

## HOME BASED SERVICE CONTRACTING: THE CASE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN ONE CITY OF NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

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### Abstract

This research paper examined the experiences of home-based online service providers. The study was done through a series of interviews with Information Technology graduates who are into the following home-based online jobs: medical transcription, online teaching, and web design. The data on detailed experiences of the respondents was based on the marketing, management, production/technical, and financial aspects of the business organization. A qualitative research design using the case study approach was used in this study. The thematic approach was used in data explication. The rigor of the findings was established using member checks for credibility, rich description for transferability, code-recode strategy for dependability, and audit trail for confirmability. It was found out that technological innovation influences business performance. Development and marketing strategies will then be established and implemented to achieve their objectives. Their effectiveness depends on how they have established the mission and objectives, corporate resources, and personnel involved. The findings showed that the respondents' observation of the policies of the company aligned with the government system of the country. Their implications and effects, both positive and negative, on an organization's development, efficiencies, and productivity were also highlighted. Marketing strategies cannot be established without a comprehensive analysis of the market, competition in the market, and consumer needs and consumer preference, and how changes in the business model influence technological innovation.

**Keywords:** Information Technology, Online, Service, Innovation.

### Introduction

Organizational success largely depends on determining the needs and wants of target markets and delivering satisfaction to those markets/consumers more effectively and efficiently than competitors do [13].

Technology has significantly changed how people interact with one another and the world around them, and one of them is home-based online services opportunities. Home-based online service contracting may include older workers, married workers, parents, and young professionals. Younger professionals whose social lives are more connected to the office tend not to want to work from home as much [16] (Sciadas, 2012).

Right now the employees who spend significant amounts of time working from home are on either end of the income spectrum: per-hour workers like call center agents, proofreaders, online teachers, and web developers, whose output can easily track and young professionals who are highly self-motivated [6] (Claburn, 2014).

The role of information technology in the labor market for both employees and employers, the influence of a general-purpose Information and Communications Technology (ICT) system for accessing and propagating this information, and the economics of the available information. These studies confirm that the availability and accessibility of information, enhance the growth of the labor market, increase the probability for the employee to find the right opportunity, and assist firms to find the most qualified individuals. Internet job search is most widespread among the unemployed, and lower among individuals who are out of the labor force, compared to those who are employed or still active in the workforce. Regardless of labor force status, most internet job searches occur from home [10] (Kuhn, 2010).

Moreover, changing the meaning of home office is the combination of work at home. It is also changing the meaning of work itself. With mobile technology readily available, "office" space is no longer relegated to a spare room or basement enclave, and "work" is no longer limited to employment-related tasks. In short, the home office, enabled and untethered by technology, has

expanded its reach throughout the home, reflecting the ongoing blurring of the lines that separate home life from work life [17] (Theckedath, Dillan and Thomas, Terrence J., 2012).

The researcher, who is an educator in Information Technology wanted to describe in detail the experiences of home-based online services providers; describe the advantages and disadvantages as well as overcoming the challenges of home-based contracting services, hence this study conceived.

## **Methods and Findings**

### **Research Design**

The researcher used a qualitative research design using a case study approach. The purpose of this method is to guide the researcher in identifying the key elements for designing recommendations for writing the research questions, developing propositions, determining the "case" understudy, binding the case, and a discussion of data sources and triangulation [5] (Baxter and Jack 2011; Altheide, 2013).

### **Research Locale**

The study was conducted in Bacolod City wherein conversation partners who are graduates of Bachelor of Science in Information Technology and Bachelor of Science in Computer Science who are engaged in a home-based online service provider.

### **Conversation Partners**

The conversation partners of this study include home-based online service providers in web design, encoding, medical transcriptions, tutorials, and advertising. The inclusion criteria were as follows: an Information Technology graduate; a young professional or at least 20 years old; single; alumni of AMA Computer College - Bacolod and a home-based online service provider.

### **Gatekeeper**

The gatekeeper for this study was the former dean of AMA Computer College in Bacolod City because he knew the key informant and persons involved in the process of the study.

