TOPHATTER

Buyer Support Success
with Upwork

Aimee Valle

TOPHATTER

Tophatter Buyer Support has successfully recruited and hired the most talented bilingual customer support freelancers all over the world through Upwork since September, 2015.

Our support team has spanned 28 countries and 13 time zones.

We initially tested Upwork by creating a 30+ hour, 6+ month contract job, and waited for candidates to submit their proposals.

It doesn't take long. If posted in the morning, there could easily be 50 proposals before the end of the business day.

For several hiring rounds we tried posting our primary long-term hourly contract position, and interviewed candidates who seemed like a good fit.

We receiving so many proposals it took up too much interviewing time.

We could do a better job vetting applicants prior to the interview process.

Upwork doesn't allow employers to request an assessment as part of the initial application, prior to being hired.

This is considered a work sample, and requesting it for someone who isn't hired is against their ToS, which we very much want to comply with so we can continue using this great service!

We changed our process to handle this challenge, by posting a fixed-price contract that pays $5 - the minimum on the platform.

Applicants are informed in the job posting that upon completion, they *might* be contacted for an interview for our longer-term position.

We hire the best applicants to submit the assessment, provide some technical specifications, and share their availability.

TOPHATTER

Thank you for your interest in Tophatter.

For this project, you will need to finish these four steps:

1. Complete a short assessment
2. Test your internet speed
3. Provide your system details
4. Include your working availability in Pacific time

Here is a link to the short assessment which should not take more than one hour to complete: https://goo.gl/forms/j4PTDTANdL92BC5f1

To test your internet speed, visit the following link and click Begin Test: http://www.speedtest.net/ After the test has run, click "Share This Result", copy the web link, and paste it into your message.

Finally, please include the operating system you are using by visiting this link: http://whatsmyos.com/ the browser you will be using, along with your working availability should you later be selected for our long-term Customer Support hourly contract position. Please show your availability for each day of the week using Pacific Time (UTC/GMT -7 hours).

Send your Speedtest link, operating system, browser details and availability to me via Upwork messages after you have completed the assessment. If an interview is requested, I will contact you to set up a day and time.

 If you are no longer able to work a full-time (40+ hours) job or are no longer interested in the long-term position, please let me know this via Upwork messages.

Thanks again!

This has been a useful tool to determine one's ability for practical application.

Google Forms allows easy updating and shuffling of questions, to combat potential cheating.

We also use images of the text in the form, so the question can't easily be copied and pasted into Google.

TOPHATTER

For every hiring round, we have a public and a private job posting & applicants who receive a call-back may be hired for the invite-only, longer-term job

Once hired

- Freelancers hired for hourly positions run a time tracker application at all times when working. This takes a screenshot every 10 minutes.
- Time is billed and paid based on actual time spent working.
- Manual time entry can be permitted due to intermittent outages with Upwork, but should be *very* minimal.
- Freelancers are notified if manual time exceeds known outages, and manual time can be disabled.

TOPHATTER

A weekly report is produced every Monday and can be reviewed against actual work performed

TOPHATTER
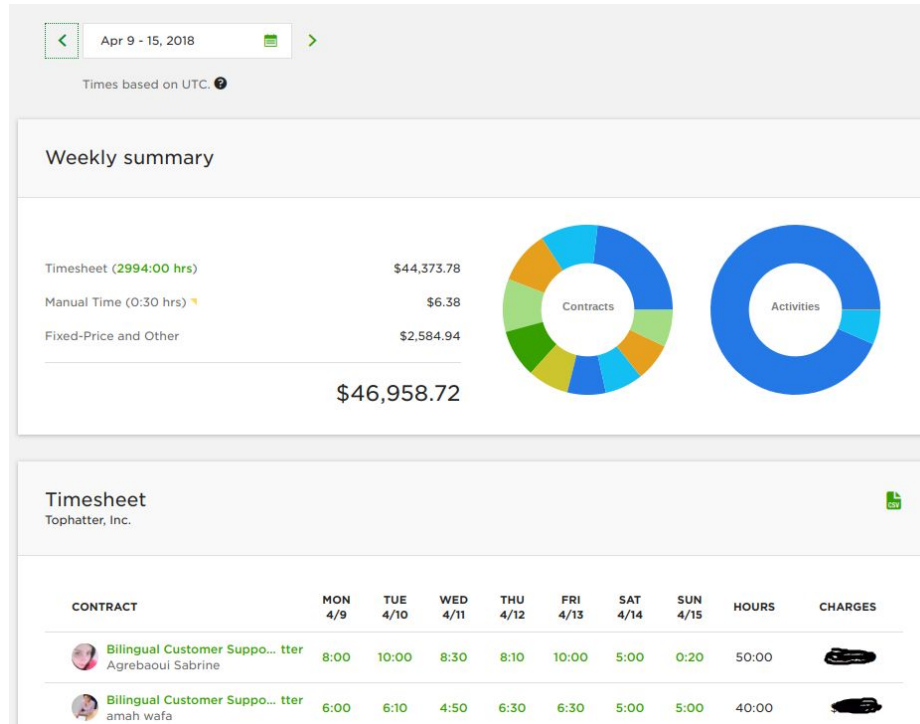
Upwork has been an invaluable service, successfully connecting us with qualified people, providing payroll and timekeeping in one package.

Tips

- Use hourly contracts and make sure freelancers use the time tracker. It protects you and the freelancer.
- If you use projects, utilize milestones to ensure work quality before getting in too deep.
- If you hire for the same role over a period of time, review your job posting to make sure it hasn't gotten stale and still says what you need to communicate.
- Stay in contact. If you don't work with a distributed team already, it might be easy to forget that freelancer out there. Get used to including them in stand-ups or regular updates early on so it becomes habit.
- Offer reference material and keep it current. Set freelancers up to do their best.
- Hiring freelancers within the US comes with some classification liability. Make sure the freelancer is outside of California, and the job is classified correctly. Hiring in the US only for short-term projects is the best way to ensure this.
  Overall, freelancers want to work hard and share their talent. Their excellent performance reflects on their ability to attract more jobs. Effectively working with freelancers depends on the business being prepared, organized, and clearly communicating the scope of work.

Overall, freelancers on Upwork want to work hard and share their talent.

Excellent performance reflects on their ability to attract more jobs and maintain their statuses and badges within the platform.

Effectively working with freelancers depends on the business.

Being prepared, organized, and clearly communicating the scope of work will ensure success.