



How I Went From Software Engineer To Copywriter (And Made \$150K In Just 18 Months)

 christopher silvestri

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[ABOUT](#)
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[TOOLS](#)
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christopher silvestri
Founder, [Conversion Alchemy](#)



\$8.5K
REVENUE/MO

1
FOUNDERS

0
EMPLOYEES

Hello! Who are you and what business did you start?

Hi, my name is Chris (actually Christopher, but only my mom when she's mad calls me that). I'm the founder and chief conversion copywriter at [Conversion Alchemy](#). We're a conversion copywriting agency helping 7, and 8-figure SaaS and E-commerce businesses understand their customers, so they can convert more of the right website visitors into excited buyers.

Typically these are companies with anything between 20 and 100-150 employees that have product-market fit but are either hitting a plateau or need to reposition themselves. They're mostly bootstrapped, but we've also worked with VC-funded businesses. Annual revenue is anything between \$2M and \$8M.

We typically work on **website copywriting projects**. That involves the research, the writing, and the wireframing (layout of the website). Recently we started including UI design, too, as I noticed a lot of clients struggled to find a reliable designer in a reasonable amount of time, after we worked together. We also offer smaller introductory productized services like website teardowns, usability and AB testing, and **consulting/coaching packages**.

In the last year in business we've made around \$8,600 per month (\$149,194 since starting out 19 months ago). And we did it with just myself (a non-native speaker writing in English), a virtual assistant - and exclusively on referrals.



Never mind the prison tattoos, I'm a nice person 

“ Unless you know where you're headed, you won't make it work. Have an idea of what you want to achieve, what you want to learn, what type of work you want to do, and the type of people you want to deal with. Then focus and go all-in.

What's your backstory and how did you come up with the idea?

I'm Italian and I moved to the UK in 2018. Before, I had been a software engineer in the automation industry for 10 years, programming automatic assembly machines for the biomedical industry. I switched back and forth between my desk and the workshop, where we were testing these robot-like machines designed to replace manual labor and increase productivity in factories. I typically traveled the world 2-3 months out of the year, to install these machines at the client's site.



At my old job as a software engineer, location: Taiwan

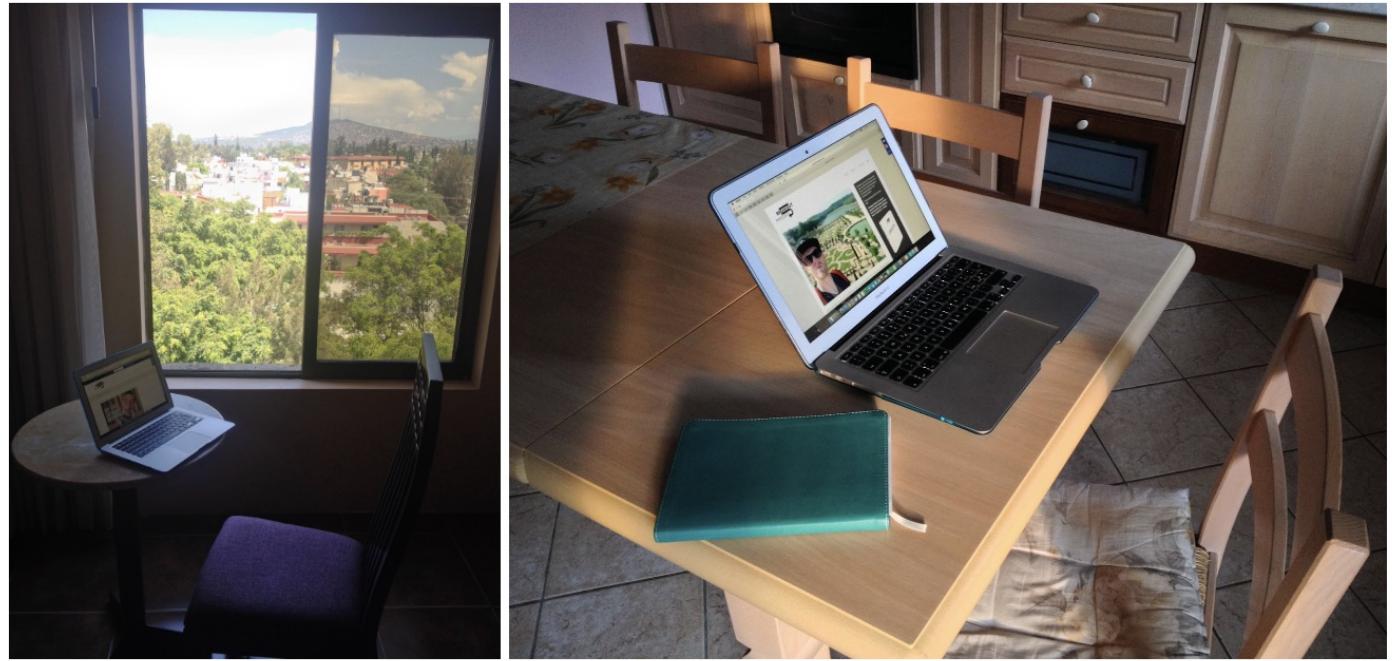
How and why did I get into that? Like most entrepreneurs, initially, you just follow the motions. My technical high school degree said that that was the next step, and I took it. It was pretty frictionless - and comfortable. I'm also a drummer, and at the time, I had a **punk rock band**. We toured Europe, Italy, and Russia (twice). It was fun, and I would have loved to do more of that. Thing is, I had a full-time job. And one that was tying me to the workplace too. In order to leave for a one or two-week tour, I had to beg for time off, 3 months in advance. It was a pain.



Tour life (in my PTO) with my band

So I decided to take the matter into my own hands. And I stumbled on the online marketing space. For 3-4 years I tried a ton of things. An SEO writing agency, first writing myself and then outsourcing content. Then an Amazon FBA business selling Yoga straps, then a couple (not

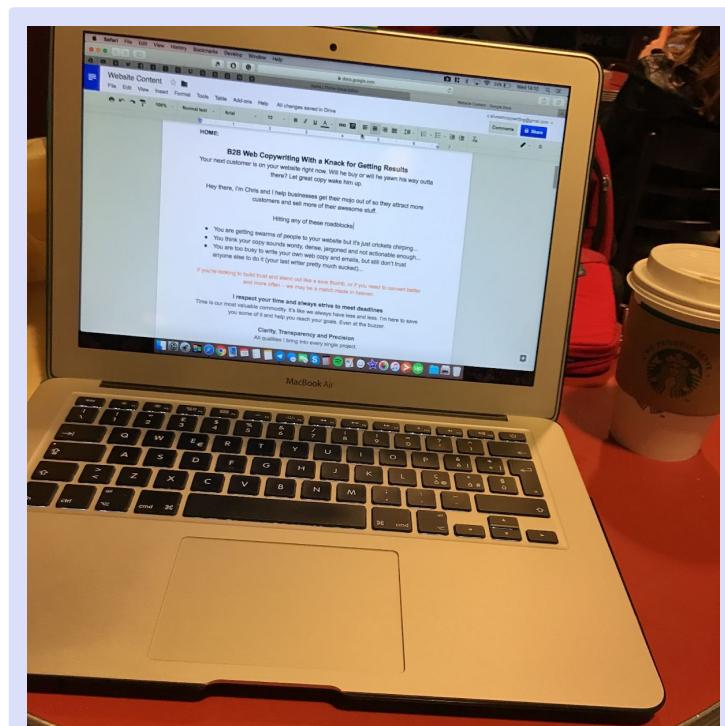
one) personal blogs, then a Kindle publishing business, and probably more stuff, that I removed from memory. All while learning new skills and making mistakes in the evenings and weekends, with any free time I had.



