

Turkopticon

Motivation, design, status, lessons, next steps

M. Six Silberman, with Lilly Irani

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Motivation

The design of Mechanical Turk is not fair for workers.

Employers do not have to pay for work.

They do not have to give a reason for not paying. Workers can complain, but employers do not have to answer. Amazon charges employers for posting tasks. So it does not hurt Amazon if employers do not pay workers. Mechanical Turk keeps track of workers' approval rates so employers can screen them.

There is no reputation system for employers. For example, how often does an employer not pay for work? Workers have no way to know.

Design

Turkopticon is a third-party employer reputation system for Mechanical Turk.

The original goals of Turkopticon were:

- (a) to call attention to the unfairness of Mechanical Turk and
- (b) to prompt Amazon to build an employer reputation system into Mechanical Turk.

Turkopticon has two parts: a browser add-on and a web database application.

The web application lets workers review employers.

The browser add-on adds these reviews to the Mechanical Turk interface.

Design

Search: Keywords on Google.com (US)

[View a HIT in this group](#)

Requester: [CrowdSource](#)

HIT Expiration Date: Sep 20, 2014 (52 weeks) **Reward:** \$0.08

Time Allotted: 16 minutes **HITs Available:** 14979

Are these two pictures of the same kind of place? (w/ clarified instructions)

[View a HIT in this group](#)

Requester: [Michelle Greene](#)

HIT Expiration Date: Sep 20, 2014 (52 weeks) **Reward:** \$0.02

Time Allotted: 10 minutes **HITs Available:** 13882

Quality Estimation from Arabic to English

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Requester: [Chris Callison-Burch](#)

HIT Expiration Date: Jul 17, 2014 (42 weeks 5 days) **Reward:** \$0.10

Time Allotted: 60 minutes **HITs Available:** 11403

Design

Search: Keywords on Google.com (US)

[View a HIT in this group](#)

Requester:  [CrowdSource](#)

HIT Expiration Date: Sep 20, 2014 (52 weeks) **Reward:** \$0.08

Time Allotted: 16 minutes **HITs Available:** 14989

Are these two pictures of the same kind of place? (w/ clarified instructions)

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Requester:  [Michelle Greene](#)

HIT Expiration Date: Sep 20, 2014 (52 weeks) **Reward:** \$0.02

Time Allotted: 10 minutes **HITs Available:** 13883

Quality Estimation from Arabic to English

[View a HIT in this group](#)

Requester:  [Chris Callison-Burch](#)

HIT Expiration Date: Jul 17, 2014 (42 weeks 5 days) **Reward:** \$0.10

Time Allotted: 60 minutes **HITs Available:** 11403

Design

Quality Estimation from Arabic to English

Requester:



[Chris Callison-Burch](#)

HIT Expiration Date:

communicativity:		4.05 / 5
generosity :		3.99 / 5
fairness :		4.27 / 5
promptness :		3.99 / 5

Requester:

[What do these scores mean?](#)

Scores based on [98 reviews](#)

Terms of Service violation flags: 1

[Report your experience with this requester »](#)

Copy Text from

Design

AMT Requester	Rating [info]	Description
Chris Callison-Burch/WikiTrans A32TTE4XXN6MQZ 79719 HIT Group » Review Requester »	FAIR: 5 / 5 FAST: 5 / 5 PAY: 5 / 5 COMM: 5 / 5	Great HITs Jun 02 2013 ali...@h... flag comment
Chris Callison-Burch/WikiTrans A32TTE4XXN6MQZ 79130 HIT Group » Review Requester »	FAIR: 5 / 5 FAST: 5 / 5 PAY: 5 / 5 COMM: 5 / 5	I was matching text across two articles, and every once in a while I got a blank one. I accidentally submitted to get to the next article when it dawned on me that the requester would need to pay or reject the hit (be patient with me, I'm new to this). I e-mailed the requester explaining my mistake, and they approved all my hits with the admonition to return blank hits from now on. Great pay, and great communication. May 29 2013 aman...@g... flag comment
Chris Callison-Burch/WikiTrans A32TTE4XXN6MQZ 78192 HIT Group » Review Requester »	FAIR: 5 / 5 FAST: 5 / 5 PAY: 5 / 5 COMM: 5 / 5	definitely one of the best requesters out there. May 21 2013 nipp...@g... flag comment
Chris Callison-Burch/WikiTrans A32TTE4XXN6MQZ 77843 HIT Group » Review Requester »	FAIR: 1 / 5 FAST: 1 / 5 PAY: 1 / 5 COMM: 1 / 5	hundred and some hits and never have been paid or heard from anyone . May 17 2013 alchic...@c... flag comment

VIOLATES MTURK TERMS OF SERVICE [?]

