



Tasksumers: Get a Tiny Job, Earn a Tiny Payment. Repeat.

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When Fernando Navales lost his job last June, things looked pretty grim.

His efforts to find gainful employment proved futile until he downloaded an app called **Gigwalk**, where companies offer small amounts of money for small tasks that take little time. (Users simply swipe to "accept" the task and complete it within a set time period.) Within days, he was earning more than he had in his previous position.

Navales threw himself into the work, taking between 30 and 40 "gigs" per day (often photographing restaurants for **Microsoft's** Bing search engine). Over the past year, he has completed about 750 gigs — and this new kind of employment has changed his perceptions of the working world. (*More: [Big Data Moves to the Food Industry](#)*)

"It's a large part of my life," he said. "I actually turned my brother onto it. He's in Ohio, but we flew out to New York together and we basically took a working trip to NY taking pictures of restaurants."

Navales's experience is unique in that he has taken so many of these small jobs, but he's part of a growing trend.

More and more, companies are tasking out micro-projects to consumers — tiny jobs for which it makes no financial (or logical) sense to send a full-time employee, but that still need to get done. And the hiring of these "tasksumers," as they're called, is quickly becoming a popular way for people with a little spare time to pocket a few extra dollars.

While Gigwalk is a business-to-consumer tasksumer play, the field has also seeped into the consumer-to-consumer and even consumer-to-business fields, thanks in large part to the ubiquity of mobile devices.

While there have been businesses catering to this audience for some time, it was the advent of the smart phone that allowed them to take off. (*More: [15 Surprising Global Technology Cities](#)*)

"But as these services now get pushed to your phone ... it's more convenient for the task consumers to receive the jobs when they're out already," said Henry Mason, head of research and analysis at **TrendWatching.com**.

Beyond Gigwalk, there are a few leaders in the business-to-consumer tasksumer space, including **TaskRabbit** and **Mechanical Turk**, a division of **Amazon**.

The model is similar at all of the sites, though: Consumers are offered a variety of odd jobs for varying amounts. Among the current offerings: \$35 to test the customer service experience at a national retailer, \$4 to photograph a restaurant's menu or \$29 to stand in line at a popular BBQ joint in Austin and deliver the food to an office.

"What you're starting to see is a higher degree of comfort with the concept," said Ariel Seidman, CEO and co-founder of Gigwalk. "Where [it] really shines is when you get to places that are hard get to, like Kalamazoo, MI or Kodiak, AK. Those types of places, you can all of a sudden reach into them with the same efficiency and speed in which you can reach into a Chicago or LA."

Other business-to-consumer tasksumer companies include **CloudFactory**, which boasts a global workforce that enters, collects, processes or categorizes data for companies; it has access to over half a million remote laborers from emerging markets that work on digital tasks. Workers can be divided into stations (like a factory assembly line) depending on their skill level, where they check the previous station's work for errors

Businesses aren't just luring tasksumers, though. Some tasksumers are turning the heads of businesses, as well. **Foap**, for instance, is an iPhone app that allows budding photographers to upload pictures into a virtual marketplace, where they're tagged by category and sold for \$10 each (with the fee split evenly between the photographer and Foap). Competitor **Fotolia** offers a similar service, with pictures ranging from 75 cents to \$75, depending on size and resolution. (Users keep up to 63 percent of that amount.)

One of the more intriguing areas of the tasksumer movement, though, is in the consumer-to-consumer space. As people become more comfortable entrusting others (since they can do minimal checks on them via social media), tasksumers have started bypassing businesses and dealing with each other directly.

Collaborative consumption companies like **Rentalic** and **SnapGoods** let people rent out household belongings they're not using for rates of their own choosing. Renters pocket a little extra money, while renters save the bother of having to buy an item they might only want to test out or need just once. (*More: [Outdated Business Model? Try Predictive Analytics](#)*)

Other firms bring people together in a different way. **PleaseBringMe** acts as a handshake service between travelers who can volunteer to bring things like hard to find items to someone at their destination.

"My wife is pregnant and craving In-n-Out," wrote one user. "We used to live in CA but are now in the NYC area. If anybody would be willing to buy 4 Animal Style cheeseburgers and bring them on a plane to me in NYC, that would be awesome."

Another user, from Brazil, is on the hunt for a drink that's only sold in Greece. "I want Mythos beer!!!!," he pleads. "I pay with money or some goods you want from Brazil!!!"

The site sees anywhere between 100 and 1,000 visitors per day, according to founder Orkun Batur. It does not charge users to place the ads.

"I lived a long time abroad," he said. "When I moved back (from Vienna) to Istanbul a year ago. I brought my printer with me and had problems finding appropriate cartridges — so I was always looking for some friends flying to Europe and back and asked them to bring me these cartridges. I realized that I was not alone. There were many others like me."

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