Crowdwork: Job of the Future?

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The API Governs the Interaction

Requester posts a task. It interacts with workers through an API defined by the platform e.g. Mturk, UHRS.

Who are crowdworkers? Why do they do crowdwork?

- Ethnography: What can we learn from workers by talking to them?
- Computer science: What can we learn from workers by using the API?
Crowdwork (esp. microtasks) is pay for labor but not much more.

The API strips out much of what turns work into a job (like ours):

- No advancement
- No employer reputation
- No larger organization
- No benefits
- No leadership
- No recognition
- No worker identity
- No colleagues
- No collaboration
Turning Crowdwork Into a Job

- **Advancement**: Mobileworks allows workers to become managers, Mturk has Masters

- **Leadership**: Mturk has Spamgirl, Gigwalk has Jenzie Hallifax & Andrew Schut

- **Employer reputation**: TurkOpticon by Lilly Irani & Six Silberman

- **Collaboration**: Forums, sharing tasks, working on tasks together
Workers Talk, Teach & Collaborate

Teach:
- “I taught Mturk to many friends. My friends Aishwarya and Priya are earning well” – 34 year old housewife in Tamil Nadu
- “Salman Khan is my guru in MTurk” - 32 year old housewife in Tamil Nadu

Talk & Collaborate:
- “If we are not here [sharing information about tasks], MTurk is also not here”
- “If I am working and find a good HIT then I call him and tell him about it” – childhood friends in Andra Pradesh

We would have never thought to measure task sharing without talking to workers
Workers are Not Autonomous

- Communicate via phone, forums, chat, Facebook
  - Workers help each other with tasks (even in person)
  - Workers refer tasks and requesters to each other
- Can affect results: if worker x does a task a friend of worker x could be more likely to do that task

API hides these edges
Workers Refer Tasks to Each Other
Crowdsourcing is less like this:

and more like this:
Conclusion

- Crowdsourcing strips away much of what makes a job a job
  - Maybe to increase quality, usability, enjoyment we need to restore some of the aspects of jobs?
  - Workers and platforms have already begun doing this.

- Is the fact that the API strips away all but the work and pay bad?
  - Gender: Women can work inside the home in India.
  - Religion: Muslims can find work more easily online.
Demo at 2:15 in Hood!