The Many Faces of Non-Traditional Work

Non-traditional workers are diverse and are motivated by different things. Commonwealth’s study “The Changing Nature of Work” identified five different personas that diverge in one major way: non-traditional work by choice and non-traditional work by default.

### Non-Traditional By Choice

**The Passionista**

The ability to pursue their passion is what they value the most.

Non-traditional work either allows them to earn money doing something else while they develop their passion, or it is how they earn money by engaging in their passion. Often labeled as “freelancers,” they see their financial challenges as temporary.

**The Balancer**

The flexibility of non-traditional work is what they value the most.

They engage in non-traditional work to better accommodate their life circumstances, such as multiple children, a child with a disability, elderly parent, or mental health challenges.

### Non-Traditional By Default

**The Bridger**

Non-traditional work arrangements are how they bridge income gaps on an occasional basis.

Living with lower income levels and very low margins means that an unexpected expense or dips in income can cause significant problems in their lives.

**The Subsistence Seeker**

Non-traditional work arrangements are the new way to get a second job.

Due to their lower income, these individuals often need a second job to meet their basic needs.

**The Job Seeker**

Non-traditional work arrangements are simply how they earn money.

They may be labeled as “independent contractors” rather than employees. Or, they may have highly variable hours that keep them below full-time status, limiting their access to benefits.

### Conclusion

Although these five personas share many of the same financial challenges, each have unique perspectives on their work lives. Understanding that non-traditional workers may work by choice or default can help ensure we design tools that best serve their needs and specific life circumstances.