

NOTE: I have moved the next rev of the essay here, using a mentor's (was it Charlie Bleecker) tip to "make a copy" for a risky rewrite:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VWH4RtHPxvZ5pXApzQJuvvN9JC_3BbUH0i9sLtmuM14/edit?usp=sharing

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Basher just turned on the "Pinch", an EMP bomb so devastating it shuts off power to all of Las Vegas for 30 seconds. Now Danny and Linus have that instant to rappel down the elevator shaft previously guarded by a dazzling array of laser beams. Meanwhile, Yen barely survives a daring somersault from inside the vault...

I love heist movies, and of course Soderberg's classic Ocean's Eleven comes to mind.

As the movie unfolds, we find Danny Ocean (Clooney) assembling 11 quirky characters that are somehow all perfectly suited for the heist. Everyone is different and yet each brings an essential skill without which the intricate theft would flop. Saul plays the convincing "European Arms Dealer". Basher is the out-of-the-box thinking munitions guy. Yen is the lithe and supple gymnast. Many in the team don't even know each other but work joyously together using their talents unencumbered by bureaucracy or tedium.

In my perfect world, I see myself pulling off a couple of these capers every year. Not stealing anything, of course. But I would be experiencing all those feelings I vicariously feel from

watching the movie. A shared sense of purpose but also a clear ownership of tasks. We work seamlessly as a team even as everyone has different skill sets. There's an element of uncertainty, risk, and luck. When things go awry, we improvise. And at the end, there's this real sense of accomplishment.

Better still, each caper can be quite different and so would my role. I can imagine being the maniacal mastermind trying to create [a shareable travel bucket list](#) one month. But months later, with a different cast, I would be totally psyched being the backroom "Livingston Dell" character geeking out on a personalized dosing algorithm in [a photobiomodulation helmet for Alzheimer's patients](#).

This sounds pretty crazy farfetched and yet with each passing year I see us getting closer to this utopia.

Covid has of course changed the world. It's not just the rise of remote work, but the Great Resignation that followed. There's rage quitting, quiet quitting and the "lie flat movement" in China. What do all these have in common? We are dissatisfied with the status quo and yearning for more.

But more of what? Cribbing [Daniel Pink](#): we want to be our own boss, we want to be continuously honing and learning new skills and we want to be part of something bigger than ourselves.

Of course, there are many who happily trade all this for a stable, 9-5 job. There are many others who can't afford to make this tradeoff. Large bureaucratic companies and jobs that make you feel you are just a cog in the wheel aren't going away. But for a lucky, increasing number of us who are fickle, complicated and contain multitudes, this life, filled with Ocean's Eleven escapades, looks increasingly possible.

"Given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow" - Linus's Law as formulated by Eric Raymond

The open source world provides a glimpse of this utopian vision. Anyone can start an open source project and the way you recruit teammates is basically from the best volunteer contributors to the project, totally bypassing [traditional labor market practices](#)!

Many people read Linus's Law above and immediately connect: there is someone, somewhere in the world who knows how to fix this bug. If you work in public and your project is popular enough (like the Linux operating system), then someone can easily fix this bug for you.

There is some truth to this but I think it elides a deeper insight: for any given bug, there are many folks who know how to characterize the bug ("this is a security issue", "it's a bug in the rendering engine" etc.) but have no idea how to fix it. Similarly, there are folks who can point you to the right person to fix it, once a bug is characterized correctly. There are others who love

writing replicable test cases. And finally, there are the programmers who do the actual rewriting of the code.

In software, someone who is great at writing test cases may not be great at characterizing a bug. It would like asking Basher to launch the EMP bomb *and* pickpocket the codes from Benedict, the casino boss. The mismatch would make Basher feel awful and the heist would fail.

In our work, we have tasks we really enjoy and others we can totally do without. The amazing thing is that lots of parts of work we find tough or unpalatable are actually joyful and meaningful to others! Open source shows us the way because it is composed of volunteers who *self-sort themselves to what they enjoy and do best*.

It is high time *work itself gets blown to bits and then reconstituted* piece by piece.

I am currently enrolled in [Write of Passage](#), a writing class that feels like an Ocean's Eleven-like educational quest. [David Perrell](#), in the Danny Ocean role, gives awe inspiring lectures. But he is also self-assured and introspective enough (just speculatin' here) to allow the collection of superstars he has assembled to run the rest of the course.

We have a dedicated set of mentors that provide deep dives into the many different aspects of writing like [how twitter threads can build an audience](#) to [dealing with inner conflict](#). We have amazing editors like [Chris Wong](#) to actually give feedback on our essays. The thoughtful [Michael Dean](#) organizes fantastic peer-review gyms. There are alumni members from previous cohorts who help break the ice in our zoom breakouts and steer us in the right direction. Finally, there's [Simone Silverstein](#) who onboarded me and continues to ensure that I don't fall too far off the tracks!

