



The Dumpling app allows users to hire a shopper by name and reputation, and turns gig workers into small business owners. | Photo source [Jeremy Smith](#) from Pixabay

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GROCERY DELIVERY PLATFORM TURNS GIG WORKERS INTO SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

 FOOD & DRINK

Dumpling provides personal shoppers with mini-loans to cover the initial cost of groceries and allows them to keep all of their tips

Spotted: One trend that has flourished during the coronavirus pandemic is online grocery shopping, as millions turned to companies like Amazon and Instacart to keep them supplied. But these firms do not always have positive press – employees from leading grocery delivery companies have staged strikes, calling for guaranteed wages, benefits and help with virus protection. Now Dumpling, a grocery delivery company that envisions a fairer system, is raising new funding.

Dumpling was founded in 2017 by three former tech executives who envisioned it as a place for gig workers to share complaints and information. What they soon found was that gig workers had a lot of horror stories about bad pay and treatment. Thus, the three founders started working for Instacart, to see for themselves how to improve the system. What emerged was Dumpling, a grocery delivery site that helps gig workers establish themselves as small business owners.

Dumpling provides personal shoppers with mini-loans to cover the initial cost of groceries. It also allows them to set their own fees, keep all of their tips, decide which stores they want to shop at and build their own customer base. Shoppers also receive coaching and help from mentor shoppers on how to build their customer base. Dumpling charges shoppers 5 per cent for each order and either a monthly fee or \$5 (€4.30) per transaction to access the platform.

For customers, the site provides a more personal experience. As they can access the same shopper every time, that shopper gets to know their customers' preferences, leading to better services and products. Using Dumpling can also save customers money because it allows shoppers to set the prices at the actual in-store price, rather than the inflated prices that are often found on apps like

Instacart. Moreover, shoppers can choose to go to a wider range of stores – including farmers markets and pharmacies.

The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the drive towards personal shopping, and particularly grocery delivery services. But it has also seen a number of innovations in other areas of shopping, including the advent of personal shopping via [video](#) and immersive, digital [showrooms](#).

Written By: Lisa Magloff

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Website: [dumpling.us](#)

Contact: [clients.dumpling.us](#)

Takeaway:

Dumpling closed its initial Series A funding round in June 2019. However, the rise in online shopping since the coronavirus outbreak has seen the business grow rapidly as both new customers and new shoppers signed on. The company raised an additional €5.6 million in June of this year and although it is still a long way behind Instacart, whose most recent funding round brought in €195 million, the site is poised to grow as more people become aware of the downsides of the gig economy, and the benefits of having a personal shopper. Co-founder Joel Shapiro [says that](#): “I think that the coronavirus exposed ... some of the benefits that you get when you have a personal shopper that runs their own business versus kind of a gig worker, that is really kind of working and doing one gig at a time.”