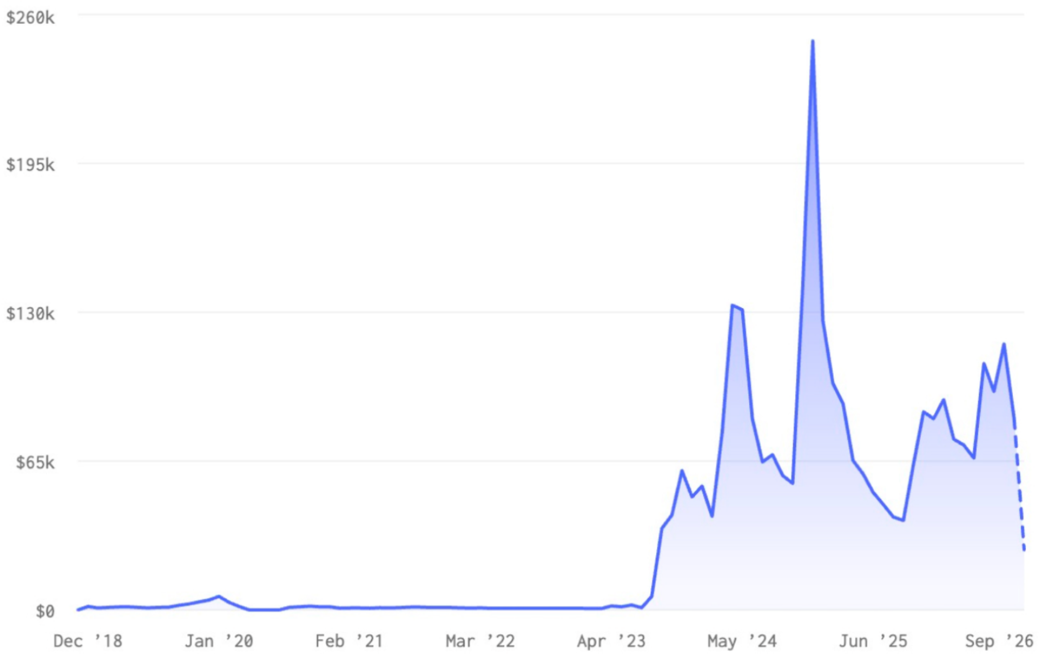
I've made **$3M** with my 36 startups



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@marclou

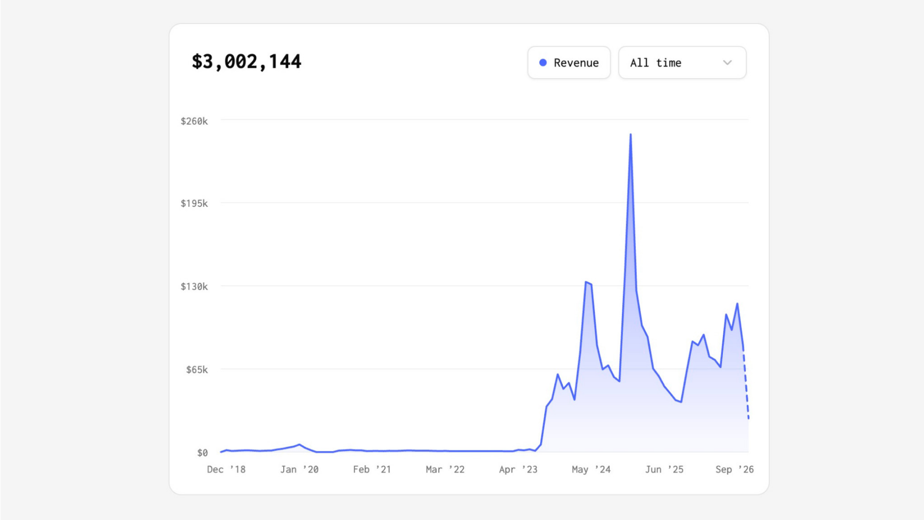
Monday, September 7th, 2026

Today is a special day for me.

I've made $3M with my 36 startups.

Solo.
85% margin.
Bootstrapped.

It took 10 years, and I loved every second of it. Here's my story.



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Mark Zuckerberg Aura

I graduated in Computer Science in 2016. My friends applied for a job in Paris, but it didn't feel right to me. My exchange semester in Hong Kong in 2015 transformed me. I didn't know what I wanted—I just didn't want that.

On a regular hangover Sunday morning (2 pm), I watched The Social Network movie and had an epiphany: **I will be the next Mark Zuckerberg.**

My secret unicorn idea? Tinder for sports lovers. I spent an entire year:

- Learning to code because I was partying instead of studying at the university
- Asking people to sign an NDA to listen to my idea
- Designing a logo and business cards

I was making $10/hour and believed I was Mark Zuckerberg

To pay the bills, I was a waiter in a restaurant in Paris. During my shift, a customer mentioned a new school to learn entrepreneurship.

I was lonely, so I registered. The teacher asked how my startup would make money. I froze. *How come I didn't think about it after a year of work?*

My app was a disaster. Users couldn't even sign up. And I was the only user. My relationship with my girlfriend wasn't working either.

On March 10th, 2017, I quit everything. The next week, my parents drove me to the airport. I cried in the car.

My friend, Sacha, was waiting for me in Seoul, South Korea. We raised $100,000 from angel investors and built an AI startup with 2 employees.

We were trying to reverse-engineer flight ticket pricing to predict future prices. 9 months later, we had a bad product, no income, and I was wearing a shirt every day. So I quit, again.

