

The pay-what-you-want model

In the pay-what-you-want model, the beneficiary of Creative Commons content is invited to give—at any amount they can and feel is appropriate, based on the public and personal value they feel is generated by the open content. Critically, these models are not touted as “buying” something free. They are similar to a tip jar. People make financial contributions as an act of gratitude. These models capitalize on the fact that we are naturally inclined to give money for things we value in the marketplace, even in situations where we could find a way to get it for free.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding models are based on recouping the costs of creating and distributing content before the content is created. If the endeavor is **Made with Creative Commons**, anyone who wants the work in question could simply wait until it's created and then access it for free. That means, for this model to work, people have to care about more than just receiving the work. They have to want you to succeed. Amanda Palmer credits the success of her crowdfunding on Kickstarter and Patreon to the years she spent building her community and creating a connection with her fans. She wrote in *The Art of Asking*, “Good art is made, good art is shared, help is offered, ears are bent, emotions are exchanged, the compost of real, deep connection is sprayed all over the fields. Then one day, the artist steps up and asks for something. And if the ground has been fertilized enough, the audience says, without hesitation: of course.”

Other types of crowdfunding rely on a sense of responsibility that a particular community may feel. Knowledge Unlatched pools funds from major U.S. libraries to subsidize CC-licensed academic work that will be, by definition,

available to everyone for free. Libraries with bigger budgets tend to give more out of a sense of commitment to the library community and to the idea of open access generally.

Making Human Connections

Regardless of how they made money, in our interviews, we repeatedly heard language like “persuading people to buy” and “inviting people to pay.” We heard it even in connection with revenue streams that sit squarely within the market. Cory Doctorow told us, “I have to convince my readers that the right thing to do is to pay me.” The founders of the for-profit company Lumen Learning showed us the letter they send to those who opt not to pay for the services they provide in connection with their CC-licensed educational content. It isn't a cease-and-desist letter; it's an invitation to pay because it's the right thing to do. This sort of behavior toward what could be considered nonpaying customers is largely unheard of in the traditional marketplace. But it seems to be part of the fabric of being **Made with Creative Commons**.

Nearly every endeavor we profiled relied, at least in part, on people being invested in what they do. The closer the Creative Commons content is to being “the product,” the more pronounced this dynamic has to be. Rather than simply selling a product or service, they are making ideological, personal, and creative connections with the people who value what they do.

It took me a very long time to see how this avoidance of thinking about what they do in pure market terms was deeply tied to being **Made with Creative Commons**.

I came to the research with preconceived notions about what Creative Commons is and what it means to be **Made with Creative Commons**. It turned out I was wrong on so many counts.

Obviously, being **Made with Creative Commons** means using Creative Commons licenses. That much I knew. But in our interviews, people spoke of so much more than copyright