

Web Monetization Feasibility Study

About the exploration:

Ampled, formed as a co-op, is interested in collectivism to circumvent, co-own, or eliminate intermediaries. The core utility of the platform is built to enhance direct community-to-artist communications and financial relationships to build artist solidarity and autonomy. The opportunities for streaming payments to artists directly, instantly, via a browser, are very promising. This grant has been a great introduction for us as a team to give a good faith exploration of some of these technologies to see how they could be applied to help further Ampled's mission: to make music more equitable for artists.

The research supported by this grant has also been at a unique time for Ampled.

- (1) The music industry has moved entirely online.

Because of Covid-19, this research has overlapped with a period of lockdowns with the main source of revenue for artists, touring, being completely eliminated – moving commerce and attention online

- (2) Ampled's increasing interest in web3 technologies

During the period of this grant, Ampled has more actively explored web3 and crypto applications and technologies. This includes being included in the Seed Club 2nd cohort to explore an Ampled community token.

- (3) Creative economy's increasing interest in web3 technologies.

Not only has Ampled's interest in crypto-related applications grown, but also the whole world's interest has grown as well – particularly as a result of NFTs in the music and art economy.

Ampled's own decelerating development and production velocity has diminished our ability to prioritize the expansion of experiments like this as we are forced to shore up our ability to ship basic core features.

Opportunities:

We have seen several opportunities related to this exploration including:

Ability to increase artist support

By adding a new revenue stream, we have been hopeful to be able to potentially add more ways that money can be sent directly to artists

Global (stripe limits countries)

We are limited geographically by countries that are supported by Stripe. While we don't see Web Monetization as a way to replace our Stripe Connect infrastructure, we are interested in adding ways of sending money directly to artists

Instant payments

Our current Stripe Connect infrastructure takes business days to complete a transaction. If any form of money or payments could be sent instantly to artists, this would be an improvement worth exploring.

Challenges:

Messaging

One of our primary challenges as a web-based cooperative is figuring out how to simply message complex topics like cooperative ownership, and the virtues and benefits of ownership. Because explaining and articulating cooperative ownership to people can already be a daunting challenge, the addition of any new narrative is a challenge for us. This is a point of friction for pushing Ampled supporters to become Coil users. More on this in the following points.

Limited Bandwidth

Our team is small, part-time, and largely bootstrapped. One of our primary constraints for us to both ship critical and high priority features at a reasonable velocity, as well as expanding our priorities to integrate technologies like Web Monetization.

Multiple payment infrastructures

Adding Web Monetization in the way we currently have it (managed centrally by one Ampled wallet payment pointer) has been great. However, we largely see it as a nominal compliment to our current payments infrastructure through Stripe Connect. For artists, if we were to add each artist page as its own payment pointer, it may get confusing having to manage even more payment destinations.

Technical considerations:

Setup

Setup of Web Monetization was straightforward and easy. We set up a payment pointer on our main website that points to an Ampled-owned wallet.

Wallet setup for each artist

One consideration we have explored is the feasibility of expanding this central Ampled Web Monetization setup to one where each artist has their own wallet and payment pointer.

Artist feedback

Artists have a hard time grasping the interrelation between Coil, Web Monetization, Interledger Protocol, and Uphold Wallet. Very few artists on Ampled, even the ones that have experimented

with NFTs, are familiar with crypto wallets. None of the artists polled have a wallet like Uphold that is compatible with Interledger.

Conclusions:

Yes to streaming money

The ability for visitors of a website to stream money to us, or any particular artist, is a very powerful idea that we are excited about. The addition of Web Monetization and Coil support is a great stepping stone for this. Although we are encouraged by this experience, our current Stripe Connect infrastructure will stay as the main way to facilitate recurring payments.

Web Monetization + Curation

Coil is not a natural fit that is compatible with Ampled's business model, but another Web Monetization utilization service could be. Coil's concept makes sense if there were added curation to have squads in which someone could support multiple websites with the same membership – (if we are able to curate which sites we are grouped with).

For instance, as a cooperative we are always looking for ways to support the 6th cooperative principle (cooperation among cooperatives). If another cooperative platform like Resonate were to adopt a model of using Web Monetization, we could create a co-op pass (or something similar) to increase economic support across sovereign platforms.

Coil + Collective Ownership + Transparency

We are not sure that Coil's private and centralized ownership model is consistent with Ampled's cooperative ownership model. Encouraging our audience to join Coil is challenging because it is not clear (1) who owns Coil and (2) where all of Coil's payments go. We would recommend that Coil adopt greater financial and organizational transparency.

Time as a KPI

Time spent on an Ampled page is not a behavior we measure, or even encourage, which makes measuring payments out based on time spent on a page a bit dissonant with our approach. One reason why we do not try to prioritize time spent on a page is because this feels like a very web 2.0/ advertising business model/ attention economy approach. For Ampled, better ways to measure engagement vs time may include # of posts viewed, or number of notification emails clicked etc.

How we will continue to use Web Monetization

Web Monetization, as currently implemented with Ampled [1] , will continue. The further exploration of using Web Monetization as a more integrated way to . As a co-op, Ampled is collectively owned by the artists anyways, so this seems like the easiest way to continue. The variable that would change this calculus is if the impact became greater. Currently, we have brought in ~\$8 total from payments, which spread among each artist is not enough impact to pursue as a more integrated feature for the time being.

[1] One artist payment pointer for Coil visitors to the Amped website

[2] Expansion of Web Monetization to include each artist page

