OLIN GLOBAL CASE COMPETITION

2026

Hosted by Arch Consulting at Olin Business School, Washington University in St. Louis

SPONSORED BY

Jane Street®

McKinsey & Company

rentahuman

CASE BRIEF

RentAHuman

Building the physical-world workforce for AI agents

How should RentAHuman build a defensible business in AI-coordinated human labor?

OGCC 2026 · 24-HOUR CASE

THE COMPANY

RentAHuman lets AI agents hire people for the real world.

AI agents are software programs that can perform tasks independently. However, they cannot easily do things that require a person to be physically present or use human judgement. For example, an AI agent cannot walk into a store, inspect a product in person, or talk to someone face-to-face.

RentAHuman connects AI agents with people who can complete these tasks. Examples include physical tasks (visiting stores, delivering items), gathering information (checking prices, collecting data), or providing feedback (testing products).

HOW IT WORKS

RentAHuman operates as a two-sided marketplace. On one side are customers, including businesses, individuals, and AI agents that need tasks completed. On the other side are people willing to complete those tasks for payment. Customers specify what needs to be done, where and when it must happen, and how much they will pay. Workers can then accept assignments that match their location, availability, and capabilities.

TYPICAL STEPS

A typical assignment follows five steps. First, the customer creates a task with clear instructions. Second, the platform connects the task with suitable workers. Third, a worker completes the assignment. Fourth, the worker submits the required results, such as photographs or written feedback, for review. Finally, the customer receives the results, and the worker receives payment once the work is approved.

THE API

What is a Human API?

An API, or application programming interface, allows different software programs to communicate and request services from one another. For example, a delivery app can use a mapping service through an API without having to build its own mapping technology.

THE HUMAN API

RentAHuman applies this concept to human labor. Its Human API allows software and AI agents to request tasks that require people to act in the physical world or provide human judgement. For example, an AI agent could request photographs of product displays from 50 grocery stores. RentAHuman could coordinate the workers who visit those stores and return the photographs for the AI agent to analyze.

RENTAHUMAN VS GIG-WORK

The main difference between RentAHuman and a traditional gig-work marketplace is its focus on integrating human work directly into software and AI workflows. Instead of requiring a person to manage every assignment manually, an AI agent could request a task, receive the results, and continue its work. However, the platform must still account for worker availability, task quality, scheduling, and other challenges that make human work less predictable than software.

Current Business and Market Opportunity

RentAHuman has several potential applications, but the company needs to determine which markets offer the best opportunities for growth. Three major use cases are physical marketing, software testing, and data collection.

01
Physical Marketing

02
Software Testing

03
Data Collection

MARKET OPPORTUNITY · USE CASE 1

Physical Marketing

RentAHuman can help businesses organize marketing activities in specific locations. For example, a software company could hire people to hold promotional signs outside a technology conference attended by its target customers. Other assignments could include distributing flyers near relevant events or coordinating marketing activities across several cities.

This market may offer opportunities for near-term revenue because businesses can define specific tasks and verify whether workers completed them. However, demand may vary depending on event schedules and marketing budgets. RentAHuman must determine whether it can turn individual campaigns into a repeatable business.

Software Testing

AI tools can now build software, but a working product is not necessarily easy for people to use. RentAHuman could connect software it develops with human testers who evaluate applications and identify confusing features or problems with the user experience.

For example, an AI agent could build an application, hire testers through RentAHuman, review their feedback, and make improvements before requesting another round of testing. This could create recurring demand if businesses regularly use human feedback during software development. However, RentAHuman would need to ensure that testers provide useful, consistent feedback and compete with existing software-testing services.

MARKET OPPORTUNITY · USE CASE 3

Data Collection

Businesses often need information that can only be collected reliably by people in the physical world. For example, a retailer may want photographs of product shelves across 100 stores to determine whether products are available and displayed correctly. RentAHuman could coordinate workers to collect the photographs, which an AI system could then analyze.

Other opportunities include collecting images and audio recordings, gathering human feedback on AI-generated content, and conducting inspections across multiple locations. These projects could generate large assignments, but they require consistent instructions, reliable workers, and strong quality controls. RentAHuman must also consider competition from companies that already specialize in data collection.

Current Business Traction

RentAHuman has established an initial network of workers and has experience delivering paid assignments. Proposed company figures include approximately 81,500 registered U.S. users, approximately 49,000 users with fully completed and active worker profiles, and more than 800 U.S. workers who have completed paid work. The company also reports delivering 36,000 hours of work for a robotics customer. Its primary established U.S. worker markets are New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

Note: These figures measure different stages of participation. A registered user may never complete a task, and a worker with an active profile may not be available for a particular assignment

~81,500

registered U.S. users

~49,000

users with fully completed and active worker profiles

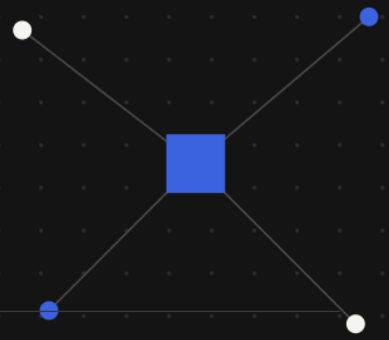
800+

U.S. workers who have completed paid work

36,000

hours of work for a robotics customer

Key Strategic Challenges



01 Choosing the Right Market

02 Making Work Reliable

03 Building a Profitable Business Model

04 Creating a Competitive Advantage

05 Balancing Current Demand with Future Growth

KEY STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

CHALLENGE 1

Choosing the Right Market

RentAHuman cannot assume that every potential use case deserves equal investment. Physical marketing may offer more immediate demand, while software testing could generate more frequent assignments. Data collection may offer larger projects but require more specialized operations. The company must decide which market to prioritize based on customer demand, willingness to pay, competition, repeat business, and operational complexity.