In December 2017, I was broke, in a foreign country, and had zero self-confidence. I started to smoke again (I smoked for 7 years in university and stopped when I arrived in Korea).

After reflection, a pattern started to emerge: Big goals, big failures.

I saw an ad on Facebook selling gloves for couples (1 big mitten to hold hands together). I decided to copy and sell them on Facebook for Koreans.

As a product-obsessed engineer, I didn't think about dropshipping. I had to build the product. A lovely Korean grandma knitted 50 Glovers™: Gloves for Lovers (I was quite proud of the name).

It took a month and a half to knit 50 Glovers™

My new Korean girlfriend helped with the translation. I burned all of my savings on Facebook Ads (a few hundred dollars) with this video. I made 0 sales.

In January 2018, my 8-square-meter bedroom was filled with Glovers™, but my bank account was empty. At $20 per piece, I had to sell them to pay the rent. My girlfriend and I went down the street every night to sell them.

To brave the minus 15 degrees Korean winter, we had to drink 1 liter of beer before standing in the street for 2 hours. We would sell 2 gloves per day. I would wake up sick and coughing.

What the fuck I am doing with my life?

She said “Yes”

In April 2018, I was more broke than ever, out of shape, and unhealthy. I needed a big change.

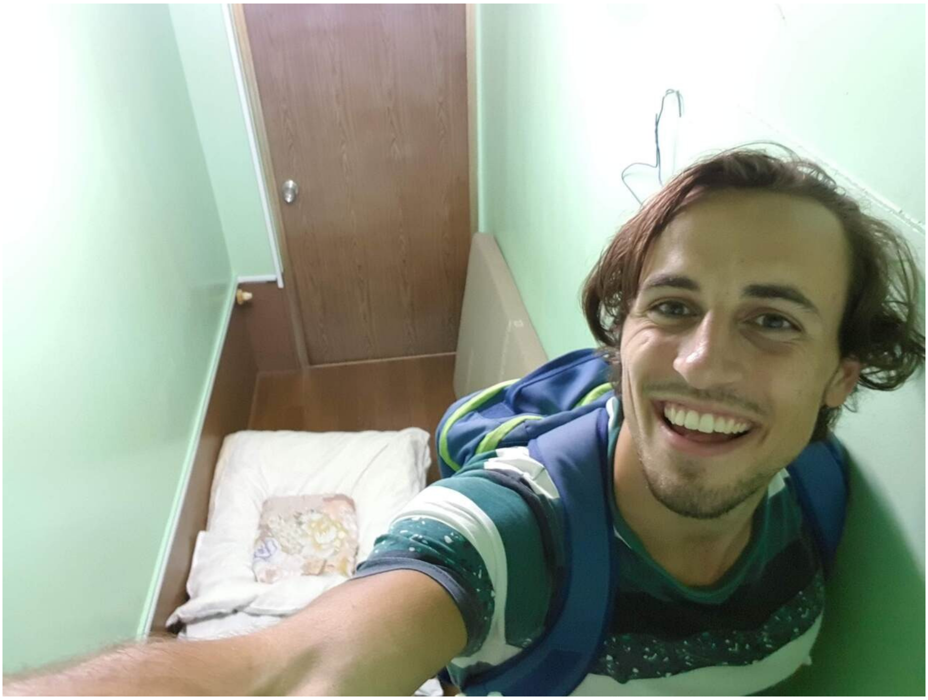
I applied for a second acting role to pay the bills. I would get a call once or twice a week and get paid $200 per gig. Then I started to work out every 2 days for clarity of mind—20 minutes of intense jumping rope. I got shredded in 1 month.

Finally, I set a simple goal: Make $1 online with code.

To avoid another failure, I focused on problems, not products. Every business wants to grow. So I decided to build a gamified marketing tool for escape rooms.

At a startup event, I met Andrey, a talented marketer who became my friend. He said: *Why don’t you sell it before you make it?*

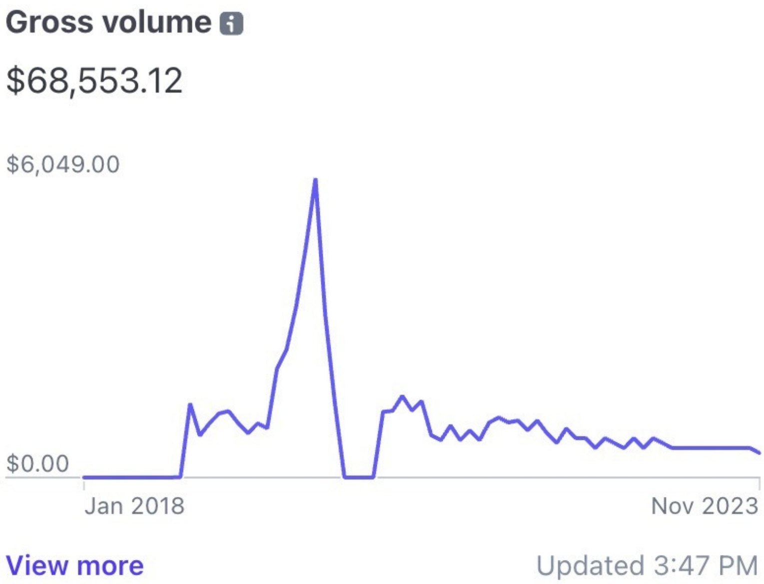
I’m an engineer. I love building. Marketing? Not at all. But I failed for 2 years, so I decided to listen. He taught me the foundation of marketing. After a few cold emails, Daniela from Time's Up Escape Rooms in Australia wanted to learn more about the product over a quick call.