"Blogging" times, trying my hand at online marketing and content, circa 2014-2015 (from home and from a work trip to Mexico in my hotel room)

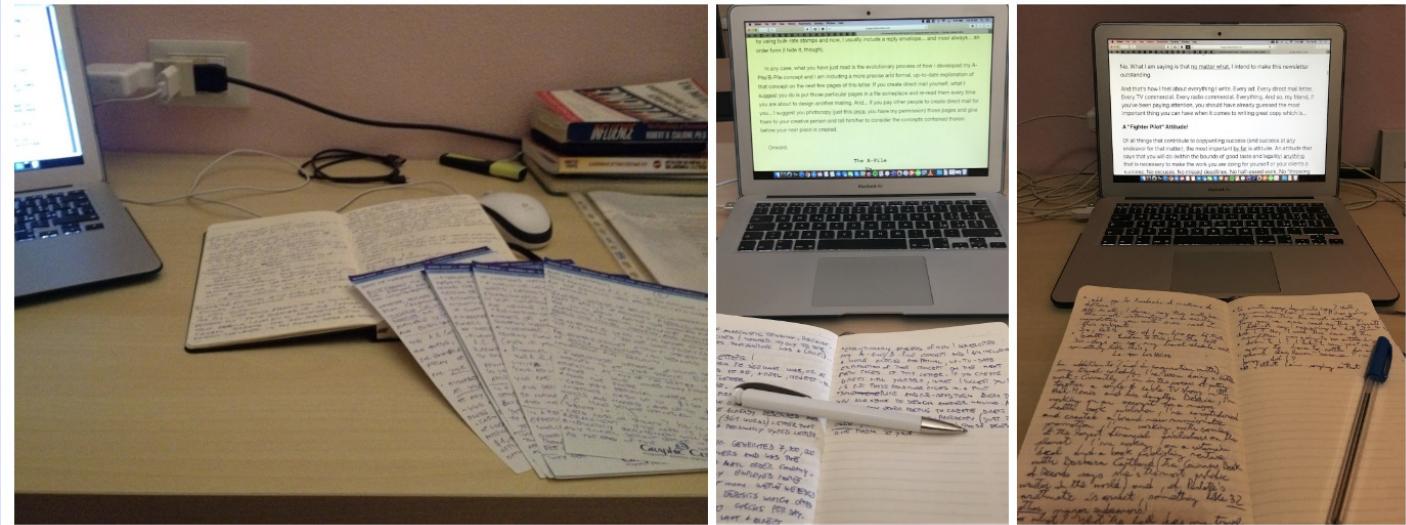
Finally, I stumbled on copywriting. From there I was hooked. I loved and resonated so much with the psychology, the decision-making, and the human behavior behind it. But also with the incredible potential all the gurus I was following and studying from promised. And yes, the flexibility of working your own hours, from wherever you wanted. This was back in 2015.

Since that moment I dedicated myself and focused exclusively on the craft and on getting to a level I could see myself starting to work with clients. I jumped on Upwork in 2015 and in one year moved from \$15/hour to \$100/hour. Then realized that the best clients, the ones I truly wanted to work with, were not on Upwork (no offense). But I kept at it, to gain experience, practice, and a portfolio.





One of my first attempts at writing the homepage for my copywriting website - I had decided for B2B at least!



The unsexy art of hand-copying successful sales letters...

Ultimately in 2017, I decided it was time to take the plunge. I set a date on the calendar for 3 months in the future, and in September I gave my resignation. As if that wasn't enough, after a couple of months and a combination of factors and lifestyle choices, I decided to move to the UK. I left my job, country, family, my band, and girlfriend (all on good terms!) and started a new life as a copywriter. I only had maybe 1 or 2 projects signed, and 6 months in savings.

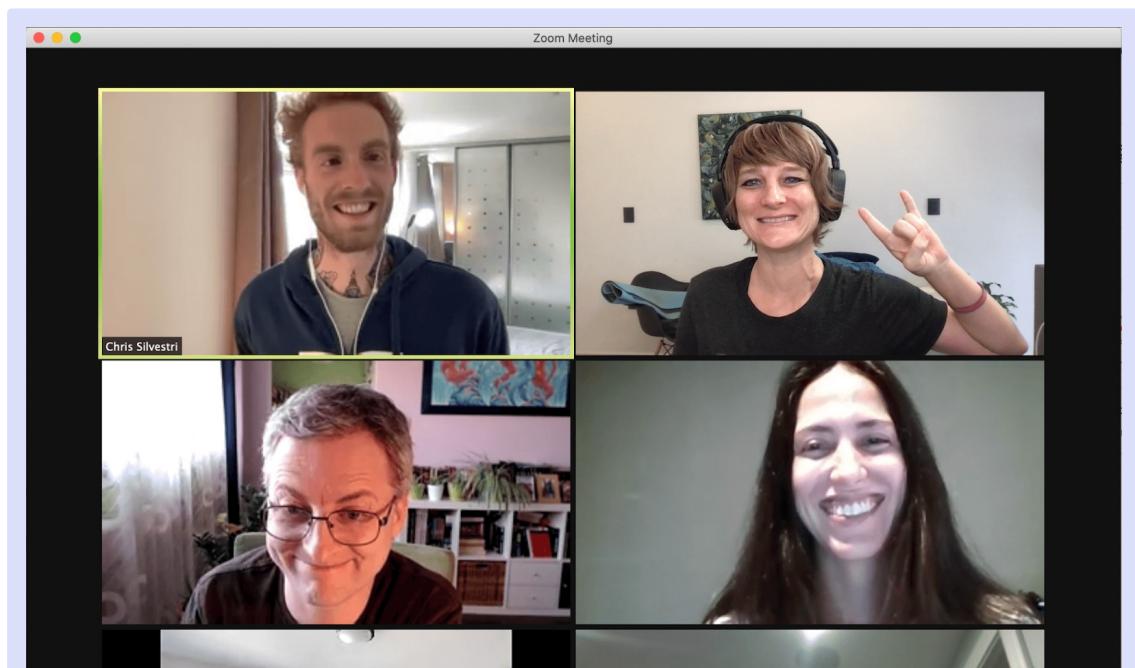


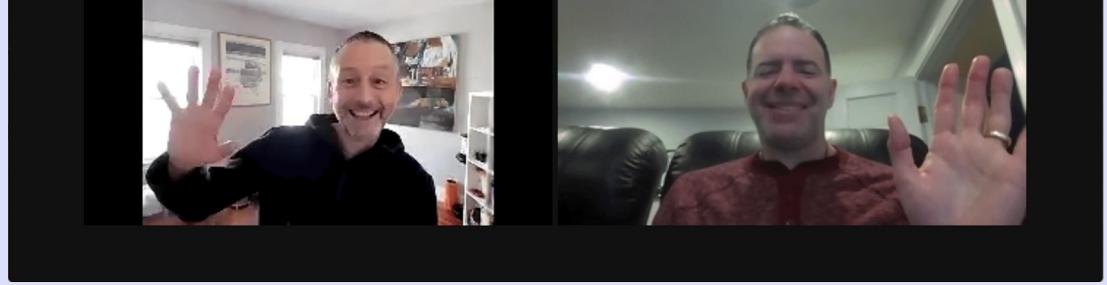


At my first retreat with the agency I joined - Thailand

Long story short, I raked up a few clients and left Upwork. Then I started working with a design and conversion optimization **agency** after meeting the founder **Quinn Zeda** at a conference in Austin, TX (which btw, I attended only because I was one of the 2 people out of thousands, who won a ticket to attend).

In the 2 years there, I learned everything I now know about UX design and CRO. My learning skyrocketed when we transitioned into a **usability testing startup** where I was lead UX and supervising our junior copywriter. In March 2021, I decided to take the plunge - again - and go back to doing my own thing.





Goodbye call at the agency before starting Conversion Alchemy

That's when I started Conversion Alchemy.

"Alchemist: Someone who transforms things for the better."

I still loved copywriting, even though I found extreme value and pleasure in UX. So after some research, I noticed that there were a ton of conversion copywriters, specifically working with SaaS and E-commerce. But none of them actually pointed out how, especially in those industries, the user experience plays a huge role in increasing conversions from the marketing site to the product experience. I felt like I could position myself and my services in a unique way, that attracted the right clients. Those who valued the research and the psychology behind this type of work. So I started putting the word out.

Take us through the process of designing, prototyping, and manufacturing your first product.

When I started out, I was already familiar with a typical copywriting project, but now I had a lot more weapons and tools in my arsenal. I kept studying and learning with resources and "virtual mentors" like [Copyhackers](#), [NNGroup](#), [CXL](#), [Brennan Dunn](#), [Erik Kennedy](#), and more on the topics of copy, UX, CRO, client management, and sales.

Initially, I put up a simple one-page website with a couple of productized services like usability testing and a website teardown (still live and selling today), plus a custom website copywriting package.

Christopher Silvestri

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Conversion Copywriting for SaaS and eCommerce

I bring research-backed UX design and copy together, to help you convert more prospects into customers.

