

Business & Marketing Essentials from A Gen Z —You Read and Win

(First Draft)

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**A book that everyone who wants
to create a start-up should read**

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Chapter 0 —

Introduction

Greetings and salutations, I am Ricky. 18 is a milestone for everyone, and I am about to step in. When I was 13, I told myself to be successful and be filthy rich before turning into an adult. It has been almost 5 years. Usually, this is one of the most important periods of a person's life because it shapes a unique individual: How you think, your characteristics, your personality, and your pathway. I was closer to the middle in school, and I didn't follow many instructions; I mostly just stayed true to myself. I self-learned a wide range of skills on the internet, built projects, gained connections, and dreamt of being someone in the future.

Every time I look at someone who is doing better than I am, I ask myself, "When will I be someone like him?". Those young founders are everywhere, raising millions, and doing what they like. Looking back on myself, I was doing what I don't like for years, trying to prove I am correct, but eventually disappointed by the fact that I was not. There is a real gap between me and them. Maybe it is because of my ability, ego, or consistency; I don't have the answer. The only thing I can do is to keep going until I see the silver lining.

I want to note what I have done in such a magical period. I know there are a lot of people who are just like me, building up projects silently, waiting to be successful. I want those who gave up to resonate with what I wrote and decide to keep moving forward. It is hard to pursue when nobody trusts you. I know the drill, and I would be delighted to share what I did so that people who are doing similar things know that they are not alone.

Often, people criticize me for thinking too much, but how would life be fun if you don't go and explore everything and build something when you still can? Spending the most precious years in your life to deal with boring papers, year after year, and eventually getting nothing in return. It is not entirely incorrect to

trust yourself or to do what others are not doing unless you're stupid. To spark our innovation, creativity, and imagination, we must go through a lot of thinking processes. Telling us to be critical while giving repetitive work to us is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. Perhaps the older generations are already forgetting what those traits are, or some of them are still attempting to bring them back. The newer generations, shall we do better?

"Science, philosophy, history, economics, and language are worth understanding fundamentally. Thousands of years of study, the phenomena, behaviors, laws, and the beauty inside all the extraordinary contradictions and explanations, are worth examining. We are steps closer to the truth; the truth of everything, and how everything works."— Ricky Chan.

I love to learn. I learn proactively whenever I need something, and that has shaped what I am currently. Nonetheless, facing something extremely boring kills my attention. I believe curiosity and interest shape motivation. It is better if I do something I like instead of forcing myself to do dull work. I've been thinking about what I did wrong after getting terrible grades in academics, but if I fully focus on the exams without expanding what I truly have an interest in, the result could be the same, but I would lose the opportunity to learn and experience. It is regretful, but what I did made sense.

I hope that a few years later, when I look back at what I've written, I will be impressed by the younger self. I am a fan of writing a letter to the future self. Every time I look at what I have written in the past, I feel nostalgic. Reflecting on my past actions also helps me understand what shaped a person like me. I love looking back at the articles, work, and videos I have made so I can see which parts I can improve and which parts are impressive, so I can keep using them.

I was a weird kid back then in the local school. Nobody can get an exact picture of what I did. Like, come on, it is not even hard to know what a website is. Sometimes hearing people's stories from another school made me question my decision, but even if I get into another school, it would be the same because only a few people shine in a group. It is also hard to be consistent in such an

environment because nobody knows what is right; they pursue what they think is correct, and it is justified by the teachers. The critical flaw is that I couldn't do what I like. Now, I left that institution, hopefully it'll get better.

I wrote this book to give myself a perspective on who I am: a young maniacal dreamer and doer. I haven't done better isn't related to my age, but my ability. Everyone has a period when they assume they can be the best. When they are out of that imagination, it is usually their real ability. I have done many things, and honestly, I think I have hit my limit. Nevertheless, the beauty in life is that even if you hit your limit now, you can always do better soon. That's how I build hope.

This book has around 20,000 words combined. It was difficult to write such an amount as a person who had only gone through a small portion of his life. There are repetitions in the book, but it is all about a 17-year-old speaking his perspective on building a business or getting a nice personal well-being while facing the right direction to your destination. So, it does make sense. In addition, all the grammatical structures and vocabulary are easy in this book. It doesn't require going through a translator or dictionary, so the reading flow should be smooth. Now, let's explore the mind of a teenager.

Chapter 1 —

Observe the Past and the Present

There is no single universal rule for business and marketing, but a common struggle. Trying your best to gain exposure on social media to earn a few impressions without actual **conversion**¹, we've all been there. However, we should look back at the trends before we step forward.

Start-up is a popular topic right now, in 2025. **AI-wrappers**² are thriving. Most of the college dropouts and students are diving into the market, and you can always hear the term “AI” in all of the presentations of the big tech companies. It feels guilty not to follow the trend if you are a business owner or an aspiring college student. It created an absurd phenomenon: we see the term “AI” everywhere, even when the product isn’t directly related to AI. I stumbled across a tech store, and they are linking AI to portable USBs. There are also students submitting AI-wrapped websites that rely on the **ChatGPT API**³ to competitions. The problem is the overemphasis on “AI is the future.”. It is indeed useful for generating roadmaps, solving real-life problems, and providing great suggestions. That is a real future, not creating everything with a single **prompt**⁴.

conversion¹ — Transforming one data into another. For example, transforming website visitors into sales.

AI-wrappers² — Websites or applications that rely on some huge AI models instead of self-training ones or having an AI foundation.

ChatGPT API³ — API stands for application programming interface. ChatGPT API refers to calling from websites or applications using API keys to access OpenAI models.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/API>

prompt⁴ — AI command that triggers action.

The idea of discovering talents and developing began to be obfuscated after the boom. Businesses are afraid of being left behind in the race, so they emphasize

the use of AI. Google announced that AI now writes over 25% of its code, and Mark Zuckerberg stated that in 18 months, coding will be done by AI. Many companies panicked. Some of them replaced customer service with AI models and automatic systems. It fostered something unhealthy across the entire market. They began to focus on the machine rather than the humans, as they can be trained easily. The problem is that artificial intelligence models nowadays are not mature enough to replace an actual human (in 2025), as they often overcomplicate tasks. AI might seem smart, but if you put it in a daily task flow, it would bankrupt your company faster than you could have expected by implementing unreasonable procedures into tasks like accepting all inventory to save time. It would also exaggerate your company's performance. It feeds your ego, but it is overall impractical, if not useless, for growth.

Digital marketing was a popular topic in 2019, particularly with the rise of dropshipping as a trend. People started flooding into the market, but the struggle in marketing obliterated most of them. Online gurus oversimplified the process, directly showing people the result, giving an illusion of "Pay and get the result". This often leads to disappointment and unnecessary expenses. For example, the most popular option among all of the gurus is to utilize **Meta Ads**¹ to generate sales and **traffic**². When you put it into practice, you will mostly end up burning your cash, according to my experience.

Meta Ads¹ — A platform that allows you to place advertising through Meta applications such as Instagram, Facebook, etc.

traffic² — The flow of visitors to your website or application.

Data can't lie, and perhaps the gurus were right. Often, we find ourselves thinking about what we lack compared to a successful businessman. Are they just luckier than us? Are they harder-working than we are? The answer is straightforward: people want something from them. That is the beauty of marketing. People seek success, which is why gurus are everywhere; people need to eat, which is why restaurants are everywhere; and people want to improve themselves, which is why educational institutions are everywhere. Business is rougher than a medieval battlefield, and the difference between you and successful business owners is that their tolerance for failure is mighty. Creating their formula rather than following something already there in the market.

If you wish to follow a single formula, go for employment. It is my honest suggestion. Most people misunderstand that building a business is like building a **side hustle**¹ for **passive income**², and you don't have to put much effort into it; you put it on **autopilot**³. The reality is, if you don't devote your life to building something you stand firmly on, you fail. For example, Singapore would be far less developed today if its leaders had not treated it seriously. *"Whoever governs Singapore must have that iron in him or give it up. This is not a game of cards. This is your life and mine. I've spent a whole lifetime building this, and as long as I'm in charge, nobody's going to knock it down."*—Lee Kuan Yew.

side hustle¹ — An extra job or income source that supplements your original earnings.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Side_job

passive income² — Earning in an enterprise in which a person is not actively involved.

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/passiveincome.asp>

autopilot³ — Leaving something automatically done or running without constantly managing it manually.

People in the higher class are no different. We are the same type of creature; we all have to find a way to accomplish something with our bare minds. The difference is that if you don't have much money, you have to find a cost-effective solution to a problem; if you have abundant resources, you can spend millions to build a **prototype**¹ that, perchance, is equivalent to what someone can do for \$100. Mostly, life wouldn't be fair, but it would be fair in a particular moment or period.

Prestigious, not prestigious, imagine going back to France when the monarchy still existed there. You don't expect the royals in the palace to invent something brick by brick while having their fancy parties. I believe that when you are in different positions and roles, you have an advantage in something. Wealthy children may have the connections or resources to achieve something great. Nevertheless, those who are relatively poor might have a strong will to create something magnificent. It depends on your mindset.

The gig economy was also popular in 2019, and it continues to shape the current market. Remember **Fiverr**²? It was one of the most famous words in 2019. Employers can find the right service they want for just \$5; it is tempting. However, the quality of the services was terrible. I hired many people on the platform; I was a fan of it. I purchased web traffic boosting services and looked into how they were driving traffic to your website. The traffic results were impressive, but they came from traffic exchange websites where you click on other people's sites for credits and use them to transfer web traffic to yourself. I could do it for free instead of spending money, and it does not contribute to your site's SEO, which is a major problem; it does nothing.

prototype¹ — An early sample of your product, or a release that tests your concept or idea.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prototype>

Fiverr² — A platform to connect freelancers and recruiters.

One reason for its popularity is that gurus are promoting a fast money-earning method on Fiverr. I was one of those who believed in that. I earned around 50 bucks doing graphic design and video editing work when I was 13. But, up until now, I still don't get why they decided to believe in a child. That would remain a mystery. Fiverr did a good job in connecting recruiters and freelancers. However, by centering \$5 for everything, they are likely to be punished by the market in recent years.

The gig economy never stops. Uber Eats, Foodpanda, and platforms that rely on people who can work whenever they join are still trending since the pandemic. Mostly because the economy has been quite bad in recent years. Furthermore, **Gen Zers**¹ often prefer highly flexible work as they haven't gone through the market yet, which means they have no actual goal: pathfinders. We are in a fast-changing world, and it is concerning for everyone to decide which career or work to pursue. All the factors contribute to the popularity of the **gig economy**²; you can join and leave whenever you want. Freelancing is the same.

If you look through what happened in recent years, you get a brief picture of what you should and shouldn't do now. Currently, it is not a good time to turn freelancing into a business, as the number of people who are willing to hire has decreased. You shouldn't splash out on advertisements without proper planning, being too optimistic about the result. I would suggest developing until you find something suitable for the market; it could be a brand, a website, or a useful application that solves a single problem (I am not suggesting developing a product that solves everything). It doesn't have to be something related to coding. If you craft a cardboard that helps you structure everything, that could work as well. The market is dynamic, and you can never anticipate what will happen next. This is only a suggestion, not a roadmap, as I don't know what will be trending in the upcoming year or decade. I am not a genie.

