

Going Full Indie

From side project to the best job you've
ever had

Emmanuel Crouvisier | Deep Dish Swift 2023

Introduction

- Launched 4 indie apps over the last 10 years
 - ... made \$200
- But then I launched CardPointers in 2019
 - ... which made \$500
 - ... until 2020 (added in-app purchases)
- Never officially hired as an iOS developer
- If I can do this, so can you

November 10, 2021

Quit

11/10/21, 09:15

Mark as Completed



Remind Me in an Hour



Remind Me
This Afternoon



Remind Me Tomorrow



3 Acts

Act 1

Build

Act 1: Build

Scratch your own itch

- Find a pain point in your life which others have, and fix it
- Especially great idea for indies
- Encourages “dog-fooding” your own app to continually make it better and stay motivated

Act 1: Build

Niches can be great

- Large companies want large markets
 - Keep costs low, and you don't need a lot of users to make a lot of money
- Underserved communities exist all over the internet
 - Reddit, Facebook, private forums, and more
- Bonus: If you picked a niche you're already into, it's a natural fit so engage in those communities organically. But don't spam.

Act 1: Build

Test the idea

- Build an MVP over a short period (even a web app)
 - Jordi Bruin has a great talk on Gumroad with his 2-2-2 method
 - Visualize the app in 2 hours
 - Make a rough version of the app in 2 days
 - Publish it on the App Store in 2 weeks
- Share what you're building in the previous communities and get feedback
- Look for patterns in responses, don't take individual feedback personally, ignore outliers
- Most users will say they'll pay for something, but won't, so focus on helping solve a problem that saves them time or money, and if they keep using it

Act 1: Build

Competition is okay

- Once companies get big enough, they tend to be slow to change direction
- If some aspect of the market/space isn't covered at all, they may never get to it — could be a good opportunity
- Not a zero-sum game, everyone's needs and preferences are different

