

# The Art of Giving it Away

**"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away."**

— *Attributed to Pablo Picasso*

## INTRODUCTION

Greetings. I'm Matthew Toellner, founder of Deep Dish Academy. After years working as a software engineer, I found myself unsatisfied with the direction my career was heading. I realized that the traditional 9-5 business culture wasn't the right fit for me. Despite lacking experience, I wanted to explore consulting and UX design where I could embrace my creative side. I'm driven by an intrinsically motivated growth mindset—one that prioritizes sharing, collaboration, and personal fulfillment over traditional financial incentives. What follows is my perspective on giving away your creative work. While I'll often use the term 'art' to paint a clear picture, this perspective applies to any gift or talent you wish to share.

## THE CHALLENGE FOR CREATORS

Blending passion with profit often leads to difficulties that can overshadow the joy of their work. Here are some examples:

**Commodification:** When your art is reimagined as a product, its deeper meaning can be lost.

**Burnout:** The constant demand to create for financial reasons can lead to exhaustion, making your work suffer.

**Obligated Support:** When your art becomes a transaction, friends and family may feel pressured to buy or support your work, even if they don't truly connect with it.

**Identity Conflict:** You may struggle to separate your personal identity from your work, feeling as though your worth is tied to how much you earn or how successful your creations are in the market.

## THE POSITIVES OF GIVING AWAY YOUR ART

### **1. Building Authentic Relationships**

Giving your art away opens the door to real connections with people. Instead of a simple transaction, it becomes something heartfelt and personal. Every time they see the art, they'll be reminded of the kindness behind it.

### **2. Expanding Your Reach and Influence**

When you give your art away, it's more likely to be shared with others. When someone buys a piece of art, they may feel pressure to justify their choice, especially if they worry others might not appreciate it as much as they do. In contrast, a gifted piece carries no such expectations and allows for more open and natural conversations.

### **3. Freedom from Monetization Pressures**

When you sell art, there's often pressure to create work that will generate income, which can limit your creativity. By giving your art away, you remove the financial aspect, allowing you to focus purely on authentic expression. Experimenting with new styles or ideas feels less risky when there's no pressure to make money from each piece.

### **4. Fostering a Generous Ecosystem**

When you give your art away, it creates goodwill and encourages others to do the same. This can help build a community of generosity, where art and support flow freely between people. Over time, you'll develop a reputation as an artist who values human connection more than profit.

### **5. Universal Benefits for All Forms of Work**

The benefits of giving away your creations aren't limited to stereotypical "artists." Whether you're a writer, designer, consultant, or wellness instructor, offering your work freely can unlock the same rewards. Focusing on the intrinsic value of your work is a mindset that can apply to all endeavors!

#### **THE CASE AGAINST OWNERSHIP-CENTRIC CREATIVE SYSTEMS**

In music, strict copyright enforcement can reach the point where even a few notes are treated as protected material, and where sampling or mashups—despite creating something new—carry legal risk. While these protections have a purpose, they can also restrict the natural evolution of creative work.

Applied more broadly, this kind of control would limit how writers draw from past ideas or how proven practices are shared across fields like consulting and design. Progress depends on building from what already exists, not isolating it.

The open-source software movement offers a different model—one where sharing and collaboration drive innovation. Stop thinking about protection. Work that is shared can travel further, evolve faster, and ultimately have a greater impact.

#### **THE PARADOX OF GENEROSITY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

That shift in perception also changes how support shows up. Instead of obligation or pricing structures, support becomes voluntary and internally motivated. Anonymous donations are a clear example of this dynamic—they remove social pressure, recognition, and reciprocity from the equation, leaving only genuine appreciation. In that environment, contributions are not payments but expressions of trust and alignment. People are investing in you—your connection, storytelling, authenticity, and consistency—just as much as they are in your work.

Visit [www.deepdishacademy.com](http://www.deepdishacademy.com) to explore my creative work and learn how embracing these principles can enhance your own creative journey.