

WFH, growing need for digital skills fuel on-demand job roles

Some techies are doing multiple jobs. Labour law changes will accelerate trend

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Iyayarami Reddy, 35, is a techie with 14 years of experience. He was hired by an HR firm for an on-demand role as an IT consultant in July. On-demand – or as some call it, freelancing – roles are short-term, for a few days, weeks or months. Payment is on an hourly basis. And you are not tied to one company, you can do multiple jobs.

Reddy says this is the first time he got into an on-demand role. It's for six months. "I didn't negotiate much, so my salary is just okay. But the job is flexible, it gives me time to pursue other interests, I get to live with my family in Khajipet (Andhra Pradesh). The daily expenses are much lower here," he says.

However, getting leave is a challenge and the job does not offer benefits like insurance, gratuity or PF. Despite this, Reddy does not intend to take up a permanent job in the near-term. "But next time, I will negotiate better terms of employment," he says.

Raja Kumar Dakka, who has 12 years of experience, also recently got into an on-demand role for an IT company in SAP. He is based out of Kurnool in AP and expects there will be many on-demand roles in the times to come. Ram Prasad, who is based in Chennai and specialises in supply chain analytics, is working on two on-demand jobs. He says opportunities are high in the areas of full-

HIRING NO LONGER CONSTRAINED BY GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES

“The whole WFH in the last eight months has fuelled the trend among companies to look at flexible and creative options for hiring. Candidates too are looking at doing different projects. For this to be a bigger change, laws around labour, social security, need to change

Sanjay Shetty | HEAD, STRATEGIC ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT, RANDSTAD INDIA



“On-demand is also a way to replace the bench model, which in today's competitive times seems unviable for IT companies. In the bench model, companies pay salaries even when the employee is not engaged in a project

Ajay Shah | MANAGING FOUNDER, REKRUT INDIA



“Remote work that followed the pandemic has made recruiters realise they are not constrained by local boundaries. This will really boost freelance tech jobs in India. Also, as economies recover, they will look for low-cost options, and many of those jobs will come to India

Sachin Gupta | CEO & CO-FOUNDER, HACKEREARTH



“On-demand hiring is happening more for digitisation projects that involve SMAC (social, mobile, analytics, cloud). On-demand workers are assessed on technical abilities only. Since their work is short-term, they are paid 10-15% more than regular staff

Siva Prasad Nanduri | HEAD - IT STAFFING, TEAMLEASE DIGITAL



“UST has been hiring for on-demand roles in India, and globally. We have seen a surge in demand for digital skills over the past three months. Technologies like Java with Angular 7+ or microservices, Java full-stack with cloud, Angular 7+, AWS/Azure, SDET have seen 20% increase in demand

Venkatesh Radhakrishnan | GLOBAL HEAD, TALENT ACQUISITION, UST GLOBAL



“The on-demand trend is increasing in high-cost locations. We are yet to see much of it in India, but I'm sure it will become important in critical functions, like testing automation, security, architectural jobs, cloud-related jobs; wherever there are no data privacy issues

Ranga Pothula | SVP, GLOBAL DELIVERY SERVICES, INFOR



stack development, DevOps, data science and analytics. “My previous employer cut salaries during the lockdown, so I quit the job and got two on-demand roles. Only people with right technical competencies can benefit from such roles because companies pay on the basis of number of hours and productivity,” he says.

All three came across these on-demand opportunities on job portals or via HR consultancies. They have been hired for terms between six months and a year, and the extension of their contract depends on the requirements of the companies.

On-demand roles are rising. Multiple trends are driving it. Certain digital skills are in big

demand, and there aren't enough people with such skills to be hired on a full-time basis. That's an opportunity for those with these skills to offer themselves to multiple companies for specific projects. This trend has been facilitated by the remote working environment created by the Covid-19 pandemic. It's easy to work for multiple companies sitting at home.

“WHF (work-from-home) triggered by Covid-19 has taught the IT sector new ways of doing business,” says Ranga Pothula, SVP of global delivery services at enterprise software company Infor.

Ajay Shah, managing founder of recruitment solutions firm Rekrut India, says on-demand is also

a way to replace the bench model of IT services companies. “In the bench model, companies pay salaries even when the employee is not engaged in a project,” he says. Around 21,000 on-demand jobs, he says, have been added in the IT services sector this year.

Siva Prasad Nanduri, business head for IT staffing in staffing solutions firm TeamLease Digital, says currently most of their customers are asking for 5% to 10% of their overall hiring to be on-demand. Such workers, he says, are assessed only on technical abilities. “Since their work is short-term, they are paid 10-15% more than regular staff,” he says.

Shah says job profiles expected to see higher on-demand hiring

include those of data scientist, AI specialist, data analyst, cloud engineer and cyber security professional. Nanduri says the demand is more for digitisation projects that involve SMAC (social, mobile, analytics, cloud).

Sachin Gupta, CEO of HackerEarth, which provides a tech platform for hiring, says web development, mobile app development (requiring both frontend and backend skills), and data analytics are the top skills in demand for on-demand roles.

Venkatesh Radhakrishnan, global head of talent acquisition at IT services firm UST Global, says UST is hiring for on-demand roles. He says technologies like Java with Angular 7+ or microservices, Java full-stack with cloud, Angular 7+, AWS/Azure, SDET have seen a 20% increase in demand in the past three months.

On on-demand hiring portals, there are many such roles available. On Wipro's Topcoder platform, there's a role of a full-stack developer, with expertise in Java microservices and Spring Boot, going for \$750-1,150 a week. That's for five months. There's a data scientist role going for \$2,750-3,150 a week. That's for four weeks.

While the on-demand trend is strong in countries such as the US, it's still nascent in India, though Covid-19 is accelerating it. Sanjay Shetty, head of strategic account management at recruitment firm Randstad India, said that for this model to work, companies need to adjust their approach to tracking the output of gig workers. “Besides, the government needs to come up with some sort of 'creative' or flexible approach towards providing gig workers social security with minimum documentation and keeping in mind the erratic attendance cycle that would be prevalent in the gig world,” he says.