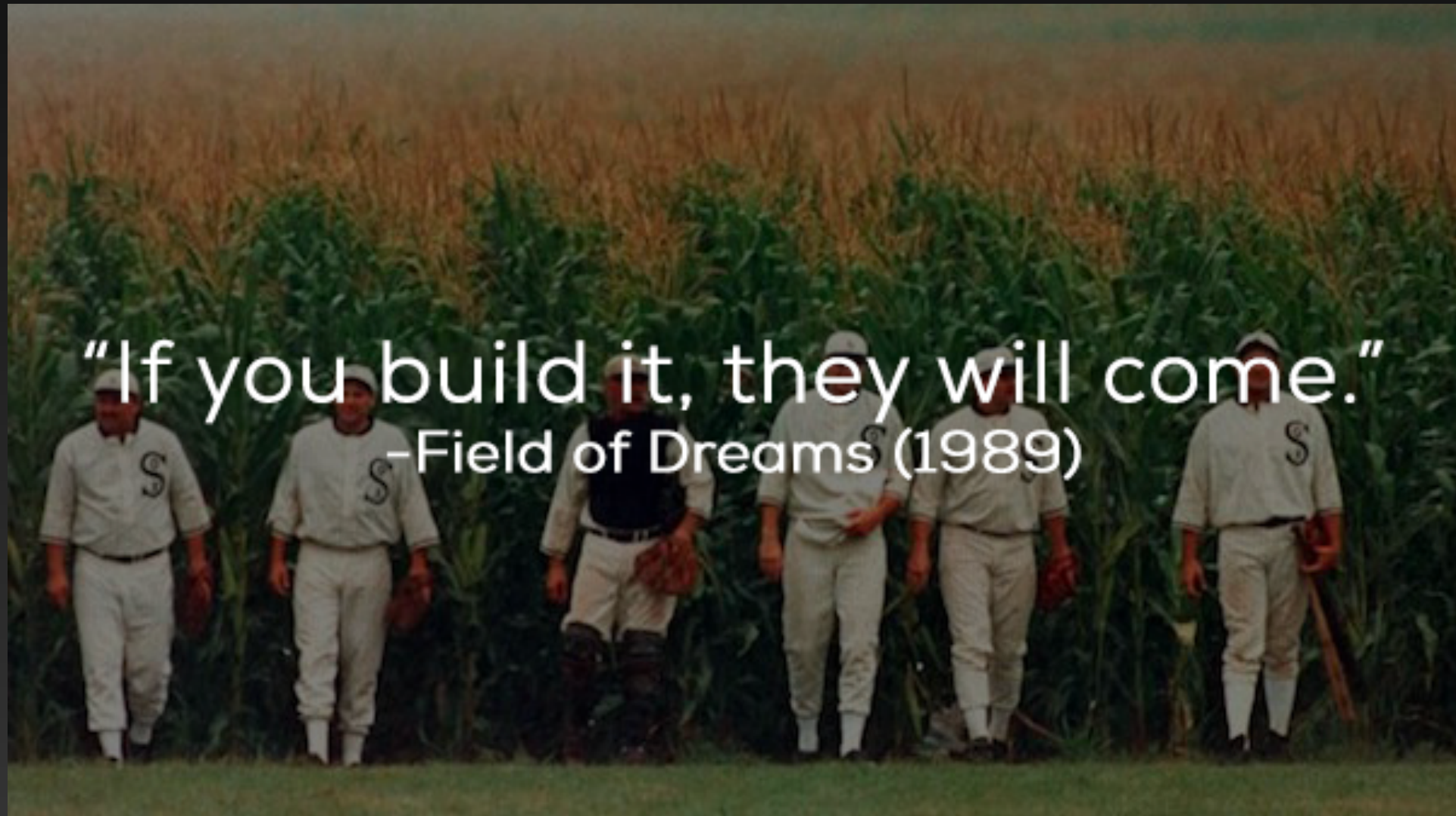
Act 1: Build

Launch

- Don't over-build or chase perfection, especially your v1
 - Keep MVPing future versions
- Accept that v1 will be the worst your app will ever be — it will get A LOT better
- Share what you've built with the communities you joined before

Act 2: Grow

Spoiler: they probably won't



Act 2: Grow

7 Marketing Pillars

- Organic: Communities + Word-of-Mouth
- App Store
- Content (SEO + Social Media)
- Rev-Share / Affiliates
- Notifications (email + push)
- Press
- Paid Ads

Act 2: Grow

Organic: Communities + Word-of-Mouth

- The world is very social now, people will organically share what they like
- Engage in communities and see what people are saying
 - Be yourself! Be indie and proud, you're unique
- F5Bot to track keywords on any subreddit (f5bot.com)
- Google Alerts to track mentions on Google (google.com/alerts)
- Twitter search for mentions
- Bonus: if you're building an app in a niche you love, you'll discover new communities

Act 2: Grow

App Store: Editorial / Feature Lists

- Being in the App Store for a big new OS launch can be game-changing for Indies
- Submit promo request form to Apple Editorial
 - developer.apple.com/contact/app-store/promote
- 1-2 months before expected release and announcement day
- Highlight new API and device features in particular
- Apple wants to sell iPhones, you want to sell your app, match made in heaven
- Submit for every big app update, and try to tie in to holidays and seasonal events
- Make it easy for the editors to say yes to include your app

Act 2: Grow

App Store Optimization

- Never been able to move the needle in my niche
- Catch Ariel's talk next, he's the expert (AppFigures is awesome)