[15] Saunders (2016) wrote: Gatekeeper is the person who controls research access or the person within a group or community who makes the final decision as to whether to allow the researcher access to undertake the research. At times, researchers are faced with challenges when access is obstructed, which can then seriously threaten the progress of the study. This can occur despite having approval and access obtained for studies through formal routes. The challenges to the researchers can come from different levels of

access such as institutional, group, and individual levels [1] (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

### **Data Gathering Instrument**

The data gathering instrument included the most common sources of data collection in qualitative research that include interviews (at least three times).

A semi-structured questionnaire developed by the researcher served as an interview guide using the person-to-person format and open-ended questions and in conversational format [14] (Neuman & Lawrence, 2015).

The interview guide questionnaires contained forty-two (42) items that covered the different aspects of the business namely: marketing, production/technical, management, and financial aspect.

There was a use of a voice recorder [8] (Emerson, 2011) where the researcher recorded their reactions, concerns, and speculations served as the materials for preserving the entire verbal part of the interview for results and analysis.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The following procedures in the data gathering procedure:

A letter of permission explaining the purpose of the study was sent to a home-based online service provider for approval. Upon approval, the researcher identified key informants of the study. An interview schedule was set by the researcher and informed consent was signed by the participants, and the researcher proceeded to the proper interview.

Interviews and document analysis were used by the researcher to collect the data needed.

Interviewing is a valuable assessment tool because it allows the participant to share their experiences, attitudes, and beliefs in their own words. The use of direct quotations in the assessment findings helps the researcher present an accurate depiction of what is being evaluated [12] (Miles, Huberman, & Sal Dana, 2014).

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews involving some planning, but there is the freedom to vary the course of the interview based on the participant's responses.

All the recorded interviews gathered by the researcher were analyzed to the research objectives. Results of the interview were analyzed and interpreted using qualitative analysis in the form of discussion based on the actual responses of the

participant on the three (3) interviews done by the researcher.

### **Trustworthiness of Findings**

The trustworthiness of the findings was substantiated by four (4) criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. It also uses the triangulation technique, use of contradictory evidence, respondent validation, and constant comparison [7] (Creswell, 2011). The trustworthiness of the results is the bedrock of high-quality qualitative research.

Credibility deals with the focus of the research and refers to confidence in how well data and processes of analysis address the intended focus or it is the ability to capture the multiple realities of the purpose of the study. This can be done on the following strategies: selection of context, participants and approach to gathering data; investigators with various perspectives; prolonged engagement; triangulation; peer-debriefing and member checks [11] (Merriam, S. B 2014).

Member checking is considered a single most important provision that can be made to bolster a study's credibility. Checks relating to the accuracy of the data may take place "on the spot" in the course, and at the end, of the data collection dialogues [2] (Anney, 2014).

Member checks, also known as participant or respondent validation, are a technique for exploring the credibility of results. Data and results are returned to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences. Member checks are often mentioned as one in a list of validation techniques. Member checks address the co-constructed nature of knowledge by providing participants with the opportunity to engage with, and add to, interview and interpreted data, several days after their semi-structured interview.

Thus this method was used by the researcher to establish the credibility of the instrument which can be established through interview questions updates based on initial findings or emerging concepts from raw data to final results.

Transferability is the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other settings/groups; theoretical, analytical generalizations and such theory is applicable beyond the study sample to similar situations, questions, and problems, regardless of the demographic characteristics of the participants. The researcher can give suggestions about transferability, but it is the reader's decision whether or not the findings are transferable to another context. It is the fit of the topic or the

comparability of the problem that is of concern [14] (Neuman & Lawrence, 2015).

Transferability can be achieved through a clear description of the research, the participants' perspectives and experiences, methodology, interpretation of results, and contributions of the participant as an instrument in the process, relationships between the researcher and participants enhance transferability Rich Description.

