

# Reflections During Startup

*This blog post was translated by Mistral*

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## About Writing

Writing articles, I have always believed is an extremely efficient way to pass time, especially when the number of people paying attention to you continues to grow. Imagine communicating with thousands of people at once, compared to communicating with just one, it is infinitely more efficient. To be successful, you need to effectively utilize your time in all that you do. For instance, is the value I gain from having a conversation with someone over dinner worth more than if I were writing an article for thousands to read, given that both took up half of my time? The answer is often clear. I might be better off writing an article by myself and sharing it with everyone. However, there are exceptions, such as when a company investor asks me to handle something and our friendly relationship could lead to substantial financial support from them in the future. Or when I collaborate with a colleague on a product, as working together to build an excellent product could lead to more brand endorsements and increased influence.

The purpose of doing things is often to earn more money, gain more influence, do more impressive things, and find more happiness. Among the thousand things you can do and the thousand people you can meet, which will help you reach your goals more quickly, and which people will help you get there more effectively? These are things we need to deeply consider and reflect upon every day.

As for the benefits of writing, many have already spoken about it, so I won't go into the usual advantages. For me, the benefits are that, having previously managed a community of engineer live stream viewers, there are many excellent people among them. When I publish my opinions, those who agree with and follow me will like and comment, and I can then reach out to them to collaborate on projects, filter out a group of like-minded people, seek their advice on problems, solve technical issues together, and cooperate on projects, exchange company management ideas, and discuss future directions, among other things.

Understanding people is very convenient. When you meet them, there's no need to introduce yourself or repeat your background and ideas over and over again. When you ask them about their experiences, their thoughts, and what they care about, you can learn something new, or find opportunities to work together on something. This way, people's mutual understanding saves a lot of time. I used to often talk about my own opinions on matters, but later I found out I learned nothing, I was just repeating my own opinions. So I started listening and asking instead, and that's how I learned new things. The other person also feels comfortable because you understand them. Every person craves to be understood. Listening and asking represents a curious attitude. In fact, every person has something to be learned from.

## About People

We all ponder on how to deal with people and what kind of people to deal with. Each person has their own set of habits for dealing with people. The more successful a person is in a worldly sense, the more they have grasped the truth of this matter. A scientist, for instance, is likely to say that they understand deeply in their field and know more than most, they are smart and have a high IQ. A self-made billionaire, they created value for some or many people and earned a lot of money, they have dealt with a lot of interpersonal relationships, handled power and interest conflicts, and have a deep understanding of human nature.

We are not discussing who is more powerful. It's possible that neither the billionaire nor the scientist will be remembered several hundred years later. The scientist's achievements may be in some more secluded fields and have not had a great impact on the future. However, the products created by the billionaire brought a lot of happiness to the people of that time.

Therefore, a simple conclusion is that the more and bigger things you do, the more power and wealth you have, the more you understand human nature.<sup>1</sup> For people, a common situation is that there are many people, extremely many people.

What does this mean then?

One meaning is that there are many people, extremely many people. In 2018, the world population broke through 74 billion, with China having over 14 million people. From a money-making perspective, you can make money from many people and create value for many people to make money. Even if today's 10,000 paying users no longer pay you, you can find another place or another field to find another 10,000 people. The world has that many people. Which pocket of money is not money?

Even low street vendors, low-end restaurants, a small mobile phone repair shop, and low-end micro-businesses selling simple products or images can operate profitably for a long time. Making money often depends on execution, courage, and persistence. If you don't do anything, you won't make any money. Simple food delivery can earn over ten thousand per month.

How can one make a lot of money? Either by becoming a high-priced product or service for a few people, or by having a low price but selling to many people. Scale is an important key word. Scale depends on organization and execution. When you don't have scale, you won't have organization, and it's difficult to make 10 thousand or 20 thousand per month. The company's boss isn't stupid, so they'll ask you to prove you can earn 10 thousand if they're paying that much. Finding a job that pays 10 thousand a month is therefore extremely difficult. Typically, you'll also need to lead a team and exert influence, make important decisions, bring financing to the company, and so on, to prove your abilities. Alternatively, another way to make 10 thousand a month is to go to the market, as you have many fans, and go directly to customers to earn money and reach your goal.

To make a lot of money, you need to do things at scale. Users or customers have scale, or employees do. Why can you make a lot of money when there's scale?

Users or customers have scale because there are more people giving you money.

Employees have scale through division of labor and cooperation. In the workplace, everyone's money doesn't come for free. Employees and bosses work equally hard and put in the same amount of time. Why does the boss earn more money? It's because they do different things and have different values. The value of creating a simple functional website is naturally less than the value of solving the core technical challenges of a product. The value of doing a good job is naturally less than the value of leading and coordinating a team to do their jobs well. The value of a 20 thousand project is naturally less than the value of a 200 thousand project. The same amount of time spent on closing one medium-sized customer is naturally less valuable than closing five medium-sized customers. Besides cooperative work, the boss does more important things than the employees during the same period of time, and he might be the only one who can do them, making the boss earn more than the employees.

Another obvious feature is that the boss bears the risk. If successful, he earns most of the money. If unsuccessful, he loses a lot of money.

So, how to be successful? You need to choose which persuasive and compatible people to work with on what valuable projects for which customers. Team, project, and customer are all big topics. Each element has many choices, and combining them can help you earn money.