On Friday 13th, 2018, I was in Osaka, Japan for a 3-day visa run. I just had a bad night of sleep in the cheapest guest house I could afford. 9 am. I was in the common area, it was hot, and the wifi was bad. The call started.

There are no words to describe how cringe I was. So here's the intro of the sales pitch. After 42 minutes, she said "yes". By the end of the day, she subscribed to the $99 monthly plan. YES!

I went back to Korea and built the product. That call started a SaaS business called ViralIyBot. It made ~$100,000 ($30K in old PayPal account).



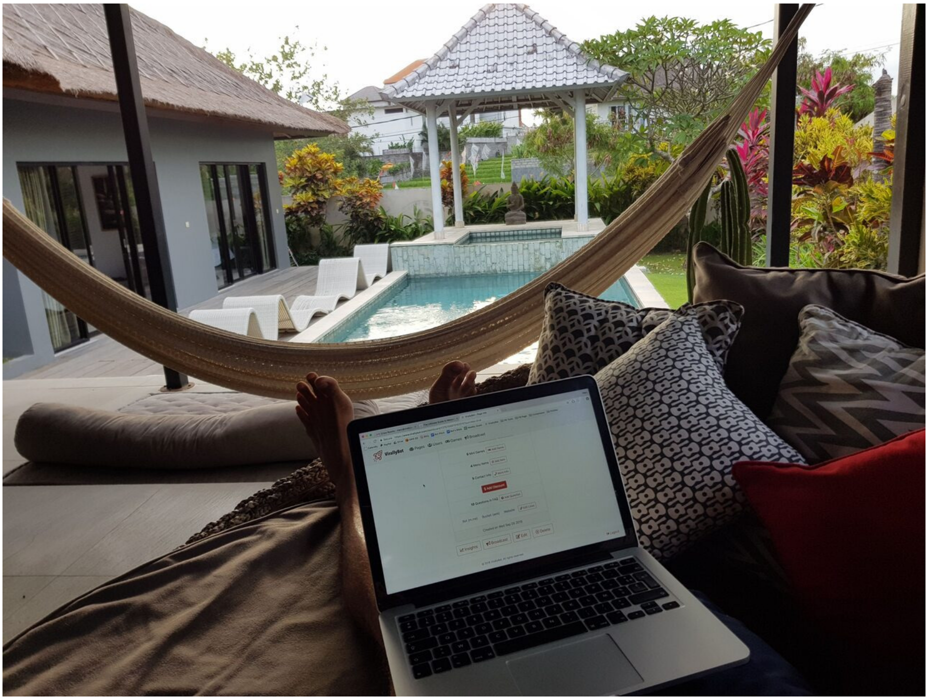
1 call paid the bills for 5 years

Growing a SaaS

After making my first $1 online in 2018, my Korean girlfriend and I had no reason to stay in Seoul anymore. We'd rather be somewhere hot and cheap. So we moved to Bali in September.

I was working on ViralIyBot: a gamified marketing tool for escape room businesses, priced at $199/month. A typical day would be:

- Marketing in the morning: Collecting leads and sending cold emails. I tried cold calls, but it was not working for me.
- Product in the afternoon: Adding games and features while learning how to code.



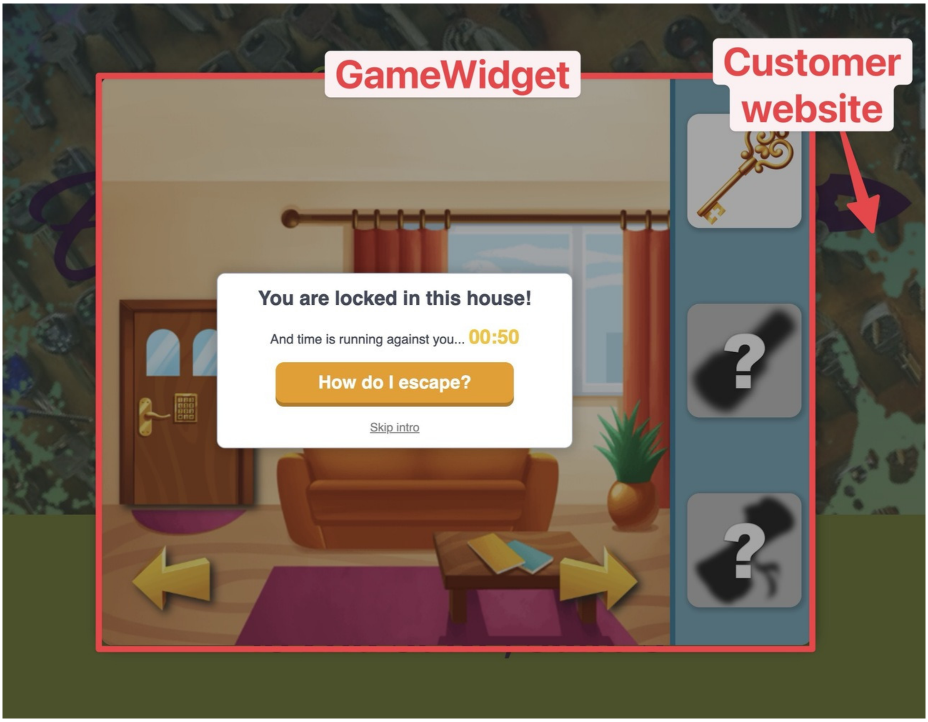
We lived in Canggu with 2 roommates

Life was good. I was not living in a bug-infested room anymore. I learned how to surf, and the SaaS was making $1,500/month.

