

# OPENDESK



Opendesk is a for-profit company offering an online platform that connects furniture designers around the world with customers and local makers who bring the designs to life. Founded in 2014 in the UK.

**www.opendesk.cc**

**Revenue model:** charging a transaction fee

**Interview date:** November 4, 2015

**Interviewees:** Nick Ierodionou and Joni Steiner, cofounders

*Profile written by Paul Stacey*

Opendesk is an online platform that connects furniture designers around the world not just with customers but also with local registered makers who bring the designs to life. Opendesk and the designer receive a portion of every sale that is made by a maker.

Cofounders Nick Ierodionou and Joni Steiner studied and worked as architects together. They also made goods. Their first client was Mint Digital, who had an interest in open licensing. Nick and Joni were exploring digital fabrication, and Mint's interest in open licensing got them to thinking how the open-source world may interact and apply to physical goods. They sought to design something for their client that was also reproducible. As they put it, they decided to "ship the recipe, but not the goods." They created the design using software, put it under an open license, and had it manufactured locally near the client. This was

the start of the idea for Opendesk. The idea for Wikihouse—another open project dedicated to accessible housing for all—started as discussions around the same table. The two projects ultimately went on separate paths, with Wikihouse becoming a nonprofit foundation and Opendesk a for-profit company.

When Nick and Joni set out to create Opendesk, there were a lot of questions about the viability of distributed manufacturing. No one was doing it in a way that was even close to realistic or competitive. The design community had the intent, but fulfilling this vision was still a long way away.

And now this sector is emerging, and Nick and Joni are highly interested in the commercialization aspects of it. As part of coming up