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I Built A Minecraft Hosting Service That Makes Me \$1,000 In Profit Per Month



Nuno Facha



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ABOUT

BUSINESS

TOOLS

SAVE



Nuno Facha

Founder, **FreeMcServer**

\$1K

REVENUE/MO



1

FOUNDERS

1

EMPLOYEES

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

Hi everyone! I'm Nuno Facha, the founder of [FreeMcServer](#), which started in 2018 (in its beta form).

Our main (and only, at this time) service/product is our free high-performance [Minecraft](#) server hosting. While we started in the red (dedicated servers are not cheap), we are now making around 1k USD profit a month, with more than 970.000 unique users registered on the platform!!

By providing a mainly free service I realized that from the beginning that most of my audience would not want (or couldn't afford) any kind of purchases or addons or similar things, after all, there are many other larger "regular hosting providers" where you pay a monthly fee for your server, so if they came to a free hosting service they were looking for a free alternative, this was (and still is) a big factor on how much resources we can assign to free plans

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This showed to be true as most of our user base remains on the free tier, and we have large user pools from lower-income countries where you have more important things to spend your money on.



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

Back in 2018, I had just finished school and was on the “let's start a Minecraft Server” vibe, seeing the growth of large Minecraft servers and all those dreams of being able to pay bills with a Minecraft server.

I had been playing Minecraft intermittently since version 1.2.5 (released on April 4, 2012), at least its the oldest version I remember playing, started with a couple of friends on a server running on an old PC at home, to than needed a way to keep it only 24/7 without my electricity bill going thru the roof.

While researching where to host it, (I wanted to host a prototype for free at the time). I didn't find any other platform that fit my needs (this mainly being some level of “advanced” and full file access instead of pre-approved plugins, as was the general practice at the time). So I was like since I will have to invest money on this server from day one, why not try to make the platform I was looking for?

I will be realistic; at the time, I was not expecting [FreeMcServer.net](https://freemcserver.net) to take the proportions it did (and that will cause problems down the line). I mostly used it as a large project on my CV when applying for work since I had just finished school and would be looking for a job soon, and I had practically no “hands-on” experience with large personal projects before.

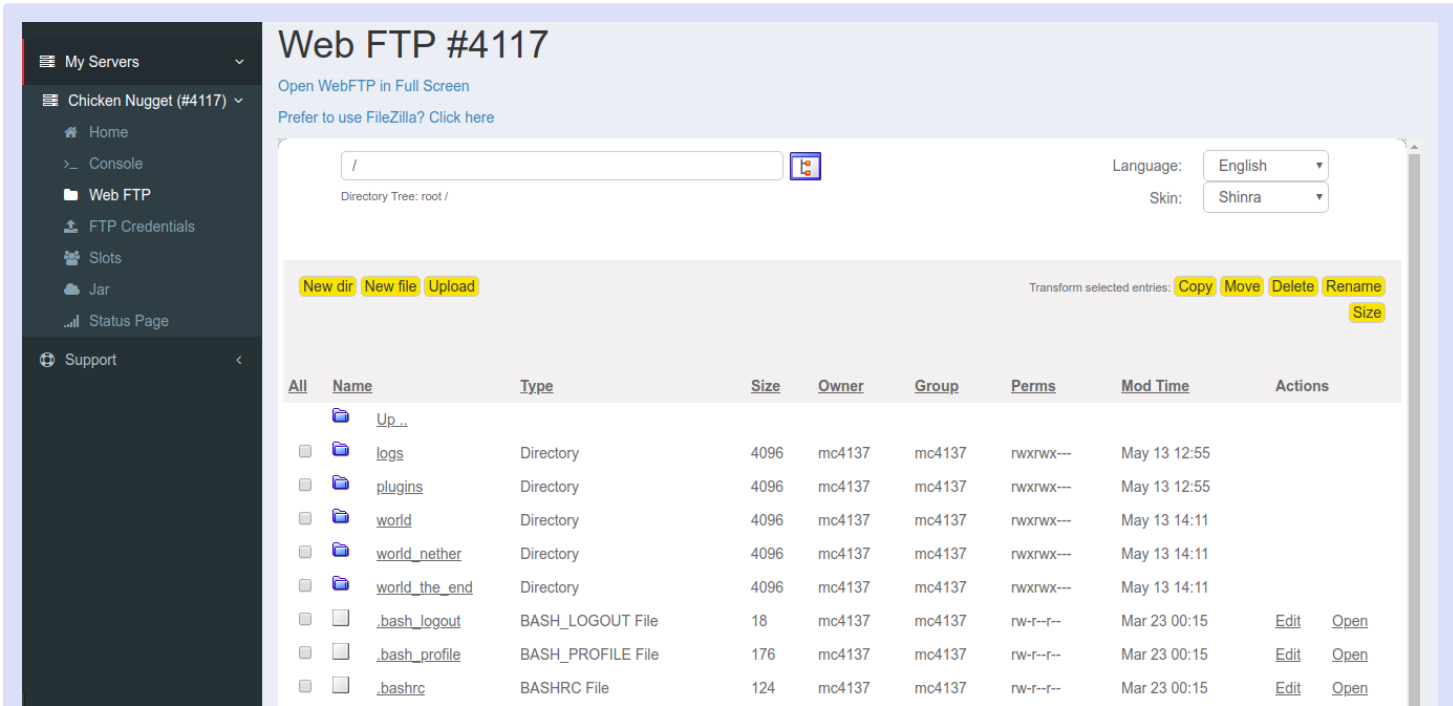
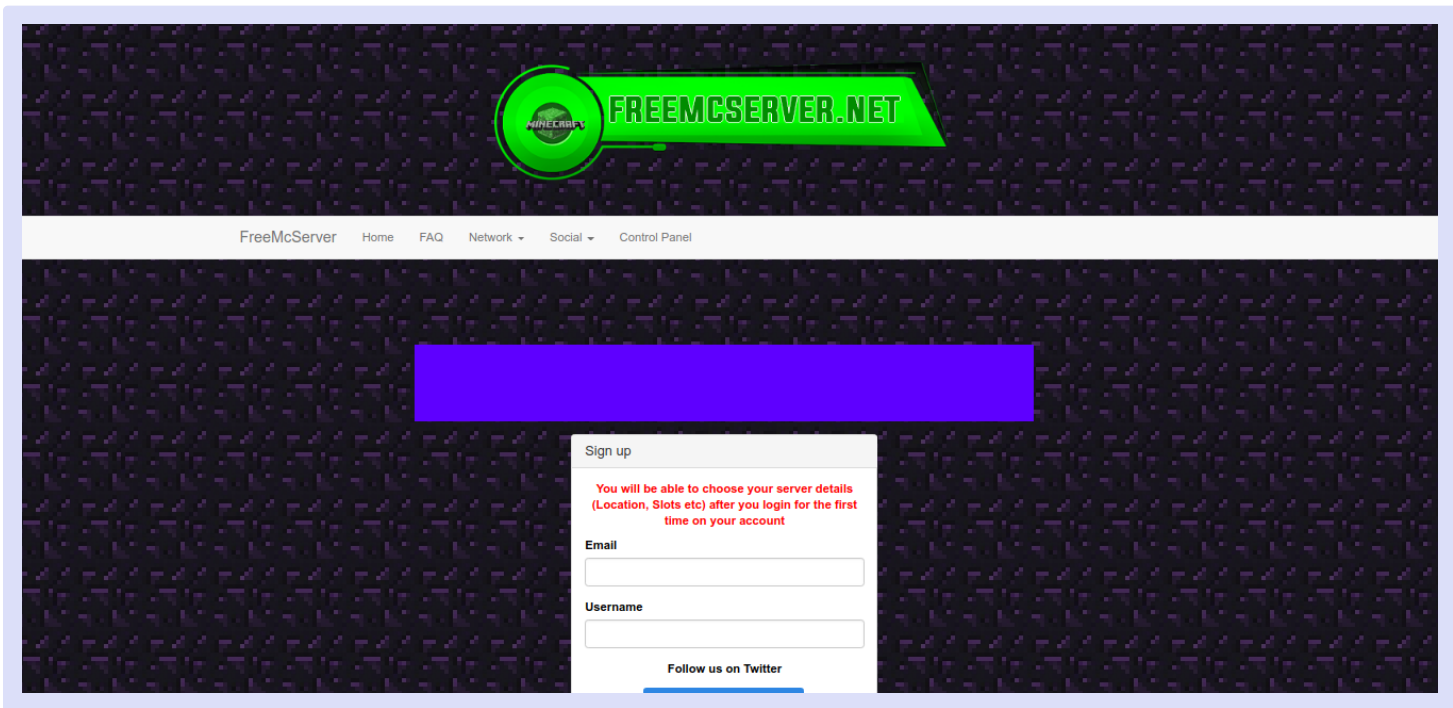
Take us through the process of designing, prototyping, and manufacturing your first product.

