DIGITAL LABOR BROKERAGE:
INTERMEDIATION AND ORGANIZATION IN THE PH PLATFORM ECONOMY

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FOCUS

Platform labor is constituted by the interconnectedness of global and local infrastructures; technology and human interaction that shape the labor arrangements between workers and clients and among workers in the platform economy

Highlights the *platform brokerage ecosystem* and the capacity of multiple actors to broker labor relationships that shape platform work experience of workers

- Online Freelancing and Digital Labor in the Philippines, British Council - Newton Institutional Links (Feb 2015 - Jan 2017) – with Dr Jonathan Ong and Dr Jason Cabanes
  - 49 cloudworkers, platform owners, collective space ethnographies, Metro Manila
  - 4 FGDs

- Between Global Aspirations and Local Realities: A Viable Future for Digital Labour in Philippine Regional Cities– DLSU (March 2019-Feb 2021) – with Dr Jason Cabanes and Dr Rabby Lavilles
  - 41 online freelancing leaders/influencers and workers in Iligan and Cebu; collective space ethnographies
  - 3 FGDs

- Digital Transaction Platforms and Ecosystems in Asia, Australia Research Council (Aug 2023-present)
  - Ongoing, 27 cloudworkers and agency owners and AI data workers (of 50 platform workers in the PH)
  - 1 FGD

Find your perfect freelancer

upwork

Platform

Client

Worker

POINT OF REFERENCE FOR THE ANALYSIS OF LABOR MANAGEMENT HAS BEEN THE GLOBAL PLATFORM

- Skill-level required, i.e. high, medium, low (Eurofund, 2018)

- Task scale, i.e. cloudwork, microwork (Eurofund, 2018)

- Type of service/activities (Rani et al, 2021; De Stefano and Aloisi, 2018)

- Matching model, i.e. bidding, directory listing, context, algorithmic (Eurofund, 2018, Rani et al 2021; Schmidt, 2017)

- Who initiates transactions (Howcraft and Bergvall-Kåreborn (2018)

- How tasks are cascaded i.e. individual or crowd (Schmidt, 2017; Heeks 2016)

- Payment model, i.e. per task or per drop (Howcraft and Bergvall-Kåreborn, 2018, De Stefano and Aloisi, 2018)

- Language of platform (Stephany, Kassi, Rani, Lehdonvirta (2021)

Platform dependence → Platform independence

Platform
Upwork, Fiverr, Rev

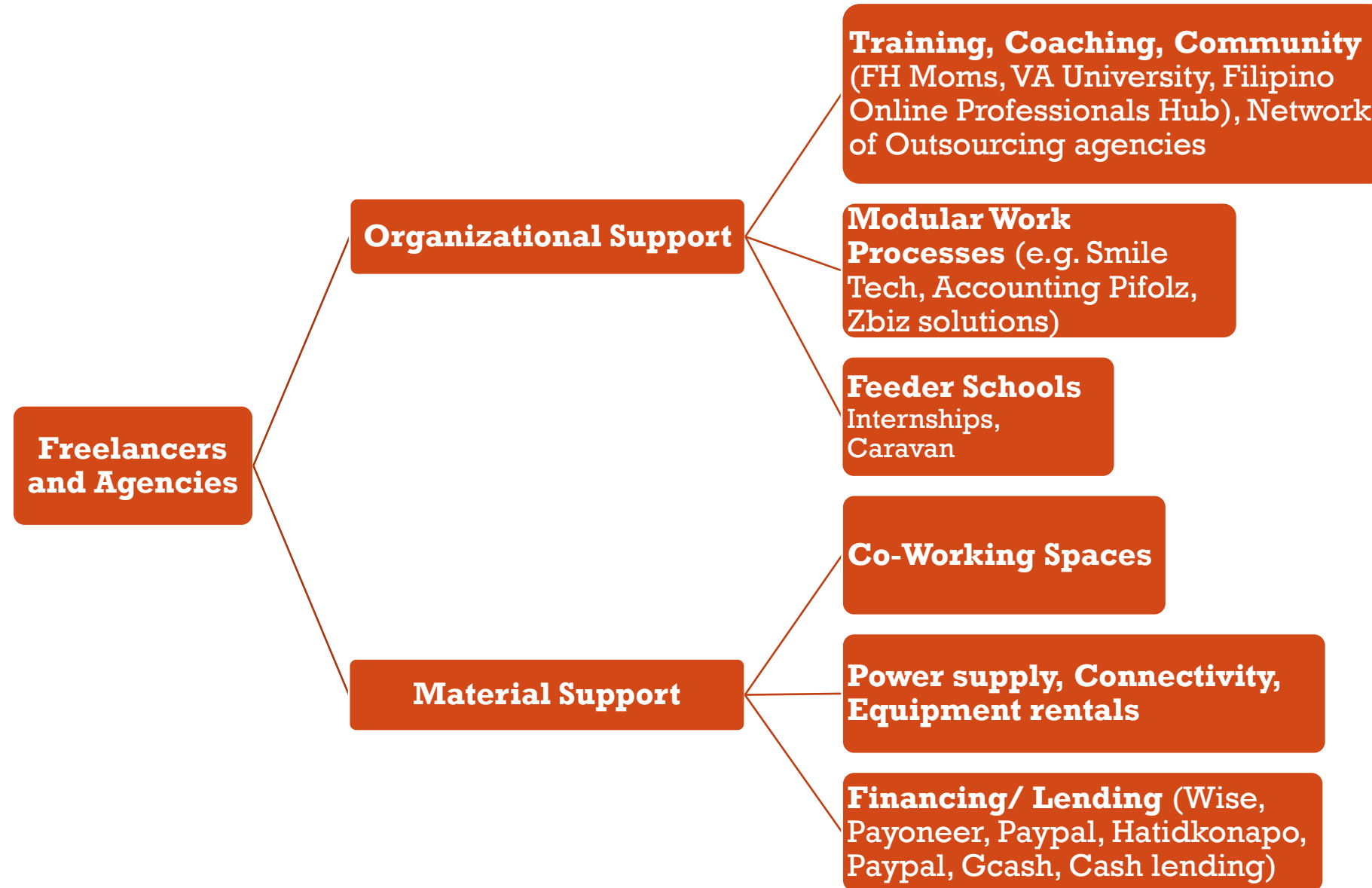**Worker agencies**
Individual freelancers

