

# # Why it might be hard

Trust in our platform is essential to building for the long term. It's core to our relationship with entrepreneurs, and it's fundamental to the success of our ecosystem.

From our earliest days, we've been deliberate in building a platform where merchants of all beliefs, backgrounds, and perspectives are included and have the opportunity to start and build a business. We do this because we believe that a world where entrepreneurship is easy and common is better than a world where it is not. By making our platform open to everyone, we accept that there will be a wide mix of merchants, some who we celebrate and amplify, and others we may personally disagree with, even passionately. The reality is that we exist within a world of varied perceptions and beliefs, and our collective Shopify view is one slice of that broader spectrum.

We have controls in place to make sure merchants on the platform adhere to the law and our Acceptable Use Policy, and we acknowledge the tension that exists between having an open platform with a mix of merchants, and being a company that proactively supports and endorses politically progressive beliefs and causes. It's a complexity we're prepared to hold in order to enable more of the good that we believe entrepreneurship and commerce ultimately bring.



## Double Click

Stewardship of a platform means that we have to make room for differing opinions and stay objective when making decisions. With 99% of stores, this isn't hard; however, some products and content come very close to the line and become lightning rods for discussion and debate. Those debates become more contentious when the environment is charged with strong opinions and deeply felt emotions.

While we have to make decisions objectively about who can use our platform, we can also be vocal in supporting specific causes and positions that align with what we value as a collective Shopify community. These beliefs and behaviors are reflected in our relationships with one another, in the high care we build into everything we ship, and in the environment we're working to build together—an environment where everyone feels welcome.

Our ideological position is evident even as we create space for merchants and employees whose perspectives may be different from what Shopify promotes. For example, Shopify is pro-entrepreneurship (somewhat capitalist), pro-immigration (somewhat liberal), and pro-equality of opportunity (an enlightenment value that speaks to our desire to level the playing field so more entrepreneurs can reach for independence).



## Holding the tension

Real talk: We won't all agree on every decision or position. At the same time, we expect you to commit to Shopify's mission. That includes being able to hold this tension and recognize the deliberate tradeoff we're making to enable more opportunity, more access, and more self-determination, particularly for individuals and groups who've historically been shut out or shut down by prevailing economic systems.

As we grow into new markets, we'll continue to promote the progress we wish to see in the world through the causes we support and the public positions we take. At the same time, we must maintain a trusted platform for all merchants and create a company where all employees feel welcome.

Like any great experiment, Shopify is a work in progress. We will continue to have open, real—sometimes raw—conversations about who we are, what we stand for, and the complexity that comes with this. Ultimately, it's a tradeoff we're prepared to make in service of the greater good we believe we can do in the world.

## # Our world view

As we build Shopify, we continue to learn lessons about commerce, entrepreneurship, and society, and how they interact with one another.

Our objective is to teach the world about the unexpected truths we've uncovered along the way. At every chance, through every narrative, we should share and teach Shopify's version of the world.

Here are some of the principles behind Shopify's worldview, and some great questions about the deep history of commerce:

### **Ordinary people change the world.**

Every extraordinary person started out as an ordinary person. So did each of our merchants. At some point, they realized that the products around them were made by people just like them; people who had opinions on how to do things better, and then did them. The power of their dissatisfaction was the entrepreneurial building block they needed to carve out their corner of the world—but they are no different from you or me.

**To grow entrepreneurship, you have to decrease friction.**

The reason why more people don't become entrepreneurs isn't because of a lack of interest. It's because their environments don't give them superpowers. By reducing emotional, social, legal, political, financial, and technological friction, we can increase entrepreneurship. For more context, read Tobi's piece in [The Economist \(original doc\)](#).

## **Entrepreneurship drives communities forward.**

So many people profit from the success of a single local business. That business has the power to change the town, the family, and the community. Many studies show the power of the "local multiplier effect." Buying locally greatly multiplies the amount of money that stays in local circulation. Plus, small businesses are huge drivers of employment and account for most new jobs created in the US and around the world.

## **Entrepreneurship is universal.**

Every culture in the world has entrepreneurs within it. In an increasingly centralized world, entrepreneurship is the best way to integrate remote, rural communities into the global world of commerce and ensure that they survive. The diversity implied in this may make it hard for some to work for Shopify.

