



# The Power of Free

DJ Metcalf

# The Power of Free – By DJ Metcalf



The conundrum over whether to give away things for free has been explored here on the internet a fair few times. When I came to write about it I was shocked how much authors seem to distrust the tactic, when it is a custom employed almost everywhere in other industries. I certainly love a freebie; I'll fill my pockets with mini-toothpaste tubes any time I go to the dentist. Yet the marketing ploy of giving things away for free seems to divide the writing community.

I had cause to go on some business training recently and I have been emerging myself in the strange world of online marketing where 'free' is king. 'Give away your finest advice and materials, and the audience will trust you and beg for more', is the lesson I have been told many a time. Not only that, but they will seek you out and invest heavily when you eventually ask for money in return for your products.

You'll see the type of thing I'm taking about everywhere once you look – people who offer a free email newsletter either monthly or weekly (have a look at Warren Ellis's [Orbital Operations](#) ). That's a free piece of news or entertainment that will arrive directly into your inbox. Some people will promise you a free ebook in exchange for your email address – a free book! Imagine!

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But I can't afford to give away a free book, I hear you cry. But can't you? I'd say that you can't afford NOT to.

In marketing terms, this is called a funnel. You invite people to connect with you (in the form of giving you their email address and the permission to email them without it going to the spam folder) in exchange for the free gift. Now you have the contact details of someone who is interested in your work; they wouldn't have grabbed the free gift otherwise. Now you can continue to contact them, offering them little freebies so that you can ensure they pay attention everytime you write to them. If they aren't interested, they'll unsubscribe from your emails. That's fine. You only want to contact the people who are really invested in your brand and your work anyway. Then, when you announce your latest piece of work, be it a book, training course, merchandise or other, you know you're preaching to the converted.

And here's the great thing: the giveaway does not *have* to be a free book! It can be a sample of an ebook, a short blog post you have converted into a PDF, a short story you have had lying around for years, a deleted chapter from your latest publication, or access to an exclusive video. Simply look at your work and re-purpose it into something your fans would love to have.

I took the training I received and implemented it; I now give away an ebook sampler if you subscribe to [my newsletter](#) . The ebook contains some flash fiction that I found teachers like to use as creative writing story starters before I come to their schools to speak. I have also got a [whole freebies page](#) , including audio and video of myself reading the first chapters of my books, so you can check out the stories and teachers have something to show their students before I arrive at their school. I even re-purposed a creative writing talk I did for my local library and stuck it up as a [free e-course](#) for those who want to find ways to access their creative writing brain!

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And does it work? Well, it is early days, but school visits have increased with teachers saying they found the free materials fun and useful.

If you want to get on the freebie bandwagon, grab a copy of 10 Ways to Make Money in a Free World ( [available free](#) , naturally) and get started. How much will all this cost you? Nothing, obviously. You can start a website for free with [blogger](#) . You can sign up for a newsletter service for free with [mailchimp](#) . You can host your free digital gifts on [Google Drive](#) . You can advertise it all on social media for- you guessed it – free.

Even if your freebies convert to one new sale, it'll have made its money back. What's more, it'll have earned you a new fan – and that's priceless.

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