



FREELANCER & GIG ECONOMY REPORT

Abstract

A brief overview of the Freelancer industry and Gig Economy including a review of a few freelancing platforms.

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Freelancer & Gig Economy Report

Definition and Explanation

The Cambridge English Dictionary describes **freelancing** as “doing particular pieces of work for different organizations, rather than working all the time for a single organization” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). A freelancer is a person who is often self-employed and not as committed to an organisation as an employee.

According to Investopedia, the **gig economy** is a sector of the economy where flexible jobs are commonplace and companies opt to use independent contractors and freelancers instead of full-time employees (Investopedia, 2018). The gig economy stands in contrast to the traditional economy where people are directly employed fulltime, rarely change positions and focus on their lifetime career.

We live in a time where more and more people value flexibility, being able to set their own hours and the ability manage their own activities over stable employment. For others participating in the gig economy is more about finding any kind of job to earn a living instead of actually having a preference for flexible work.

Either way the gig economy is here and it's growing. According to a recent survey, 1 in 3 workers in the United States (US) is a freelancer in some form (Betterment, 2018). If the current rate of growth in the freelancing workforce continues, the *majority* of the US workforce will be freelancers by 2027 (Upwork, Freelancers Union, 2017). Younger generations are mostly responsible for the rise in freelancing, 47% of millennials freelance which is more than any other generation (Upwork, Freelancers Union, 2017).

Reasons why people choose to Freelance

The reasons why people choose to freelance are many and complex. The main reasons cited are increased freedom and flexibility (mostly valued by fulltime freelancers) and the need to make extra money (mostly valued by part-time freelancers) (Upwork, Freelancers Union, 2017).

In the past, people used freelancing as a casual stop over to earn an income when between jobs or were forced to become a freelancer as they could not find a suitable full time job, essentially they were freelancing out of necessity. In recent years more people are becoming a freelancers by choice and not because of necessity. A 2017 survey of US freelancers found that 63% were freelancers by choice, with half of those surveyed saying they wouldn't take a traditional job no matter how much they were offered (Upwork, Freelancers Union, 2017).

The Internet and Technology as a Driver of Freelancing

Internet enabled technology is a leading enabler of the freelancer economy, aiding its growth. On the one side the supply of computing devices like smartphones, tablet and laptops on which to carry out work have gotten a lot more affordable on the other side telecommunications infrastructure and WiFi networks have grown to blanket the corners of most urban areas and with coverage improving in more rural ones.

These factors make freelancing and working remotely very accessible to the average person (Muhammed, 2018). All the modern day freelancer needs is a computing device capable of completing the work they do (a laptop or computer for some, a tablet or smartphone for others) and a decent internet connection.

The internet has done more than just enable freelancers to work remotely, it has empowered freelancers to find new customers and develop new business. Several large companies have emerged in this area, including Upwork.com, Freelancer.com, Fiverr.com and Guru.com. They make the whole business of finding new customers easy and connect freelancers with customers in an online marketplace. Many have progressed past simply connecting freelancers with customers and offer additional services.

We will now consider a few of these companies and the services they offer. There are far too many platforms to look into, so for the purposes of this document we consider only a few (Upwork, Fiverr, Freelancer, No Sweat, Freelance Cape Town, Nomad Now, GetTod and Domestly).

Other platforms to take a look at include:

www.Guru.com

www.linkdpro.com

www.skyword.com

www.99designs.com

www.PeoplePerHour.com

www.toptal.com

Upwork Analysis

Upwork is in the top 3 freelancer marketplaces globally. It was created through the merging of Elance and oDesk and aims to connect freelancers to businesses and individuals looking for help with a variety of tasks, Upwork offers freelancers with more than 5000 skills across 70 categories.

The Upwork platform allows businesses (large or small) to handle the entire freelancing process on the platform including: the identification of a suitable freelancer, the contact between potential freelancer and potential client, the clients' management and oversight of the project and the payment of compensation.

The platform has over 12 million registered freelancers and more than 5 million registered clients posting about 3 million jobs annually totalling \$1 billion worth of work (Martin, 2017).

Browse our highest-rated developers

Profile	Hourly Rate	Location	Skills
Yevgen S. Expert Web Developer TOP RATED	\$47/hr	Berdiansk, Zaporiz'ka...	PHP, MySQL Administration, JavaScript, AJAX, HTML
Priyanka A. Expert WordPress, PHP Developer and TOP RATED	\$38/hr	Jalandhar, India	WordPress, PSD to Wordpress, PSD to HTML, HTML, CSS
Remon R. Arabic Copywriter /English to Arabic TOP RATED	\$45/hr	Assuit, Egypt	Translation English Arabic, Article Writing, C#
Ashadi C. Expert ExtJS/NodeJS/Golang TOP RATED	\$37/hr	Malang, Indonesia	Laravel Framework, Ext JS, Symfony, jQuery, PHP

Freelancers create a profile on the platform much like one would on Facebook or LinkedIn. This is the approach most freelancing marketplaces take.

