

## Freelancing vs. Full-Time IT Jobs: A Comparative Study on Future Prospects – Which Offers Better Stability and Growth?

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<p><b>Type:</b> Article <b>Received:</b> 20 March 2026 <b>Revised:</b> 03 April 2026 <b>Accepted:</b> 21 May 2026 <b>Published:</b> 03 June 2026</p>	<p>The rapid evolution of the Information Technology (IT) industry has introduced diverse employment models, notably freelancing and full-time employment. This study presents a comparative analysis of these two career paths in terms of stability, growth, flexibility, and job satisfaction. Using a qualitative research approach, data was collected through a structured survey and supported by secondary sources such as industry reports, blogs, and professional testimonials. The findings reveal that full-time employment offers greater financial stability and structured career progression, while freelancing provides flexibility, autonomy, and diverse project exposure. Additionally, the study highlights a growing inclination toward hybrid career models among early-career professionals. The research concludes that career success in IT depends more on skill adaptability and individual preferences than on employment type, emphasizing the need for informed decision-making in a dynamic work environment.</p>
	<p><b>Keywords:</b> Freelancing; Full-Time Employment; Information Technology Careers; Gig Economy; Career Growth; Job Stability; Work-Life Balance; Hybrid Work Model.</p>

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## Introduction

### *Purpose of Study*

In the dynamic and ever-evolving world of Information Technology (IT), the landscape of employment has undergone a dramatic shift in recent years. With the rapid advancement of digital infrastructure and the widespread adoption of remote work models, there has been a notable rise in freelancing, gig-based assignments, and contract work across the globe. Online platforms such as Upwork, Fiverr, and Toptal have enabled IT professionals to connect with clients internationally, offering their skills and services beyond the constraints of traditional office-based employment.

This shift has sparked a growing debate among IT professionals and aspiring technologists regarding the future of work in the industry. Many individuals are now weighing the benefits of freelancing — such as flexible schedules, diverse project exposure, and location independence — against the perceived security and structured career progression offered by full-time roles in established organizations.

The primary aim of this study is to delve deeper into this ongoing transformation by comparing freelancing and full-time employment in the IT sector. Specifically, the research seeks to identify which career model offers better long-term stability, growth opportunities, financial security, and job satisfaction. Through the analysis of responses collected via a structured questionnaire, this study aspires to provide meaningful insights into how professionals perceive both career paths, and what factors influence their preferences and career choices.

By understanding these perceptions and trends, the study hopes to guide current and future IT professionals in making informed decisions about their careers. Additionally, the research could serve as a valuable resource for organizations, educational institutions, and policymakers aiming to adapt to the changing demands of the IT workforce.

### *Research Questions*

1. What is your current status?
2. Which of the following do you think offers better career growth in IT?
3. What excites you the most about freelancing?
4. What do you think is the biggest advantage of a full-time job?
5. What would you most likely prefer and why?

### *Significance of Research*

In the context of a rapidly transforming global workforce, particularly within the IT industry, understanding the comparative value of freelancing and full-time employment has become more important than ever. The emergence of remote work as a standard practice, coupled with the growing influence of the gig economy, has redefined how professionals engage with work. As a result, traditional career trajectories are being challenged, and individuals are presented with multiple pathways to pursue their ambitions.

For **job seekers**, particularly recent graduates and early-career professionals, the decision between freelancing and full-time employment can significantly shape their professional journey. Each path offers distinct advantages and challenges in terms of income consistency, skill development, career progression, and work-life balance. Having clear, research-based insights into both options empowers individuals to make choices aligned with their goals, values, and circumstances.

Ultimately, this study contributes meaningfully to the broader discourse on the **future of work** in the IT sector. By exploring and comparing the realities of freelancing and full-time jobs, it offers practical recommendations and data-driven perspectives that can guide individuals, organizations, and institutions in making informed decisions about the most suitable and sustainable career pathways in today's digital age.

