



# **ONLINE WORK**

Where to Start and  
How to Identify the Right Platform for You

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# INTRODUCTION

Online work has become a buzz word in the world today, and many are turning to it to find a way to sustain themselves and pay their bills. As much as online work has been around for a long while, many people don't understand it.

The reason why online work has become popular is because of the high rate of unemployment around the world and especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Livelihoods have been wiped out by this virus, and people now wonder where to turn to find jobs considering that many businesses have shut down and others have downsized.

Online work seems mysterious and a maze to navigate without directions or an instruction manual. Many websites are offering online work, some genuine and others a scam. Many people experience frustration when looking for work on the internet because the options are many, and scammers are hard at work seeking to take advantage of them. The challenge becomes how to identify genuine and enjoyable work that pays well.

What people don't know is that "online work" is a wide range of services that freelancers offer to meet market demands. Businesses and organizations have identified their needs and turned online to find those who can meet them. Online work is, therefore, where the services of the freelancers meet the needs of the buyers.

Those who engage in online work are referred to as freelancers and the platforms they use as freelancing sites. Different kinds of services are offered on freelancing platforms, and I will mention some in the section on types of services you can offer.

You may be wondering how to find online work that you will love since most of it does not seem to interest you. Finding work that you love starts with knowing your purpose and gifts and then using them under God's direction.

This eBook will help you know where to start offering your services online. By the time you are done reading it, you will be ready to try out some platforms. The focus of this eBook is not "101 websites to find online work" but rather how to identify the platform that is right for you.

In this eBook, you will learn: How to identify the right platform, the different types of services you can offer, payment methods, and how to avoid scams.

# PLATFORMS

Online work is organized around platforms, also known as freelance sites, which are websites that facilitate different kinds of work. These platforms are ideally virtual marketplaces where you offer your services and have access to a large pool of buyers. There are thousands of platforms, each with its own rules of engagement for the type of work it facilitates. Platforms facilitate the matching of buyers and sellers, and this takes away the headache of looking for clients.

Freelance sites make their money by charging their sellers a commission, usually between 10-20%. Buyers also have to pay when ordering for the services they desire. When you use these sites to find work, you will be charged a commission depending on the individual platform. Most of them use the US Dollar as the main currency while others use the GBP or Euro. The commission is charged when you are paid for your service.

Most sites don't have a membership fee, and this is what makes them the best places to start looking for online work. There is no initial investment that you have to put up to use these sites, other than a short test to gauge your competence. On some freelancing sites, you simply open an account and create a profile and begin offering your services.

The frustration that many people experience is the over-saturation of sellers or service providers in the popular freelancing sites like Upwork, Fiverr, People Per Hour, Freelancer, etc. There are too many people offering the same thing. However, you will be surprised that many people have become successful on these sites by being specific with what they offer. Offering general services will not set you apart from the crowd.

The easiest way to identify a freelancing site is to start by identifying the type of work that best suits you. Finding online work will frustrate you if you don't know what you want to do. You will feel like you are walking through a maze and always coming to a dead end.

Once you know the kind of work you are looking for, you will find the best freelancing site for you. Don't choose one based on popularity because people are making a lot of money. Someone can be making a lot of money doing a particular type of work, and when you try doing it, you fail miserably. Do some research on the platform you want to plug into so that you will make an informed decision.

# HOW TO IDENTIFY THE RIGHT PLATFORM FOR YOU

Before attempting to look for a platform, first identify what work you want to do so that you can find the right one for you. It may seem easier to look for any kind of job online, but if you are looking for a long term career, it is worth taking some time to know what you want.

The first step in finding online work is to know your purpose and the gifts God has given you so that you can be successful. You waste a lot of time training to do anything for the sole purpose of making money. People are successful online because they are specific about what they will or will not do. When you do what does not suit you, you will struggle to achieve results as opposed to when you rely on God's grace.

