



Netwatch

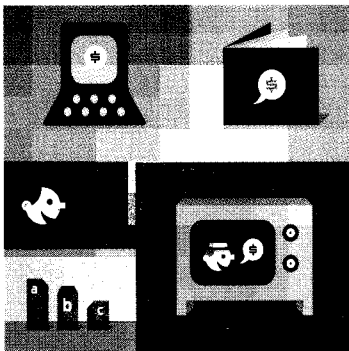
By Jim Carroll

Your guide to business & accounting on the Internet

Skills for hire

Back in 1996, I released a list of predictions for the future, most of which proved to be stunningly accurate in the years to come. Among them was the following nugget: companies will hire the best talent they can, regardless of where that person might live.

The location of workers simply won't matter. And the shape of tomorrow's company won't be defined by the walls in its offices — it will be defined by its ability to tap into a rich set of skills and capabilities determined by the reach of its communications network.



Fast forward to today, and I must ask, why are so many people surprised by the wave of offshoring and outsourcing that is underway? It's not like no one told them it was going to happen.

While a political debate swirls around the offshoring aspect of outsourcing, one thing remains certain — we are entering an era

that will witness the ongoing commoditization of human capital. This will have a significant impact on many clerical accounting related activities in the years to come.

From a big-picture perspective, we will continue to see a change in many aspects of the accounting function, as more organizations outsource entire accounts payable, receivable, general ledger or treasury departments.

That's but the tip of the iceberg, because the very nature of the corporate organization is undergoing a significant structural change. We will soon see an evolution to a corporate structure that consists of a small, core group of permanent executives and staff, with regular expansion and contraction in other staff resources that are sourced on a temporary, contractual or partnership basis. In other words, if you think you will have a job in the future, think again. You'll have a career that consists of multiple projects on behalf of multiple organizations.

We're already seeing evidence of this trend with the emergence of an online human-capital exchange, where routine, small-scale projects are easily farmed out to the

lowest bidder. It's almost like an eBay for human capital.

Need a website or logo design? Visit the Design Outpost, post your requirements, and you'll get an almost instant response along with a cost estimate. Have a complex little

questionnaire you would like to add to your website? Scoot on over to GetAFreelancer, and post your project needs. Need an inexpensive bookkeeper to enter some data for your payables system? Visit ElanceOnline and post your requirements. Your SAP enterprise resource planning system needs some custom coding to pull out some important real time data? Visit any number of online freelance sites, and you will find a wealth of expertise.

These systems allow you to quickly access needed talent in a hurry, from a global marketplace of talented skills providers. It's an extremely straightforward process — after your project is posted, it is made available to interested freelancers who might be prepared to enter a bid.

How do you know if they are any good? Just like on eBay, you can view each freelancer's portfolio and examine his or her ratings, as well as review comments from previous customers.

While many of these sites are currently geared to technology, Web and programming tasks, it is only a matter of time before we see many small-scale accounting and finance functions migrate to the same type of online freelance marketplace.

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