Gen Zers¹ — People who were born in the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. (1995 - 2014)

gig economy² — An economy based on flexible, temporary, or freelance jobs. Often rely on platforms.

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/gig-economy.asp>

I'll share my experience in the next few chapters to give you a clear sense of what marketing is, and help you discover what can impact your business based on what I've encountered. Most people struggle with building something cool, even when they have a complete skill set. Confident speaking, I have more practical experience than professors at some universities. They might know more in theory, but it wouldn't be generally useful in real-life applications, as the market is overall dynamic. Focusing on theory can't get you far, especially when it comes to marketing. Thus, let's find out what is working.

Chapter 2 —

The Art of Demonstration and Negotiation

The movie *The Wolf of Wall Street* truly inspired me to speak, write, and express myself. When I was a kid, my only guiding principles were to be kind, honest, and humble; basically, be a gentleman. Alas, if you have been to interviews, you will understand that being a gentleman gives people a chance to take advantage of you. I have seen people sitting anxiously while others debate loudly and proudly in an interview. I asked myself, “How can you demonstrate your actual ability when you sit there and do absolutely nothing?”. I answered myself, “You can’t”. That was what motivated me to be aggressive, even when people hate me, it only means I am firmly showcasing myself.

There is only ONE PRINCIPLE, “NEVER, EVER, BE AFRAID.”. When people get nervous when introducing themselves in an interview, as if there's glue glued to their butt, sitting right in their chairs, you stand strong and confident, distinguishing yourself from the others. You also never want to avoid arguments. If you are brave enough, try to “Be a sucker”, spark arguments by stating something you don’t believe in, and eventually navigate people into your stances. Engaging in an argument showcases your ability to talk, confidence, and emotional intelligence. They are fairly essential to marketing.

Whenever fear controls your body before an interview, a conversation, a meeting, or a speech, always tell yourself, “If you can’t handle this one, you are not able to accomplish the bigger ones.”. Recall the characters in *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Consider how confident they are when facing their clients, which has played a significant role in their success. Selling **pink sheet stocks**¹, something that people don't want, to the **1%**².

The movie illustrates marketing very well. You sell something people need, rather than something they don’t want; demand and supply. I believe most people have mistaken marketing for a magic wand, transforming something garbage into an alluring item. When people crave immediate wealth, you sell them stocks; when people want security in their wealth, you sell them bonds. Although the outcome isn’t guaranteed, you earned your part when you sold something.

pink sheet stocks¹ — A type of over-the-counter (OTC) trading service where companies’ stocks are quoted, often with less stringent regulatory requirements than a major exchange like the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) or NASDAQ.

https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/capital_markets/pink-sheets/

1%² — Implying the rich.

Back to my experience, it works the same way I described. I tried reselling **hosting**¹ plans when I was 15. I rented a website domain, a **RackNerd**² reselling plan, and a **ThemeForest**³ website template. I thought customers would flow in after I owned everything. Then, I realized nobody would come to your website unless you construct a channel that could navigate them into your platform. The only one who used my service was one of my Filipino friends. I introduced him to what a website is and helped him construct an art gallery for his work using my hosting service. Although it didn't go well, the lessons are invaluable. I learned how to introduce something to people, and back then, I didn't know how a website works, so I did research; it was useful up until now because that was the real start of my **web developer**⁴ journey.

The guts to introduce are important. If you don't know what a website is, how would I introduce it to you? “A *website (also written as a web site) is any web page whose content is identified by a common domain name and is published on at least one web server.*” (From Wikipedia). If you assume you don't know everything about the internet, how would you suppose to understand that? It is exactly why marketing exists: to explain well.

In real-life practice, we have land and buildings. Owning a web domain is like owning a piece of land, but in the digital world. You can build everything upon your digital land. Wanting to open a store, a virtual bank, or a school? When the land is yours, you own the possibilities.

hosting¹ — Here, it means the web hosting service. Maintaining a site and making it accessible on the World Wide Web (www).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_hosting_service

RackNerd² — A web hosting service provider.

ThemeForest³ — A platform that provides a variety of templates for websites, videos, etc.

web developer⁴ — The one who develops websites.

That is how I introduce the idea of a website to my clients if they are confused. You grab their attention, fantasize about the item, and make it important to them, not you. Demonstrate in a way your client likes. You are not the target audience. You should focus on the one you are talking to and stand in your client's perspective. Find what your client is struggling with, create resonance with it, and provide solutions. It is easy, but in practice, it requires a real-time reaction, which would make it difficult. As long as you are prepared and confident, that wouldn't be a problem.

Being specific is also one of the important things you would like to do. I applied to **Y Combinator**, and my first attempt failed. I reviewed my application and found several parts that, potentially, led them to reject me. One of the most critical mistakes was that nobody knew what I was introducing. I looked back at the introduction video I made, and I didn't know what I was talking about either. I was introducing GoDotWebs, the centralized **database** that backs my services, but I didn't introduce specifically what is linked to GoDotWebs. I mentioned DotWebsHosting, MassMail, and QuLoad, but nobody knows what they are. Who would invest in something unknown? So, being specific is crucial.

Also, never go against yourself. Don't say "I don't think I can do it.", "I am bad.", or "I have a limited capability" in an interview or a presentation. When the interviewer or your client decides to listen to you, they expect how your ability contributes to them. If you say something that does not meet their expectations, you will mostly leave a bad impression. Being humble doesn't mean you need to expose all of your weaknesses. Even when you are asked what your weakness is, you can always link it to your strength. For example, "Sometimes, I am too focused on work to a point that I forget to eat, that's certainly unhealthy, but I love finishing the work I have before doing something else."

Y Combinator¹ — A platform that funds aspiring startups and provides counselling.

database² — An organized collection of data stored in a computer.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Database>

When you accidentally say something against yourself, when you don't know something, or when you don't know what else to say, you have to learn how to round things up. There are two ways to do it. The first one is to justify what you have said, even if it's incorrect. Make it persuasive so nobody notices you did something wrong. The second one, although less professional, you could navigate your client to another topic, but you have to ensure the transition between topics is smooth. Assuming I have a website for automatic email sending. When my client asks whether bulk importing emails is possible, given that this feature doesn't exist, I would first reassure him that the feature he needs could be a potential one. Then, I would start introducing efficiency while slowly shifting to the core features.

There is a common way to negotiate with your client; the oldest trick in the book: Give your client an absurd price and then start sliding it until a deal is made. However, making an easy task look like a hard one would be more desirable; make the backstory of your work more challenging to make it worth it for your client. Don't spend 12 hours researching what your client likes and present it as a simple task; your client doesn't know what happened behind the scenes, and they will conclude that your effort does not deserve the cost. Work smart and efficiently, not hard and stupid.

Chapter 3 —

My Projects and My Progress

I was jealous of those students who could focus on their exams while building their projects. One of them I stumbled across on the internet was Rexan Wong, Roy Lee (The founder of Cluely), and the others who made **MIT maker portfolio**¹ videos. They are smart, and I want to be as intellectual and confident as they are. That's why I self-learned a variety of skills and built projects.

My first-ever project was a **Discord server**² called “Freelance Hub”. It was created when Fiverr became astonishingly popular in 2019. The idea was simple: to connect freelancers and recruiters like Fiverr does and let the members advertise their Fiverr gigs. I also collaborated with my Australian friend to make a website. I used the **Q2A template**³ to set up the site, and my friend hosted it for me. The website did pretty well. After being approved by **Google AdSense**⁴, the site generated US\$20 within a week. I also learned how to use **Google Analytics**⁵ and **Google Search Console**⁶. However, my friend decided not to support it anymore and terminated the hosting, because he thought it was expensive. I had nearly no idea how to set up a website and hosting before, so it burned down in flames. Nonetheless, it didn't stop the ambitious 13-year-old.

MIT maker portfolio¹ — A portfolio for the MIT application.
<https://mitadmissions.org/apply/firstyear/portfolios-additional-material/>

Discord server² — An open space for an online community.

Q2A template³ — A PHP-based online Q&A website forum code and interface template.

Google AdSense⁴ — A platform where you can integrate Google advertisements into your websites.

Google Analytics⁵ — A platform to monitor site data. For example, web traffic and user retention.

Google Search Console⁶ — A platform to monitor your site performance on the Google search engine.

I attempted to rebuild Freelance Hub multiple times, but it consistently turned into a spam mess. People in the community are too eager to promote their **Fiverr gigs**¹ and accounts without communicating. Every day, all I see in the Discord community are spam messages, and I was annoyed. I rebrand it as Gotaam and reorient the community to insight exchanging and providing help to community members. I recruited volunteers to write blogs with me and help build a new website, but it didn't all go smoothly. I looked back, and it makes sense why it didn't work. The team organization is chaotic. The team consisted of an Estonian, an Australian, and me. I was responsible for managing the community and writing blogs; the Estonian helped me with blog writing, and the Australian was in charge of developing a website for it. The blogs were about topics related to freelancing. For example, "How to get sales within the first month of your freelancing career?". Although we had roles, we didn't have a clear development roadmap, so the website had never been developed. The Estonian had mental issues, struggling to live in his country; therefore, he couldn't contribute much. I made an effort to help him, but I couldn't do anything except offer suggestions.

I learned a lesson: You must be proficient in something before attempting something related to it. If you don't know how to set up a website, you don't expect to join the web development market or let someone do it for you. If the information gap is too wide, you will either be scammed or squeezed out of the market. When I was building Freelance Hub, a man approached me and proposed to make a replica of Fiverr. I was 13 and I agreed to it because I saw the potential of the market. I paid a total amount of US\$200 to him. He showcased me samples of the website whenever I asked for them, but eventually he disappeared without giving me anything. Then, I stumbled across a site that provides website templates when I was older. I figured out those samples are actually from the exact site; he didn't even develop them. I would have noticed that if I had researched what web development is.

Fiverr gigs¹ — Services that are listed on Fiverr.

As I mentioned in the last chapter, I built a hosting reselling service when I was 15. That was when I dived into the world of web development. Before that, I was still finding random freelance jobs that were related to graphic design, video editing, or 3D modeling online. The payment ranges from US\$5 to US\$30. I spent a day learning **HTML**¹ and **CSS**² when I first started trying to make websites. I still remember how I searched for crash courses on YouTube and started making my portfolio. It was lousy, the site was not responsive at all, but overall, a great experience. I learned how to use **Adobe XD**³ to create superb graphics and web design. Then I met my client, and I proposed \$25 for developing an information site. He agreed, and he gave me jobs to build information sites for companies. I learned **TailwindCSS**⁴, **JavaScript**⁵, and my web development ability became more robust. I created a **Caesar cipher encryption**⁶ website, along with other sites that I made for fun and to practice.

HTML¹ — Hypertext Markup Language. For documents built to display in a web browser, it is an essential part of web development. Imagine it as the structure of a house.

CSS² — Cascading Style Sheets. It styles a document written in HTML. Imagine it as the paintings and decorations of a house.

