Online Worker Foundation Guide

Online Worker Foundation Guide

I'm Hired, What Now?

The Online Worker

Ideal traits of an online worker

IDEAL TRAITS OF AN ONLINE WORKER

What kind of qualities should you have as you work?

INITIATIVE

Doing what you're supposed to do without being told to, being able to think on your own without anyone's help.

RELIABILITY

Your client can count on you to get the job done even if they're not around.

TIME-MANAGEMENT

Being able to plan how much time you spend on tasks and actually follow them to be more efficient.

ACCESSIBILITY

The employer can easily contact you through different ways whenever they need to.

RESOURCEFULNESS

The ability to think of various ways to solve problems and adapt to new situations.

What traits are Filipino workers known for

WHAT TRAITS ARE FILIPINO WORKERS KNOWN FOR?

Why are Filipino workers sought after around the world? It's because they are:
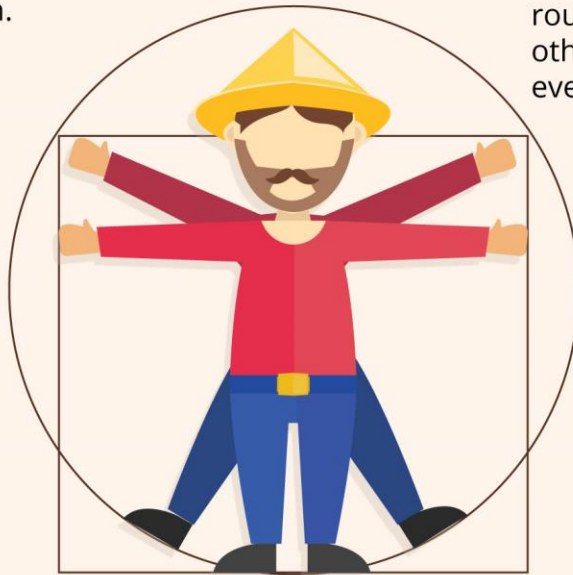
VERSATILE

They find it easier to adapt to any situation they find themselves in.

HARD-WORKING

They do their best in every job given to them.

CHEERFUL AT WORK

Even when things get rough, they always greet others with a smile and even make a joke.

ABLE TO WORK UNDER PRESSURE

They are still able to deliver even when under a lot of stress.

RESPECTFUL

They are polite to everyone, and always listen to their employers first before making any response.

The skills you need

Computer knowledge

Since you will be doing most of your work on a computer, you need to be proficient in the use of one. You also have to know how to fix any issues that may arise from your computer.

Communication skills

Doing work online means you will not have any conversations with your clients in person. There are programs like Skype that help contacting others easier, chat and emails are still used for the most part of communication. It is vital that you able to convey what you mean to say clearly.

Good grasp of the English language

This goes together with good communication skills, as you will most likely be conversing in English with a foreign client. It would be a good idea to have at least basic knowledge on informal expressions and terms.

Organizational skills

You will most likely be working on several projects at a time. Knowing how to balance your work and keep track of everything from your progress to your files helps you do your job more efficiently.

Critical thinking

The ability to think and deal with problems on your own is a highly valued skill whether you work home-based or in an office. You should be able to do tasks even with minimal directions, and not have to constantly rely on co-workers.

Educational background

What makes getting work online easier is that your educational background will rarely matter, as long as you have shown in your portfolio that you have the skills that they need. There are companies that do prefer hiring college graduates, but jobs like data entry often require you to finish at least high school.

How to know if you're ready and able to work online?

You never truly know if you are ready unless you are finally working. But if you are confident with using a computer, managing your work time while at home,

communicating with clients over the Internet, and have a stable Internet connection, then you can start a career as an online worker.

The Client/ Employer

Common traits of employers who outsource

- Many employers will be foreigners who have decided to hire people from other countries. Their reasons for looking for Filipino workers vary; it can be due to the lower prices we can offer them,
- Because they are from different parts of the world, clients have different timezones. You may have to adjust your working hours depending on the job.
- Foreigners, especially Westerners, have a direct way of speaking. They are not afraid of telling you exactly what they are thinking. Remember not to take it as an insult if a client points out your mistakes to you. They are simply saying it as it is.

The #1 problem you'll run into

Filipinos tend to be shy. When you don't know how to do something, you're afraid to tell your employer. However, your employer assumes you understand everything, and know how to do whatever they ask you, unless you tell them differently.

