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# E-Commerce: Changing How We Shop and Work

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Did you take advantage of the tempting deals on Cyber Monday? Did you completely avoid crowded malls and long lines at the cash register on Black Friday, in favor of the online Black Friday deals? As someone who did enjoy the Black Friday online deals, Cyber Monday, and free two-day shipping, I could not help but think about how the phenomena of online shopping and fast and free delivery have changed the landscape of retail. With the shopping experience now in the literal palm of our hand, e-commerce represents more than a shift in how we shop and order goods; it represents a shift in our labor markets.

The growth and importance of e-commerce has resulted in an increased amount of warehouse jobs. In fact, warehouses are among the fastest growing workplaces in the country. This fact is particularly salient given that traditional brick-and-mortar retailers have seemingly cut jobs and hours year after year. The warehousing and storage industry and the electronic shopping and mail-order industry employ more than 1.2 million workers in warehouses across the country. From 2010 to 2016, employment in these industries increased by 48 percent, drastically outpacing employment in all other private industries, which only rose by about 12 percent over the same period.

This is evidenced by Amazon's recent announcement to create two new headquarters in New York City and Northern

Virginia, which are set to create more than 50,000 jobs, the majority of which will be in warehouses. Even here in the Triangle, the town of Garner announced in August 2018 that it would be the new home of an Amazon distribution center, which will employ up to 1,500 people to fill warehouse jobs. These Amazon distribution centers have popped up throughout North Carolina in cities like Durham and Kannapolis, and one is expected to come to Charlotte in 2019, bringing with them much needed jobs in these fast-growing communities.

Wake County Commissioner Matt Calabria, when discussing the Garner distribution center, stated that “there is a tendency in economic development . . . to really only look at major investments with the highest paying jobs. We do that . . . But we also want to make sure we can help working-class folks rise up and have good job opportunities.” The jobs created by the warehousing and the electronic shopping industries do just that. Given the low barriers to entry for workers with lower levels of formal education and the opportunity for more competitive wages than those typically earned in other lower-skilled occupations like cashiers or cooks, the warehousing and storage industry and the electronic shopping and mail-order industry have, so far, been able to create thousands of jobs for people in an increasingly electronic industry.

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