



# FROM DEPENDENCE TO INDEPENDENCE

THE RISE OF THE INDEPENDENT CREATOR

## THE WHITEPAPER

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE CURIOUS AND CREATIVE PEOPLE  
AT NONFICTION RESEARCH AND BODACIOUS STRATEGY STUDIO.  
COMMISSIONED BY MIGHTY NETWORKS.

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# INTRODUCTION

These are the results of the largest independent, open market study of creators ever done.<sup>1</sup>

Our goal was to better understand what motivated creators, their current challenges and what a more sustainable and successful future would look like for them and the followers who love them.

What we found surprised us.

While many creators are hitting a glass ceiling when it comes to growing their businesses, we also discovered a new vanguard of the Creator Economy emerging – the Independent Creator.

These new Independent Creators are forging a very different path. They cultivate direct models and communities that are both more passionate and more profitable – ushering in a new era of opportunity, experimentation and reasons to be optimistic for the future.

We'll get to all of that in a bit. First, let's set the scene.

## The Intoxicating Promise of a New Creator Class

For those paying attention, a new creator class has gone from embryonic concept to inescapable reality as a powerful combination of cultural, societal, economic and technological shifts have overlapped to create the perfect conditions for a new form of entrepreneurship.

Got a phone or a laptop and something to say? Great, you're in. Just start recording, grow an audience and make a living online from home or, better yet, while traveling the world.

From experienced educators to beauty buffs, gregarious gamers, skillful stylists and deft dancers, the promise of sharing your unique talents and passions with the world to find instant fame, fortune and fans has become the new American Dream. [Today, 75% of U.S. children ages 6 to 17 want to become YouTubers when they grow up.](#)

The promise of soaring success where we could rewrite the rules of work and follow our passions to guaranteed profits captured people's imaginations.

There was only one problem.

To make money sharing your talents in this new world, you had to hit the social media lottery – building an audience in the millions to make enough money from sponsorships or the slim revenue share offered by YouTube, Twitch or occasionally, Instagram and Facebook.

Into this gap came the first wave of “creator tools” that promised direct payments from fans, followers or subscribers in exchange for your entertainment, education and expertise. From Patreon to OnlyFans, Udemy, Teachers Pay Teachers and more, a [new cultural and economic moment struck](#) and made the creator opportunity impossible to ignore.

<sup>1</sup> Our research methodology and the sample of creators included is available at the end of this report.



## The Creator Economy Gold Rush

As excitement around direct revenue grew, so did COVID-19. Demand from creators and their audiences for new tools, programs and platforms exploded as we sheltered in place.

Patreon and OnlyFans quickly became the darlings of the scene, hoisted atop the creator pedestal as the effortless solution for those looking to cash-in on their social media followings via bolted-on tiered subscription access and fan rewards.

Then TikTok blew up, minting new multiple million-follower starlets daily, resulting in a billion people trying to crack the [FYP page](#).

Now in addition to a flurry of [new creator monetization tools](#) promising creators faster, easier ways of going direct to fans, TikTok woke the giants.

Instagram rolled out a slew of new features: Creator shops, tipping, badges, native affiliate links and a marketplace to help foster paid content relationships with brands.

Facebook offered paid online events, fan subscriptions, badges and even a virtual currency for creators. Facebook also touted a zero “take rate” for gaming livestreamers until 2023, a move to compete with Amazon-owned Twitch, which itself saw exponential growth during 2020/21 as it managed to tick the dual boxes of providing a new form of entertainment and entrepreneurship.

Meanwhile, Snapchat waded into the fray with “Spotlight,” a TikTok FYP competitor, which promised creators a share of \$1 million a day, depending on how their content performed. They also expanded virtual gifting to all “Snap Stars” globally, allowing creators to accept digital tokens from fans.

And YouTube, well, they kind of carried on doing what they’ve always been doing, but with the addition of a few new bells and whistles to their [Paid Digital Goods](#). On top of existing options such as “Super Badges,” channel subscriptions, a product “shelf” to highlight branded merchandise and “Live Alerts for Merch,” they also launched “Super Thanks” to allow fans to show their appreciation by donating in-stream.