This is the #1 source of problems between workers and foreign employers. The employer asks the worker to do something they don't know how to do, or don't understand what exactly the employer wants done, and the worker doesn't do anything because they're shy and scared of disappointing the employer.

When this situation happens to you the worst thing you can do is sink down and "go dark". The best thing you can do is suck it up, get up some courage, and tell your employer the real problem. You would be surprised how many Filipinos lose jobs because they're not willing to say something. You would also be surprised at how many Filipinos keep jobs for years and years (along with good pay raises) because they're willing to overcome this fear and say something when there is a problem.

What employers expect

Employers want a VA who:

- Can deliver high quality work on time
- Can be easily contacted online
- Solves problems, not create more

Difficult employer behaviors, what they mean and how to deal with them

Difficult employers will always be a part of work. These are several behaviors that you may encounter throughout your career, and how you can deal with them:

Giving impossible deadlines

If a client hands you a task that you know cannot be done within the allotted time, be direct with them and lay out all the requirements of the job. Offer a different deadline or at least compromise on a more workable one.

Never satisfied with output, always asking for changes

This is a common situation during the start of your work with the employer. To avoid these instances in the future, learn what their preferences are. You may want to document their comments whenever this situation happens.

It may also be a case of miscommunication; you might not have understood what the client was telling you through email or chat. Aside from improving your communication

and comprehension skills, consider holding a video call session with the client or have them provide feedback in image or video form.

Making too many requests

If you find that your client is giving more tasks than you can handle for the moment, you can propose to use a project management system to better organize your projects. Ask the client which tasks take priority over the others. Working on too many at the same time can be exhausting and may affect your output.

Expecting too many skills

There are clients who give jobs that are above your capabilities. Should this happen, remind them of the skills listed in your resume. Request further training if you do want the job. If you don't, recommend to hire an additional worker for the task.

Requiring same timezone although unnecessary

If the job you want to sign up for does not need for you to work at the same time as your client, talk to them about it. If they insist on their own time zone, it is best to turn down the job and look for alternatives. You can try to look for an employer that lives in a country with a similar timezone, like Australia.

Late payments

When an employer hasn't paid you yet, it can simply be a case of them forgetting about your bill. Do not be afraid to remind your employer. Have a document of your payment terms and always create an invoice.

Absent employers/Difficult to contact

Clients that are hard to contact can be a hindrance to work progress. Remind them through email that you may still require guidance regarding other tasks and feedback on your output.

There are many other difficult employer behaviors, but everything can be resolved by honest communication. However, a problem with many Filipinos is that they do not like to talk to their bosses. Despite whatever issue that arises, it is absolutely important not to disappear. Remain open for communication.

Leaving the client and the work unfinished will affect your reputation as an online worker and the chances of getting jobs in the future.

The Art of Negotiation – How You and the Client Can Both Get What You Want

Salary

When searching for work, keep in mind that the salaries that the clients offer on the job postings are not always final. You are still able to ask for a higher starting price. However, just like with company jobs, your skills and experience is a large factor in how much you are going to be paid.

Work hours

Although you will most likely be working in comfort of your own home, that does not mean you should be doing your job 24/7. You should have days off as well. Follow the standard 8 hour-work day as much as possible if you are being paid per hour. But for many clients, the number of hours you work in a day is not much of a priority, as long as you are able to deliver on time.

Output

The client should see your work progress regularly. Deliver output on a daily basis as much as possible. If you are unable to work on the task due to problems (ex. family emergencies), be sure to make up for it. Minimize delays as much as you can.

Feedback and idea sharing

To ensure that your output satisfies your client, regular feedback from them is highly preferable. Propose having scheduled brainstorming sessions as part of the deal. This allows you both to share ideas on how to improve your output, the work process, etc.

Building A Good Reputation As An Online Worker

Professionalism

A professional takes their work seriously. As much as possible, do not let personal feelings get in the way of your job. Be polite with your employer, and take care not to get too informal when conversing with them.

It is important that you do not disappear on your client no matter the situation. Not only does it hurt their business, but also your chances of getting work in the future. It is very easy for a client to share their bad experiences about you to others.

It is also important to maintain a clean presence on social media. Even just your username and profile picture affect how employers view you.

Remember, a background check on your jobseeker profile will tell a potential client whether or not you are worth hiring.

