

NOUN PROJECT



The Noun Project is a for-profit company offering an online platform to display visual icons from a global network of designers. Founded in 2010 in the U.S.

thenounproject.com

Revenue model: charging a transaction fee, charging for custom services

Interview date: October 6, 2015

Interviewee: Edward Boatman, cofounder

Profile written by Paul Stacey

The Noun Project creates and shares visual language. There are millions who use Noun Project symbols to simplify communication across borders, languages, and cultures.

The original idea for the Noun Project came to cofounder Edward Boatman while he was a student in architecture design school. He'd always done a lot of sketches and started to draw what used to fascinate him as a child, like trains, sequoias, and bulldozers. He began thinking how great it would be if he had a simple image or small icon of every single object or concept on the planet.

When Edward went on to work at an architecture firm, he had to make a lot of presentation boards for clients. But finding high-quality sources for symbols and icons was difficult. He

couldn't find any website that could provide them. Perhaps his idea for creating a library of icons could actually help people in similar situations.

With his partner, Sofya Polyakov, he began collecting symbols for a website and writing a business plan. Inspiration came from the book *Professor and the Madman*, which chronicles the use of crowdsourcing to create the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1870. Edward began to imagine crowdsourcing icons and symbols from volunteer designers around the world.

Then Edward got laid off during the recession, which turned out to be a huge catalyst. He decided to give his idea a go, and in 2010 Edward and Sofya launched the Noun Project with a Kickstarter campaign, back when