The profile would include a picture and some information about the freelancers, the skills and/or qualifications they have and the average rate they charge. Freelancers can also upload a portfolio of their work, so potential clients can inspect the quality of work before offering a gig.

As a Freelancer uses the platform and completes work for their clients, clients can leave reviews which serve as another way for potential clients to evaluate the freelancer and his suitability for a gig.

There are two types of payment on the platform: Fixed price contracts and hourly rates.

With fixed price contracts, clients make a deposit in an escrow account. The money is released to the freelancer once the job is completed or on the achievement of specific milestones in the project – whichever of the two has been chosen by the two parties.

With hourly jobs, clients are billed every Monday for the freelancers previous week's hours based on the freelancers' work diary that records number of hours put in a job with work-in-progress snapshots.

In both these scenarios the client sets the milestones for payment and has to approve work done to ensure payment can go ahead. This can and still does lead to situations where a conflict between freelancer and the business/person offering the gig results in partial or non-payment.

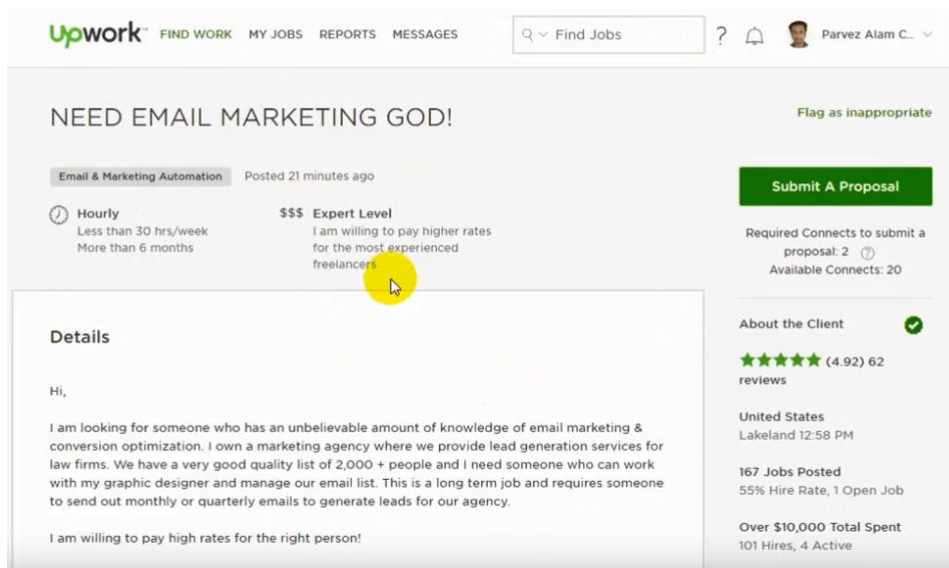
All work done using the Upwork Desktop App can be tracked as proof of work in progress or work completed and both clients and freelancers have access to a complaints process should there be a payment or quality grievance. Both freelancers and potential clients have a rating attached to their profile so there is an incentive to treat each other well, although this does not always happen.

The rating system, together with the other metrics attached to a potential clients profile are supposed to help the freelancer decide whether an offer is legitimate and worth their time.

Both potential clients and freelancers can search the platform for each other. When browsing freelancing opportunities, the freelancer can see a number of details for each opportunity such as when the gig was posted, approximately how long the project would take, the amount of time they would have to spend each week, the rating of the potential client out of 5 stars, whether or not the clients payment methods have been verified, whether the gig is per hour or a fixed contract and the difficult level of a gig (e.g. Intermediate, Expert etc.), the total amount of jobs posted by the potential client and the total amount of money spent on gigs posted on Upwork among other stats.



A typical job listing by a potential client



A typical job listed that has been clicked on to provide more information

After finding a gig, the freelancer will submit a proposal detailing all he or she would do and why the client should ultimately go with him/her. If a client accepts a proposal, the freelancer can begin. Freelancers pay a services fee for getting work through the platform, the fee is on a sliding scale of between 20% to 5%, based on the freelancer's lifetime billings with a specific client. You pay 20% for the first \$500 billed with the client across all contracts, once the total value paid out by a client exceeds \$500.01, there is a 10% fee. When total billings with the client exceed \$10,000, a 5% fee is charged.

This means that the more business you do with a client the less you pay in fees if you managed to solicit sufficient business.