But churn was high. To earn money with my software, escape rooms had to use it. Most didn't.

I felt like on a treadmill: New customer, new churn. So I offered a yearly plan for $1,999 and got some sales. My revenue hit $3,000 in early 2020. But I was just running faster on the treadmill.

So I built a new product called GameWidget: An embedded mini-game on websites to entertain visitors and offer discount coupons.



Winners of the game get a discount coupon for the escape rooms

Same market (escape rooms) and same strategy (gamification marketing) but different fulfillment. Instead of using the software, my customers just had to add a script to their sites and let the magic happen.

I beta-tested the product for 2 months and the results were impressive: +0.6% conversion rate (3% is considered great in the industry). I was excited.

Failing life

When COVID hit in March 2020, all escape rooms closed. My revenue went to $0 in a week.

I was fortunate to be in Bali because I met Hugues, who became my best friend. We spent 6 months surfing empty waves and talking about life.

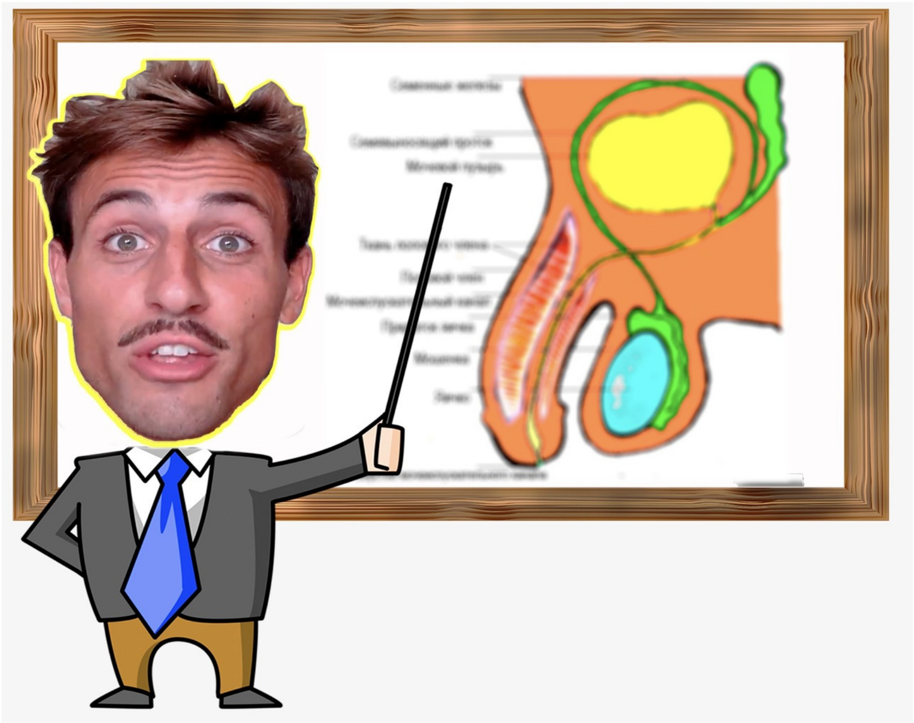
We surfed 6-9-foot waves in tandem

Just like my girlfriend, he never judged me—I could show him every weird side of my personality. Thanks to them, I stopped caring about what others think of me.

In the summer of 2020, my girlfriend and I decided to get married. We flew back to France. My Korean parents did too. The wedding was wonderful. Unfortunately, we couldn't go back to Bali due to COVID restrictions. We lived in Paris with my parents and sisters for 1 year.

I worked on my previous SaaS and got it back to $1,000 MRR, but something was off. I didn't like it anymore, so I quit.

After a few months of nothingness, I had to start something new. Anything. So I launched The Golden Plumber in January 2021. Males often dribble after going to the toilet, due to the nature of our engine—as my sister explained (she's a doctor).



Entrepreneurship at its peak

I created an info-product (2-page PDF) and ran ads on adult websites. I made $4 in 2 months. I quit, again.

My parents gave me $100,000 as an early legacy. I invested everything in Tesla in March 2021, when the stock hit an all-time high. I refused to use the money for at least 20 years. I still believe it's not mine.

2 weeks later, my portfolio went down by -$36,000.

I was 27 years old, broke, and living with my parents. A recurring thought started to echo:

I am a failure…

On Wednesday, 9th, June 2021, while drinking a morning coffee in my bedroom, I started to cry. Sadness turned to anger, and I dug 4 holes in the wall.

Overcoming depression

It's not common to see a 27-year-old boy crying in his mum's arms on the sofa. But life isn't like movies. I needed a change, a big one:

Quit entrepreneurship and get a job.

Within 2 weeks of applying as a software engineer, I got an interview. At the end, HR asked: *Do you want to say anything to Tai Lopez?* It wasn't written on the application, but it was a $9,000/month job offer to work for Tai Lopez. I accepted.

I started reading. I thought I hated books because it was boring in high school. It turned out to be my favorite activity. My first book was "Why We Sleep" by Matthew Walker. It changed my life. I realized I was tired without knowing it. Fixing my sleep unlocked more motivation, happiness, and less anxiety.

While I worked for Tai, I also learned Korean. 1 hour a day, 6 days a week. 3 months later, I could have a conversation with my wife.

