I KNOW A GUY WHO CAN DO IT FOR CHEAPER

By Lucca R. Goldberg

Do you know the cost of professional CAD software? The answer is very, very expensive. To give you an idea, I paid less for my 2010 Subaru than what I pay every year for a SolidWorks subscription. Throw in a good computer, precision tools, high quality 3D printer, tons of filament of all types and colors, and not to mention about 5 years (and counting) of out-of-pocket paid education, and you have a really large bill. All that for you to be able to design, prototype, and manufacture custom made parts for your clients, just for them to deny your design, go to Fiverr, and hire someone halfway across the globe for less than what it costs to take the bus from New Hyde Park to Jamaica.

That happened to me last Tuesday. A client came to the store, consulted with me for about an hour, gave me his ideas, I spent about 8 total hours working on SolidWorks, modeling, stress testing, printing test parts, revising, printing more test parts, and finally coming up with a final design, ready to present it to the customer in order to receive the green light to print the final part. All those hours to hear "are you kidding me? I am not paying all this.". For a bit of context, I originally charged $35/hr as my designing rate. Some more experienced engineers might hear this and think that I am stupid for charging this low and undervaluing myself to this extent, but the truth is, even that price is absurd for the regular day-to-day customers that I talk to. In fact, it

embarasses me to say this, but I had to value myself at $15/hr in order to not lose the client to an online global pool of designers charging $5 per design.

Don't get me wrong, Fiverr is not a monster. Fiverr allows designers all around the world to publish their services, products, and experience for everyone and anyone to utilize just for a couple bucks an hour. It only takes a couple of seconds on the platform to realize how much you can accomplish. From a quick glance, i found [Amandeep Mehta](#), who can design anything that I want for $15, [Tanveer](#), who can design and 3D print whatever I need for $5, and even [Tran Tung](#), who can reverse engineer any part that I want, scan, and make a 3D model file from it, all for $20. Looking through their profiles we can notice that they are from all over the world, such as India, Pakistan, and Vietnam, which in my opinion is amazing. I find it fascinating that it is so easy to get in contact with extremely talented and educated engineers and designers all for less than a McDonalds meal, but at the same time, it makes me feel awful.

I know all the learning, practice, education, nights awake, frustrating lessons, and countless hours these people spent in order to do what they are doing, because I have been and currently am going through all that, and it actually pains me so much that they are getting paid the same amount as I am spending on a quick trip to Dunkin Donuts. Seeing talented people sell their knowledge for that cheap shows the disgusting side of customers who, even not knowing a tenth of the work that goes into making a project like that, demand that their needs are met cheap and quickly.

On another hand, Amandeep, Tanveer, and Tran are all my competitors, thanks to Fiverr. Tha same way it makes me sad that they are selling days of their lives for less

than my lunch at the local diner, it makes me angry that all my job, all my hours, and all my talent, is worth less than an Applebee's "2 for $25" meal, thanks to Fiverr.

I live in New York, and things are expensive. Very expensive. If I were to charge the same as Tram Tung charges for their orders, I would have to design an average of 3.3 products every single day, just in order to pay for my rent, not including electricity, gas, water, food, 3D Printing supplies, and not to mention the software. Therefore, I have to charge much higher rates compared to those designers on the other side of the globe, which most times sounds disgraceful to whatever customer comes to me looking for a "cheap and quick" prototype. I am always met with the phrases "are you kidding me?", "why are you charging me all that?", "you know this is not that big of a part right?", and most frequently, "I know a guy who can do it for cheaper".

I don't think there should be many changes to Fiverr and other online platforms, for that they are extremely helpful for those in third world countries, even if that means that their prices are extremely more competitive to someone living in the US. The change that I propose comes down to the balance of wages, where they stop reflecting on the designer's location, but instead they focus more on the quality of the job. Higher quality jobs require higher wages. This way, the stigma of customers requiring cheap and quick jobs decreases, as the designers would then all be treated fairly.

Reflection

I did not have a good time writing this. Part of me does feel like what I wrote is important in some way, but at the end of the day it stems down to changing the entire economy of the world, which I don't think I have the power of. This topic is really broad and complaining about it will amount to nothing. For me, it is more worth my time to find customers who are willing to pay my rates by being convenient and local, because complaining about it won't do anything.

Although it was not the best, I can't say that it didn't teach me anything. I got a better insight on international rates for CAD designs, which led me through a rabbit hole and made me realize that I should start charging even more for my work, something that I have always been on the fence about but might actually attempt.

I am sure op-eds have a great effect when people write and publish them, but for me it felt like I was someone's angry uncle writing on a facebook comment section complaining about something.