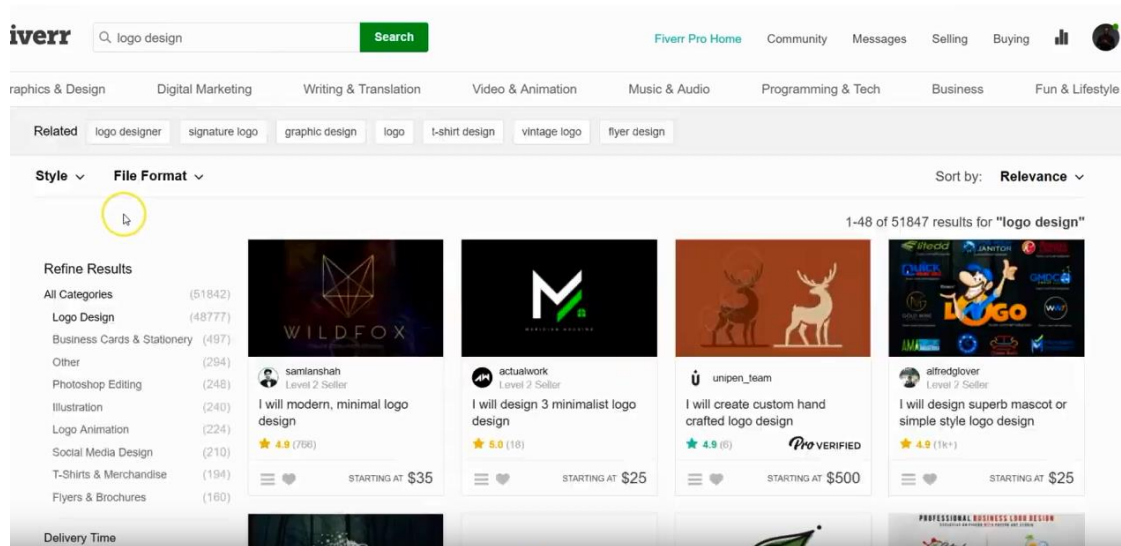
Upwork goes a step further and offers the Upwork Pro services. Here freelancers take a variety of tests, assessments and interviews that is supposed to result in a group of well-trained, pre-vetted and hand-picked freelancing professionals.

The freelancer then becomes eligible to access exclusive gigs only available to pro freelancers who have undergone this process. When a potential gig gets submitted by a client using Upwork pro, an Account Manager will determine the scope of the job that needs to be done and shortlist Pro Freelancers for the client to sift through.

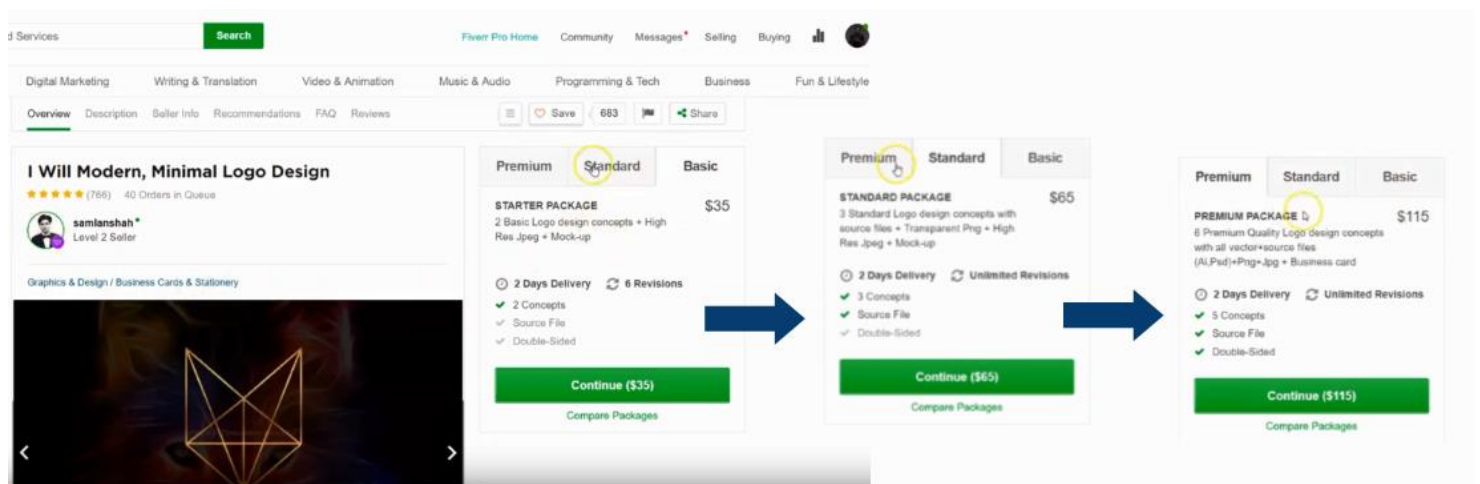
Most freelancing websites work more or less in the exact same way, with some changes in their business model and how they generate income (fee structure).

Other major large scale platforms that *work in a very similar way* are:

- 1) Fiverr.com, which opened in 2010 and boasts that 11 million businesses enter into a project with freelancers every 5 seconds on its platform with 25 million projects already completed. (Fiverr, 2019). The biggest difference being that on Fiverr freelancers post a gig they are capable of doing and provide a least 3 packages at 3 different standard prices. Businesses then search for services (a gig) that match the project they want to do and purchase one of the freelancer's standard packages. This goes against the norm in online freelance platforms where freelancers normally search for potential clients whereas with Fiverr it's the other way around.



Screenshot showing the gigs posted by freelancers brought up by the search for logo design services by a business.



Screenshot showing a gig posted by a freelancer and the different standard packages and pricing offered by the freelancer.

If businesses can't find a gig that matches the type of project they want to undertake, the business can send a "buyer request" out to all freelancers in a category with specifics detailing what needs to be done, potential freelancers can then make an offer to take on the project.

