Learn to:

• Plan and launch your crowdsourcing project
• Find the right platform for your needs
• Promote your project and attract the right audience
• Manage and motivate your crowd to get the best results

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Introduction

Crowdsourcing is the latest revolution wrought by the technologies of computing and communication – a revolution that brings people together and harnesses their collective intelligence. The power of crowdsourcing is such that it’s created political revolutions and toppled governments. At turbulent times, crowdsourcing has deployed the crowd – the group of people who actually do the work required – as a collective witness to follow the actions of governments, record speeches and monitor elections. And yet, at a more modest level in everyday life, crowdsourcing can still revolutionise the way you go about things. Crowdsourcing enables you to work with people who have specialised skills, to engage massive groups of workers, to collect data that you couldn’t have gathered previously and to offer advice that’s far beyond experience.

Crowdsourcing can change your life. It connects you to a massive crowd of people who can bring their skill, experience and knowledge to everything you do in your business, your non-profit organisation and even in your daily life. When you work with the crowd, you no longer work alone. You have the power of the crowd behind you, a crowd that will change the way you work, the way you plan and even the very way you think.

About This Book

Crowdsourcing For Dummies is here to help you become a crowdsourcer – a person who manages the crowdsourcing process, whether in a business, a non-profit organisation or just in everyday life. This book gives you the tools you need for each stage of the crowdsourcing process. I show you:

- How to identify the activities you currently undertake that may benefit from crowdsourcing
- How to determine the best form of crowdsourcing to use for your project
- How to engage the crowd
- How to get started, see a project through to completion and start again with a new project
In this book, I give you a broad perspective on crowdsourcing. I look at the common forms of crowdsourcing, such as crowdfunding and crowdcontests, as well as the lesser-known forms, such as self-organised crowds, so that you can think about different approaches to using the crowd and the ways in which you can best use crowdsourcing to suit your own needs or those of your organisation.

This book is also here to help you understand the information about crowdsourcing that you can find on the Internet. The Internet is constantly producing new information about crowdsourcing and is an important source of reference, but this book puts that information into context.

**Conventions Used in This Book**

To help you navigate your way through this book, I’ve set up a few straightforward conventions:

- I use *italics* for emphasis and to highlight new words or define terms.
- I use **bold** to indicate the key concepts in a list.
- I alternate between male and female pronouns in the chapters to be fair to both genders.

**What You’re Not to Read**

You’re undoubtedly a wise and experienced individual who can identify the pieces of the book that you should read and the pieces that you can ignore. And although I like to think that you’ll be hanging on my every word, I know that you may not want to read the whole book. If you skip bits of it, you won’t hurt my feelings.

There are sections of the book that you can skip or put aside for later. Sidebars, for example. I love the sidebars, although they usually contain historical or contextual information that’s completely and utterly fascinating but, I admit, not especially useful. Don’t you want to know that many basic forms of crowdsourcing were developed in the American Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression? I certainly enjoy knowing that titbit of info, but you may be able to live without it. Certainly you can be a great crowdsourcer without knowing it. That’s why such stories are in sidebars. You can skip them if want.
Paragraphs marked with the Technical Stuff icon in the margin are also things you can skip if you want to. This icon marks specialised material that you may not need to know. You can do a lot of crowdsourcing without knowing much about technology. You don’t have to make yourself unnecessarily anxious by reading these sections.

One final note: if you’re anxious about technical issues, you can completely skip Chapter 16, about workflow, without feeling bad. The ground I cover in this chapter is fascinating but is really useful only to people who are doing cutting-edge microtasking.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, I made the following assumptions about you, the reader:

✓ You know something about the current state of the Internet and social media. Certainly, you know about email and probably know something about sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, PayPal and Twitter. You may not use these sites much – I’m okay with that – but you know that they exist and you know what they do.

✓ You know something about work and how you organise tasks. You may work in an office – large or small – or be part of a non-profit organisation, or you may work for yourself. However, you know how to take a job, think about the resources that you need to do it and then actually do the job.

✓ You know a little bit about economics. You don’t have to know much, but you do have to know the basic ideas of supply and demand. Check yourself on this little example. If you want to hire someone for a job, you’ll get more people applying for the position if you offer a high wage for the work than if you offer a low wage. You understand that, right? Good. Then you’re fine with this book.