## **Great products come from great craftsmanship.**

Pay respect to the deep level of mastery and practice that goes into honing someone's craft. Real care and craftsmanship is at the core of every good product. Good products tend to be the things you want to buy; the ones you tell people about; the ones you keep for years.

Consumerism is what happens when people don't love their products and need to continually buy more of them as replacements. The kinds of products we celebrate are the ones people purchase and love long-term.

## **# On leadership**

Reproduced here in full, this is an email that Tobi sent to leaders within Shopify in August 2020

Team,

Leadership is tough. Leadership through times of crisis and ambiguity is doubly tough. Leadership through times of multiple compounding global tidal waves can seem impossible. To refer back to my 2020 Summit talk, Shopify is in a new box that we don't understand yet. The world is in a new box that it barely understands yet. We've only mapped out a small corner of this box and have just started exploring the rest of the vast dark patches. It will take some time.

What's more, our team members need us more than ever. The best thing we can do for them is not add to the ambiguity. Shopify hasn't historically been great at setting clear expectations across the organization and I think this is starting to cause an enormous amount of managerial debt that's ballooning out of control.

I can't tell you how to do that in your various departments. But a good start would be to remind everyone that we are a business. More importantly, we are a hugely ambitious one. We are trying to create a world class product that gives superpowers to the merchants that we are obsessed over.

Everything Shopify does is to accomplish this, and everyone at Shopify should be able to describe how their job, through a series of direct or indirect steps, furthers this mission. To help you make this more clear to your team members, here are some pointers about what Shopify is not: Shopify, like any other for-profit company, is not a family. The very idea is preposterous. You are born into a family. You never choose it, and they can't un-family you. It should be massively obvious that Shopify is not a family but I see people, even leaders, casually use terms like "Shopifam" which will cause the members of our teams (especially junior ones that have never worked anywhere else) to get the wrong impression. The dangers of "family thinking" are that it becomes incredibly hard to let poor performers go. Shopify is a team, not a family.

We literally only want the best people in the world. The reason why you joined Shopify is because - I hope - all the other people you met during the interview process were really smart, caring, and committed. This is magic and it creates a virtuous magnetism on talented people because very few people in the world have this in themselves. People who don't should not be part of this team. This magic and magnetism is a product of tight performance management that I expect all of us to get back to. Shopify is also not the government. We cannot solve every societal problem here. We are part of an ecosystem, of economies, of culture, and of actual countries. We also can't take care of all your needs. We will try our best to take care of the ones that ensure you can support our mission. Shopify's worldview is well documented - we believe in

liberal values and equality of opportunity. Sometimes we see opportunities to help nudge these causes forward. We do this because this directly helps our business and our merchants and not because of some moralistic overreach.

We want to build one of the best companies in the world. We obsess about our merchants. We want everyone to have a shot at bettering their lot through entrepreneurship. We want to make and keep Shopify, the product, world class or die trying. Only way to do this is through having incredible people. Some of them we hire on future potential, and we help them but expect them to grow into their potential. Some of them we bring in further down their careers. But we all have to re-qualify for our jobs every year.

[The red-queen race](#) of Shopify's historic 40% or better growth is that everyone has to show up at least 40% better every year to qualify for our current jobs. I expect you to hold yourself and your teams to this standard. Judge this improvement based on having a growth mindset, deepening the craft, taking risks, making better decisions, and doing what it takes to better support our mission and our merchants.

We will always have compassion for team members in truly difficult situations. For example, those who find themselves suddenly becoming primary caregivers or those who are struggling with mental health issues. There are also second chances, especially for those who have been top performers before. Outside of those cases we need to remind everyone that like any other competitive (sports) team, it matters how you show up every day and contribute to the team's success. Beyond straight performance output, everyone that engages in endless Slack trolling, victimhood thinking, us-vs-them divisiveness, and zero sum thinking must be seen for the threat they are: they break teams. Teams survive and thrive on the actions of the collective, and the cohesiveness of the whole. Poor performance and divisiveness cannot be tolerated.