Adobe XD³ — A discontinued graphic tool for designing websites. (Not web development, coding is not involved)

TailwindCSS⁴ — A CSS framework that allows you to style directly in an HTML document, within tags. Accelerating the development speed and efficiency instead of constantly switching tabs to edit the style.

<https://tailwindcss.com/>

JavaScript⁵ — A programming language for the web, updating HTML and CSS. Imagine it as the wires, cables, and electricity of a house.

https://www.w3schools.com/whatis/whatis_js.asp

Caesar cipher encryption⁶ — An encryption technique that replaces a character with a character on a fixed number of positions down the alphabet.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesar_cipher

After that, he gave me the biggest challenge during that time: To build a file storage system and a **CRM system**¹ combined in a website. I had no idea how to build a website with a database involved. So, I spent two days learning **Firebase**², and I made it possible within a week. I believe the efficiency of learning surges if you need a particular skill instead of going through all the theories and forgetting them. Everyone, or most people, has the sample capability like me; some of them are better than me, even. However, looking back at how we were educated, I can see how absurd it was. We are told to learn everything within 6 years, and after that, there is minimal practical use, and we start to slowly forget what we have learned. Afterwards, we go to university, learn impractical things again. Eventually, we go to the job market, nobody hires us, then we have to learn something practical to build up the foundation. There are exceptions, but this is still a disaster.

Back to the topic, after I learned database usage, I created a platform called Jumpmaster. It started with joking around with my friends. It is a web builder, but for making sites that scare people with a sudden flash of a photo and a horrific sound. There are 400 users in the initial model, and 250 users in the newer model after I decided to collect emails. I hired a spokesperson on Fiverr and edited a video for the front page. The traffic is organic; I didn't spend any money advertising online because this product is not something impactful anyway. However, it is good for gathering marketing materials like emails.

CRM system¹ — Customer Relationship Management system. A system that stores and manages clients' data for a company's use.

Firebase² — A platform with built-in tools like a database, an authentication system, etc, for websites or applications.

<https://firebase.google.com/>

Also, I built a bank simulation in Jumpmaster, trying to prove economic theories correct. I added a in-platform currency with a limited supply from an account named “Central Bank” and made every registration get 100 units of that currency. Then, I added a marketplace for users to bid on advertising spots on people’s websites that are generated by Jumpmaster. I crafted a bunch of formulas for that, including “*Transaction Tax Rate = 25%(1-0.01%)^(Bid)*”, “*Compensation = After-Tax Bid - (After-Tax Bid x PER (Penalty Exclusion Rate))*”, and “*Earnings on Bid = Bid([25%(1-0.01%)^(Bid)] x PER (Penalty Exclusion Rate))*” (You don’t have to read the formulas; a kind reminder). As every translation will be taxed, I wanted to see if that is the case, whether all money eventually transits back to the central bank. In my theory, that is the case, but since there were not many transactions, I couldn't prove it. Nevertheless, it was fun, I wrote an article for that, and I enjoyed it.

Apart from Jumpmaster, I created GoDotWebs. It has two roles. One of them is to be a brand that gives practical tech solutions; one of them is to take part as a **centralized database**¹ for my services. The original plan was to develop three products within months—DotWebsHosting, a hosting website; PutEverythingInsideABox, a storage website; and DotWebsBuilder, a **web builder**². Things didn’t go as planned because I had to focus on both the HKDSE examination and my projects; it was harsh. The examination is notoriously known as you can’t do anything but focus on it, or else you are doomed. Thus, balancing both while having a good mindset was tough. Not to mention, I had to study in Chinese; my English was decent, and my Chinese was way worse. I scored double in English exams. I would describe it as a great challenge to handle everything.

centralized database¹ — A single database for multiple websites. Mostly to speed up the development and make integrations between platforms fast.

web builder² — A website that builds websites with tools and interfaces that make the process easy.

I created DotWebsHosting. There are only a few users, but most importantly, I created a **hosting infrastructure**¹ in my **Raspberry Pi 5**². That would come in handy for me to develop more projects. Then, I developed MassMail, a tool to automatically send emails to different people. I built it to automate sending emails to the contacts I stored in my database. I built QuLoad, a speed-based file-to-link transformer. I created that because I have to upload a PDF file to social media, break the file upload limitation, and ensure photo quality while posting it, or when demonstrating it. I develop something when I need it, because perhaps someone needs it too. That is exactly how business works.

I am proud of what I built; becoming a tech-driven innovator was my dream. *“Never stop building until something works”* is a summarization of those who succeeded. It is useful, it encourages you to pursue, while not burning yourself out. Again, up until now, I am still jealous of the people who built and gained recognition from that because nearly nobody gives recognition to my work; they are generally unrecognized. Yet, I will not stop building. I am planning my upcoming projects.

hosting infrastructure¹ — Networking, storage, OS, code, etc, that are hosted and run in a system that can then be utilized in development.

Raspberry Pi 5² — A small computer that can handle tasks with exceptional performance. Mostly used to build prototypes.

<https://www.raspberrypi.com/products/raspberry-pi-5/>

Chapter 4 —

Social Media Marketing

The goal on social media is never to be afraid of going crazy online. *“If anything, I’ve learned that I need to become crazier online.”—Roy Lee.* I have several successful marketing campaigns on social media. One of them is the **English reading mock examination**¹ I made. There are A, B1, and B2 sections in the English examination I took. A is mandatory, and you choose between B1, the easier section, or B2, the difficult section. So, I made a mock examination titled “B0”. I wrote an article, created some questions, and went straight to Adobe Illustrator, designing based on the style of the real examination. I took a photo of the printed paper and then threw it on **Threads**². The post got 85K views. I created a **Google Form**³ for people to upload their answers so I can mark them. I gathered 30 participants. I also created a questionnaire and eventually obtained useful data about how people think about the paper; quite positive. If this is a campaign for a tutor center, I believe it would have generated some real students.

English reading mock examination¹ — A replica of the real HKDSE English reading examination, but for practice.

Threads² — An online platform with high toxicity. A platform to share text-based conversations. Born to counter X (Twitter).

Google Form³ — A questionnaire-type website made in Google Forms.

So, the core idea of advertising on social media is to shape resonance with your target audience. You can take the idea of **guerrilla marketing**¹. By mentioning something your target audience knows, while adding some new elements that give them a shock. Now they are on your hook. Bringing back the oldest question in the book, “How would you sell an ordinary pen?”. If you are in a nerdy community, you describe how good the pen is in terms of dropping notes, along with showing creative tips on studying. If you are in a business community, focus on the duration of the pen and how fancy it is. Demonstrate it as a sign of long success. Non-intrusive approach to promote a product is a smart way. Don’t overemphasize your product even if you want to sell it.

I saw people using trending topics on social media trying to promote their restaurants or services, but they give an awkward vibe. Other than being confident, you also have to be resonating without looking “weird”. Being “weird” means everyone knows your intention. It is easy to tell whether a promotional video is staged or not by just looking at the interactions between the actors. If you are doing a street interview, try picking strangers instead of someone you know. If you are making a promotional video, don’t keep spamming your brand logo and name; leave it to the end and focus on the content. Go to social media, search for communities that fit your **niche**², and learn the style they like. Companies don’t even have to mention their name if they successfully created a style or a vibe of themselves.

guerrilla marketing¹ — An advertisement strategy in which a company uses surprise and/or unconventional interactions to promote a product or service.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_marketing

niche² — A specialized market, or a theme.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/niche>

Some brands are utilizing social media for marketing as well. Their marketing teams are using recent news and connecting it to their products. For example, when the humidity is high, companies that sell dehumidifiers can make promotional materials based on it: “*Having a weeping house? Sweep the tears, rejoice!*” with well-designed graphics. Companies are smart to do this; often, it leads to excellent results. One of the best examples is IKEA. It is rare to see the comment section of a brand filled with positive feedback, and they did it, with posts that resonate and are close to our lives; they are interesting and linked to products.

I wrote something months ago:

Rage Baiting: The Art of Marketing

“What I noticed about marketing is that people often don't truly care about your product or creation. However, if you have something that triggers their interest or simply provokes, they will usually react, and you can attract and guide more people to learn about your product through that. It is just as simple as that, but highly effective if you master it.”—Ricky Chan.

This theory I made is not entirely correct. **Rage baiting**¹ requires controversy. Theoretically, fame from controversy fades fast. You also have to be aware of the backfire from what you say online. The efficiency of this method has been proven to be inefficient, too. I was on **Reddit**² promoting my side project. It is a **Roblox**³ game listing website to help game developers gain attention for their creations. It was developed because I see a well-developed infrastructure, the brand is popular, and most importantly, the in-platform advertising system is notorious. I saw an opportunity to win. Besides, I want to step into the SaaS market, so this project will help me figure out how to set up Stripe payments. Apart from that, I need money to fund my main projects.

I introduced what my product is on Reddit on different **subreddits**⁴ related to Roblox. The posts had around 20K views combined, and they contributed to gaining 100 users within a week. Then, I switched to a different approach because I want more user flow in. By emphasizing and boasting about the use of my product by stating the immediate effect on boosting the popularity of games, I sparked some arguments, and I started to argue with people. The campaign gained the same amount of attention as the previous one. However, only 20 users joined.

Rage baiting¹ — Making people mad by saying something controversial for attention.

Reddit² — A home for thousands of online communities.

Roblox³ — A platform for young teenagers to create and play digital experiences.

subreddits⁴ — A community inside Reddit.

The data was worth examining, and I can draft a new theory. Using controversy to gain publicity for your product is less efficient because people are focusing on the topic rather than what you are selling. When your product isn't in the spotlight, and the topic you are engaging with sparks anger, not only do you receive a worse brand image, but also hate; it would be long-lasting as people usually remember what they hate than what they like. It explains why companies tend to keep a good reputation: to avoid controversy that damages their long-term development. That's why, when a creator becomes controversial, companies would terminate the contract or break the relationship as they fear it would tear their brands down.

The essential skills for social media marketing are identical to what I mentioned in Chapter 2. Believe in yourself, stay confident, and no matter how people hate you, as long as it is not from the majority, it is ok. People on the internet are not rational and can sometimes be intimidating. You have to believe in your product or brand; if you don't trust it, nobody else will. So, be rational, logical, and stay calm in any circumstances. It's not like the world is ending, don't be anxious.

I especially love Gen Z style marketing. First of all, I am a Gen Z. Secondly, I like how it is playful, informative, and it is not dull. People criticize us for being unserious, but we put our effort and time into trying to build something fantastic while people are being skeptical. That indicates our strong will and tolerance of this generation. Some of us are lazy and unreasonable, but that doesn't mean the endeavor of the entire generation is nothing.

Chapter 5 —

My Experience with Clients

Learning from people who have built a business or own a business is more practical than focusing on theories. I have met different clients since I was 13. However, speaking of the most impactful, I would say things I learned after getting web development jobs from the client I can meet in person. They were useful. I learned what the difference is between an **invoice**¹ and a **quotation**². Also, I learned that if you own a business in Hong Kong, you have to fill in the **NAR1 form**³ annually. Apart from those theoretical items, I learned the backstories of some companies, knowing how they started from nothing, to build up factories, manufacturing plastic packages, and their expansion plan. Every story of a successful business is encouraging because you know it is going to be tough, but eventually, you can find your pathway towards success.

invoice¹ — A commercial document that includes an itemized list of goods or services furnished by a seller to a buyer relating to a sale transaction.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invoice>

quotation² — A list of items and their prices for a customer who wants to know more about certain goods or services before they make a purchase.