I had wanted to assume that you were deeply interested in the historical and cultural influences on crowdsourcing and how crowdsourcing is part of the great trends of industrial society. My editor, however, convinced me that I was misguided to make that assumption, so I didn’t. (However, if you are interested in historical and cultural influences, there’s a lovely book on the subject called When Computers Were Human, by yours truly. It’s a great read, but it won’t help you become a great crowdsourcer.)
How This Book Is Organised

Because crowdsourcing is a way of organising people, this book is organised in a way that helps you build your organising skill. It moves from simple ideas to the more complex. The book is split into five parts, and each contains several chapters on the part’s theme. Here is an overview of the parts.

Part I: Understanding Crowdsourcing Basics

Do you know what crowdsourcing is? Do you know how it differs from using social media? Or mob rule? To help, the first two chapters of Part I give you an overview of the material in the rest of Crowdsourcing For Dummies. Chapter 1 gives you an introduction to crowdsourcing and helps you understand the potential benefits of crowdsourcing to you, to your work and to any organisation that may want to use crowdsourcing. Chapter 2 guides you into the rest of the book. It offers an introduction to the different forms of crowdsourcing and then points you to the parts of the book that will be of most use to you.

I also include chapters on how to be a crowdworker. Being a working member of the crowd for a while is a great way to learn more about crowdsourcing – and you can earn money while you do it, too.

Part II: Looking at the Different Forms of Crowdsourcing

Part II divides crowdsourcing into its five basic forms – crowdsourcing, crowdfunding, macrotasking, microtasking and self-organised crowds – and provides a thorough introduction to each. Each chapter includes a detailed description of one type of crowdsourcing along with examples that illustrate how to apply it. You may only read one or two of these chapters, because you may want to use only one or two forms of crowdsourcing.

Part III: Building Skill

Part III helps you to develop your skills as a crowdsourcer. It offers a chapter on each of the steps you need to take in order to crowdsourc. You may not need to read all of these chapters thoroughly, because you may already possess some of these skills, but you can use them to ensure that you have the basic skills to be a good crowdsourcer.
Chapter 14 is an important chapter, because it deals with the basic ideas for managing crowdsourcing. And in Chapter 15, I look at the idea of *continuous improvement*, where you always try to identify the weak parts of your work and take steps to make them better in future.

**Part IV: Getting All You Can Get from the Crowd**

Part IV presents some advanced topics, such as microtask workflow, large-scale data gathering, prediction markets, election monitoring and innovation crowdsourcing. Many of these topics are becoming more and more common and are increasingly easy to do.

**Part V: The Part of Tens**

The Part of Tens illustrates the current state of crowdsourcing. It presents innovative crowdsourcing platforms, best practices, success stories and worst practices. The chapters in this part are filled with stories about crowdsourcing. Some will be familiar. Some will be new to you. They’re all here to help you understand both the strengths and weaknesses of crowdsourcing, the techniques that work well and those that don’t.

**Icons Used in This Book**

To help you understand crowdsourcing better and to guide you along the way, this book contains icons in the margins that flag different pieces of information:

- **This icon identifies suggestions and tips that make crowdsourcing easier.**

- **When you see this icon, expect issues that need special attention, or problems that can easily get you into trouble. You ignore them at your own risk.**

- **I use this icon to identify an important point that’s worth remembering.**
This icon highlights stories that illustrate the ideas in each chapter and demonstrate how you can use them. All examples are based on real stories of real people who use crowdsourcing. Some people have allowed me to use their name and the name of their company. You can identify these by the fact that they have full names and real URLs associated with them. For others, I’ve camouflaged the source of the example. If an example begins ‘Emily started crowdsourcing when she ran a flower shop in Livosk’, you can be sure that the source of this story is not named Emily, she doesn’t sell flowers and has never been to Livosk.

Paragraphs with this icon are intended for people with experience in IT. You can skip the information and still understand the basic ideas of crowdsourcing.

This icon marks sections that deal with material that’s used only for the form of crowdsourcing called microtasking. You can skip the paragraph if you’re doing some other form of crowdsourcing, such as crowdcontests.

Where to Go from Here

Chapter 1 is a must-read to get a basic grasp of what crowdsourcing is all about, and Chapter 2 gives you an overview of the different forms of crowdsourcing. From there, you can jump to Part II, where you find detailed descriptions of these different forms. The chapters in that part give you more information about becoming a crowdsourcer.

After you’ve identified the form of crowdsourcing that you’re going to do, head to Part III. There, chapters give you the information that you need to design the job, get it posted and running, and evaluate the results.

Alternatively, you can jump around the book as you like, reading whatever chapter appeals. Use the table of contents to help you navigate your own path. Alongside your reading, I recommend browsing some crowdsourcing websites – you can find examples in Chapter 13.

