

People

Kwon Ko

<https://hyungkwonko.info>

Dec 10, 2025

We are a species built to cooperate. Whether in a lab, a company, or a movement, we depend on others to do work of impact. So I ask myself: what kind of people do I want to work with?

Smart: Being smart does not mean being a genius who will change the world. In collaborative settings, “smart” tends to manifest in two ways: whether the person answers the actual question they were asked, and how well they answer it. The way they approach problems reveals their expertise, logic, and ability to connect ideas. The bar is not brilliance; it is competence applied with clarity.

Hustle: Oftentimes, the direction set by a PI, a manager, or a founder can be wrong. The best response as a team is not blame but recalibration: correct quickly, support each other, and invest the hours needed. Time is the only real currency. But people have lives and priorities beyond work, and those vary. I want to understand where work sits in their life—not to judge, but to know whether our urgencies align.

Nice: Nice people create synergy and sustain morale across the team. But how do we know if they are nice? We cannot judge their soul—only their behavior in shared work contexts. That is all we can observe, and frankly, all that is relevant. Past signals help: how they communicated in the past, how they handled friction. We assess from evidence, not intuition.

Like-minded: This part is very personal. There is no right answer. But I know what I value. I like people who share what they have, even when they are struggling. People who believe in equality, even if it costs them something. People who want their work to matter beyond themselves. People who believe **you and I can change the world together**.

All four qualities matter, but if I have to rank them: 1) like-minded, 2) nice, 3) hustle, 4) smart.

Why this order? Because life is uncertain. Plans fail. Outcomes surprise us. But walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light. When I find such people, I no longer feel alone. And that is worth holding on to.

Kwon Ko

Dec 10, 2025