

LABOR MARKET TRENDS



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Telecommuting: Work from Home, the New Way to Go

Sometime 2012, media fuss centered on the new 'in thing'; People need not go through heavy traffic hassle along EDSA and line up in the Light/Metro Railway Transits (L/MRTs) in able to get to work and earn money. All that is needed is a working computer, earphones with built-in microphone, and a high speed internet connection. Earning money has never been that easy that people learning about the new craze get totally amused and excited to try and make income from it.

With a number of business establishments closing down on one hand and businessmen majorly relying on the world market economy to keep their ventures going on the other, this new trend proves what Bill Gates once said to be relatively true, "If your business is not on the internet, then your business is out of business". Not having been drastically affected by disruptions in the economy so far, this kind of work shows its resiliency from economic shocks, thus, a favorable and more stable source of income for the 'techie' Filipino.

Being the focus of attention recently may not necessarily mean that telecommuting or online home-based job is a new industry in the market. Despite limited presence of studies about it on the web, various articles which feature the boom are present. Further, speaking with people making a living out of this so-called work from home jobs will get you an answer like "I have been earning online since mid-2000" (or maybe even earlier). This shows that the start of online-home based jobs in the country may not be clear as to when, but the benefits are evident and are clearly seen on people who have engaged in this kind of business. In a report of the International Labour Organization, telecommuting or telework as they called it, started in the 1980s.

Flexible Work Options

In the digital age, they say that Filipinos have come to favor the more flexible work options instead of the usual 8AM-5PM jobs. With the likes of the usual work arrangement in Information Technology-Business Process Management (IT-BPM) which employs workers in night or mid-shifts, online home-based jobs give workers a freelance option. That is, work anytime of the day, at the most convenient time, at the most convenient place, hence, home-based.

In a 2011 report published by Regus, a company which offers products and services that allows other companies to concentrate on their core business helping them become more flexible, more cost-effective, and more agile to better face business challenges through third-party services like video-

conferencing, virtual offices, and many other support services, entitled Why Place Still Matters in the Digital Age: Third Place Working in Easy Reach of Home, of which a portion of the respondents are Filipinos, part of the conclusion stipulates third place working as contemporary norm. This includes work from home and any other places except for the company building. In an article written by Manila Times in January 2014, it quoted what Regus Philippines Regional Director John Henderson said: "Flexible working, which is lower cost than fixed office working, offers the attractive perks of lower stress and better work: Life balance to existing and prospective employees, and provides a low-cost solution to attracting and retaining those top workers. It's also striking how mainstream the perk of flexible working



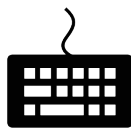
has become, with many respondents actually choosing their jobs on the basis of flexibility.” Hence, an empirical evidence of the break-through of online home-based jobs.

In another report of Regus published in 2012 called Flexibility Drives Productivity, “72% of global businesses report that increased productivity is a direct result of flexible working practices while 68% of interviewed firms stated that flexible working has led to staff generating increased revenue. This is particularly true in emerging economies that appear to have made flexible working a key part of their development.”

Common Online Home-Based Jobs

While a number of online home-based jobs abound on the web, the list below presents the most common:

Encoder/Transcriptionist



Data entry jobs are probably the most common online home-based job. All that is needed is to enter data as instructed in a word processor or a spreadsheet. Others may require online research.

A more technical type of data entry job is the medical or legal transcriptionist. This type requires a more technical background, i.e., familiarity with medical and legal terms is needed. One would have to listen to audio recordings and transcribe them according to the prescribed format.

Online Teacher



Most common are online English teachers needed by non-native English speakers usually from Asian countries. A working computer, earphones with microphones, and stable internet connection are needed since the teacher will have to converse with the student online and teach him or her basic and conversational English.

Internet Entrepreneur/Online Seller



Born entrepreneurs take advantage of this online home-based job by marketing and selling items online. While stores and malls offer a wide range of items to choose from, online market provides the same, which is more convenient and accessible.

Customer Service Assistants



Just like Customer Service Representatives in the IT-BPM sector, Customer Service Assistants do the same job. The only difference is that they are working from home.

Virtual Assistants



Virtual Assistant is a collective term for online/web-based workers providing support to various companies. There is a general virtual assistant who is required to provide administrative assistance such as data entry, social media management, research, among others. Other types of virtual assistants are Article/Content Writer, SEO Specialist, and Web Developer/Programmer.

Web Developer/Programmer



A Web Developer designs, codes and modifies websites, from layout to function to make it visually-appealing in design and user-friendly in navigation.

Online Writer/Editor



For writers, online writing and editing is a good fit. Instead of doing writing as a hobby, one can do blogs and write online articles at a price. There are also others who look for online editors to edit and proof papers and reports.

Online Trading or Stock Market



Investing in the stock market is the newest and probably the most rewarding online job. While others earn from it by acting as financial advisor to various clients, others also do it for himself or herself. The earnings in this kind of venture depend on the performance of the stock market.

Online Gaming



Who would think that playing online games could be a source of income? From playing social media games, online poker, among others, a gamer could earn some bucks. There is usually a challenge to beat for one to get paid.

Modes of Payment

Salary in telecommuting may range from PhP5,000 to PhP15,000 monthly for part-time work and ranges from PhP15,000 to as high as PhP60,000 (or even more) for the highly technical online jobs. Payment for this is usually done through bank transfers. The most common is the use of PayPal account.



Work Conditions

While there are so many online home-based jobs that can be found on the web, only a few are legitimate. Thus, careful scrutiny of online posts is needed to avoid fraud and scams.

The other drawback of online home-based job is that it does not offer social security benefits since you are dealing with virtual employers. Hence, this type of job may only be good as a part-time job or a supplemental source of income.



Opportunities for Advancement

Career advancement in telecommuting may not be limited to doing the same job and advancing the ladder. An experienced online home-based worker can explore other online jobs and hop from one company to the next. However, specialization especially in the more technical fields may be necessary.



Related Government Measures

On 5 August 2013, the Bureau of Internal Revenue issued Revenue Memorandum Circular No. 55-2013 entitled Reiterating Taxpayers' Obligations in Relation to Online Business Transactions. This memorandum circular reminds online businesses doing online retailing and shopping advertising and auction, to pay their tax obligations. While the BIR mandates for the payment of tax in this kind of e-commerce business, the government currently does not have a clear legislation covering other types of IT business especially those with foreign employers.

On the side of consumer protection, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Department of Health (DOH) and

the Department of Agriculture (DA) issued Joint Department Administrative Order (JDAO) 01 which prescribes the "rules and regulations for consumer protection in a transaction covered by the Consumer Act of the Philippines (R.A. 7394) through electronic means under the E-Commerce Act (R.A. 8792) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). The JDAO took effect on 13 November 2008. Another government measure is the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Department Administrative Order No. 8 "Prescribing Guidelines for the Protection of Personal Data in Information and Communications System in the Private Sector." (<http://www.entrepreneur.com.ph/business-ideas/4-philippine-laws-that-govern-online-business>)



Recommendations

Telecommuting offers extravagant advantages for employees and more so to the employers, thus, corresponding protection and security must be provided to workers. While Filipinos get totally hooked with the flexibility options that the industry offers, one must still remember that a good gauge in measuring an employment opportunity is the social and security benefits that it provides more than the monthly monetary salary that it gives.

On the part of the government, legislative measures to ensure workers' protection and tax revenues complied with must be lobbied actively.

Images were downloaded from google.com and content is a compilation of studies and reports found on the web.

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