

## Introduction to HICSS-54 Minitrack on Crowdsourcing and the Digital Workforce in the Gig Economy

Xuefei (Nancy) Deng  
California State University  
Dominguez Hills  
[ndeng@csudh.edu](mailto:ndeng@csudh.edu)

Sara Moussaswi  
Carnegie Mellon University  
[smoussaw@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:smoussaw@andrew.cmu.edu)

Joseph D. Taylor  
California State University  
Sacramento  
[joseph.taylor@csus.edu](mailto:joseph.taylor@csus.edu)

### 1. Introduction

The “gig” economy has been described as individuals engaging in contract labor arrangements as a supplement or alternative to traditional employment. The rapid growth of digital platforms that enable the gig-based contract relationships is one factor contributing to this emerging employment trend [1].

While the use of digital platforms to facilitate work is growing, it's less clear if the structures or effects of organizational practices differ between workers engaged in digital platforms when compared to traditional organizations. The extant literature has established that workers finding meaningful work opportunities and receiving accurate feedback regarding work outcomes fosters intrinsic motivations [2], however within digital platforms the conditions under which these actions are taken differ from traditional employment.

Digital platforms enable new ways to supervise and motivate workers. Platforms such as Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), Uber, and TaskRabbit provide access to on-demand workers who can engage in tasks as a virtual workforce. This emerging crowd work environment is shaped by six essential characteristics, including on-demand virtual labor, open access to work, internet access to join the crowd, human tasks, modular technical architecture, and three stakeholders of crowdsourcer, crowdsourcee, and crowdsourcing intermediary [3].

Digital platforms provide capabilities to coordinate work and facilitate administrative tasks between sourcers and sourcees. The administrative affordances of digital platforms demonstrate the need to expand on traditional work design theory by integrating motivational, social, and work context characteristics. While the digital workforce brings new, important competencies to the workplace, it may also develop new identity and new ways of collaborating [4]. One of the compelling aspects of

the “Digital Workforce and Crowdwork” are the unique benefits and opportunities that it provides to both workers and firms engaged in digital activities [1]. Moreover, the digitalization of work is transforming not just organizations and industries, but potentially the whole labor market [5], calling for updating and developing public policies governing the emerging, global digital work environments and digital workforce.

Studies on the technical systems and collective intelligence of crowdsourcing are informative, but our understanding of the crowdsourcing phenomenon cannot be complete without a comprehensive understanding of the crowd itself, the work made available on the digital platform, and its institutional, regulatory and societal impacts. More broadly, crowdsourcing contributes to the growth of the gig economy, the labor market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs, enabled by on-demand apps such as Uber, Upwork and TaskRabbit.

### 2. Scope

Research of this minitrack lies at the intersections of multiple disciplines, namely Information Technology, Organization Science, Human Resource Management, and Behavioral Science. This minitrack publishes both theoretical and empirical studies addressing organizational, managerial, technical, and behavioral perspectives on digital workforce and crowd work.

In particular, this minitrack presents research on the three critical aspects of crowdsourcing and digital workforce: (1) crowdsourcing, crowd worker and digital workforce; (2) work design and work environments in crowdsourcing; and (3) gig work and workers in the gig economy.

Topics and issues presented in this minitrack include, but not limited to:

**(1) Crowdsourcing, crowd worker and digital workforce**

- Crowd worker participation and motivation
- Crowd worker community
- Emerging digital professions and professional development
- Employment relations in crowdsourcing
- Ethical issues in managing the digital workforce
- Global workforce in the crowdsourcing
- Psychological aspects of digital workplace (e.g., Technostress)
- Skill development and career pathways of digital workforce

**(2) Work design and work environments in crowdsourcing**

- Crowdsourcing for microtasking
- Task design for crowd engagement
- Crowdsourcing contest design
- Institutional practices and policies for crowdsourcing
- Management and practice of work in hyper-digital environments
- New work routines and future work design
- Regulatory challenges of crowdsourcing

**(3) Gig work and workers in the gig economy**

- Gig work and platform governance
- Employment relations in the gig economy
- Community effects of a distributed digital workforce
- Job and career opportunities in the gig economy
- Organizational and regulatory challenges in the gig economy
- Psychological well-beings of the gig workers
- Work-life balance of the gig workers

### 3. Summary of Articles

This mini-track presents two papers in HICSS-54. First, He, Kotlarsky and Nevo [6] take a longitudinal and stakeholder-centered approach in their study of the process of value (co-)creation through interactions between firm and crowd. Their study suggests that, in a crowdsourcing project, the crowd and the firm perceive different values: the crowd is expecting extrinsic and intrinsic value, while the firm is expecting a business-related value. The study also shows the process of value creation and transitions from value in-exchange to value co-creation over the life of a project. Their paper is titled "Process

Perspective on Emerging Value in Tournament-based and Collaborative Crowdsourcing."

Second, Niyomwungeri and Chankov [7] investigates the internal branding activities of a gig work platform and its potential effect on individual service providers' perceptions towards the platforms. The authors argue that, although those service providers (SPs) are not employed by a gig work platform, their consistent delivery of brand promises is crucial to the platform's performance. Based on the analysis of nine cases, the study shows that highly engaged SPs not only make their extra effort to satisfy customer needs but also possess positive WOM and have intentions to stay longer with the platform. This research offers recommendations on service providers' engagement and disengagement, knowledge dissemination, and organizational citizenship behaviors. The paper is titled "Internal Branding in the Gig and Sharing Economy: Enhancing Service Providers' Engagement to Achieve Higher Customer Satisfaction."

### 4. Reference

- [1] Taylor, J., and K. D. Joshi. "Joining the Crowd: The Career Anchors of Information Technology Workers Participating in Crowdsourcing," *Information Systems Journal*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2019, pp. 641-673.
- [2] Hackman, J. R., and G. R. Oldham. "Motivation through the Design of Work: Test of a Theory," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1979, pp. 250-279.
- [3] Deng, X. and K. D. Joshi. "Why Individuals Participate in Micro-task Crowdsourcing Work Environment: Revealing Crowdworkers' Perceptions," *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, vol. 17, no. 10, 2016, pp. 711-736.
- [4] Colbert, A., N. Yee, and G. George. "The Digital Workforce and the Workplace of the Future," *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 59, no. 3, 2016, pp. 731-739.
- [5] Deng, X., K. D. Joshi, and R. D. Galliers. "The Duality of Empowerment and Marginalization in Microtask Crowdsourcing: Giving Voice to the Less Powerful Through Value Sensitive Design," *MIS Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2016, pp. 279-302.
- [6] He, H. R., J. Kotlarsky, and D. Nevo. "A Process Perspective on Emerging Value in Tournament-based and Collaborative Crowdsourcing," in *Proceedings of the 54th Hawaii International Conference on Systems Science (HICSS -54)*, January 5-8, 2021, Hawaii.
- [7] Niyomwungeri, O. and S. Chankov. "Internal Branding in the Gig and Sharing Economy: Enhancing Service Providers' Engagement to Achieve Higher Customer Satisfaction," in *Proceedings of the 54th Hawaii International Conference on Systems Science (HICSS -54)*, January 5-8, 2021, Hawaii.