

fy everyone or trying to sugarcoat mistakes or bad news, but instead about explaining your rationale and then being prepared to defend it when people are critical.⁴⁶

Being accountable does not mean operating on consensus. According to James Surowiecki, consensus-driven groups tend to resort to lowest-common-denominator solutions and avoid the sort of candid exchange of ideas that cultivates healthy collaboration.⁴⁷ Instead, it can be as simple as asking for input and then giving context and explanation about decisions you make, even if soliciting feedback and inviting discourse is time-consuming. If you don't go through the effort to actually respond to the input you receive, it can be worse than not inviting input in the first place.⁴⁸ But when you get it right, it can guarantee the type of diversity of thought that helps endeavors excel. And it is another way to get people involved and invested in what you do.

Design for the good actors

Traditional economics assumes people make decisions based solely on their own economic self-interest.⁴⁹ Any relatively introspective human knows this is a fiction—we are much more complicated beings with a whole range of needs, emotions, and motivations. In fact, we are hardwired to work together and ensure fairness.⁵⁰ Being **Made with Creative Commons** requires an assumption that people will largely act on those social motivations, motivations that would be considered “irrational” in an economic sense. As Knowledge Unlatched's Pinter told us, “It is best to ignore people who try to scare you about free riding. That fear is based on a very shallow view of what motivates human behavior.” There will always be people who will act in purely selfish ways, but endeavors that are **Made with Creative Commons** design for the good actors.

The assumption that people will largely do the right thing can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Shirky wrote in *Cognitive Surplus*, “Systems that assume people will act in ways that create public goods, and that give them opportunities and rewards for doing so, often let them work

together better than neoclassical economics would predict.”⁵¹ When we acknowledge that people are often motivated by something other than financial self-interest, we design our endeavors in ways that encourage and accentuate our social instincts.

Rather than trying to exert control over people's behavior, this mode of operating requires a certain level of trust. We might not realize it, but our daily lives are already built on trust. As Surowiecki wrote in *The Wisdom of Crowds*, “It's impossible for a society to rely on law alone to make sure citizens act honestly and responsibly. And it's impossible for any organization to rely on contracts alone to make sure that its managers and workers live up to their obligation.” Instead, we largely trust that people—mostly strangers—will do what they are supposed to do.⁵² And most often, they do.

Treat humans like, well, humans

For creators, treating people as humans means not treating them like fans. As Kleon says, “If you want fans, you have to be a fan first.”⁵³ Even if you happen to be one of the few to reach celebrity levels of fame, you are better off remembering that the people who follow your work are human, too. Cory Doctorow makes a point to answer every single email someone sends him. Amanda Palmer spends vast quantities of time going online to communicate with her public, making a point to listen just as much as she talks.⁵⁴

The same idea goes for businesses and organizations. Rather than automating its customer service, the music platform Tribe of Noise makes a point to ensure its employees have personal, one-on-one interaction with users.

When we treat people like humans, they typically return the gift in kind. It's called karma. But social relationships are fragile. It is all too easy to destroy them if you make the mistake of treating people as anonymous customers or free labor.⁵⁵ Platforms that rely on content from contributors are especially at risk of creating an exploitative dynamic. It is important to find ways to acknowledge and pay back the