

### **Web 3.0: How decentralization can help creators own and control their passion**

#### **Hunger and passion**

‘Was there a day in this past month that a family member didn't have enough money to eat?’ – I asked, reading from my questionnaire.

‘No’ – she smiled - ‘Last month I started selling my crochet’ – she said as the tension slowly evaporated from the room.

In the previous consult, the medical log recorded that her newborn was rapidly losing weight, a signal of important malnourishment. The doctor’s notes stated that after she was fired from her receptionist job, and her baby’s father left, she found herself on a very tight budget, unable to even muster the R\$ 5,60 (US\$1,16) needed for the bus fare to go to the distribution center and pick up the government-provided baby formula.

‘It feels like a dream. I know it’s not too much, but tonight I’m even having chicken’ – She said.

It had been about a month since the hospital’s social service had contacted her primary care center and developed strategies to help her earn money within a program called ‘The singular therapeutic project’. As a young medical student from the northeast of Brazil, I’ve met plenty of hardships as an apprentice physician in an underfunded, overcrowded health system. Because of that, I often witnessed humbling moments, especially during the period I was working in the pediatrics department of my university hospital, where lengthy consults of hundreds of questions examine not only the child’s physical health but also the family’s ability to take care of the child. Out of all the questionnaire, one particular question stood out and consistently took the longest to answer:

‘Was there a day in this past month that a family member didn't have enough money to eat?’

I believe this question was deep, not only because it evoked raw emotions, memories, and even traumas, but because it was usually followed by personal stories. Contrary to my expectations of grief and self-victimization, the answers usually brought forth inspirational tales of perseverance, entrepreneurship, and plans each family was mustering to try and enhance their quality of life, so a child could grow healthier.

Stories filled with consistent encounters of personal misfortune flooded me. Yet all of them had something in common: People were unapologetically trying their best for their families, and some even found fulfillment in the process. It was unexpected, to say the least. How did a 57-year-old radiology technician still find energy before a 12h shift to bake and sell her own sweets to the hospital staff every day? How did a mother of twins find time to sew up newborn clothes and sell them to her neighbors?

Money, at first – they told me. But as soon as the financial issues were solved, they did not want to forego the feeling of fulfillment they felt doing it. For Jacira, the radiology technician, it had been a 55 years long-dormant desire to bake, but she felt it was never quite the right time to start. Pressured to get a stable job and marriage, she never had the chance to follow her passion – that is – until she needed money for her husband’s knee surgery. It made me wonder why it was only when things went south, and money was tight, that people dared to follow what they always knew they were passionate about and felt could do better than others.

### **Is passion a luxury?**

A common belief is that ‘passion economy’ is simply a gourmet-ized term used in social media propaganda by the lucky few that actually get to work in what they enjoy, in order to drive an audience and capitalize on the gullible – in an almost pyramid-scheme fashion. That, however, is only one side of the coin. As technology developed, it has become increasingly easier to start working and showcasing one’s passion via the web space, which in turn builds an audience that can support your craft. Working with one’s passion is powerful, and it has the potential to make available for societal use the best of every worker: competence fueled by passion. It is not a platonic search for meaningful living and self-indulgence, but an expression of personal freedom of choice.

It is remarkable for me that in most of my encounters, people only choose to follow their passions once the regular wage market failed them. I guess that following one’s passion does seem like a luxury reserved for those in comfortable positions. Yet, it was precisely the opposite that I found. People that had mostly worked as subordinates doing what they were told, had been obliged by circumstances to reach deep within themselves to answer, ‘what should I contribute?’, and ‘What do I excel at?’. To conscientiously understand where their strength lies, and act on it, and yet not be limited to simply following their desires but fusing both desire and performance. Drucker dignified the importance of such an epiphany as a step toward prosperity in his now-famous article, ‘Managing oneself’(Adi Ignatius 2020).

‘Most people think they know what they are good at. They are usually wrong’ and yet, ‘A person can perform only from strength’.

