Some Instacart shoppers plan Saturday strike over pay and work conditions

Some Instacart shoppers are striking on Saturday, to protest the company's pay structure and failure to communicate directly with workers. The Gig Workers Collective (GWC), which represent some of the company's shoppers, want the Instacart to address five of its policies. The group is calling for Instacart to pay shoppers by order instead of by batch, reintroduce its item commissions, fix fraud issues with its rating system, provide occupational death benefits, and raise the default tip for shoppers on the platform from 5 percent to 10 percent.

The group said the company ignored its demands, which led to the decision to walk off the job on Saturday. "Instacart has refused to finally address these fixes that workers have been begging the company for, in discussions both private and public," the GWC wrote in a blog post.

An Instacart spokesperson wrote in an email to *The Verge* on Saturday that the company takes worker feedback "very seriously." adding that "historically the actions by this group have not resulted in any disruption or impact to our service." The claims by the Gig Workers Collection "do not reflect the current shopper experience," the Instacart statement said, adding that the company has "a variety of channels" for engaging with its shoppers to gather feedback. "The reality is that over the last year, shopper sentiment and engagement remain the highest they've been in company history."

As noted by the Instacart statement, Saturday was not the first time the GWC has pushed for a work action among Instacart shoppers. The group organized a boycott of Instacart in January 2020 to encourage the company to reinstate the minimum 10 percent tip, and staged a walk-off in March 2020 to protest the company's lack of sick leave and protections for workers from the coronavirus.

Following the March 2020 walk-off, Instacart said it had seen "absolutely no impact" on its business as a result. But a spokesperson for the GWC pointed out that several days after the March walk-out Instacart said it would provide its shoppers with health and safety kits that included masks and hand sanitizer, two items that were among the workers' demands.

And, the GWC spokesperson added, the walk-offs are about more than disrupting the company's operations; it's hoping to change the narrative around Instacart's plans to go public later this year. "It's been a huge success," the GWC spokesperson said of its past efforts. "Prior to this, the media stories were about how 'Instacart's prepping for an exciting IPO.' Now, the stories are focused on their exploitative practices."

It's also not totally clear how many of Instacart's workers the collective represents, but its spokesperson said the company's claims that the group doesn't speak for the majority of its shoppers is incorrect. "Instacart knows that we're speaking for a majority of its shoppers, because they hear about these specific grievances nonstop," the spokesperson said. "We hope Instacart's customers are watching how the company handles this."

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