

Nick and Joni say that customers like the fact that the furniture has a known provenance. People really like that their furniture was designed by a certain international designer but was made by a maker in their local community; it's a great story to tell. It certainly sets apart Opendesk furniture from the usual mass-produced items from a store.

YOU GET DESIGNER PRODUCTS WITHOUT THE DESIGNER PRICE TAG, A MORE SOCIAL, ECO-FRIENDLY ALTERNATIVE TO MASSPRODUCTION, AND AN AFFORDABLE WAY TO BUY CUSTOM-MADE PRODUCTS.

Nick and Joni are taking a community-based approach to define and evolve Opendesk and the “open making” business model. They're engaging thought leaders and practitioners to define this new movement. They have a separate Open Making site, which includes a manifesto, a field guide, and an invitation to get involved in the Open Making community.⁴ People can submit ideas and discuss the principles and business practices they'd like to see used.

Nick and Joni talked a lot with us about intellectual property (IP) and commercialization. Many of their designers fear the idea that someone could take one of their design files and make and sell infinite number of pieces of furniture with it. As a consequence, most Opendesk designers choose the Attribution-NonCommercial license (CC BY-NC).

Opendesk established a set of principles for what their community considers commercial and noncommercial use. Their website states:

It is unambiguously commercial use when anyone:

- charges a fee or makes a profit when making an Opendesk
- sells (or bases a commercial service on) an Opendesk

It follows from this that noncommercial use is when you make an Opendesk yourself, with no intention to gain commercial advantage or monetary compensation. For example, these qualify as noncommercial:

- you are an individual with your own CNC machine, or access to a shared CNC machine, and will personally cut and make a few pieces of furniture yourself
- you are a student (or teacher) and you use the design files for educational purposes or training (and do not intend to sell the resulting pieces)
- you work for a charity and get furniture cut by volunteers, or by employees at a fab lab or maker space

Whether or not people technically are doing things that implicate IP, Nick and Joni have found that people tend to comply with the wishes of creators out of a sense of fairness. They have found that behavioral economics can replace some of the thorny legal issues. In their business model, Nick and Joni are trying to suspend the focus on IP and build an open business model that works for all stakeholders—designers, channels, manufacturers, and customers. For them, the value Opendesk generates hangs off “open,” not IP.
