Cision Study: Gig Economy Media Reporting Disconnected from Worker Reality

Conversation Analysis Reveals Independent Worker Groups Express Uncertainty About Taxes, Insurance and Income

CHICAGO, Dec. 20, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- Media coverage of America's independent workers leans more positively than the conversation that actual workers have on social media, a new media analysis by Cision has found. The analysis found that while the media discusses growth in the independent workforce and its benefits for employers, workers discuss the difficulty in finding work, fears about their retirement and even loneliness.

On behalf of The Rockefeller Foundation, Cision conducted a one-year news media and social media analysis of conversation relating to independent workers, including those working in the growing gig economy. Analysts conducted the media review between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016, studying more than 540,000 news media and blog articles as well as 132,000 social media posts. The goal of the analysis was to better understand media perception around the topic.

The analysis found four distinct groups of independent workers: parents, retirees, recent graduates and small business owners.

Retirees most often discussed needing to supplement their income in 28 percent of the discussions, followed by 21 percent of discussions for looking for work and 21 percent with questions about filing taxes.

"Workers are trying to find ways to make ends meet and they are going online to find advice from each other on how to do just that," said Caitlin Jamali, Cision's senior insights analyst.

Small business owners were twice as likely to discuss hourly rates, as well as not earning enough money, 12 percent of their conversations related to general worry. Meanwhile, parents were twice as likely to discuss the benefits of having a flexible schedule with their gig work, but were also more likely to miss the day to day interactions they'd have with colleagues in more traditional work environments.

Study Highlights

- Leading negatively toned discussions were about taxes, worry and insurance ultimately leading to 37 percent of the overall discussing being negative in sentiment
- More than 25 percent of all discussion related to general worry for independent workers
- Retirees often reach out for help online with questions about taxes and their retirement plans
- 35 percent of discussion from recent graduations were about looking for work, discussing additive work, or using gig labor to supplement income from a primary job three times as much as than independent workers as a whole

Leading gig economy stories from the past year:

The analysis also found that four stories grabbed the headlines and influenced the conversation most throughout the year:

- **August 2015:** BizJournal story highlighted the benefits of hiring freelancers over full-time employees
- **November 2015:** Gig economy startups urge safety net for workers
- **February 2016:** New York City's consideration of legal protection for freelances who suffer wage theft
- **June 2016:** Uber appeals California Labor Commission ruling that drivers should be considered employees

The disconnect between the news coverage of the independent workforce and the voice of independent workers signals that while the perception is that the community is thriving, general worry is shared concerning their future and the group may benefit from additional funding initiatives and workshops to ensure their continued success. View more from the study here.

About Cision and Rockefeller Foundation Research Project:
This independent research was supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, with the goal of providing new insight into the way people are thinking and talking about important problems affecting resilience and economic inclusion around the world. As part of this work, Cision investigated challenges surrounding America's independent workforce, the resilience of global healthcare systems, and food waste and loss in South and Southeast Asia.

About The Rockefeller Foundation:
For more than 100 years, The Rockefeller Foundation's mission has been to promote the well-being of humanity throughout the world. Today, The Rockefeller Foundation pursues this mission through dual goals: advancing inclusive economies that expand opportunities for more broadly shared prosperity, and building resilience by helping people, communities and institutions prepare for, withstand, and emerge stronger from acute shocks and chronic stresses. To achieve these goals, The Rockefeller Foundation works at the intersection of four focus areas —advance health, revalue ecosystems, secure livelihoods, and transform cities—to address the root causes of emerging challenges and create systemic change. Together with partners and grantees, The Rockefeller Foundation strives to catalyze and scale transformative innovations, create unlikely partnerships that span sectors, and take risks others cannot—or will not. To learn more, please visit www.rockefellerfoundation.org.

About Cision:
Cision is a leading media communication technology and analytics company that enables marketers and communicators to effectively manage their earned media programs in coordination with paid and owned channels to drive business impact. As the creator of the Cision Communication Cloud™, the first-of-its-kind earned media cloud-based platform, Cision has combined cutting-edge data, analytics, technology and services into a unified communication ecosystem that brands can use to build consistent, meaningful and enduring relationships with influencers and buyers in order to amplify their marketplace influence. Cision solutions also include market-leading media technologies such as PR Newswire, Gorkana, PRWeb, Help a Reporter Out (HARO) and iContact. Headquartered in Chicago, Cision serves over 100,000 customers in 170 countries and 40 languages worldwide, and maintains offices in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Australia. For more information, visit www.cision.com or follow @Cision on Twitter.

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