[Get started](#)



I was impressed by how quickly Chris was able to get an in-depth understanding of our product and customers. He exceeded our



Jim Belosic
CEO - ShortStack

The first version of my website, when the name Conversion Alchemy wasn't a thing yet

For the custom package prospects had to book a 15-minute call, we were going to see if there was a fit, and then I sent them a proposal with a price. At the time, my minimum engagement rate was \$2,500 and a typical project was between that and \$6,000. These usually lasted 1.5 months including research, writing, and wireframing. This was my MVP and I just needed to test it and refine it.

Overall, everything, including the website, and a few software tools cost me probably less than \$200. I designed the website myself using a free **Figma** illustration pack (that I still use!) and a **visual builder**. When I started, I was still self-employed and didn't even have an accountant.

Describe the process of launching the business.

Everything began with one referral from Quinn, the founder of the agency. It was a **cool e-commerce store in Australia**, selling Ukuleles. The founder is awesome and I loved the work and the autonomy of strategizing and planning everything around it from the get-go. We started working together not even 3 weeks after I left the agency. And I had my biggest lesson right then and there: I wasn't doing a good job at explaining what I was doing on my website (and I'm a copywriter!). It's the curse of knowledge - and also the rush of wanting something quick up to sell myself.

The way that I converted this first client was really just by listening and addressing questions. In particular, he was confused about the different stages of the process. What type of work was I doing compared to a design agency? Where did copywriting fit? What about CRO and UX? So, I outlined my process and methodology in a super rough mindmap, recorded a screencast video of me walking him through it, and shared it. A couple of days after, he signed. We were officially in business. This is a recurring theme throughout my career: "just in time learning". Spot your weaknesses, address them right away with the action, and get better.

That single project sparked a series of referrals and word of mouth. A couple of other e-commerce store projects (it helped that all the founders were part of a **community** of business owners) and then the first few SaaS companies from various other referrals in my network.

The screenshot shows an email inbox with a message from Jim Belosic to Christopher Silvestri. The message is dated Wednesday 24 Mar, 01:50. The content of the email is as follows:

To: Christopher Silvestri

Hey Chris,

You mentioned referrals in your initial offer. I have some friends interested in the current UIUX project we are doing. [REDACTED] Both guys are on [REDACTED] and have ecommerce businesses.

I did share one document with [REDACTED] it was one of your analysis, which he was impressed with. [REDACTED] has been asking me lots of questions too about it.

Would you mind if I showed them the work as we go? Im pretty excited about what we are doing and so are they. Good potential for you to pickup new clients as well. I think it would be awesome to bring them along on this project as we go.

Just wanted to check before I show them the details.

Referrals start coming in



To: Chris

Friday 29 Apr, 09:44



...

Hey Chris,

Thanks for doing this. I really, really like what you came up with and it's very impressive you're able to figure out the audience so well.



logo.svg

Preparing...

Sam, Project Specialist:

Managing projects with

Projectdeck

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Show History



To: Christopher Silvestri

Friday 27 Aug, 04:57



...

Hi Chris,

thanks for the wrap-up last night, awesome stuff.

It's got me excited again, honestly, I have been drifting the last few months but this gives me a great interesting project to get excited about.

First happy clients

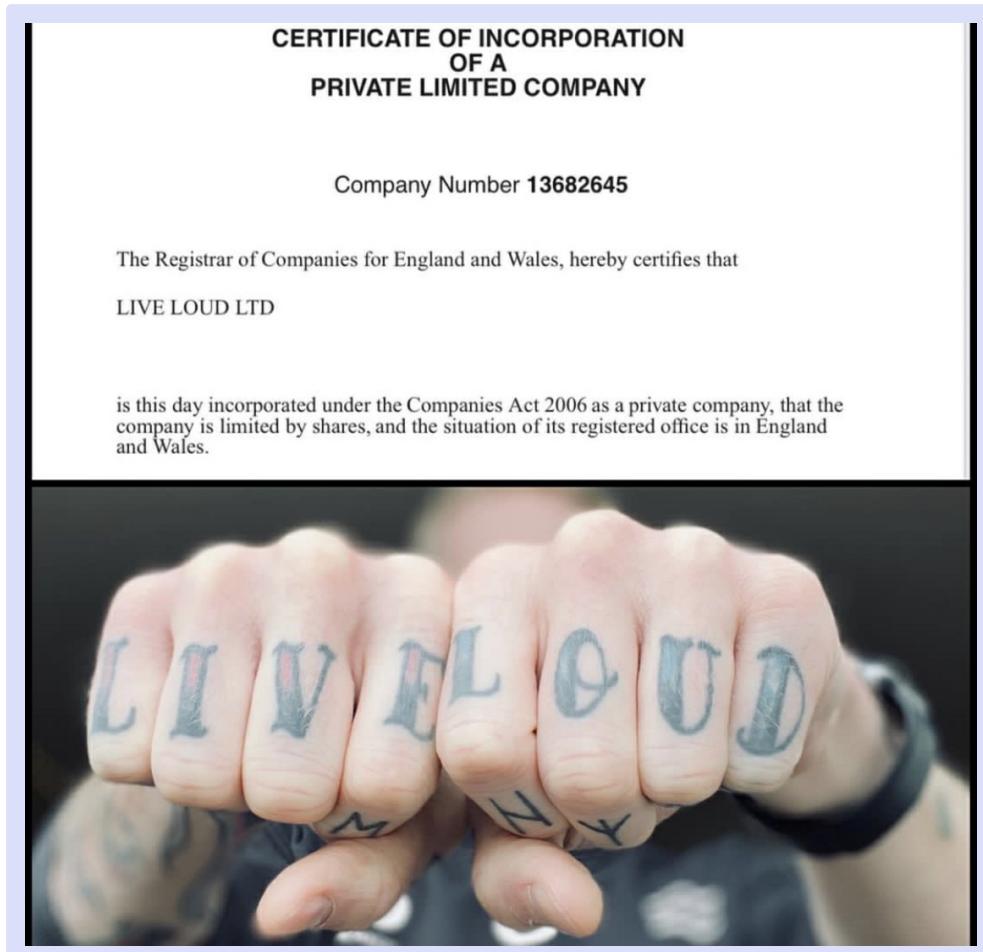
The word spread, and soon I found myself booked one or two months in advance. I realized I could handle 2 clients at a time and still keep my project work to a max of 25-30 hours a week. The rest of the time I kept learning and working to improve my processes and skills. In retrospect it makes sense. Before even trying to market yourself as a service provider, you have to know exactly what you're selling, what you can and can't do, and how you do it. Then, explaining it and persuading prospects becomes easier.

I have to be honest, I didn't have a solid strategy for generating leads though - for the first 6 or 8 months actually. What I focused on at the beginning, was simply doing the best possible work, offering the most value, and truly curating the client experience at every touch point. If there's one thing I learned in my years spent on UX, is that the user experience is as important (if not more) than the actual product or service when it comes to sales. People need to feel valued. They want to feel like you care. It's not enough to sell them and do the work. You have to confirm to them that they made the right decision, ensuring them and guiding them throughout the process. It's the difference between being an executer (how most freelancers see and present themselves) and a partner, a consultant.

This also means teaching them. That's why I always make a point of "installing" my

methodology in every business I interact with. So they can keep doing what I've done for them, iterate, and improve as the market changes.

Only near the end of the first year, I decided that I needed to incorporate and I formed Live Loud Ltd of which Conversion Alchemy is part.



Where I took the name for my company ■

That's when I also started thinking about promotion and marketing, first by sharing my expertise and story on podcasts and writing my newsletters.

“ Because let's not forget that even when it comes to referrals - you still have to convince them to buy from you.

Since launch, what has worked to attract and retain customers?

I still had an email list from a previous, pretty generic “mindset/advice” newsletter that I started. It was just 50 people. But I grew tired of it and didn't have time to write it anymore. So I decided to keep that going, but to pivot to writing about my business and learnings. It worked quite well, mostly as a monthly update for peers and friends. I think it kept the word going about me and the interesting things I was working on (which, in turn, kept me in the minds of people who could refer me). But with 2022 looming, as a goal, I wanted to truly focus more on producing rather than consuming.

So I decided to start a daily email newsletter. Because, why not? From Monday to Friday, I would share my thoughts on copywriting, client management, decision-making, psychology, and everything in between. The audience was SaaS and e-commerce founders. I had the idea

for it after following [email copywriter Ben Settle](#) for a couple of years. His style is truly unique and it's always captivated me.



My daily newsletter was born

After a while, I realized that maintaining two newsletters, a monthly and a daily, was way too much. I was spreading thin. So I abandoned the monthly newsletter. But I was determined to keep working on the daily [Conversion Alchemy Journal](#). Why?