## Your Purpose and Gifts

God created you for a purpose and set you apart to fulfil it. He will reveal it to you. The world has taught you that you figure it out or design it, but the truth is that God reveals it. The apostle Paul was able to flow in his purpose and gifts because God gave him a revelation of his assignment on earth. Armed with the knowledge, Paul was able to go and preach Christ to the Gentiles. Paul noted that the gospel he preached was not of human origin and he did not receive it from man neither was he taught it. He received it by revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12-13).

The gifts God has given you bring your purpose to life. Platforms give you a place to use your gifts to provide a service. Platforms change with different seasons in your life. Your offline platform may have disappeared after the global pandemic, but God could be opening an online one for you. When you identify your purpose and gifts, seek direction from God on how to package your services.

As a freelancer, you are not a jack of all trades, you are a worker on purpose. By being specific with your services, you can find the right clients without struggling. For example, I am a writer, but I don't write about everything under the sun. I focus on Christian writing; you will not find me writing academic documents. The niche I serve flows from my purpose and gifts. When I created my profile on Fiverr, I was specific about what I write, and I found that I mostly attract the right clients. Some of them have become regular, and my writing style meets their unique needs.

You can ask God today to show you what services you can offer based on your purpose and gifts. Find out the niche you are to serve so that you will not try to sell your services to everyone.

Once you are clear on how to use your gifts to bring your purpose to life, you will know the kind of service to offer. You'll even identify a platform that works for you. If you are gifted in graphic design, you don't have to focus on creating all kinds of graphics, instead, choose a niche. You can choose to focus on creating book covers, social media graphics, brochures and flyers, business cards and stationery, etc. It also becomes easy for you to research and increase your knowledge of the work that you have chosen to do.

In the section on different types of services, we will look at some unique examples of work that some freelancers are doing.

Different platforms operate in different ways. On some platforms, you will create a profile and list your offerings, on another, you will have to send proposals to clients so that they can give you work. In others, known as content mills, you can sell pre-written articles.

Although freelancing platforms are similar, they also differ in their rules of engagement. As you read their terms and conditions, you will know how they operate. Each platform has its pros and cons, and you can check out reviews on the internet so that you can make an informed decision before signing up to any.

## **Examples of Platforms**

There are platforms for every kind of work. The ones that are commonly used for online work include the following.

1. Upwork
2. Fiverr
3. PeoplePerHour
4. Toptal
5. Problogger
6. Freelancer
7. Indeed
8. Flexjobs
9. Freelance Writing Gigs
10. Working Not Working

There are many more platforms, and you can check them out on this [site](#), which categorizes the freelance sites according to industry. If you can find platforms that offer work that suits you, the better for you. However, platforms like Fiverr are more general and are easy to use for a beginner.

Online platforms use different approaches to help freelancers find work. On some platforms, you can create a profile, and clients will approach you with their work (e.g. Fiverr). On others, you will bid for work (e.g. Upwork), and on others, they will post the work they have, and you can apply the same way you do for a job (Indeed). Find the one that best suits you.

Social media is another avenue that freelancers use to find work. Many organizations post their projects on social media platforms like Twitter and LinkedIn and invite freelancers to apply. You can also approach these organizations on social media and pitch for work.

# TYPES OF SERVICES YOU CAN OFFER

When you look at the types of services that freelancers offer on the various platforms, you will realize you can do anything. You can write blog posts, ghostwrite ebooks, design book covers, write Amazon book descriptions, do voice-overs, illustrate children's books, write video scripts, offer coaching services, etc.

When clients go to platforms to look for service providers, they tend to gravitate to those who are specific with what they offer. They want to be sure that the person they are engaging in their projects has lots of experience. Think about that when you decide what you want to offer as a service. Don't be a jack of all trades because you will struggle to sell your services. You don't have to do everything under the sun just to make money. There is more to life than making money and chasing fame. Focus on service, and you will find that you will be compensated for it. Remember to focus on what God is calling you to do so that you will not get lost in the sea of online work.

