

Noun Project creators agree. When surveyed on why they participate in the Noun Project, this is how designers rank their reasons: 1) to support the Noun Project mission, 2) to promote their own personal brand, and 3) to generate money. It's striking to see that money comes third, and mission, first. If you want to engage a global network of contributors, it's important to have a mission beyond making money.

In Edward's view, Creative Commons is central to their mission of sharing and social good. Using Creative Commons makes the Noun Project's mission genuine and has generated a lot of their initial traction and credibility. CC comes with a built-in community of users and fans.

Edward told us, "Don't underestimate the power of a passionate community around your product or your business. They are going to go to bat for you when you're getting ripped in the media. If you go down the road of choosing to work with Creative Commons, you're taking the first step to building a great community and tapping into a really awesome community that comes with it. But you need to continue to foster that community through other initiatives and continue to nurture it."

The Noun Project nurtures their creators' second motivation—promoting a personal brand—by connecting every icon and symbol to the creator's name and profile page; each profile features their full collection. Users can also search the icons by the creator's name.

The Noun Project also builds community through Iconathons—hackathons for icons.² In partnership with a sponsoring organization, the Noun Project comes up with a theme (e.g., sustainable energy, food bank, guerrilla gardening, human rights) and a list of icons that are needed, which designers are invited to create at the event. The results are vectorized, and added to the Noun Project using CC0 so they can be used by anyone for free.

Providing a free version of their product that satisfies a lot of their customers' needs has actually enabled the Noun Project to build the paid version, using a service-oriented

model. The Noun Project's success lies in creating services and content that are a strategic mix of free and paid while staying true to their mission—creating, sharing, and celebrating the world's visual language. Integrating Creative Commons into their model has been key to that goal.

Web links

- 1 www.kickstarter.com/projects/tnp/building-a-free-collection-of-our-worlds-visual-sy/description
- 2 thenounproject.com/handbook/royalties/#getting_paid
- 3 thenounproject.com/iconathon/