-Peter Drucker

This idea from Drucker seems a bit exasperating at first, yet after a profound revision of the literature, I admired how he was able to synthesize both modern concepts of personality research and ancient Greek ideas, best summarized by the aphorism written in the temple of Apollo at Delphi ‘Know thyself’(Ryff and Singer 2008). Yes, personality matters. Worldview matters. The road to prosperity in entrepreneurship is deeply intertwined with self-awareness. One cannot perform from strength unless he knows where it lies, and some archetypes of personality are more probable to search for this strength. So, what do we know about the correlations between personality and following one’s passion?

## **Personality and passion**

The Big-5 model is a multidimensional approach to defining personality and how it influences work performance/career choice, using 5 macro traits, and has been the leading analytic tool since the 1980s. Self-starters and entrepreneurs are unsurprisingly high in conscientiousness traits, which is a composite of dependability and achievement motivation (Zhao and Seibert 2006). Not only are they more self-aware and able to probe their strengths, but they are also driven by it, on an ever-increasing scale. While also being high in openness to experiences, which is a major necessity for one who is breaking away from the traditional work environment. Parallely, entrepreneurs tend to be low on agreeableness and neuroticism, explained by the fact that high self-confidence is necessary in order to take risks and follow their passion (Kerr, Kerr, and Xu 2018).

It is in the final trait, extroversion, that literature diverges, and the definition of an ‘entrepreneur’ matters: Self-employed people, following their passion usually scored low on this trait, as many run their business from home to get away from large bureaucracies that demand sociability. Meanwhile, growth-oriented founders are the opposite, constantly in contact with investors, and vendors, in a relentless social environment (Envick and Langford 2000).

That’s precisely why this path of a self-starter is not one available for every type of personality. That does not preclude someone without those bundles of traits to act within the passion economy, but it does diminish their chances of *wanting* to join it and even feeling fulfilled by it. Some work best as subordinates and trying to start an independent business would be as much hell as a decision-maker confined to indefinite rules (Drucker 2018). In retrospect, I can fully understand why my patient chose the path of entrepreneurship to curb her financial problems. She was a textbook example of an entrepreneur, self-aware, bold, and brash, but simply lacked the initial push to follow her passion.

## **Big tech: ‘Freedom fighters’ or ‘Under new management’**

Sometime later, I was revisited by the same mother who previously started her online crochet business. Her personal store had grown. Albeit semi-illiterate, she had joined a few social networks, and managing her online store was now her main occupation, as she was making state-wide sales.

She first thought of this work simply as a blessing; she could finally work only with what she loved – crochet – and no longer be a wage slave, anxious about the next personnel cuts. However, as her sales climbed, her enthusiasm fell. She couldn’t manage her stock properly; her every waking minute was spent stitching, and errors in margin calculations often made her lose money. Yet, she chose to persevere, as the alternative was terrifying.

Through her example, I could see that a passion-driven work as an occupation does not mean having fun professionally. It means hard work, accepting inexperience and uncertainties as a job. I could also understand that selling through social media meant not only following plenty of restrictions but also having a very different type of boss, one that unilaterally and with no prior explanation can choose the amount of exposure you are allowed to have and even shadow-ban your store, all following a black-box algorithm(Myers West 2018).

Parallely, recent debates on data ownership have questioned the ethics of these platforms' monetarization methods. As human interactions progressively move to the webspace environment, data is getting progressively more refined. This enables the reshaping of personal perception by malicious third parties. Much like what happened in the 2016 USA elections, where Cambridge Analytica, a mining, and data analysis company, collected Facebook data in order to influence almost 87 million voters (Hal Berghel 2018). Data is no longer a simple byproduct of human consumption of the internet; data is a commodity of the highest demand; data is labor (The Economist 2017).