A big factor that determines what I do and chooses to work on, is learning and practicing.

"Writers write. Runners run. Establish your identity by doing your work." - Seth Godin, The Practice: Shipping Creative Work

Trust me, writing a daily newsletter when your only readers are your local friends and your mom, is not super motivating. My motivation was intrinsic though, which [is what lasts](#). What I mean by that is that like for most things, I was driven by the process of doing the work and getting better at it. Writing daily was and still is like working out. It helps me get my ideas out into the world and to think about them in a deeper, free-flowing way. I would be doing it even if I had no readers. In fact, the way I launched it was:

I tested it myself first.

The only question I wanted to answer at the beginning was: Is this something I can sustain and that makes me better in any way? So I wrote the first 36 emails privately. Nobody read them but me.

To make sure I was gonna stick with it, I gave myself a couple of constraints:

- Emails needed to be written in under 20 minutes
- I couldn't do any research online
- I couldn't add any external links apart from one final CTA link to my services
- I had to try and sell myself in every single email, but only after teaching, entertaining, or making readers reflect.
- Emails needed to be under 500 words

These forced me to get creative and methodical. Once I saw it was going well and I enjoyed it, I tested them for 2 weeks with a friend, giving each other feedback as he was also writing his own. Then I launched it to the world. That included my previous Substack list and anyone who signed up when I shared it on social media.

Today at its 193rd issue, the newsletter is still going with ~120 subscribers. I haven't truly done

Today at its 193rd issue, the newsletter is still going with ~120 subscribers. I haven't truly done anything to grow it though, which is a big goal for 2023.

Another reason that keeps me going, which is more of an extrinsic motivating factor, is that even with very few subscribers (the daily + SaaS and Ecom focus filters out a lot of people), the interactions, feedback, and relationships that you can spark are worth it. It happened more than once that potential clients landing on my site both signed up for the newsletter and booked a 15-minute call to see if we were a fit. Or that they signed up, read a couple of emails, realized they were resonating with my way of thinking, and then became clients.

Another experiment I tried that brought in newsletter subscribers, was to build a [Chrome Extension for copywriters and designers](#). This was purely a "scratch your own itch" kind of project. I often look at websites and [run teardowns](#) while taking notes and screenshots. Problem is it takes ages to put everything together into a nice report for clients (or even just as a swipe file for inspiration).

So I designed the wireframes and specs, found a developer on Upwork, and had them build a first MVP for \$1,500. It took a year as the developer was working on it part-time, but eventually, we got it done. Currently, it's live, but I had to deprioritize the project. I still use it and it brings in a couple of email newsletter sign-ups too which is nice.

[Christopher Silvestri](#)

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Conversion Design & Copywriting for SaaS and eCommerce

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[Get started](#)



I was impressed by how quickly Chris was able to get an in-depth understanding of our product and customers. He exceeded our expectations.



Jim Belosic
CEO - ShortStack

How my Chrome extension UXTeardown works in a nutshell

On the social media front I've been pretty lazy I have to admit. And only started being consistent recently. The "problem" of having worked for the past year and a half exclusively on referrals, meant that I never really had much time (or urgency) to focus on marketing and promotion. Being book 2 or 3 months in advance can become a really comfy blanket. But I'm determined to be more deliberate and proactive about it.

A couple of things that worked to bring in all those referrals, apart from just doing good work are:

Establishing relationships with the big players in my field: mostly through Twitter and organically. Connecting with people I look up to or with peers, and genuinely asking questions. Sharing the work I'm doing and some of my wins (transparently, without bragging). I think

Sharing the work I'm doing and some of my wins (transparently, without bragging). I think connecting on the platform alone generated around \$40,000 in revenue, plus plenty of referrals that come in every once in a while. You don't need thousands of followers, you just need the right ones.

I was going to message you actually. Basically small to medium projects.

One right now that I need some help on:

2 refreshes of existing competitor comparison pages based on new positioning

1 new comparison page

Think you have some time to do those?

Jan 31, 2022, 9:54 AM

Yes that should work.

Is the research, positioning canvas etc. all done for those?

What's the deadline? We can either jump on a quick call if you want or you can send more details in a vid/email :)

Jan 31, 2022, 10:39 AM

Here's the private page where you can learn more, download it and try it out: christophersilvestri.com/uxt/

I'd love any feedback/ideas you might have 😊 If you're not interested, that's fine too, no worries!

Oct 14, 2021, 12:00 PM

Thanks!

Oct 14, 2021, 9:52 PM

Hey 🚩 just wanted to stop by and say thank you for the continued referrals! Let me know if I can help in any way.

Jun 6, 2022, 6:19 PM

Cheers, hopefully they're good onesz

Jun 6, 2022, 7:34 PM

hi Christopher :) thanks for your tweet, it's a small world

-

Quinn Zeda also recommended we reach out to you.

Nice to meet you! I'm [redacted] founder of [redacted]

Nice to meet you, I'm [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] founder of [REDACTED]

 Nice website you got there. Would you possibly have a preferred email address so that I could share a bit more in writing? Many thanks,

Apr 22, 2022, 10:05 AM

Hey [REDACTED] thanks for reaching out! I was just chatting with Quinn yesterday, small world indeed. :) Sure you can shoot an email at chris@conversionalchemy.net



Apr 22, 2022, 10:05 AM



There are 2 other people in this group

Chris, [REDACTED] — making a quick intro here.
[REDACTED] has a client looking for help with copywriting. Chris is the guy I go to when I want someone to do really great copy work. Hope it works out.

 · Apr 15, 2022, 7:19 AM

Examples of profitable Twitter DMs

Outreach for podcast interviews

I'm not big on sending cold emails and pitches, but when it comes to podcasts it worked really well and it's probably the promotion area I spent the most time on so far. I just made a list of the copywriting, marketing, SaaS, or e-commerce podcasts I listen to or that seemed interesting (no matter how big or small) and reached out via email.

A few key lessons on what worked here:

- Actually, listen to their podcast. Even if it's one episode.
- Start with a connection they can easily make in their minds: either you found an episode interesting, or have heard about them somewhere/from a mutual friend.
- Help them fill in the gaps: clearly tell them how you can contribute with a topic they haven't yet covered or with a unique spin or angle on a popular topic.
- Provide some social proof (for me it was my quick growth and interesting combination of skills and background).
- Leave a review for them and tell them.
- Make it easy to say no while going for the yes: the less needy you are, the more chances you have of them saying yes. Paraphrasing top negotiator Jim Camp, "You want it, but you don't need it".

Partnering up with platforms you use

Another powerful outreach tactic is to list all the platforms and tools you use (for me it was

Another powerful outreach tactic is to list all the platforms and tools you use (for me it was wireframing, usability testing, and analytics tools) and reach out to them offering to write guest posts or newsletters on how you use their tool successfully. The majority will be more than willing to give you a shot. It's how I landed a couple of posts on [Balsamiq](#)'s and [Userfeel](#)'s blogs.

Writing about your process

As I mentioned, I spent a ton of time especially at the beginning, optimizing my processes. Good systems make your work more efficient, help your clients trust you, and give you instant credibility. When you start out, invest some time, as you're developing your systems, writing about them, and sharing them publicly.

For me, it was two articles in particular:

- [ClickUp for agencies](#)
- [The Alchemical Transformation Process™](#)

Think of these pieces of content as assets that you create once and use forever. The ROI is 100% there. And the simple process of writing everything down will help you improve even more. **Pro tip** : sign up for the platforms' affiliate programs to get a commission if your readers sign up. Even if you don't get a huge amount of traffic, an affiliate commission for a subscription product could give you returns for the entire lifetime that person is subscribed to.

My promotion plans recently started including a [Youtube channel](#) where I analyze interesting SaaS and E-commerce websites with ideas on how to improve the copy and UX. And more regular and consistent content on [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#) and [Linkedin](#). One area I'm thinking of exploring is also coaching aspiring copywriters, so that will be interesting.

The screenshot shows the YouTube channel page for 'Conversion Alchemy'. At the top, there's a banner with the channel's logo and name. Below the banner, the channel's profile picture, name (@conversionalchemy), and subscriber count (10 subscribers) are displayed. To the right are 'Customise channel' and 'Manage videos' buttons. The main navigation bar includes links for HOME, VIDEOS, PLAYLISTS, COMMUNITY, CHANNELS, ABOUT, and a search icon. Under the 'VIDEOS' tab, five video thumbnails are shown, each titled 'Weekly website copywriting and UX teardown' followed by a specific platform name ('The Diary', 'Lunch...', 'Paperlike', 'Who Gives a Crap', 'Tella'). Each thumbnail includes a play button and a timestamp (e.g., 12:13, 13:05, 12:02, 9:40, 13:30). Below each video thumbnail is a brief description and the number of views and upload date.