## **Yet, All Is Not What It Seems**

Even as Big Social and new upstarts continue to fall over themselves to cater to creators, the rosy picture of people following their passions to newfound profit and prestige has begun to look more and more like a mirage.

When you look under the hood at a creator's business, the foundation is shaky AF.

Headlines abound about creator burnout and the need for mental health programs to help those trying to stay upright on a content treadmill designed to please the algorithm Gods.

The New Yorker recently described the current state of the Creator Economy as “the gig economy, but for digital content.” (Not a compliment.)

For those aspiring creators who have yet to make it big, the cost-benefit analysis of entering the game is coming up short as they realize it may never be possible to make ends meet.

Despite audiences of hundreds of thousands and revenue-generating creator tools galore, the math, confoundingly, doesn't seem to add up.

## **The Game, While Fun, Is Rigged**

Creators believe they are building a real asset on social media platforms – an audience that can be monetized by sponsorships, revenue splits and direct payments on Patreon or OnlyFans.

But that audience they're building? They don't own it.

What the algorithm giveth, it can also taketh away.

Despite following the right hashtags and posting the recommended 5-7 times a day, the algorithms are designed to benefit the platform, not the creator – with very real consequences.

Should the algorithm turn away from a creator, they have no recourse.

Should a creator's brand of content fall out of favor with advertisers, they have no recourse.

Should platforms move on to the next shiny object (👉metaverse), they have no recourse.

Even the take rates and demands from fans on direct payment platforms like Patreon and OnlyFans require a content conveyor belt that puts sustainability and scalability out of the reach of the vast majority of creators.



## **And Building on These Platforms Is Precarious**

A few months ago, OnlyFans threatened to cut off sex workers, its biggest creator base, deciding that it would no longer support their brand of content. They backtracked on the decision (too lucrative not to), but the damage was done. More creators woke up to the total lack of choice or power over their own destiny when building on rented land.

More recently, Facebook accidentally locked themselves out of their own house. Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp were inaccessible for six hours, and another outage happened 4 days later. Once again, creators were shaken as their livelihoods were directly impacted by factors entirely outside of their control.

And the online course marketplace Udemy just drastically changed the percentage it pays out to instructors ahead of a public listing. Great for their gross margin, terrible for the course creators who chose to go all in with them.

That's just the tip of the iceberg.

The horror stories we heard from creators — accounts being shut down arbitrarily before big events without warning, shifts in the algorithm favoring one kind of content or another, swift enforcement of entirely new content rules and other blocks that offered no rhyme or reason — were worse than we imagined.

The central premise of the Creator Economy is one of freedom and independence.

But it's an illusion.

As status quos go, this is a pretty shitty one.

## **What's the Solution?**

If we want the Creator Economy to have a future we're going to need better options.

And who better to ask about these options than creators themselves?



# ENTER THE LARGEST SURVEY OF CREATORS EVER DONE

To understand the current state of the Creator Economy, we undertook the largest open market survey of American creators done to date.

We knew that the more voices and perspectives we could hear from, the more robust and insightful our findings would be. **So, we spoke to 1,624 creators and qualified them to ensure that they are currently earning an income from what they do.**

It was important to us to capture the state of play for creators who saw themselves as entrepreneurs and were currently building solid businesses. For us, the future of the Creator Economy is about finding ways for people to create livelihoods.

The result is a behind-the-scenes story of online creators laboring to create their businesses:

- a) what they're experiencing,
- b) the glass ceiling that many of them are hitting in time, earnings and will-to-go-on,
- c) an emerging vanguard of "Independent Creators" who are rapidly innovating a new approach to their craft and community, and
- d) how the coming quest to help more creators become independent could reshape everything — not just creator tools but entrepreneurship and Web3 as well.