Compare all this to a college writing class, and you begin to see how Write of Passage is completely rethinking the education experience. Each role is filled by folks who are genuinely great and delight in what they do. I have never been amongst peers as willing to reach out and be helpful to each other as this cohort. Together, it makes me feel like I am a part of a glorious, harmonious symphony.

I like to tell my daughter, "your job hasn't been invented yet". Rather than chasing that elusive Ivy League degree, she should focus on building her portfolio, her contributions, her github profile. "Show, Don't tell" is as applicable today as ever. Work in public, get really good at what you truly love, and the world will find a way to joyfully weave your contributions in a never ending tapestry of heists we call progress.

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Lots of chunks I decided to do without:

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“The future is already here – it’s just not very evenly distributed.” - William Gibson

In the Hollywood studio model, the modern studios [don’t hire employees to make movies anymore](#); Instead, a specialized team is assembled just for the purpose of a project (movie, tv show or documentary) and then just as easily disbanded as the project is produced.

The world of Open Source, a field I’m much more familiar with, is another great example. Anyone can start a project, by submitting their work to a public repository such as Github. If the project gains popularity, it not only attracts users of the code, but also contributors who want to change/improve the code, often for their own needs.

The project founder can choose to accept individual contributions. Often when such contributions are significant, the founder chooses to elevate such a contributor to become a co-maintainer of the project with commit privileges, a distinct honor.

Bye, Bye Credentials, Say Hi to Github profiles

In this way, an open source project grows a team without ever going through the traditional labor market! Because a contributor is not an employee of the project, they can join or leave as they see fit. But what doesn’t go away is your contribution and reputation. In fact, many employers today value your github profile much more highly than where you went to college or even your resume.

Open Source is distinctly a “Show, Don’t Tell” culture. Your work is public and your specific expertise is easily discerned. It is thus much easier to figure out if you are a good match for a project or not.

“...only two ways to make money in business: One is to bundle; the other is unbundle” ~Jim Barksdale

There has been a lot of unbundling and bundling going on in recent years! Think YouTube videos, 15 second Tiktok shorts and individual songs compiled as Spotify playlists to name just the tip of the iceberg.

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Coase’s Theory of the Firm - and how we find our people

Why are there companies and employees in the first place? Why can’t everyone be a free agent and work on a project they love and then leave and go on to the next project?

In Write of Passage, we are taught to write in abundance by tapping to our “second brain” which we should be adding to and compounding everyday with acute observations, insights and links. That way, when we are asked to write a piece, we are already “80% done”, because our second

brain already has so many thoughts and observations on the topic that all we have to do is string them together in a coherent form.

Likewise, we should be building a rolodex of people we want to work that compounds over time.

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The ultimate heist would be to take away the moats and barriers to entry that BigCos have purposefully and insidiously erected against all of us over the past decades. I for one can't wait to join this adventure!

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#wop9 How is the world changing?

ideas:

- bye, bye credentials
 - github profiles
 - beautiful portfolios
 - music
 - art
- world of collaboration without Coase's transaction costs
 - like a studio
 - Coase's theory of the firm
 - people begin to organise their production in firms when the [transaction cost](#) of coordinating production through the market exchange, given imperfect information, is greater than within the firm.
 - gig economy for all
 - tinder for jobs
 - uber for whatever
- Show, don't tell
- Rise of AI augmentation
 - Managing robots, not humans
 - AI that works for you, not against you
 - open source AI like stable diffusion vs centralized AI like google
- Rise of remote only jobs
 - focus on results, not credentials or effort
- Just in time learning (a la the Matrix)
 - New skills and knowledge are needed
 - new cohort based classes will arise to provide just those skills
 - eg. we need people to write good prompts for DallE or Stable Diffusion

- Braintrust app to "find your people"
 - plenty of evidence for hard skills
 - soft skills (what kind of people do I work best with) much harder
 - maybe there will be new match-making jobs
- Just like we have a second brain for facts, ideas and feelings, we will have one for people we'll like to work with too
 - we need a third brain (google). And that also applies to people
- Geography matters less
- Linus's Law: with enough eyeballs all bugs are shallow
- Things are increasingly getting chopped up and reconstituted
 - today's Instagram addict is tomorrow's "influencer"
 - today's Twitch stream could well be tomorrow's Christiane Amanpour
 - big companies aren't nimble enough to handle this!
- Jane McGonigal's Imaginable
- "The future is here, it's just unevenly distributed"
- "Turn on, tune in, drop out" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turn_on,_tune_in,_drop_out
- Crowdfunding
- Open source as a strangesight
 - Coase's Penguin
 - Github sponsors
- Counterpoints:
 - There are forces imposing geography back on us too: eg. Trump's wall and China's Covid Zero
 - Competition to get into Elite Schools is fiercer than ever
 - My friend's bible is the US News & World report
 - Tech and gig economy backlash
- Compensation: Splitting the pie
 - Crypto?
- Lots of questions
 - how will folks get compensated?
 - will this be a new form of exploitation?
 - How does a project end?