Punctuality

If you and your client have a working schedule set in place, following that schedule not only helps you avoid cramming, but is also a sign of respect for the client and their time.

It not only means coming to work on time, but delivering work on time. Being punctual also says a lot about your character to your employers.

Consistent output

The quality of the work you deliver to your client should be able to meet their expectations, or better yet, exceed it. They want you to give them output that is as good as or greater than the samples they have seen in your work portfolio.

Daily reporting

Make it a point to give your employer daily updates on the progress of each task given to you. This way, they are able to keep track of your work and provide you feedback more frequently.

Daily reporting also provides peace-of-mind to your employer as they are given knowledge every day that you're working. Daily reporting will build their trust in you, which means long-term, stable employment.

Problem solving

Being able to solve problems on your own is a much-needed skill to have especially since you will be working mostly by yourself. Remember that you were hired to help your client with their problems, not create more of them.

Asking for help

If you find that your task is beyond your ability, do not be afraid to tell your employer about it. It is in their best interest to know what you can and cannot do. If you do not understand something regarding the job, approach your client and ask for clarification.

Request for further instructions and training if needed.

Keep in mind that it is better to admit your shortcomings and ask your employer for help in order to improve yourself. This way, your work will not be compromised any further, and you can still meet your client's expectations. Disappearing, or "going dark", is not a good option. Western employers don't know how to handle someone who stops communicating with them. It makes them super frustrated. They would much rather have you tell them you need help than have you stop communicating with them.

Self-development

As you continue working online, do not forget to continue improving the skills that you have, and to learn the ones that you don't. Being versatile can help you get more jobs outside your specialty, since online work, especially as a freelancer, has higher risks of "dry seasons" in between projects. It will also make your resume more impressive to prospective clients.

Listen from the advice that the more experienced workers are willing to give you and apply it to your career.

Underpromise and overdeliver

Be very careful when making promises to your employer, as this will lead to them expecting too much from you. In most cases, it will only lead to disappointment.

If you do have to make one, an underpromise is much easier to keep. This way, you are able to deliver better than what the client was expecting.

Maintaining Productivity

Dealing with work from home distractions

Working in the comfort of your own home sounds easy at first, but it's often more difficult than working in an office environment, especially since there is no one to supervise you in person. A few of the most common distractions are:

- **Family members** - Your family needs to understand that although you are at home, it does not mean that you are available. Inform them of your working schedule, and remind them regularly if they keep distracting you. If you have an office room in your house, you may want to put a "Do Not Disturb" sign, or lock your door to prevent anyone from suddenly entering.
- **Chores** - Oftentimes, it can be tempting to just leave your work and do household chores to distract yourself. While it is alright to take a break, be careful not to overdo it. Should you wish to do some chores during your work hours, stick to tasks that can be finished quickly. Chores that will take a long time should be done before or after work to avoid any possible output delays.
- **Food** - Since you are home-based, you may be prone to making trips to the kitchen for food, or eating meals and snacks while working. However, it is actually best to avoid bringing food to your workstation, as you will usually end up just eating instead of working.
  Preparing food can be a time-consuming activity. If they are willing, have another family member cook for you. You can also prepare your meals the day before you work again.

- **Procrastination** - One of the biggest challenges of working at home is that we tend to gain a mentality of "I can always do this later". This is especially prevalent in jobs that don't have working hours. It results in cramming, and you may not be able to deliver satisfying output.
  To avoid rushed work, set yourself a timeframe.This specific task or project should be done by this time, and so on. Pressure helps you do your work better.

Another way to deal with home-based distractions is to set some days in your schedule so you can work outside. Many people prefer to work in coffee shops or coworking spaces, since they tend to more productive in these places than if they stayed at home.

Dealing with online distractions

Being in an online job makes it very easy to set aside work for a while and browse the Internet or play games on the computer. If you find yourself doing more play than work, here are a few things you can do:

- Have regular breaks where you step away from the computer. Not only does it help you resist the temptation of using your computer for non-work purposes, you also get to rest your eyes.

- Go offline if the task doesn't need you to use the internet. You can also take it further and switch off your internet connection.