## How Creators Make Money Today

Among the creators surveyed, they earn revenue from more income streams than ever before. On its face, this paints an optimistic picture of their lives and earning potential:

INCOME STREAM	% OF CREATORS	INCOME STREAM	% OF CREATORS
Revenue Share of Advertising	61%	Merch Sales	25%
Paid Subscriptions	38%	Affiliate Links	24%
"Tips" From Fans	36%	Community Memberships	21%
Creator Funds	27%	Online Courses	15%
Brand Sponsorships	27%	Community Events	14%

But these rosy numbers mask a much darker reality.



## THE PICTURE ISN'T SO PRETTY



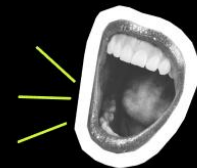
### Creators are hitting a glass ceiling

93% say that being a creator has introduced stresses that have “negatively impacted their lives,” with 45% saying they’ve experienced “big emotional lows.”

Only 35% of all creators feel they’re earning a reasonable income and putting in an acceptable amount of time and effort.

This means 65% of creators feel overworked and/or underpaid.

### They are tapped out of time and energy



The majority of creators surveyed say they don’t have much more time or energy to invest in making creating financially viable. They said they are **less than an hour a day** away from feeling like it would “not be worth it” to continue on their path as a creator.

Nearly 25% of all creators admit they have real doubts they’ll ever be able to reach their financial goals without burning out.



### The financial gains they have made feel precarious

77% of creators worry about being dependent on social media platforms for their earnings.

70% say that a dip in earnings from an algorithm change could have “serious effects” on their life.

Looking at these findings, it’s no wonder that 33% have felt anger, rage, or extreme frustration with major social media platforms as they navigate this uncertainty.



## WHAT THEY SAID



*There's no tutorial to get you over **the overwhelm and the burnout.***



*What's good for a platform is not good for a person. Trying to have a business online **without exploiting myself to make the algorithm Gods happy** is so hard.*



*You're fighting against the algorithm, and the algorithm wants you to feed the beast. You're doing all of these things and not getting anything out of it, and you're just hoping for [fame].*

***I don't want to be Internet famous but broke.***



*It's tough because you are literally at the mercy of an algorithm. It wants consistency and product. And it wants it on the regular.*

*It's not sustainable for a human being. **In fact, it's not human.***

Out of hours in the day and struggling to make a living, creators are looking for alternatives. And they are drawn to one specific path like never before.





# A VANGUARD OF NEW INDEPENDENT CREATORS IS RISING IN RESPONSE

As more creators are getting wise to an increasingly exhausting and uncertain future, something fascinating is happening.

## **A new Independent Creator is emerging.**

They represent a small but rapidly growing segment of the Creator Economy. And they are finding success operating by three very different principles.

### **Principle #1**

**They own a direct relationship with their audience, rather than renting it from social media platforms.**

57% of creators see direct revenue (subscriptions, tips, memberships) as more crucial to their future than social platform revenue.

24% of creators have a website where fans can pay to participate in creator-led challenges or activities.

### **Principle #2**

**They earn money from cultivating communities, not just building audiences.**

21% of creators earn revenue from an online community where followers pay to interact with each other, not just with the creator.

They are gaining independence by building a community that entertains each other in meaningful ways, freeing the creator from the constant hamster wheel of content creation.

### **Principle #3**

**They seek to build a network effect, rather than stay on the content conveyor belt demanded by big social platforms to succeed.**

77% of creators say their ability to earn revenue has improved since they launched a community where followers pay to join and connect with each other, not just the creator. 77% also say their ability to grow follower count has improved since they launched a community.

How? They're building a network effect.



Put simply, a network effect is a phenomenon whereby the more people or participants there are, the more the value of a good or service improves. It's what built Facebook, Instagram and now TikTok into juggernauts.

Independent Creators have watched the power afforded social media platforms by having a network effect. Now they want their own.

They are inching closer to this by:

- Choosing to launch and grow their own website and/or app destination.
- Experimenting with a new breed of community and content platforms where followers interact with each other, not just the creator.
- Seeking out new software designed to deliver more value in the connections between their members automatically.