## Examples of Services You Can Offer

1. Translating a book from English to French (or any other language)
2. Editing Christian books
3. Writing social media posts for wedding vendors
4. Writing Amazon product descriptions or design product labels
5. Illustration for adult and children's books
6. Creating cooking videos
7. Writing video and podcast scripts for Christian ministers
8. Writing real estate articles, white papers, eBooks
9. Design a WordPress website, stationery, journal pages, PDF eBooks
10. Draw cartoons, design wall art, create PowerPoint presentation slides
11. Landscape design
12. Draft legal documents or operating procedures
13. Offer accounting services to freelancers
14. Design food menus and digital screen menus for restaurants
15. Movie and book trailers
16. Design Christmas, Easter, and Birthday cards
17. Do voice overs for commercials
18. Create a travel itinerary for travelers to different destinations
19. Resume and cover letter writing for executives
20. Video editing for coaches and counselors

If you go through the different categories on Fiverr, you will see the many unique services that others offer. You will find that you can even do the kind of work you were doing in the office.

There is a growing market for printable documents, for example, notebooks, journals, templates, etc. For those who are good with creating templates, this is a niche to focus on. Many people are preferring to sell digital products for a growing market of people who want to print documents at home as opposed to buying them ready-made. If you want to take advantage of the international market, focus more on digital products.

Many freelancers are also selling their art online and are making a good profit. This includes paintings, drawings, pottery, etc. Etsy is a good platform to sell physical and digital products. Find a platform that is suited to what you want to do.

## CREATING A PROFILE

When you settle on the platform you want to use for your freelance services, you will have to create a profile and list your offerings. Creating a profile is easy as you will input your personal information, which includes your email, username, address, bank details, PayPal account, etc.

After you create your account, you will also specify your service packages. For example, if you are a writer, you will indicate what you write and for how much, e.g. one blog post for \$20 or five blog posts for \$100. If you are a book cover designer, you will indicate the price of designing one cover or multiple. You can also offer bundled services to increase your income.

Once your packages are set, you are ready to sell. On some platforms, they will require you to take a test before your profile is made available on the site. If you are a writer, you will take an English test, and your account will have a badge to show you have passed and are competent to offer writing services.

If you are on a platform where you have to bid for work, you can do so after your profile is ready and approved. Each freelancing site has its own way of doing things.

# PRICING YOUR SERVICES

One challenge many freelancers have is how to price their services. It can be challenging when you see people being paid top dollar and others way below the market rate. New freelancers feel that they are not good enough and charge low rates. You can start by finding out how much others on the platform are charging for services similar to yours. Pay attention to what is included in their packages as different freelancers charge based on their unique service. A basic package will go for a lower price than a premium one.

One place you can check for prices is Fiverr because sellers have prices for the different packages they have created. You will get ideas on where to start even if you choose to work on another platform.

Keep in mind that you can start with a price that is lower than you may desire and then increase it as you become experienced. You can also increase the value of your services when you want to increase your prices. You can also have premium services that come at a higher price.

## **PAYMENT METHODS**

Freelancing platforms use the major world currencies, e.g. the US Dollar, Euro, and British Pound (GBP). Most, however, use the US Dollar. You will need to open an account with one of the international payment service providers like PayPal, Payoneer, Stripe, etc. so that you can get your payment. PayPal seems the most common because it is used by very many people around the world. On some platforms, you can include your bank details in your local currency.

In Kenya you can now link your M-Pesa to your PayPal account and receive your money within minutes. This makes it very convenient to receive money without having to wait for days or being overcharged.

Once you open your account with PayPal, you will load a credit or debit card and verify it. This removes the set limit on how much you can transact with your account. You will also verify your personal information like your ID number and postal address.

Freelancing platforms charge a commission of between 10-20%. When you receive your payment, it will be net of the commission amount and any other fees.

# HOW TO AVOID SCAMS

Nobody wants to be scammed in the name of earning a living. Many people avoid looking for work online because they do not want to lose their money while trying to make some. Scams are everywhere, and one has to be constantly vigilant to avoid being scammed. Scammers are looking for the next unsuspecting victim from whom to extort money. Scammers succeed because they play on the ignorance and desperation of their victims.