Local Platforms
GetHired

Platform Outsourcing Agency
Barangay VA, Coconut, Home Service VA

Platform cooperatives and social enterprises
Wrup Up (inactive), Connected women, FOPSCo

Platform-independent agency
E-Strat Marketing, Third Team Media

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Solidaristic Formations among Cloud Workers in the Platform Economy: Entrepreneurial Logics with Resistant Identities

Cheryll Ruth Soriano (De La Salle University)
Jason Vincent A. Cabañes (De La Salle University)

SOURCE OF VARIATIONS

- Nature and scale of tasks

- Matching strategy (algorithmic vs bidding vs manual vs hybrid)

- Business model (for profit or coop)

- Client recruitment (via platform vs direct)

- Labor arrangement (full-time, gig-based)

- Compensation model (platform-based vs manual)

- Formality (i.e. business registration)

- Geographic tethering

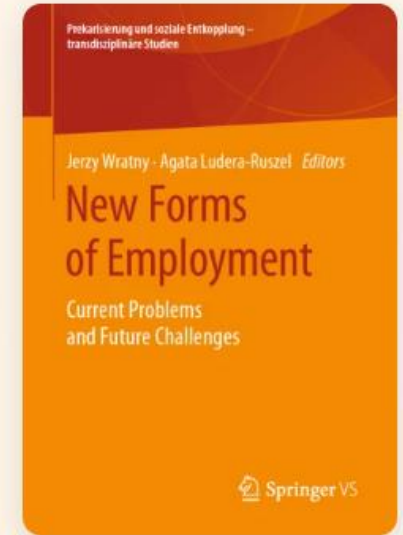- Dependency on global platform and logics
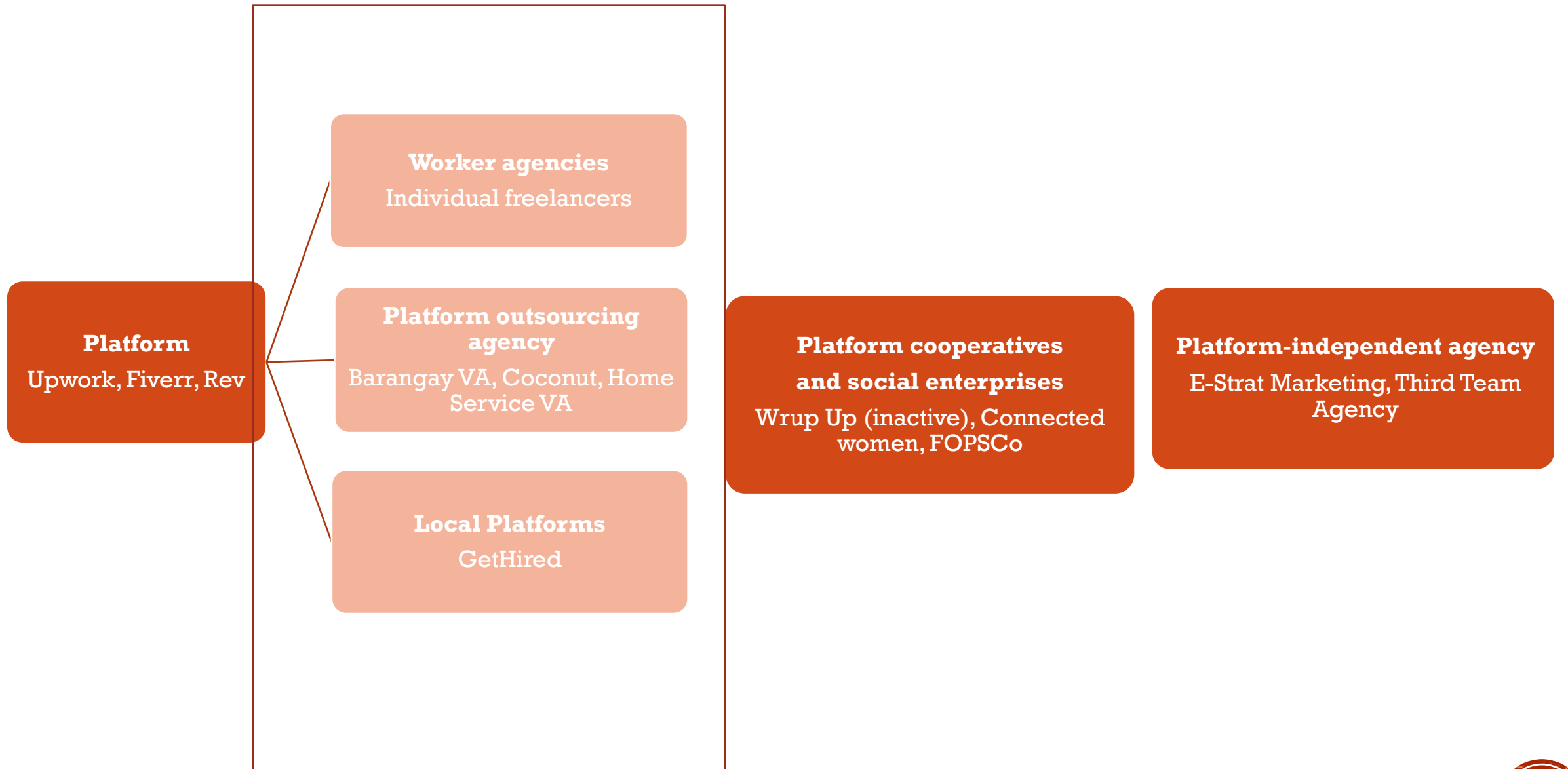
The Changing Nature of Labour Intermediation. Do Algorithms Redefine Temporary Agency Work?

(A) MAKE VISIBLE HIDDEN INFORMATION; CONNECT DISPERSED INFORMATION AND PACKAGE THIS INFORMATION FOR GREATER VALUE

A CENTRAL POINT FOR ENACTING SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL TRANSACTIONS, ESPECIALLY WHEN GROUPS "MONOPOLIZE GOODS OR INFORMATION AND RESTRICT ACCESS TO OUTSIDERS" (STOVEL AND SHAW, 2012: 140)
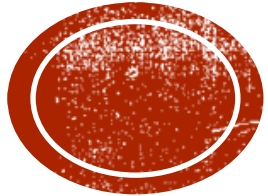
(B) CONNECT DISCONNECTED ENTITIES

BECOMES "ONE OF A SMALL NUMBER OF MECHANISMS BY WHICH DISCONNECTED OR ISOLATED INDIVIDUALS (OR GROUPS) CAN INTERACT ECONOMICALLY, POLITICALLY, AND SOCIALLY (STOVEL AND SHAW, 2012: 142).