With a network effect, creator content is replaced by the value generated by members for other members. It leads to a more sane, sustainable and scalable digital business – and that represents a potentially seismic shift for creators.



***Now at any given time, I can do whatever I want. If I don't want to post on Instagram for two months, I can do that.***

***When it comes to posting or not posting, nothing hurts me.***



## CLOSING THE INDEPENDENCE GAP

Both our quantitative study and qualitative interviews showed a clear gap between the desire for and fulfillment of the independence that creators crave.

Only 21% of creators surveyed combine community, direct payments and an independent website or app where they earn money independent of large social platforms. But 89% say they'd be interested in an integrated platform that combines these elements.

There's clearly an "Independence Gap" among creators. Our research surfaced three plausible scenarios that will close this gap in the near future.

### Scenario #1: Combos & Partnerships Continue to Dominate

Creators go independent today by stringing together multiple creator tools. This is the primary way Independent Creators are moving more of their efforts off social platforms today.

For example, creators use Patreon for rewards and also add a Discord server to fight churn. On Substack, writers quickly find that they also need to add Slack or Discord to do the same thing. And creators building courses on Teachable or Kajabi also use Facebook Groups or new add-on community platforms to keep students engaged.

In this scenario, a creator takes advantage of singular use case "best-in-class" features offered by different platforms, pulled together into their own configuration.

The challenge with this model is threefold. It's difficult to manage multiple platforms. It's expensive to string together an increasing number of software-as-a-service creator tools. And followers can drop off as they attempt to navigate multiple places in search of a deeper connection with their favorite creator.

### Scenario #2: Fully Integrated Tools Pick Up Momentum

In the second scenario, creators go independent by using integrated platforms like Mighty Networks, Disciple or new entrants to the market.

The benefits of integrated platforms are not only ease of management and lower cost (buying one service versus many), but also emerging features that connect members to each other in ways that build a network effect for each creator community.

On the other hand, integrated platforms need to offer a fuller spectrum of features and flesh out network effect dynamics for their value, ease and efficiency to become obvious and propel them to the mainstream.

Our research points to the creator community being split today on their preference for stringing together the singular use case "best-in-class" tools versus newer integrated platforms.



### **Scenario #3: Giant Social Platforms Swallow Everything**

To deliver an independent offering for creators, social media platforms could either acquire and integrate independent community platforms, payment providers and website makers – or build these features out themselves.

While a very real possibility, this scenario also comes at a time of dramatic mistrust and looming regulation of these platforms, some of which may also preclude them from further acquisitions, or a focus on the needs of creators. It's also unclear how creators, who have been burned by their broken promises, would feel about further entrenching themselves with these companies.

## **THE NEXT STEP FORWARD**

Regardless of which scenario comes to pass (or some mixture of the three), one thing holds true: The role of the major social media platforms will shift from “the center of the creator universe” to “the way followers discover me before they join my independent world.”

We just have to look at the Independent Creator and what's emerging as a “New Creator Manifesto” for what comes next.



# THE FUTURE OF THE CREATOR ECONOMY IS PREDICATED ON CREATOR INDEPENDENCE



It's clear from this study that creators feel short-changed, burned out and stuck working within the restricted parameters of Big Social with little to no control. Therefore, it's encouraging that this vanguard of Independent Creators points to an altogether different, more autonomous future.

They're flipping the script on the status quo we've all been fed — that broad reach, big numbers, advertising dollars and a relentless content conveyor belt is the formula for their prosperity.

While social media has a role to play in building their businesses, they're funnelling new followers into an "owned and operated" space outside of the tyranny of gatekeepers, and under their full control.

This new ethos points to a better future for the Creator Economy. It's sustainable and scalable in a way that doesn't demand that creators burn out on content production or the ever-changing rules of a rigged game.

As we reviewed the research, what became abundantly clear is that there are very specific rules these new Independent Creators have seized upon and made into their own manifesto:



1. **They own, they don't rent.**
2. **They go niche, not broad.**
3. **They cultivate communities, not audiences.**
4. **They build network effects, not content conveyor belts.**

Let's look at the reasons behind each of these philosophies and how they upend the status quo.