Video Title	Length	Views	Upload Date
Weekly website copywriting and UX teardown - The Diary	12:13	14 views	5 days ago
Weekly website copywriting and UX teardown - Lunch...	13:05	58 views	11 days ago
Weekly website copywriting and UX teardown - Paperlike	12:02	10 views	2 weeks ago
Weekly website copywriting and UX teardown - Who Giv...	9:40	34 views	3 weeks ago
Weekly website copywriting and UX teardown - Tella	13:30	50 views	1 month ago

My new Youtube Channel!

The screenshot shows the Instagram profile for 'conversionalchemy'. It features a profile picture of a man, the handle 'conversionalchemy' in white text on a dark background, and a small bio placeholder. Below the profile information, there are several posts visible, though they are mostly cut off at the bottom of the screen.

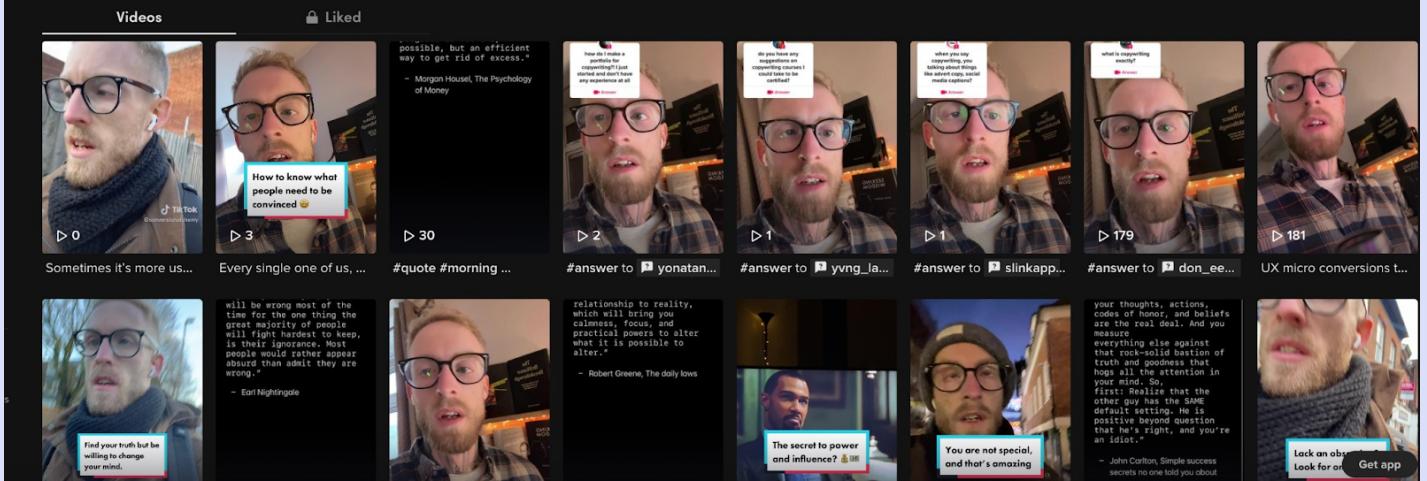


Silvestrichris
Edit profile

9 Following 20 Followers 191 Likes

SaaS & E-commerce conversion copywriter and founder at Conversion Alchemy

[linktr.ee/conversionalchemy?f...](#)



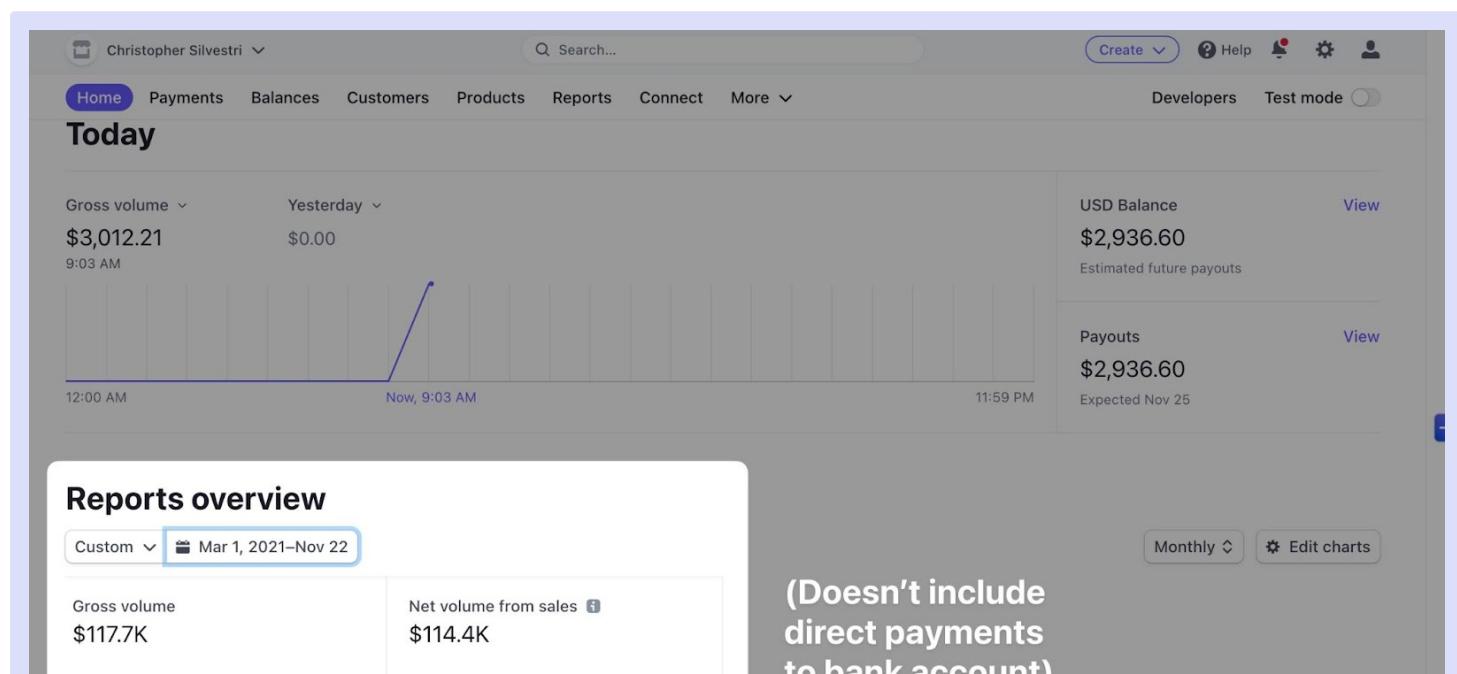
My TikTok page, doubling down on social for 2022/2023

How are you doing today and what does the future look like?

Today I keep doing my best work for clients, my custom copywriting project rates have gone up and now a typical ballpark project ranges between \$8,000 and \$25,000 for ~2 months of work. My capacity is still at 2, a maximum of 3 clients every 2 months, but I don't plan on hiring at the moment. I explored the idea for a bit but had a few pains when trying to find a good junior copywriter. I realized I work best by myself so the plan at this stage is to just get better and better, offer more value, and charge accordingly, so I can do more with my time. Potentially also selling more productized services.