<https://www.sumup.com/en-gb/invoices/dictionary/quotation/>

NAR1 form³ — A compulsory form that records publicly available information about a company. It provides the government with important details, including shareholder and director information, registered address, and an overview of the company's operations.

<https://osome.com/hk/guides/annual-return/>

Don't be afraid of talking. My friend would randomly go straight up talking to strangers, it could be a shopkeeper, janitor, or business owner. Asking things out of curiosity. For example, "*How would you count the items on an inventory check? They are stacked together.*" (The answer is they know how tall each item is, so they can measure the height and get an approximate number of the total amount). Sometimes you will be fascinated by their methods or the way they finish their work, and sometimes you will gain insight into how people run a business. I was in a business meeting, and I had to introduce the business management website we have set up to my client. We were having coffee. Out of curiosity, I asked my client how he gets customers for his electrical and mechanical business. Turns out he joined a business association where he can gain connections and referrals, and the business association is divided into different groups, where each group only has one business from a particular industry to prevent strong competition. The information will come in handy if I decide to start a company, as I know where to get my clients and expand my business.

Listening to my clients broadened what I know about the industry and market. Sometimes I heard conversations about how my client was planning to build an online shop, learning the tools he uses, and comparing them with the current ones I use to develop the same thing, so there might be a chance of reducing the current cost, as there are different prices for plans across all websites. You have to consider factors like cost-effectiveness, robustness, and speed to conclude whether using **WordPress**¹, **Shopify**², or developing from scratch is a good idea. If you are not a developer, this is also important. Saying like, if you're manufacturing cars, you have to compare different prices of raw material vendors. Information is the key to finding a perfect deal; you can earn more.

WordPress¹ — A web builder that assists you in building websites with simple interfaces.

<https://wordpress.com/>

Shopify² — An online shop builder that assists you in building an online shop with simple interfaces and features that help you get sales.

<https://www.shopify.com/>

Knowing what your competitors are doing is important, too. Through your clients, you will be able to find their weaknesses as well as something to learn from. Using web development as an example again, I heard tech companies out in the market are usually using **pre-built templates**¹ or **canned packages**² to finish their websites. I thought to myself, “What if I give my clients custom-coded websites with the biggest flexibility?”. I did it, but no one appreciates that. Now I understand those companies. It could be because of the market, but you can’t change it single-handedly, sadly.

Hearing about how your client has built a company, learning about the history, is motivating. There is a story where my client established a packaging design company. He hired a teenager to design. Back in the days, factories in Hong Kong were still thriving. Their workload is relatively light compared to employment, yet they earn a living. It was successful until factories were shifted to China for a lower cost. The business became unsustainable because the factories there usually pay less for the design. Nonetheless, it was successful, and there was one teenager who was a part of the company who earned that amount at a young age. The story told me that if I have a practical skill with good utilization, I could be successful too in terms of starting a business. It means what I am pursuing isn’t only a dream but something that can be accomplished.

pre-built templates¹ — Purchasing the code of a developed website.

canned packages² — Purchasing a developed website, sometimes it could be a plan from a SaaS platform, etc.

Although mostly, I am the only one in the development team, sometimes I am happy with it. It could be tough working alone, but it would be better than working with someone who fully relies on **Cursor**¹ and will screw up your whole database and **infrastructure**², overcomplicating your code, within an hour. I would be better off if I had a team with intellectual and insightful talents, but it is fine working alone. You learn practical skills while encountering something new. I learned Next.js to speed up the development process; it is by far the most useful thing I have learned. So, when you deal with your clients, accept something new, try not to disappoint them, and you might have fun learning. Don't doubt your ability.

When you get in touch with your clients, you will understand that building a business isn't magic, but it involves dedication and connections. It is not simply filling demand. It is also not just putting money for return; it is not a game of stocks and bonds. Even when you buy stocks, you are involved in a company's decision-making. This is an opportunity to build up an empire you own, or co-own. Getting into details by speaking to your clients illustrates a vivid image of their endeavor and how they were building brick by brick.

Cursor¹ — An AI assistance for development.

infrastructure² — It means how the database is structured here.

There is an obvious difference between a dreamer and an entrepreneur. A dreamer would spit out impractical business ideas, while an entrepreneur knows what's realistic in practice. I heard people saying you don't have to train employees, but rather hire someone with perfect traits, and you have to rely on this to build a business; this is not correct. Employee training exists for several reasons: to familiarize oneself with the working environment and procedures, build a relationship between the employee and the company, and, most importantly, to give a clear goal. Many details are not visible when you dream, but through experience and conversations. Talking to your client transforms you into a real businessman with real-life knowledge acquired. Hence, your clients matter.

Chapter 6 —

Observing the Environment

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, my friend would love to know what is around him, and we always talk about business and science. Knowing how things work around you is crucial, as people's intelligence shapes them. For example, in a shopping mall, my friend and I would try to discover how **swivel casters**¹ work and why they are convenient to customers. We made a theoretical conclusion: Instead of using fixed wheels, swivel casters are more effective as they can go in any direction, reducing collisions in such a narrow area, enhancing customer experience. I also created a blueprint attempting to explain how casters would work, but that's not about business; it's about science and physics, so I would skip it. Going in-depth on something small is fun, and this is one of the traits you should have when building a business.

When you go into a restaurant, there are interesting details as well. Although mostly it was rough assumptions, we were guessing the use of things around us. When you order something at McDonald's, they will usually give you a ton of napkins. My theory is that, similar to Five Guys, they give customers something excessive to make them feel they are getting a good value, and napkins are useful when you are having fast food because you get dirty often. It might not be correct, but the thinking was there. We also discussed why their napkins are not folded exactly in half. It could be that they made it so you can unfold them easily. You will also notice that all the tables and chairs have rounded corners; this could be to prevent kids from getting injured as they often run around. When you notice small things from big companies, it triggers you to think more to finish the puzzle of how they became huge corporations.

swivel casters¹ — Wheels that are designed to be attached to the bottom of a larger object, with great mobility, and 360-degree rotation to enable that object to be moved.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caster>

Many things we see in life are mostly common sense. However, when you ask yourself why, sometimes you can't jump to a conclusion or answer. We see markings on roads every day. Without learning, you wouldn't be able to know what they are about, although you encounter them every day. In business, you solve people's problems to profit. So, if you can't picture what people are struggling with, it is difficult to provide solutions. I struggle with marketing every time I start a new project or build a new product. I would make an immediate purchase if I discovered an application offering a US\$20 per month plan that solves my problem. Now, if I want to help people with the same issue, I would have to go explore marketing topics, try advertising online, and analyze the results.

Here is how you can distinguish between knowing nothing and being knowledgeable. Try to compare two of the quotes:

"To make your brand successful, you must advertise on Meta Ads."

*"To make your brand successful, you have to research your competitors through practical online tools like Semrush, find high volume and least competitive keywords, target your audience, aim for particular communities that the people in there would be interested in your product, run **A/B tests**¹, and find the right advertisement to put your budget on."*

The second one is more convincing. When you know nothing about what you are selling, typically, you can't explain it in detail. If you can explain it in detail, it sounds more persuasive. If you want to be persuasive, you have to understand how things work. To understand how things work, you must first observe what is around you. It is to build up your foundation on logical thinking and understanding, so you can use it to further explain what you want.

A/B tests¹ — Randomized tests that contain two variants. Usually, to compare which advertising campaign performs better within a limited budget, before focusing on the best-perform one in marketing.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A/B_testing

It might be overwhelming if I tell you to learn everything possible. Nobody can ever do that, and that is why we have specialization. I am not suggesting that you follow like what those motivational videos have demonstrated. Be dedicated, “**locked in**¹”, try harder, and start learning everything you can without taking a rest. Let’s be real, we are human, not robots. This chapter is not encouraging you to know everything outside forcefully, but to spark curiosity and to build **from zero to hero**².

Additionally, the shops are worth examining as well. They are an indicator to evaluate how well your place is currently doing, apart from complicated indices. The simplest way to know how inflation goes is to compare the price of the items in shops around your location to their approximate former price. If the items are pricey, it doesn’t necessarily mean the economy is bad. Watch behaviors. If price hikes and the purchasing pattern and volume remain the same, it implies that the economy is stable; otherwise not. If we go further, we can look at industries individually. If restaurants are expensive, then we know people would rather cook for themselves than dine in. Potentially, we see people flock to supermarkets, buying the ingredients. They are valuable data because if we obtain the pattern, we can briefly anticipate where consumers would go. That is economics, but from what we see to an illustration of the market. We clear our vision step by step to make sure our decisions are correct.

locked in¹ — Be serious and determined.

from zero to hero² — Starts with nothing to building something huge.

If everyone knows the answer to “one plus one”, then solving it would not be valuable anymore. That’s why we are consistently improving. The **SaaS**¹ market in recent years has been the same. From to-do list apps to AI-integrated note-taking apps like Notion, we have hopped on a long journey. Companies are competing with their similar counterparts intensely, and individual developers are striving to develop creative and useful applications. There are a lot of similar SaaS applications out there with the same purpose but different user experiences. For example, applications related to AI are everywhere, and it is impossible to be the center of attention. However, there is one brand that is fully focused on user experience and has eventually raised \$15 million in a funding round: Cluely, a desktop application that has exceptional navigation and functionality, so you don’t have to enter the ChatGPT website every time. You can see that even a small aspect can bring a whole different outcome. That is why the strong word—Observing, is essential to business. When you notice something is annoying or brilliant, understand the backstory, and do better.

SaaS¹ — Software as a service. A service model that the provider offers use of application software to users to solve problems or to provide resources. Usually, this term is used on web applications.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software_as_a_service

Chapter 7 —

How to Catch the Real Trend

If you want to know what is currently trending, you can visit social media and see what people are posting or check news websites to see recent events. It's simple. Or, if you want to find out whether a specific topic is trending, you can use **Google Trends**¹ to view the statistics and graphs. There are many ways to observe what is trending right now, but the key is knowing how to catch it.

Google Trends¹ — A platform to view the popularity of specific keywords and what is trending right now.

Starting from a website, notable knowledge: How to get traffic from trends. You should have your website listed and monitored with Google Search Console. People often encounter a problem here, which is no data, no impressions, and no traffic. There is a saying that it takes at least 3 months for your website to be recognized by Google, ranked on the **search engine**¹, and kick-started. If it still receives no visits, that means it's either that your website does not have enough content, or it is not **crawlable**² and it can't be **indexed**³; it means your site is isolated apart from the others. The way to fix that is to list a bunch of **keywords**⁴, search them on Google one by one, and see what the difference is between your website and those in the top position in terms of content, readability, and functionality if you are building a web application. If you developed a product or wrote something unique, congratulations, you can now write articles without competition.

search engine¹ — A software system that provides hyperlinks to web pages with other relevant information on the Web.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine

crawlable² — Search engine bots (crawlers) recognize you so they can display your content accordingly.

indexed³ — Recognizing the content on a website via bots or sometimes human verification.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_indexing

keywords⁴ — Important words on a website that help search engines understand what your site is about. Usually, it depends on how many times particular words appear on your website or in metadata. [Metadata (or metainformation) is data that defines and describes the characteristics of other data. In web development, it means words that represent a page.]

