, mixers and after work parties with those employees whom you worked with in the client company?
5. Were you ever invited along with your spouse or family to company picnics, office parties and family days at your client company?
6. Were you ever made aware of the CSR activities and other charitable work done in your client company?
7. Were you ever asked to volunteer your time or help contribute to a charitable cause supported by your client company?
8. Were you ever given access to employee training seminars and other knowledge resources to upgrade your skills while working in your client company?
9. Did your client company have employee gyms and other self-care resources?
10. Were you given access to them?
11. Did you make use of the resources? Why or why not?