

On Vision

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5-6 minutes

Hello beautiful people —

In my last newsletter, I mentioned writing about my vision on the margin of a notebook. Few of you immediately asked what that vision is for me and how to find a vision to pursue.

Visionaries have reached their heroic status for their prescient insights and relentless pursuits in a society that idolizes self-determinism. They seem to possess the special ability to peek into the future and get to take part in creating it. An original and inspiring vision is scarce, elusive, and is by nature a better alternative of our current condition. These mythical qualities have made being a visionary so unattainable yet attractive.

The institutional language of our time, over-embellished by corporates and mainstream media, leverage grandiose rhetorics to create banalities that sound more normative, factual, and urgent than they actually are (any major conference, university website, or billboards in the bay area). It's even more anxiety-inducing when our peers show up in the press announcing their ambitious vision statements — to democratize x, to eliminate y, to revolutionize z. When we subconsciously benchmark our own aspirations to these statements, they start to seem rather insignificant and trivial, so many people end up deciding that having a vision is just not the thing for them.

I found three most common mindsets among my smart and capable friends:

1. accepting one's limitation and becoming complacent: "I don't think I have that kind of vision and drive, so it's okay just to be working at a large firm that defines the vision for me."
2. resorting to cynicism or nihilistic beliefs: "well all of these visions are lies that corporates tell; talking about vision is gimmicky and unrealistic."
3. **motivated by short-term pseudo-vision that's in fact just winning a game with an artificial scoreboard: "My vision is to make some list before I turn 30."**

We can say that vision may really not be that important when it comes to the execution of an idea. Especially in our time where ideas are in abundance yet great execution is in such scarcity. That's why many so-called "visionaries" ended up spending their time giving TED talks. With that being said, many can reach success by working hard and being lucky (being at the right place at the right time), but those who end up living the most fulfilling and meaningful lives are the ones who are making things that align with their internal compass. **The mindsets above significantly decrease the probability of creating the impact they could've had if they've spent more time reflecting on and cultivating their own vision.**

Sam Altman, the chairman of Y Combinator and co-chairman of OpenAI, wrote in [one of his posts](#):

"People have an enormous capacity to make things happen. A combination of self-doubt, giving up too early, and not pushing hard enough prevents most people from ever reaching anywhere near their potential...Ask for what you want. You usually won't get it, and often the rejection will be painful. But when this works, it works surprisingly well."

I think Altman has a better definition of "vision" here: **having a vision is "to ask for what you want."** If there's a version of the world that would be better for the people or community you care deeply about, then there's probably a way to get there. This should be a problem that you are too familiar with and being skin in the game for all of its joy and suffering; this qualifies and legitimizes you to make the situation better. The longer we wait to make that better version a reality, the longer those problems will remain, and I try to ask myself daily: am I making things happen?

Thinking about what you want is a humbling exercise. We'll have to calibrate our reality and upgrade ourselves continually. We want to accept that meaningful work is extremely obscure and uncomfortable

and fall in love with the struggle. **The pursuit feels much less like a chase but more like a pilgrimage.**

I guess now it's a good time to jump back to the question that some of you ask: what is my vision? To be honest, I don't have a singular, clear-cut vision, but I do have a list of things that I want to make happen, and they continue to evolve and become more descriptive and specific. One of them is my belief that everyone can effectively construct a narrative-driven vision that leads to a more meaningful career and life.

There are still much more on that I'd like to dig deeper, but this is getting a bit long. So I'm going to take a pause here, and leave the rest to future letters.

Until then, keep dreaming.

Tina

After some discussions with friends, I'm making this newsletter a channel to discover and connect **creators and thinkers who are navigating the future.**

If you *or anyone you know* want to be a part of this, please [drop a line](#). I'll reach out for a short interview.

Things I'd love to know.

(1) What are you working on? Why does it matter?

(2) What are things that you see and most people around you don't see yet?

(3) How do you think this will impact the human experience (can be as broad as our civilization or as narrow as our experience going to restaurants?)

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