

Why You (or anyone) Should NOT Start a Business

TNU

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A few years ago, like many of us, I had often dreamt of starting up a small business I can call my own. Like many, I never liked the idea of working for someone else. The fruits of my labor never fully benefited me nor the people I cared the most. So I thought it might be better for me to start considering setting my own shop.

Business Startup Plan

Being my own boss sounded like a lifestyle fit for me.

If you look up on “how to start a business,” most of the framework you’ll end up finding goes something like this:

1. Determine the hobbies you enjoy. You will be asked to simply make a list of things you like doing.
2. Dive deeper into a hobby. You will be asked to pick one out of the top three, and learn more of it. If you’re into running, you’ll need to know what kind of footwear is best for each type of foot shape, the best hydration methods, the best warm-up exercises, etc. If it gets boring, don’t worry, just pick another hobby to dive into.
3. Find “pain points” in the hobby. Going again with running as an example, you might find that it’s difficult to find a customized pair of rubber shoes for your specific foot shape.
4. Look for solution/s for each or all of the pain points in the hobby. Supposedly, this is where you come in. You might be inclined to ask shoe manufacturers if they can team up with you to build upon your solution on providing the custom sneakers.
5. Sell the solution, as a service or product. You’ll be asked to look for a willing victim, “target customer” as they are called, and make the pitch.

It’s a seemingly simple framework, easily digestible for a budding entrepreneur. Since you’re starting with your hobbies, the entry barrier is almost nil, unless you’re the type with literally nothing going on in your life.

However, soon it came to me that to run a business from the ground up, an entrepreneur must dedicate their whole being into making it stable as soon as possible. This could mean working upwards of 50 hours per week, which is definitely more than what I can allot for something, or anything really, without losing focus.

Growth mindset is not sustainable

Business analysts, or whatever they are called these days, tend to be optimistic in their projections. It’s always growth, increase in sales, boost in revenue year-on-year. I doubt that they account for the finite resources in their mathematical models. Or maybe they do—they just don’t care.

All they care about is making their projections come to fruition. It becomes the benchmark to chase. And when every business-owner goes about chasing loftier and loftier Numbers, the effect can be damaging, although subtle at first.

Bills must be paid. Necessities must be bought. This is our current reality under capitalism. Again it’s worth noting that it’s naive to disregard this reality, for the sake of revolution. Of course, the Revolution is worth pursuing; the current systems are worth abolishing. But in order to sustain the ourselves, to keep fighting the long fight, we can grind against the gears

Generating jobs isn’t exactly ethical

What a business essentially does is, take the resources from the community that are by the way already available to them in some form; funnel these through the operations; slap a nice branding; and sell it back to the community. Along the way, the business employs the labor of the community, which they have to... thank for?

Get this: workers have to thank their employers for giving them barely living wages in exchange of toiling under dreadful conditions.

And on those times that the workers realize that they actually have nothing to thank for—i.e. when they unionize—they are met with violence.

On the other hand, white collar jobs, while exactly not dreadful, isn't exactly pleasurable either, when all you do is sit in front of a computer, looking busy playing with whatever spreadsheet. Modern offices also use up a lot of energy to run a lot of equipment to sustain the operations: air conditioning units, lighting, and computers and data centers among others.

Solving a problem doesn't need another startup

Yes, that's a rub against your current favorite K-drama.

We suffer from different problems of varying magnitude. And we will continue to do so as we discover yet another set of problems that we don't know that we don't know.

This doesn't mean to scheme another money-making opportunity for each problem.

I'm certain that we don't need another apartment complex and condominiums if we're not going to give it to the homeless. We don't need another mall, another grocery store, if we're not giving essential items to those who need them the most. We don't need these structures if we're desecrating the land on which they will be erected; and if we're displacing the people who have been living there in peace.

We don't need another diner if we're not going to feed the hungry.

We don't need another plant seller if it means poaching endangered species from faraway land to import them into our living rooms.

We don't need another private school if we're going to brainwash the next batch of entrepreneurs into continuing the capitalist legacy. We don't need them if they're not going to teach the children on how to truly care for people and for the environment.

Ask yourself if we need another manufacturing plant or factory that enables capitalists from stealing from local resources, and then come back to me with a 200-word write-up that I might append in this post (who knows).

Besides, you can't *just* start a business

Majority of businesses fail. That's the truth. The odds, by far, are that you will *lose* whatever you put into it, and end up in a worse place than when you started.

Even if it were somehow true that anyone could start a business and expect it to be successful, there would still have to be people who couldn't start a business, and instead had to be exploited by others, and whom you would be exploiting. Otherwise, the whole world, would consist of owners, and nobody would do any actual labor.

You might argue that "it's worth the risk." But just taking a risk doesn't mean that you deserve something for it, especially when that risk only exists because private property forms the basis of our economic activity. If all owners really do is assume the risk of ownership created by the existence of their class, why should that entitle them to the lion's share of their worker's efforts? Why even have an *owning class* at all?

If your goal is prosperity for all, which should be the goal of every society, then this one is a dead end. At best, it's a risky gamble for a privileged population.

What then?

Go back to the business startup plan mentioned above. What can you do to improve the framework so it doesn't need the exploitation of people and resources?

Perhaps you can encourage others to join you in your hobbies. Perhaps you can join them in theirs. The point is to form a community that shares something you all enjoy for the sake of enjoying it. To share a bond with people

partaking in similar interests is human nature that could transcend any profit motive. This way, you also have a chance to teach others that they might not already know, and learn from them as well.

When knowledge is made practical in this manner, the community is empowered to contribute to some other aspects in their lives. The “product” of this cooperation becomes beneficial to as many people as possible, and not something that need not be sold.

Where to get resources?

Let’s be real, though, for a moment: In order to sustain a mutual-aid-based startup or coop, some sort of funding must be in place. We can’t just shrug off the need for resources, especially while we are still under capitalism. Below are just a few suggestions.

1. **Donations.** Whether recurring or one-time, this is probably the best way to ask for daily bread from people. Services like Liberapay, Open Collective, and maybe, just maybe, Patreon.
2. **Affiliate and referral links,** by which I mean, linking to other similar groups with projects you’d like to support. This is very much different from those of megacorps like Amazon, in that we are trying to achieve a federation of collectives.
3. **Wishlists.** If your mutual-aid startup (can we call it that?) already has a list of items, materials, and/or tools that you need for the operation, might as well ask for those directly. Many people would be inclined to donate their junk if it’s another person’s treasure.

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