Buyer Requests Search requests

ACTIVE **53** SENT OFFERS **2** 10 offers left today

DATE	BUYER	REQUEST	OFFERS	DURATION	BUDGET
Sep 05, 2018		Am looking for a Tv ID (video)	2	3 days	\$5
Sep 05, 2018		I am looking for a female spokeswoman to create a quick video for a baby affiliate website, video would be less than a minute and script wi... See more ▾	2	2 days	---
Sep 04, 2018		Spokes woman shot on green screen for online promo of conference. 420 words. Needs to be professional & articulate.	2	3 days	---

Screenshot showing specific buyer requests send out to freelancers in the video and animation category.

- 2) and Freelancer.com which opened in 2009 and boasts just under 32 million employers and freelancers globally from over 247 countries, regions and territories with the only difference being that Freelancer.com using a competitive bid system allowing freelancer to bid against each other to take on a project (Freelancer.com, 2019).

freelancer Hire Freelancers • Work • My Projects • Help • USD \$ -4.50 🗨️ 🔔 (1) ⋮

Find an Accountant

entry accounts books in tally up to finalization ,excel speed sheet ,payroll sheet in excel and entry in ledger in tally

Data Entry, Accounting, Excel, Intuit QuickBooks, Payroll

Creat email contact list

43 Today 6d 23h \$7 / hr Unspecified

I have pdf documents with emails contacts that I want it to be converted into CSV Excel format. This is to use in later in survey-monkey. (email,person name,company) Please if your ar...

Data Processing, Data Entry, Excel

Bid Now

Get Data Entry Done

53 Today 6d 23h \$64

I need someone to copy information from some websites. Text and numeric information into an Excel spreadsheet

Data Entry, Accounting, Excel, Mathematics

Screenshot showing available gigs/projects posted by businesses, red arrow showing the button freelancers can use to bid on a gig.



Get Data Entry Done

Bids	Avg Bid (CAD)	Project Budget (CAD)
55	\$87	\$30 - \$250

6 days, 23 hours left
OPEN

Bid on This Project

Project Description
I need someone to copy information from some websites. Text and numeric information into an Excel spreadsheet



About the employer
5.0 ★★★★★ (4 Reviews)  

Skills required
Accounting, Data Entry, Excel, Mathematics

Post a Project like this

Project ID: 1391
Report Problem Contact

A gig that has been expanded showing the bid page, here the freelancer can see all relevant information needed to make a bid.

 Hire Freelancers • Work • My Projects • Help • USD \$-4.52 • 

Get Data Entry Done


Bids	Avg Bid (CAD)	Project Budget (CAD)
63	\$92	\$30 - \$250

6 days, 22 hours left
OPEN

Bid:

Paid to you: CAD

Freelancer Project Fee: \$ 30 CAD

Your bid: \$ 300 CAD 

Deliver in: Days

5/8 BIDS LEFT

Note: Freelancer Project Fee will only be charged when you get awarded and accept the project

Screenshot showing the bid last step of the bid process.

Many freelancers use more than one platform to try to ensure a steady and constant flow of work they can rely on. It is important to keep in mind that while using a few platforms increases your chance of finding work it also increases admin work involved in managing multiple profiles.

South African Freelancing Platforms

While South Africans can use any of the international platforms available to everyone, there are also a number of local platforms, some with a broad focus and some with a more narrow focus.

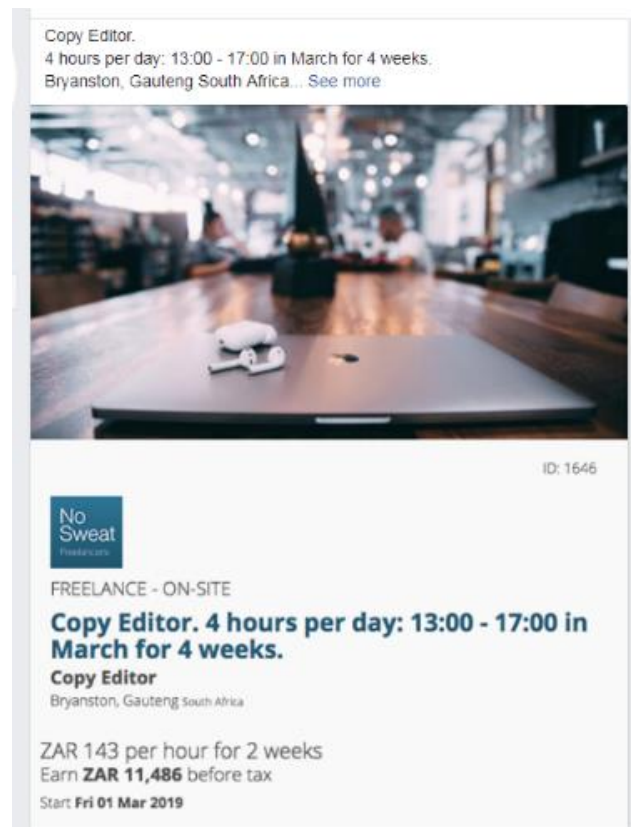
We will briefly look at a few of these.