## Literature Review

### *Freelancing: Flexibility and Autonomy*

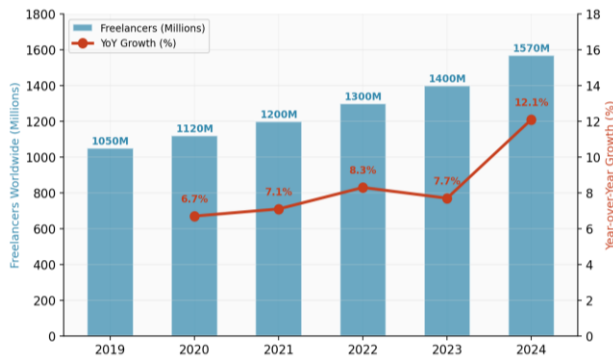
Freelancing in the IT sector offers professionals the freedom to choose projects, set their schedules, and work from various locations. This autonomy allows for a better work-life balance and the opportunity to pursue diverse projects that align with personal interests and skills. However, freelancers often face challenges such as inconsistent income, lack of employer-provided benefits, and the need to continuously seek new clients to maintain a steady workflow.

### *Full-Time Employment: Stability and Structured Growth*

Full-time IT positions provide employees with a stable income, benefits like health insurance and retirement plans, and clear pathways for career advancement within an organization. These roles often come with structured professional development opportunities and job security. Nevertheless, full-time positions may offer less flexibility in terms of work hours and project choices, potentially leading to less autonomy compared to freelancing.

*Economic Trends and Workforce Shifts*

The global workforce is experiencing a shift, with a significant increase in individuals engaging in freelance work. As of 2024, over 1.5 billion people worldwide are involved in freelancing, indicating a substantial rise in the gig economy. This trend is driven by technological advancements and changing attitudes toward traditional employment structures.



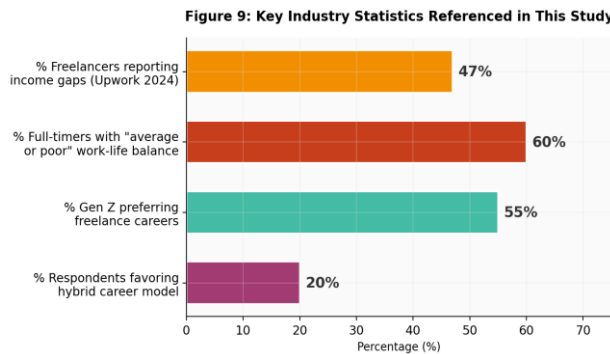
**Fig. 1.** Global Freelance Workforce Growth Trend (2019–2024)

*Impact of Technological Advancements*

Technological innovations, particularly in artificial intelligence and automation, are reshaping the IT job market. While some fear that AI may displace certain jobs, others argue that it will create new opportunities, especially for those with specialized skills. The demand for IT professionals who can develop, manage, and secure advanced technologies is expected to grow, emphasizing the need for continuous skill development in both freelancing and full-time roles.

*Generational Preferences and Career Choices*

Younger generations, notably Gen Z, are increasingly favoring freelance work over traditional full-time employment. This preference is attributed to the desire for flexibility, diverse experiences, and the ability to work on projects that align with personal values and interests. The trend suggests a cultural shift in how newer generations perceive career success and work-life balance.



**Fig. 2.** Key Industry Statistics on Freelancing and Full-Time Employment

**Research Design & Methodology**

In qualitative research, the goal is to explore experiences and perspectives, not to measure or quantify them. For this study, we are using a comparative case study approach based on secondary qualitative data (e.g., blogs, articles, interviews, and public testimonials from IT professionals).

**Case Selection**

To conduct a meaningful comparison of career trajectories within the IT industry, this study focused on two distinct and widely prevalent professional pathways: freelancing and full-time employment. These cases were selected due to their growing relevance in the current digital economy and the significant contrast they present in terms of work structure, professional development, and lifestyle.

The study selected two primary career paths within the IT sector for comparison:

1. Freelance IT Professionals – This category includes individuals who operate independently, offering their technical expertise on a contract or project basis. These professionals typically connect with clients through digital freelancing platforms such as Upwork, Fiverr, Toptal, or via personal and professional networks. Freelancers often manage multiple clients, negotiate their own rates, and are responsible for self-marketing, time management, and income stability. The freelance model represents a flexible, self-driven career path that has gained immense popularity due to its potential for autonomy and diverse work opportunities.