Such lack of creator-ownership is sneakily engraved within the privacy terms and conditions of every social network. Each one has a slight variation of a simple idea. Albeit the user is the primary owner of the shared content, the platform has extensive privileges to it, including using and licensing your work to third parties, without the need to compensate or even warn the user. Pictures, videos, live streams, and stories. All are subjected to big tech's will (Marshall and Shipman 2011)

As it turns out, the promises of the potential of an economy fueled by passion are true but can only be achieved as we dodge the pitfalls inherent to the current centralized distribution platforms. Calls for tighter regulations of these data companies are usually in order, but I'd like to shed light on a different emerging solution.

### **Web 3.0: Freedom in decentralization**

Drucker believed that there is no ideal to organize companies or people (Drucker 2001). So, the optimal organization and internal structure of each organization should be specific to its endeavor. Because of that, dynamic companies, interested in breeding an ambiance favorable for creativeness, development, and ultimately profit, have constantly invested in the adoption of management theory. Hence, works like Drucker's 'The practice of management' became a corporate cornerstone, with every different company building its own incarnation of his 3 pillars: prioritizing knowledge work, management by objectives, and SMART goals (Drucker 1975).

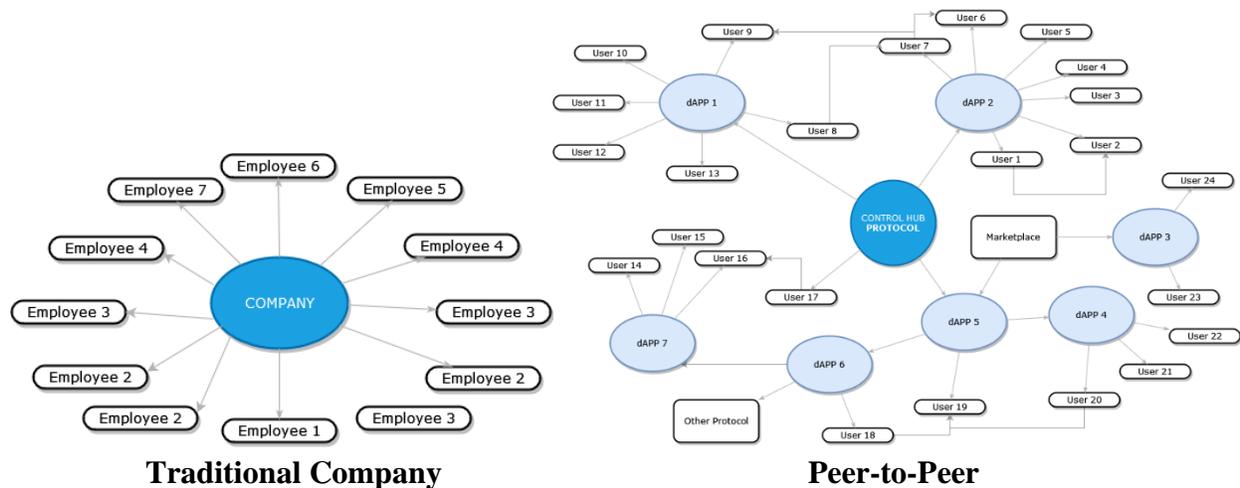
Yet, I believe that the full potential of Drucker's 'The practice of Management' ideas might have only started to be utilized near potential in the last decade, in an unexpected field: Web 3.0. This so-called decentralized web, born alongside bitcoin's blockchain system, has grown

tremendously, both in size and applications, all while applying Drucker’s principles, possibly beyond what even he could foretell.

Decentralization. Or, as Drucker called ‘Organization by autonomous product business’ (Drucker 2001) is the commanding line of Web 3.0, where creators within an open-source, public forum, actively choose to work for a specific protocol. Workers are not acquainted, nor have been hired, but this worldwide array of contributors, fueled by their passion work together in a peer-to-peer setting. The open-source, fully transparent, protocol rewards those that contribute to and maintain it with a native token, exchangeable for money when a goal is reached. Meanwhile, development decisions and goals are voted within its public forum by the holders of those same tokens, which in turn fuels the cycle of growth of the protocol, all the while giving its participants a voice.