Act 2: Grow

Content: Social Media

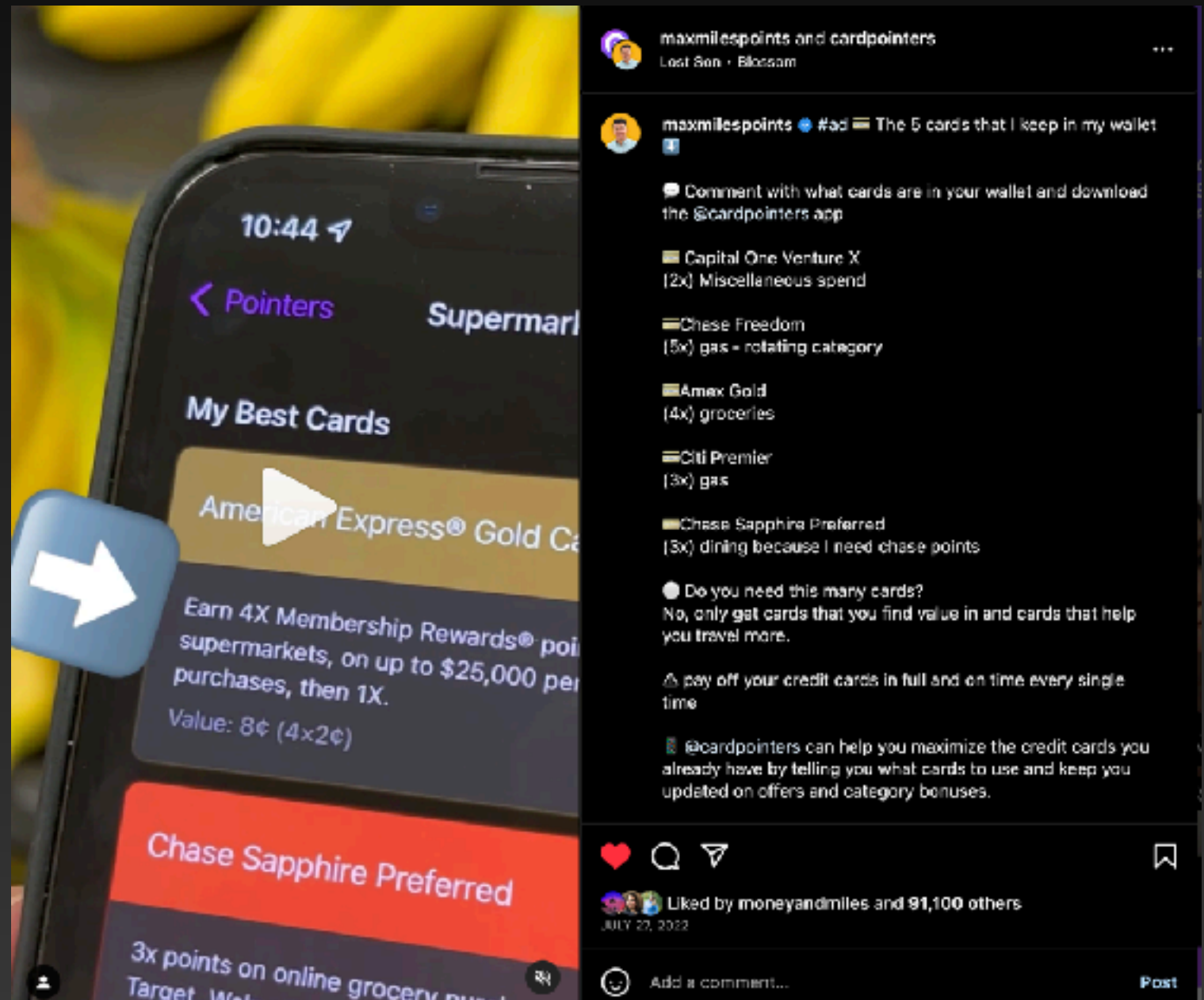
- Video is king
 - Tips & Tricks to using the app, showing what problem it solves, etc
 - screen.studio is amazing
 - Made be an indie who quit his job
- Cross-post to TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, etc

Act 2: Grow

Social Media: Example

**The 5 cards
in my wallet
and the
CardPointers
App**

▶ 2.4M



Act 2: Grow

Content: Search Engine Optimization

- If applicable, share app content on the web
 - Long-tail can be amazing
 - Convert users from site
 - Long-term play

Act 2: Grow

Rev-Share / Affiliate Marketing

- Big network effect from working with content creators in your niche
 - Attribution is hard
 - Use incentivized offers to get users to use specific links
 - Make links easy, e.g. cardpointers.com/max
 - Most users don't check the "link in bio"
- Rev-share means the more they make, the more you make
- Send through web checkout to save 15-30% App Store commissions, pay to creators instead
- A lot of creatives aren't business people, keep them in the loop and share data