Two hands, one on the left and one on the right, are pointing towards the center of the page. The hands are rendered in a stylized, high-contrast manner with a bright yellow-green glow around them.

## **THE NEW CREATOR ✊ MANIFESTO ✊**

**THEY OWN, THEY DON'T RENT.**

**THEY GO NICHE, NOT BROAD.**

**THEY INVEST IN COMMUNITY, NOT AUDIENCE.**

**THEY BUILD THEIR OWN NETWORK EFFECT,  
NOT A CONTENT CONVEYOR BELT.**



## THEY OWN, THEY DON'T RENT

Independent Creators understand the importance of owning their own businesses, member relationships and data, end-to-end. While they don't expect to entirely leave YouTube or delete Facebook, they do expect to spend less time there. For them, every hour they invest building their own destination is better than an hour spent growing a social media following on borrowed land.

They are choosing new platforms expressly designed for ownership. Platforms where they can put their brand front and center, where they can mix and match content, community, events and subscription features, and where they own the relationship with their fans, followers and members.

From Substack to Gumroad, Kajabi and Mighty Networks, this new breed of services gives creators near total autonomy over the how, what, when and where of their content, community and monetization choices. In this model, Big Social serve as feeders and funnellers, not feudal overlords.

And ownership has its privileges.

Independent Creators are building real businesses with a fraction of the scale they need to achieve the same results on social media.

For example, one rapidly growing community platform – where creators bring together a community, online courses, events, and subscriptions in one place – found that 77% of the creators who *offered* paid plans on its platform, *sold* paid plans on its platform.

That's a crazy high conversion rate. It points to a future where creators who have their own integrated website, app, community and subscriptions under their own brand find amazing success connecting their members to each other.

The best part? In this new model, creators can take their members, content and community with them should they ever want or need to.

That's not just ownership, that's freedom.



## THEY GO NICHE, NOT BROAD

We tend to hear the success stories of the creators who have made it big. The TikTok stars with millions of followers becoming chart toppers, the YouTubers redefining entertainment, and the Instagrammers who have become bonafide celebrities.

But the Creator Economy is much bigger and broader than these stories suggest.

The true Independent Creator class spans teachers, artists, coaches, craftspeople, musicians, chefs, hobbyists, writers, gardeners and many, many more.

For the vast majority of them, the game — and the goal — isn't stratospheric fame and money from brands. It's carving out a niche that's obvious to them and new, novel and valuable to those equally interested in the topic.

This model was first defined by Kevin Kelly in his seminal 2008 piece, "[1,000 True Fans](#)." He articulated a vision uniquely enabled by the Internet of artists foregoing stadium-level success in favor of tapping a small number of "true fans" to support them.

For Kelly, it was never just about the artist's content. Rather, 1,000 True Fans tapped into how fans valued *each other* and being a part of a passionate scene.

Then in early 2020 right before the pandemic, venture capitalist Li Jin posited that with the help of new creator tools and technologies, [those 1,000 true fans could actually become just 100](#). With new creator platforms, fans had more than enough reasons to pay their favorite creator \$1,000 a year, resulting in a comfortable \$100,000 paycheck.

But what actually happened is even more dramatic.

One community platform recently found that across 100,000+ monthly subscriptions, 70% of their creators who offered paid subscriptions were generating a median of \$1,000 per month from just 26 members paying \$39.55/month.

[To put this in perspective, to make \\$1,000/month elsewhere](#), a creator needs approximately 229 Substack subscribers, 224 Patreon supporters, 100,000 Instagram followers, or 2M monthly YouTube views.

Independent Creators are carving out valuable niches on emerging platforms where they're connecting members to each other in ways that get more valuable with each new person who joins.

These numbers speak for themselves.





## THEY CULTIVATE COMMUNITIES, NOT AUDIENCES

For too long, we've been getting our terminology mixed up – calling audiences built on social platforms “communities,” when they're anything but.