If you think that you’re ready to become a crowdsourcer, take the next step. Turn the page, and start the journey.
Part I
Understanding Crowdsourcing Basics

For Dummies can help you get started with lots of subjects. Visit www.dummies.com to learn more and do more with For Dummies.
In this part . . .

- Bone up on the basics and benefits of crowdsourcing to see what it could do for you and your organisation.
- Meet the five different types of crowdsourcing and understand the rules that govern how they operate.
- See the inside view on crowdsourcing and gain valuable experience by becoming a working member of the crowd.
- Enjoy working in the crowd? Fancy joining a crowdmarket? Want to consider the options open to you? Get the lowdown here on crowdsourcing careers.
Chapter 1

People Power: Getting a Feel for Crowdsourcing

In This Chapter
▶ Understanding the basics of crowdsourcing
▶ Seeing the benefits of crowdsourcing
▶ Joining the crowd as a crowdworker
▶ Following the steps to being a crowdsourcer

You’ve probably heard about crowdsourcing. If you haven’t, you probably won’t be leafing through the pages of this book. However, you may not be aware of the many ways in which you can use crowdsourcing to your advantage or of how crowdsourcing is a powerful way of doing work, organising people, gathering information and raising money.

Many people – the unconverted – think that crowdsourcing is nothing more than putting a question on Facebook and waiting for your friends to answer. Yet it’s much more than that – and much more powerful.

I can think of no better example of the power of crowdsourcing than what it has done to the encyclopaedia. Putting together an encyclopaedia was once a grand scholarly activity to organise the knowledge of a nation. The French created the first in the 18th century. The British followed with Encyclopaedia Britannica in the nineteenth, and the Americans with the Encyclopaedia Americana in the twentieth. Now, in the 21st century, they’ve all been replaced with a crowdsourced encyclopaedia: Wikipedia. Just think about what crowdsourcing could do for you.

In this chapter, I introduce you to crowdsourcing – how it works, the benefits it offers and how you can think about organising the crowd to help you – and the areas that I cover in this book.
What Is This Thing Called Crowdsourcing?

Crowdsourcing is a means of organising and coordinating the labour of individual human beings. You use the Internet and computer software to contact individuals, offer them things to do, and collect the results of their work.

Seeing how crowdsourcing works

Crowdsourcing requires four different elements:

✓ A person, usually called the crowdsourcer, who manages the process
✓ A group of people, called the crowd, who do work
✓ A market, usually called the crowdmarket, that’s used to help manage the contributions of the crowd (crowdmarkets are often found on Internet sites that are called crowdsites or platforms)
✓ A means of communicating with the crowd – usually the Internet

Strictly speaking, you can crowdsource without the Internet. You need to have only the crowdsourcer, the crowd and the crowdmarket. However, you can raise a larger crowd most easily if you use the Internet. The Internet reduces the isolation caused by geography and allows you to contact more people, who may have a wider range of skills.

To crowdsource, you put a request on a crowdmarket. You ask for a piece of information, an idea for a new product, a little bit of work, a large task or even a contribution. In return, you offer some kind of compensation. You pay for the worker’s services with money, or you offer him gratitude, or give him a gift, or offer him membership in a community.

Just because you may not use conventional money in the transactions doesn’t mean that you have no crowdmarket. Even when they’re volunteers, workers receive something in the transaction. They get satisfaction from using their skills, pleasure at being part of a group, or a sense of meaning from contributing to something bigger than themselves.

In one of the most well-known examples of crowdsourcing, Wikipedia, almost all the workers are volunteers and work for no payment. Yet they’re part of an exchange at a market. They offer their contributions to the Wikipedia encyclopaedia and receive no money in compensation for their efforts, even if their words becomes a fixture in the encyclopaedia. Still, each person feels some kind of satisfaction at contributing to the well-used compendium of human knowledge.
Chapter 1: People Power: Getting a Feel for Crowdsourcing

Looking at crowdsourcing forms

Crowdsourcing can take many different forms. You can do it with large groups of people or small teams, or even with individuals. You can crowdsourc with people who live near to you or those who live and work on the other side of the planet. With crowdsourcing, you can engage the creativity and intellectual powers of individuals, or you can engage their physical labour, or you can ask for money.

To understand the nature of crowdsourcing and all that it can do, consider the following examples. I indicate the type of crowdsourcing used in each example; for an overview, take a look at Chapter 2.