If this sounds at all surprising, this is because we somehow lost something. Shopify has always been like this. I feel that a lot of these core beliefs have been muddled over recent years. So in my capacity as the one person who has witnessed every minute of Shopify's existence, I want to reiterate some of these core principles. Shopify is as successful as it is right now precisely because of the downstream effects of those early ideas. Currently we are successful despite the muddying. This will not work for much longer. Let's get back there.

Despite all the external buzz around Shopify (market cap, biggest company in Canada, ...) we are still really early. We are in the big leagues amongst the biggest and baddest companies in the world. When we succeed in our mission, millions of merchants do better. [Millions of people find employment](#). We have the opportunity to make that tens and even hundreds of millions in the future. I'm here for this potential, and I need you to be here for that too.

- tobi

## # Reflexive AI usage

Reproduced here in full, this is an email that Tobi sent to all Shopifolk in March 2025.

Team,

We are entering a time where more merchants and entrepreneurs could be created than any other in history. We often talk about bringing down the complexity curve to allow more people to choose this as a career. Each step along the entrepreneurial path is rife with decisions requiring skill, judgement and knowledge. Having AI alongside the journey and increasingly doing not just the consultation, but also doing the work for our merchants is a mindblowing step function change here.

Our task here at Shopify is to make our software unquestionably the best canvas on which to develop the best businesses of the future. We do this by keeping everyone cutting edge and bringing all the best tools to bear so our merchants can be more successful than they themselves used to imagine. For that we need to be absolutely ahead.

## **Reflexive AI usage is now a baseline expectation at Shopify.**

Maybe you are already there and find this memo puzzling. In that case you already use AI as a thought partner, deep researcher, critic, tutor, or pair programmer. I use it all the time, but even I feel I'm only scratching the surface. It's the most rapid shift to how work is done that I've seen in my career and I've been pretty clear about my enthusiasm for it: you've heard me talk about AI in weekly videos, podcasts, town halls, and... Summit! Last summer I used agents to create my talk, and presented about that. I did this as a call to action and invitation for everyone to tinker with AI, to dispel any scepticism or confusion that this matters at all levels.

## **What This Means**

- Using AI effectively is now a fundamental expectation of everyone at Shopify. It's a tool of all trades today, and will only grow in importance. I don't think it's feasible to opt out of learning the skill of applying AI in your craft; you are welcome to try, but I want to be honest I cannot see this working out today, and definitely not tomorrow. Stagnation is almost certain, and stagnation is slow-motion failure. If you're not climbing, you're sliding.
- AI must be part of your GSD Prototype phase. The prototype phase of any GSD project should be dominated by AI exploration. Prototypes are meant for learning and creating information. AI dramatically accelerates this process.
- We will add AI usage questions to our performance and peer review questionnaire. Learning to use AI well is an unobvious skill. My sense is that a lot of people give up after writing a prompt and not getting the ideal thing back immediately. Learning to prompt and load context is important, and getting peers to provide feedback on how this is going will be valuable.
- Learning is self directed, but share what you learned. You have access to as much of the cutting edge AI tools as possible. There is chat.shopify.io, which we had for years now. Developers have proxy, Copilot, Cursor, Claude code, all pre-tooled and ready to go. We'll learn and adapt together as a team. We'll be sharing Ws (and Ls!) with each other as we experiment with new AI capabilities. We'll dedicate time to AI integration in our monthly business reviews and product development cycles.
- Before asking for more Headcount and resources, teams must demonstrate why they cannot get what they want done using AI. What would this area look like if autonomous AI agents were already part of the team? This question can lead to really fun discussions and projects.
- Everyone means everyone. This applies to all of us—including me and the executive team.

AI will totally change Shopify, our work, and the rest of our lives. We're all in on this! I couldn't think of a better place to be part of this truly unprecedented change than being here.

Our job is to figure out what entrepreneurship looks like in a world where AI is universally available. And I intend for us to do the best possible job of that, and to do that I need everyone's help. I already laid out a lot of the AI projects in the themes this year- our roadmap is clear, and our product will better match our mission. What we need to succeed is our collective sum total skill and ambition at applying our craft, multiplied by AI, for the benefit of our merchants.

- tobi