A community isn't built on DMs and comment feeds. A community doesn't require you to fight for attention with every post or story.

That's an audience, not a community.

And, once again, Independent Creators are choosing a different path.

They are investing heavily in their own communities away from the noise and attention wars of social media. Why? Because for them, community is a massive unlock.

A community unleashes true peer-to-peer interaction. It allows members to find the most relevant people to them. And, most of all, it doesn't rely on the creator to keep things going.

In fact, in an era characterized by an epidemic of loneliness, Independent Creators see their role evolving from content producers to human connectors in a number of profound ways.

By giving members an opportunity to belong to something bigger than themselves and making it normal and natural to meet one another, they are finding an even more rewarding experience with dramatically less effort.

How much less? Compared to the 5-7 posts per day recommended by Big Social, one community platform found that among all of its revenue-generating creators, they were generating \$1,000/month posting just 2-3 times per week. That's it.

Even more astounding? These paid networks had 60% more active members to total members than the same platform's free communities.

When Independent Creators build paid community memberships, they attract people excited about their niche and motivated by connections, results and even transformation.

The community develops its own energy, its own dynamism and its own vibe – far more so than a free audience waiting for the next broadcast.

Which leads us to our final core principle of the Independent Creator's manifesto.



## THEY BUILD NETWORK EFFECTS, NOT CONTENT CONVEYOR BELTS

A network effect has been the source of energy, power and strength of each of the Big Social platforms since day one. A network effect made YouTube the destination for uploading and watching video. A network effect made you want to connect with your friends and family on Facebook. Today, a network effect attracts and engages a billion people on TikTok.

Not only are Independent Creators slowly walking away from the content conveyor belts required of them by Big Social and the first generation of direct payment platforms like Patreon, they are asking more of their owned and operated technology stack of singular use case “best-in-class” tools.

But pulling these tools together is expensive to run and hard to manage, and precludes them from acquiring the most valuable, scalable and sustainable asset anyone can build on the internet – a network effect.

Yet they’ve spent the past decade renting attention from companies who could hire the product and engineering talent to create a network effect.

Now they want to build their own.

So, Independent Creators are increasingly choosing a set of nascent tools and technologies that bring fragmented features together in “all-in-one” platforms that combine community, content and subscriptions – the first step required to create a network effect.

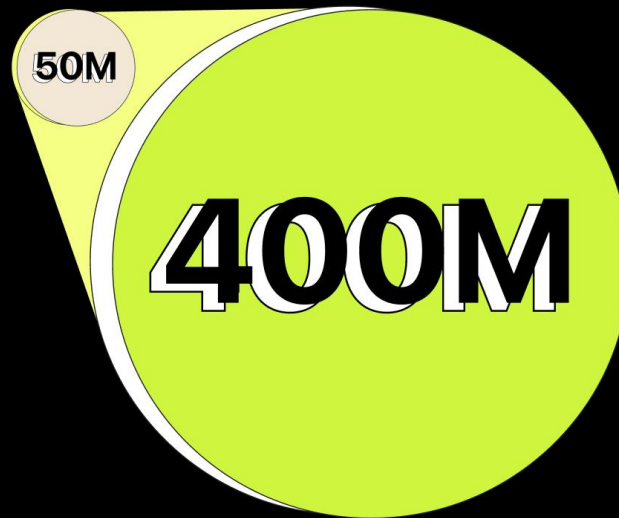
Now on the path to developing this for themselves, Independent Creators are turbocharging the value of the connections made between fans, followers, students and members well beyond what they have come to expect from chat communities alone.

A network effect is also far more valuable to both Independent Creators and their members than a social media following or group. For example, one platform enabling creators to build their own network effect found that of their top 250 revenue-producing customers (generating tens of millions in subscription volume a year), the median social following was just 8,500 people.

Even in the earliest stages of building a network effect, Independent Creators and their members are seeing more reasons to come back and engage, challenging the assumption they need to build a massive following before a business. Rather, a network effect points to a new reality where creators generate revenue from a small but passionate set of members.