✓ Creating the best design: You’re preparing an annual report for your organisation. You’ve written all the text you need but you want it organised with a nice graphic design. You post on a crowdsite or platform a request for proposals for a design for your report. The crowd members submit proposals. You choose the one that best suits your needs and compensate the individual who created it. This form of crowdsourcing is called a crowdcontest (see Chapter 5 for more).

✓ Getting a little help with editing: Every now and then, you write a small article for a professional periodical. You know that your articles would be better if someone edited them. You don’t have enough work to hire a professional editor, and so you post a request on a crowdsite for an editor. You find one who meets your needs and hire him to do your editing. This type of crowdsourcing is called macrotasking (flick to Chapter 7 for more).

✓ Setting up a new blog: You need a new blog for your organisation but you don’t know how to set up the software. You also need a few special things that aren’t usually part of standard blogging software. You describe what you need, post the details on a crowdmarket and ask for bids, and then you choose the ones that best meet your need. This process is called macrotasking (the subject of Chapter 7).

✓ Gathering contact details: You’re the marketing manager for a small company and have just been given a list of 10,000 companies that might be potential clients. This list includes no contact information. To get the email address and URL for each firm, you could put the list on a crowdsourcing site and ask members of the crowd for the details. This form of crowdsourcing is called microtasking, and is common (head to Chapter 8 for details).

✓ Converting medical records: You’ve just finished medical school, passed your exams and are about to take over your Uncle Enda’s practice, but here’s the problem: your uncle kept all his patient records on paper forms. He kept detailed notes, but they were all in his tiny, slightly messy handwriting. You can either transcribe all his records yourself or hire a consultant to do it for you. Alternatively, you could also divide the records into tiny parts, put each part on a crowdmarket and ask the
crowd to transcribe the information. This latter solution is called micro-tasking (see Chapter 8) – a technique that has become a common way of transcribing handwritten records.

**Creating a new product:** You’ve an idea for a new product but you don’t know how to make it, how you can market it or even whether you’ve got the perfect design. You go to a crowdsite that specialises in innovation and post your idea there. First, you get suggestions from the crowd for improving the product. Next, you get ideas that can help you manufacture the product. Finally, the crowd helps you identify an organisation that can help market the final invention. You’re doing a form of self-organised crowdsourcing, a type of crowdsourcing that’s been around for years (refer to Chapter 9).

**Testing new software:** You’ve created a mobile app but you need to test it to make sure that it works on all kinds of phones, in every different region. To test it, you go to a crowdmarket that specialises in software testing. Members of the crowd download the app, test it in their region, and give you a report. This form of crowdsourcing can be handled by either microtasking or macrotasking. Either way, it can be very effective and profitable (see Chapters 7 and 8).

**Raising funds for a good cause:** You run a community organisation and want to convert an abandoned car park into a flea market. You need money to buy the land and to erect a shed in one corner. While you may try to raise money through conventional means, you can also do it through crowdsourcing. You post your request on a website and ask for small donations. In doing so, you’re crowdfunding. (There’s more on this kind of crowdsourcing in Chapter 6.)

This form of crowdfunding is charitable crowdfunding. The donors expect nothing (or just a gift) in return. A second form of crowdfunding, equity crowdfunding, allows people to give money to companies and get a stake in the company in return.

**Solving a big problem:** You’re a company or a charity or just a wealthy person who wants to do some good. You’re aware of a problem that touches every member of the human race and yet that no one can solve: a dreadful disease, perhaps; an uncontrollable pollution; a desperate poverty. You would like to see the problem solved, so you create a crowdcontest that seeks a solution. You offer a large prize and publicise the activity. As people start working on the problem, you encourage those with good ideas to work together. This form of crowdsourcing is called innovation crowdsourcing or self-organised crowdsourcing (see Chapters 9 and 18).

**Organising a collection:** After Aunt Emily and Uncle Jared die, you discover that they collected photographs, and had thousands of images stored in boxes that were stuffed into their basement. You recognise a few faces or an occasional vista, but you’re unable to identify anything in the remaining photographs or put these pictures into any kind of order. You can identify the images by putting them on a website and
Chapter 1: People Power: Getting a Feel for Crowdsourcing

asking the crowd to give you information. You can then hire members of the crowd to process the information and put it into order. This is a type of microtasking, one that can be done in sophisticated ways. (Find out more about it in Chapters 8 and 16.)

Creating an encyclopaedia. Finding missing people. Folding proteins. Transcribing medical records. Collecting price information. Identifying sales contacts. Running errands. Deciding whether a web page is offensive. Checking the tone of translated text. Answering a question that has stumped you. All these are examples of crowdsourcing.