On freelance sites, people are scammed when they disregard an important rule that is meant to protect them. *Do not communicate with buyers outside the platform.* Some buyers will give you an email address where you can reach them if you have any questions. Others offer freelancers lots of work and tell them that they would have to engage outside the platform for them to access the work. Don't fall for their lies.

When you decide to follow a buyer outside of the platform, you put yourself at risk of being scammed. When you are scammed by such buyers because you chose to communicate with them independently, you cannot receive help because you violated the rules of the platform. Always tell these type of buyers that you will only communicate within the platform, and if they have a problem with it, then you cannot work with them. As long as you keep your communication within the platform, you have nothing to worry about.

If you get work using social media or through an avenue where you communicate with the clients directly, you have to be extra vigilant. Some of the clients you get on your own can ask you to pay them first before they give you work. They will tell you how you will get the best of the jobs if you pay a small fee. The thing is, you never pay a fee when a company calls you for an interview because they want to hire you. Therefore, do not pay a fee to access work online. The exception is if the platform of your choice has declared upfront that they have a membership fee. In this case, you will decide whether you want to pay or not.

## What Are Some of the Reasons That Make People Fall for Scams?

**Contacting buyers outside the platform.** When you take your conversations with buyers outside the freelancing site, you will likely fall into a scam. Those who ask you to do so will expect you to share with them your bank details and personal information and they may use it to access your bank accounts and rob you. You will also not be able to contact the platform and tell them you have been scammed because you violated their terms and conditions.

**Lack of discernment.** It is possible to discern that a buyer is not a good fit for you. If you get this feeling, don't ignore it or try to explain it away to avoid disappointment. You can politely decline to work with them because it will not end well.

**Desperation.** Many of the people who are scammed are those who are desperate to make money. When you go for online work with the sole purpose of making money, you are a ripe candidate for being scammed. When you allow God to guide your steps and you focus on providing a service, you will not be eager to do things in a hurry or to grab that mega-deal that is only valid for 24 hours. It's like scammers can sniff desperation from a mile away and they spring into action. Take your time as you look for work or engage with buyers online. Trust that you will find the kind of work you are looking for.

**Lack of due diligence.** When you don't vet the clients you want to work with, you may end up falling for a scam. Be wary of clients who insist that you must sign up with them immediately or you lose the offer. Instead of being in a hurry, take your time to understand the clients who want to give you work so that you don't get scammed. Look for ways to mitigate risk when dealing with clients outside of freelancing platforms. If a client has restrictive terms, you don't have to work with them because most times, it doesn't end well. If a client is being scanty with information about their organization, be wary.

One way you can identify scams associated with a particular platform is to read reviews on the internet. Look for the reviews of those who have been scammed looking for online work. You'll also spot trends, and this will help you be more discerning when engaging with clients online. The beauty of platforms is that they significantly reduce the risk of scams. For this reason, keep all your communication within the platform you want to sign up with for online work.

# CONCLUSION

Online work can be a blessing when you find yourself unemployed and want to earn an income. With the right knowledge, you can be successful in finding work, and enjoy it without fearing the risks. Read widely on the things that people are doing online. It's okay to try out different things as you find what works for you. Read through the sellers' forums of various platforms to see the issues that freelancers raise, and how they have dealt with them.

Avoid buying accounts as some people do so that they don't have to start from scratch. You can build your account by genuinely working and trust that God will bless the work of your hands. You want to lay a good foundation for your work online, and genuinely represent yourself.

Keep away from abusive buyers. They will threaten you with bad reviews, but you can't be held hostage by someone who doesn't respect you. Some platforms give you the option of blocking a buyer if you don't want them to contact you anymore.

Be patient as you build a client base, and focus on doing excellent work. When your work is quality, clients will come back. You may be new on a platform but there are buyers who are willing to give a newbie work, so don't despair.

If at first you don't succeed, try again. Your success doesn't depend on being on any one platform. My application for Upwork was rejected and I ended up being successful on Fiverr. I even increased my rates, and clients still came.

Wishing you all the best finding online work that you will love.

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