# WITH INDEPENDENT CREATORS IN THE MIX, THE TRUE NUMBER OF CREATORS IS FAR LARGER THAN WE'D FIRST IMAGINED.



While some estimate that there are 50 million creators today feeding the social media content engine, Independent Creators armed with this New Creator Manifesto (and easier network effect tools) dramatically expand the total number of people who can choose this path.

In a world where creators own, don't rent; go niche, not broad; invest in community, not audiences; and seek to create their own network effects, not a content conveyor belt, the possibilities are more open. There's no reason why any person with the most modest of followings, or *even none at all*, can't become a revenue-earning Independent Creator.

With these new rules, the path to a different kind of independent entrepreneurship is available to any freelancer, online small business owner, coach, Facebook group admin or individual with an idea anywhere in the world.

We went and added up (and de-duplicated) all of these types of accounts. The result is a Creator Economy that can easily reach 8x the 50M creator figure that's been bandied about for the past few years.

And this hangs together. As it gets easier for Independent Creators to build their own network effect and fewer members are needed to deliver value, engagement, novelty and incentives – anyone with an online profile or any small number of relationships can create something meaningful.

And that's why...



# INDEPENDENT CREATORS ARE A BRIDGE TO A VERY DIFFERENT FUTURE

Looking at Independent Creators, their New Creator Manifesto and the emerging demand for network effects may feel a world away from the resurgence of blockchain technologies, the arrival of the NFT boom and the overall crypto hype train.

But ignore the connection at your own peril.

These new community economies and movements share an essential ethos with Independent Creators – crypto’s central tenet of “power to the people” – creating a collectivized, community-centric ecosystem, not a corporate gate-kept one.

As Independent Creators are able to build a network effect with a small number of passionate people, their members step forward in ways that are more interesting and equitable.

This opens up the ability for the community to share control, spark collaboration and chart a path forwards for themselves.

Today in the NFT world, we’ve seen a lot of this happening on Discord. But new network effect platforms open up new possibilities by allowing communities to better wrangle their options, their organisation and their outputs – to undertake quests and challenges, build new skills, spin up their own workshops or universities and so much more.

This then elevates them from a chaotic chat server to something much more powerful that offers a more sophisticated and generous model for community building and ownership. That’s exciting.

As different models for community economies and currencies emerge – NFTs, play-to-earn, status to access and more – we believe that it’s the Independent Creator who will mainstream this new world. Armed with platforms designed to deliver a network effect, they are perfectly positioned to drive forward innovation in community ownership, contribution and purpose.

It’s the Independent Creators who will:

- Experiment and explore new ownership models where members share in the work and rewards of what they are building together.
- Take community currencies mainstream.
- Rally their communities to accomplish seemingly unreachable goals – such as raising millions for charities, buying a sports team, designing a new brand, collaborating on a film, building out a new gaming multiverse and other crazy, cool shit.

They’ll be the ones to redefine fandom and the cultural and commercial enterprises associated with it.

