How to Build Relationships

This blog post was translated by ChatGPT.

Starting a business, especially like us running a software outsourcing company, involves managing relationships with clients. Besides giving gifts during holidays, I realized there are many other ways to handle these relationships. I've also observed some successful friends and how they manage their connections. Discussing this topic helps me clarify my thoughts.

Ideally, we wouldn't need to maintain relationships. All business transactions would be fair, and there would be no debts of gratitude. This would be great because everyone is busy. If you owe someone a favor, you might forget to repay it because of your busy schedule. Keeping things straightforward and separate is also good.

I often struggle with whether to help some friends by sharing their posts on my social media. Many friends have helped me in the past. On one hand, sharing a post and responding to comments can take an hour or two. Additionally, my friends are diverse, and I sometimes worry about bothering them. I've noticed that I behave differently in different states of mind. Sometimes, I don't mind sharing posts, even two or three a day. Though it might be annoying to some friends, and they may block me, I need to respect their freedom. Everyone has different habits; some might prefer a clean feed and think my posts are intrusive. If a friend blocks me without any conflict, I shouldn't overthink it. I've also noticed that some friends won't let me see their posts but still comment on mine. When I message them, they still reply.

I later used the concept of "common sense and responsibility" mentioned by Colin Huang to understand these matters. Generally, if we don't run businesses on social media and don't post many ads, friends usually don't mind. If a friend never likes or interacts with my posts, that's okay because everyone is busy. Social media is social media; personal relationships are personal relationships.

I've observed some successful friends. Every two weeks or a month, they share a company article or news. That's all. Some even disable their social media. They are executives in internet companies. How do they manage without social media?

I enjoy working publicly on social media. I used to post job openings and summaries of recent activities every half month or month in 2018. In 2019, after some reflection, I only updated my social media five or six times a year. In 2020, I mainly shared articles and videos. In "A World Driven by Desire," it is mentioned that people's social media activities are driven by their desires.

Using social media to maintain relationships is one method, but one-on-one contact is more sincere. We need to think about how we can help our friends and what they need. If we want to help a friend, it's good to offer help when they ask on social media. Everyone wants to make money and succeed in their ventures,

so how can we mutually assist each other? What tasks can we do easily that our friends find difficult? How can we complement each other?

Some friends are building their personal brands and need users and clients. Others need to recruit employees. Some need partnerships. Helping friends when they need it and not bothering them when they don't is also good. When I realized many friends were willing to help me, I also realized I shouldn't owe too many favors. People should treat each other equally and kindly. I try to be restrained in asking for help, especially on social media. If friends take it seriously and help me repeatedly, how do I repay them? Can we maintain so many relationships and obligations?

After writing the article "Who to Give Projects and Who to Earn Money With," I realized that many tasks and projects can be done by anyone. So, who do we choose to do them? I realized I should first repay the favors I owe to friends who have helped me over the years. For simple tasks like creating mind maps or initial product requirements, family and friends could help too, as we need to maintain long-term relationships with them. After clearing these favors, who among the trusted friends should I work with next? Who is available, a freelancer, or specializes in this area?

I need to focus on my life first. Only when I earn money and live well can I help family and friends. Relationships improve with mutual exchanges. I realized that I should remember my friends who have helped me when I have good opportunities or projects. After establishing Xiaomi, why did Lei Jun also create Shunwei Capital? He has been in the industry for decades with numerous connections. In this desire-driven and money-driven world, relationships and feelings are fragile. Even a giant company like Xiaomi is small in society, so it needs to expand its territory. After all, competitors are constantly expanding.

Teacher Chi Jianqiang said that starting a business is not about playing with technology or showing off products. It's about solving the connections and relationships between users, products, enterprises, employees, and shareholders. Iterating and strengthening these connections leads to sustainable development; failing results in disintegration.

What resources do we have, and who can we cooperate with? Who do we want closer relationships with? During the period of running Qu Zhibo, a live-streaming platform for technical sharing, I didn't consider this issue well. When finding streamers, I considered their influence and tried to cooperate with influential ones. However, overall it was random, and I didn't establish long-term cooperation. Many streamers have full-time jobs and can't do long-term sharing. Some friends are entrepreneurs whose businesses also target engineers, and they need continuous users and influence. We could seek long-term cooperation with them. How can we sustain a knowledge-sharing community? Content is crucial, but behind the content are people and relationships.