My mood improved every day. I was growing, and I finally had a sense of purpose.

In October 2021, we went back home to Bali

In November, I got fired.

But it didn't matter. I was so inspired by Pieter Levels building startups in public that I went back to entrepreneurship. I had a new dream.

Just for fun

When there isn't much happening in your life, it's hard to find a startup idea. I was so frustrated with my previous years of go-big-or-go-home mindset that I needed a simple project everyone could understand.

In December 2021, Mood2Movie was born: A movie recommendation app based on your mood. It sounds fancy, but it's just a simple if [mood], then [movie_genre].

This app got 20K+ visitors by going viral on Hacker News

This project kickstarted my build-in-public journey. The app is free, so I could launch it everywhere on Reddit. One post went viral and got 10K visitors. So I had somewhat valuable content to share on Twitter.

In 6 months, I launched 7 projects without thinking about business, just for fun. **I learned much about coding, SEO, writing, launching, and marketing.** My Twitter account reached 1,000 followers in July 2022.

Meantime, I ate healthy food, prioritized sleep, and worked out every day (surfing or skating). I also raised a chick.

SWE 2020 (left) | Solopreneur 2021 (right)

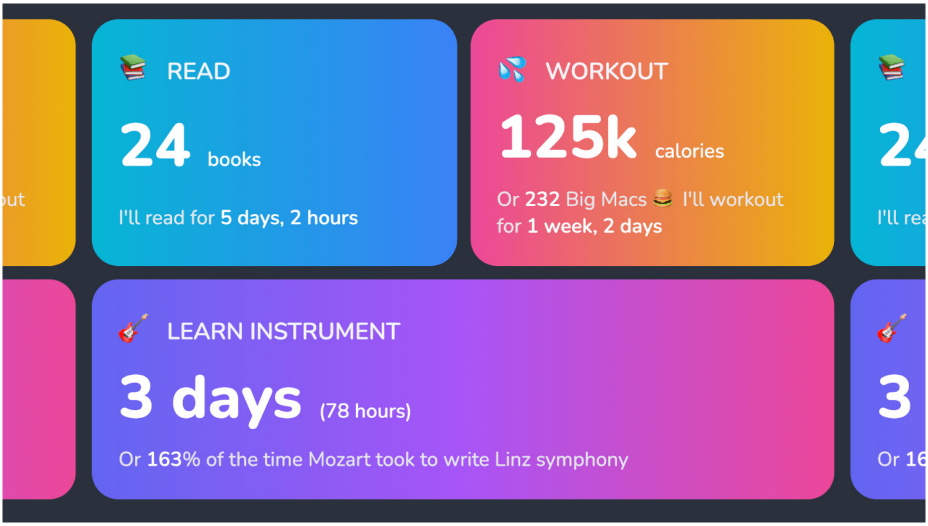
Even though I was making just a few hundred $ a month, it was too much fun to give up.

I fell in love

In August 2022, my gamified habit tracker, Habits Garden, was making ~$200/month, so I went all-in. But I'm a product-obsessed developer. I don't like marketing.

Side-project marketing saved me: Ship free tools to promote a paid one.

For instance, I launched VisualizeHabit—a free tool to visualize the compound effect of tiny habits. I plugged Habits Garden, and it brought 30,000 visitors in 2 months.



If you read 5 minutes/day for 1 year, you'll finish 6 books!

For a side project to work, I had to be good at launching. I started to make fun launch videos. People enjoyed and shared them, creating a viral loop. Each side project grew my Twitter following and brought decent traffic.

Skit for the launch of ByeDispute

Thanks to side-project marketing and launch videos, Habits Garden reached 10,000 users in January 2023.

Users requested a mobile app. I had no idea how to code it, but I tried. After 14 days with the help of my friend Martin, Habits Garden was live on the App Store and the Play Store.

It was making $700/month. Not bad, but not worth 6 months of my life. **I fell in love with the wrong product.**

Back on the grind

Early 2023, I sold a micro-startup I built in 2021. It was making $80/month and was acquired for $4,300. I had stories to tell. My Twitter account grew by ~50 followers a day.

But I was still not making enough to cover my cheap lifestyle.

So I did the 2021 strategy again: **Ship startups like a madman**. But this time, I applied some rules:

- No free plan
- Only painkiller product
- Move on if no product-market fit

I built 8 startups in 8 months. 6 made money. 2 paid the bills. **Ship fast, launch viral, repeat**. In July 2023, I was making ~$3,000/month.

60% of my revenue came from MakeLanding, an AI landing page generator. I tried to grow it but failed. I didn't use the product, and I didn't care about the market. I just built the startup out of AI FOMO.

In August 2023, my whole family flew to South Korea, where my wife and I remarried. It was wonderful.

Product-market fit, finally

Holidays are magic. When I left for Korea in August 2023, my head was full of questions. When I came back, it was obvious: **I must build a business for customers I care about.** So I quit all my faceless AI projects and focused on products I'd use.

I sold my AI landing page generator for $35,000 and my habit tracker for $10,000. It gave me time and clarity. I wrote about the process and the outcome.

On September 1st, I launched ShipFast, a NextJS boilerplate to ship startups fast. I packed 2 years of shipping knowledge in a GitHub repo.

