

Module 5

Pro Bono Publico



Exercise / Module 5 / Pro Bono Publico

A new model for volunteering in the art world & entertainment industry.

Pro Bono Publico definition: (English: for the public good; usually shortened to *pro bono*) is a Latin phrase for professional work undertaken voluntarily and without payment. Unlike traditional volunteerism, it is service that uses the specific skills of professionals to provide services to those who are unable to afford them.

Just like traditional business professionals who view the offering of their services and expertise to people and organizations who cannot afford them as pro bono work, Artists and Creative Professionals need to remember their added value to the community and the worthiness of their expertise when volunteering and see themselves in this same light.

Artists and creative professionals can take the model and advice of those who have gone before in how to view their volunteer services and the amount of time reasonable to give.

Fun Fact:

"A lawyer should aspire to render at least (50) hours of pro bono publico legal services per year. In fulfilling this responsibility, the lawyer should...provide a substantial majority of the...hours without fee or expectation of fee to persons of limited means...In addition, a lawyer should voluntarily contribute financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means."

American Bar Association, Model Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 6.1, amended 1992

Important to understand:

In specifics Pro Bono work is different than volunteering, especially as it pertains to the IRS and tax benefits.

“Pro bono services are not something you do for your neighbor for free, and they don't involve volunteering to run the Girl Scout cookie station for an afternoon. From a tax standpoint, pro bono services must be donated to charitable organizations or causes. The IRS treats pro bono services and free or discounted services and volunteer services differently. It uses separate guidelines to govern how you can deduct associated costs and expenses.”

From: <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/are-pro-bono-services-the-same-as-volunteer-services-3515203>

Volunteer Work

“Volunteers also offer time, knowledge, skills and expertise for free to help other people or organizations. The IRS classifies volunteer services into two basic categories:

- **Non-GAAP Volunteer Services:** These are not tax deductible for the individual donating his time and services.
- **GAAP Volunteer Services:** GAAP services or "professional" services are sometimes at least partially tax deductible.

GAAP is an acronym that means "generally accepted accounting principals." These principles cover the most common practices and rules for financial reporting of business income. This is an important distinction because of the tax treatment of volunteered time and services.”

From: <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/are-pro-bono-services-the-same-as-volunteer-services-3515203>

So in light of this information, how do we give back in a way that is intentional, meaningful and healthy for us?

Pro bono work and/or volunteer work is an important part of being in community but many artists and creative professionals struggle with two extremes--- always needing to get paid or giving too much away for free.

Artists do this for a WIDE variety of reasons, here's just a few:

1. People have taken advantage of your kindness and generosity.
2. People have taken advantage of your inability to say “no”.
3. You were more worried about other people's expectations of you.
4. You wanted to be liked/accepted/seen as “hero” or “rescuer”
5. You had set a template of folks being used to you doing things for them.
6. You had unhealthy relational boundaries.
7. You don't know how to say “no” without appearing mean or angry.
8. You have a skewed view of ministry.
9. You don't prioritize your needs and the needs of the ones you are responsible for.
10. Lack of margins.
11. Not in touch with your own limitations of resources.
12. Poor Time Management.

How do we solve this?

We need parameters on the donation of our resources (time, services, emotional health, spiritual health, physical health).

Remember you are your business, so how you are physically, emotionally, and spiritually will deeply and profoundly affect your business.

You are an entrepreneur and your resources are limited.

That being said: **Always Be Generous.** But be aware of what healthy generosity looks like:

“Generosity that is done right should not leave you unhealthy and burned out because it is birthed out of wisdom, intentionality and a deep commitment to obey Christ’s call on our lives.” -Michelle Pelsue

Helpful Tips:

1. Plan your pro bono work and volunteering in advance.
2. Take stock of how you are doing--- physically, emotionally, spiritually, financially. You need to learn your capacity—what you can handle--- if you don’t know I bet your spouse or close friend can speak into your life regarding these issues.
3. If you have extra time and money and resources be generous
4. If you are struggling with limited resources still give but be careful and measured
5. If you are not giving back in any capacity, repent and engage with a plan to help others.
6. Follow God’s order to your life: God’s first, You and your spouse are next, then your family needs, then your work.
7. Identify the season of life you are in: each season has its advantages and disadvantages.

