

30+ Somethings and Our Love of the Side Gig

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As I was browsing my Facebook feed the other day, it occurred to me how many of my friends have a side business of some sort—a hobby turned business venture or a 'between jobs' project that helps pay the bills. For a few, they even chose to drop the '9-5 paycheck working for someone else' and focus instead on building their own dream.

I was fascinated, when I sat down and counted them, how many there were just in my small circle of acquaintances.

*Then it occurred to me that this was indeed
a unique period in history.*

The number of small-business Facebook pages went from 40 to 50 to 60 billion annually from 2014-2016. And according to the U.S. Census Bureau Survey of Business Owners, 52% of all businesses were home-based, and most earned less than \$25k/year.

Add to these numbers telecommuting jobs and full or part-time remote workers which have been increasing about 6% annually, and we detect a distinct shift in our definitions of a typical wage worker.

So, what's the point? What does that say about our evolving culture and how do we imagine 2017 will be impacted?

I like to think this shift reflects a positive trend toward self-fulfillment and cause. The pursuit of 'just making a living' is being replaced by our

desire for work/life balance, and for 'making a difference.' Our need to set our own hours and be our own boss has overshadowed the norm to work for someone else and bring home a paycheck. Plus, cultural and economic developments have given wings to this movement with easy access to websites, online reach and the power of social media to spread our messages.

It's like another dot-com bubble, this time powered not by commercial greed, but by individual entrepreneurialism and grit.

Let's hope the societal and political shifts in 2017 don't somehow burst that bubble. I would hope our independence and self-actualization is a productive and promising sign for the future. But only time will tell.

Meanwhile, I applaud my friends and family who channel their inner artists and merchants—from crochet queens and film-makers to consultants and philanthropists. In fact, I am among them. Maybe it's the shifting economy and the transient nature of corporations, but full-time traditional work is harder to come by and doesn't last long these days while freelancing from home or launching an independent business can keep you moving in a positive direction. I enjoy the freedom—if not the stress of an unsure income.

For other go-getter workers-from-home and all you enterprisingly idealistic do-gooders (you know who you are), I raise my coffee cup in solidarity and wish you all well.

We can get through this. We can prevail. We can forge a different path and still provide for our families — with dogs at our feet or babies in the next room. Let's hope all our pursuits in 2017 and beyond are both rewarding and sustainable.