The revenue distribution so far has been:

- 92% custom copywriting projects
- 5% recurring consulting
- 2% productized services
- 1% paid content



Today

Gross volume	Yesterday	USD Balance	View
\$3,012.21	\$0.00	\$2,936.60	Estimated future payouts

Reports overview

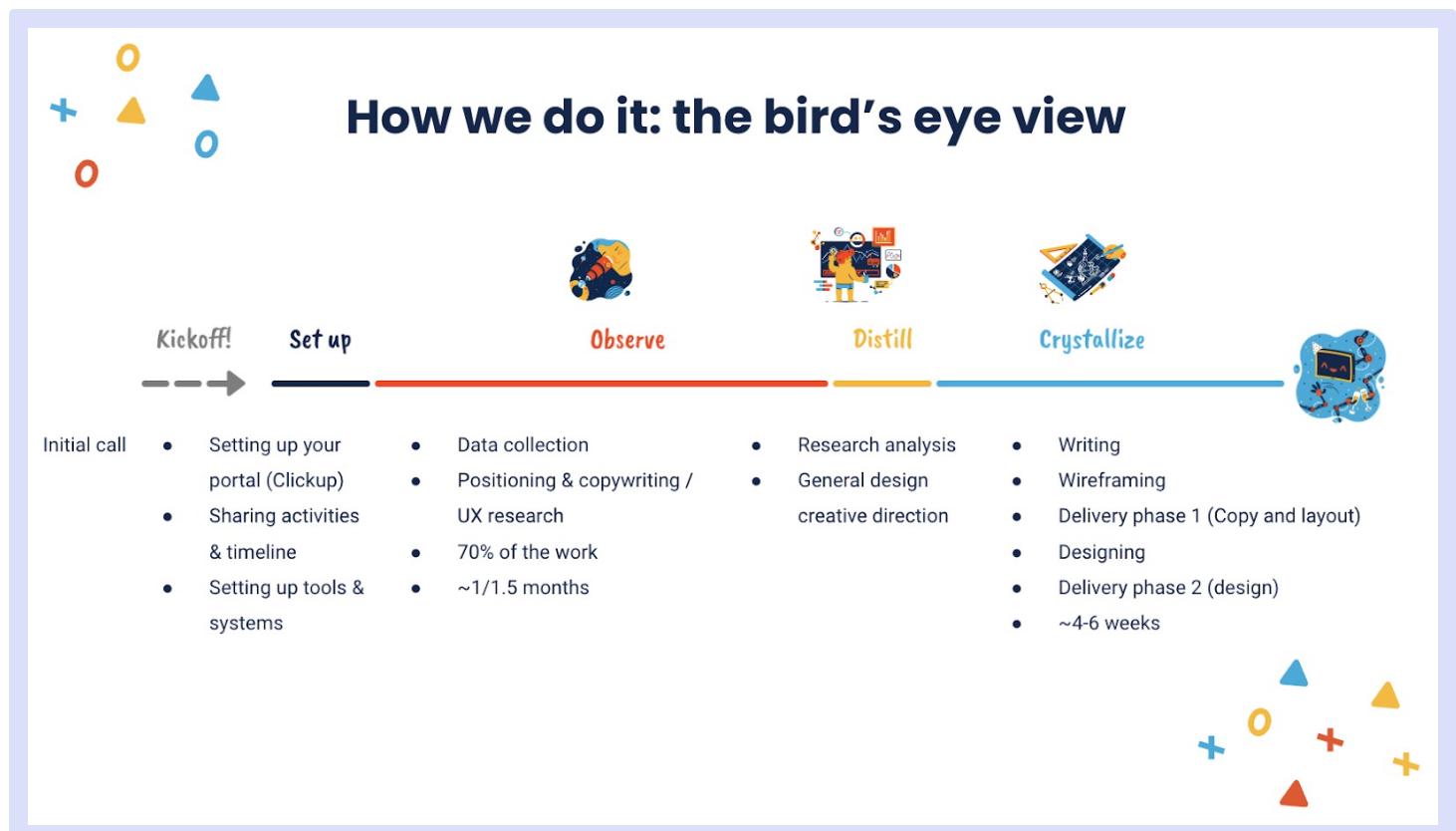
Custom Mar 1, 2021–Nov 22

Gross volume	Net volume from sales	(Doesn't include direct payments to bank account)
\$117.7K	\$114.4K	



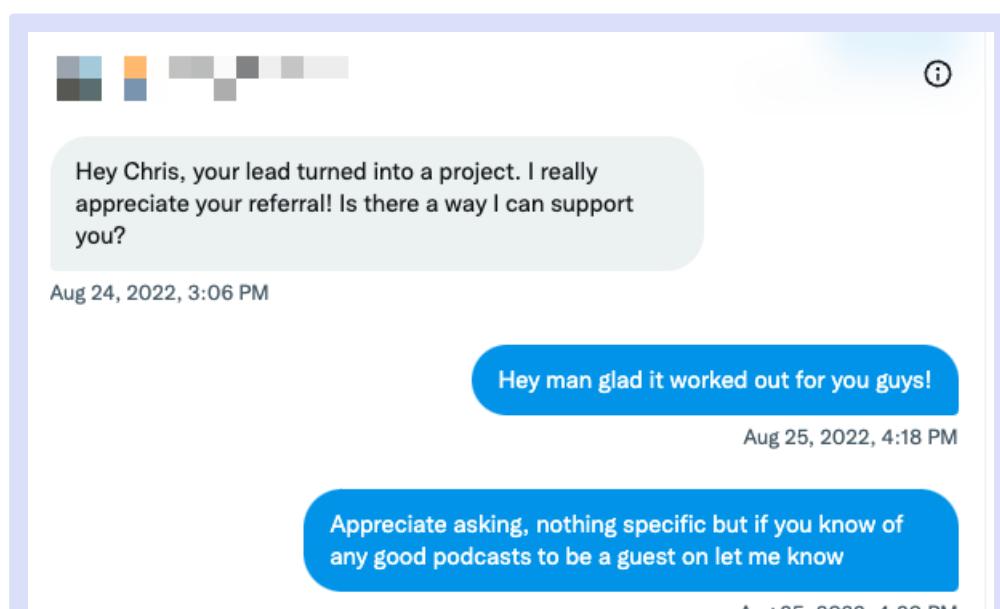
Stripe revenue since starting Conversion Alchemy (not including payments to bank account)

At the same time as mentioned in the intro, I started partnering with a UI/UX designer that will take on my copywriting projects from the wireframes to final mockups. I simply charge a fraction of their work and my clients get the full value from one provider, by signing one proposal.



My current project timeline with design phase included

I also find it hugely valuable to constantly keep an eye out for collaborations. Either with other agencies or freelancers. And giving back when I can. I often recommend other copywriters whenever I'm too busy, with no commission and no attachment. I believe in giving others what you wish they'd give you.



Alrifght my man. Do you like chocolate? We have a dairy-free chocolate brand would love to post you some :)

Aug 25, 2022, 6:59 PM



Christopher Silvestri
@SilvestriChris

...

Thanks [REDACTED], this is amazing, can't wait to gorge on that chocolate (probably 1g at a time to stick with my macros 🍫)

Glad I could help! 🤗



Love spreading the word about good people, especially when it turns into chocolate

In a year and a half in business, I never ran an ad.

My operations are super streamlined:

- People learn about me, visit my site and if they like what they see, book a 15-minute call where we simply decide if we're a fit.
- If it's a yes, we jump on a longer 45-minute call where we dive deeper into their situation and goals, and where I walk them through my methodology, process, and typical timeline.
- From there I create and send them a custom proposal (usually with 2 or 3 options). If it works they sign, pay and book the time in to start.

My virtual assistant (thanks Gleal!) helps me with collecting data for research, summarizing interview transcripts, preparing presentations, and any type of marketing or outreach research we need to collect.

In the short term, I would say my goal for the business is to put a reliable and consistent content engine system in place. So I can attract new prospects other than referrals and spread the word about the Conversion Alchemy brand. This also includes doing public speaking at conferences and in peer groups or masterminds (need a speaker? Shoot me an email: chris@conversionalchemy.net).

Long term the goal is to diversify my streams of income. Adding information products both for SaaS and E-commerce businesses and for copywriters/freelancers. And doing more recurring **coaching/consulting engagements**, which I'm currently testing with a startup and it's going really well.

Through starting the business, have you learned anything particularly helpful or advantageous?

The biggest challenge for me when I started, was confidence and wearing the shoes of a business owner.

After two years working at an agency, I wasn't used to dealing with clients and having to sell myself. The founder was doing all of that. I was executing. On the one hand, it was great because it allowed me to exponentially get better at my craft, but on the other hand, it hindered my ability to brand myself and get out there. So, a lot of the inner work I had to do in the past year and a half has been to build up my confidence and business skills.

Because let's not forget that, even when it comes to referrals - you still have to convince them to buy from you.

From simply jumping on prospecting calls and negotiating, to talking about budgets, scope, deliverables, and outcomes. Often to an entire team on the other side. An important promise I made to myself in the first few months, was that if something scared me, I HAD to do it. For example, I made it a point to always deliver the final copy and wireframes on a call with clients, rather than limiting it to sending an email or recording a screencast video. Initially, my heart pounded out of my chest in every hour-and-a-half call I had. I dealt with it and saw that I could come out unscarred. Actually, I finished those calls always pumped and excited because I noticed that clients were stoked with the results.