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metadata>

If you start seeing keywords popping up in the queries section of your Google Search Console page, that means there is something people would love to learn about, potentially a trend. Catch the trend. Write blogs related to the keywords on **buymeacoffee.com**¹, social media platforms, forums, or news websites that allow you to do **guest posts**². Now, most people might think writing blogs is useless because nobody will read them. However, one of the purposes of writing articles is to build backlinks. Whenever you write on different websites and place a link that refers back to your website, you gain one backlink. More backlinks means your website gets a higher authentication score, which means a higher ranking in search engines. If you want to know how many backlinks your competitors have, search for “Backlinks checker” on Google, pick a random one. I suggest Ahrefs, but it is up to you. Other than backlinks, given that what you write is trend-focused, if people are interested, your article might benefit from a popularity boom. Then, you can reap the benefit. That could happen, but you don’t expect it because you wouldn’t know in such a dynamic environment, you can predict what people search, encounter, and read.

There is an indicator to evaluate whether a topic is dead or not. If gurus start to make videos about a specific topic, it’s either overhyped or the market is already fulfilled. It is because if you were someone who knew a method to earn money, you wouldn’t share it out loud unless the golden mine is nearly empty and you want to earn more from it, so you create an empty-headed dream and sell pickaxes to those who fall for it. A few years ago, people were all discussing dropshipping. People were already noticing that dropshipping products can be bought inexpensively. Gurus who made money from dropshipping are starting to hit a limit on what they can earn; that is why they decided to go for tutorials. The number of gurus has risen exponentially; it has hyped. Now, you see gurus quitting as the gold mine is now empty.

buymeacoffee.com¹ — A platform allowing you to create a donation website with an article posting feature.

guest posts² — Posts on other blogs or news platforms that are submitted as a guest.

How to distinguish between a real trend and a **bubble**¹ is to focus on resources instead of overgeneralized videos that are too good to be true. We all know you must have a foundation of coding, writing, marketing, etc, to accomplish something fantastic. Earning money is not you getting something cheap, putting advertisements on Meta Ads, and making big money. The most practical approach is to use this book as a foundation, again, learn to solve issues, and find resources related to your issues. I am a web developer, and recently, SaaS became a trend. I know that because a lot of useful tools have joined the market, and **Fireship**² is making videos about them. I started to learn **React.js**³, and now I have a tech stack combination that consists of speed-based frameworks and tools like TailwindCSS, **Next.js**⁴, and **Supabase**⁵. I've learned how to build something realistically from nothing; it's different compared to an unclear and generalized roadmap.

bubble¹ — Something unstable or vulnerable.

Fireship² — A YouTube channel dedicated to tech and coding news and tutorials.

React.js³ — The library for web and native user interfaces. Allow you to build user interfaces out of individual pieces called components written in JavaScript.

<https://react.dev/>

Next.js⁴ — Built on React. A React framework that focuses on quality, speed, and efficiency.

<https://nextjs.org/>

Supabase⁵ — A platform that provides a Postgres database for every project with real-time functionality, database backup, and more. In a nutshell, it supports your site's back-end database.

<https://supabase.com/>

Most importantly, a real trend provides value to people. It is also one of the most important core values of a business. When a trend of market losses its ability to provide value to people, it will be gone. Dropshipping, the initial purpose of it is to supply interesting goods to people who don't know they can buy them for a cheaper price, that's it. How it provides value to people is that it fits the supply and demand. However, once the **information gap**¹ is gone, the value disappears. Not like the market will immediately go away, but it will not be as popular as it was. Same for the SaaS market, the overemphasis on AI, and people charging too much for applications that are not necessary or useful, like the photo-to-calorie app with low accuracy, with gurus popping up, indicating the market will go down. Nevertheless, despite the situation, web apps are still providing value to people because some of them are relatively useful and convenient in our lives, like file converters, photo-to-text tools, and SEO analyzers. It won't go down like dropshipping because it's different.

Knowing what is trending is easy, but every time it feels pitiful if you do nothing and just let the trends fade away as if they were never there. If you find it hard to follow instructions to utilize trends, it's completely normal. They are more dynamic than the market itself. Think about whether you can predict what is going to be popular in the upcoming year. You will be madly successful if you do, but mostly, it is about the right actions matching the right opportunities. So, keep trying, you know it's going to work.

information gap¹ — Information that is known by some individuals but not others.

Chapter 8 —

Facing the Struggle

I am competitive, a **try-harder**. Whenever I see someone doing better than me, I know I have to surpass them. I saw international students crafting their portfolio with practical web development experience, so I made one myself as well; I saw people creating marvelous edits on the internet, so I made some myself as well. My ego supports me in achieving something impossible; it pushes the boundary. I said to myself, *“If someone can do this, I can as well.”*. Then, I act, which distinguishes me from those who lie down after being motivated for a while. I built a solid portfolio, extraordinary projects, and a foundation that nobody around me can match. Yet, I started to fear what if people catch up, and what if everything I do goes down in flames. I am nothing; no recognition, no trust in me, and I was forgotten. How can I carry on the struggle?

Watching startup founders' success at such a young age, I realized it might be too late if I don't act now. No matter how harsh it is, and no matter how much I doubt myself, things have to go on. Time won't stop even if you are sad or desperate. The only thing I can do is catch up with everyone, be better than them, and pursue my goal. I have the guts to believe in myself. My teacher said I live in my own world. If the world out there is absurd, I would rather find my way instead of doing what's already proven wrong. Even if I am eventually incorrect, I can tell others to trace the right path.

I believe if your ability is stronger than your grades, that's when you know you are on the right trajectory. I was below average in my English examination; if I can write a book and speak loudly in conversations, that grade can't define me. If I can do something, no matter in terms of business, marketing, design, ideas, or thinking, better than any other individuals or institutions, I win. Imagine fitting in a group by presenting yourself as a different person other than your true self, how would that be glory, and how would that be fun? People hate when you demonstrate yourself, not because you are bad, it is because when they are in denial when they realize someone outpaces them. It is contradictory, as some people always say, "Be yourself.", while judging others for being themselves. I would call them hypocrites.

However, sometimes you find yourself in a struggle; it's like being trapped in a mud pit. I have been through a stage of "What can I do more to earn traffic?", "What can I do more to be more generally accepted?", and "How to be more successful and escape what I am currently at?". When those thoughts pop up, it is usually annoying to think, and it blocks you from thinking more. Back in the days, when I had to present or get into conversations, I had to spend time thinking, and worrying about how screw up it would be. After I went through interviews with intellectual people, I realized that I am not that bad after all. People were impressed, and my talking was smoother than I expected; building up a foundation and moving forward actually helped me. I know what I did was right, which encouraged me.

If you lose something you own, you feel regretful. I will not stop until I get what I deserve. If I stop here, the things I built would be all meaningless. I love the quote, “*We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.*”—Winston Churchill. The quote is beautiful, powerful, and heartening. It indicates never giving up in any circumstances, and it helped me go through all the tough situations. If you lose something you own, you feel regretful. The same goes for not using what you learned and letting it vanish. Even if I look crazy at the present, I would rather leave no regret.

Once you realize how unrealistic you were, you will be able to step forward. Once, I planned to develop an AI-powered website generator. However, I saw how impossible it is, given that the market is highly competitive, wrapping **Ollama**¹ in a website with **Monaco code editor**² won't work. You still tried. Being unrealistic doesn't mean you have to lose all your hope, but it is to help you achieve something even better. With experience telling you something doesn't work, you must think ahead and change how you originally thought; it sounds like an improvement. I tried to beat institutions with my singular one-man strength, creating work that is capable of competing with small companies or greater organizations. It was ridiculous but yet I improved doing that; I don't see any drawback.

Ollama¹ — A tool that allows users to download and execute large language models (LLMs) directly on their personal computers.

<https://ollama.com/>

Monaco code editor² — A code editor that you can integrate into your website.

Although I failed so many times to the point that I might consider giving up, something reignited my determination. I was in university interviews. During the interviews, the professors were interested in my projects; one of them was impressed by my CV, and asked what Jumpmaster is in detail. Furthermore, they gave an overall exceptional feedback to my interview performance; bonus points were given to me. I was having conversations with fellow brilliant groupmates, which made me understand that I am not alone in thinking the way I am. As you are in a struggle, you have to demonstrate yourself, go out, and talk to people. Although eventually, I got rejected by all the institutions, I have no regret, because I know people love my work.

We are all the same. I don't think someone is inherently better than any other person unless we are talking about special cases. It is just a matter of the learning curve or the motivation to do something. I feel myself to be relatively lucky, I live in Hong Kong, and I have a computer, so I can explore whatever I want, and I can learn whenever I need. I didn't need fancy tools, note-taking apps, being fully prepared to develop websites, or to learn random things online, like historical facts, science, or economics. I also love the quote "*Let it rip.*", from the movie *The Bear*. Off the leash, achieve the best you can.

My motto, "*Be extraordinary.*", doesn't only mean be different, but be who you truly believe in. You have to acknowledge that your struggle will drag you down. You don't have to be affected by the noises around you unless you are doing something unethical. You do something beneficial, smart, justified, and righteous. I don't see any reason that stops you.

Chapter 9 —

How to Manage Your Ego

In modern days, we have the internet. In Chapter 6, I mentioned that many things in life are common sense. We can search for something on the internet whenever we want; it is a backbone to support our points, even when it exceeds what we know.

"I think everything is too oversimplified, and it is a cause of the fluency effect of the internet. It's like when you watch a video, then you think you have the capability of doing something without overall practice. Similarly, when AI seems like a strong figure, it is overall easy to overestimate it and jump to an unrealistic conclusion."—Ricky Chan.

This is a quote after I went through a few chapters in the book *Thinking 101: How to Reason Better to Live Better*. It is a fact that people become more arrogant after they acknowledge that they can talk more than they know, especially when AI exists. When I ask what the benefits of eating an apple or something closer to common sense, people would search for it hiddenly rather than accepting in fact that they don't know. It also fostered many egocentrics.

The best way to improve is to admit you don't know about something, and then fill in the gap. If we are over-reliant on Google or AI, this thinking and learning process will be less seen among us. It also gives us a picture of how we know everything in the world, but as a quote stated, *"The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing."*—Socrates, acknowledging the limits of one's knowledge is an important starting point for learning and growth. Being stupidly over-confident is the exact opposite. People often jump to a conclusion and forget the process of learning just because they know the answer. It is like telling AI to code everything for you, but you don't know how to set up everything. Moreover, often people will forget what they saw. To prove that, remind me about what I wrote at the start of the paragraph. If you get that correct, that means you are deeply focused. Thank you. You get the idea.