TRADITIONS OF BROKERAGE

DIGITAL LABOR BROKERAGE (LABOR INTERMEDIATION WITHIN THE PLATFORM ECONOMY)
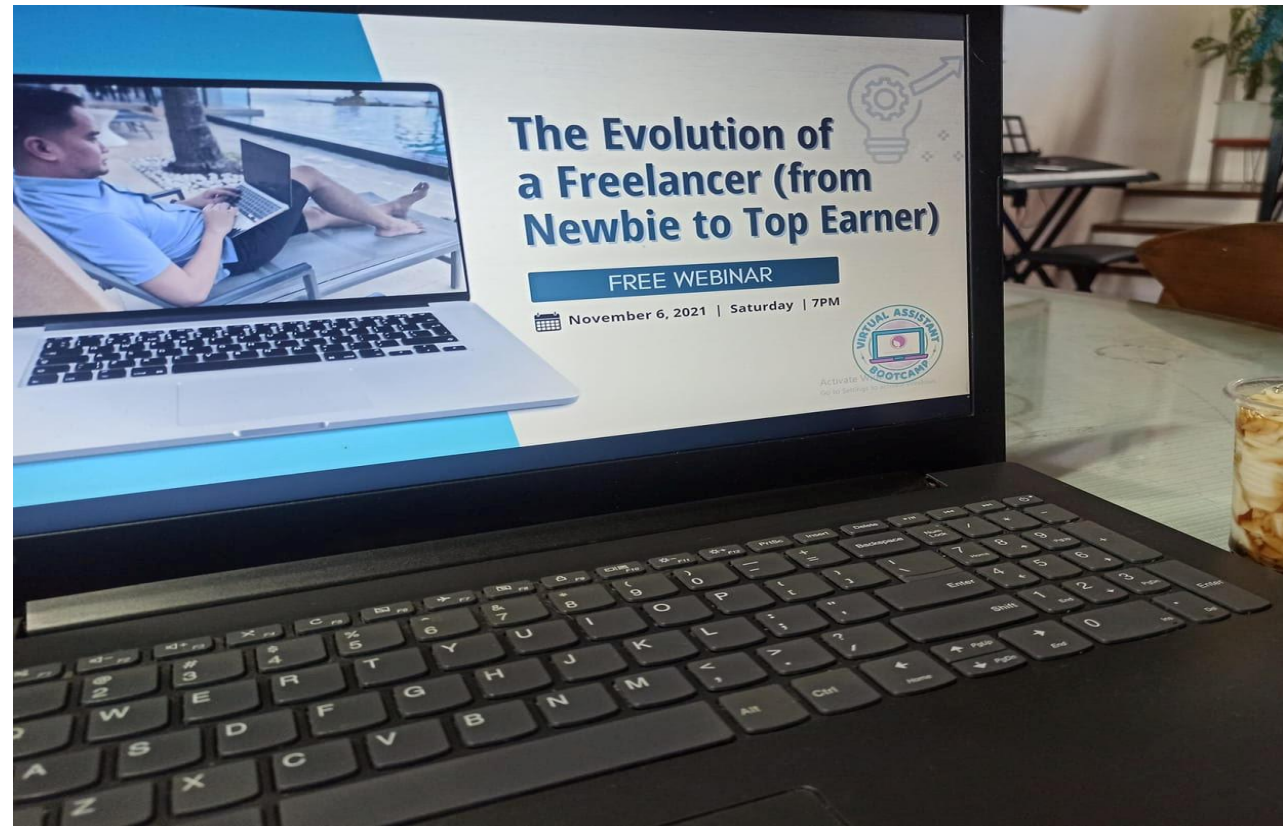
I. Skill and community making

II. Re-outsourcing

SKILL AND COMMUNITY MAKING

- Play a crucial role in bridging platforms and workers (informally)

- Strong perceived worker bias and cohesion

AMBIGUITIES AND CHALLENGES IN PLATFORM LABOR

- Expertise building
- Portfolio building and expertise selling
- Rate identification vs specialization level
- Relationship building
- Language fluency / cultural flexibility
- Client negotiation
- Reputation management
- Platform navigation
- Complaint mechanisms
- Continued learning / platform diversification
- Sustainability
- Overall prospects and viability

Online Filipino Freelancers
Group
Online Filipino Freelancers is a group made for online freelancers by on...
25 unread posts
✓ Joined

Filipino Freelancer Online Home Based Job (Upwork, Elance, oDesk etc)
Group
This group is for all Filipino Freelancer seeking to find a Home-based jo...
25 unread posts
✓ Joined

FreeLancers In the Philippines (FLIP) - by Jason Dulay
Group
For Pinoys who either work from home or are interested in learning mor...
25 unread posts
✓ Joined

Filipino Online Freelancers
Group
For Online Freelancing Only....
21 unread posts
✓ Joined

Filipino Freelancers with Australian Clients
Group
Welcome to the community of Filipino Freelancers with Australian Client...
25 unread posts
✓ Joined

PINOY ONLINE HOMEBASED JOBS (Legit, No Scammers Allowed)
Group
To provide the most legitimate and the best online jobs for all the Pilipin...
570 posts a day
+ Join

FILIPINO VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS
+ Join

ONLINE FILIPINO FREELANCING SOCIAL MEDIA GROUPS

How to Retain Existing Clients Long Term | Online Job Virtual Assistant [CC English Subtitle]

855 views • 2 years ago

Are **you** struggling to retain your **clients**? I've shared my 3 hacks on how to retain your existing **clients** for **long term** projects. Work .