Once you have evaluated your resources:

What you can give that doesn’t compromise your health---spiritually, physically, emotionally, financially

AND

You have your priorities in their proper place

AND

Your life ordered according to God’s Plan.

You can then choose the Pro bono work or volunteering work you would like to do. Rule of thumb to start is suggested to be 50 hours if you are not severely compromised.

Types of volunteering:

1. Strategic: can further your career goals and intentions.
2. Organic: doesn’t benefit your work.

“For Christians, working in the art world or entertainment industry is a marathon not a sprint.”
-Michelle Pelsue

Last key factor to determine what Pro Bono work and/or volunteering we can do is to evaluate if we have enough margin in our lives.

In his excellent book, [*Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*](#), Richard Swenson, M.D. describes margin like this:

“Margin is the space between our load and our limits. It is the amount allowed beyond that which is needed. It is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations. Margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating.”

On his blog, Michael Hyatt puts it like this:

“Margin is the opposite of overload. If we are overloaded, we have no margin. Most people are not quite sure when they pass from margin to overload. Threshold points are not easily measurable and are also different for different people in different circumstances. We don’t want to be under-achievers (heaven forbid!), so we fill our schedules uncritically. Options are as attractive as they are numerous, and we overbook.

If we were equipped with a flashing light to indicate “100 percent full,” we could better gauge our capacities. But we don’t have such an indicator light, and we don’t know when we have overextended until we feel the pain. As a result, many people commit to a 120 percent life and wonder why the burden feels so heavy. It is rare to see a life prescheduled to only 80 percent, leaving a margin for responding to the unexpected that God sends our way.

Margin is not something that just happens. You have to fight for it.

Everyone, it seems, wants a piece of you. And no one seems to appreciate the fact that you are a finite resource. (Perhaps you don’t even realize this.)”

It is ideal to have margins in these areas of life:

Spiritual: you are getting fed spiritually and have spiritual food to offer.

Emotional: you are not emotionally drained but instead have room to carry others burdens.

Physical: you are healthy, strong and not debilitated by a physical ailment.

Financial: you have money in savings for emergencies and retirement.

Do you have margins?

What areas do you have margins?

What areas do you need margins?

How will you regain margins in the areas that need it?

Now we can plan:

How many hours of Pro Bono work are you committing to do this year?

How will you split up those hours? Which people or organizations will you help?

How many hours of volunteering are you committing to do this year?

How will you split up those hours? Which people or organizations will you volunteering for?

Look at your calendars.

Have you already scheduled pro bono work? _____

Volunteer work? _____

Have you scheduled too little? too much? none? _____

How do you determine how much time & resources & services to donate in either category?

Homework / Module 5 / Pro Bono Publico

1. Go back over Module 5's exercise, spend time in prayer and reflection and answer the questions as thoroughly as possible. Finish them completely.
2. Review your margins with your accountability partner or Spouse, get feedback and revise as needed.
3. Mission statement, should be done by now, if not finish it completely.
4. Final touches on your branding should be completed. Begin making decisions on how you need to change, update or create your website, social media presence and any physical promotional materials.
5. Look at your year ahead--- review and fix any issues related to prioritizing. Have you set intentional time aside for dates with your spouse? Time with your family? Time with friends? Time for pro bono and/or volunteering? Time to serve your church? (This of course assumes you have been maintaining your weekly schedule of time with God to pray, seek His vision for you personally and your career.)

Things that should be done:

6. CV or Resume.
7. Plan for website and promo materials.
8. Final career goals and intentions.