Considering Why People Crowdsource

You may find a few people out there who are interested in crowdsourcing because it seems to be something new and interesting to do with the Internet, but novelty and technology are never great reasons to do anything. Most people crowdsource simply because of the advantages it offers them. It brings new talent to organisations, enables individuals to do things that they couldn’t do before, and allows groups of people to meet and collaborate for their common good. Crowdsourcing is a way of expanding what anyone or any group can do.

Introducing three key strengths

You get different benefits from crowdsourcing, depending on who you are and what you’re doing. However, most people who crowdsource are expecting to get at least one of three things. They’re looking for:

✓ Access to talent: Many people crowdsource to get access to talent that they can’t get in any other way. They not be able to find anyone who is an expert app programmer, or knows how to translate French into Urdu, or knows how to optimise a web page in order to get the best ranking on search engines. Crowdsourcing can help you find individuals who have these skills. It can also bring you the talent that comes from the collected intelligence of the crowd, the ability to do things that are difficult for machines to do. For example, crowds are good at recognising handwriting or identifying faces in photographs, or comparing the quality of writing.

✓ Doing more with less: Crowdsourcing allows you to do more with your resources. You hire the best person for each job rather than looking for a single person with multiple talents. If you’re building a bilingual web page, you don’t have to look for a web designer who knows two languages. You can crowdsource one person or team for the task of building the web page. You can crowdsource another team or individual for the task of writing the text in a different language.
Greater flexibility: Crowdsourcing allows you to follow trends in the market. It lets you replace rigid organisational structures with simple, flexible processes. Say that you’ve an office that processes email. Rather than creating a large staff with fixed rules, you can give some of the work to the crowd and let individuals decide the best way to process the material and find the information you need.

Benefitting from crowdsourcing

Anyone can benefit from crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing expands your capability, giving access to new skills and abilities. It allows you to hire people when you need them and to get exactly the skills that you need at any given time. The following types of crowdsourcer in particular find crowdsourcing beneficial:

Small businesses: Crowdsourcing offers skills that small businesses can’t easily get any other way. A new business, for example, can use crowdsourcing to stay small and minimise the demands on its capital. You may not have the need for a full-time marketer, but you can get professional marketing skills for each project when you need them. You may not have the need for a full-time finance officer, but you can get financial advice through crowdsourcing.

Large businesses: Large businesses often look at crowdsourcing as a way of reducing costs. That’s one reason for enterprises to use crowdsourcing, but this reason is often not the best. Large companies often have other ways of minimising the cost of doing business. However, large enterprises should consider using crowdsourcing, because it can make them more creative and more responsive to the market. They can use crowds to do things that they used to think impossible, such as to handle large amounts of data in a personalised way, or get detailed contact information for their sales staff, or adjust their web materials to better engage the market.

Non-profit organisations: Non-profit organisations often need specialised skills that they can’t find or can’t afford. They have to rely on a volunteer for bookkeeping, the friend of a neighbour to design a presentation, the goodwill of the local computer store to create and maintain a web page. Crowdsourcing enables such organisations to hire people with specialised skills on a short-term basis or to use inexpensive services that provide the skills they need.

Expanding the power of artists: Artists can use crowdsourcing to expand their role and capacity. Crowdsourcing can offer skills that artists didn’t learn in art school and services that they can’t provide for themselves. It can give them access to funds through crowdfunding, to collaborators who can expand their art, to business and marketing skills that they couldn’t otherwise afford and give them a way of promoting their art to bigger audiences.
Individuals: What can one person do? The answer is ‘much’ if he uses crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing enables one person with a vision to do things that he can’t accomplish by himself. It gives him access to people with different skills, backgrounds and viewpoints.

If you want a good example of how crowdsourcing can expand the power of a single individual, look no further than Linus Torvalds, the person who conceived the Linux computer operating system, or Jimmy Wales, the organiser of Wikipedia. Both these individuals had ideas that they could not accomplish by themselves. However, both were able to rally the crowd to support their work.

Scientists and researchers: Research is also a form of production and can make use of new production techniques. Crowdsourcing can allow scientists and researchers to process large amounts of data, gather data from regions that they can’t visit, or analyse materials in ways that can’t be done by machine.

Considering reliability

Crowdsourcing has its benefits, but you want to be sure that the crowd itself is trustworthy, that it’s providing you with good information and not making things up. This is what’s called the reliability problem. You’re putting a task to the crowd – people you don’t know and may never meet. You want to be sure that the crowd brings you a reliable result, something that has been done correctly and properly.

