

## **DO YOU HAVE TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR TO EARN A DECENT LIVING IN THE FUTURE WORLD?** **by Case Lane**

When Alibaba CEO Jack Ma announced his plans to support one million new jobs through online entrepreneurship, a new realization dawned. With fewer traditional jobs, automation, and outsourcing, an increased percentage of the population will have to create their own work. Ma is suggested they open an online storefront on Alibaba, and that advice may be timely and vital to future economic stability.

In my book [The Motion Clue](#), medical scientist Dominique Dorth is a French North African who runs a global business from an island near Shanghai, China. The entire enterprise is based on the idea of providing unique remedies to people around the world. And her lifestyle as described in the book, fits neatly with Ma's 2017 vision.

*"...her preferred location was her lab, which was next to her pharmacy in one of the gold-plated skyscrapers on Shanghai's Yangshan Island free trade zone. Exempt from import-export controls, she could order any legal ingredient, invent and test a new vitamin or supplement, and market the product to willing buyers around the world. Her lab included a production studio where she produced promotional and instructional videos for her products. With millions accessing her content as a consistent global audience that nicknamed her, 'Dr. Dorth', she was one of the most viewed people in the world."  
- from The Motion Clue, Book 1 in the Life Online series*

The character has an online storefront on the Internet, which provides her access to a global market encompassing the entire world population. We can guess she is able to employ a few dozen people (maybe hundreds) because her market is not limited by physical world constraints. This universal access, and uninhibited market reach is the vision Ma outlined at his own conference, Gateway '17 held in Detroit in June 2017. He repeated his intention to support one million U.S. jobs by helping American entrepreneurs reach the Chinese market. China represents one-fifth of the world's people. And Alibaba's reach through the Internet covers the whole world. With rising consumer demand from China's middle class looking for high quality products, Ma has a vision that small business entrepreneurs in the U.S. can use the Alibaba platform to create online storefronts, and those small businesses will employ at least a million people, just as the process works in China (estimated 12 million entrepreneurs, employing 30+ million people in China).

Of course not only Chinese and Americans will be using Alibaba and similar platforms. As in the book, anyone will be able to access the services, and everyone will be in business with each other. This world does not require concerns about competition. In a world of extreme niches, every consumer is able to demand customized products. The economic winners will be businesses that provide outstanding customer service and consistent quality production and delivery.

One can envision some entrepreneurs like Dominique decided to launch an online storefront after being pushed out of traditional work either through automation or outsourcing. As these realities continue to hit the economy many people will realize their best chance to bounce back and continue to earn a living, may lie in knowledge, professional experience, hobbies or personal skill, which you can become a product or service to sell to the global marketplace. In Dominique's case, she is a pharmacist who researches ancient remedies around the world and creates customized treatments for her global customers.

In today's niche-consumer world, the average consumer does not want to be average. People are constantly looking for specific products aimed at their particular tastes. Recently I was shopping for a slim shoulder bag that my laptop would fit in. My specification requirements included specific shades of red or green (the colors of my company readyentrepreneur.com) that I also wanted to carry around. To find this bag, I was not going to go to a shopping mall and walk aimlessly through every store. I went online to Amazon.com. After entering a few search terms, I looked at various options and selected the one meeting my criteria - color, number of pockets, fits laptop, and also good reviews. Later, when I attended a conference carrying the bag, everyone commented on how much they liked it, and no one had heard of the manufacturer. The Internet is the infrastructure of the 21st century, playing the role taken by roads and railroads in the last century. But in contrast to the physical transportation infrastructure, cost and access to the Internet is inexpensive, and available to almost everyone.

The Alibaba platform was originally designed as a business-to-business e-commerce site, think Amazon (as they do) for entrepreneurs looking for other entrepreneurs to provide products and services. Today additional companies under the Alibaba umbrella provide consumer-to-consumer and business-to-consumer sales, and the entire behemoth is on its way to \$400 billion in market cap value. By the way, this is a company projecting \$1 trillion in revenue in the next three years. The growing consumer demand for deepening niches of products is the rising curve accelerating small businesses into global companies. In a hundred years, Alibaba or its successor is likely to be a multi-trillion dollar company, and the use of the site or another similar online commerce platform would be the standard for any business.

Online commerce will eventually drop the "online" and become just commerce. The Internet has made access to business services possible for anyone in the world. The business infrastructure is readily available to anyone who wants to use the software. The work of managing consumers, suppliers, finances, logistics and technology is performed by many competitive Internet companies, and new ones arrive every day. In contrast to last century manufacturers, in the Internet age, a company can focus only on creating a product or service, and outsource the manufacturing, delivery and record-keeping to other systems, again at a reasonable price.

Maintaining culturally-specific uniqueness will be a selling point for global niche products. The world's consumers are waiting for products suiting their personalities, interests and desires. Although there are many cultures where conformity is still

implemented, sometimes violently, these ways of thinking will be superseded by the world's interconnected youth, liberated women and mobile workers. Think of the Filipina nurse who has worked in Saudi Arabia or New Zealand. Or the Barbadian restaurant manager who works on a cruise ship serving customers from ten countries traveling to twenty others. These global workers, spread their knowledge and experiences at home and abroad. And that movement is only expanding, not diminishing, as countries continue to build for a rising middle class, and expanding incomes promotes the demand for more professionals and service workers, including foreigners.

A globally mobile workforce is not governed by free trade agreements. Government contracts typically focus on commodity items a country is trying to protect such as wheat, coal, oil and automobiles. But unique items of clothing, or specific learning materials, or household decorations, or technology software or even health remedies face no online barriers to trade. Since individuals rarely turn down an opportunity to make money, even in the face of government policy or their neighbor's disdain, the expanding online marketplace will not be controlled.

These new "Alibaba" entrepreneurs are likely going to be a significant force in influencing the ongoing expansion of a global, free trade, self-supporting, entrepreneurial, technology-driven and controlled, individually-minded world - just like in the Life Online series. This is a case where technology will drive human interaction, not government. Free trade automatically exists online and there is no government ability to end this reality. Even if legislators pulled the plug on the Internet, clever rogue technologists, like Life Online character Zylon Blain and his Cyber Army friends, would figure out how to directly deliver the connection services. Global free trade is a fact of economic life, and online entrepreneurs do not need a trade treaty to work with people all over the world.

However, the ongoing ability of technology to drive our activities, and help us make money, becomes even more ubiquitous in a world where the average entrepreneur has to think of the online presence as a branch of the business, not only a function of the business's administration, like the accounting department. Although earning a living income online increases a person's dependency on Internet technology, the benefits outweigh the risks as the number of people utilizing online services increases exponentially. When being online becomes the only way to function in the economy, the call to create a million jobs in 2017 may end up being completely understated.

For a real world explanation of how the rise of online entrepreneurs will influence and change the market, see another version of this blog created for today's entrepreneurs at my site: <http://www.readyentrepreneur.com>.

Want to discuss these ideas? Send me an email: [casechat\(at\)claneworld\(dot\)com](mailto:casechat(at)claneworld(dot)com).

For more information about the Life Online book series visit my website: <http://www.claneworld.com>.