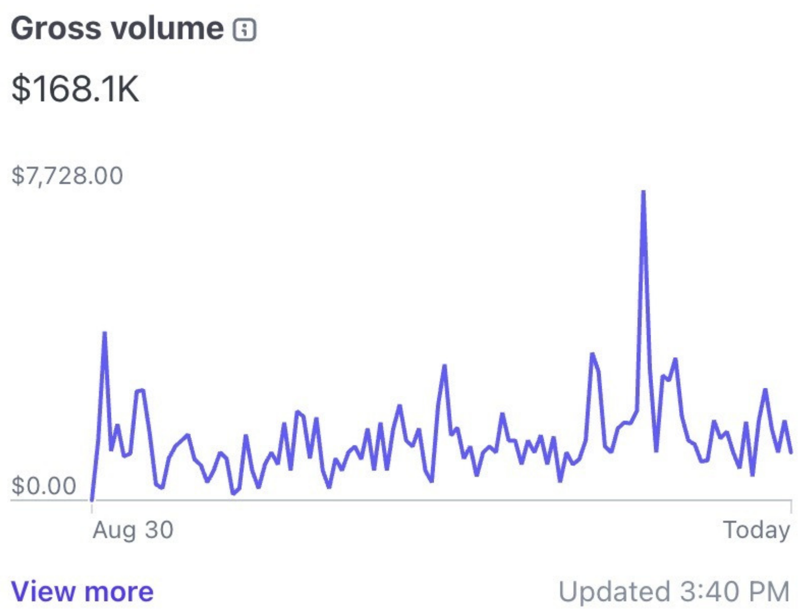
I told my wife we'd be lucky if we made $100 with it. By the end of the month, ShipFast made $40,000. I was blown away. **It's hard to describe product-market fit, but when it hits, it's clear**.

I kept adding features while tweeting about it. I received tons of testimonials from customers who made their first $1 online thanks to the boilerplate. I was happy.

I also launched ByeDispute: A no-code tool to prevent Stripe chargebacks.

In November, my revenue hit **$65,400/month at a 91% margin and 0 employees**. By the end of 2023, ShipFast alone made almost $200,000 in total revenue.

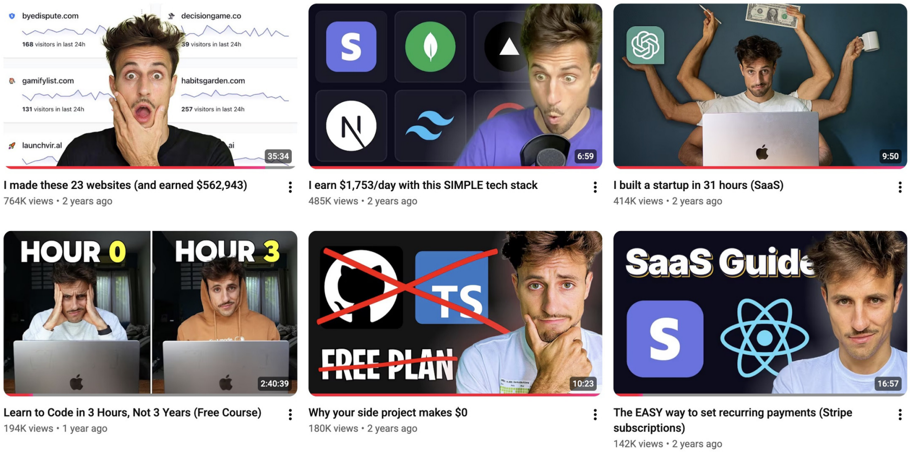
It felt so good to be financially rewarded for my last 7 years of work.



Old Stripe screenshot taken on December 17th, 2023

Rat race

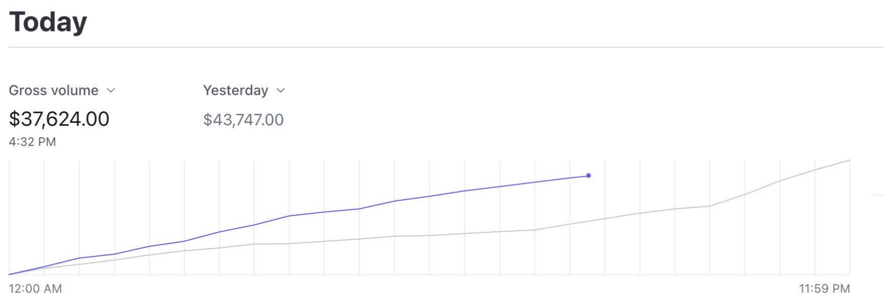
I started a YouTube channel in 2024.



The videos made ShipFast hit $133,000 in monthly revenue in April 2024. The YouTube channel quickly grew to 100K followers because I had a story and numbers to back it up.

This made me overconfident. I started to believe I was Alex Hormozi for developers, so I doubled down on content and info-products.

People kept asking how I learned to code under my videos, so I built CodeFast. It took 9 months working 6 hours a day. It made $100,000 in 2 days.



