Marketing Channels for NOVA Web Development

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We have arrived at a critical juncture in the process of launching our cooperative enterprise. We have developed a solid working relationship among our cooperators and raised our level of skill as Django web application developers to the point where we have something of real value to offer. We have been preceding under the assumption that there is a need for what we have to offer. Python was reported to be the fastest growing programming language in 2019 (Nesmiyanova, 2020) and Django is currently the most widely used Python web application framework (Petlovana, 2020). The problem now for us is fundamentally two fold. How do we find those who have a need for what we do, and how can we come to just, equitable terms with them to exchange our labor for their money?

We are not interested in "the market" as either an abstraction or a fetishized power to which we must bow down and serve. The market is nothing more than people, and we are interested in solidarity with and mutual dependence on people. In *Ours to Hack and to Own*, co-editor Nathan Schneider says that cooperative enterprises historically have relied on two strategies for getting a foothold in economies predicated on competition, leveraging the competitive advantage found in cooperation, and the latent power of solidarity (Scholz & Schneider, 2016, p. 17). Regarding platform cooperatives, he says that they are "poised to thicken the notoriously loose ties that online connectedness normally offers" by offering positive, ethical alternatives workers and users can turn to in place of the big tech companies which "continue to have difficulty treating workers and users as -- well, people" (p. 17).

As we begin a Summer of activity looking for work our members can do to earn a living, our primary approach to both direct and indirect marketing channels is going to be to rely on the

solidarity of the cooperative movement. We have been connected to this movement for years, but not that our skills are ready, we will more actively engage with it and reach out to it to find opportunities where our skills can be put to use solving the real needs of the people out there in the world who comprise "the market".

The main difference for us between direct and indirect marketing channels is the degree to which we know and have relationships with the people we serve. Direct channels are those people with whom we are already working, or who know us in other contexts. Indirect channels are either people who come to us by reference from our direct channels, or who find us through the information we put out in publications, presentations, etc. about who we are and what we do, as well as why we do it.

Fellow NOVA Web Development cooperator Natalia Cerna and I have signed up for an online course jointly offered by The New School in New York and the Mondragon Cooperative titled "Platform Coops Now!", the flyer for which says it is aimed at people who are "Determined to launch dignified digital platforms that offer decent work" (Scholz, 2020). That describes us at NOVA Web Development perfectly. In *Ours to Hack and to Own* co-editor Trebor Schultz makes the suggestion that the platform cooperative movement could develop "a free-software labor platform that local developers can customize" (Scholz & Schneider, 2016, p. 26). NOVA Web Development has started developing just such a platform, LibreOrganize (https://libreorganize.org/). It is our hope that this Summer course will bring us together with the network of cooperators we need to sustain our effort and to successfully turn NOVA Web Development into a cooperative that can provide its members dignified and sustainable livelihoods.

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