Those calls were responsible for cutting rounds of revisions by 90%. If you do the work, when you walk the client through it, provide the necessary context and go over your decisions one by one, there's not much anyone can say.

It all carried over to my work, too. I started conducting much better and more insightful customer interviews for my clients. I asked better and deeper questions. And it showed in the results. Ultimately this added confidence is a skill I'll always carry in my personal life too.

Something I could have maybe done differently is to hire a virtual assistant sooner. You can find a very good one affordably on sites like Upwork. At the same time, it all depends on being clear on what you want and need from them. And to be clear on that, you first have to start doing the work yourself. Figure out which gaps need to be filled and then create systems to fill them.

I also spent a lot of time with my brand and website being just my name "Christopher Silvestri". I wouldn't recommend it. When you are your business, spreading the word is harder and doesn't stick in the minds of your prospects. The trigger that made me think about the Conversion Alchemy brand name was actively looking for promotional opportunities (podcasts, guest posts, etc.). It made me realize that I needed one clear and compelling name to define what I was

doing. If I had to go back I would likely start with a brand name right away.

Speaking of branding, another important decision was to actually put a website up. Even if it was a single page at the start. A lot of gurus might say you don't even need a website to get started, but I don't agree. A website is your central and "decentralized" identity online. Whether it's a personal blog or your business site, you need somewhere to point people to. And it can't just be your Twitter or Instagram account. Plus, once you have a website, you can build anything on top of it. That's where I have my newsletter, my blog, and even my little Chrome Extension experiment.

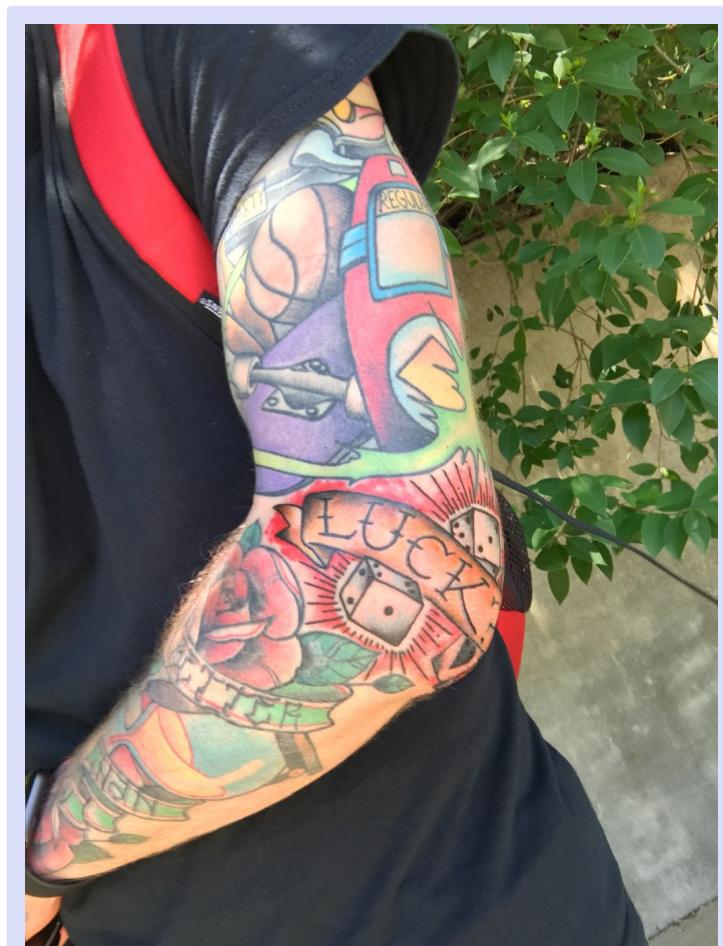
Pro tip: build a [media-kit page](#) that you can point people to for podcasts, guest posting opportunities, and partnerships.

Was it all luck?

I love this quote by Morgan Housel in his book "The psychology of money":

"Luck and risk are both the reality that every outcome in life is guided by forces other than individual effort. They are so similar that you can't believe in one without equally respecting the other. They both happen because the world is too complex to allow 100% of your actions to dictate 100% of your outcomes."

There was surely some element of luck (like winning a ticket to the conference in Austin) and I always took a certain amount of risk at every stage of my journey. From leaving my full time job after 10 years to leaving the agency with basically no clients.



"LUCK?" - I got this tattoo back in 2018 in Austin, TX right after the infamous conference that sparked my work at the agency and everything else. My reminder is that you have to place

yourself where luck can find you and where you can meet opportunity.

But I believe you can create your own luck and mitigate risk, too. It all starts with good foundational habits and a strong mindset.

For me, it's always started with budgeting and having at least 6 months in savings. This gave me the confidence I needed to embrace new challenges and to say NO to clients I didn't want to work with. It's also what allowed me to set time aside for learning because it meant that instead of having to work 40-60 hours a week, I could work 15-20 while getting better and growing my knowledge on the side.

Once the financial situation is taken care of, I always look at my trajectory and try to learn as much as possible from my journey. To do this efficiently, I came up with a system:

- Every year do a yearly review and plan for the new one
- The yearly review informs my main themes and goals
- The themes and goals dictate the monthly projects
- The monthly projects inform my weekly to-dos
- I do a weekly review/plan every Sunday morning
- My weekly to-dos set my daily tasks
- I do a daily review and plan at the end of the day

The focal points are the yearly, weekly, and daily reviews and planning sessions. When I do those consistently and thoroughly, I'm sure everything else will fall into place.

The screenshot shows a digital note-taking application with a light blue header bar containing icons for search, create, and navigation. Below the header is a section titled "2021 Yearly Review". Under this title is a list of bullet points:

- Target Date:: January 2nd, 2022
- Tags: #Yearly review #Reflection #Planning
- Status:
- Resources:
- **Tips:**
 - **Reflection**
 - **Review 2021 Outcomes**
 - **Where You Are Now**
 - **What Do You Want?**
 - **Action and Plan**
 - **Accountability & Feedback**
 - **Thought Experiments:**

On my 2021 yearly review page, each section is expanded on

▼ 2021 Yearly Review

What Do You Want?

- *What are the major themes for the upcoming year? #2022 change/action items*

#Themes2022

- **Stillness** - creating more space and keeping focus on one thing at a time
- **Action** - do more than I consume
- **Energy** - optimise for strength, vitality and power in life and work
- **Storytelling** - think and produce in stories, be interesting, be curious, be memorable
- **Vulnerability** - open up and invite failure or rejection when possible

My “themes” for 2022 - working on it

Obviously your yearly and even monthly plans will unlikely be exactly as you've envisioned them, but at least you're setting your intentions. I always find that in one way or another, using this system, I end up pretty close to where I wanted to go.

This also frees up a lot of mental energy. Pro tip: any time you have an idea, find a way to offload it to some kind of [note-taking system](#).

If you want to learn more and get templates for these, the two main resources that I used to develop my process are:

- [This annual review template](#)
- [This article on how to decide what to work on](#)

Then comes the daily routine and physical habits.

Especially in the past 3 months, I became pretty strict with these. Here are a couple of things I do daily:

- Wake up at 5 am (weekends included) and even if I only get to sleep 3-4 hours
- Journal and reflect on what I read (can be just 5 mins on a simple quote)
- Go to the gym or workout outdoors for 1 to 2 hours
- Stick to proper nutrition and specific macros
- Meditate, specifically Vipassana meditation (I used to do it daily but lately it's on hold because of new habits I'm testing)

It's nothing super complex, no biohacking, just discipline, and reflection. You can't go wrong with the fundamentals.

In the end, everybody talks about the “millionaire habits”. There's no shortage of Youtuber videos of people trying them out, or making fun of them. I think that, like a lot of things, unless you try it you won't know if it works for you. Then the hard part is sticking with it. For me, it hasn't come easy, but it's simple.

What platform/tools do you use for your business?

I try to keep my tech stack to a minimum. And my main advice here is: find multiplatform tools, if on the same ecosystem (i.e. Apple) even better, and rely on long-standing platforms. Too often it happens that a new software tool comes out, you rush to try it out, and after 4-5

months of use, they go out of business. You then find yourself having to switch your entire system to something else. It happened to me with a calendar booking app because the one I wanted to use was a bit cheaper than Calendly (the top dog) and I regretted it later on when they got acquired and stopped developing it.