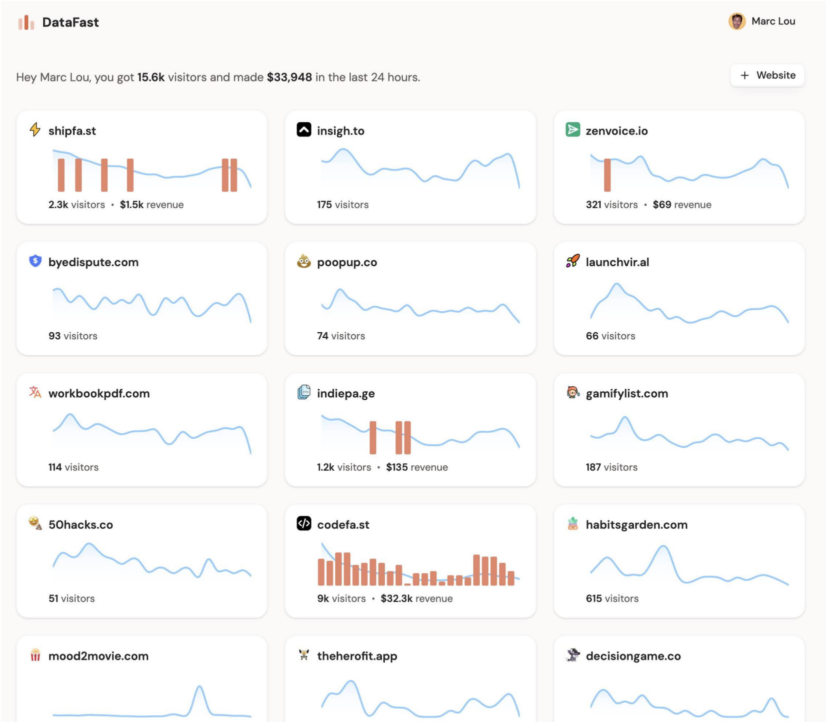
CodeFast's launch video was my favorite part of building this product

My mood was negatively affected by the ups and downs in revenue. One month I could make $120K, the next $40K. I told myself it's stupid to stress because I'm still making very good money, but it's hard to ignore degrowth.

I wish I could tell you I was happy making $1.2M by the end of 2024, but realistically, **it felt like a rat race where I had to work harder and harder to keep the numbers up.**

First love

I launched DataFast in October 2024.



I connected Stripe with web analytics to find out my best marketing channels

It reached $300 MRR in 2 weeks.

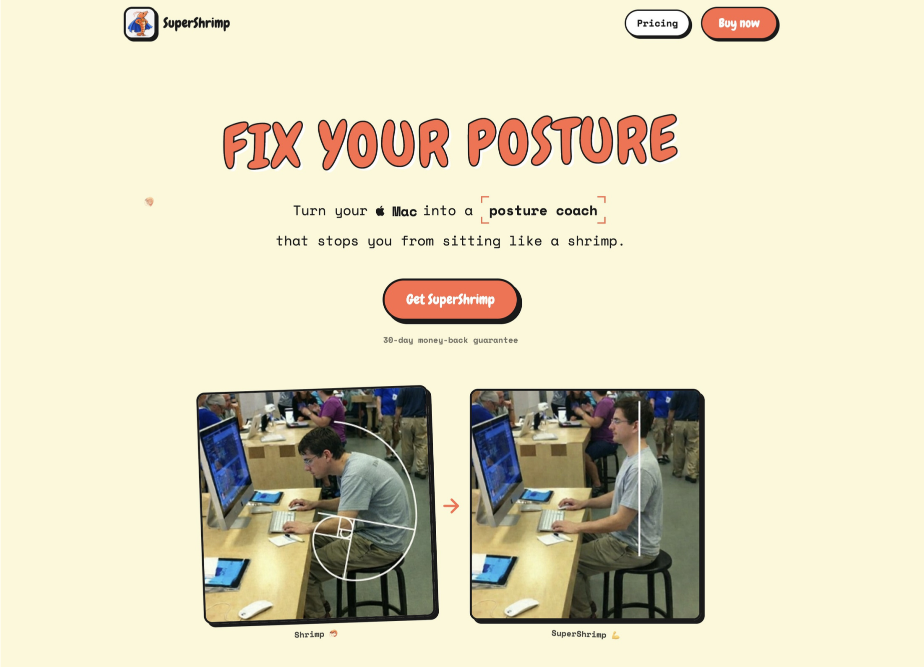
The revenue was ridiculous compared to CodeFast, but **it saved me**. After spending 9 months making videos, I felt happiness finally building features people could use and touch. I know it sounds weird, but that's my happy place.

I realized I had to go back to my first love: building apps out of curiosity, not revenue opportunity.

Builder mindset

When I started building in public, I had one goal in mind: **1 startup per month.**

I drifted in 2024, but I was back in 2025. I built BioAge, SuperShrimp, and many other little projects that never really made money, and my overall revenue went down, but it didn't matter. **I was having fun again.**



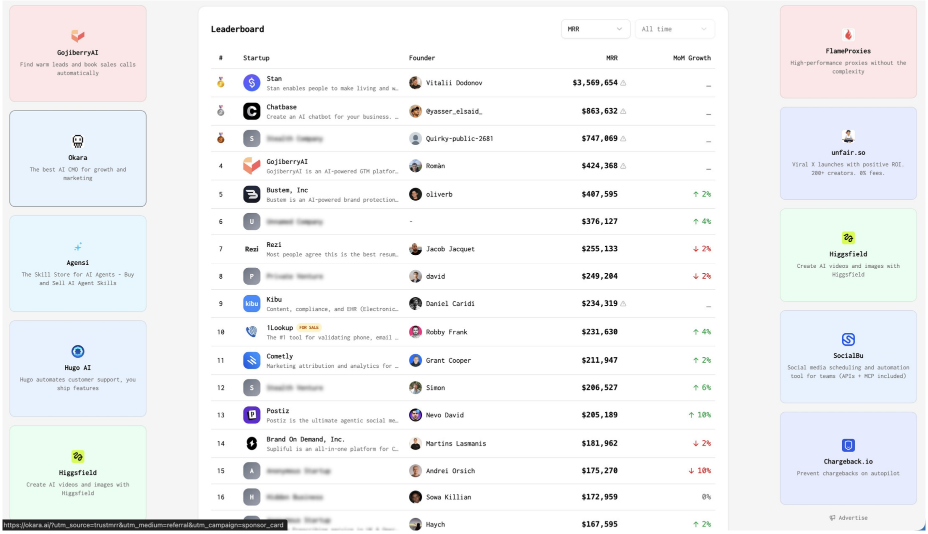
I also prioritized other aspects of life and worked less.

