

## Project Finds Who, Pays Who Earns

*This blog post was translated by Mistral*

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Who should do the project, who should take the positions, and who should earn the money, these questions are similar. After working on several dozen projects and cooperating with several dozen part-time designers and engineers, and then experiencing more than two years of living with my friends, I roughly understand how to handle this problem best. I don't have many projects here, nothing special, but reflection and self-improvement are quite important, striving to do things better. I'll give an example. There are many examples I can give, but I'll just vaguely mention one here for writing down some thoughts and sharing with friends. A friend asked me to make a product for them, but it seemed quite large and I planned to introduce it to their team instead. I wanted to try working with Team A. Team A is an old friend introduced to me by another friend, whom I recently met. We chatted for a long time.

My friend is smart in this regard. Cooperating with people often requires more stable relationships, and if you haven't met in person, it's necessary to have a good chat. If it's in different locations, send company materials and personal introductions, and have a good phone call. When starting a business, there are many things to do and friends are numerous. Sometimes, when I need to do something, I might forget about a friend. Posting updates on social media about my progress every half month is quite helpful if we need friends to cooperate with us. Now that we're doing things, we often need a PPT and detailed company introductions and cooperation details to cooperate effectively with people.

Team A gave a quote, with an estimated price in several millions, including design and development, and including modules for PC end, mini-program end, interface end, and backend. My friend said it was expensive. I honestly introduced Team A's situation and suggested that I could also ask two other teams for quotes and inquire about outsourcing teams in third-tier cities. To not lose my friend's trust, I also mentioned keeping a backup plan. everybody knows that I am a freelancer now, outsourcing intermediary is one of my jobs. Generally, I tell my friend team that if the project goes smoothly, around 5% should be given to my side. First, I try to give a favorable quote to the customer and also leave some money for myself. After all, I'm not easy either. I've spent a lot of money on this 50,000 to 100,000 project for the client, isn't a few thousand for me reasonable? Doing outsourcing projects is not easy. However, I've been in the circle for a few years, and it's rare to have some friends who trust me and rare to meet friends who need projects. It's not easy.

I realized that I had talked to the leader of team A for a long time and was quite familiar with the situation. However, my friend, based on what I said a few segments, may not have the same understanding and trust in team A as I do. I asked team A for more information, including online accessible project cases, company introduction websites, and sample contracts. These things all tell the client what it's like to cooperate with

team A. How serious and meticulous is team A in their work? I'm pondering how to handle the somewhat high quote. Preparing a detailed price quote is indeed laborious, but a price estimate should suffice. In the past, when I ran an outsourcing company, I prepared numerous price quotes. First, I'd establish a total price, then allocate that price to each function for the client. However, internally, I'd create a cost planning table for freelance employees. The team leader of A team told me that preparing a detailed price quote doesn't matter much, and the client's situation isn't well understood, plus they're not very familiar. This makes sense.

So how do I convince the client about this quote, how do I promote team A to the client? I realized I can't sell the client on team A. Although we've been WeChat friends for several years, they were a team I worked with on a previous outsourcing project, and later they started their own business. We get along well and exchange entrepreneurial experiences. However, it's all about the money. It's a project worth five to ten million. I think all I can do is let the client explore other teams and experience the market. Team A says this quote is quite reasonable. Indeed, if we calculate it by person-month, with a few people and a company cost of ten thousand per person, it seems about right for two months or so. However, the client is looking for the most affordable and reliable option.

I find it difficult to be human. I've come to realize I can no longer think about whether I'll make money or not. I must fully consider the client's perspective. After all, they're the one spending the money. This is true. There are plenty of software outsourcing teams around. My friends come to me because it's rare to find trust. I need to help my friends first, and maybe I'll earn a few thousand RMB in the end. I have to find two more teams for quotes. These team leaders are good friends of mine, some have been WeChat friends for years, have tried to liaise on projects, or have had good chats over meals. I told them the situation honestly and sent them the product description document. I asked them for a rough quote and a total price. I realized that as an outsourcing intermediary, I should communicate and get as much information as possible about Team B. I should also respect Team B's time and request their company information, team introductions, project cases, and contract samples. This is reasonable for Team B to provide to the client and something they should prepare in advance. Regarding this specific project, requesting a rough estimate within half an hour is also reasonable. Everyone is busy and everyone's time is valuable. Consideration for Team B is also important. I will communicate with three teams to get detailed introductions and obtain a rough estimate. Then I will communicate with the customer to let them make a choice. I will find out how the customer thinks, what they value most - price, serious and careful attitude, team capability, or convenience in the same city, and the smoothness of communication. Once we have preliminary quotes, I will let the customer communicate with the selected teams to see if the communication is smooth.

Since the customer wants to choose a team, we need to ensure fair competition. When communicating with the next two teams, I cannot disclose the price of Team A or even that the customer finds it a bit expensive. We need to ensure fair and reasonable competition for all parties involved.

The above example describes a detailed case of how to serve customers, how to consider the interests of all parties, and how to make both parties as satisfied as possible. moving on, if I were to form a team, hire freelancers, or part-time engineers, it would be the same. I want to understand engineers as much as possible. If we haven't worked together before, I want to find out what it would be like after we have. How is the code written, what is the work attitude like, and how well are they compensated. When unexpected events occur, such as the client being dissatisfied or canceling the project, can everyone be honest and take responsibility. I mentioned before that I can manage a project and not earn money, but I don't want to lose money. It's possible that my experience was insufficient in the past, and I didn't prepare for various things or serve the customer well enough during project discussions. This led to some projects having unexpected outcomes. This is what I want to learn and reflect on.