Dependability refers to the ability of the researcher to account for the constantly changing conditions of the phenomenon studied, for the interaction with study participants, and the entire research process carried out with an emergent design. The code-recode strategy involves the researcher coding the same data three (3) times, giving one or one week gestation period between each coding. Compare the results from the three codings to see if the results are the same or different. The code recode strategy is also referred to as code agreement, whereby the research process allows multiple observations by the researcher, suggesting that the inter-rater or inter-observer code the data and compare the coding done by the inter-rater [3] (Ary et al., 2010). If the coding results are in agreement, it enhances the dependability of the qualitative inquiry. This helps the researcher gain a deep understanding of data patterns and improves the presentation of participants' narrations.

Confirmability is founded on the acknowledgment that research is never objective. It deals with the main issue that "findings should signify", as far as possible, the specific situation being investigated as opposed to the beliefs, pet theories, or biases of the researcher. It is according to the perspective that the integrity of results is based on the data and that the investigator must properly tie together the data, analytic processes, and findings in a manner that the reader is in a position to confirm the adequacy of the findings [9] (Holloway & Wheeler, 2012; Macnee & McCabe, 2014).

Confirmability in this study was achieved through an audit trail, an audit trail (e.g., different types of personal notes) is a technique wherein another researcher should be able to follow the "decision trail" used by the researcher [19] (Yin, 2014). Audit trails are simply records kept of how qualitative studies are conducted. The audit trail should include all field notes and any other records kept of what the researcher does, sees, hears, thinks, etc. The field notes contain most of these details or at least an index of documents that contain them. These notes not only describe where the researcher is to what she or he is observing or participating in, and what is being learned; but they also describe

the researcher's thoughts about how to proceed with the study, sampling decisions, ethical concerns, and so on. The audit trail may be used by the researcher to review what has been done, and to consider alternative plans, in addition to serving in the dependability and confirmability audit functions.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

Qualitative data analysis involves the identification, examination, and interpretation of patterns and themes in textual data and determines how these patterns and themes help answer the research questions at hand [18] (Trochim, 2016).

A careful description of the data and the development of categories in which to place behaviors or processes have proven to be important steps in the process of analyzing the data. The data may then be organized around certain topics, key themes, or central questions, and finally, the data need to be examined to see how far they fit or fail to fit the expected categories.

Interpretation of the data is the act of identifying and explaining the core meaning of the data. Organizing and connecting emerging themes, sub-themes, and contradictions to get the bigger picture-what it all means, guiding the researcher to think about how best to integrate data from multiple sources and methods. Interpretation of data can also help the researcher in generalization-providing answers to questions of social and theoretical significance and ensuring credible or trustworthy interpretation.

Thematic analysis was used in this study and focused on examining themes within data and the following steps were utilized by the researcher in the data analysis procedure:

A recording is the initial phase in the thematic analysis is for researchers to familiarize themselves with the data. The researcher recorded the responses made by the respondents in a reflective journal, along with a description of what each statement means, and provided detailed information as to how and why data were combined, what questions the researcher is asking of the data, and how these data are related.

Transcribing was done after completing data collection where the researcher begins transcribing the data into written form. Transcribed data came from voice-recorded interviews. After this stage, the researcher should feel familiarized with the content of the data and should be able to identify overt patterns or repeating issues in one or more interviews.

Cleaning and data simplification where the researcher did include a process of indexing the data texts which came from the interview transcripts, or other documents.

Each data is being coded to guide the researcher on themes and considering what works and what does not work within themes enables the researcher to begin the analysis of potential codes.

The data was chunked to give way to the coding process of breaking data up through analytical ways and to produce questions about the data, providing temporary answers about relationships within and among the data

In the clustering stage, the researcher classified all the data gathered from the responses and reduced these classes or categories in which the researcher can identify segments of the data that share a common category or code.

Analysis and interpretation were done by examining how codes combine to form over-reaching themes in the data and the researcher came up with a list of themes and began to focus on broader patterns in the data, combining coded data with proposed potential themes.

After the final themes have been reviewed, the researcher performed the process of writing the final report. While writing the final report, the researcher decided on themes that made meaningful contributions to answer research questions posed in the research study.