2. Full-Time IT Employees – This group comprises professionals who are employed on a long-term or permanent basis by established organizations, including software companies, IT consultancies, startups, and multinational corporations. These individuals work within structured teams, follow defined roles and responsibilities, and typically benefit from consistent monthly salaries, health insurance, retirement plans, and other organizational perks. Full-time employees often follow a clear promotion ladder and have access to internal training, mentorship, and professional development programs.

To ensure diverse and balanced viewpoints, secondary data was drawn from various **public sources**, including:

- Blog posts from industry experts
- LinkedIn testimonials
- YouTube interviews
- Online articles from Upwork, Investopedia, Medium, and more

These sources were chosen based on:

- Relevance to the research questions
- Credibility and authenticity of the authors/interviewees
- Diversity in experiences (geographical, career stage, domain)

**Data Collection**

To make sure that the study incorporates both experiential knowledge and actual world views of prospective professionals, we employed a mixed-method strategy integrating both primary and secondary qualitative data.

Along with reviewing public sources, we performed a primary online survey with Google Forms, aimed at students, interns, freelancers, and early career professionals in the technology industry. The questionnaire centred around essential determinants such as:

- Job satisfaction
- Career development
- Income stability
- Motivation and flexibility
- Work preference (full-time vs. freelancing)

*Table 1: Data Sources and Types*

Source Type	Examples
Google Forms Survey	Primary data from 20 respondents (students and IT aspirants)
Blog Posts	Medium articles by freelancers and IT workers
Company Reports	Upwork workforce trends, LinkedIn Insights
YouTube Interviews	Freelancer success stories, tech employee vlogs
Industry Articles	ASC Connections, Investopedia, Forbes on IT job market trends
Career Community Posts	Reddit and Quora responses from IT professionals

The questionnaire was posted on peer and student networks and received 20 responses. Though small-scale, the information gained valuable first-hand insight that supplemented and reinforced the findings of the secondary research.

The following types of primary data and secondary data were analysed:

Source Type	Examples
Google Forms	We collected the responses from different peoples
Blog posts	Medium articles by freelancers & IT workers
Company reports	Upwork workforce trends, LinkedIn Insights
YouTube interviews	Freelancer success stories, tech employee vlogs
Industry articles	ASC Connections, Investopedia, Forbes on IT job market trends
Career community posts	Reddit and Quora responses from IT professionals (used carefully)

Each selected source was reviewed and thematically coded to extract insights around:

- Stability
- Growth
- Flexibility
- Challenges

### Analytical Approach

A thematic analysis was employed to identify and compare recurring themes between freelancers and full-time IT professionals.

Steps followed:

1. Familiarization – Reading/watching selected sources multiple times to grasp context.
2. Coding – Highlighting key ideas related to job satisfaction, income, career growth, etc.
3. Theme Development – Grouping similar codes under major themes (e.g., income stability, flexibility).
4. Cross-Case Comparison – Contrasting these themes between freelance and full-time paths.

This method allowed a deep exploration of subjective experiences and helped answer the research questions.

### Findings

Based on the thematic analysis of publicly available data, five dominant themes emerged when comparing freelancing and full-time IT jobs:

#### 1. Income Stability and Financial Predictability

Full-Time Employment:

- Most full-time IT professionals receive a fixed monthly salary, bonuses, paid leaves, and benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans.
- This financial consistency allows better long-term planning and a sense of security, especially in uncertain economic conditions.

*Example:* According to Investopedia (2025), traditional IT roles still dominate when it comes to financial predictability, especially for mid-level professionals with families who depend on a stable income.

Freelancing:

- Freelancers often face fluctuating income depending on project availability, client payments, and time between gigs.
- High earners exist in freelancing, but income inconsistency remains one of the biggest drawbacks for newcomers and those in saturated niches.

*Example:* In an Upwork blog (2024), 47% of freelancers surveyed reported occasional gaps in earnings, especially during off-peak seasons.

#### 2. Flexibility and Work-Life Balance

Freelancing:

- Flexibility is cited as the #1 advantage of freelancing. Freelancers can choose their working hours, clients, and workloads.
- This flexibility appeals especially to digital nomads and those seeking work-life integration.

Full-Time Employment:

- Although full-time roles are becoming more remote-friendly, most still require adherence to company hours, meetings, and long project cycles.
- The pressure of office politics or unrealistic timelines can impact mental well-being.

*Reference:* ASC Connections (2024) reports that 60% of full-time IT professionals consider their work-life balance “average or poor.”