CC

Building Client Relationships Remotely (A Filipino-English Podcast) Episode 42

25 views • Streamed 1 year ago

Building client relationships remotely is very important if we want to have a lasting working relationship with them. We prefer and

HOW TO IMPRESS CLIENTS | REACTING TO A COMMENT| FREELANCING TIPS

989 views • 1 year ago

antos
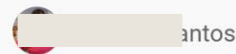
How to impress clients? let me answer a comment and share some advice especially on how to impress and get clients even you ...

CC

ONLINE FREELANCE TIPS

Top Filipino Freelancer Influencers
you should follow

ENTREPRENEURIAL SOLIDARITIES

RE-OUTSOURCING AS BROKERAGE

MATCHES SELLERS AND BUYERS OF LABOR

The Philippines

38,742 Jobseekers
Signed Up Last Month.

🔍 Search Filipino Resumes

MOST RECENT RESUMES CREATED

Amazon FBA Virtual Manager
More than a year of experience as a Amazon Virtual Manager

💲 Php 30,000.00 ($633 USD)

See More

Customer Service Representative
9 years as a Customer Service Representative

💲 Php 25,000.00 ($528 USD)

6,003 Employers
Signed Up Last Month.

🔍 Search for Jobs

MOST RECENT JOBS POSTED

Market research analyst [Freelance]

Posted on Sep 15, 2020

💲 USD 200$

Graphic Mug/Tee Shirt Designer. [Freelance]

Posted on Sep 15, 2020

💲 $50

2015: WORKER RE-OUTSOURCES PARCELS OF PROJECTS TO PERSONAL NETWORK

- Draws from social influence through platforms
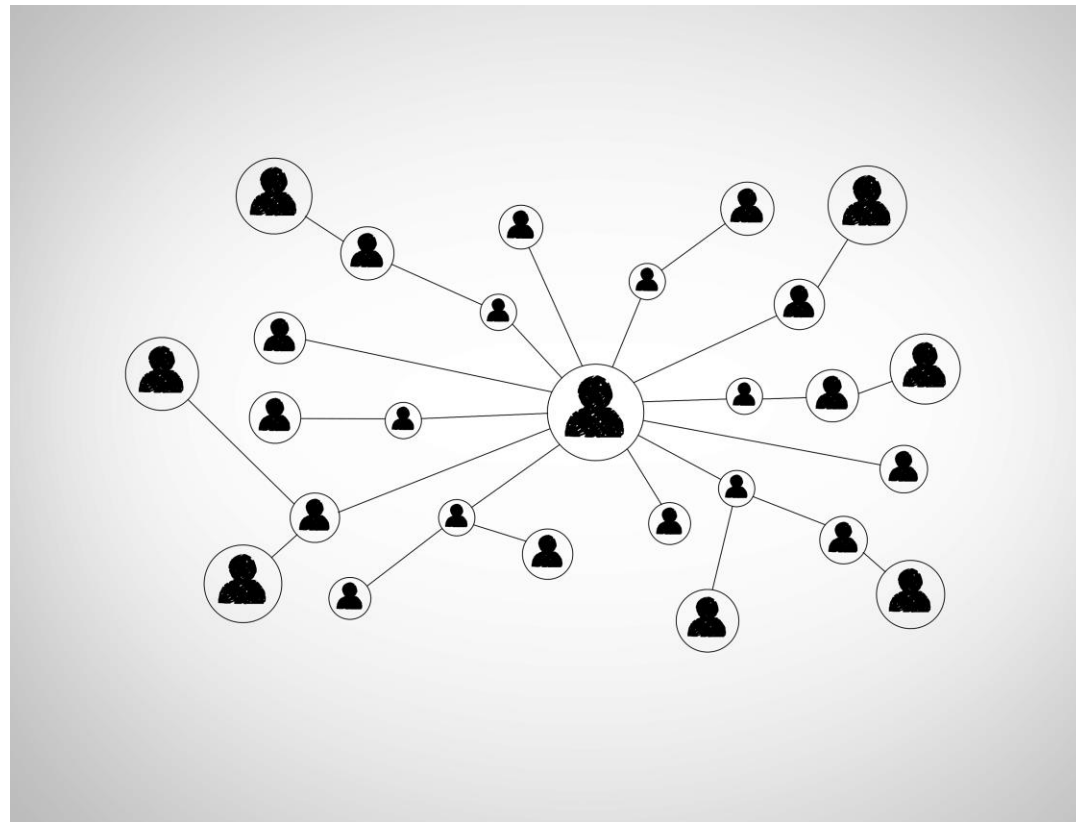
2016 – ONWARDS: LOCAL LABOR OUTSOURCING THROUGH 'OUTSOURCING-AGENCIES'