Many people resist crowdsourcing because of the reliability problem. They believe that crowd members are lazy, that they traffic in gossip and lies, that they’re subject to a mob mentality and want nothing more than to take your money and give nothing in return. Such concerns are valid. The crowd can behave badly. It can take your money and leave nothing in return. But these aren’t reasons to avoid crowdsourcing.

A relationship between two people is reliable when one of the people can ask something of the other and get a response that’s correct and useful. Few relationships are naturally reliable. Unless you live a blessed life, you’ve probably had a family member lie to you, a worker fail to finish a job, or a colleague give you a wrong piece of information. You have to work to make relationships reliable.

In ordinary relationships, you do a number of things to ensure reliability. You try to pick friends who have the same interests and goals as you. You take advice from several individuals in case one doesn’t know he’s misinformed. You threaten to withhold a pay cheque from a worker unless he properly completes a task. In crowdsourcing, you also have to work to make the crowd reliable. You get information from multiple points of view, ask multiple members of the crowd to review work and look at the what the crowd has done before you pay for it.
You need to devote time and effort to make crowdsourcing reliable, just as you need to devote time and effort to make any human relationship reliable. In crowdsourcing, you get out what you put in. To get good results from your crowd, you have to think about the process and design it in a way that’s efficient and which also catches the crowd’s mistakes.

**Being a Crowdworker**

People become *crowdworkers* – workers who earn their living by taking jobs from a crowdmarket instead of seeking a permanent job in a company – for the same kind of reasons that attract people to social media. Crowdsourcing helps workers overcome the limitations of place, time and creativity. When you’re a member of the crowd, you can:

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**Is crowdsourcing new?**

The quick answer is ‘no’. People have used crowdsourcing techniques for as long as they’ve used labour to produce goods and services. You can now do it easily, because you have the Internet and computers, but you can find examples of crowdsourcing throughout history:

- In the late 1810s, the English mathematician Charles Babbage hired contractors to help him compute astronomical tables that could be used for stellar navigation. This form of crowdsourcing is called macrotasking (see Chapter 7). Babbage became famous for designing mechanical computers, but he developed several key ideas of crowdsourcing.
- In 1891, the state of Washington ran a contest to design an exhibit hall for the upcoming World’s Fair in Chicago. It was a form of crowdcontest (see Chapter 5).
- In 1914, the National Cash Register Company put a box next to its factory manager’s office to collect suggestions from employees. The management announced that it would reward ideas that would reduce the costs of manufacturing. It is an example of how crowdsourcing can be used for innovation (see Chapter 18).
- In 1938, the US Government’s Work Projects Administration used crowdsourcing to give jobs to unemployed workers. For example, it created the Mathematical Tables Project, the largest computing office in the world. This project engaged 450 workers at a time to do advanced mathematical calculations. It used crowdsourcing techniques called microtasking (see Chapter 8) and macrotasking (see Chapter 7). It also managed the computations with tools that controlled the workflow (see Chapter 16). This book is dedicated to the leader of the Mathematical Tables Project, the mathematician Gertrude Blanch.
Break geographical barriers to using your skills. Some people have skills that they can’t easily use where they live. It’s one thing to be a graphic designer in cities that support large advertising industries, such as Chicago or London. It’s quite another thing to be a graphic designer and live in a small country town by a lake.

Employ skills that you can’t fully use in your regular job. You may have a great job close to home that even uses some of the Spanish language skills that you acquired by attending the University of Santiago for two years. However, you find that reviewing the occasional document in Spanish doesn’t really use these skills. By becoming a crowdworker, you might be able to take a job each week that engages all of your languages. For example, you might find a job that asks you to review a Spanish newspaper and summarise the opinion page in English. Something like this may never replace your regular job or add much to your income, but it will challenge you and support a skill that’s important to you.

Work from home. Some people, such as new mothers, can’t easily leave their home and work in an office.

Work to your own schedule. Some individuals prefer to work at night, for example.

Choose jobs you like and avoid work you dislike. Crowdsourcing does not require workers to do the same job, day after day.

Develop new skills. Many crowdsourcing sites offer training classes for specific skills. You can learn skills that are rarely taught at school, such as how to test software, or expand skills that you already possess, such as those of copy or page editing.

As a crowdworker, you’re judged by your skills and accomplishments rather than by your background and training. Even if you didn’t go to the right school or come from the right part of the country, you can still do jobs that you want if you can show that you have the skills.

Chapter 4 gives you the lowdown on joining the crowd.