3. Career Growth & Learning Opportunities

Full-Time Employment:

- Corporations offer structured growth through promotions, mentorship, internal training programs, and exposure to large-scale projects.
- There’s a clear ladder of progress, especially in big tech firms.

*Example:* Employees at Google or Infosys receive planned career progression and are encouraged to pursue certifications or leadership programs.

Freelancing:

- Growth depends on individual effort—freelancers must build their brand, portfolio, and technical skills on their own.
- Opportunities for mentorship or team collaboration are often lacking unless working with agencies or long-term clients.

*Quote:* One freelancer on Reddit shared, “I upskilled fast because I had to, but I missed having seniors to guide me.”

4. Job Security and Market Vulnerability

Full-Time Employment:

- Perceived as more secure, but layoffs, downsizing, and automation are rising even in permanent jobs.
- Many full-timers rely on the assumption of job stability, which can be misleading during recessions or tech disruptions.

Freelancing:

- No formal job security—work depends on continuous client acquisition and performance.
- However, experienced freelancers build diversified income streams (consulting, teaching, product-building) and often feel more in control.

*Medium blog (2024):* Some freelancers claim they feel *less* vulnerable to layoffs because they’re not dependent on a single employer.

5. Long-Term Outlook and Lifestyle Fit

Freelancing:

- Best suited for self-starters, risk-takers, and those who value independence over structure.
- Can lead to early burnout if not managed well, especially with client overload or financial anxiety.

Full-Time Employment:

- Fits those seeking structured growth, stability, and team-based collaboration.
- May become monotonous or limiting for creative developers or digital nomads.

*Upwork’s 2024 report* showed that Gen Z professionals increasingly prefer freelancing as a lifestyle choice over traditional employment.

*Table 2: Comparative Analysis — Freelancing vs. Full-Time Employment*

Dimension	Full-Time Employment	Freelancing
<b>Income Stability</b>	Fixed salary, bonuses, paid leaves, insurance, retirement plans	Variable income; depends on project flow, client payments, and market demand
<b>Flexibility</b>	Structured hours; limited schedule control; some remote options emerging	Full control over schedule, location, and workload; ideal for digital nomads

<b>Career Growth</b>	Clear promotion paths, mentorship, internal training, large-scale project exposure	Self-driven growth; must build own brand, portfolio, and seek learning independently
<b>Job Security</b>	Perceived as stable but vulnerable to layoffs, downsizing, and automation	No formal security; diversified clients can reduce single-employer dependency
<b>Work-Life Balance</b>	60% report average or poor balance (ASC Connections, 2024)	High flexibility but risk of burnout from client overload or financial anxiety
<b>Benefits &amp; Perks</b>	Health insurance, PF, paid leaves, team outings, office infrastructure	No employer-provided benefits; must self-fund insurance, retirement, and tools

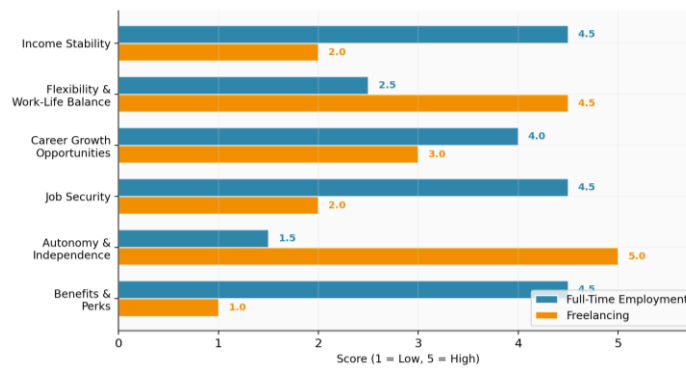


Fig. 3. Comparative Analysis of Freelancing and Full-Time Employment Across Key Career Dimensions

**Discussion & Interpretation**

*Reconnecting with Research Questions*

To understand participant perspectives regarding freelancing and full-time employment in the IT sector, specifically in terms of career growth, personal motivation, and job preference. Each question from the survey is discussed in detail, highlighting key trends and drawing meaningful interpretations.

RQ1: What is your current status?

