10 Tips to become a maker

Being a maker
This means different things for different people. There are a ton of ways to refer to a maker/indie maker/indie hacker/bootstrapper/etc. There are similarities and differences between them all. Some make things for fun, practice, sustainable business, money, lifestyle, raise funding, etc. I think the best thing here is that you can be more than one thing at any time and have multiple goals in mind. I call myself a maker and I build things for fun, to share with others and hopefully build a sustainable business.

Ideas
Ideas are not the be-all end-all. Your idea is not special/unique/wonderful/amazing. - But what if it is? **It isn't.**The ideas which turn out the best often start out looking horrible. Airbnb started by renting out a spare air mattress in your living room - the idea of a stranger sleeping in your living room looked like a terrible idea at first! If your idea is good then you're not the only one who's ever thought of it. Seriously you're not. So where does that leave us... build something to solve a problem you experience, that's close to you and your friends. Build something for the fun of it or for the challenge of it. We all have loads of ideas all the time, so think about them in the context of #1. When some don't work, throw them away (It's not a baby) and on to the next.

See if you can replicate a good business by piecing together no-code tools and a niche you're pumped about. (e.g. How Mike Williams took the Airbnb model and made Studiotime, a booking service for music studios - [story here](#)).

Tools
In this day and age there are endless tools out there to help you get something built. There are tools which offer out of the box solutions to your favourite startups (like Studiotime above). Your job here is to find the tools, test them out, see what you like, what works for you, what's got the right pricing and always think how you can connect it with another tool to replicate a process. When I found Airtable I thought it looks like a great 'fake' database tool. It's got a small learning curve (and great

learning tools anyway), pricing is reasonable to build lots of tables, I can link it to other services using Zapier pretty easily, there are others recommending it left right and centre. Let's give it a go!

p.s. people think I'm against coding...I'm not! I wish I learnt to code and I will (someday properly). If code is your tool, then use it!

I'll be doing mini-reviews on no-code tools on the site so keep your eyes peeled for those

Finding time

Getting to the point, you can **always** find time. If it means waking up 30 mins earlier, watching a little less TV, etc. The good news is you can build something within minutes with the tools out there today. If you say you don't have time to build something you want to build then frankly I think you should think about building something else. You clearly aren't passionate enough on this thing (that's ok), so just move on. (This is applicable in 99.9% of cases)

Making excuses

Similar to finding time, people always make excuses about why they can't do this or that. If a tool can't do that thing you want it to then see if there's a workaround by linking other services together, try another tool or settle on something that isn't quite perfect. An 80% solution is better than a 100% solution which never launches. If it's a skill you lack, then learn it from YouTube videos, courses, blog posts. I'm the type of person who likes to click around and figure it out myself.

Getting started

There's no big secret here (much the same as the other tips!)... just get started! It's like any habit (gym, meditation, learning a language etc). Don't wait until Monday or the 1st of the month. Sites like IndieHackers are great for reading inspirational stories or listening to the podcasts about founders who were once in your shoes. The only issue is...when you're consuming said stories, guess what? You're not fucking building anything. So make sure you do both!

How to build

Ok so you think of something or find a product/service and then how do you *actually* build it... well that is the big question! There is no one right way, whatever works for you - you've just got to figure that out. I wrote about a few ways to build some simple things on [MakerPad](#): screen casting business, podcast, job board, course, membership site, community, productised service. These (if nothing else) can be great practice in figuring out your maker process, stretching your maker muscles and experiencing the learning curve of building and shipping.

Creating a process

You can read all day every day about how different products are made. Some people have scrappy MVPs and launch them while continuously chatting with users, others run user interviews around a problem before thinking of a way to solve it, some offer a product/service with an illusion of working technology where the backend is very manual ([great article on that here about ClassPass](#)). Many start off in different ways but the 'figuring it out' and 'product market fit' stages are often similar in taking their existing product, pivoting or slightly changing how its executed/what it offers and running the user interview loop until they find the AHA! moment, or die. So using the later stage as inspiration, I do that at the early stage instead. I build something in a few hours at most (not weeks or months) spread over a few days so I at least have a base-product that users can see what I'm trying to provide. Then 'launch' it as if it were a fully functional product with 10 employees. The end goal for the users still need to be met (however the sausage is made) so don't promise something you actually can't deliver. Why do I do it this way? Because I like to build things, I can build them swiftly, validation & payments come quickly and I can reach out to users super easily.

Find your tribe

Honestly you should find a platform that suits you (finding things that suit you is a bit of a theme here isn't it?!), whether that's WIP, IndieHackers, ProductHunt, Women Make, etc. You can find value in all places of the internet. I'm a member of several of these communities which I dip in and out of from time to time. PH is obviously my most active (*I used to work there too*) and it's been a tremendous source of inspiration before and since.

You might think the internet is crowded with maker communities and you're not wrong. But for me I think there is a gap where people who *want to learn to* be makers can go, so that's why I set up the [MakerPad community](). I don't like Telegram chats, Slack seems unbearably baron or unbearably busy - also these are more fitting for real-time messaging. So I decided to use a trusty forum

Identify your weaknesses
We all have weaknesses (talking more about maker-related than personal here, folks). You essentially have two options:
1. Get strong where you are weak. Study, read, take courses etc.
2. Get help from others who are strong where you are weak.

Number one is great and all, I'm all for improving yourself where you can, but not at the cost of doing something else more valuable. Number two is the most effective.

> Set and enforce an aspirational personal hourly rate. If fixing a problem will save less than your hourly rate, ignore it. If outsourcing a task will cost less than your hourly rate, outsource it.
> — Naval (@naval) [May 31, 2018]()

Using me as an example to explain. I dislike copywriting and I'm pretty sure I'm average at best at it (even that sentence doesn't seem right does it?!) so for a landing page of a tech product I launch, I hire the help of something much more qualified than me. Recently I did this for a past project and it cost me $400. We had one hour call to discuss the points to get across, the type of language, a feel for the product and goals etc etc. She did brilliant work (much better than I could have!) with a few revisions we were done. Simple as that. I used the time not spent googling and scouring thesaurus.com building the product and speaking to users. A much better use of our time.

There are times, however, like with MakerPad where the content is actually from my mouth. These tips are expressed in the way I say them in my head or to people I speak with. I like that it's more personal. It's me to you. It won't work for all your audience (I was once described as 'dreadfully dull' 😅) - *That's totally fine, my style and voice won't resonate with everyone.*

I want the tool reviews I'm working on to not be a big content piece I dread to write and you dread to read for 15+ minutes. It needs to be authentic. I want to do them super to-the-point, with the essential info you need, consumed in less than 5 minutes.

(Cough, cough... find whatever suits you and works best for you in order to provide value continually)

[Bonus tip] **Experiment**
Things fail a lot and often. So don't get too attached. The beauty of learning to make things quickly means that a lot less seems to be on line line. People make the mistake of pushing something out and thinking ou just haven't paid for enough distribution yet. But maybe your baby is just that ugly.

If you're paying for users and the product/service isn't hitting a nerve for others to share organically, then you're a sitting duck. Incumbents can bleed you out.