No Sweat Freelancers

No Sweat freelancers currently has over 8 000 freelancers in over 19 categories with a focus on Marketing and Media Advertising, Film, IT and Software Development (No Sweat, 2019). No Sweat is interesting on the financial side of things as they don't charge freelancers anything to offer their services and will take care of PAYE tax for you so the freelancer will get paid their project fee less PAYE tax. The client is charged 13.1% of the total cost of a project as a fee for accessing freelancers through the No Sweat platform.

No Sweat suggests building a robust profile to attract clients. They suggest connecting your LinkedIn profile to your No Sweat profile and linking a portfolio website where you can showcase your work. As with other freelancing websites, No Sweat will also allow potential clients to see any work you've done on the platform.

No Sweat will also help you set up a professional No Sweat profile if you can't do it yourself and will



work of the freelancers on offer and choose a freelancer based on their needs. Once a freelancer is

An example of a freelancing gig post on Facebook by No Sweat.

hours to accept it.

During the duration of the project, the freelancer will need to keep a timesheet to record the hours spent on the project, which No Sweat takes steps to verify. Once the project is completed, No Sweat

review any portfolio website you may have suggesting edits. They also offer some services to help a freelancer improve their chances: they will assess your LinkedIn profile and suggest improvements for R399, they will help you record a video interview for R499 and they'll edit the video interview for you for R299.

Potential clients essentially post a job or project on the platform, No Sweat can notify you of a relevant job posting by email notification, posts on social media channels and the jobs board section of the website where jobs can be browsed.

When a freelancer sees a job they like, they can apply via the web site. The application would include the scope of what can be done, pricing, qualification and any other information that would be prudent to supply. The client will look through all the applications, evaluate the profiles and the chosen, No Sweat will send a purchase order with all the info to the freelancer who has 48

will invoice the client, collects payment and passes the payment along to the freelancer minus PAYE. If there is a dispute around payment, No Sweat will act as an arbitrator to resolve the issue.

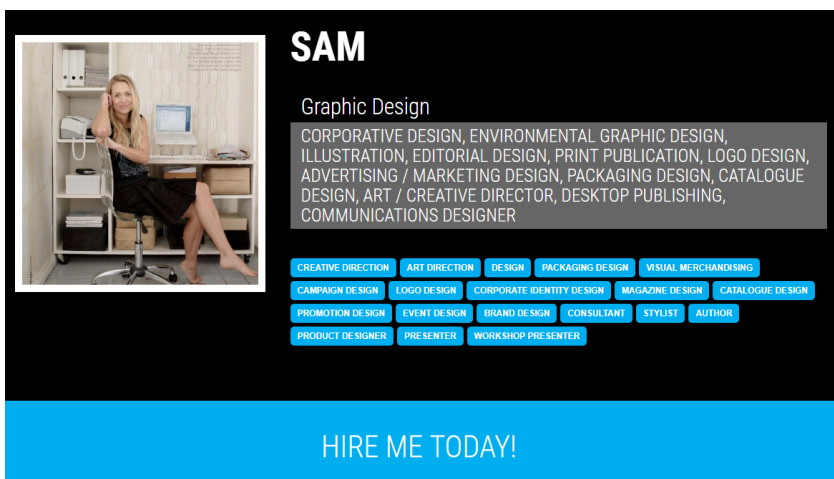
No sweat also offers a service where clients on the platform can post permanent positions for freelancers on the platform to apply for. Should a freelancer get the permanent job, the client pays 10% of the freelancer's annual salary as a finder fee over a 12 month period.

Freelance Cape Town

Freelance Cape Town is a relatively newcomer and has a localised focus on the greater Cape Town region. It boasts about 380 local freelancers residing in the greater Cape Town area.

Freelance Cape Town has an interesting business model, potential clients looking for a freelancer simply have to register for free and they can access the platform to find freelancers for their projects. A freelancer or small business looking to join the platform and offer their services to potential clients will have to pay either an annual or bi-annual membership: R999 for 12 month access to their platform or R599 for 6 month access. Membership allows the freelancer to be added to the Freelance directory.

Freelancer Cape Town follows the norm in the freelance market place industry allowing freelancers to set up a profile where one can describe themselves, their qualifications and work experience. They can upload examples of work they have done to form a portfolio and they can link to professional websites like LinkedIn.



The screenshot shows a freelancer profile for 'SAM'. On the left is a photo of a woman sitting at a desk. To the right of the photo, the name 'SAM' is displayed in large white letters. Below the name, the text 'Graphic Design' is shown. A grey box contains a list of services: CORPORATIVE DESIGN, ENVIRONMENTAL GRAPHIC DESIGN, ILLUSTRATION, EDITORIAL DESIGN, PRINT PUBLICATION, LOGO DESIGN, ADVERTISING / MARKETING DESIGN, PACKAGING DESIGN, CATALOGUE DESIGN, ART / CREATIVE DIRECTOR, DESKTOP PUBLISHING, and COMMUNICATIONS DESIGNER. Below this list are several blue buttons with white text: CREATIVE DIRECTION, ART DIRECTION, DESIGN, PACKAGING DESIGN, VISUAL MERCHANDISING, CAMPAIGN DESIGN, LOGO DESIGN, CORPORATE IDENTITY DESIGN, MAGAZINE DESIGN, CATALOGUE DESIGN, PROMOTION DESIGN, EVENT DESIGN, BRAND DESIGN, CONSULTANT, STYLIST, AUTHOR, PRODUCT DESIGNER, PRESENTER, and WORKSHOP PRESENTER. At the bottom of the profile section is a large blue button with the text 'HIRE ME TODAY!'.