Becoming a Crowdsourcer

If you’ve read this far, you’re seriously considering becoming a crowdsourcer, a person who creates and manages the crowdsource processes. A crowdsourcer is a form of a manager. As you find with all forms of management, you can’t become a crowdsourcer simply by taking the name of crowdsourcer or by wishing that you can do crowdsourcing. You have to approach the work of crowdsourcing systematically.
When you work as a crowdsourcer, you have to do seven things:

1. **Define the goal.**
   
   You need to know what you want from the crowd in order to have the crowd help you. It’s all too easy to think 'I'll let the crowd solve this' when you’re facing a difficult question. But if you don’t know what you want, you rarely get anything useful from the crowd.

2. **Design the process of engaging the crowd.**
   
   To get ideas, look at Part II of this book. It describes the different kinds of crowdsourcing and how you can use each to solve problems.

3. **Post the job.**
   
   You find a crowdsourcing website – a crowdsourcing site, your own blog or a social networking space – and post your request. You can find information on crowdsourcing sites in Chapters 11 and 12.

4. **Find the crowd.**
   
   If you’re working on a crowdsourcing site, you’ll probably find the crowd you need already affiliated with the site. If you need to raise a crowd, you do so using your social network. You contact friends and co-workers to see if they can help you find people who can serve as your crowd. Chapters 10 and 13 offer pointers on recruiting crowds.

5. **Manage the process.**
   
   Crowdsourcing is an activity that you have to manage. You can’t expect it to happen automatically. You can, however, ask one of the crowdsourcing companies to manage the crowd and the work. For more on managing crowds, head to Chapter 14.

6. **Look at the results.**
   
   You become the best crowdsourcer by learning from what the crowd has done. When the crowd returns your job, it also gives you information about how you should plan your next crowdsourcing endeavour. You can read about learning from results in Chapter 15.

7. **Evaluate the product.**
   
   You look at what you’ve done and evaluate the work. You have to ask a few basic questions. Is the final product acceptable? Would I do it again? What changes would I make? After you answer these questions, you can decide to do more crowdsourcing or quit your efforts and go back to conventional ways of doing things.

The good news is that this book takes you through the whole process, so soon crowdsourcing can be a breeze.
Chapter 2

Getting to Know the Forms of Crowdsourcing and Crowdmarkets

In This Chapter

▶ Understanding the benefits of each form of crowdsourcing
▶ Getting to grips with the rules of crowdsourcing

You may be as keen as mustard to unleash the awesome power of the crowd. You’ve heard about all that the crowd can do and you want to use it for your business, for your neighbourhood association or for your own purposes. You might want to use the crowd to design an advertisement for your company, to conduct a poll, to search for a lost child or to have a team of skilled workers behind you.

But whoa there! If you want to be a skilled crowdsourcer and use crowdsourcing to really transform your work, your business or your non-profit group, you need to understand the basic properties of the different forms of crowdsourcing before you make a headlong rush into starting a project; you need to understand what they can do for you. Each form of crowdsourcing, because it has its own rules, works in a way that’s slightly different from how the other forms work. Each is best for certain kinds of jobs and less good for others, and each has certain benefits and drawbacks. Therefore, to get the benefits – to transform your work – you need to know which form will best work for you.

The five forms of crowdsourcing are:

✓ Crowdcontests
✓ Macrotasking
✓ Microtasking
✓ Self-organised crowds
✓ Crowdfunding
I look at each of these forms more fully in Chapters 5–9, but in this chapter I introduce you to them, to help you get to grips with the basic elements of these forms of crowdsourcing. You’ll see here how they differ from one another and how you might apply these forms to certain kinds of jobs. And because each form of crowdsourcing has its own rules, its own purposes and its own form of crowdmarket, you also get acquainted here with the different kinds of crowdmarkets – virtual online marketplaces used to help manage the crowd’s contributions – and how you can use them to engage the crowd. All this is here, ultimately, to help you match the job that you want to do with the right form of crowdsourcing, and to guide you to the right part of the book that will enable you to become an expert crowdsourcer.

Harnessing the Power of Divided Labour

Crowdsourcing is a powerful means of getting work done by giving that work to a large group of workers – the crowd. It gets its power from the idea of divided labour, of taking a large job and dividing up the work. Each of the five forms of crowdsourcing involves a different way of dividing the work. Understanding all five ways enables you to work out the best way of dividing your job so as to get the best work back from the crowd.

