

Let the World Help You Get Things Done

By David J Greer

In good times and bad, businesses need help to achieve their goals. What if you could easily draw on the global talent pool to dramatically increase the people you can hire on contract to get things done? What if you could obtain the services of top contractors for a fraction of the cost of what you are used to paying?

Use oDesk to Hire the World

oDesk is an online site that brings together service providers from around the world. oDesk makes it easy for businesses to post jobs, interview and hire candidates, monitor a job's progress, and to pay for the services that are provided. For service providers, oDesk looks after all the details of connecting the providers to people willing to hire them. Think of oDesk as the largest supplier of independent contractors in the world.

Create Success

I have used oDesk for numerous projects, including many for clients of mine. The following is a sampling of the projects I've successfully completed using oDesk providers and what they cost (all prices in US dollars):

1. Have a 45 minute three-way conversation transcribed (\$10.00).
2. Get a new web page added to my professional web site, using the same graphics, fonts, colors, and layout as my existing pages, while updating all of my web pages with a link to the new page (\$5.00).
3. Produce the final layout of an article, including detailed placement and sizing of photographs, in a two-column format (\$3.00).
4. All of the details (over thirty specific items of information) recorded of more than 2,500 vessels registered in the Port of Vancouver from Canada's ships registry web site (\$39.00).

Each of these projects required careful attention to detail. In each case I received an incredible level of quality in the final results and every project has been done on time.

Get Started Now

To get started, all you need to do on oDesk is:

- Access the web site at www.odesk.com
- Create a new account.
- Create your unique login identifier. Providers will know you by your identifier.
- Enter the country and time zone where you are located.
- Agree to the oDesk terms and conditions.
- Setup a credit card for payments.
- Post a job.

Posting a Job

To get things done on oDesk, you need to post a job. Job postings include details such as what you want done, what skills you need, and whether your job is hourly or a fixed price. I have only done fixed price jobs. If you were looking to source a contractor at an attractive hourly rate, I would still post one or two jobs at a fixed rate and work with the contractor on the fixed bid to see how they work out. If they work out well, you could then work out an agreed upon hourly rate.

For fixed bid contracts, you fill in the start date, end date, and the amount you wish to pay. When providers bid on your fixed price jobs, they may bid under, on, or above the fixed price that you specify. They also specify whether they can meet your deadline.

Finding the Right Talent

Once you have posted your job to oDesk, providers will respond to your job within minutes. For each bid, oDesk will provide you with the following summary information:

1. Provider's name and a link to more information about the provider.
2. Details on the provider's rating (out of five stars), hours worked on oDesk, number of feedbacks from buyers, and the providers average hourly rate.
3. The provider will usually include a short paragraph telling you why they feel they are suitable for your job. I check the English language writing of this paragraph as my first filter to see if I want to work with the provider. If there is any English spelling or grammatical mistakes, I usually choose a different provider.
4. For fixed price jobs, the price that the provider is willing to do the job for. The provider also indicates how much, if any, of the fixed price must be paid up front before the job starts. The deadline that the provider is willing to deliver for is also given.

Working the Time Zones

Providers on oDesk really do come from all around the world. I've had providers from the Ukraine to Indonesia and just about every place in between. Be aware of the time zone that your provider is working in. If you pick your time zone right, your provider can be working while you are sleeping. Do keep in mind that your provider will need to communicate with you, so plan which hours will overlap between your time zone and your providers. Many providers supply the hours that they work so that you can know ahead of time what hours of overlap you will have.

The Cheapest May Be Close to Home

You may assume that the lowest cost providers will all be overseas. I've had more than one job where I've worked with suppliers in the US who have been charging overseas rates. In these cases, I've found that working with contractors close to home has provided me with better English language skills and better time zone overlap, while still providing me with an overseas price.

Interview the Right Person

Once you have received one or more appropriate bids for your job, the next step is to interview candidates. When interviewing, I ask candidates to respond to my email address and not to oDesk. I personally prefer to use my regular email address for communication with all subcontractors. This is also one of my first tests. If a candidate cannot follow this simple direction they are not for me.

Depending on the job, I may ask for a small sample of their work. For example, when I needed detailed information from Canada's ships registry, I asked candidates to fill in the first two vessels from the Canada ships registry web site in the Excel spread sheet that I provided. This helped me verify that they both understood the directions and that the provider was up to the detail oriented nature of the task.

Success after Success

I have been overwhelmed at the depth, breadth, and quality of the service providers on oDesk. Every person that I've hired has been professional and great to work with. My one word of advice would be to keep the job description short, only providing an overview, when you post the job. If your job requires detailed instructions, provide those in an MS Word or MS Excel file during the hiring process. Like all projects the more effort you put into describing your job and making the details clear, the better the results you will get. Providers have thanked me for the fact that my directions are clear and easy to follow.

Get Things Done

oDesk makes it possible to source, validate, and hire talented and skilled people from around the globe. Use this talent pool to help you move your business ahead and get things done.

If you have a project that needs to get done, please contact David Greer to learn more about how he can help.

About David J. Greer

With a professional background in software engineering, David Greer has many business successes to his credit. He built up and ran a highly profitable multi-million dollar software company with a global industry presence and Fortune 500 customers. He has also been active in the Vancouver, Canada angel investment community, and instrumental in launching and growing several emerging companies.

David provides tailored, senior-level support to companies needing to accelerate areas of their operation that have plateaued, or to capitalize on high-potential, but as yet untapped, product or market opportunities. His key areas of focus are Sales and Revenue Generation, New Business Development, Product Performance, and Industry Relationship Management.

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