### **Result and Discussion**

The detailed results of the interviews permitted the researcher to quickly identify responses from the categories of marketing, management, production/technical, and financial aspects of home-based online service providers as a reason for the home-based employee's satisfaction and the range of possible responses from participants and isolate subjective perceptions from the actual events and experiences that have shaped them. The researcher collected detailed personal responses through a series of interviews

This approach capitalizes on what Maxwell (2012) has identified as the principal strengths of qualitative research: the capacity to examine, the meaning for participants of the events, situations, and actions in which they are involved. A particular context within which participants act and how the context influences their actions. Unanticipated phenomena and influences, which emerge spontaneously in open-ended interviews. The process by which events and activities take place. Complex underlying relationships and interacting

responses of home-based contracting employees/respondents. Data was coded and aggregated to reveal result patterns in each aspect of the operation. Coded data, moreover, provide context and detail, showing the chronology and interaction of events that shape the professional lives and influence the decisions of conversation partners through a series of interview responses provided by participants through a discussion guide provided a substantial amount of information to analyze. Further elaboration on the main points became possible through follow-up interviews conducted with the respondents. These interviews also uncovered new themes that had not necessarily come up in the initial interview questions to a final interview.

After the transcribing process, the following is the discussion of how the operation of the business structure evolved as well as the experiences of home-based online service providers and the researcher come up with the eight (8) themes summarized as follows: (1) satisfaction of working conditions among employee; (2) innovation of products and services through technology; (3) marketing strategy for future expansion; (4) factors of effective marketing strategies; (5) role or importance of human resource management in the business organization; (6) desirable working environment, resources and work process; (7) formulation of marketing and promotions of the business; and (8) operational feasibility of the business organization.

The following statements and discussions describe in detail the experiences of home based online service providers in the aspects of marketing, management, production/ technical and financial aspects of the business organization.

### ***Satisfaction of Working Conditions among Employees***

#### **Conversation Partner 1 said that:**

“As a member of the team, I joined the company last 2015, and if I have to choose another job, I still want this job, because, I can manage my time, can save food expenses, and can do my report any time of the day if I want, and I can meet my deadline anytime of the day. I know that this company is stable as my boss observes all the necessary government requirements. It is a unique among jobs because I can say that you have your own and it is very flexible in terms of time and reporting.”

#### **Conversation partner 2 state that:**

“I have been with the company for 2 years, and I still prefer my job because I have

flexible working hours and nobody control my time as long as I want to sit in front of my computer. For me, working home-based is more advantageous because, you don't have to spend on transportation; meal is served fresh and hot and there is always a good pay! I am paid per project of not less than P50,000 per month with some incentives if the client would hire the company again for my services.”

#### **And conversation partner 3 add that:**

“Sometimes, actually I want to work in schools because of the offer especially government schools, but you have so many things to do, unlike my present job, I am the one who manage my time, so yes, I still prefer my present job. I have been with the company for 2 years and, I found that my teaching experiences through online is fun rewarding.

### ***Innovation of Products and Services through Technology***

#### **As stated by one conversation partner that:**

“Through my employer in Canada, a list of customers will directly call me though internet usually Skype and present in visual draft of the web design they want. By creating and updating the layout of a website, it should be attractive while still able to serve the purpose of the website, an understanding of the color and font and how they can be used to enhance a website, ability to organize and structure the website for easy navigation and coding languages, such as CSS, SQL, can increase marketability and value.

#### **Another one conversation partner state that:**

“The existing business has its promotional activities in the United States because using the Internet, the company have created knowledge bases that employees can tap into anytime, anywhere.

### ***Marketing Strategy for Future Expansion***

#### **As uttered by one conversation partner:**

“The computer home based web designing business isn't so much concerned of the segmentation and the people around but the techniques necessary for successful Internet marketing. It's all about knowing what's available, such as SEO, PPC, website promotion and social

networking. Majority of the customer are those who are into advertising of their product and services. Simple and by not making promises to the customers. Through online marketing and developing a separate online marketing plan to evaluate client's options and help implement the strategy is vital in the modern marketplace."