- Using time tracking systems is extremely helpful. It keeps a time log of the accomplishments you have done for the day. Some employers require this, but don't get too intimidated. Managers use time trackers not so they can spy on you, but to get a better idea of what you are accomplishing, and so they can reduce micromanaging. This is also your proof for getting paid. It takes note of the time it took to finish tasks you worked continuously on. If you feel unsure about every single thing you do online

How to maintain a flexible work schedule

Before applying for any job, ask the client about the specifics regarding your working hours, if there are any. Ask them if it requires adjusting to their time zone, and if you can take holidays and/or weekends off. Do not be afraid to negotiate if you have to until you can agree on a schedule that you can both work with.

Working at home can make it very easy to lose track of time and continue working beyond the set hours. Always remember to set aside time for personal matters and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Apps and tools you can use to maintain productivity

There are many available tools on the Internet that help you be more productive. Some of them are free to use but have premium versions that have payment schemes. There are also software that need to be bought. Here are several types of tools that you can use and their examples:

- **Writing Tools** - These can range from simple grammar and spelling checkers, to apps that help you with the overall format of your writing
    Ex. Hemingway, Grammarly

- **Website Blockers** - Site blockers let you select websites to block while you are working, removing the temptation to procrastinate online. Some let you have the option to block sites for a certain period only, or track how time you have spent on sites when unblocked.
    Ex. LeechBlock, StayFocusd

- **Ambient noise generator** - According to some studies, ambient noise or music is conducive for creativity and helps people focus better on work. This has lead to the creation of apps that mimic the noise of coffee shops and rainy weather, among others.
    Ex. Coffitivity, RainyMood

- **Social Media Managers** - These allow you to manage multiple social media accounts and pages from different websites all at once. Through these apps, you can schedule future posts, study how your pages are performing, all without having to log into each site one by one.

Ex. Hootsuite, Buffer

- **Project Managers** - these tools can aid you in several areas, task and file management, time tracking, scheduling, note-taking, etc. They can also have a messaging feature, which allows you to communicate better with clients and any team members. They helpful if you are handling several projects at once.
Ex. Teamwork, Google Drive

Outsourcing Challenges

Language difference

Many clients will be from English-speaking countries such as the United States, UK, and Australia. Aside from a good grasp of the English language, learning informal terms used in those countries is a good idea in order to better understand them. However, there will be employers from non-English speaking countries. There will be instances in which understanding what they are trying to tell you may be difficult. In these cases, it is better for the both of you to use simpler words to minimize any misunderstanding.

Cultural difference

Understanding the culture in other countries is important in maintaining a good working relationship with overseas clients. For example, employers from the USA and in most Western countries will be more direct with how they deal with people and can be more focused on business than on being friendly with employees. While this can lead to them being viewed as aggressive, they may simply prefer to maintain the relationship on a purely professional level.

Westerners tend to be less accepting of mistakes and commitments that are not kept, since they expect nothing less than what they are paying you to do. In these situations, remember to always be honest with your reasons, and own up to your shortcomings. Make it a point to learn from your mistakes so that you will not repeat them.

Employers from Asia, on the other hand, tend to value the relationship than the immediate results. They may be more forgiving of mistakes (though this does not mean it's alright keep making them) to retain civility. Being polite is very crucial when it comes to dealing with Asian clients.

Time difference

Working with a client from another part of the world can be difficult especially if they live in Europe, USA, or other countries with vastly different time zones. Depending on your job, you may have to work late at night, or hold meetings with the client early in the morning.

Make sure to clarify with the employer if the work requires you to be up at irregular hours or not. Keep it mind that you do not have to force yourself to take a job if you find the schedule disagreeable. It may only hinder your work output.

Communication breakdown

Communication problems will always be an unwanted part of the job that leads to delays in work progress. They are usually caused by the previous factors mentioned: language, culture, and time difference.

