Twitter Thread by Kevin Lee



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1/ Thank you to everyone who expressed support for our immi launch and we're so grateful for all of you. As I think back to the past 18 months of this journey, I want to share one of the hardest parts of being a founder that I struggle with daily. ■

2/ Most founders start because we believe that we have high standards for what an innovative product can do for customers. But most of the time, sacrifices have to be made to get a first version of a product to market. These sacrifices slowly eat away at our mental health.

3/ @kchanthasiri and I grew up eating all types of instant ramen and we believe that we have the "taste" for what great ramen should be. We knew creating a healthier option meant a different taste & texture profile, but we didn't realize how different our v1.0 would end up.

4/ Food industry manufacturers (a.k.a. co-mans) have heavy capital expenditures in commercial equipment, and they produce product for multiple customers. It's not easy for them to alter their production processes for each eager startup founder.

5/ They need to consistently run their production lines and produce product in order to make profit for themselves. Every second innovating with a new brand and adjusting their standard processes negatively affects their bottom line.

6/ As we began the onboarding phase with one of the co-mans who was willing to work with us, we discovered that they weren't in a position to iterate as fast as we could, and major trade-offs were necessary to get this first version of immi to market.

7/ These trade-offs led to many flaws in our first version of immi. The noodles aren't as slurpable as traditional ramen noodles, and some people can taste a slight tartness from a natural ingredient we use to make the noodles shelf-stable.

8/ When we soft launched immi to our beta community, we anticipated most of the feedback we might receive because we already tasted the flaws ourselves. We braced ourselves for the worst and we were pleasantly surprised when we got dozens of positive reviews.

9/ But whenever we got a negative review about the taste or texture, each review felt like a blow straight to the heart. It's hard not to feel like the world is ending with each scathing comment.

10/ This is something I'm working on with my coach that I feel most founders can relate to deep down: I live with a fear that if people don't like the product, then they are judging me personally for my standards.

11/ It's an irrational fear, because what other people believe doesn't change your own taste. But that's what you feel like as a founder. We work in silos for a long time to create a baby that we then hand to the world to judge.

12/ I don't have a good solution for this yet and I'm still working on getting over this fear. But as my coach has reminded me many times, my job is not to get other people to like me. My job is to understand what needs people have and figure out how to meet them.

13/ One thing I continue to believe - it's so important to build in public. I want to be vulnerable about this process to let our customers know that we're aware of our current flaws, we hear their feedback, and that we know we can do better.

14/ It's only through self-awareness that we can match the gap between the product we're shipping now to the product that we dream of.

Nobody tells this to people who are beginners, and I really wish somebody had told this to me.

All of us who do creative work, we get into it because we have good taste. But it's like there is this gap. For the first couple years that you're making stuff, what you're making isn't so good. It's not that great. It's trying to be good, it has ambition to be good, but it's not that good.

But your taste, the thing that got you into the game, is still killer. And your taste is good enough that you can tell that what you're making is kind of a disappointment to you. A lot of people never get past that phase. They quit.

Everybody I know who does interesting, creative work they went through years where they had really good taste and they could tell that what they were making wasn't as good as they wanted it to be. They knew it fell short. Everybody goes through that.

And if you are just starting out or if you are still in this phase, you gotta know its normal and the most important thing you can do is do a lot of work. Do a huge volume of work. Put yourself on a deadline so that every week or every month you know you're going to finish one story. It is only by going through a volume of work that you're going to catch up and close that gap. And the work you're making will be as good as your ambitions.

I took longer to figure out how to do this than anyone I've ever met. It takes awhile. It's gonna take you a while. It's normal to take a while. You just have to fight your way through that.

—Ira Glass [1]