

# ACCESSING A GLOBAL WORKFORCE WITH FREELANCER.COM

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## Freelancer.com offers a way for employers and freelancers to connect in a global digital space

Unable to source a local contractor for a simple data entry task, Matt Barrie turned to the Internet and got 74 replies overnight from all over the world.

Barrie sensed an opportunity and, from this start in 2009, the founder of Freelancer.com has built a global online crowdsourcing and freelancing marketplace that enables potential employers to post jobs that freelancers can then bid to complete.

Director of Communications Leon Spencer said Freelancer.com offers everything from direct freelancing with individual users, to hiring freelancers by the hour, engaging teams for more complex projects, and crowdsourcing to many talented freelancers with design contests.

'Freelancer.com is often described as "eBay for jobs" – through our marketplace, employers can hire freelancers in more than 1,000 different professional disciplines,' he said.

'The benefit for small businesses is that they can interact with freelancers more easily and in more effective ways, while also being able to tap into the world's largest talent pool of its kind — more than 29 million users.'

Both freelancers and employers can write and receive reviews of people they work with, which is a model proving increasingly attractive to small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) undergoing digital transformation, or for projects that require skills that smaller businesses might not have internally.

Today, Freelancer.com also counts large companies among its users, as the benefits of freelancing and crowdsourcing projects begin to become more widely known and accepted.



Freelancer.com Founder Matt Barrie.  
Image supplied by Freelancer.com

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Freelancer.com Director of Communications Leon Spencer

## Building the community

While expanding the pool of potential freelancers and employers to a global scale provided vastly increased opportunities for both, it came with some of the traditional risks of contingent work arrangements.

Spencer said employers are keen to ensure that anyone they hire will provide quality results, while freelancers are looking for reassurance that they will get paid in a timely fashion.



Australian Government

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'It can sometimes be difficult to trust employers or workers that you haven't met – or won't ever meet – so people may sometimes be wary of hiring and working online,' he said.

'To minimise these potential risks and to give its users peace of mind, Freelancer.com has created a system called Milestone Payments.'

This system sets aside funds for payment to be released in full or incrementally depending on the desired schedule, or at completion of a project's agreed objectives.

The employer determines the amount set aside for each objective, but the Proposed Milestones feature allows freelancers to nominate a breakdown of tasks, deadlines and payment amounts.

Both employers and freelancers can view the milestone payment but only the employer can release it and only the freelancer can cancel it, giving each party shared control and providing a sense of security and reassurance to both.

Spencer said another challenge the company has worked to overcome is ensuring Freelancer.com can provide a ready supply of the skills and talent needed by employers looking to get a job done.

'The smaller the pool of talent, the harder it can be to ensure the right resources are available for the work that is on offer at any given time,' he said.

'To avoid this dynamic, Freelancer.com has made an effort to grow quickly, both organically and through acquisitions, to build its community to a point where it can provide substantial liquidity in terms of skills and jobs to ensure both employers and freelancers are able to find the right match for each other.'

Freelancer.com is currently the largest single freelancing marketplace in the world, which offers users of the site an unparalleled breadth and depth of skills, talent and expertise, coupled with a platform that is typically more feature-packed than similar marketplaces.

## Creating opportunities

Austrade has directly assisted Freelancer.com with networking events and introductions to potential overseas service providers to assist the company in establishing operations in other markets.

The company has been a recipient of Export Market Development Grants seven times, which assisted in establishing offices in Buenos Aires, San Francisco, Vancouver, Manila, London, Sydney, and Jakarta with a workforce of about 520 employees.

Additionally, Australia's free trade agreements (FTAs) with countries where Freelancer.com users live, such as the US, Thailand, Malaysia and China, collectively break down some of the barriers that can sometimes hamper the offering of services across international boundaries, Spencer said.

'For example, the Australia-US FTA allows people in Australia to provide architectural services, engineering services, and computer and related services to customers in the US,' he said.

'Likewise, the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA) allows a range of professional and financial services to be offered cross-border between the Philippines and Australia.'

The company is focused on continuing to improve product development and services provided to users by continuing to invest capital and talent in its international offices, guaranteeing a consistent user experience and greater benefits for our customers.

Freelancer.com has also set a goal of beneficially influencing a billion people's lives by giving them jobs through the platform and is assisting professionals from the developing world with access to education and digital income opportunities, with partnerships in Malaysia and the Philippines to empower communities with skills training and access to online employment.

'Today, when the Freelancer.com team hears stories from its community of users of how the company's services and global community has helped to change their lives, it is always the most rewarding part of the business and a validation of its mission,' said Spencer.

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