



LOCATING MORE VIRTUAL WORK

If you're going to go fishing, you have to know where to fish, right? There are several types of job posting sites of which you need to be aware. Each type has its pros and cons. Below, I will show you the different kinds of sites available to freelancers and then discuss the good points and bad points of each.

Paid sites on which clients post their own jobs:

Don't automatically discount an online job service just because they charge for the service or because you have to "bid" on jobs. I had to learn that the hard way. When Jim and I started seeking more freelance work, I wouldn't touch those paid sites with a ten-foot keyboard. I figured they must be a scam. Jim says, "Hey, why didn't you go to this one?" I said, "I'm not going to pay for job postings! And I'm certainly NOT going to bid against other freelancers to get work!"

After more encouragement, on Jim's part, I finally checked it out, coughed up the \$125 for three months of service, built my profile, and started bidding. Hey, this is business, not a hobby.

In business, there's competition and you need to be ready for it and deal with it. Now, I'm not saying you should go out and sign up for every paid service that exists - that doesn't work either. What you should do, though, is pick one or two paid bidding sites. My favorite is eLance.com. They're expensive and I don't like using the site for long-term clients. However, it's a good place to find clients. What you do with them after you've earned their business, is, uh, well, none of my business ;-).

Paid sites where the site pulls postings from other sites (uses non-original postings*):

For the freelancer, these sites are not very useful for finding work. If the posting isn't original, meaning that the client didn't post the job or the opportunity, you can bet that client is getting so many responses that they're ignoring the majority of them. This type of site doesn't do much for you in the way of job postings. They may offer some other good information, but the job postings are likely sub-standard.

Free sites where clients post their jobs

These sites share the same pluses as paid sites with client job listings. Most of the same things apply, except they're free! One drawback for clients, however, may be the perceived value of the site and their service. Many people feel that if you don't have to pay for it, it must not be very good. So, it's possible that you won't find as many good clients and/or job listings on this type of site. However, if the postings are original and credible, it's worth a shot.

Free sites where the site pulls postings from other sites (uses non-original postings*):

This type of site gets a double-whammy for uselessness -- Unless of course, they can offer you some other kind of information to help you in your job. But, again, if they're not using original job postings, and are pulling from other sites, their jobs and clients are likely so saturated with responses rendering them useless in finding work.

Staffing agency sites:

Sites like these can be good ones to pursue. Usually, what this type of site or company does is locate its own clients and work and "share" the work with their freelance pool. In fact, this is exactly what Team Double-ClickSM does. The problem, however, is that if they're good (they pay in a timely manner, work with good clients, and otherwise treat their freelancers well), they fill up quickly and either refuse additional freelancers or have a long waiting list. Persistence is the key here. If you can get in touch with a real human being (not their computer), sometimes it helps to send follow up notes to see if they have changed their acceptance policy.

Sites using non-original postings:

Unfortunately, the fact that a site doesn't post original job listings isn't something they advertise. This makes it much more difficult for us, as freelancers, to know whether they're for real. Most clients don't post their job openings on multiple sites - they will choose one or two and stick with them. The best way to ferret out the sites who are using others' postings is a rather time consuming one. You have to surf. Make a mental note (or written if need be) of the sites you visit and the postings you see on them. Then you have to refer back, either by memory or to a log that you create, and watch for patterns. If you run across a posting and remember seeing that same posting elsewhere, it's a good bet that the site is "borrowing" postings to beef up their site. The other thing you can do is to send the companies an email before you pay for their service. Interview them, so-to-speak.

Ask the following questions:

- Do you borrow job postings from other sites?
- If so, how many of your job postings are original? Ask for a percentage.
- What does my \$29.95 get me - exactly?
- How many new postings do you receive per day?
- What areas do you post jobs in, ex: IT, Administrative?
- Should one of your clients not pay me for the work I do, what is your support policy?
- When does my membership expire?

These things will help, but again, there's no guarantee. You're a freelancer, which means you're in business for yourself and there are always risks when you're in business.

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