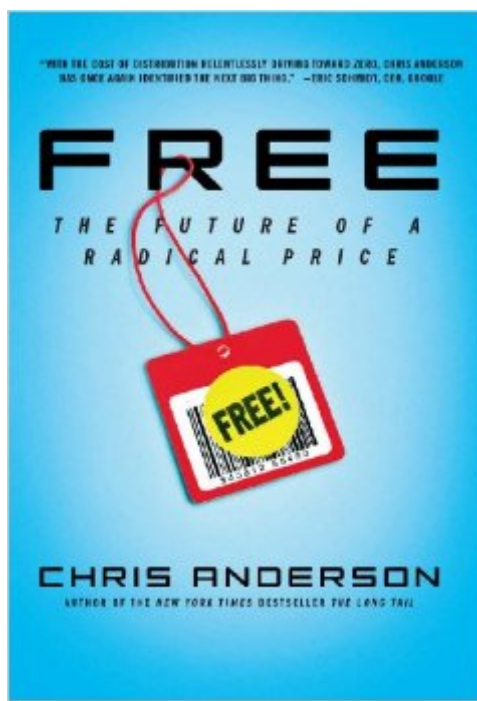


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# Free: The Future Of A Radical Price



## Synopsis

The online economy offers challenges to traditional businesses as well as incredible opportunities. Chris Anderson makes the compelling case that in many instances businesses can succeed best by giving away more than they charge for. Known as "Freemium," this combination of free and paid is emerging as one of the most powerful digital business models. In *Free*, Chris Anderson explores this radical idea for the new global economy and demonstrates how it can be harnessed for the benefit of consumers and businesses alike. In the twenty-first century, *Free* is more than just a promotional gimmick: It's a business strategy that is essential to a company's successful future. Download the audiobook of *Free* for free! Details inside the book.

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## Customer Reviews

I read the original WIRED magazine article written by Mr. Anderson that this book is based on back in February 2008; I've been anxiously awaiting this book... and I've just finished it. First off, I've implemented a few "freebies" in the past year that I give away in my line of work; the question was whether it would pay off. It did. I offered something of value (to me, and I believe to my customer)

and waited to see if interest in the free item would increase sales of a companion item. Sales were there. So many people are attacking the book for various reasons, but for me the key question for rating this book was "Is the author's information accurate and can it hold up to real-world results?" The answer is Yes. A lot of things in the book aren't relevant to me, but I've taken what I can from it (in addition to the original article) and made some changes in how I do business. (I'm a small business owner, not a corporate giant.) You can agree or disagree with the book's overall theme, but my findings are that the book has a solid grasp on how any business that has any Internet-related sales or support must adapt. The author's argument about how costs are moving to zero for the "bits" world is dead-on. I find it humorous that so many negative reviews of the book are simply about the price of the book (or the lack of price for some of the free versions). The book is about the concept of Free. Some people are seeing "Free" on the cover and whining that it has a price??? The book isn't light reading - it's got some complicated concepts that the reader must grasp, especially business owners.

Because of the ongoing drop in the cost of bandwidth, storage and computer processing power, which brings the cost of each of these digital age services to almost zero, "free" is becoming a more prevalent price with real power. For the business person and others wishing to profit from "free", the trick is to figure out how to sell services or products related to the free one. Author Chris Anderson, who also wrote *Long Tail, The, Revised and Updated Edition: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More* uses Google as one of his primary examples of how free functions in this new economy. Google provides free internet searches and makes money off the targeted ads and premium products. Music groups have gotten on board, and have let go of the idea that they must rely on copyright protection, and have benefited handsomely by giving away their music and more than making up for it in concerts, premium versions of their music and band-related paraphernalia. Not all "free" providers have managed to "monetize" their offerings. Facebook and Twitter are two examples, although the latter is on the verge of attempting to do so. The above successes have occurred in what Anderson labels the "bits" world that relies on the electronic generation of information, but free can also work in what Anderson calls the "atoms" world, where products are things you can hold or services that you can experience. Telecommunications companies, for example, give you a free cell phone but make their money on usage and ring tones. Anderson provides a good number of examples in table form of both bits and atoms free.

I was eager to read "Free," since as an author with an online presence myself, I have used free

strategies and would like to know how to implement them more effectively. The book really hooked me in the beginning, but wandered throughout the middle as a hodgepodge of poorly-chosen or explained examples, and then finished more strongly with summaries of free-style strategies. My biggest disappointment was that in the 274-page guide, Anderson devoted barely two pages to the strategy of free books in particular. I thought this was an important case study that deserved more coverage, as it can tie together an older model of book publishing with new media and free electronic outreach. I really objected to some of the overlooked opportunities to discuss the ethics of some free models, such as the "free" electronic health record and practice management software that is given to doctors in return for their patients' anonymized medical chart information. The patients' health history data is resold for \$50 to \$500 per chart. I am extremely uncomfortable with that kind of commercialization of the doctor-patient relationship, which I assume goes on without the patients' knowledge or consent. Yet Anderson does not discuss this as a problem. He brings up the Corn Economy and the impact of cheap, ubiquitous corn, invoking Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, while largely missing the point that industrial corn-dominated agriculture with its economies of scale is in the process of ruining our diet and environment. Free in the short term can have disastrous, displaced costs in the long term.

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