Design

HIT ID (optional)

This HIT is a violation of the **Mechanical Turk Terms of Service**

Requester Name

Requester ID (required)

How many HITs have you done for this requester?

Rate this requester on the following qualities, with 1 being worst among requesters you've had experience with and 5 being best among requesters you've had experience with:

	1	2	3	4	5
How fair has this requester been in approving or rejecting your work?	<input type="radio"/>				
How promptly has this requester approved your work and paid?	<input type="radio"/>				
How well has this requester paid for the amount of time their HITs take?	<input type="radio"/>				
How responsive has this requester been to communications or concerns you have raised?	<input type="radio"/>				

Please briefly explain any issues you've had with this requester:

Status

Numbers

Browser add-on installs (since Aug 2012)	18344
Web application since 2008	
Registered users	21312
Reviews	96806
Employers reviewed	21851
Users posting at least one review	8146 (38%)
Web application, last 3 months	
Reviews	15699 (16%)
Employers reviewed	4322
Users posting at least one review	2124
Average daily visits	
Web application	3721
API (for browser add-on)	8034
Tasks with reviews out of the first 100 (19 Sep 2013)	96

Small fraction of total Mechanical Turk workforce

Probably most of professional Turkers

Status

Assessment

Goals:

- (a) to call attention to the unfairness of Mechanical Turk — success.
- (b) to prompt Amazon to build an employer reputation system into Mechanical Turk — failure (Amazon: „the community handles the problems“).

Turkopticon, combined with other forums and tools made by workers, make Mechanical Turk less unfair. But a built-in reputation system would be better.

There are problems with Turkopticon itself.

Our moderation system could be better.

We don't respond adequately to all user feedback.

We have no good collaborative or democratic decision-making process.

We have no good way to let other programmers help us.

The site is slow and buggy.

The technology is „old“ (2008).

There is a climate of distrust and fear around Mechanical Turk, and Turkopticon too.
Can this be fixed, or do we need to start over?

Lessons

About software

If you listen to people and build what they want, they will use it.

You must keep listening to people and maintain what you built.

Maintenance is both technical and social.

The social and technical parts of maintenance both take time.

About markets as institutions

Most workers and employers have good intentions, but not all.

The small selfish fraction affects the market, and must be designed for.

No system can solve all problems. Human judgment (administration) is needed.

To maintain trust, there should be a record of administrative judgments and why they were made.

About Amazon

Amazon is not all-powerful. They do not have infinite developer hours.

What now? Turkopticon

There will not be a commercial version. Turkopticon is not-for-profit.

Try to make decision making more democratic

Try to respond more systematically to user feedback

Try to find ways to let other programmers help us

Accept donations

Create a non-profit organization

Improve moderation

Collect more „objective“ data in reviews

Make code „open source“

Make site faster

Fix search

Let people delete and edit comments while maintaining a record

I would like for Turkopticon to become unnecessary.

more institutional



more technical

What now? Another crowd work is possible

Understand the situation.

The situation is complex; e.g., many US crowd workers don't want minimum wage laws for crowd work. (They are afraid they will lead to less work.)

Research

Demographic („quantitative“: how many? who?)

Ethnographic („qualitative“: how? why?)

Build shared data, knowledge, theory

Cross-sector work groups

Build a „community of practice“.

Workers, employers, platform builders and operators, policy makers, researchers, ...

Build new models for crowd work arrangements.

Processes, markets, technologies, organizations, contracts, laws, ...

Build new systems.

Build and maintain cross-sector conversations *that lead to learning and action.*