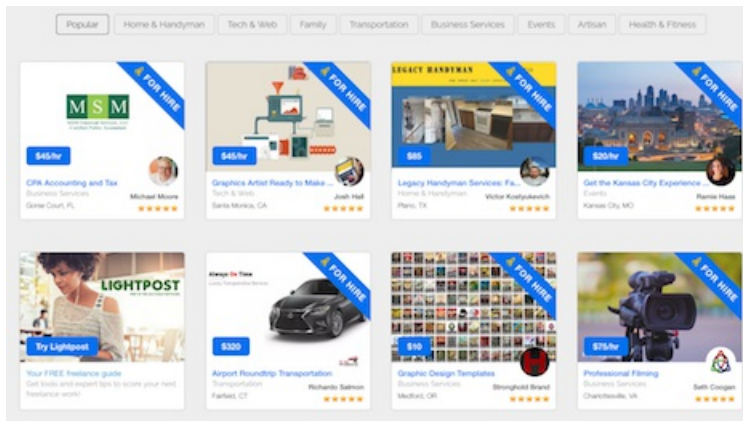


Q&A

Moonlighting eyes opportunity as US devolves to gig economy

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Temp nation

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

Two years into founding Moonlighting as a resource for participants in the gig economy, Jeff Tennerly is looking to strike more deals with media and corporate partners to tap into a market of 100 million underemployed consumers in the United States.

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The former Millennial Media executive and now CEO of Charlottesville, VA-based Moonlighting claims 300,000 users of his platform that puts freelancers in touch with temporary job opportunities.

“U.S. workers can’t find full time employment and wages have stagnated over two decades, forcing many to turn to the gig economy to solve their earnings,” Mr. Tennerly said.

“From our inception two years ago, we believe that full-time jobs will continue to shrink and not keep pace with the population growth, leaving a massive employment gap for many,” he said.

“Moonlighting’s sole focus is to fill that earnings gap and help freelancers legitimize their business and assist first-time entrepreneurs in building their own independent business.”

In this Q&A, Mr. Tennerly discusses the state of U.S. employment, labor trends, catering to different generations looking to supplement their income, **Moonlighting's** revenue plan and the role of technology in connecting jobs with jobseekers as full-time employment and job security ebb away. Please read on:

As we wrap this year and head into 2017, where is Moonlighting heading in terms of progress?

Our mobile on-demand platform continues to attract users from all demographics across a wide variety of jobs.

In 2017, we are focusing on maximizing our partnerships with the top local media companies in the country like Gannett, tronc and McClatchy to drive deeper into their communities and help our users find more meaningful work and sustainable income.

It's quite common to hear terms such as the gig economy, which itself is an evolution in the way U.S. workers view their means of employment. Is Moonlighting capturing that zeitgeist?

Moonlighting sits at the epicenter of the 21st-century employment revolution and our platform was built purposely to legitimize the gig economy.

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From our inception two years ago, we believe that full-time jobs will continue to shrink and not keep pace with the population growth, leaving a massive employment gap for many.

Moonlighting's sole focus is to fill that earnings gap and help freelancers legitimize their business and assist first-time entrepreneurs in building their own independent business.

You haven't just designed Moonlighting to be a simple Upwork.com, Guru.com, Angie's List, freelance.com or freelancer.com sites, right?

Correct, we designed Moonlighting very differently and often find ourselves explaining to the media that we are an open marketplace.

Meaning, we want our users to control all aspects of their employment and provide them the very best tools to empower them to build a long-term sustainable freelance or small business.

We built tools that allow them to interact with new and existing clients on their terms including pricing and promoting their services.

Many of our contemporaries have either replicated Uber's curated model or take a decent-sized chunk out of the worker's wallet.

We're in the business of helping people earn as much as possible, keep that earnings and provide them multiple places to get discovered and not just in a walled garden.

The name is catching and appropriate and quite in tag with the concept. What does Moonlighting stand for and who are you targeting?

When we first started the company, like many entrepreneurs, we had day jobs, and worked nights and weekends to build the platform.