Here are my tools of choice and links to each:

- Website: [Siteground hosting](#), [WordPress](#), [Elementor](#)
- Note taking, writing, review and planning: [Roam Research](#)
- Calendar and calls booking: [Calendly](#)
- Video screencast: [Loom](#)
- Email newsletter: [Convertkit](#)
- Email client: [Spark](#)
- Credit card payments: [Stripe](#)
- Accounting & invoices: [FreeAgent](#)
- Proposals & agreements: [Better Proposals](#)
- Project/client management & CRM: [Clickup](#)
- Collaboration and writing: [Google Workspace](#)
- Call recordings and transcriptions: [Fathom](#)
- Internal surveys & feedback: [Typeform](#)
- Automation: [Zapier](#)

I would say my favorites are definitely:

Clickup: all in-one for project and client management. It removes the need for Slack + email + Asana and you can easily create separate spaces for projects and tasks etc. I also use it as my “client portal” giving clients only what they need to see.

Elementor: super easy-to-use visual site-builder. You need to have a sense of what good design and branding look like if starting from scratch, but they also have a ton of templates.

Better Proposals: create and send rich media proposals with a visual editor, and have clients sign and pay (through Stripe) directly from those. On any device. I’m getting an 80% conversion rate on my proposals with it.

Spark Mail: free email app that works like a paid one. Swipe features, email templates, multi-device, snooze email, send later functionality, integrated calendar, and more.

Roam Research: not the easiest or best-looking note-taking tool around, but once you establish your system with it, it’s super powerful. You can create interconnected notes, it’s super fast, and focused and integrates with Readwise to collect all your book highlights in one platform. Helps me never start with a blank page. (full disclosure: I don’t pay for it as I was one of the first few users to sign up).

My advice for tools in general: try them and when you find the right one, go with an annual plan. When you start having monthly plans for 20+ tools, it can quickly spiral out of control. This also helps you budget better for the business and saves you some money.

What have been the most influential books, podcasts, or other resources?

What have been the most influential books, podcasts, or other resources?

Way too many here to mention but I'll give it a go:

Books:

- **Confessions of an advertising man** - David Ogilvy – Principles behind managing an agency and clients
- **Breakthrough Advertising** - Eugene Schwartz – Immutable fundamentals of copywriting
- **Alchemy - Rory Sutherland** – How to think differently than everyone else about marketing/advertising
- **Influence - Robert Cialdini** – Fundamentals of persuasion, a classic
- **The Almanack of Naval Ravikant** - Eric Jorgenson, Jack Butcher, and Tim Ferriss – Mental models for effective thinking and living a good life
- **Big money energy** - Ryan Serhant – How to actually fake it til you make it and project magnetic confidence
- Non-negotiable - Wes Watson – How to build disciplined and finally establish a routine for growth
- **Can't hurt me** - David Goggins – Mental toughness principles in its purest form
- **Seeking wisdom** - Peter Bevelin – What they taught you in school but you forgot, and how to apply it in real life
- **The power of now** - Eckhart Tolle – Understand where trauma and suffering come from and how to deal with it
- **Think and grow rich** - Dale Carnegie – The step by step process to turn vision into reality

Podcasts:

- The Tropical MBA podcast – Insightful interviews with entrepreneurs
- The diary of a CEO – Deep questions and learnings from big companies
- The Copywriter Club podcast – Great interviews and perspectives on copywriting
- Copywriters podcast – Interesting discussions and nuanced stories on copywriting
- The Tim Ferriss podcast – Super deep dives with top performers, artists, and entrepreneurs
- Huberman Lab – Scientific, actionable, and data backed advice on any area of life
- Lex Fridman podcast – Mind-bending conversations on tech, life, and business
- The Jordan B. Peterson podcast – Deep psychological topics, framed in a useful way
- Philosophize This! – Super engaging history and recap of philosophy
- The Daily Stoic – Great interviews on entrepreneurship, life, mindset, and more

Resources:

- **Copyhackers**
- **NNGroup**
- **CXL**
- **Brennan Dunn**
- **Erik Kennedy**
- **AWAI**

Advice for other entrepreneurs who want to get started or are just starting

Advice for other entrepreneurs who want to get started or are just starting out?

Giving unsolicited advice is usually not the easiest thing. That's because I know that every stage is different and you can easily feel overwhelmed or like what I'm saying is irrelevant to where you're at.

So if I had to cut my advice to just 3 things, I would go with:

1) Be 100% clear about what you want

It might seem pretty straightforward and you'll hear it a hundred thousand times, but it's true. Unless you know where you're headed, you won't make it work. Have an idea of what you want to achieve, what you want to learn, what type of work you want to do, and the type of people you want to deal with. Then focus and go all in. Adopt a testing mindset: set a specific goal for a shorter amount of time, but be clear on exactly how it will play out and what the next steps will be. If it doesn't work out, shift focus.

2) Be who you want to be, NOW

One of the biggest lessons I've learned recently is that confidence and success are not only the byproduct of experience and years of work. They are the result of the person you are, in every moment and in every decision you make. In the beginning, you'll fail and will have to learn more than after a couple of years, sure, but it's all contributing to building the person you want to become. So just remind yourself that you can be your future you, right now with every choice you make. You don't have to wait.

Rather than "fake it til you make it", think of the concept of "The Method" or "Method acting".

This video is really powerful.

From [Wikipedia](#): "*Method acting, informally known as The Method, is a range of training and rehearsal techniques, as formulated by a number of different theatre practitioners, that seeks to encourage sincere and expressive performances through identifying with, understanding, and experiencing a character's inner motivation and emotions.*"

Be the main actor in your own story.

3) Never stop learning

I'm a learning addict, I admit it. If I didn't have to actually work, I would spend my time reading, listening to, or watching interesting interviews and stories. But learning is also my superpower, especially "just-in-time-learning". I believe that you don't have to know everything. But you have to be good at understanding where your weaknesses lie and how to fill in the gaps, just enough so that you can overcome your next challenge.

- What book can you read to help you with this? No time? Just skim it, and get one lesson.
- What course could show you how it's done by a pro? Find the right source and buy it.
- What story, podcast, or movie could inspire you to change or head in the right direction?
- Writing and don't know what a word means or how it's spelled? Google it!
- What Youtube video could teach you about that topic? Watch it (fun fact: I learned to play the Cajon by watching a 15-minute Youtube video in Russia right before our acoustic set)

the Cajon by watching a 15 minute YouTube video in Russia right before our acoustic set).

- Who can you reach out to in your network to learn more about that? Send that email or DM.
- And on and on.

It's all about understanding yourself, and your weaknesses - and bridging the gap between those and your goals.

Where can we go to learn more?

You can find me everywhere and get in touch [here](#).

If you have any questions or comments, drop a comment below!



christopher silvestri, Founder of Conversion Alchemy



Pat Walls, Founder of Starter Story

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O
Dylan

I Grew A Drinkware Brand To \$1.1M/Month At 23 Years Old



Drinkware brand

\$12M / month

O
Chris

How I Started An SEO Agency For Lawyers Generating \$3.6M/Year



Seo agency

\$10M / month

O
Matt

How I Started An \$8M/Year Stock Market Research Website



Finance blog

\$2.13M / month

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Building a business is lonely. And it's easy to feel stuck.

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going.



Michael

\$1.08M /YEAR



Scott

\$300K /YEAR



Chad

\$1.2M /YEAR



Garrett

\$300K /YEAR

Resources to keep you building



Building a business is not a game of luck.

Abhishek

\$12M /YEAR

It's about taking action every day.



You'll get access to courses, frameworks, weekly live events, alongside a group of people that genuinely want you to succeed.

Samping

\$432K /YEAR

You'll start making real progress, and experience first-hand what it's like to put your ideas into the world.



Osman

\$1.68M /YEAR



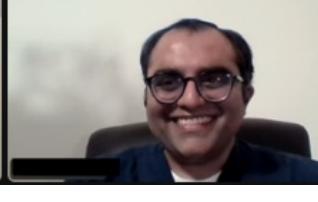
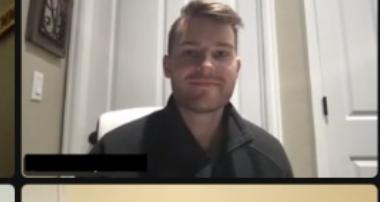
Tricia

\$600K /YEAR



Michael

\$264K /YEAR



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Sam Parr

My First Million

I love this website.



Rand Fishkin

Moz / SparkToro

Love Starter Story's transparency.



Johnne Vang

Be The Match

You can't find this information anywhere else.



Trent Baren

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Bilal Budhani

Entrepreneur

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Jenn Leach

Millennial Nextdoor

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Jamie

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