Potential clients will simply browse all freelancers in the category of services they're looking for, identify potential freelancers and can contact them directly with the contact information provided. This is where Freelance Cape Town differs the most, it only facilitates the connection between the freelancer and the potential client and once this takes place has nothing to do with the rest of the transaction, payment or tax collection.

ABOUT SAM

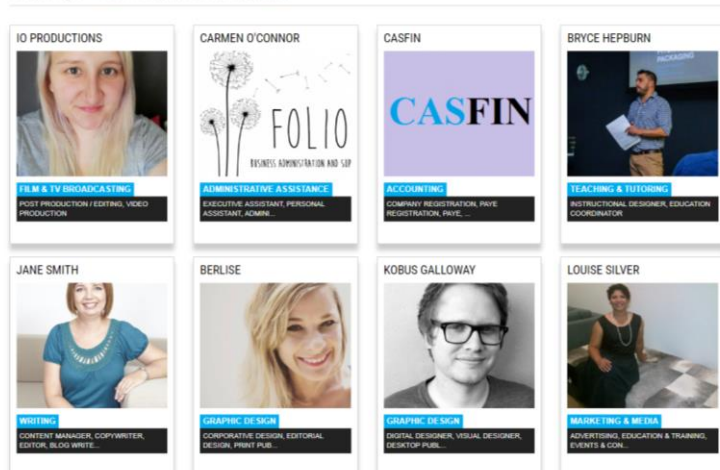
I am a creative director, author, designer and marketing consultant. In a consultant capacity, I have independently produced magazines and marketing material for a number of retailers. I have been involved in the launch issues of a number of magazines, which have required a new design and visual identity. I have taken projects from initial concept stage through to print ready.

CONTACT

M: 076 000 0000
T: 021 000 0000
facebook.com/0000
twitter.com/0000

Screenshot showing a typical freelancer profile on Freelance Cape Town

Showing 1 - 381 freelancers out of 381



Screenshot showing multiple freelancer profiles in Freelance Cape Town's directory

Nomad Now

Nomad Now is an independent company founded in 2016 and is powered by Paton Personnel's networks. Paton Personnel has been in the business of recruitment for over 20 years making them a great partner to assist Nomad Now in finding professional freelancers to serve clients on their platform.

In early 2018 the platform boasted over 500 freelancers just two weeks after it's official launch and this number is likely higher now (Ferreira, 2018).

Much like other freelancing platforms Nomad Now allows both the Client and the Freelancer to set up profiles with freelancer profiles including the ability to upload a portfolio of work, link to their LinkedIn accounts and requires the freelancer to post their availability for work in an "availability calendar". Potential clients will engage in a search for specific skills or services they need and the corresponding Freelancers profiles will appear. Once the client decides on a freelancer, they can place an order for services

Nomad Now also invoices on behalf on the freelancer and collects payment in line with the payment intervals agreed on (hourly, weekly monthly etc.). Payment terms for clients contracting the services of freelancers are a maximum of 30 days for monthly Freelancers and 7 days for weekly or hourly paid Freelancers with actual transfer of funds taking place on the first Wednesday after this payment period has passed if there have been no disputes surrounding work delivered. Nomad Now charges the potential client 4% plus VAT over and above the agreed cost of services and the Freelancer will get their agreed upon cost of services provided less 4% plus VAT for use of the Nomad Now platform (Ferreira, 2018).

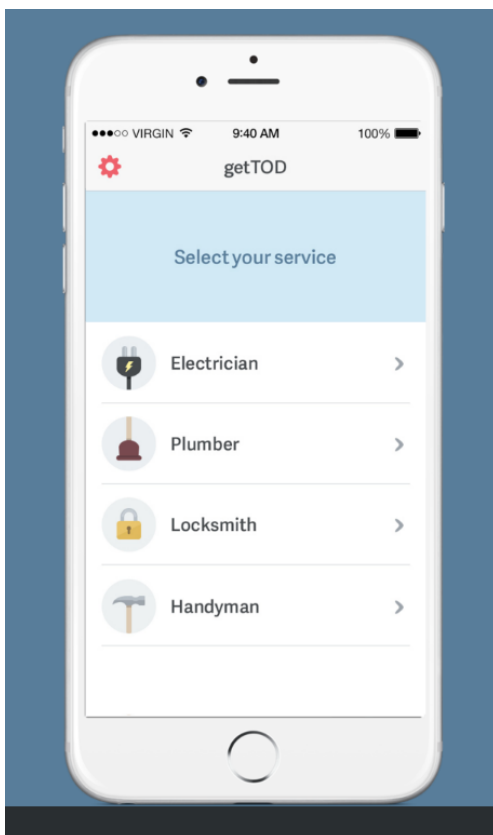
Like some other freelancing marketplaces, Nomad Now can also arrange for permanent placement of a freelancer in a company as an employee and charges 5% of the total cost-to-company remuneration plus VAT.