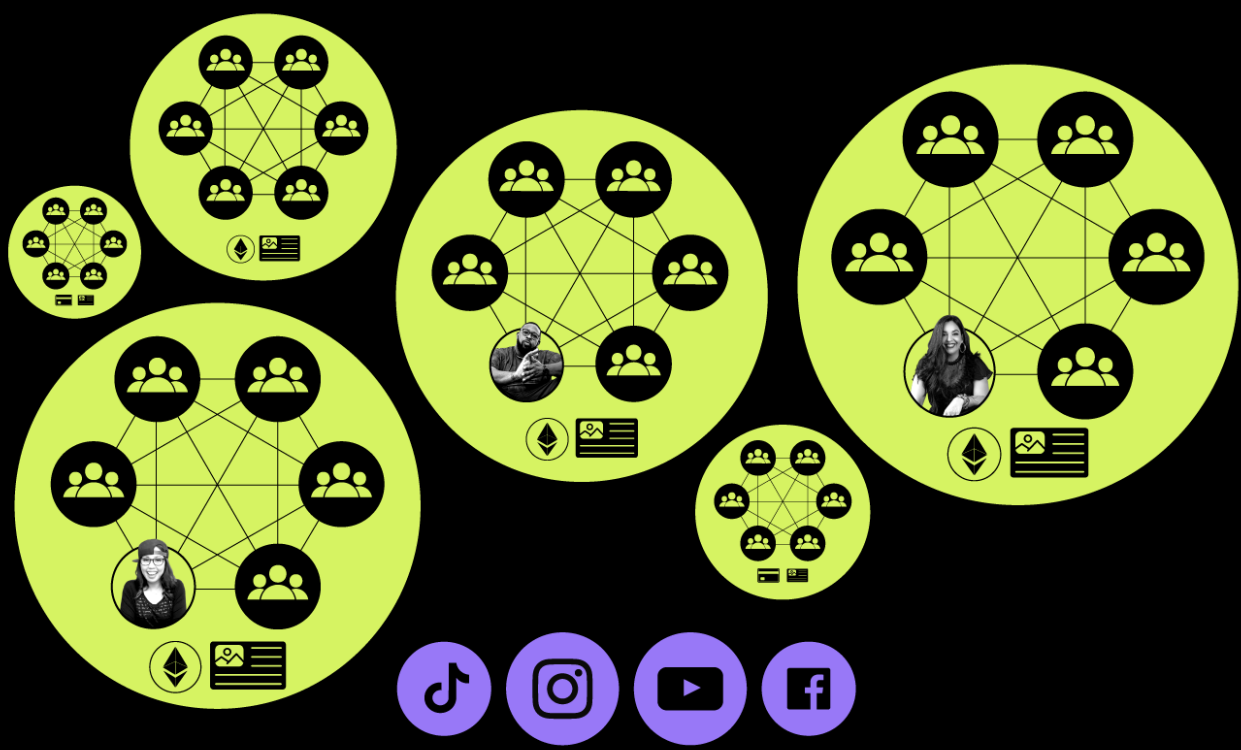
We’ll end here with a prediction:



This new breed of Independent Creator will bridge today's Creator Economy (built on the shaky foundation of social media) into a stronger, more resilient and more interesting Community Economy where more people can design new and fascinating social and economic experiences all their own.

We can't wait to see what wild and wonderful ideas and innovations are unleashed from here.

**FROM A CREATOR ECONOMY TO A COMMUNITY ECONOMY**





## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Nonfiction Research is responsible for conducting both the quantitative and qualitative research that produced these insights.

Their quantitative sample of respondents was collected from people identifying as creators across a wide range of platforms over a one-week period in October of 2021. The results totaled 1,624 completed responses, using a 95% confidence level and a 2.5% margin of error based on the population of the U.S.

Their approach utilized a technique called "known sampling" in which the identity of respondents is verified for accuracy.

In order to focus on the financials of creators, they screened out creators not currently earning any income. Since this sample was taken from the creator market broadly and not skewed by any involvement with a particular creator platform, we believe that this is the largest open-field study of revenue-generating creators done to date.

Funding for this research was provided by Mighty Networks, who were not permitted to approve findings throughout the research and were contractually prevented from having any edit privileges or contingencies over the report.

While some of the findings of this study are aligned with Mighty's vision for the future of creators, the report equally considered futures where Mighty Networks is not the beneficiary. The research looked at a future where competitors or new entrants win out — or where social platforms gobble up the market.

While there's always a possibility for bias in funded research, all parties have sought to ensure the accuracy and objectivity of these findings that we believe are novel and stand true.

### Qualitative Methodology

- 24 confessional interviews with American digital creators
- Expert interviews with industry thought leaders

### Quantitative Methodology

- A nationally representative survey to a statistically-significant number of 16+ year old American digital creators, n=1,624
- A financial analysis of the data collected from the quantitative survey



## SPECIAL THANKS

To the thousands of American creators who confessed to us their highest and lowest moments, showed us behind the scenes of their work, told us their dreams and their doubts, bared their joys, struggles, frustrations, funny stories and financials to us.

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