**Another conversation partner said that:**

"Majority of the customer are those who are into advertising of their products and services. Simple and by not making promises to the customers.

**Factors of Effective Marketing Strategy**

**Uttered as by one of the conversation partner:**

"We should have enough knowledge of coding and programming you'll need to stay current on coding and software because there's a lot of competition, newer, easier to use systems and some clients are trying to create their own website. The company should build a website from templates and content management platform and other updated technology in the internet. "

**Another conversation partner added that:**

"The company has a marketing and sales people who will provide the time to identify potential customer demographics in a new service area who will likely have our teaching service and having enough funds to be spent in finding more students to teach. In the social media, I can read that one business owner say, our tutorial services is terrific! It appeals to everyone. There are times that as a business you should have the target market by defining who your primary customers are will be, how old are they, where do they attend school, what is their culture and how they learn subjects in school".

**Role or Importance of Human Resource in the Business Organization**

**A conversation partner 1 reported:**

"I personally apply for a job through email. Then, I was interviewed and hired as a medical transcriptionist after a series of training online, then I have passed the training, and I started working".

**The second conversation partner said:**

"On my part, I hired on the following procedure: The first step is to collect

information about the site's content, audience, goals, and features of the client, as well as beginning a preliminary layout. Listen carefully to the customer's needs, desires and dislikes. Then, site maps form an initial conceptual view of how the site will work. Then followed by directing the site's construction and the final result of this work is the design document in which you will include all of the information you collected from the site, along with the site map. Then the Canada site will check my work and bring the vision that they have produced based on interaction and feedback with the client and if the client agreed, approval will be sent to my email".

**And conversation partner 3 state that:**

"First of all you have a PC, a stable broadband internet connection and a headset. You have install Skype in the PC. My entire application process is done online as well as the registration as online teacher. Requirements submission, screening and training procedures is done via phone and Skype. After agreement is approved, an account in the school where you enrol is installed in the system of your PC at home. The school will assign the specific students and then you will start teaching English".

**Desirable Working Environment, Resources and Work Process**

**One conversation partner shared:**

"I was very thankful that I am one of the chosen employees to work from home or home-based contracting employee and my own personal computer at home and an internet connection was a great source of income. Although I pay for my overhead expenses, I can work at home with no superior and I believed that this company can help me augment my family needs as I have siblings to send to school".

**Another conversation partner uttered that:**

"I have been with the company for 2 years and I found that because that experience happened right into the comfort of my home and I can control my activities at home when I have to. I am allowed to manage my own schedule and choose how many days

and how many hours I will work. In my case, I scheduled myself to teach my students which I have four of them from 6pm to 12pm every day except Sunday”.

**The third conversation partner added that:**

“I don’t like office setting, because you have to spend eight hours, I still prefer my job because I have flexible working hours and nobody control my time as long as I want sit in front of my computer”.

**Formulation of Marketing and Promotions for the Business**

**One of them told the researcher that:**

“I think the billboard and the online ads can help the company acquire customers as majority of the jobs we are doing are also through online”

**And the other one share:**

“An online banner will be more accessible to responses of the clients. Promotional activity is done online and the US office is the one tasked to perform order to compete with the promotions of the other competitors.”

**The third one stated:**

“The office has a marketing and sales people who will provide the time to specifically identify potential customer demographics, in a new service area who will likely have our teaching service and having enough funds to be spent in finding more students to teach, and to meet customers’ needs, you must know who your customers are, what they want, where they live and what they can afford that be found in the internet and social media or online advertising”.

**Operational Feasibility of the Business Organization**

**A conversation partner t suggested that:**

“If the company will adopt more advertisement strategies in the social media and other technological way of communication it will still hire additional workers who will help the company reach its goals”.

**The other one said that:**

“Increase some branches or develop the same company in other countries like Philippines by making innovation on its products and services”.

