

There's probably an app for that – new solutions for old problems

1 Warmer

- Brainstorm all the ways you could safely transport a family pet dog across a large country or continent.
- Scan the article to find out how the author transported her dog across the USA.

2 Key words

- Write the words from the box next to the definitions below.

Check your answers and your understanding of the words by using the same word to complete the example sentence immediately after each definition. Then read the complete article to see how each of the key words is used in context.

boundaries compensated decline dilemma dubious ferry
fluid gig innovative side hustle soared trivial tale

- a situation in which you have to make a difficult decision _____
I'm in a _____ Should I tell my colleagues about my diagnosis, or not?
- carry people or goods between two or more places _____
Firemen and villagers formed a human chain to _____ furniture out of the burning building.
- not sure about the truth or quality of something, or whether you should do something _____
We were _____ about accepting the offer, but it was the right decision.
- a second job you do while you still do your main job _____
If you want to earn up to \$1000 a month, you can try out some of these _____ ideas.
- quickly increased to a high level _____
Unemployment has _____ in the past twelve months.
- an unimportant and simple story _____
It was a _____ but one that brought back a lot of good memories.

7. a single job that you do for money, especially if you are self-employed _____
Jonathan decided to accept the gardening _____ until he could get a new full-time job.
8. become less or worse _____
Last month, there was a _____ in the number of people who tested positive.
9. being given money for work you have done _____
The company finally _____ him for the extra hours he had worked last year.
10. new, original, inventing or using new ideas, methods, equipment etc. _____
Its _____ and discreet design makes it popular with young women.
11. divisions or separations between two things _____
The fences are the _____ between the two farms.
12. likely to change _____
The situation is _____, there may be new danger at any time.

What delivering a dog to Denver tells us about work

FOR SOME, THE PANDEMIC TURNED A SIDE HUSTLE INTO A NEW WAY OF LIFE

GILLIAN TETT

- 1 Last month I confronted a doggy dilemma. My daughters and I unexpectedly had to fly to Denver for a long period, leaving our beloved golden retriever behind in New York.
- 2 We were desperate to have Charlie with us. Pets, after all, are a comfort at times of stress and this was unfortunately one of those times. But I did not relish returning to New York to make the 26-hour drive to ferry her to Denver and there were no sensible flying options.
- 3 “Get someone else to drive her. There’s got to be an app for that,” a friend suggested. I was dubious: sure, I use apps to book taxis, dinner and flights, but it had never occurred to me I could ferry a dog at short notice, like a pizza.
- 4 But I duly tapped it into my phone, discovered a site called CitizenShipper and three days — and \$825 — later, Charlie arrived in Denver in the car of a dog-loving millennial couple. My daughters were so overjoyed that I swallowed the steep cost (and additional \$159 brokerage fee).
- 5 The dog-movers were delighted too. They cheerfully explained that they had started performing this service as an occasional side hustle, but demand had soared so dramatically during the pandemic that dog ferrying was now their main source of income.
- 6 “We love it,” said Robert, the driver, explaining that his wife had given birth six months ago and they had discovered that ferrying dogs around was a way for them both to spend quality time with their new offspring, while also getting paid.
- 7 It is a trivial tale. But it underscores a key theme of our age: digitisation and the pandemic are turning many of us into the cyber equivalent of hunter-gatherers, scavenging for income and services in novel ways.
- 8 Think about it. In recent years, there has been a flurry of debate about how digitisation is wiping out jobs. No wonder: a widely cited 2013 Oxford Martin School study suggested that as many as half of existing roles could be automated over the next couple of decades.
- 9 That sounds scary. But what is often ignored is that digitisation is creating jobs too. The speed and scale is tough to measure: while the jobs being eliminated tend to be attached to institutions (and thus easy to count), the jobs being created are often “gig” posts, or those linked to non-traditional, short-term and contract work.
- 10 But the data that are available are striking. A Survey of Household Economics and Decision-making carried out by the Federal Reserve found that, in 2020-21, 27 per cent of adults earned some money from gigs and 8 per cent were regular gig workers, spending 20 or more hours on gigs.
- 11 Most of these workers are young, relatively poor and non-white. A survey issued by Pew Research Center last month, for example, found that, while 30 per cent of those under 30 have done gig work, in older age groups it was half this number. And while 30 per cent of Hispanics have done gig work, far fewer white Americans have. Most significantly, just a tenth of wealthy Americans are gig workers, compared with a quarter of those who are poorer.
- 12 The focus of such work fluctuates, as demand for services shifts: during the pandemic a quarter of all gig workers saw income soar, while another quarter saw it decline. But nobody expects such gig work to disappear soon; on the contrary, the pandemic has almost certainly left it more deep rooted.
- 13 Is this a good thing? Leftwing economists might howl “no”, given that gig work is not just insecure and lacking in benefits, but often less well compensated than traditional forms of employment.

