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U.S. Chamber of Commerce

How Gig Economy Companies are Stepping Up to Help Americans Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Amid the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting stay-at-home orders and national economic downturn, our nation's gig economy companies have become a fundamentally essential part of many Americans' daily lives – and an economic lifeline for many others. Not only are companies like Instacart, Postmates, and Uber delivering food and groceries to those in isolation, they're

also stepping up to donate meals and rides to workers on the frontlines and granting funds to those in need.

Perhaps most importantly, these companies are also providing vital earnings opportunities to Americans who have lost hours or jobs amid the economic slowdown.

Here's a look at how six gig economy companies are going far beyond rides and deliveries to support Americans during the pandemic.

Uber

While Uber's ridership is down, that hasn't stopped the company from stepping up in other ways to assist in stopping the spread of COVID-19. The rideshare company pledged \$10 million in free rides and food to healthcare workers, seniors, and people in need. Uber Eats waived the delivery fee for more than 100,000 restaurants across U.S. and Canada, is encouraging non-contact delivery, and its customers can now donate to their favorite restaurants through the app when they order food.

This week Uber launched Work Hub to connect drivers to other positions while rides are down. Drivers can start working for Uber Eats to deliver to deliver food, Uber Freight to drive trucks, or take an opportunity through Uber Works, which connects people to shift work like food production, warehouse, and customer service. Work Hub will also include opportunities at other companies in need of workers like Domino's, Shipt, and CareGuide.

To further help all workers, Uber partnered with the National Restaurant Association to create the Restaurant Employee Relief Fund, which will give grants to restaurant industry employees who have been impacted by COVID-19.

Lyft

Although they've faced a similar drop in ridership, Lyft is focusing on activating several programs to serve communities. LyftUp, an initiative which typically brings transportation access to people in need, will work with public health entities and community organizations to donate free rides to those with essential transportation needs during the coronavirus pandemic –especially families and children, low-income seniors, and doctors and nurses.

Lyft partnered with EO Products to distribute more than 200,000 bottles of hand sanitizer and other cleaning supplies to their drivers, and will provide funds to any driver diagnosed with COVID-19 or put under quarantine.

Last week the LyftUp Scooter Critical Workforce Program was launched to provide first responders, healthcare, and transit workers with free scooter trips as they serve the public on the frontlines. Free 30-minute scooter rides are available for critical workers in Austin, Denver, Los Angeles, Metro DC, San Diego, and Santa Monica.

To further serve as a vital link in communities, Lyft started a pilot program in the San Francisco Bay Area where drivers pick up meals from distribution centers and deliver them to individuals in need. Plus, Lyft is giving rides to caregivers within the National Council on Aging's network to deliver food and supplies to homebound loved ones.

Instacart

To keep pace with surging demand from customers, grocery delivery company Instacart plans to bring on an additional 300,000 shoppers over the next three months, doubling their current number. The move comes as volume order has increased by more than 150% year-over-year, and customers are seeking 15% more food per order amid "stay home" efforts.

"Instacart is serving as a critical lifeline for millions of people and hundreds of businesses during these uncertain times. They're not only connecting people from all 50 states to the groceries and goods they so desperately need, but they're also stepping in to support the economy by unlocking much-needed earnings opportunities for hundreds of thousands of people who can no longer rely on their previous incomes," says Suzanne Clark, President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Instacart has taken additional steps to help their workforce and customers by sending health kits to shoppers, providing sick pay and bonuses, and encouraging leave-at-door delivery.

DoorDash

DoorDash has taken steps in the last several weeks to ensure that folks who can't eat out at their favorite restaurant can still enjoy their favorite dishes. Existing restaurant partners now pay zero commission fees for pick-up orders, and newly registered restaurants will pay zero commission for 30 days. Plus, DoorDash made their default delivery option "no contact," and created a "priority access" program for restaurant workers to become delivery drivers.

DoorDash reported last week that Dasher earnings have increased by \$5 per active hour as compared to this time last year, and Dashers are averaging over \$22 per active hour over the past week nationally.

In March the company spearheaded the #OpenforDelivery campaign to promote that restaurants are open—and are safe for ordering delivery and take-out. The food delivery company is also partnering with community organizations to deliver one million pounds of groceries to food-insecure households, seniors, low-income families, and mobility-impaired individuals across the U.S.

Grubhub

Grubhub announced in March that it will temporarily suspend collection of up to \$100 million in commission payments from independent partner restaurants nationwide, providing cash flow relief to the restaurants that drive more than 80% of the company's orders. "Independent restaurants are the lifeblood of our cities and feed our communities. They have been amazing

long-term partners for us, and we wanted to help them in their time of need," said Matt Maloney, Founder and CEO of Grubhub.

In addition to working with government officials to ensure restaurants can keep their kitchens open for take-out and delivery through the crisis, Grubhub is giving proceeds from its Donate the Change program (diners can round up the change from their order to go toward charitable organizations) to support restaurants and drivers impacted by the COVID-19.

Postmates

Postmates, a company known for delivering snacks, food and essentials, launched the [Postmates Fleet Relief Fund](#) in March to help its fleet of couriers cover medical expenses related to COVID-19. Non-contact deliveries have also been implemented allowing for social distancing between our customers and Postmates. Postmates is also piloting a program in the San Francisco Bay Area for small businesses to more easily use their platform by temporarily waiving commission fees.

The company has also been posting some big acts of kindness on [social media](#): Postmates teamed up with Jimmy Kimmel and Jennifer Aniston to surprise a COVID-19 positive nurse with a \$10,000 Postmates gift card, and partnered with Steve Aoki's Pizzaoki to deliver pizza to nurses on the frontlines in California.

About the Author



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Lindsay is a native of the Philadelphia suburbs and graduated from Washington and Lee University. She previously worked as a writer and editor at U.S. News and World Report.

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