

"The irony of the modern market is that it can get a spare part from across the world, but a neighbor still might not know that the mechanic with the skills to fix the car is right next door." – Donnie Maclurcan

What's an Offers and Needs Market (OANM)?

An Offers and Needs Market is a way to discover what kinds of support you can provide to others and what help you might get within a specific community. Each exchange builds a connection, more connections create meaningful relationships, and the collective relationships strengthen existing communities – and maybe even create new ones.



General Context

The Offers and Needs Market (OANM), like [asset-mapping](#), is a way to bootstrap communities by focusing on what passions, skills, resources, and connections the group already has. It highlights what people can already do and provides a positive way to short-circuit the "But ... we don't have any resources!" narrative. The emphasis is on creating and sustaining a mindset of what you can do to help – and get helped – right now.

Examples:

- A local business has an incoming supply of extra pallets and a number of citizens need pallets to create furniture for a homeless shelter. Match!
- A woman knows how to juggle and you have five kids in your neighborhood who are desperate to learn how to juggle. Match!
- A spreadsheet enthusiast loves teaching people simple ways to use Microsoft Excel and another person needs to learn how to use Excel for work. Match!

[Go here to see anonymized examples](#) from OANMs that I (Joel Zaslofsky) have run at various events and gatherings.

How an OANM Creates and Helps Communities

- **It reduces consumption.** By making the most of existing assets, people don't need to buy something that they can access when they need it.
 - **It reduces waste.** When someone else's surplus or gift can become another's resource, fewer precious commodities like time go to waste.
 - **It builds and enhances** personal connections and community. Knowing who's doing what, who has access to what, and who knows who are vital for getting things done.
 - **It creates new possibilities** for co-created action that none of us can do alone.
 - **It increases community ownership and commitment** since it requires active participation and shifts the group narrative from what's scarce to what's abundant.
 - **It builds confidence** to ask for what you truly need and own the gifts you're meant to share.
 - **It's a simple, fast, and inexpensive way to resource a movement** because it focuses on what already exists – people's hidden or intentionally public gifts – and is positive in nature.
 - **It's mostly (or completely) non-commercial.** OANMs don't typically involve financial transactions.
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"I love Offers and Needs Markets! It's so much bundled into one: community-building, vulnerability, sharing resources, owning up to our own depths, and the generous use of sticky notes. We all inherently want to help, so giving and receiving with an intentional, organized process allows us to contribute and gain without it feeling transactional. This is just genuine and heartfelt." – Aja Marsh, Offers and Needs Market participant

Housekeeping Notes

Acting upon these housekeeping notes makes for a better and more valuable experience for everyone:

- You only need to share what you're comfortable with.
- The OANM is both a community-building and trust-building exercise. Everything we do here assumes everyone has the best of intentions and that nobody's offering is available in unlimited quantities. In other words, *what we offer each other shouldn't and won't be exploited.*
- Go beyond what you think people might expect you to say are your gifts. The more random the gift, the more likely it will be unique ... and potentially of even greater value to the group.
- The contents of each sticky note can or will be put in a spreadsheet and made available to all participants at a future date. In other words, writing down an offer or need comes with implicit permission for participants to contact you about it. *Don't write it down if you don't want someone asking about it.*
- Place your sticky notes on the designated surface once you're done to avoid everyone placing their notes in a cramped area all at once. Additional notes can be added later if you think of more offers or needs.

The OANM Process

Creating Offers

We always begin with Offers because they're almost always easier for people to think off and symbolic that we've come together to be generous with our gifts (a.k.a. give first, receive second).

1. Take up to ten minutes to write up to ten offers for your fellow participants. These are typically things that come from your heart (caring about children or the environment), head (knowing creative writing), hands (cooking or carpentry), or connections (the groups or associations you and your family belong to).
 - **Heart examples:** "I'm passionate about animal rescue centers and willing to volunteer to help animals in distress" or "I nerd out about spreadsheets and would enjoy helping you craft yours."
 - **Head examples:** "I know a lot about tiny houses and will chat with people who want to know more" or "I can show you how to create an efficient podcasting workflow."
 - **Hands examples:** "I know how to do major plumbing jobs and often help people in my city with their smaller plumbing tasks" or "I can teach you how to design your own logo."
 - **Connections examples:** "I can introduce you to people in the permaculture movement" or "I'll sponsor your membership in [insert desirable organization]."

Pro tip: Think as broadly as possible about what you might offer others – personal, professional, on behalf of an organization, or otherwise. From services (e.g., assisting with grocery shopping) to passions (e.g., tennis buddy) to knowledge (e.g., how to use Twitter) to physical resources (e.g., a used printer) to introductions or leads (e.g., connections with graphic designers), just about anything is fair game.