Continued on next page

- 14 Many free-market economists, however, might argue that gig work's lack of fixed structure is precisely what makes it so vibrant and innovative, and thus able to adapt to changing patterns of demand. Some gig workers would also say they like the freedom it can bring, if they are fairly compensated and treated by the tech platforms (which is a big "if").
- 15 As the moral debate around gig work continues, it is interesting to consider our concept of work. In the 20th century, it was widely assumed that a job was separate from one's home and social life; temporal and spatial boundaries existed between work and everything else.
- 16 However, as the evolutionary anthropologist Joseph Henrich has observed, many traits that westerners consider normal are actually abnormal by the wider standards of history: hunter-gatherers, peasant farmers and almost anyone else outside the modern western world have had fluid boundaries between work and family. To them it is the idea of "nine-to-five" that seems weird.
- 17 What the 21st-century gig economy is doing is essentially tossing people back to the future. For someone like Robert, with a dog and a baby in the car, the boundaries between home and work, or family and colleagues, have become fluid. The rise of working from home during the pandemic has blurred them further, even for people doing more traditional forms of work. This might sound terrifying. But for some people — and their dogs — it has been liberating too.

FT

Gillian Tett January 05 2022

© The Financial Times.

All rights reserved.

Articles republished from the Financial Times.

3 Understanding the article

a. Are these sentences True or False according to the information in the article? Tick (✓) the sentences that are correct and rewrite and correct any that are false.

1. For a long time, Gillian Tett had been planning to move to Denver with her daughters.
2. She wanted to take their pet dog with them on the plane, but it wasn't possible.
3. She told her friend about an app for pet transport services, and her friend arranged to ferry the dog to Denver.
4. Tett found out the service cost more than she expected, so she decided to look for an alternative way to transport Charlie.
5. A young family drove Charlie to Denver in their car. They got the gig via the Citizenshipper app.
6. It was the first time they had transported a dog.
7. They used to transport dogs just to make some extra money on the side. Now it is their main job.
8. Most people who work in the gig economy are wealthy white Americans.
9. Most people who like doing gig work say it gives them more money than they would get in an institution.
10. This is the first time in history when work-life and home-life have not been clearly separated from each other.

4 Business language

a. Find multi-word expressions and phrases in the article that match the meanings below. The section numbers are given to help you.

1. without getting much warning before something happens (3 words, section 3)

2. accept the price of something even though you think it is expensive (3 words, section 4)

3. be or stay with someone, usually your partner or child, and do enjoyable things together so that your relationship remains strong (3 words, section 6) _____

4. the job or place that you earn most of your money from (4 words, section 5)

5. used for emphasizing that something is true, even though it is the opposite of something that has been said (3 words, section 12) _____

b. Now choose those that will be most useful for you and write one or (preferably) two sentences for each.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- Have you ever had to ferry an animal from one place to another, e.g., when you moved house, or to take it to the vet? How did you do it? Was it easy or difficult?
- What was the last difficult thing you had to transport, e.g., a large plant, a set of expensive wine glasses, or a ladder? Talk about how and where you transported it. Did it arrive safely and in good condition? Would you do it differently next time?

6 Wider business theme – Venn diagrams

a. Use the words in the box to complete the description of Venn diagrams.

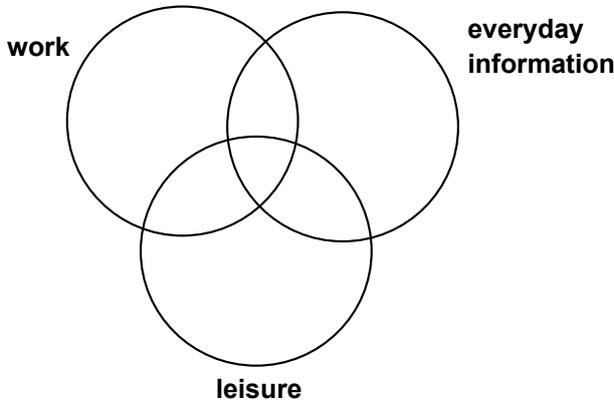
compare industry reports products circles similar

A Venn diagram usually has two or three overlapping _____ that show how things relate to each other. They are often used in business presentations and _____ to clearly show how the items are _____ and different.

A Venn diagram could be used, for example, to _____ two companies within the same _____. Items both companies make are written in the overlapping circles, and _____ that only one or the other company make are written into the outer circles.

b. What apps do you have on your phone? Write them into the Venn diagram to show how and when you use them.

Apps on my phone:



c. Choose one of your work apps and explain it to a partner. Talk about, for example:

- When you downloaded it
- What it can do
- What it costs
- How often you use it
- In which situations you use it
- How useful it is
- Why you prefer it to another app