To manage your ego, you must first understand yourself. Know what you can do and what you can't do. For example, you can write a book, but you can't build a rocket by just skimming through three YouTube tutorials about rocket engineering and physics. Face the real picture, and start learning from the start. To learn economics, you start from basic graphs and theories like supply and demand, and you move from **microeconomics**¹ to **macroeconomics**². Make sure the progression is there while having a realistic expectation. Shaping a healthy ego that pushes you further.

You can also try matching your ability with your ego. If you feel like doing something new, go for it. I took the **IELTS examination**³ with the money I earned to fulfill my ego in language. Though the result is fairly decent, I am certain that I can do better because I know which part I did incorrectly; I shouldn't have been paranoid about finishing a certain part, but rather move on to the next one when I didn't get the previous one, and I should be speaking more confidently. Every time you try on something, you get experience, and the next time you remember what you did wrong last time, you won't make the same mistake; that's valuable. That is how you build yourself, and slowly approach where you set your goals earlier.

microeconomics¹ — A branch of economics that studies the behavior of individuals and firms in making decisions regarding the allocation of scarce resources and the interactions among these individuals and firms.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microeconomics>

macroeconomics² — A branch of economics that deals with the performance, structure, behavior, and decision-making of an economy as a whole.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macroeconomics>

IELTS examination³ — International English Language Testing System. A test to evaluate your English proficiency.

I thought there was nothing impossible, and because of my ego, I was occasionally on the brink of breaking down. Searching for hours for solutions to a particular problem on the internet? I've been there a lot of times. Nevertheless, I cherish opportunities like that because every time I solve a complicated problem, I get huge fulfillment. The process was harsh, but I have a strong will to finish something I should have done. Persistence is one of my characteristics. Writing thousands lines of code, drafting logic mindmaps on **MS Paint**¹, those can't be achieved without a sturdy willpower. I also went through challenges like building a simple **algorithm**² and learning **Brainf*ck**³; my ego was so high, so I explored topics that are considered hard. It was a treasure when I look back.

It could be depressing when your ego is so high and you can't achieve something at the same height. If you aim so high, at a particular moment, when you realize that if you want to master something, you have to devote in your life, it could be overwhelming. The realization of what you have learned on the surface level is something you will encounter when you go from "I am built differently" kid to a more mature individual. Sometimes when you look back and ask yourself, "I didn't do too badly back then, why am I still miserable now?". Think about how narrow your view was. You were not like the current self; you are more ahead now. You are still doing the things you used to do back then, but in a more advanced way. So, it doesn't matter if you aim high as long as you are nearing how you imagined yourself.

MS Paint¹ — A Microsoft tool that allows you to draw.

algorithm² — A finite sequence of mathematically rigorous instructions, typically used to solve a class of specific problems or to perform a computation.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algorithm>

Brainf*ck³ — An esoteric programming language created in 1993 by Swiss student Urban Müller. Designed to be extremely minimalistic, the language consists of only eight simple commands, a data pointer, and an instruction pointer.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brainfuck>

It is not “Fixing yourself”. You don’t have to oppress your ego. You don’t have to change anything but open a wider view. Ego is not your enemy. When you have an ego, that means you trust yourself in many aspects. You recognize your ability, strength, and quality; you know who you are. Embrace things that are beyond your sensation or acknowledgement, as nobody is born to understand everything around us; be less skeptical.

At the end of the day, put improvement as your top priority. Not forcefully, but follow your heart. When you don’t feel like being organized, then go pick random topics and start nourishing your thinking. When I was engaged in an activity like developing a website I like or expanding my ideas, I could spend hours fully focused on it. Make sure ego can’t stop you, don’t fall into an illusion that improving and learning is a luxurious experience. Instead, it could be done at any second, just like right now.

Chapter 10 —

A Book I Read—Anything You Want: 40 Lessons for a New Kind of Entrepreneur

The founder of **CD Baby**¹, Derek Sivers, wrote a book about the journey of how he became successful. I bought this book on **eBay**², and it was worth it. Derek is a man who would rather do everything by himself rather than outsourcing it to people unless it's necessary. It was brilliant. Not only does it demonstrate his ability, but it is also the trait of a businessman. I agree with what he wrote in the book, although it might be a little bit too old for modern-day business; the core is still there.

CD Baby¹ — A platform to distribute music for independent artists for a low, one-time fee.
<https://cdbaby.com/>

eBay² — An e-commerce platform that allows you to sell or buy things.
<https://www.ebay.com/>

The part where he explained the idea must match with action left me a strong impression. (The chapter: Ideas are just a multiplier of execution) Indeed, it is hilarious to see people being so protective of ideas. Things from your mouth are unlimited, but to act, it will be another story. You can say you aim to build a multi-billion-dollar business by selling online courses, but we all know it wouldn't be that easy. Look at the **unicorns**¹. If you talk about building a network of cars where you could transfer smoothly in the past, people wouldn't believe you, but it worked. Building a social network was crazy, but it is now common. The founders had crazy ideas, but imagine if they didn't code or do anything about it, some people would replace them; it is just a matter of time. However, most of the time, people think their ideas are brilliant, but they are just like pink sheet stocks. I appreciate how Derek vividly explained the link between ideas and execution with numbers. A good idea valued at 10 units, combined with good execution worth \$100,000, can then generate \$100,000 multiplied by 10, which equals \$1,000,000. Excellent, though it is only an image, not a real profit.

I also love how he emphasizes that being small isn't a big deal. Many developers aim to get thousands, if not millions, of users. It is tough, and even if you provide free services to farm users, it has no practical use. I created an **auto blog**² before, and it has thousands of posts; it was enormous, and there were readers. However, I couldn't convert them into something useful. The idea is that even if your product or brand is small, when you get a couple of clients, it is useful than getting 1,000 users on a random app you made. I have approximately 800 users across all the web apps I developed. Compared to the few clients I have, they are relatively more tangible as they are real connections instead of random strangers online. Being small with actual connections is awesome; you learn, experience, and talk. Talking to like-minded people is amazing.

unicorns¹ — A startup company valued at over US\$1 billion, which is privately owned and not listed on a share market.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unicorn_\(finance\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unicorn_(finance))

auto blog² — A blog connected to an automatic posting system with third-party feeds.

In the book, he mentioned you don't have to listen to all of the voices. That is true. When I developed my web applications, there were a lot of suggestions and feedback; some of them were impractical, and some of them were reasonable. The problem is, you wouldn't have time to develop all the things they want, not to mention I work alone most of the time. It feels bad not to listen to what your users said because you are the one who developed a web app for them, and you are supposed to solve their problems. My friend, who developed with me, was anxious about not fulfilling their needs. He rushed into development and eventually made a mess. The lesson here is to be steady instead of rash. You don't have to satisfy every single user. It would be better if your product were stable instead of being updated a hundred times per month to the point that your old users don't recognize it anymore.

Also, he would love to keep his humor while facing customers. Derek mentioned in the book, whenever he sends an email to his customers, he would add jokes and nice humor in it. I like the idea, as I would love to receive an email that has a personal touch in it. Users and customers should not be seen only as a number, a sale, or a tool. They are all real. It is like getting in touch with another individual who exists. Especially when AI nowadays is more advanced, people are starting to forget how to talk to people. Nonetheless, I saw an opportunity. If you can talk normally to your clients, it might be an advantage.

He got mocked by Apple, yet doing what he likes. When you get mocked by someone, especially someone you admire, it sucks. However, when you have a will of steel and remain unbeaten in that situation, you are superior. It is hard to move on without support; you don't know are you're doing the correct thing. If someone living in your dream, and tell you what you are doing is wrong, imagine how discouraging that would be. But that's business. You never let someone make you down. In the most highly competitive field, you never stop being better.

Surprisingly, he did not rely on any funding. I tried getting some attention and funding through Y Combinator or platforms for Gen Zers because I know, building something without money is dreadful. All the platforms I built are mostly relying on my Raspberry Pi 5, and it can't be the case forever. I need money for marketing, recruiting, online plans, better equipment, etc. Yet, I am uncertain about whether I can achieve the same height as the others. One of my friends said, "*You can find everything for free on the internet, you don't have to pay to start a business now.*", but one of my friends said, "*You must have cash to start a business.*". After reading the book, I understand that starting up something doesn't necessarily require cash, but you need money to pay fees, or you have to leave a portion of that to tackle unexpected expenses. Ultimately, you have to be realistic and understand that you are not a magician; you can't make money out of nothing, but you can build a business without money, with the right strategy. The story of CD Baby inspired me, and I knew Derek knew nothing about programming. I started to learn earlier than him, with all the resources online now, I might be on the right track.

As I mentioned, focusing on small things matters. Imagine the mathematical bridge was built with calculation errors; it wouldn't be a thing. Small things are beneficial to your business, and ignoring them would be fatal. One of the reasons why huge corporations survive is that they focus on details. To compete with Coca-Cola, Pepsi must focus on teenage elements as teenagers are its target audience. They have to study teenage behaviors and what distinguishes between old-school and new-fashioned. One wrong advertisement could cause a backfire. Details matter.

This book helped me move forward. I remember the lessons in there. Mostly, every entrepreneur starts with nothing. Muck Zuckerberg was a nobody before he developed Facebook. I am currently at my developing stage, and I don't know whether what I did benefits me. As this book gave me a proper roadmap of someone successful, it gave me some hope. Hopefully, I can get anything I want.

Chapter 11 —

Gig Economy, Platform Capitalism, and Data

I mentioned the gig economy in Chapter 1 with factors that shaped the current market. It was fostered after platforms were developed. They are backed by data, the new oil of this century. Google without data is just like a phone without a battery; it's useless. Remember the term “**Big Data**¹”? The term is less seen after the rise of AI. However, it also relies on large and high-quality **datasets**² for training, but the **architectures**³ reduce the need for perfectly structured data. So, we need data, but what is data, and why is it useful?

Data analysis exists, and with a great volume of data, you can anticipate what is coming. It doesn't necessarily have to be training computers. There is a simple example, think of the difference between knowing the prices of a specific item, like the same pen across the street. Without data, you don't know which shop sells the cheapest pen. With data and comparison, you can quickly get the best deal and predict how the price will go by getting the price differences. The process of analyzing, comparing data, and predicting the future is called data analysis.

Big Data¹ — Large datasets or digital information that are too highly complicated require a machine to process them into valuable and practical data. It can be both organized and unorganized.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_data

datasets² — Sets of digital information.

architectures³ — Structural frameworks that define artificial intelligence to learn, process, and make decisions. Comprises algorithms, computational models, and hardware configurations.

When it comes to your business, data is essential. For example, when you are running a restaurant, the preferences of your customers, sales during peak time, and the flow of customers would be the ones you extract. It can then be proceeded, concluding whether to subtract some items from the menu, or adjust the opening and closing time. Extending that to compete with the others, without data from your competitors, you wouldn't know whether your pricing is too high or too low. When platforms rose, the game changed.