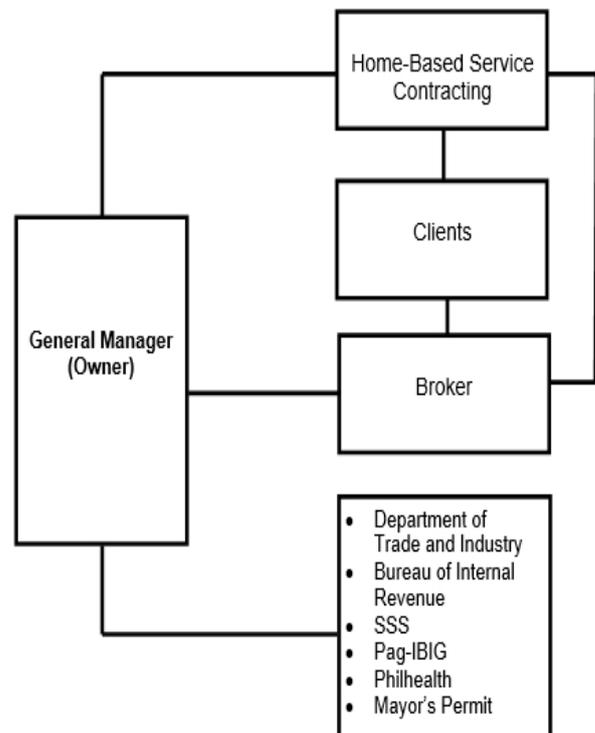
**One tells that:**

“They should have a local bank that will cater all the transactions such as salaries and wages, etc.”

**Business Structure Climate**

The business is a single proprietorship owned by a couple in Bacolod City. It started its operation last January 2012 with working capital of P100, 000.00. The organization was composed of three (3) personnel: a manager and five (5) home-based online services contracting employees. The clients of the company were tied up with an online company based in the USA who served as a broker for all the daily transactions. To date, the company has 20 home-based online services contracting employees.

**BUSINESS STRUCTURE OF THE HOME BASED ONLINE SERVICES CONTRACTING**



**Figure 1: Business Structure**

**CONCLUSION OF FINDINGS AND GENERAL STATEMENTS**

This study has shown that many of the findings of the experiences of home-based online services contractors have a positive effect on their lives as a person. The different aspects of the business: marketing, management, production/technical, and financial had provided the necessary support which served as a key to both attracting and retaining employees and helping them be productive.

Their responses showed that home-based online contracting employees have the tools needed to be involved and productive. By providing technical support in both equipment and training it is crucial and justifiable financially, considering the related costs that can be saved through an online billing and coding procedure.

The employees emphasized that through the existence of this business entity it also denotes that when a company makes their resources and people available, it sends a clear signal that the employee's well-being is a top priority. That kind of a sign is friendly and concerned management may provide a desirable future for people with varying needs and differing expectations.

Commitment, responsibility, and being realistic are some of the important traits that the respondents exhibited during the interview. The findings also indicated that working from home can improve the morale of employees by showing them that their company trusts, respects, and appreciates them and wants to help them pursue the work/life balance they seek.

Among the responses of the conversation, partners are that the most important part of employee empowerment is the inculcation of the values of the company, which is centered towards the excellent service provided to customers and realize the goals and objectives set by the enterprise.

Results further showed that the respondents' observation of the policies of the company agreed to the government system of the country. Their implications and effects, both positive and negative, on an organization's development, efficiencies, and productivity are also highlighted. In some cases, suggestions are made on how to remedy difficulties arising from a production aspect. These were given due in an attempt to reach a corrigible understanding of what can be considered an ideal approach in maintaining home-based contracting performance in an organization. This set of information greatly helped the researcher to understand the study at hand meaningfully.

Development and marketing strategies were then established and implemented to achieve their objectives. Their effectiveness depends on how they establish their mission and purpose, corporate resources, and personnel involved. Also, general and marketing strategies cannot be developed without a comprehensive analysis of the market, competition in the market, and consumers' needs purchasing behavior, and consumer preference [4] (Baker, 2013).

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