What is your current status?  
24 responses

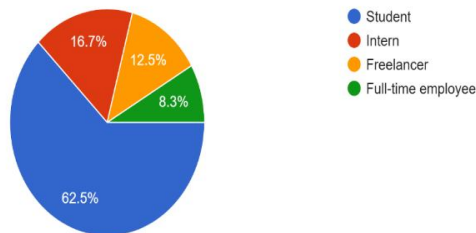


Fig. 4. Current Employment Status of Respondents



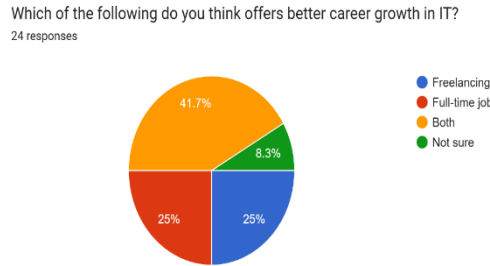
Fig. 5. Distribution of Students and Aspiring IT Professionals Among Respondents

**Findings:**

All of the respondents to the survey reported as students, which means that the opinions gathered are from those who are either getting ready to enter the IT sector or already in educational training. There were no full-time workers or veteran freelancers in this data set.

Interpretation: This discovery identifies that the study captures early-career professionals' career goals, attitudes, and inclinations as opposed to experienced workers. Students are especially affected by external parties (like social media, friends, mentors, or websites) when comparing freelancing and full-time employment. Their opinions are based on the expectation of future professional experience as opposed to direct sector exposure.

RQ2: Which of the following do you think offers better career growth in IT?



**Fig. 6. Career Growth Preferences in IT Careers**

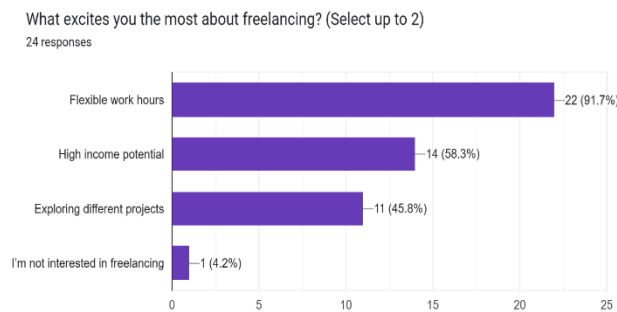
Findings:

Survey responses:

- 45% of the respondents felt that a full-time job provides greater career development, citing formal promotion channels, mentorship, and in-house training.
- 40% chose "Both", indicating that they believe there is merit in balancing freelance experiences with full-time jobs.
- 10% opted for freelancing as the better option, and 5% were undecided.

Interpretation: Most of the students polled identified full-time employment as the safer path to long-term professional growth because of its established growth structures and career support systems. But the high number of people choosing "Both" suggests an increasing cognizance of blended career models—where one may work on freelance assignments and/or in the process of transitioning to a full-time job. The modest minority inclined towards freelancing could be a result of minimal exposure or trust in dealing with freelancing at the initial stage of career.

RQ3: What excites you the most about freelancing? (Select up to 2)



**Fig. 7. Factors Attracting Respondents to Freelancing**

Findings:

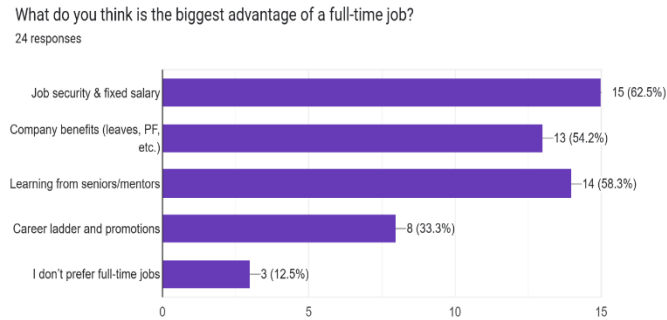
Survey participants highlighted the following top motivators for freelancing:

- Flexible work hours – Selected by the majority of respondents, this was the most appreciated benefit.
- High income potential – A close second, indicating strong interest in the financial upside.

Interpretation: The findings indicate a great enthusiasm for freelancing, specifically among students, who link freelancing with liberty, creativity, and the ability to work on varied projects. Flexibility was the overriding attractiveness, which comes in line with Gen Z workers' expectations focusing on independence. Whereas earning potential matters as well, the motivation to work on passion-matched or diverse

projects speaks to a wish for more active and purposeful work experiences. Freelancing is decidedly becoming a serious and aspirational choice, not merely a side hustle.