Keeping the job whole

The simplest way of dividing a job is to keep it as a single task and not divide it at all. If you do this, you give the job to a single person to complete. When you do this kind of division in crowdsourcing, you rely heavily on that single person, so you obviously want the best possible person to do the work. Crowdsourcing enables you to find the best person by letting the crowd compete for your job. You ask the members of the crowd to submit their best work, you choose the best submission and then reward the person who did it. This form of crowdsourcing is known as a crowdcontest.

Crowdcontests are commonly used to create a single product quickly and easily and are great for creative activities such as graphic design, package design or video production, and can be useful for other activities such as product development, statistical analyses and financial projections. Crowdcontests are also well suited to activities in which workers believe that they benefit by participating in the contest even if they aren’t ultimately awarded the winner’s prize, because crowd members can use contests to practise and develop their skills and don’t have to invest anything beyond their time and energies.
Caitriona uses crowdsourcing for her cookware store. In addition to standard commercial kitchen utensils, she sells a small line of custom plates, bowls and tableware. She obtains her designs by running crowdcontests. She describes what kind of product she wants and lets the members of the crowd propose designs. She identifies the design that she thinks is best, manufactures it and sells it in her store.

A crowdcontest is for you if you don’t want to manage the crowd and you don’t have an interest in a long-term relationship with any member of the crowd. Crowdcontests can deliver products quickly and generally don’t take much effort to manage.

Crowdcontests do have two drawbacks, though. First, they aren’t suited to all kinds of jobs, especially those that take a long time. For any job that requires a lot of work and investment, you have to offer a large prize to get a good crowd. The second drawback is the lack of a long-term relationship with the crowd. You may not, for example, be able to contact the winner of your last contest if you decide that you want to have her help you again.

You can find more about crowdcontests in Chapter 5.

\section*{Splitting the job into big pieces}

Instead of keeping a job whole, an alternative approach is to divide it into large pieces that each require specific skills. You give each of these large pieces to a member of the crowd who has that specific skill. You manage the process and pay the workers. This form of crowdsourcing is known as \textit{macro-tasking}.

Macrotasking is the most flexible form of crowdsourcing because it’s an expanded version of freelancing. With it, you can identify a specific skill that you need, find someone with that skill and recruit her to help with your work. The macrotaskers can help you individually; they can join an office team; they can even lead a project for you. Crowdsourcers often use macrotasking to bring specialist skills to an organisation for a short time.

Kwame uses macrotasking in his corporate communications firm, where he helps companies prepare public relations strategies. When Kwame acquires a new client, he assembles a team to help the client deal with its communications problem. That team usually has a manager, a writer and a presentation designer. It may also have several specialised workers, such as a graphic designer, a speach coach or an advertising expert. Kwame tends to hire the specialised workers from a macrotask market.
Macrotasking offers you the broadest set of skills. Not only can you find artistic skills, you can find technical and programming skills, various business and office skills, language skills, communications skills and management skills. Macrotasking also offers you the chance to nurture a long-term relationship with a worker if you find a particularly good macrotasker. It also requires the least amount of preparation, as the work of hiring a macrotasker is just a simpler version of the process of hiring an ordinary employee.

Macrotasking does have its drawbacks, though. Sometimes you may find it difficult to track down exactly the skill you’re seeking. Other times, you may find it a challenge to communicate with a macrotasker who lives several time zones away and in a different culture. Finally, managing a macrotask worker can require as much effort as you’d expend to manage a regular employee. If you want a simpler form of crowdsourcing, you may want to consider crowdcontests instead.

You can find out how to hire a macrotask worker in Chapter 7.

Dividing the job as small as you can

Dividing up your job into small or tiny tasks means you can engage more of the crowd and get your job done more quickly. When you do this kind of crowdsourcing, you pay all members of the crowd who work for you. This form of crowdsourcing is known as microtasking.

The basic forms of microtasks are simple – usually far simpler than macrotasks. You describe what you want done, post your job on a microtask site and wait for the crowd to respond. You can judge each submission and accept those that are properly done, without having to first review the résumés of potential workers or interview them.

When microtasking, crowdsourcers generally look for a large crowd to do their work, and so they divide it into small tasks that can be done by many, many people. This usually means that the tasks can’t require special skills that only one or two people may have. You can microtask if you can find a crowd of ten to help you, but you can’t microtask if you can only find one person.

Niall prepares instruction manuals for electronic consumer goods. He has to have the instructions translated into eight major languages and check that the translated instructions are still accurate. He once hired an expert translator to check each version of the instructions, but discovered he can use microtasking to check the translations instead. To do this, he divides each newly translated manual into paragraphs, posts each paragraph on a crowdsourcing