Workers are not contained within a single company but are free to work as independently intertwined nodes in a peer-to-peer setting, all connected via a decentralized protocol (Fig 1). In this format, the creators, (e.g. artists, programmers, designers) can either work as independent contractors, via decentralized protocols and/or work as members of a dynamic workforce assemble within decentralized applications. It is important to note that creators are seen as nodes in a decentralized environment, able to put in their best work for a cause they deem fair.

But... isn’t that the same as the gig economy? Where workers are relegated to a non-employee status, subjected to the whims of a third party? Well, no. While these networks can offer simple one-time gigs, their design is so that smart contracts in the blockchain, fueled by code, can be used to hire full-time, part-time, and even compute benefits for the user, in the form of legal taxes, healthcare, and pension (John Paller, Hannah Oreskovich 2021). Thus, decentralization could be the missing piece needed to decouple the dangerous monopoly within the gig economy, that gave rise to the freelancer exploitation methodology.



**Fig1.** dAPP: Decentralized application.

Unlike social networks, in which creators share ownership of their content with the platforms, Web 3.0 produces undeniable, blockchain-generated, digital proofs of content ownership, giving creators total control of their productions. An example of this is the Audius music streaming platform, which invested in streamlining royalty payment for artists while eliminating expansive middlemen and establishing a single point of origin for the songs, providing certifications of originality to their creators. This not only empowers creators to control their music distribution directly but also rewards them accordingly, as they get paid directly from their fans spending (Rumburg, Sethi, and Nagaraj 2019). Most recently, Audius struck a partnership with rising social platform, TikTok (Locke 2021), powering ‘TikTok sounds’ library. This shows an appetite for adoption not only from artists but also legacy platforms, and possibly signaling that we are entering an intermediate stage between the Web 2.0 standard social media format and the promising Web 3.0. Just like Napster first disrupted the music industry, Web 3.0 is now re-establishing the way artists can consciously share and better retain the profit of their content.

### **Values as a further filter**

An urban legend tells that amidst the cold war, John F. Kennedy was visiting the NASA headquarters in Florida for the first time, and after encountering a janitor mopping the floor late at night, the president inquired what he was doing. To Kennedy’s surprise, he was told - ‘Mr. President, I’m helping put a man on the moon’.

Values can make or break the relationship between a worker and a company. As the marketplace of protocols expands, decentralized applications aiming to solve a plethora of problems are emerging. So, filtering by alignment of values will not only be possible, but easier than ever. When there is synergy in beliefs, workers can truly go the extra length to unravel their talents. Work ceases to be only an obligation and reverts back to passion, a greater goal. Not just mopping the floor to go home, but to put a man on the moon. Values are the bedrock of our sense of purpose and fulfillment in work. That, in turn, can also be used in building a more efficient executive. Don’t just do what you like but use it to further what you think is right.

‘To work in an organization whose value system is unacceptable or incompatible with one’s own condemns a person both to frustration and to nonperformance.’

-Peter Drucker

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the development of the passion economy has the potential to unleash the best possible work from those that have the adequate inner and psychological equipment to fit within these models. What started mostly as viral influencers and e-commerce classes as a side hustle,

must be faced for its true potential: an expression of personal freedom of choice. Yet, we must be careful of data concentration and the consequent possible market manipulation from big tech companies. A remedy against this concentration is the progressive decentralization promoted by the Web 3.0 movement, which empowered creators with the first large-scale mechanism in which they can own their own digital body of work. This not only functions as a signal of creator independence and ownership but also as a stimulus to the furthering of the passion economy.

“Decentralization is always the best way to organize functional activities. but if the system of production contains any elements of automation, it becomes absolutely essential.”

-Peter F. Drucker, 1954

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