RQ4: What do you think is the biggest advantage of a full-time job?



**Fig. 8.** Perceived Advantages of Full-Time Employment

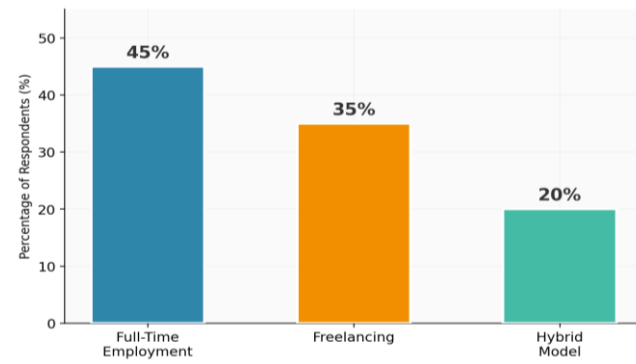
Findings:

The following were cited by the participants as the most significant benefits of full-time IT employment:

- Job security and fixed salary – Chosen by most respondents, indicating the need for financial stability.
- Company benefits – Such as paid leaves, insurance, and provident fund, were widely mentioned as necessary support systems.
- Learning from seniors and career advancement – Also widely mentioned, particularly by those who wanted to establish structured, long-term careers.

Interpretation: Full-time employment remains the most stable and structured career route for students and new professionals. The promise of financial security, access to mentorship, and formal employee benefits makes these positions appealing—particularly to those newly entering the IT sector. The overwhelming desire for job security demonstrates the lower risk tolerance among those still establishing their careers. The low rejection of full-time employment also indicates that freelancing is seen more as an auxiliary or future alternative rather than a first-line option at this point.

RQ5: What would you most likely prefer and why?



**Fig. 9.** Career Path Preferences Among IT Aspirants

Findings:

Survey responses reflected a wide variation of preferences:

- 45% favoured full-time employment, mainly for job security, systematic growth, and stability.
- 35% favoured freelancing, appreciating independence, flexibility, and autonomy to select projects.
- 20% opted for a mix-and-match model, being interested in merging both models based on career level or lifestyle requirement.

Interpretation: The statistics clearly indicate that there is no one-size-fits-all approach—students are balancing their choices based on personal desires, financial obligations, and personal preferences. Full-time work is appealing for individuals who want security and a structured career path. Freelancing, however, is appealing for those who enjoy flexibility and diversity. The development of a hybrid

preference is a sign of a generational change: most professionals today want a combination of stability and autonomy, a balance that is more and more possible through remote work, flexible contracts, and side jobs. This change is a sign of a more fluid and individualized career planning in the IT sector.

### **Additional Observations**

- Cultural Shift: There's a noticeable shift in career values from job titles and promotions to lifestyle, flexibility, and impact.
- Skill is the new currency: Whether freelance or full-time, continuous upskilling determines success more than role type.
- Mental health concerns arise in both paths, burnout from job overload or instability. Support systems are crucial.

### **Conclusion & Implications**

#### *Summary of Key Findings*

This research set out to explore the dynamic and evolving debate between freelancing and full-time employment in the IT industry, particularly in terms of future prospects, stability, and professional growth. Using insights gathered from a qualitative approach—through structured questionnaires and analysis of secondary sources such as expert blogs, LinkedIn testimonials, interviews, and reputable online articles—the study paints a well-rounded and insightful picture of both career paths.

The findings highlight a clear contrast between stability and freedom:

- Full-time employment continues to appeal to a majority due to its predictable income, structured career advancement, and access to company-sponsored benefits such as paid leaves, provident fund contributions, insurance, and mentorship opportunities. It remains a strong choice for individuals seeking long-term stability, security, and a guided career trajectory, particularly in the early to mid stages of one's career.
- In contrast, freelancing offers unparalleled autonomy and flexibility, allowing individuals to choose projects, set their own schedules, and explore multiple areas of interest. It is increasingly favored by professionals who value independence, creative freedom, and the ability to work remotely.