Some people, you can make money with them, while others, you cannot. Some people, you can make a lot of money with them. Some people, you make a little money with them.

Some things, you can make money quickly by doing them. Some things, you won't make money for a long time by doing them. Some things, they are not viable, no matter what, you won't make money with them. Your user base or customer base may be large but they may not have significant demands for you. On the other hand, even if it's a small customer base, they may have significant demands, and you may have met their core requirements. Some are small customers, some are large customers, do you want to serve them all or make some selections?

Customers come from various domains, users come from diverse backgrounds, do you want to expand into a new domain or focus on deepening the current domain?

Furthermore, there are pricing issues. Should it be high pricing, continuously enhancing core competitiveness to create corresponding value products, or low pricing, optimizing costs?

There are many complexities here. Without experiencing negotiating several thousand yuan with clients, or not being able to pay wages to recruit employees, or letting go of unsuitable employees, or being pushed to the limit with clients and regretting decisions that cost tens of thousands of yuan, only after experiencing

many setbacks can one gain wisdom.

However, it's not always filled with such difficulties and unhappiness. There are also hiring a reliable employee or a cooperative customer, which brings joy and therefore earned a little more. Life is usually balanced.

Regarding recognizing people:

Understanding people's needs and motivations, communicating effectively, and building trust are essential skills in recognizing people. It's important to be empathetic, patient, and respectful, and to listen actively. Additionally, being adaptable and open-minded can help in understanding and working with diverse groups of people. Ultimately, recognizing people involves building meaningful relationships and valuing their unique contributions. Understand the concept of distinguishing. Prerequisite for distinguishing is understanding. How well do you know the other party? What have they been doing for the past one to two years? How do the people they have cooperated with evaluate them? Try to find out more. The cost of misunderstanding someone is high. You will have to pay a salary. Regardless of their output, you will have to pay a monthly salary.

More often than not, you only find out after cooperating. Therefore, if it's not suitable, make a decisive move, quit or change people when necessary. For employees, it's the same. A worker who is willing to work hard encounters a complacent company, they should also express their intention to leave in a timely manner. The market is like this. You can choose companies, and companies can choose you. Only when we match each other can we generate significant value.

People are many, so you must work hard to find the right one. Why can't you convince ten people to cooperate with you? If you want to start a company, this is definitely a self-reflection issue. It's because you're too independent or too timid. I used to be like that. I tried to persuade people to cooperate with me, but I failed, so I stopped. Until many customers came, I couldn't help but find people to solve the problem for me. I asked several dozen people, and I gradually found a few.

Regarding the matter of timely dismissal, it's not always the boss being ruthless. The boss also can't help it, he needs to keep the company alive. The market is also ruthless. Everything must be done in the long-term interest, maximizing the correctness. There's not that many people's feelings to consider. A customer delaying payment by a month will not be tolerated by your office landlord, they will immediately evict you. When your peers step on you, they will never wait for you, they will continue to pursue their own successful ventures. The price of an iPhone XS is over 10,000 elements, costing 2,600 elements, Foxconn earns 30 elements. Apple took 62% of the profits in the mobile phone industry in 18 years. Apple Company will not sympathize with Foxconn's employees.

The market is like this. If Foxconn says, I want to earn 500 elements, I will raise wages for employees. Apple

will ruthlessly replace it.

So, even the world's most profitable company will not sympathize with its partners. As a majority of small companies, we are talking here about how to be lenient with employees, how to be good to employee welfare, is meaningless. You will not become a towering tree in the world if you do not grow. Survival depends on performance, and other things are relatively insignificant.

### **About Ambition**

Besides dealing with the outside world, a person's growth is more about continuously sharpening their ambition. The size of your ambition determines the size of your achievements. We often say we are tired, but there are always some people who are not tired, they continue to hustle, they are relentless. I want to earn a lot of money, how to earn ten or even a hundred times more than others, there are all kinds of troubles on the way. Money is something everyone wants, but how do you make people willing to pay you, and the key is either many people pay you or a few people pay a lot. It's all difficult.

Perhaps you are fond of programming or music. But to earn millions or even billions through it, there are still many complex situations to deal with.

So you need ambition. You want it, you really want it. You really want to achieve that goal. You won't give up until you reach it. That's how you can face one problem after another.

A customer calls, and your entire weekend holiday is gone. You have to recruit employees with such and such skills, repeatedly persuading them. The work is never done. There are occasional disputes and quarrels. You work hard for several months only to find that you haven't earned any money.

The road to earning a lot of money is certainly happy at times, with a sense of achievement. But there are also unhappy, grueling parts. More importantly, every day you have to do good work, gradually optimizing and improving in all areas. Some friends asked me for career advice. cherish time, the harder the better, the earlier the better, set some goals every year, work hard, continually striving for excellence.

Persist. Still a long way to go.

Sometimes, you find yourself too anxious. The goals are still far away. Be patient. Life is long, what's the rush.

Reading historical books makes you feel at peace. A human life is just a few decades. It goes by quickly. Among the 7.4 billion people in the world, all will eventually die. In 500 years, 73.9999 billion people will also be forgotten.

So, what is the meaning of human existence? Maybe one day, humanity will be extinct. Almost nothing matters, I suppose. Humans live, each person lives their own life, probably because we don't do anything, it's too boring. Time always has to be passed. So, might as well live a good life then.