



Mr. Matt Barrie

CEO & Chairman, Freelancer.com [Australia]

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ICMA Pakistan: Freelancer.com is considered the world's largest freelancing and crowdsourcing marketplace by the number of users and projects. What was your vision behind forming this platform?

Matt Barrie: I was driven by a vision of creating economic opportunity for talented and ambitious individuals in economically challenged economies.

ICMA Pakistan: Freelancer.com has been working successfully for the last many years and growing at a fast pace. What are the top 5 success indicators behind this sustainable growth?

Matt Barrie: Well, the top five success indicators behind the sustainable growth of Freelancer.com are:

- 1) Number of Registered users
- 2) Number of Jobs posted

- 3) Number of Freelancers earning
- 4) Number of project fee/ project upgrade fee
- 5) Revenue

ICMA Pakistan: COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted businesses around the world. However, it is assumed that the number of freelancing work has surged during this period. How far do you agree with this?

Matt Barrie: As the world rolls into its second year stymied by the Covid-19 pandemic, two major themes have emerged (according to Freelancer.com Q1 2021 Fast 50 Report Analysis):

- a) people are determined to find alternative or replacement income by starting their own projects, and
- b) established businesses are embracing machine learning

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During the global pandemic crisis, there has been no better time to start a side hustle or freelancing work. Now is the time to grab hold of the opportunity presented by freelancing. Multiple income streams have become the way of work, especially for people who lost their jobs during the pandemic.

Not only that, with lockdown and extra time at home, many people have launched e-commerce businesses - and with global online sales booming, their timing could not be better.

2020 and 2021 might have been a year of loss and unfortunate events for many people; however, it also created room for innovation to survive.

The figures from Freelancer.com showed that during the pandemic, the platform has experienced rapid growth throughout 2020. Compared to 2019 performance, in 2020, Freelancer.com hit:

- Increase in posted jobs (up 17%)
- 20% increase in new freelancers earning (changed lives)
- 51% increase in Web Traffic
- 85% increase in Direct Web Traffic
- 22% increase in registered users

In 2020, Freelancer.com ended the year with 50.8 million registered users, adding 8.9 million (up 22%). The number of jobs posted (filtered) totaled 19.1 million on 31 December 2020, adding 2.2 million for the year (up 17%).

In Q1-2021, gross marketplace volume (payments to freelancers) grew at the fastest pace since IPO and was up 23.6%. In this quarter, project fees were up 21.6%, project upgrade fees were up 24.3%. In this quarter, web traffic to Freelancer.com also grew substantially year on year. Users were up 105.7% to 16.4 million for the quarter with sessions up 105.6% to 26.6 million. Direct traffic up 120.1% year on year.

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ICMA Pakistan: What are the top 5 countries whose freelancing projects are uploaded (in terms of amount) and what are the top 5 countries whose freelancers have completed projects on your marketplace in the last one year?

Matt Barrie: The top five most Popular Countries awarding Pakistani freelancers (Last 12 months) on Freelancer.com are:

1. United States
2. India
3. United Kingdom
4. Australia
5. Canada

Top 5 Most Popular Countries Awarded by Pakistan (Last 12 months) on Freelancer.com:

1. Pakistan
2. India
3. Bangladesh
4. United States
5. Egypt

ICMA Pakistan: How many freelancers from Pakistan are the registered users on your marketplace and in what areas they are providing their freelancing services?

Matt Barrie: The total number of Pakistani users on Freelancer.com reached 2.15 million where 2.03 million of them are freelancers. The rest are businesses/employers who have posted projects.

The top 20 skills of Pakistani freelancers on Freelancer.com:

- Data Entry
- Excel
- Copy Typing
- Article Writing

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“I would further advise that the Pakistani finance professionals must use online freelancing marketplaces like the Freelancer.com platform more frequently to seize the bigger opportunity in getting international clients that can be useful for their career growth as well as in earning more income”

- Microsoft Office
- Logo Design
- Photoshop
- Data Processing
- Article Rewriting
- Editing
- Research Writing
- Word
- Graphic Design
- Content Writing
- Copywriting
- HTML (programming)
- PowerPoint
- Web Search
- WordPress
- PHP (programming)

ICMA Pakistan: How far technology like Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain plays a role in enhancing the quality of freelancing work and what advice would you like to give to the new freelancers in this regard?

Matt Barrie: According to Freelancer.com’s Fast 50 Report for Q1-2021, it revealed that blockchain and Artificial Intelligence jobs have become mainstream:

Bitcoin Boom boosts Blockchain

Blockchain Technology had the fastest growth on Freelancer.com in the quarter - up 59% to 2207 jobs. As the underlying technology behind virtual currencies, this growth coincided with the period in which the Bitcoin price went “to the moon” (US\$29,333 to US\$58,000+) and there was intense activity in trading and speculation in the currency.

Artificial Intelligence becoming Mainstream

Developments in AI (artificial intelligence) and machine learning are filtering through to mainstream use with the number of jobs requiring the Deep Learning skill set up 23% to 1,307 jobs.

One job with a budget of US\$3,000 was looking for Freelancers to use AI to automate the analysis of scientific medical publications. The job poster required automation to keep abreast of developments in the 100,000 papers published each year.

Late in Q1 2021, IBM and Freelancer.com posted the Cloud Data Challenge offering US\$40,000 in prize money for the

use of AI to predict real-world outcomes that address the social impact and climate challenges.

(Note: The Freelancer.com Fast 50 Report is a quarter report published by Freelancer.com that tracks 50 fastest growing and declining jobs on the site’s global marketplace during the quarter.)

ICMA Pakistan: How your marketplace can help Pakistani finance professionals, especially management accountants, to seek international job opportunities on your platform. Please advise our young generation?

Matt Barrie: Freelancer.com can be a good marketplace for Pakistani professionals like Management Accountants to upgrade their skills and provide online quality financial services to clients. This would help them make a freelance niche to stand out in the virtual freelancing world, which could add to their professional exposure internationally.

I would further advise that the Pakistani finance professionals must use online freelancing marketplaces like the Freelancer.com platform more frequently to seize the bigger opportunity in getting international clients that can be useful for their career growth as well as in earning more income.

ICMA Pakistan: ICMA Pakistan and Freelancers.com can work together in undertaking joint surveys and arranging webinars on freelancing opportunities for finance professionals. What are your views on this?

Matt Barrie: Yes, definitely we would be happy to support training and webinars on freelancing opportunities for the finance professionals in Pakistan organized by ICMA Pakistan. In fact, we have always supported such initiatives organized by local and regional institutions and communities from around the world by facilitating them in providing experts to speak and share valuable information, knowledge, and experiences about freelancing. We can also help reach out to our freelancers/employers (successful case studies) living in your country to speak and share their knowledge or experiences on freelancing at your events.

The Editorial Board thanks Mr. Matt Barrie, CEO & Chairman, Freelancer.com [Australia] for giving his exclusive interview for Management Accountant Journal.