

BUSINESS; NAVIGATING THE GIG ECONOMY; Where companies go to find coveted freelance professionals

Kristof, Kathy . Los Angeles Times ; Los Angeles, Calif. [Los Angeles, Calif]10 Jan 2021: A.12.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Jobs for skilled freelancers are booming. And it doesn't matter whether your skill is in marketing, tech, law, logistics or accounting. Companies are turning to gig platforms to find skilled freelancers to fill a wide array of openings.

The pandemic is partly responsible for the change. With COVID-19 leading to widespread telecommuting, acceptance of nontraditional working arrangements has gone from rare to de rigueur. That has broken down barriers that discouraged companies from hiring off-site experts, said Joseph Fuller, professor of management practice at Harvard Business School.

At the same time, the uncertain economy makes companies reluctant to hire full-time employees. Instead, they're enlisting part-time and temporary consultants.

"When companies are under duress, they innovate," Fuller said. "They often take that learning and make it part of their permanent approach."

Online platforms such as Upwork, Toptal, Braintrust and Catalant are a key to the trend, Fuller said. These gig platforms screen freelancers, sussing out specialties and publishing ratings from their former employers. That creates the equivalent of an online talent supermarket – a big benefit to companies in need of experts, he said. Using freelancers rather than hiring new employees also saves companies time and money, Fuller said. It enables them to experiment with new people and processes without making costly long-term commitments.

However, these job platforms are a mixed bag for the freelancers themselves. Some provide invaluable matchmaking services. But others charge far too much for questionable benefits.

Reviewing more than a dozen online job platforms for skilled freelancers, SideHusl.com found that more than a third of the platforms provided substandard to barely average options. In many cases, the only outstanding thing about the fair-to-middling bunch was the wide array of fees they imposed on their freelance workforce.

Still, many skilled job platforms provided better-than-average opportunities, allowing freelancers to set rates and collect 100% of what they charge. The better platforms generally charge clients a fee for the introduction instead of digging a commission out of the freelancer's wages. And they have high-quality clients who expect to pay a premium for skilled work.

As is true in much of the freelance economy, some of the best places to find skilled work specialize in a limited range of positions.

–

Creatives

Working Not Working connects "creatives" – such as writers, editors, producers, photographers and illustrators – with big companies that need talent. The site's fees are paid by the companies that do the hiring, not by the creatives listed on the platform. And the site's client list is a who's who of innovative Fortune 500 firms.

–

Technology

One of the most hotly competitive markets for freelance talent is in the tech sector, where experts command six-figure wages. Not surprisingly, some talent networks specialize in connecting these tech experts with clients. Braintrust and Toptal, for example, list only technology specialists.

Tech specialists are also sought at dozens of other sites that have a broader mandate. Many freelancers on Upwork, for instance, complain that much of the site's work is poorly paid, but those with specialized technology skills say they can find plenty of well-paid assignments there. That said, Upwork gets its fees from freelancers rather than from the employers.

Insurance, HR and accounting

Wahve enlists pre-retirees in the insurance, human resources and accounting fields to work with small businesses that need temporary or part-time help. Workers here give up benefits and, sometimes, higher salaries for the freedom of a flexible schedule. Worker reviews of the site are overwhelmingly positive.

All skills

Far more sites have a broad mandate, allowing a wide array of skilled professionals to list their availability and rates. Among the better sites: Catalant, Gerson Lehrman Group, Maven, Zintro, FlexProfessionals and FreeUp.

What makes these platforms better than their competitors? Two things.

One is fee structures that charge clients, rather than freelancers, for the connection. The other is that these marketplaces have rules that prevent bidding wars between freelancers – wars that can drive pay rates into the basement.

Instead, they usually allow freelancers to set rates and focus on niches where they can command premium prices.

The better sites play matchmaker, allowing only people with pertinent skills to vie for plum positions.

SideHusl is less enthusiastic about Upwork, Freelancer, PeoplePerHour and Guru. These sites exact high fees from workers, create environments that encourage clients to post low-wage jobs, encourage underbidding by pitting freelancers against one another, or all of the above.

Caption: PHOTO: SOME JOB platforms are great for matchmaking. Others charge far too much for questionable benefits.

PHOTOGRAPHER: Tetra Images

Credit: Kristof is the editor of SideHusl.com, an independent site that reviews hundreds of moneymaking opportunities in the gig economy.

DETAILS

Subject:	Talent management; Hiring; Freelance; Employment; Fees &charges; COVID-19; Skills
Business indexing term:	Subject: Talent management Hiring Employment
Publication title:	Los Angeles Times; Los Angeles, Calif.
Pages:	A.12
Publication year:	2021
Publication date:	Jan 10, 2021
Section:	Main News; Part A; Business Desk

Publisher:	Los Angeles Times Communications LLC
Place of publication:	Los Angeles, Calif.
Country of publication:	United States, Los Angeles, Calif.
Publication subject:	General Interest Periodicals--United States
ISSN:	04583035
Source type:	Newspapers
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	News
ProQuest document ID:	2476387225
Document URL:	https://search.proquest.com/newspapers/business-navigating-gig-economy-where-companies/docview/2476387225/se-2?accountid=44910
Copyright:	Copyright Los Angeles Times Jan 10, 2021
Last updated:	2021-01-10
Database:	U.S. Major Dailies

Database copyright © 2021 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved.

[Terms and Conditions](#) [Contact ProQuest](#)