The diagram bellow describes how the process of signing up and using the Nomad Now platforms works for client and freelance.

CLIENTS	FREELANCERS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Register your basic information to get access to Client portal. You will receive an e-mail to verify your account. 2) Complete your company's information and give additional internal users access to the company's profile. 3) Do a text search for desired Freelance services, or simply use our drop-down menus. 4) Make contact with selected Freelancers within Nomad Now's closed network 5) Make contact with selected Freelancers within Nomad Now's closed network 6) Nomad Now will automatically send you an invoice on behalf of the Freelancer or Contractor, that is payable upon commencement of services. 7) Upon completion of the Order, you will have an opportunity to rate the Freelancer's services. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Register your basic information. You will receive an e-mail to verify your account. 2) Create a Freelancer Profile. The more information you provide, the easier it will be for Clients to find you, so spend some time on this! 3) Set your availability in your personal diary. 4) If your services and skills match our Clients' needs, they will contact you directly via the Nomad Now platform to Order your services. 5) Based on the details of the Order received, you can decide whether to accept or decline it. 6) Deliver your services in line with the terms and duration agreed directly with the Client and get paid within 30 days of completing the order, using our revenue collection assistance on your behalf. 7) Rate your experience of interacting with the Client upon completion of the Order.

GetTod

GetTod is a specialised freelancer app that focuses specifically on matching Plumbers, Electricians, Handymen and Locksmiths with people looking for their services so you have to be qualified in one of these categories to freelance on the app.



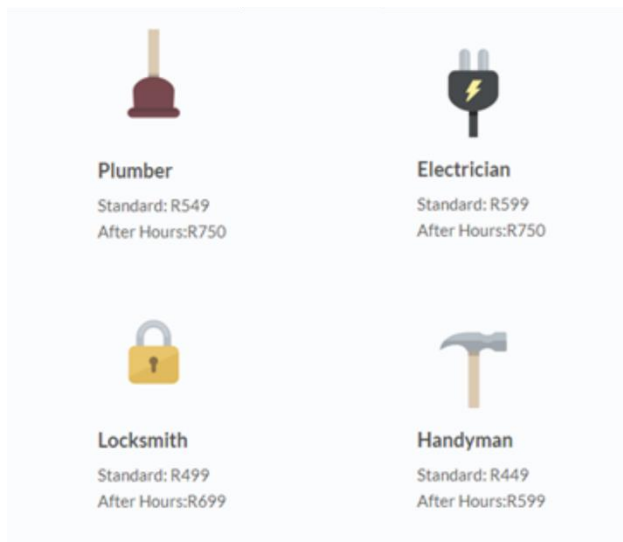
GetTod is free to download mobile app on Android and iOS that allows users to connect with service providers to meet their particular needs using location based tracking and supplier availability in real time. It offers 24/7 access to listed services in an Uber-like fashion

GetTod boasts over 250 registered tradespeople and a partnership with Builders Warehouse where customers can use the app to access services.

Get Tod engages in a vetting process to ensure all their freelancer professionals are indeed qualified. Freelancers set up a profile with a description of themselves and their businesses along with their customer rating. Potential clients will go the relevant services they require and browse through available service providers. They can then describe their problem and request a visit to their property where the services are needed. If a service provider accepts the job they will make their way to the property to carry out work.

All work is insured and GetTod uses standardised per hour pricing for labour across all freelancing tradespeople and small businesses, see diagram bellow. Parts and materials are

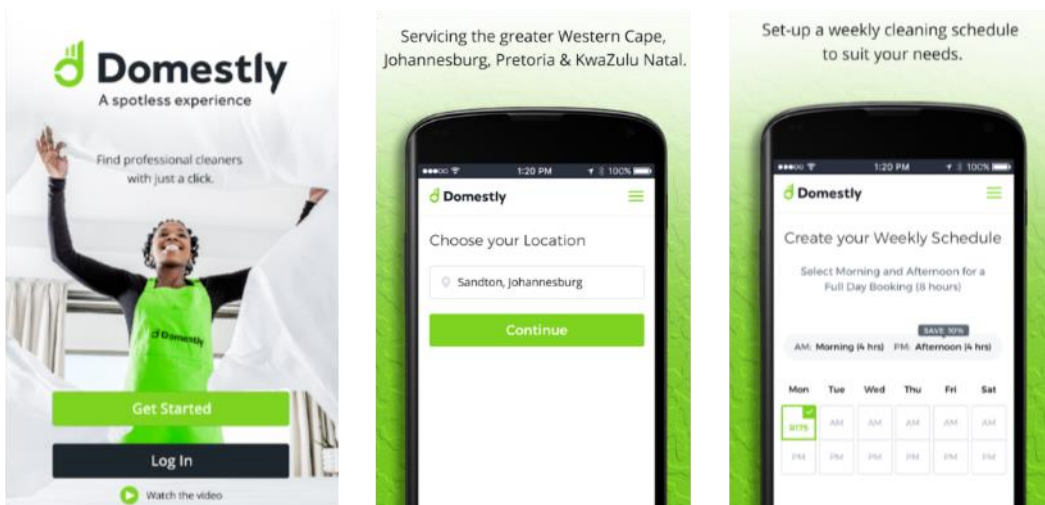
charged separately and their price does not form part of the income upon which GetTod charges its fee.



