

# 10 TIPS FOR ETHICAL PRACTICE IN THE “GIG ECONOMY”



These tips first appeared in the CERIC-NCDA Spring-Summer 2017 issue of *Careering* magazine, a publication by CERIC

1. **Stay current.** Attend conferences, take webinars, access key readings, and follow thought leaders. Ensure you are immersed in the current discourse regarding both the labour market and ethical practice. Don't limit your explorations to one side of the argument; always seek a balance between the for and against.
2. **Know the local context.** Staying current is crucial but CDPs also need to interpret that information into their local context. In some regions, almost all available work might be in the Gig Economy; in others, Gig work may be confined by various bylaws or what is common to the sector. The language used might also be different; freelance work may be common but the notion of “gigs” might be foreign.
3. **Learn the lingo.** A “gig” may refer to contract, temporary, and/or freelance work; unfortunately, the language isn't consistent resulting in confusion for CDPs and their clients. In some cases, “gig” may actually refer to how the work is found (i.e., through an app) rather than to the work relationship. Part of staying current and knowing the context is ensuring a common understanding of what is being said and translating that to clients.
4. **Go beyond your Codes of Ethics.** When faced with ethical dilemmas, CDPs will turn to their Codes of Ethics for guidance. However, many codes aren't keeping pace; they aren't updated quickly enough to address emerging challenges. CDPs, therefore, must go beyond the specific principles to draw from what codes are, and aren't, saying. Using an ethical decision-making model will help CDPs explore alternatives (see *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners*, 2004).
5. **Consider the “other” skills clients might need.** Beyond specific job or employability skills, CDPs may need to help clients develop the skills needed in the Gig Economy including marketing, financial management, and entrepreneurship. Clients may also need to be reminded of the importance of engaging in lifelong learning.
6. **Be aware of beliefs and biases.** A CDPs role isn't to advise for or against a specific type of employment; CDPs should be mindful of how their beliefs and biases about the Gig Economy, whether for or against, may be impacting how they serve clients. Strive to stay neutral and encourage clients to do their research.
7. **Consider the ethics of advocacy.** In her article, *The Ethics of Advocacy: Channelling Outrage to Champion Change*, Dr. Roberta Neault (2008) offered guidance for CDPs interested in working for more systemic changes within the systems they work. CDPs who feel the Gig Economy is creating more precarious work, may want to explore how to advocate for change. Conversely, CDPs who embrace this type of work may want to share their experiences, adding to this important debate.
8. **Embrace the possibilities.** Freelance and contract work can often lead to a more permanent relationship with an employer. In my own career, one 2-hour contract (i.e., a single “Gig” with no expectation of more) led to a 15+ year history with Life Strategies Ltd., a small consulting firm, known for exceptional work within the career development sector. My story is not unique; taking on one small contract often opens the door to incredible opportunities.
9. **Educate clients and employers.** It is likely unethical, for employers to hire freelance workers simply to avoid paying mandatory employment related costs or adhering to employment standards. Truth be told, in some instances this practice might be deemed unlawful. Conversely, some clients may be “working” full-time in the Gig Economy while also receiving disability or employment insurance; this could be considered fraud. Ethical practice may be shining a light on the more seedier side of the Gig Economy.
10. **Lead by example.** The career development sector has undergone, and is continuing to undergo, incredible transformation. CDPs may need to embrace the changing nature of their own work, looking at how the changes help, rather than hinder, their practice. Optimism has been found to be the biggest predictor for career success and job satisfaction; hope has also surfaced as an important component of career development. CDPs who have hope and optimism for the future may be more likely to impart those same feelings to clients.

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