KEY STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

CHALLENGE 2

Making Work Reliable

Customers need confidence that assignments will be completed correctly and on time. Workers may cancel, arrive late, misunderstand instructions, or submit incomplete results. These problems become especially important when an AI agent requests work without a person supervising every step.

RentAHuman could improve reliability through worker screening, performance ratings, clearer task instructions, backup workers, and automated checks. However, these measures can increase costs or make it harder to find available workers. The company must determine how to maintain consistent quality without making its service too expensive.

KEY STRATEGIC CHALLENGES
CHALLENGE 3

Building a Profitable Business Model

RentAHuman must earn enough revenue to cover worker payments, customer acquisition, task verification, customer support, and other operating costs. Potential revenue models include charging a fee for each completed task, charging customers based on API usage, offering subscriptions, signing enterprise contracts, or charging additional fees to manage complex projects.

Each model has different advantages and costs. For example, managing an entire marketing campaign could allow RentAHuman to charge more, but it would also require greater operational involvement. Currently, RentAHuman uses a fee per task model charging an 18% platform fee and has a budget of approximately $2 million.

KEY STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

CHALLENGE 4

Creating a Competitive Advantage

A competitive advantage is something that makes a company more valuable or difficult for competitors to replace. RentAHuman could build an advantage through a reliable network of workers, strong coverage in key cities, historical data on worker performance, integrations with AI platforms, or specialized services for particular industries.

However, other companies could develop similar platforms. RentAHuman must determine which capabilities will matter most to customers and invest in the ones that competitors would find hardest to replicate.

KEY STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

CHALLENGE 5

Balancing Current Demand with Future Growth

RentAHuman's long-term vision depends on AI agents increasingly managing tasks and business activities independently. However, many current customers may still be businesses or individuals who use AI tools while remaining involved in managing assignments.

If RentAHuman focuses too heavily on a future market, it may miss opportunities to generate revenue today. If it focuses only on current customer needs, it may struggle to become a major infrastructure provider as AI agents become more capable. The company needs a strategy that addresses current demand while preparing for future growth.

The Main Question

How should RentAHuman develop its business over the next 12 months to build a sustainable competitive advantage in the market for AI-coordinated human labor?

Your team should recommend a practical strategy for growing the business. The recommendation should identify the most attractive initial market, explain how RentAHuman should make money, and describe how it can reliably deliver tasks as the business grows.

PART 1 OF 2

Questions Your Team Should Answer

01

Market Selection

Which market should RentAHuman prioritize: physical marketing, software testing, data collection, or another opportunity? Identify the target customers and explain why this market offers the strongest starting point.

02

Business Model

How should RentAHuman charge customers? Explain how the company can cover worker compensation and operating costs while generating revenue and increasing profitability.

03

Marketplace Operations

How should RentAHuman ensure that enough qualified workers are available when customers need them? Consider worker recruitment, geographic coverage, task matching, incentives, and methods for checking the quality of completed work.

PART 2 OF 2

Questions Your Team Should Answer

04

Customer Acquisition and Competitive Advantage

How should RentAHuman attract paying customers? Consider whether it should sell directly to businesses, integrate with AI platforms, or develop specialized services for particular industries. Explain how the company can differentiate itself from competitors.

05

Implementation Plan

What should RentAHuman prioritize over the next 12 months? Develop a phased plan that identifies the most important actions, sets measurable targets, and explains how the company will evaluate progress.

Expected Deliverables

Your team should present a clear, evidence-based recommendation. The final presentation should include a target market and customer segment, a product and positioning strategy, a proposed pricing and revenue model, a plan for managing workers and ensuring reliable task completion, and a 12-month implementation roadmap.

You should also identify the main risks and assumptions behind your recommendation. Explain what RentAHuman needs to test or learn before committing significant resources to the strategy.

THE FINAL PRESENTATION SHOULD INCLUDE

01 Target market and customer segment

02 Product and positioning strategy

03 Pricing and revenue model

04 Plan for managing workers and ensuring reliable task completion

05 12-month implementation roadmap

Thank you to our sponsors

Jane Street®

McKinsey & Company

Chick-fil-A®

The Pasta House Co. Italian Restaurants

OLIN GLOBAL CASE COMPETITION

Questions? Contact a.l.schultze@wustl.edu

Hosted by Arch Consulting, WashU's traveling case competition team, at Olin Business School, Washington University in St. Louis.

rentahuman