A FREE PREVIEW FROM PAID BY AI

My story: how I started getting paid to train AI

By TYB — the real timeline, the real numbers, and what I wish I'd known before I started.

CHAPTER 1

How I found these platforms

I didn't set out to build a directory. I set out to find a second income stream that didn't depend on building an audience, chasing freelance clients, or picking up a side job with a fixed schedule.

AI training platforms — the ones that pay engineers, data professionals, and domain experts to evaluate and train AI models — kept coming up. Mercor was the first one I actually applied to. Not because it was the easiest or the best-paying on paper, but because it was the one I could actually find clear information about at the time.

That was the first problem: almost none of these platforms publish a real rate card, a clear timeline, or an honest description of what the work is actually like day to day. I had to apply, get in, and find out myself.

> This preview walks through my actual timeline and real numbers. The full **Paid by AI** directory is the research I wish I'd had before I started — 15 platforms, compared side by side, so you don't have to apply blind to find out.

CHAPTER 2

The slow start

The first months were not a straight line up. My own earnings dashboard from that period tells the real story better than I can:

> **EARNINGS OVER TIME — JAN–JUL 2026**
> February had real activity. March dropped to almost nothing. April was a complete gap. Then May and June picked back up — by far the strongest months in the window.

That gap in March and April wasn't a platform problem — it was a **task availability** problem, which is the single most common complaint I've since found repeated across nearly every platform in this space. Getting accepted onto a platform doesn't mean there's steady work waiting for you. Some weeks there's a full queue. Some weeks there's nothing that matches your profile at all.

I didn't know that going in. I assumed getting accepted was the hard part and everything after would be steady. It wasn't, and that's exactly the kind of thing that doesn't show up on any platform's marketing page.

CHAPTER 3

What changed

Two things turned it around. First, I stopped waiting on a single platform and kept applications moving on more than one at a time — so a dry queue on one didn't mean a dry month overall. Second, I started taking a mix of contract types instead of holding out for one ideal role.

By mid-2026, my active and past contracts looked like this:

CONTRACT	RATE	STATUS
Contractor (Mercor)	**$80/hour**	Active
Project Thor — Mac Professionals (Mercor)	**$30/task**	Active
Data Science Expert	**$70/hour**	Ended
Professional Evaluator Expert	**$70/hour**	Ended

Some of that work was hourly, some was per-task. Some of it lasted months, some ended after a few weeks. None of it was the single steady job I half-expected when I started. That variability is normal — the strategy chapter in the full directory covers how to plan around it instead of being surprised by it.

CHAPTER 4

The real numbers

Here's what actually showed up in my account, unedited:

MAY 4 – JUN 1, 2026

$4,422.36

JAN 1 – JUL 11, 2026 (FULL WINDOW)

$9,241.04

My results — yours will vary. This reflects my own hours, platform mix, and acceptance into specific projects. It is not a guarantee of what you'll earn, how quickly you'll be accepted, or what work will be available to you.

The redacted screenshots behind these numbers, along with more evidence, are on the Receipts page at paid-by-ai.com/receipts.

CHAPTER 5

What I wish I'd known

- **Apply to more than one platform.** A quiet queue on one platform is normal, not a sign you did something wrong.
- **Read the payment terms before you start** — holding periods, payout rails, and minimum withdrawal amounts vary a lot and aren't always obvious upfront.
- **Track everything.** Application dates, assessment results, actual hours worked versus actual pay — the gap between advertised and real can be significant.
- **Expect an uneven ramp.** My own first quarter had a two-month gap in it. That's not unusual — it's the norm this preview didn't warn me about.

None of this means the work isn't real or the pay isn't real — both are, and they show up in my own account. It means the honest version of this opportunity looks different from how any single platform markets itself.

THE FULL PICTURE

What's in the full directory

This preview covered my own story on one platform. **Paid by AI** is the 33-page, source-cited directory covering all 15 — the comparison table, a full profile page per platform, the strategy chapter this preview only touched on, a printable application tracker, and a 1099 tax basics page.

Get the directory — $29 → paid-by-ai.com

For more receipts — check out my redacted dashboard screenshots at **paid-by-ai.com/receipts**.

30-day refund, no questions asked. Not affiliated with any platform mentioned. My results — yours will vary.