Act 2: Grow

Notifications (email + push)

- Best way to re-engage existing users, especially with a freemium product
 - Use Sign in with Apple to get emails
 - Store token for silent push notifications (no opt-in needed), or use local
- Send communications users want to open
- Let users customize which notifications to receive, and 1-click unsubscribe
- Discounts convert existing users really well (50% off is sweet spot)
- Automate cancelation and churn emails (RevenueCat webhooks are awesome)
 - Plain text converts better than a fancy HTML email and takes far less time
 - Follow up with a discount after x days to try to win them back

Act 2: Grow

Press

- Not as important as it used to be, especially at indie scale
 - Big dopamine hit when you see your name in your favorite blog, though!
- Short emails to targeted journalists, include link to Press Kit
 - ImpressKit.net is great (also made by an indie)
 - Make their jobs easy
- Keep a spreadsheet of mentions to correlate w/changes

Act 2: Grow

Paid Ads

- Personally, I hate ads, but they can work
- Experiment and see if you can make them work for you

Act 3

Profit

Act 3: Profit

How much can I make?

- B2C means a huge market of over 1 Billion iPhone users
- \$30 annual x 5,000 users = \$150,000 per year
 - Recurring revenue is like crack
 - Err, like compounding interest
- Example 1: No growth, \$150k new revenue per year, 50% retention:
 - Year 2: \$225k
 - Year 3: \$262k
- Example 2: 50% growth YOY, 50% retention:
 - Year 2: \$300k
 - Year 3: \$487k

Act 3: Profit

Lifetime Option

- Sweet spot is 3x annual price
- Avoid if you have high per-user costs
- Most users don't use an app for 3+ years
 - Early, happy users will be your biggest cheerleaders
- Upfront capital to invest back into business and grow
- Users love options — but make default what YOU want

Act 3: Profit

Reality

- With a freemium product, only around 5% of users will typically pay
- Growth will plateau
 - Over 1 billion iPhone users in the world
 - Motivation to try something different to reach new users
- Big goals can take a while; zoom out for the big picture

Act 3: Profit

Run your business like a business

- Make it easy to get paid — show your paywall
 - Most paid users will choose to pay during onboarding
 - Even Apple recommends this in their documentation as of last year
- Pricing is hard — test, test, test
 - Don't undersell yourself
 - Increase prices over time, but notify users a week before (ideally with a discount)
- Every month try to find 1 new way to get a new sale each day
 - \$30 annuals x 30 days = \$900 new MRR (\$10k more per year)
- Web checkout (Stripe) instead of App Store and Google Play (stay in SBP)
- Accountants can save a lot of money: S-Corp election, expense purchases, etc.

Act 3: Profit

Customer Support

- In-app contact button and on website
- Read all your support emails (sometimes it hurts)
 - Helps to understand pain points
 - Users don't expect replies - shock them! Use snippets
 - A form of torturing myself until I fix whatever is causing an issue
- Help Center
 - Huge help in cutting down support requests, mosts users just want answers, not to talk with you
 - Launched 6 months ago using Help Kit (helpkit.so, also made by an indie)

Act 3: Profit

Time is Precious

- You'll get emails from users and firms wanting to invest, buy the business, collaborate, etc
 - Almost never worth the time for a call, ask for email summary
- Do what YOU want with your time
- Build for your users and you (but don't forget to market!)
- Set goals for yourself to help stay on track, but enjoy life and family

Act 3: Profit

When to go all-in

- Very personal decision
 - My process: revenue coming in on the side from the app while working a “normal” job and set aside x months of money to live off of should all revenue stop
- Great thing about tech jobs: still in demand, so it’s always possible to fall back to a 9-5
- Having 100% focus on your indie app can lead to amazing results

The Beginning

(not the end)

Questions?

YOU'RE STILL HERE?

**IT'S OVER. GO
HOME.**

memegenerator.com