In delivery applications, the items the restaurant sells are all visible to everyone. That means not only can customers view the food they sell, but also all the restaurants. Which means it is relatively easy to snipe down a business with data. Similar to Fiverr, when all the details about freelancers are listed on the platform, everyone is replaceable if they are alike. Besides, this trend is less likely to be gone as websites and platforms are the most convenient source to gain and gather information, making businesses that don't utilize data a lot less competitive.

Uber, Amazon, Airbnb, YouTube, Spotify, etc, they succeed because of what is inside their platforms. A platform shares data with users while having algorithms and code to connect them. An online shop is also a platform. If you are running an online shop, you are also connecting your visitors with the information you have about your store, which is also data sharing. Not to mention, you can generate a lot more data with it, like user retention, carts, and payment method preference. All of the platforms have their data; imagine how big it would be. With **globalization**¹, the transfer of information became significant. That was why more platforms were developed. It is a part of our daily lives as we now can't live without them, just like modern businesses can't live without data.

globalization¹ — The process of increasing integration and communications among economies, markets, societies, and cultures of different countries worldwide. Gradually forming a structural reliance on each other.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globalization>

Not using data is like not knowing what AI is in 2025. Using data is more like an approach to polish your company. There are lots of tools to gather data. The most common one is Google Analytics if your business is web-based. You could also use Google Forms to create surveys to gather data. If you feel like an old-fashioned person, use a paper survey. As you can see, data is not a new term, but it has always been there since the market was born. It was gradually digitalized in the recent century.

We often hear the sentence “Growth before profit.”. The reason for it for most of the tech companies is to collect enough data, big enough, so they can dominate the market. Amazon was unprofitable from 1994 to 2003. That is almost 10 straight years before it became huge. Once they have enough data, a solid infrastructure, and a wide range of users from many countries, they thrive like never before. Therefore, you can see, sometimes the importance of data is bigger than money.

After the **Dot-com bubble**¹ in the late 1990s, people are skeptical about tech companies. **Fundraising**² started to die, but we can see it has been revived. In recent years, start-ups, especially tech start-ups, have become popular. However, this time is a bit different. Companies now have a solid base; they won’t easily collapse. We can even see some companies that thrived after the bubble. That means even in the worst scenario, the entire market wouldn’t be gone; platform capitalism won’t die. This might be a good sign because, as digital platforms are still going to exist, that means business as usual.

Dot-com bubble¹ — The dot-com bubble (or dot-com boom) was a stock market bubble that ballooned during the late 1990s and peaked on Friday, March 10, 2000. This period of market growth coincided with the widespread adoption of the World Wide Web and the Internet, resulting in a dispensation of available venture capital and the rapid growth of valuations in new dot-com startups. Between 1995 and its peak in March 2000, investments in the NASDAQ composite stock market index rose by 80%, only to fall 78% from its peak by October 2002, giving up all its gains during the bubble.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dot-com_bubble

Fundraising² — Raising funds for start-ups or companies.

Also, people fear companies stealing data and are often reluctant to share data. I extract data from my websites. The handiest information would be emails, so I can send promotional materials whenever there is an update from my web apps. I know the concern is about how the websites or applications will monitor the users. Nevertheless, we need data to survive. Imagine you have to repeat what you like to Alexa every day without it recording them. Imagine all the websites are listed in the search engines without an order. The true focus should be on how to focus on the balance, giving the data the companies want without them spying on you in the bathroom.

Finally, how would platform capitalism affect us? It brings efficiency and tragedies. It is there so that you can now search for cat videos easily, order food online without leaving your house, and get a smooth transportation experience. Everything is a double-edged sword. It also gives workers poor working conditions, over-extraction of data, and makes us over-reliant on digital platforms or devices. Now, we can't live without phones. Nonetheless, it is interesting to see how much we have advanced. We can't make something perfect, in theory. All I hope is that our work won't be torn into pieces while solving the problems we currently have, step by step.

Chapter 12 —

The Digital World

I got access to the internet when I was 9. I had a decent PC, and I was fascinated by how big the internet is. Content was everywhere on YouTube, Instagram, and websites. That was when I entered a new world: The Digital World. It is a world where people can send messages anonymously, introduce themselves online, and change how people think. There were PewDiePie making gaming videos, Ben Phillips making prank videos, and Dude Perfect making trick shot videos. It was such a great time. My childhood was filled with entertainment.

The digital world changed me. The first ever skill I learned from the internet was video editing, as after watching so many enjoyable videos online, I decided to make some myself as well, for fun, and might as well earn some fast cash. Additionally, because of the internet, I acquired decent English. I live in a fully Chinese environment, and my school didn't teach me anything efficiently, so I had no choice but to move online. I didn't intentionally learn English, but just talked and chatted more. Whenever you spit out sentences with grammatical mistakes, people on the internet usually overreact, so that contributes.

There is an accurate metaphor in a book. The newer generations are like babies who were sent to Mars; they are isolated from our planet Earth. It is an interesting metaphor that implies we were born with electronic devices, so typically, we are born with the ability to click on our phones or type in our computers. This has never happened before. In the previous thousands of years, you won't see anything as similar as that. It also gave us speed in handling work like never before.

My time spent on the computer was insane. When I didn't have to go to school, I usually spent around 10 ~ 15 hours per day on it; typically from 9 am to 9 pm. But that was the only place for me and us. It is a sad truth that if we don't have the internet with exceptional speed in transferring information and data, we would fall behind by a century, by theory. Imagine people still have to go in person or send letters every time they want to communicate. If that is necessary, then calculating the time they spend on walking and waiting for the letter to be delivered, adding up the misinformation, the world would become slow. In modern day, you would complain even if the internet is slower by 0.5 seconds. Imagine how insufferable that would be if we dismissed the use of the internet.

In modern days, the internet has become essential to businesses. Some websites are crazier than One Times Square in NYC. When you enter some online tools, like converting MP4 to MP3, usually there are a lot of advertisements. By knowing there is such a great demand, there must be a reason. Some of the ads are from **Google Ads**¹. Often, if you own a business, one of the platforms you rely on is the same one. To understand advertising in digital marketing, you must understand where your money goes. Look at those websites with advertisements. If you spend money on Google Ads, you must pay for every impression and click. If you feel like you will click on those ads, then that means it is good for you to advertise like that.

Google Ads¹ — A platform that allows you to place advertisements across Google-verified websites or in its search engine.

Advertisements are everywhere, but the rise of ad blockers makes us have to think of a different way to promote our products. That is a game-changer for marketing because it is harder to just pay and get results nowadays. The digital world changes every few years; in few years ago, we didn't even know AI existed for most of us. When I first tried ChatGPT in 2022, it was magical. However, I thought it would be just an ordinary digital tool, and never expected the market would grow on such a large scale; it has only been 3 years. But we are still stuck in digital marketing in an old way. Digital marketing has potential, given that the advertising environment has changed a lot, yet businesses are still relying on traditional ad placement methods. We must think of a way to advertise in a new way. I thought of creating an algorithm that extracts readers' data, like reading time, and weights every paragraph with a score. Then, a system automatically inserts an ad seamlessly in the highest weighted paragraph. Of course, there would be ethical concerns. Any method is not perfect yet, making the potential big.

The only problem is how you bear with the people on the internet while achieving what you want. Now, you can connect with whoever you want online. Being mentally unbreakable is important. The same goes for business, as your competitors won't be happy about you being successful. What makes us anxious, especially for the younger generations, is that the internet has exposed how nauseating people can be. When that perspective is deeply rooted in your mind, when you see people again in public, you will always isolate yourself from them. It is bad because I mentioned a lot of times in previous chapters, speaking confidently is a very important part of doing business with others. Therefore, we must strike a balance between soaking into the digital world and being back in reality.

It is hard to imagine me without the internet. I acquired almost everything from the internet. Imagine there were no tutorials backing your studies anymore; that was why tutor centers thrived. I love the internet, although there are a lot of unreasonable individuals there. Nonetheless, we should beware of what the internet makes us into. It is gradually getting into our **reward system**¹. People mentioned that the newer generations are weaker. It is not because we were born in that way, but we were raised in a system with great rewards in our childhood. Phones, tablets, and computers are everywhere. But they are just too useful to gain connections, learn, or even build a start-up; we need the internet.

reward system¹ — A group of neural structures responsible for incentive salience (i.e., "wanting"; desire or craving for a reward and motivation), associative learning (primarily positive reinforcement and classical conditioning), and positively-valenced emotions, particularly ones involving pleasure as a core component (e.g., joy, euphoria, and ecstasy).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reward_system

Chapter 13 —

The Path: Where Should We Go

"The purpose of life should be to aim, act, and achieve something in a cycle with events you can participate in or feel. If this system is interrupted, then it makes life harder to bear. Eventually, it fosters an asshole or someone easy to manipulate."—Ricky Chan.

The only correct path is the one you are walking on. Whether you are a tech-driven innovator, painter, spokesperson, writer, or engineer, we are following ourselves. If you want to become a freelancer, hop on **UpWork**¹, Fiverr, or simply go out and have conversations, and introduce what you have. Back then, when I worked on Fiverr, I had no idea what to add to my profile or what gigs I should create. I ended up with the most random things I could put in. Graphic design and web development; I didn't know how to develop websites when I was 13. Everyone should have experienced a period where they always ask themselves what to do. If you have the answer as early as possible, that would be good. But it is overall not a competition. So, you can take your time.

UpWork¹ — A platform that connects freelancers and recruiters.
<https://www.upwork.com/>

I do before I learn. When I was finding random freelance work on a forum, if I knew a job required something I didn't know, yet I could learn, I would apply to it. Once, I applied for a 3D modeling work before I knew how to use **Blender**¹. Eventually, I did more than what my client required, and we established a long-term collaboration. The worst scenario is you don't have the ability; it is not like the world is ending. If the mistake you made is less fatal, people wouldn't care, or they won't notice it, because if the one who hired you doesn't know what you are doing, you won't expect the problem you caused to be found. Unless you did something stupid. Mistakes are ok, we make them, just don't make them regularly.

As long as you act, you gain something; it is only a matter of how big the return you are getting. Once you acknowledge that what you did won't necessarily earn as much as you expected, then you feel better. Those who founded huge organizations, institutions, or companies put their bet on something that might not work. If you are struggling to walk on a path that might, at the end, direct you to a dead end, it is not there; the dead end never exists. Your life is not in one direction; you could always bounce back, even if you have experienced something tragic.

Don't be afraid of doing what you are not familiar with. Many people intend not to do something they don't know how to do. I know it is to prevent awkward moments like when you get the job, but you don't know what to do. I have been there. I accepted a freelance job that was about a full-scale game development in exchange for a percentage commission when I was a kid. I was the only one in the development team, and I didn't get paid at all. Errors were everywhere. Eventually, I quit the development. It is not shameful because you then know what you can't do, and everyone has a limit. It is not like I can build a supercomputer within a day.

Blender¹ — A free and open-source 3D creation software.

<https://www.blender.org/>

As long as you learn fast. That is not a problem because usually the market is quite slow due to a lot of procedures. When you study economics, sometimes you see the immediate effect that an action causes on the market. Or, you see people flooding into your websites, you feel like you have to take action to sustain it. But the market is still relatively slow. When you kick-start a website, it usually takes 3 ~ 5 months for the algorithm to recognize it; when you want to build a brand, it also usually takes a couple of months to gain recognition. Some people on social media emphasize the speed of development. But this has to be in control because you wouldn't want to burst developing something and eventually lead to absolute chaos. Try fitting into the "waiting time" in constructing or developing something.

