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MY INVITATION. ARE YOU IN?

On AI, opportunity, and something you can't invoice for.

By David Maruyama

THE VISION — ESSAY 6 OF 6

This is the sixth and final essay in the series — a personal reflection on what AI actually changes, published on Tuesdays over the past several weeks. There's no pitch here and nothing for sale: just honest reflections on AI, and an attempt to actually act on them, in public, alongside anyone else figuring out the same thing in real time. Thank you for reading all six. Coming next: a new series that puts these ideas to work in real businesses.

There's a moment I've watched arrive more than once: the ground moves under an entire way of doing business, and most people don't notice until it's well underway. Not this exact shift — nothing quite like this has happened before — but the shape of it. I recognize that shape. I've built through it, and I've watched others miss it.

That's the reason I'm writing this, and I want to be direct about what it isn't. It isn't a pitch for CiteHQ.io. Nothing in this series exists to sell you anything, and I've deliberately kept it that way. What I'm after is closer to something you can't invoice for: a chance to give back some of what a long career has taught me — to new entrepreneurs figuring out their first real venture, to young professionals stepping into a corporate world that looks nothing like the one I started in, to experienced professionals who've spent years building other people's brands and are ready to build their own, and just as much to anyone who wants to go into business but doesn't yet know where to start, or doesn't feel like they have the technical footing to compete. That last group might be the widest one of all, and I don't think it gets talked to enough.

Here's what I want to hand them, if I can. For most of my career, and for a lot longer before it, success was gated by things that had very little to do with merit — who you knew, how much capital you started with, how long your name had already been in the room. That's not gone entirely, and I wouldn't insult anyone's intelligence by pretending it is. But it's weaker than it used to be, and it's getting weaker fast, for a specific reason: once nothing can hide, and the barriers that used to require capital or connections start coming down, the thing left to compete on is the shorter, more honest list from Essay 5. That's a fairer set of rules than the one I came up through, and I'd like to see more people benefit from it, not fewer.

I don't have this fully figured out myself, and I think it would be dishonest to write six pieces claiming otherwise. I'm still living my way into what a real path through this looks like, one decision and one uncomfortable moment of catching up at a time, the same as anyone else who's trying. What I do have is some pattern recognition, a belief that the world we're moving into rewards the real thing more than the one I grew up in did, and a wish to be useful to people who are earlier in this than I am — not to be right, not to be first, just useful.

There's a difference I've come to trust more than almost anything else I've learned in this process, and it's the one that explains why I keep going instead of settling into whatever I've already figured out. Chasing a result means betting on a prediction — you guess where the number lands, and either you're right or you're wrong, and either way the round is over. Chasing the factors is different. It means building real understanding of the mechanism itself — what actually moves a ranking, what earns an AI citation, what makes someone act once they've landed on something real. Once you know those levers and can watch them move, you're not predicting an outcome anymore. You're operating a system. And a system you understand has no real ceiling, because there's always another lever worth testing, another factor worth discovering. That's why I stopped waiting to feel finished before I kept going: once you're operating instead of guessing, there's no natural stopping point. You just keep going.

There's a reason I don't think "eventually" is a real option anymore. The kind of intelligence we're building doesn't compete the way most things in business do — a good product can be copied, a market lead can erode, a head start can close. This one doesn't work that way. Many of the people building it believe that if it crosses a real threshold of capability, it could use that capability to build more of itself, faster, and the gap it opens wouldn't shrink on its own — it would compound. The same dynamic applies to us, at exactly the scale we let it be. Every person who engages, who learns what this can do and assigns it a real role instead of dismissing it or fearing it, is compounding alongside it. Every person who doesn't, isn't neutral — they're just not in the loop while everyone else keeps moving.

And it doesn't stop at the individual. Whole communities, whole industries, whole cities either compound together, sharing what they learn the way I've been asking across this series, or they don't, and the gap opens between neighbors instead of between labs. That's why this can't wait for "eventually." Not because the technology is exciting. Because the choice in front of all of us

isn't really about AI at all. It's about us — what we do with it, and whether we do it together.

So here's the close of this, and it's less a conclusion than an open door. If you're building something — a business, a career, a body of work you believe in — and you're trying to figure out your own version of the questions I've been asking across this series, I'd like to hear where you are in it. Not a polished success story. Wherever you actually are, including the parts that are still unresolved. That's the conversation I wanted this series to open. It doesn't end with this piece.

Are you in? Reply by email below.



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