Market economy, market system, market is such a beautiful word. What we discussed earlier about fairly competing among three teams is the principle of market fair competition. Of course, we hope to truly understand one hundred teams and choose the best one. Of course, we hope to truly understand one hundred candidates and choose the best person for the company. This is only natural. The market, this invisible hand, is always surrounding our lives. Understanding comes with a cost, requiring investment of time and energy. In the end, what will it be like? It's like shopping for goods, comparing one from another. This depends on us, understanding the goods well to pick the one that satisfies all aspects. Software projects vary greatly among different teams, companies, and people.

For me, I'm gradually understanding, it's better to be close to money than to people. In the end, one must first live well. Earning honestly and working with friends to earn is a good thing. I do things fairly and reasonably, hoping to continue earning and gaining friends' trust.

When I received a ten-thousand-dollar project from a customer, I assembled a team to do it, and I earned two thousand from it. I shouldn't complain about earning less. Don't regret not earning more when there's no project to do, wishing I had taken a few more pennies from past projects. At that time, everyone was dividing the money this way, and I did it the same way. Money spent is like water spilled. Just like my customers, their projects may fail, and they may blame their partners along the way. However, the past is past, and the money I earned is spent, covering all my living expenses. I think this price is reasonable based on what the customer told me, but they still asked me to ask other teams. The customer is smart and good at business.

If I want to earn more, I can ask more people and find the most suitable and affordable partner. If I'm lazy to ask, then I have to be content with what I have. Partners, if you want to earn more, you have to expand customers yourself. I have done many principal-agent transactions, both sides are clear. It's like I work hard to write articles and share some experiences, which is similar to activating my friend circle occasionally, and I'm working hard to expand customers. We need to improve ourselves from all aspects. The most important thing is to enhance our professional skills, making every project a benchmark. There are many

ways to make a project the best. Regarding price and service, we can choose our own path, whether it's the Apple premium route or the Xiaomi value route. Are we serving high-end or mass-market customers? How can we serve customers long-term and keep the business going? As a company, how do we choose our partners, partnership forms, full-time or part-time employees?

From the beginning of the project to its delivery and after-sales service, every stage is an opportunity for us to do our best. When we first meet customers, do we make efforts to understand each other and consider their needs? During the project, do we prioritize the customer, making things easier and even pushing them to cooperate for the sake of the project?

As for gaining customers, besides actively showcasing ourselves, we also need to maintain good relationships with potential customers. We strive to help people and share experiences with colleagues.

Our energy is limited, and we cannot do everything. As individuals, we are insignificant. To improve skills and make friends, energy is always in short supply. We can only do well in one area and then collaborate with upstream and downstream friends. This is like being a blogger. Writing 10 articles a year, writing 50 articles a year, writing 100 articles a year, writing 300 articles a year, the effort level is quite different. However, the important thing seems to be how well we write and how we promote. After all, there are too many articles nowadays.

Brother, let's settle accounts honestly, balance the interests of all parties, and ensure that everyone is satisfied. Of course, communication and dealing with each other should be done sincerely and enjoyably as much as possible. However, in our hearts, we must make sure that the interests are clear, and for the sake of long-term cooperation, we can afford to bear some losses, but we must strive to make things fair. In project selection, it often depends on who is more eager and sincere. For those unwilling to take on a project, it holds no value for them. For those eager for the project, it is important. People often say, "low price is the king." Pinduoduo is more sincere and more determined, so everyone's money has to go to them. Baidu came up with bidding ranking to give sincerity a price for customers. Apple sets a high price for its phones to test the sincerity of the crowd.

In business talks, friends are friends, business is business. That's how things are.

Software projects come in many types. When a client brings a certain type of project, such as software and hardware integration, if we have experience in that area, we can compile relevant materials and present such projects to the client. For new clients, we should provide as much detailed information as possible to help them fully understand us. This means that after we complete the project for the client, we should showcase it to them as much as possible. Communicate well with the client about whether we can showcase the project, whether it should be fully shown, partially shown, or if we can share technical insights, etc. There are many things we can do here, just like how I will do what and what skills I have, and what people can ask me to do. I also don't do things well enough, I'm lazy about asking clients, or afraid of bothering them.

For some busy major clients, we can greet them once every six months and update them on our situation. Maybe busy friends don't have time to refresh their friend circles. More importantly, every cooperation requires effort to make things right, and every communication as well. I mentioned in the article "Making 300 million in revenue within 5 years: From a 4k internship wage to joining my side business training camp" that I had been introducing projects to a friend's team for over a year, creating over a hundred groups. This made things easier for me. However, when I seriously considered this matter and discussed it with my friend, I realized I should diversify my channels and make more friends. This way, I would have a clearer understanding of the industry situation and know how to best match resources. Different teams may excel in different areas, in different regions, and follow different paths. I would still pull groups for this friend's team, valuing our friendship. However, I would allocate some projects to build stronger friendships with some friends and have more interaction. I might even find that this friend's team is the best in the end. I act as an outsourcing intermediary, which allows me to earn this little income, but I can't optimize it any further, so I might as well let them handle it. Maybe having more brothers is not bad.

I realized that trying to match the hundred groups had some issues. I didn't make sure customers fully understood the team, nor did I find the most suitable team based on the project type for customers. Then my friend approached me with a 50,000 to 100,000 project, and I found a good team and completed the task, earning myself 2,000. My friend later posted a recruitment ad in their circle of friends, asking if I wanted to help spread the word. Doing my part, I also tried to maintain good relationships. Who will do the project, who will handle the position, who will earn the money. There are many scholars here, interacting with various friends, they have given me a lot of inspiration. It's not easy, how to long-term coexist with scholars, how to long-term cooperate with customers. With the passage of time, we can see the influence of what we did initially. So, let's work hard.