Poor internet connection and tools like cheap headsets/microphones also result in miscommunication. Consider investing in better equipment and a faster connection as you continue on your online career.
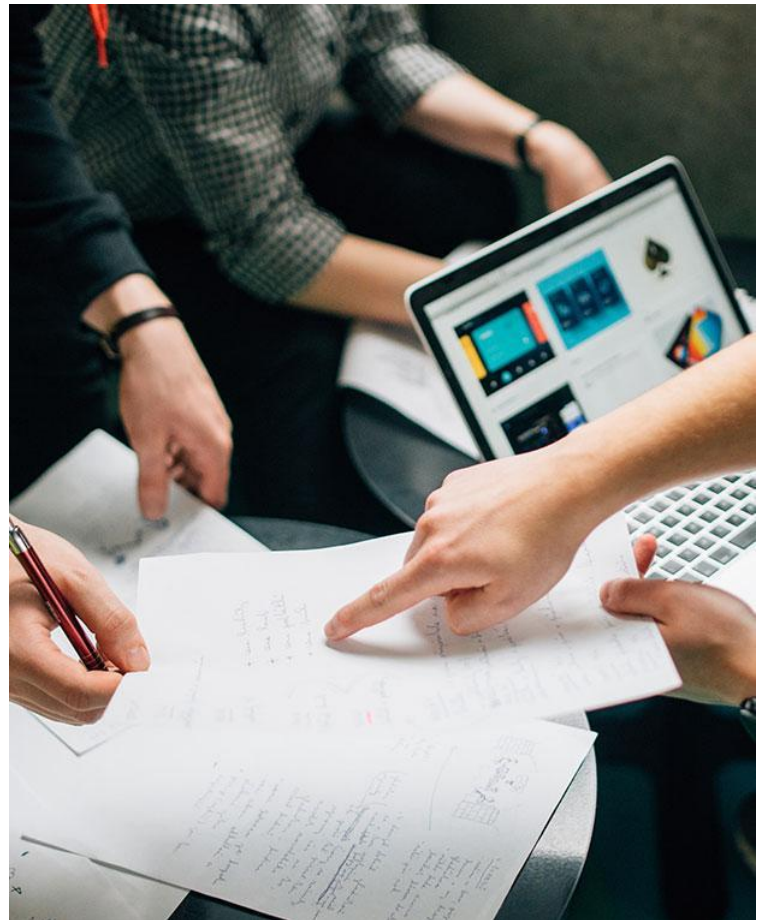
Career opportunities for online workers

As you continue on your career, you can use your experience to try new ventures. The network of contacts that you have (hopefully) built can help you find more opportunities to expand your knowledge and find new sources of income.

Management/partnership

- Work in a managerial position, become a team leader
- Invest in businesses or real estate, become a co-owner of a company

Training/consulting

- Provide training seminars and share your knowledge and experiences with others who are still starting out their online careers
- Become a consultant for outsourcing firms or other companies that have need of someone from your field of expertise

Entrepreneurship

- Build a startup company that specializes in what you do (ex. Graphic design firm, customer support, general virtual assistance)
- Start any business that you want

How To Amicably End A Working Relationship

Should you decide to stop working for an employer, be honest with your reasons for leaving, whether it is due to an emergency or if you want to move on in your online career. Inform the client whether or not you are open to working again for them in the future. If you have any ongoing tasks for the client, it would be best to finish them before leaving, or at least ensure that whoever will handle them next will not face any unnecessary difficulties.

For accounts you share or have made for the project, be sure to give all login details and advise the client to change them for the sake of confidentiality.

Remember: do not to disappear just because you do not want to work for the client anymore, as this is unprofessional. Always give them a notice. Disappearing on a western client makes them think poorly about Filipinos. They will likely take their jobs to another country. Don't stop communicating with your employer!

How To Ask for A Raise or A Promotion

Before asking for a salary increase from your client, there are several factors to consider:

- The length of time working for them
- The consistency of your output
- Your major accomplishments for them
- New responsibilities given by the employer
- New skills learned

It is important to make the client see your value--show them that you are worth more than what you are currently paid. However, the act itself of asking for a raise can be daunting. If

you are unsure of how to approach your client on the matter, you can follow the flow in this sample:

> *-Name of client-,*
>
> > *It has been great experience working with you for the past <u>(length of time working with client)</u>. I*
> *have learned new skills and have accomplished much for your business, such as:*
> > - *List*
> > - *Of*
> > - *Your*
> > - *Major*
> > - *Accomplishments*
>
> *However, I have also noticed that the responsibilities given to me have increased and are beyond what we originally agreed on.*
>
> *(If you had any previous agreements on your salary that were not fulfilled, ex. pay increase after a year, you can also include it)*
>
> *I would like to request a renegotiation of my salary when your schedule is free.*
>
> *Thank you,*
>
> *-Your name-*

Starting out at any job is never a smooth ride. Dealing with difficult situations and people will always be part of the job. But if you have the passion to continue pursuing an online career, any challenges that you face will become easier to handle. You will also take the initiative to improve yourself as you go on.

If you any further questions, feel free to contact us at <u>support@onlinejobs.ph</u>. We will be glad to be of assistance to you in any way.

Thank you for reading!