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Crowdsourcing

FOR DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Plan and launch your crowdsourcing or crowdfunding 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

David Alan Grier

Crowdsourcing

FOR DUMMIES®

A Wiley Brand

by David Alan Grier

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Crowdsourcing For Dummies®

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Crowdsourcing For Dummies®

Visit www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/crowdsourcinguk to view this book's cheat sheet.

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Introduction

C*rowdsourcing* 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 – crowdcontests, 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 crowdsource. 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