

The moral implications of compensation and classification

“A budget is a moral document.”

Kate Barr

“There will never be a market argument for paying artists more – supply will always outstrip demand. Therefore, if we care about artists, it must be a moral imperative.”

Joseph Haj

“ ... the exercise of our freedom is a small piecemeal business which goes on all the time and not a grandiose leaping about unimpeded at important moments. The moral life, on this view, is something that goes on continually, not something that is switched off in between the occurrence of explicit moral choices. What happens in between such choices is indeed what is crucial.”

Iris Murdoch, in *The Sovereignty of Good*

“Even the mundane can acquire grandeur if it’s held in a wider perspective. A researcher once asked men working with stone what they were doing. One said his job was to square off the stones and move them. Another said he was working to provide for his wife and children. A third, while conscious that he was doing both those things, said he was building a cathedral, for people to worship in long after he’d gone. Each of them was doing great work, but only one recognised how great it was.”

John-Paul Flintoff, in *How to Change the World*

No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, cloath and lodge the whole body of the people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well fed, cloathed and lodged.

Adam Smith in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*

I make my living now as a screenwriter! Which I’m surprised and horrified to find myself saying, but I don’t think I can support myself as a playwright at this point. I don’t think anybody does.”

Tony Kushner

#5. Always give 100%- do whatever it takes. Be on time for acting classes and audition for roles, even if you aren't getting paid as these will build your experience and confidence.

From “How to Never Give Up Acting” on wikiHow

Discussion questions for Compensation and Classification

What if you thought of your budget and staff structure as a moral document? What would that look like?

Value:

- Have you ever looked at compensation as a percentage of budget? Compared which job titles are getting what percent?
- If not supply/demand driven, how would you value labor? Could you value it in terms of what most yields revenue? Or what most yields delivery of mission?

Transparency:

- What happens if everyone knows what everyone gets paid and why?
- Do you know what your peers are getting paid?

Compensation and diversity:

- Are compensation constraints a barrier to diversity?
- Who can afford low-paying jobs and free internships?

Fair vs. possible:

- Yeah, but what about “small” companies doing “interesting” work?
- The infrastructure required for employment vs. contractors
- Can theaters spend less elsewhere so they can spend more on labor?
- Should funders care where their funds go?

Empowerment

- Does more pay = better work?
- Does more stability = better work?
- Who is entitled to more pay and stability?
- Why does it seem like the more generative or closer to the product the worker is, the less they are likely to be paid or have stability?