

Small Business Economics Special Issue - Call for Papers:
The Role of Freelancers in Entrepreneurship and Small Business

Guest Editors: Andrew Burke and Marc Cowling

The emergence of entrepreneurial or innovation-driven economies heralded the need for businesses to be more flexible and innovative (Brock and Evans 1988, Audretsch 1995, Audretsch and Thurik 2004, and Acs and Autio 2011). As the external business environment has become more dynamic firms face greater pressure to be flexible, agile, innovative and capable for transformation (Rousseau, 1997, DeFillippi 2001, Swan et al., 2002, Guest 2004, Bakker 2010 and Burke, 2012). This has led to new forms of organization and work (Applebaum and Batt 1999, Kalleberg 2000, Bechky 2006 and Burke 2012). Business have moved beyond a simple employer-employee relationship and placed a greater emphasis on using temporary contract labour to complete specific projects and to widen the capability of the organization while simultaneously facilitating a less risky variable cost business model more suited to a dynamic and uncertain business environment years (Atkinson 1984, Hall 1996, Burke 2012, Jahn et al., 2012 and Greenhaus and Kossek, 2014, Burke and Cowling, 2015).

Throughout the last two decades there has been a huge rise in the flexible freelance workforce (Kitching and Smallbone 2008, Kalleberg 2011, Rapelli 2012, and Kitching 2016). Alongside this development has been the finding that that Freelancers (alternatively, referred to as temporary contract workers, solo self-employed and also include independent professionals, Audretsch et al, 2015) are both *enablers* and *providers* of entrepreneurship (Burke 2011, 2012). The adoption of freelance workforce business models has played a key role in reducing minimum efficient scale and financial constraints among small businesses which enable them to innovate and compete with larger organisations.

Freelancers usually generate these benefits through a working partnership with employees. This symbiotic relationship between employees and freelancers has often been overshadowed by perceptions of their competitive interaction. Despite these important economic functions (Liang and Goetz, 2016), freelancers are still largely under-analysed and

unheralded economic agents in the modern economy. The main purpose for this special issue is to help fill this knowledge void by exploring the roles of freelancers as providers and enablers of entrepreneurship in small business context. Freelancers are becoming a much more recognised source of entrepreneurship by policy makers and industry but very little is known about what type of freelancing generates these benefits, how firms find and manage freelance talent as well as the extent to which it enables small businesses to extend their performance beyond the constraints of their own limited employee base. Of course, freelancers may also enable larger firms to mimic flexible small firms by facilitating 'skunkworks' style innovation and the ability to recraft a workforce swiftly and on a lower risk variable cost basis. There is also the issue of whether freelancers are competing with (substitutes for) employees or whether they are a differentiated form of labour that by boosting entrepreneurial activity among firms actually create jobs for employees.

Economic and business performance are not the only areas where there is a knowledge deficit and there is the increasing question over the features of freelancing as career. It clearly, is a more risky form of work but does it generate extra gains (over and above those secured by equivalent employees) or does it really lead to low paid workers with weak bargaining power? Furthermore, does the answer to this question lie in some form of segmentation of the freelance labour force which compromises a heterogeneous group where some are precariat workers while other are privileged in comparison to employees? Alongside these pecuniary concerns are non-financial dimensions of freelance worker well-being such as the potential greater ability of freelancers to accommodate family and leisure pursuits (Anxo and Ericson, 2015) through a more flexible output-based freelance career rather than through a more rigid input-based worktime regime for employees. There is also the issue of job satisfaction and whether freelancing enables more fulfilment through project-based work with clear mission accomplishment end points or whether employees with more longer-term and more 'member of the family' connections with a firm leads to more fulfilled workers.

This list of knowledge deficits are not by any means exhaustive but give an insight into some of the key questions that are important for people considering freelancing as a career, firms deliberating on the effectiveness of deploying freelancers to increase their business

performance and policy makers who are interested in the potential of freelancers to affect economic and social well-being. So without deterring the submission of papers which research freelancing - independent contracting - solo self-employment - generally, we are particularly interested in papers addressing the following research questions/topics:

- Freelancing and business/economic performance
- Small business organisational form/behaviour and contract workers
- Do freelancers create or compete for employee jobs?
- False versus legitimate solo self-employment
- Are temporary contract workers 'precariat or privileged' ?
- Income inequality dimensions of solo self-employment
- Segmentation of the freelance workforce
- Trends in the freelance labour market
- Gender dimensions of freelancing
- Well-being and freelancing
- Pension and social insurance among the solo self-employed
- Workers' rights and compatibility with freelancing

The closing date for submission for this special issue is January 31, 2017 and papers should be sent by email to the Guest Editors at: andrew.burke@tcd.ie and

m.cowling2@brighton.ac.uk . When preparing manuscripts, please make the title of the paper as short as practically possible; keep the abstract as brief as possible (although it is not a limit, you should try to keep it at about 150 words), and also include all appropriate keywords and JEL classifications. Please also cite published (or online first) articles, including DOI (Digital Object Identifier) information for each reference. Try not to include colour images as these often do not reproduce well when printed in black and white. It is possible to print papers in colour, but there is a substantial extra charge for doing so.

A research workshop is also being held at Brighton Business School, UK on November 24-25, 2016 in order to develop papers intended for submission to the Special Issue. The workshop is being organised by the Centre for Research on Self-Employment (www.crse.co.uk) who will support travel and accommodation expenses for one author per paper selected for the

workshop. If you would like to submit a paper to the workshop then please send a title and abstract to Suneeta Johal (CRSE Director of Research) at info@crse.co.uk by September 30, 2016. Authors will be notified within 2 weeks of this date to let them know whether or not their paper has been selected for the workshop. It is not necessary to present a paper at the workshop in order to submit a paper to the Special Issue; although there is obviously a developmental advantage in terms having done so.

Authors new to this field and looking for overviews of research already carried out may find it useful to get a free digital copy of *The Handbook of Research on Freelancing and Self-Employment*, available at <http://www.crse.co.uk/research/handbook-research-freelancing-and-self-employment>

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