You must actively think differently. I mentioned the market is dynamic, which means your thinking has to be dynamic as well. Traditional marketing is less effective now compared to digital marketing. So, if you still use the way people advertised in the past, you would be at a huge disadvantage. This can be applied to many aspects, no matter whether it is learning, training, or solving questions. Being critical and logical is great for thinking differently and gaining the advantage as you discover something people didn't notice. People are breaking world records, and some factors have caused it: better equipment, smarter training methods, or a tighter information gap. We are all moving towards better.

We all dreamt of changing the world, and we are approaching that goal.

Digitalization¹ has changed the world in a short period. But it is not from the endeavor of a single person. It was us, and it is still going to be us. The companies are fighting against each other, and the competition between individual developers is also strong. We are all finding a way to beat the others, while people can easily catch up. When you invent something unique and the market likes it, then expect thousands of replicas. Notably, competition would never end. So, we always have a path to step on or engage in.

Digitalization¹ — The adoption of digital tools or online resources in daily life practice or operations.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digitalization>

You are not miserable at all. Even if you feel like down in a particular moment, that doesn't mean you are on the wrong track. Analyze what you did in the past, think ahead about what you can contribute in the future, and the pathway is clear. Your ability will eventually match what you can do and how big your achievement is. It is only dangerous when you don't do or learn anything, as falling behind means you will eventually be squeezed out of the whole society. It is the nature.

Chapter 14 —

What Shaped us Gen Zers

We are bold, innovative, and fast thinkers. We are born with electronic devices. The older generations assumed we as arrogant dreamers and we would never succeed. How they look at us is like looking at 3-year-old children playing with blocks. We were mocked, and now, as a Gen Z who was born in 2007, I am almost 18. A new generation will now slowly get into the market. Imagine years or decades later, Gen Zers will dominate the market. Imagine the generation that was labeled as immature joins the market and starts changing the rules.

Through social media, great talents are demonstrating their projects. Changing the image of the generation that gives up on anything. Individuals can't represent our whole generation. We have people who strive to do impeccable work and contribute to the market with their best effort. Some of them are documenting their journey. There are people like me, building projects and hoping for the best. Our hope isn't crushed by anyone; we are still trying. I saw people engaging in **Hackathons**¹ and starting to be creative about their creations, like a robot built with used Coca-Cola cans; they don't have to be perfect yet as a prototype, but will soon be polished as a real product. I love their vibe because what is better than building something with people who think like you?

Hackathons¹ — A hackathon (also known as a hack day, hackfest, datathon, or codefest; a portmanteau of hacking and marathon) is an event where people engage in rapid and collaborative engineering over a relatively short period, such as 24 or 48 hours.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hackathon>

As we are already immersed in the digital world, we are fluent in multiple skills. For example, typing fast, knowing where the interface buttons are, and searching for information online. These practical skills are useful as nuts and bolts. I have a typing speed of around 120 **WPM**¹. That would be faster than writing. Besides, you can catch up on how to use particular online tools quickly if you have used similar ones. When you feel dizzy searching for something online and whine about how the information is not organized, we can find the essential ones easily. The beauty of our generation is the speed of thinking and acting; It is trained online. I had an Australian friend who would rush me to do anything for him, like building a logo or making graphics. It was stressful when I was a kid, but he shaped me good. I like the way I am more efficient than I was.

However, since we are generally young, there is still a lot to explore. The older generations are partially right when they mentioned we are not yet mature. We are still doing stupid things, and without guidance from the mature ones, we would eventually destroy ourselves. The wisdom of older generations is impressive because they have gone through decades. Without them, it would be like building a modern plane without the Wright brothers. They have built a firm foundation for us to expand what we have learned. It is the platform they built for us to carry on their effort.

What shapes a generation is how the older generations educate us. However, the situation is a bit different because the internet exists. Now we can receive information online, and we normally learn more than our parents, teachers, or peers have taught us. Sometimes we can use tutorials or online resources on the internet instead of relying on teachers. The source might contain misinformation, but neither are teachers fully correct.

WPM¹ — Words Per Minute. Indicating the typing speed.

Although being bold, this generation is often filled with toxicity. Social media made us more paranoid. When you enter online forums or platforms, there will always be arguments and idiotic conversations. Anonymity gives everyone a fair chance to say whatever they want and go insane. When you see people going crazy online, normally, they would be looking just like us in real life. The internet is slowly narrowing what a person can think through an algorithm, and by recommending what that person believes, and it will become extreme. Being one of the generations that fused with electronic devices like soul-bonded, we have to be critical.

We are awesome. Gen Zers can lead the market soon. It is one of the interesting phenomena in the market because it indicates how the market is going. As AI is booming right now, I believe the market would tend to go from highly structured to creative and flexible. Now the Gen Zers are focusing on building and developing using the help of the internet, who knows what else they can do. People's perspective on Gen Z is highly generalized. Nobody went in-depth on who we are and what we are trying to do. Every mind is highly complicated, and with us pursuing something, the contradictions, the dedication, and the breakthrough shape not only a generation, but everything.

It is a transition of generations. We should appreciate what the ancestors and older generations did to secure our safety and comfort zone. It is not to beat any generations but rather to stay collaborative and achieve what hasn't been done together with perseverance. A year can change a lot of things. It is unimaginable what we will be in the next year, or even in a decade. Perhaps something we thought impossible will be achieved by someone, or you. It is not predictable, but cool to think. I had never joined any Hackathons. I dreamt of getting into one because they are inventing something new at the fastest possible speed. It is not like the old days when you focused on a final exam that decides your fate. I was in a highly academically competitive environment, and I hope it gets more reasonable, removing the old flaws in education.

It is not putting all the hope into Gen Zers and worshipping them. It is to build trust and recognition through everything we do. We are not born better than any other generation; we are still human. But the way we think is different. People who stand strong on their life-views see us as the absurd tracers of unrealistic dreams. Nevertheless, that sounds great. We don't want strings attached to us for decades, doing what we don't like. Our idea is to do what we love and pursue it as our life.

Chapter 15 —

Ending: But it's not Ended Yet

Being almost 18 isn't the end. Sometimes I was anxious about what would happen in the future, but I often tend to focus on what is happening now. It is nonsensical to overthink the future right now because it depends on what you have built recently. Miracle won't appear; you get what you deserve. What you do will never be enough. However, it feels good when you can achieve something at a young age. When I was in a language school in the United Kingdom at 16, I was the youngest in the class. When the people heard about my creations, they were all impressed by the things I did at such a young age. I liked the feeling. Nonetheless, our age won't be frozen, so I shall build more impressive things.

I mentioned I love to learn in Chapter 0. My process in learning is not limited to memorizing something like others do; I love learning the logic. Imagine spitting random nonsense that is not inherently connected. Even when you are in an interview, the interviewers would prefer you not memorize anything but show them a real-time reaction to what they have provided. I remember writing a lot of English poems and getting in-depth philosophy and history while studying Chinese. They might be meaningless at that, when I was having my exams, but going in-depth learning something is different from memorizing and forgetting. For me, it is better.

“The beauty of science and language fosters a shame for me, whose synapse can be stimulated by the intangible yet cannot reach it.”— Ricky Chan.

The status quo is concerning. I don't know whether the academic path I chose is correct. Perhaps I will end up doing what I don't like again for years; that's the worst. The best would be if all the people I met were similar to me, but I don't expect that in the institution I am getting it. I would probably still be craving the path I want while trying to be more realistic. I don't hate my life, but it feels off, not on the right track.

As I said, we still have a long journey to go. I am not even 18 yet when I am writing this book. Perhaps there would be more opportunities for me in the future. My only concern is that what I am doing can be replaced by people. If you own some irreplaceable skills, you will be invaluable and irreplaceable. However, in my case, web development can be learned by anyone. Although I have experience in business, marketing, etc, I don't think they are too favorable. Usually, I am afraid of people catching up to me easily because that's when I lose my advantage. As time goes by, I can feel my importance is fading as well. Yet, I haven't caught any opportunities.

It is hard to construct this book because I don't have a lot of real-life experience, rather than what I learned from the internet. I want to go to NYC, California, etc, cities or places that are bigger, more suitable for entrepreneurs. I want to get in touch with Silicon Valley. But those are empty-headed dreams right now because I am nothing to people. The only approach is to stay determined and hope that one day, an opportunity will be given to me. Of course, I also have to seek opportunities if there are any; that was why I sent countless emails to universities. I got some replies, but they are honestly useless.

I didn't have a lot of expectations because whenever people expected me to do better, I failed them. But that doesn't mean I shouldn't aim higher, though I might fall harder. I truly believe that no matter how many times I fall, I can always bounce back like ever before. I didn't gain a lot of trust from the others because, usually, having certificates or recognition speaks louder than your actual ability; this is reasonable but harsh. Imagine if a stranger tells you that he can earn you money without showing something that can verify his ability, it often leaves us doubtful until we see some results. I am in a gap between wanting to demonstrate my ability and without having any recognition or certification; it is awful.

It was hard to imagine earning money like I am doing right now. In the past, I would be excited to earn 5 bucks from Fiverr; it was there in my PayPal balance, and it was thrilling watching it. It was such a treasurable moment. However, as you grow, you gain ambition and acknowledge the true importance of money. You start having to be reliable. Then, you have to do more to secure your life. Earning small money was not as stimulating as before, but I am still happy with it.

Sometimes I would think, what if the projects I made don't exist? GoDotWebs, DotWebsHosting, Jumpmaster... what if they are gone? How could people tell my ability? They are like the last trump card I have. I remember a quote, "*It's only after we've lost everything that we're free to do anything.*", in the movie Fight Club. Overconcerning recognition has been a part of my childhood and teenage life. It is common, as how else do you know you are doing great? But it is not down to earth, I just wanted an illusion backing my skills and ability. I believe the right way to handle this is to embrace the spirit of "*You do you.*".

I heard my friend saying that those professors at universities don't have practical business experience, as some of them are theory-focused. I was partially unconvinced because there are programs in universities that help you gain experience via collaborating with businesses. Even so, knowing that there might be a chance, even knowledgeable people would lack real-life practice, I have confidence in writing this book. Might as well have a chance for me to showcase my work.

At the end of the day, I believe in myself, the *extraordinary* one. Life won't go as you expected, and that is the beauty of it. Born small, but let's accomplish beyond possible.

Chapter AS —

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The Anxious Generation, Jonathan Haidt

A book of a maniacal dreamer and doer

Being 18 is a milestone for most people; it implies maturity and a different aspect of life. The teenage period is magical, yet it fades. This book documents the experience of a 17-year-old kid who dreamt of being someone remarkable.

Conducting essential lessons that must be learned by a business owner or start-up founder. As a Gen Zer himself, his understanding of the market is worth examining, as the market is shifting to younger, aspiring entrepreneurs.

“Be extraordinary.”—Ricky Chan