2. Write these things on each Offer Post-it Note:

Required

- **Your full name** (in the upper left).
- **Contact information** (in the upper right). This tells participants how you prefer to be contacted about the note contents (e.g., email, Twitter handle, phone number, or Skype ID).
- **The offer itself** (in the center). Use abbreviations if you have to and keep the description short.
- **How often your offer can be used** (in the lower left). Give participants an idea of how many times an offer can be used. For example, "Three Times Total" or "Five Times per Week." If you want others to know how many times a limited quantity Offer has been redeemed, you can write "1 2 3" and have participants physically strikethrough a number when they take someone up on their offer (e.g., 4 ~~2~~ 3).

Optional

- **Expiration date** (in the lower middle). If you'd like your offer to expire after a certain amount of time, put a specific date on the note. Write nothing if your offer is good indefinitely.
- **Cost** (in the lower right). Write a currency sign (e.g., "\$") if you normally charge money for your offer. You can also include a flat fee or an hourly rate if you like.

Creating Needs

1. Take up to ten minutes to write up to ten needs that your fellow participants might help you with. For example, what are you working on, seeking, or what kind of support do you require *right now* that someone else might be able to provide?
 - **Heart example:** "I need a coach who can help me understand which passion to pursue first between meditation, business workflows, and slow travel."
 - **Head example:** "I want to self-publish my first book, but I have no idea where to start."
 - **Hands examples:** "I'd like to make classy, hand-made thank you cards, but I don't have access to the right tools" or "I want to build a shed in my backyard."
 - **Connection example:** "I play guitar and want to meet a local drummer and cellist to form a band."
2. Write these things on each Need Post-It Note:

Required

- **Your full name** (in the upper left).
- **Contact information** (in the upper right). This tells participants how you prefer to be contacted about the note contents (e.g., email, Twitter handle, phone number, or Skype ID).
- **The need itself** (in the center). Use abbreviations if you have to and keep the description short.
- **Urgency** (in the lower left). Use short-hand to tell others if your need is urgent (U), semi-urgent (SU), or not urgent (NU). This designation might make the difference between someone helping you right away or never getting around to it.

Optional

- **Expiration date** (in the lower middle). If your need becomes irrelevant or obsolete after a specific date, write it down. Write nothing if your need will be outstanding indefinitely.
- **Potential payment** (in the lower right). Write a currency sign (e.g., "\$") if you're willing to pay to have your need met. *Note:* Each person is responsible for their own negotiation if it occurs.

The Market Opens: Matching Offers with Needs

If you haven't put all your notes up on the designated surface, do that now. Your OANM facilitator is here to answer any questions you have.

At this point, read other participants' offers and needs, and approach your fellow participants about potential matches, things you're curious about, or just because you think they're worth talking to.

Your facilitator may take down all the sticky notes after a period of time and have someone put them in a spreadsheet so more matches can be made at a later time.

Visual Examples of an OANM



<p>Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail</p> <p>Show you how to authentically connect with people in-person.</p> <p>M Doesn't Expire</p>	<p>Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail</p> <p>Teach you how to podcast (complete with a ridiculous workflow document).</p> <p>M Doesn't Expire</p>	<p>Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail</p> <p>Give you one heck of a good, big hug!</p> <p>Any Doesn't Expire</p>
<p>Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail</p> <p>Someone to do one-off graphic design or document layout tasks.</p> <p>Any \$ SU</p>	<p>Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail</p> <p>Advise me on how to use the Elegant Themes Divi 2.4 WordPress Theme for a new website.</p> <p>W 09/15/2015 SU</p>	<p>Joel Zaslofsky jezaslof@gmail</p> <p>Teach me how to fall asleep fast.</p> <p>Any NU</p>

What Now?

Did you enjoy your OANM experience and want to have one happen for another community you belong to? Contact your facilitator for details, learn how to run one of your own at <https://joelzaslofsky.com/oanm>, or [send a note to Joel Zaslofsky](#) so he can provide you with the resources you'll need.

And if you want to go even deeper, consider and answer some modified questions from Peter Block's book, *Community: A Structure of Belonging*.

- What gift have you received from another in our OANM? (Get specific)
- What has someone in your community done today that has moved you or been valuable to you?
- How did someone in your community engage you in a way that had meaning?
- What gift do you have that nobody knows about?
- What are you grateful for that has gone unspoken?
- What is the positive feedback you receive that still surprises you?
- What is the gift you have that you don't fully acknowledge?