My wife and I travelled the world: New Zealand, South Korea, Bali, South Africa, Greece. And I started running and lifting weights.

10% rule

I launched TrustMRR on October 30th, 2025.

24 hours later, it was making $20,000/month in ad placements. I vibe-coded the platform in 6 hours.



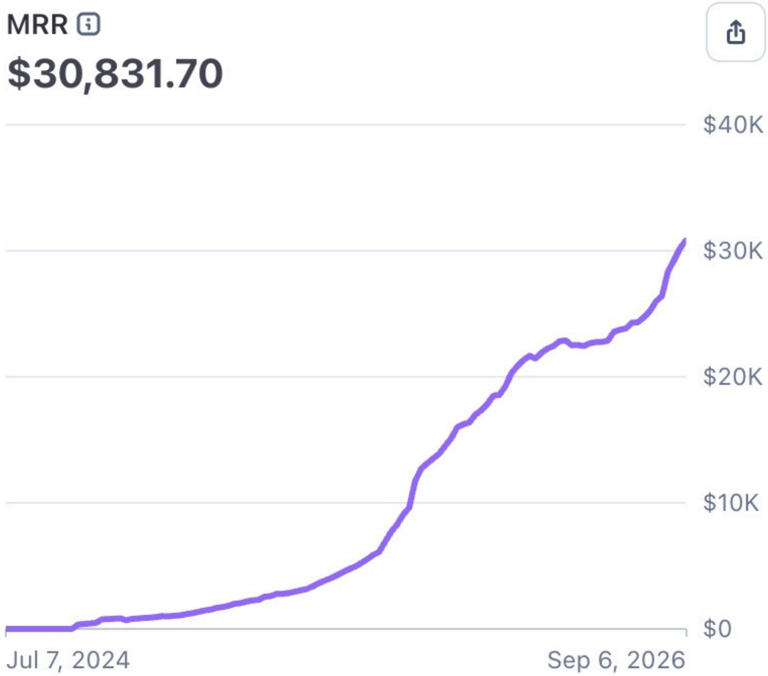
The hype died the next month, so I started building verticals to keep the project afloat. After 10 failures, the startup marketplace took off in January 2026. Someone made an offer to acquire TrustMRR for $1M. I rejected the offer.

7 months later:

- 164 founders got acquired
- 200K people visit the site every month
- and I've made almost $400,000

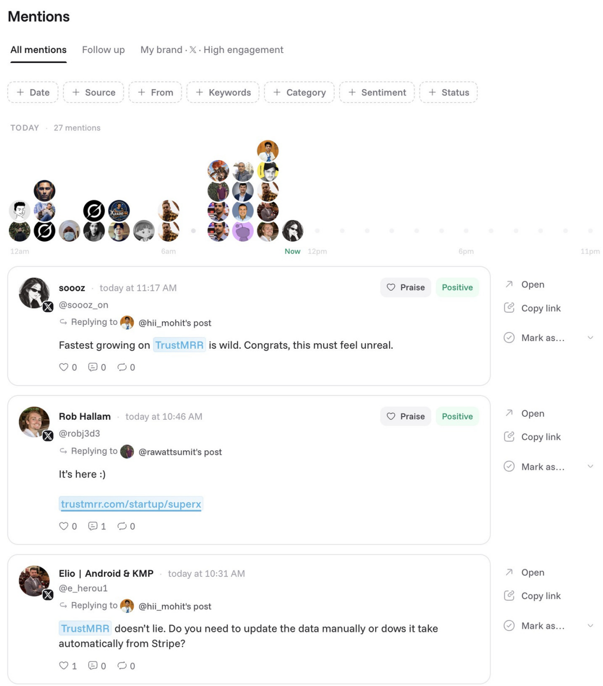
I've documented TrustMRR's journey here.

Meanwhile, I added features to DataFast, and it kept growing. As I'm writing this in September 2026, it's now at $30,831 MRR and ~7% churn.



I launched Stalkr in August 2026 and got my first customers.

It's doing $223 MRR, which is very tiny compared to my other products, but it doesn't matter! I build tools for myself, and I'm having fun.



Stalkr is how I find testimonials, feature ideas, and bug reports for my products.

I see a recurring pattern: **I have no idea what's going to work**.

ShipFast and TrustMRR blew up overnight. DataFast was slow and steady. My other 30 startups never really made money.

90% of my 36 startups failed. And it's OK! My goal is to build stuff that makes me happy, even if it doesn't make money.

Starting over

Back in 2016, when I started, I believed I would make it.

If I had known it would take 7 years of failure, I probably would never have started.

That's why I'm stupidly optimistic.

I don't think in years. I don't dream big.

I think in weeks. I build tiny projects fast. And I quit even faster.

That's how I wake up happy, enjoy the journey, and eventually build life-changing projects.

If you've been following the journey, thank you. You've given my posts a sense of purpose, which has kept me going, and I'm very grateful for this.

I root for you and your projects. ❤️

PS. Here’s my little portfolio of everything I built