An important takeaway from the study is that the divide between freelancing and full-time work is not as rigid as it once was. With the rise of remote work, contract-based roles, and digital collaboration tools, many professionals are experimenting with hybrid models—working full-time while freelancing on the side, or transitioning between the two over the course of their careers. This flexibility is particularly attractive to Gen Z and Millennial professionals, who prioritize work-life balance, meaningful work, and control over their schedules.

### **Implications for IT Professionals**

#### 1. Personal Fit Matters Most

There is no universally "better" career path—the ideal choice largely depends on the individual. Factors such as personal goals, appetite for risk, work-life balance preferences, financial responsibilities, and career stage all play crucial roles in determining whether freelancing or full-time employment is a better fit.

#### 2. Skill Development Is Non-Negotiable

In both freelancing and full-time roles, the pace of technological change demands ongoing learning. Regardless of job type, professionals must consistently upgrade their skillsets to remain competitive. Cloud computing, cybersecurity, AI, and data analytics are just a few of the fast-growing areas where demand is outpacing supply. Those who fail to invest in continuous learning risk stagnation.

#### 3. Strategic Planning Is Key for Freelancers

Freelancing may offer freedom, but it also places the entire burden of career planning on the individual. Freelancers must take proactive steps to build a strong online presence, diversify income streams, and manage finances effectively. This includes maintaining an impressive portfolio, staying visible on professional platforms, and developing strong communication skills to handle clients.

#### 4. Full-Time Workers Should Diversify Too

In an era of economic volatility and rapid industry shifts, even full-time employees are encouraged to adopt a more entrepreneurial mindset. Exploring side gigs, contributing to open-source projects, mentoring, or teaching online not only adds an extra layer of financial security but also enhances personal branding and keeps skills sharp.

### **Recommendations for Future IT Job Seekers**

As the IT industry continues to evolve, with new technologies and work models emerging rapidly, it is crucial for future professionals to approach career planning with both awareness and adaptability. Based on insights from this research, the following recommendations can help individuals make informed decisions as they navigate the early and middle stages of their careers:

- **Begin with Structure, Grow into Flexibility:** For individuals just starting out in the IT field, beginning their careers in full-time roles can provide much-needed structure, consistent income, and access to valuable mentorship. These environments often offer guided learning, exposure to team-based collaboration, and opportunities to understand professional workflows. Such a foundation helps new entrants build confidence and competence before venturing into more independent setups.
- **Explore Freelancing with Experience:** As professionals gain experience, they may find themselves seeking greater autonomy, higher earning potential, or more diverse project work. This is where freelancing—or even hybrid roles—can be explored safely. With technical skills, industry contacts, and time management experience already in place, seasoned professionals are better positioned to manage the unique demands of freelancing and benefit from its flexibility and earning potential.

### Scope for Future Research

While this study has provided a qualitative comparison based on existing secondary sources, it opens up several avenues for deeper exploration and richer insights. Future research can build upon this foundation in the following ways:

- **In-Depth Primary Interviews:** Conducting direct interviews with a diverse pool of IT professionals—from freelancers to full-time workers across different regions and domains—can offer first-hand insights into day-to-day challenges, motivations, and career decisions. This would bring authentic human narratives into the research.
- **Domain-Specific Comparisons:** The IT industry includes a broad spectrum of roles—from frontend and backend developers to cybersecurity analysts and AI engineers. Each role may experience the freelance/full-time divide differently. A focused comparison based on specific technical domains would allow for a more granular understanding of opportunities, demand, and work conditions unique to each specialization.

### Final Thoughts

The landscape of careers in the IT sector is no longer defined by a binary choice between freelancing and full-time employment. Instead, it exists on a dynamic spectrum, where professionals can shift fluidly between roles—whether that’s working as a full-time employee, offering freelance services, launching a startup, or engaging in consultancy. This career fluidity reflects the evolving nature of work itself, driven by technological innovation, changing economic models, and shifting personal priorities.

As the future of work becomes increasingly hybrid and borderless, understanding the strengths, limitations, and demands of both freelancing and full-time employment becomes a vital part of career planning. Embracing flexibility, fostering a mindset of lifelong learning, and staying adaptable to changing trends will be the cornerstones of a resilient and future-proof career in IT.

In essence, the power lies in choice—and the ability to pivot between roles as the industry and individual needs evolve.

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