Firm usually based in more developed countries (but not exclusively anymore)

Global labor platform

Client

Worker

AGENCY

Worker

Worker

Worker

Worker
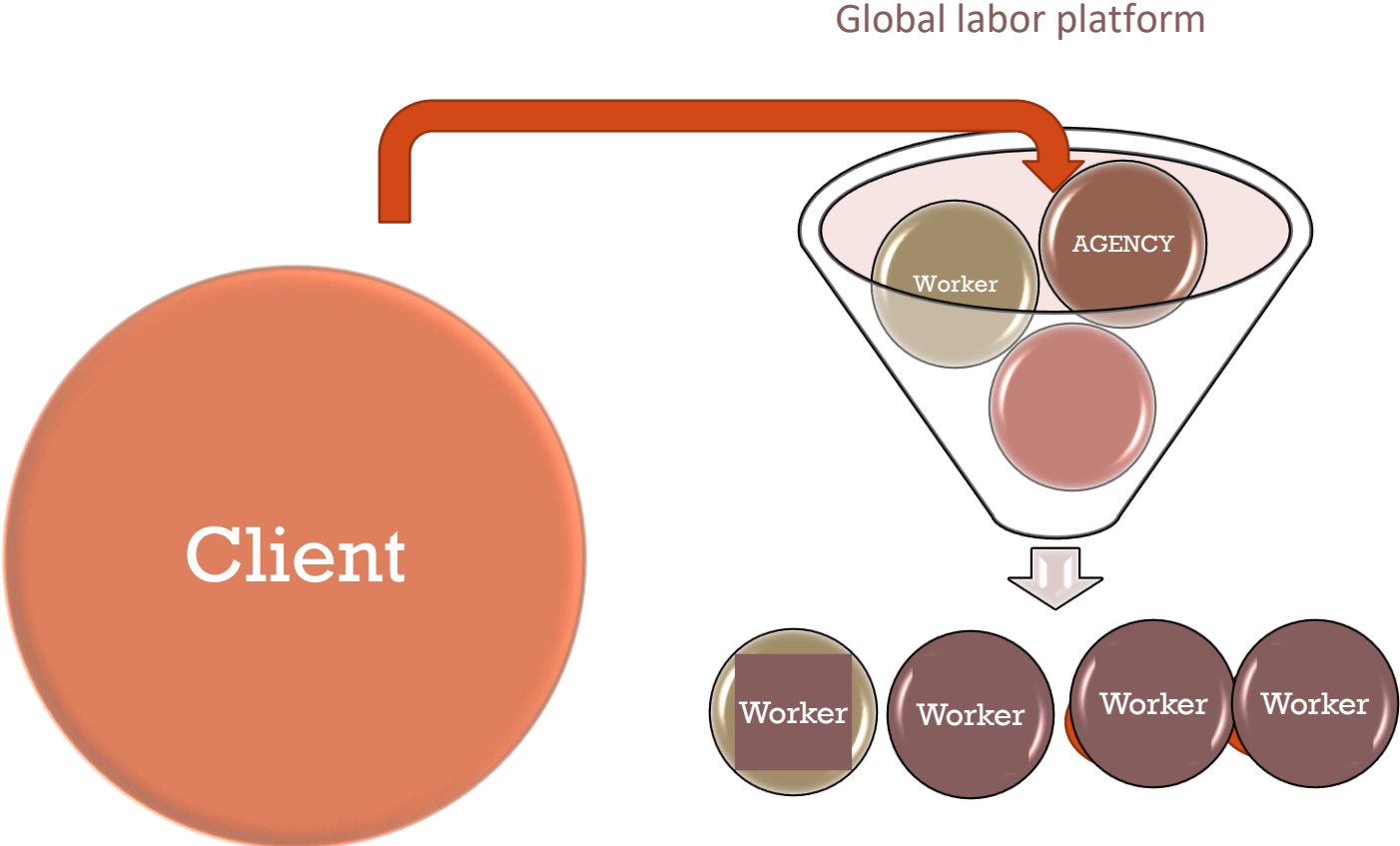
RISE OF RE-OUTSOURCING AGENCIES

Freelancers and Agencies

- Scale Expert
- VA Service Provider
- VA Coconut
- Home Service VA
- Vavavoom.ph
- Virtualahan
- RYU Data Center

VaVaVoom Job Application Form

***The job positions are open to Filipino citizens who are residing in the Philippines.

About Us
Awaken 2 Business is a young and thriving company providing a range of services to property investors based in the UK.