When we have money or projects to manage, who do we want to cooperate with? Who can get the job done without us losing out? I've often failed in these aspects. When friends referred projects to me, I passed

them to my team but didn't follow up due to laziness. Although it's not always convenient to repay with money, did we think of ways to repay or help friends? Did we prioritize helping friends when we had money or projects?

Similarly, I sometimes refer projects to freelance engineer friends. After introducing them, I didn't follow up. Some friends kept me updated and thanked me, which touched me. Some friends ensure we don't lose out, knowing projects are hard to come by and trust isn't easy. Whether a project succeeds or fails, they give feedback. Everyone is busy, and I often don't update friends who referred projects to me. But I think it's best to keep them informed.

This isn't about networking but about doing things fairly and ensuring everyone's efforts are rewarded.

Li Ka-shing said, "Taking a loss is a blessing." Take seven points when reasonable, eight points if possible, but only six points for oneself. Top salespeople at Lianjia don't post much on social media. Their performance mostly comes from old clients. They sometimes spend thousands to compensate clients' agency fees, gaining clients who frequently buy and sell properties. These top salespeople win people's hearts.

I used to do things publicly on social media, but now I prefer doing things privately. Learning to maintain long-term relationships with friends, understanding their needs, and cooperating better.

Everyone is busy with work and life. Sometimes, I lose touch with friends and worry our relationship has deteriorated. I try to reach out and chat, finding it's just my overthinking. I don't need to constantly think about relationships; I'm just too idle. Everyone is busy serving their users and clients, striving to earn money.

I don't need to think about maintaining relationships. I just need to do my job well, live my life, and earn my money. When I live well, I can help others.

In 2016-2018, when I focused on Qu Zhibo and software outsourcing, as I did better, friends were willing to help me. In 2020, when I was more idle and did some unreliable things, I damaged some friendships.

In 2018, I wrote an article "After Interacting with 5000 People, My Insights on Social Interactions." It had a bit of a clickbait title. A senior entrepreneur praised my writing. The last paragraph said, "Do more things; the bigger and harder they are, the more you need to cooperate with excellent people. In the end, when things are done, you'll have brotherhood from fighting together."

I had already discussed this principle, but my understanding was still shallow.

I realized I might not need business interactions with many friends. My energy is limited. When trying to cooperate with a new friend, I should think about collaborating with old friends. Which friends can benefit my long-term career? Which friends can complement resources better? It's not just about doing business with friends but also considering friends' businesses and supporting them.

In the past, I did okay in choosing partners, but not the best. My relationships with old friends have become distant.

I haven't found ways to help or seek more cooperation with influential seniors. I didn't think of them when good things happened.

Ultimately, it depends on what I want to achieve. If I aim to build a listed company, I will need to cooperate with many friends, and relationships won't be bad. Everyone is busy, and earning money together allows cooperation and fun. What do we want to achieve? Who will we cooperate with? Which users and clients do we want long-term relationships with? Which friends can help us earn more money?

Talking about relationships feels like discussing politics. We don't like politicians; we prefer people who focus on their work. We like products from Apple and Xiaomi because they attract people at first sight. They don't need networking; their products are the best sincerity. For individuals, our excellence is the best sincerity in making friends.

OPPO's founder said OPPO does two things: make a good product and sell it. To make a good product, we need to establish relationships with the right people.

What kind of works and products do we want to create? What will have long-term value? Writing an article with only current value or one valuable in five years? Satisfying a few people's desires or writing a book for

the majority? Writing a book that sells for a year or one that sells for ten years? Creating a product popular for a while or one that grows in popularity? Making a video for a few or a video for many?

Talking about networking, we must consider how to make it easier. What can we do to satisfy more people's desires and unite more people?

Friends are friends, and business is business. In personal life, we don't overthink who we interact with. In business, we carefully consider each cooperation. We might not know them yet, but we need to meet and strive for cooperation. Earning money and doing business isn't easy; it often takes a toll on family. People want to do business happily and lightly. We hope to make friends who believe in "one-time cooperation, lifelong friendship." True care is warm.

We understand why some friends don't post on social media yet are successful. We understand why many Fortune 500 founders are low-key. In the face of good products, relationships seem unimportant. Relationships need constant communication, but good products speak for themselves.