GetTod handles receives payment from the customer and takes 20% of the hourly rate (excluding the cost of materials), depositing the remainder in the service providers account after a 5 day cooling off period. The cooling off period is to ensure customers are happy with the quality of the work that has been conduct.

Domestly

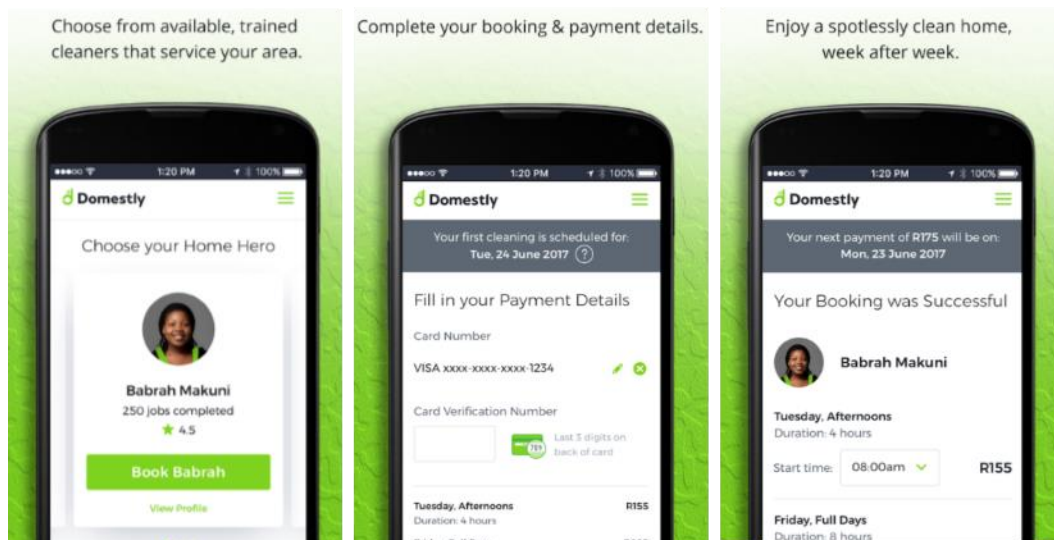
Domestly is a freelancing platform with a specific focus on connecting domestic workers with potential clients operating in the greater Western Cape, Johannesburg, Pretoria and KwaZulu Natal. Domestic workers seeking to use the platform need to apply. Domestly vets all their freelancers with criminal record checks and reference checks. Once these have been passed the freelancing domestic worker undergoes hospitality training to ensure they provide a high level of customer services and gets provided with modestly banded overalls.



Screenshot from the Domestly app showing the greeting screen, location selection screen and scheduling screen.

Each domestic worker gets a profile just like other freelancing platforms. The profile includes a star rating that is completed each time the domestic worker does a job. A customer would sign up for the platform, input their location and then browse freelancer profiles to find a domestic worker whose services they want to use.

On selecting a worker they complete a weekly schedule for when they would like their house to be serviced. The platform allows the client to skip a booking up to 24h before the start time after which the schedule will resume as per normal the following week.



Screenshots from the Domestly app showing the profile of a freelancer, the payment screen and the booking confirmation screen.

Domestly allows to types of bookings a half day booking which can be either 8AM-12PM or 1PM-5PM or a full day booking which would be from 8AM-4PM.

After selecting a schedule the customer can leave additional instructions on their cleaning preferences and can prioritize cleaning tasks to ensure they are completed in the preferred order.

Domestly aims to offer a standardised service and therefore has standardised per hour pricing although they vary depending on the region where the client is base. For example in Milnerton a half day will be R195 or R289 for a full day. This means that freelancers can't set their own pricing for their services. Domestly debits the customer's account on a weekly basis for work schedule in the week ahead. Domestly take a 20% cut from the per hour earnings of freelancers on the platform with the remainder paid out.

Conclusion

There is much evidence to believe that we are witnessing a freelancing explosion as people look for flexible forms of work and ways of supplementing their main source of income.

South Africa has long had a vibrant freelancing industry specifically in the media and communications industry. Although South African online freelancing platforms are still mostly in their infancy, they have shown decent growth and many South African freelancers make use of both local and international platforms to increase their chance of securing work and to improve the diversity of work coming their way.

Freelancing is definitely on the increase, as mentioned earlier, the *majority* of the US workforce will are expected to be freelancers by 2027. This trend will surely disseminate globally as internet and technological penetration improves.

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