We have a number of branded services the main one being VaVaVoom where we mentor clients in how to systemise their business and recruit for them Virtual Assistants working from the Philippines to undertake the day to day tasks. We also provide free training services to people in the Philippines who want to work as Virtual Assistant.

More recently we have started to create websites and marketing media for our clients.

Website
https://vavavoom.solutions/

cheryllsoriano@gmail.com Switch account

The name and photo associated with your Google account will be recorded when you upload files and submit this form. Only the email you enter is part of your response.

* Indicates required q

Email *

COCONUT VA

Coconut VA Application Form

Congratulations on making it through our pre-qualifying quiz! Please fill out the form below so we can get more details on your skills and experience for further screening.

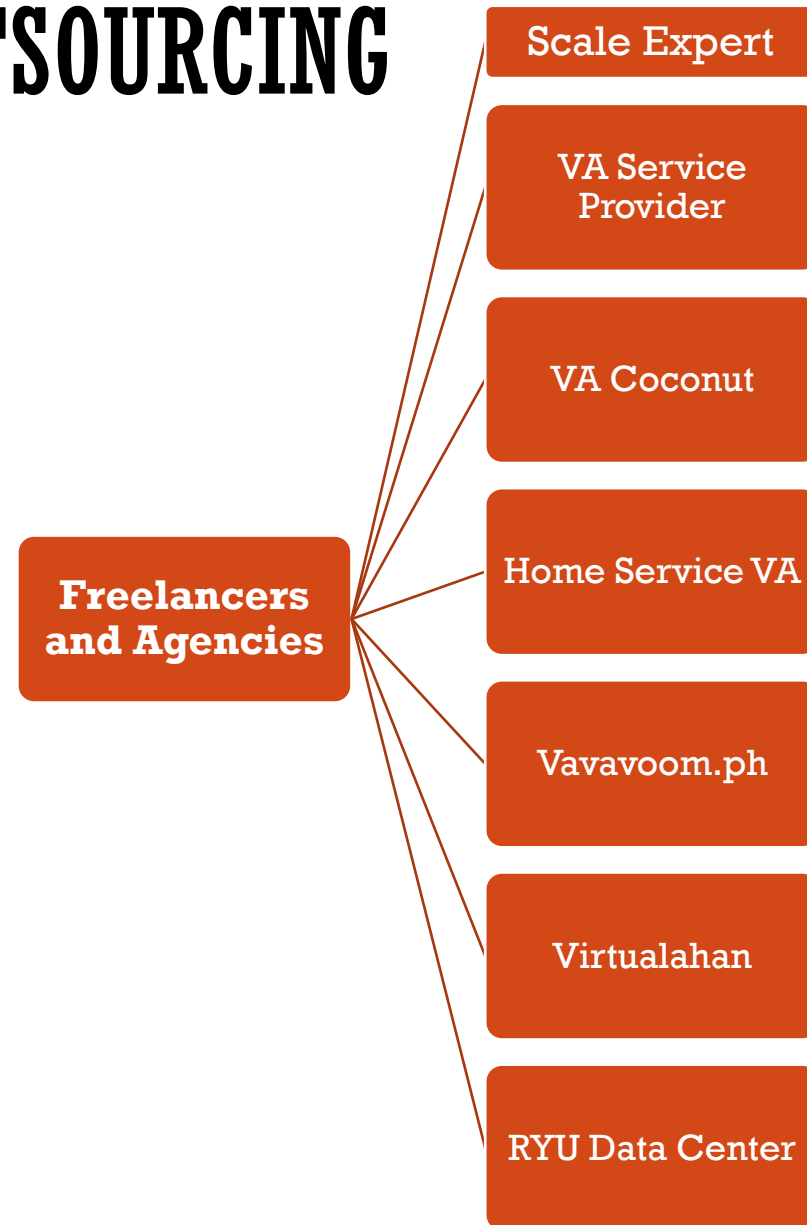Please read and follow directions carefully. Submissions with missing requirements and with CV/resumes not following the template will automatically be disqualified by the system.

1. Full Name*

2. Gender*

3. Where are you based in the Philippines?*

VA SOURCER

Let me help you find qualified Filipino Virtual Assistants for your clients!

As More Work Moves Online, The Threat of 'Digital Sweatshops' Looms

EMIKO JOZUKA
Apr 12 2017, 7:46am

For some in developing countries, virtual assembly lines of data entry have parallels with bricks-and-mortar factories. Image: Shutterstock

SIDE GIG

GETHIRED

Agency Models based on Traits

With training or no?

Does the agency offer any skilling or training prior to the formal start of contractors working for them?

How formal vs. informal? Government supported?

Is the agency registered?