We were motivated from the onset to help people like ourselves make extra money on the side, moonlighting, and the name made sense.

We wanted to target the LinkedIn crowd and thought making side money would appeal to frustrated corporate employees who wanted to get ahead.

In our first year, we saw interest grow from that frustrated Gen X corporate employee to the energetic first-time entrepreneur millennial, to work-from-home moms.

We even have baby boomers who are eager to supplement their fixed income and not ready for the retirement circuit.

What milestones have you reached through this past November, you know, such as users and categories?

Moonlighting now sits at 300,000 users nationwide and operating in over 1,500 cities and currently a top 10 app in the job postings category in the App Store.

We launched a new product called Moonbeam that helps our users [and what] we call "Moonlighters" find jobs accelerate their business. It's the fastest way to hire someone and designed to help people engage our users much like you order a car on Uber.

So how does this whole thing work for a user?

Moonlighting looks and feels a lot like Facebook and Twitter in that we made it very easy for users on both the hirer and hiree side to post a job or service and participate in a feed.

We call it a job feed, and we have between 500 and 1,000 new people joining in each day.

And as I mentioned before, we have a popular new feature for people looking to hire. It's called Moonbeam and it allows people looking to hire someone quickly, find available help on-demand from our real-time hiring grid. Pretty powerful tool as we have a workforce of 300,000 people and want to help them get hired as fast as possible.



Jeff Tenney is founder/CEO of Moonlighting

How do you keep track of jobs?

We have over 28,000 daily promotions being offered on our platform through the job feed.

Our Moonlighters promote their unique skills set and personalize it by offering up incentives for people to hire them.

Because our platform is open, our moonlighters can differentiate themselves which is very different from Uber or Task Rabbit when you have no idea who it is you are getting.

Is it mobile first? So much work is conducted on mobile these days, why bother with a PC Web site, right?

We started out mobile only and thought we were right.

We started to receive complaints from the baby boomer set complaining about screen size, so we built a Web version, which has helped us grow even more.

A good learning for us as a company as we didn't think 55-plus-year-old users wanted to participate in the gig economy. And we were dead wrong.

What about monetization – how are you going to drive revenue?

We wanted to provide an affordable way to help our moonlighters make more money and accelerate their discoverability. That is our whole mission as a company.

We introduced a feature called “Boost” where we provide additional marketing support for our users to help them find clients faster and started selling it in select cities like Miami and Charlotte this year.

Freelancers and small business entrepreneurs need low-cost options to grow their business, so its only \$19.99 per month, which is hundreds of dollars less than competitors. For less than a buck a day, you can be thriving in the gig economy.

How many rounds of investment have you had so far? And from?

We have raised \$4.2 million of financing across three rounds led by news media leaders Gannett, McClatchy and tronc, formerly Tribune.

All helped us with investment plus commercial marketing support to help drive adoption and brand awareness.

We also have partnered with global wireless leader Verizon to co-market Moonlighting to their small business customers nationwide and leveraging AOL platforms.

So what need are you trying to meet with Moonlighting?

We feel like the employment market as we know it is dead.

Meaning that publicly traded companies who once fueled full-time job employment will continue to decline and outpace millennials graduating from school and entering the workforce.

This fundamental and permanent shift will put unbelievable pressure on the country as witnessed now with the amount of underemployed people in the U.S. which is close to 100 million people.

So in a nutshell, we are trying to fill the income void and create more earnings opportunities for everyone.

By creating an on-demand hiring exchange for the masses, we believe we can not only help millions build an independent work life, but also build a community in which the very people seeking to build their dream career can rely on and hire others who share their vision and are doing the exact same thing.

Has LinkedIn called? Microsoft?

[Laughs]. Flattering thought. We worked closely with LinkedIn in our early days and they have been good partners for us.

Our most active users share their job posts in LinkedIn daily to help their cause.

I think that LinkedIn is a wonderful tool for full-time corporate work and networking in that environment.

Moonlighting is about part-time side work, and breaks conventional wisdom on the way we look at employment.

The work world as we know it is changing. I am sure that they see that too and will do their best to address it as the contingent freelance world evolves.

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