Does the agency have any payment platforms or accounts under its organization name?

Agencies are self organizing. Global dynamics locally unfolds in agencies

Employee size?

Is the agency ran by just one or two people, or a larger team?

Physical space?

Do they coordinate physically or remotely?

Payment terms?

Do they pay contractors per hour or per output/ project?

Does the agency obfuscate the actual amount a client pays to them from contractors?

Payment rate split?

Do they pay their contractors at least half of the client payment?

Agency niche?

Does the agency focus on a specific niche of worker or subsector?

RE-OUTSOURCING AGENTS BECOME PLATFORMS OR PLATFORM INDEPENDENT COMPANIES

(OPAQUE?) LABOR (RE)INTERMEDIATION

'Organizes' labor and worker-client arrangements

- Client – worker transparency

- Job and worker visibility

- Pricing and compensation models

- Evaluation and mechanisms for redress

Power and communicative imbalances

Agency Models based on Traits

With training or no?
John T

Does the agency offer any skilling or training prior to the formal start of contractors working for them?
John T

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John T

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John T

'PRECARITY' VS 'THE GOOD LIFE'
--NUANCED – DEPENDING ON WHERE ONE IS IN THE CHAIN

DIFFERENTIATED EXPERIENCE OF FREELANCERS

Conditions of platform labour	Variable conditions of freelancers
Seasonality of work 'Labour arbitrage' (Graham et al 2017)-buy labor where cheapest -Oversupply of workers and competition	• Develop management expertise • Maintain large client/project portfolio through reputation management • Cultivate skill expertise • Long-term client through relationship management • Diversify skills and platforms
Material cost - Matching commissions - Connects	
Platform dynamics - Technological distance – fully digitally mediated - Cultural distance - Power distance – curating worker dispensability vs client prominence	

WHY DOES IT MATTER TO SEGREGATE THE CATEGORY "REMOTE WORKING" BEYOND SIZE OR SKILL (I.E. CLOUDWORK VS MICROWORK)?

- Mapping to include workers of different categories within *different contracting arrangements in the ecosystem* can provide needs-based solutions instead of a blanket solution
  - Know targets of policy (global, local, company/community, individual)

- Understand worker conditions and rights and protections across layers (and sublayers) of intermediation

- Consultations with leading groups of cloudworkers at every stage of policy-making, not just in the beginning

WHY USEFUL TO MAP THE ECOSYSTEM OF BROKERAGE DYNAMICS

- Constituted by the interconnectedness of global and local; technology and vibrancy of Filipino worker sociality and entrepreneurship

- Map out the largely unseen and unregulated sub-economy to mitigate against abuses

- Show divergences: Those that operate to sustain or challenge the power embedded in global platforms (local possibilities)

- Strengthen the ecosystems of support

THANK YOU

Our related works:

Soriano, C (2023). Solidarity and Resistance Meet Social Enterprise: The Social Logic of Alternative Cloudwork Platforms. *International Journal of Communication.* (open access)

Chen, Y. & Soriano, C.R (2022). How do workers survive and thrive in the platform economy? Evidence from China and Philippines. In Graham, M. & Ferrari. F. (eds), *Digital Work in the Planetary Market.* MIT Press. (open access).

Soriano, C. (2022). Class formation and relations among Filipino cloudworkers. In Ness, E. (Ed), *Routledge Handbook on the Gig Economy.* Routledge. Open access preprint.

Soriano, C. & Cabanes, JVC. (2022). Solidaristic formations among cloudworkers in the platform economy: Entrepreneurial logics with resistant identities. In T. Flew (Ed.), *SAGE Handbook of the Digital Media Economy.* Sage.

Soriano, C.R. (2021). Digital Labour in the Philippines: Emerging Forms of Brokerage. *Media International Australia*.

Soriano, C., Cabalquinto, E. & Panaligan, J.H. (2021). Performing 'digital labor bayanihan': Strategies of influence and survival in the platform economy. *Sociologias*.

Soriano, C. & Cabanes, JV. (2020). Entrepreneurial solidarities: Social media collectives and Filipino digital platform workers. *Social Media + Society* https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120926484

Soriano, CR & Cabanes, JV. (2020). Between 'world class work' and 'proletarianised labor': Digital labor imaginaries in the Global South. In E.Polson, L. Schofield-Clarke, R. Gajjala (Eds). *Routledge Companion to Media and Class* (pp 213-225). Routledge.

Soriano, CR & Panaligan, J.C. (2019). 'Skill-makers' in the platform economy: Transacting digital labor. In A. Athique & E. Baulch). *Digital Transactions in Asia: Economic, Informational, and Social Exchanges* (pp 172-191). Routledge