So back then, while I was pretty new at coding, I started researching how I could even do this. I had some experience with PHP, so that was the chosen language (and the one used to this day even after multiple rewrites of the whole system).

My original idea, which I implemented for the first demo, was to build an interface based on the existing commercial panels (such as GameCP, and Multicraft). I did some tests, and so the first version was born. No frameworks, no nothing, all basic PHP full of issues hidden under the blankets, but it did the job.

Describe the process of launching the business.

Anyone that knows me knows I hate anything to do with design or anything UI/UX, so the first version was awful in terms of UI, and I mean it:



But that was it. It worked (well, most of the time). A cheap server was placed running the backend (enough to handle just a few servers, ~25 small-scale servers). It was shown in the past to some friends (and these friends were given the green light to invite other friends).

Well, this “open beta” launch happened on 17/03/2018, and on 19/03/2018 (just two days!), we reached our server capacity and couldn't take more servers. I had set a conservative limit to make sure performance didn't go down the drain by the abuse of some bad actors (it's the internet, after all). Still, I then decided to gradually increase this value until performance effects started to be noticeable. The server capacity was around 150 servers.



It was around the same time when the site started getting traction and traffic started appearing that Google approved the website to start displaying ads (notice that the ad is shown as a blue square on the first picture, I had not yet enabled it), which was good since it was going to cost some money for it to be setup.

“ My top tip is always to assume it is going to be a success, don't be like me and think, “ill just make a proof of concept”, to attach to my CV.

While the prototype was not that expensive to host, increasing capacity is another thing. As some might know, Minecraft is not a light game, even for it to run many servers.

We were hosting on Hetzner at the time (and still are in our Europe server location but on a different server tier). Because of their “Server Auction” feature, where you could get some good servers at lower prices.

One lesson I learned and will implement on any future projects was to assume everything will be a success and make an effort accordingly and make its code clean accordingly, or it will bite you later.

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

In the beginning, we hadn't invested much time in social marketing. We have run a few ad campaigns in the past, but they didn't result in much return (probably because I had done it with a lower budget). We may try this again in the future with better funding and assistance from someone with more marketing knowledge.

Most of our marketing was by “word of mouth” and most recently thru our Referral system that we added to our platform, which rewards users with credits (that they can use to upgrade their server resources) for referring their friends.

Since my early days as a developer I didn't care much about SEO (oh boy I was wrong) I

Since my early days as a developer, I didn't care much about SEO (oh boy, I was wrong). I should have done this from day one, and I would probably be in a better spot now.

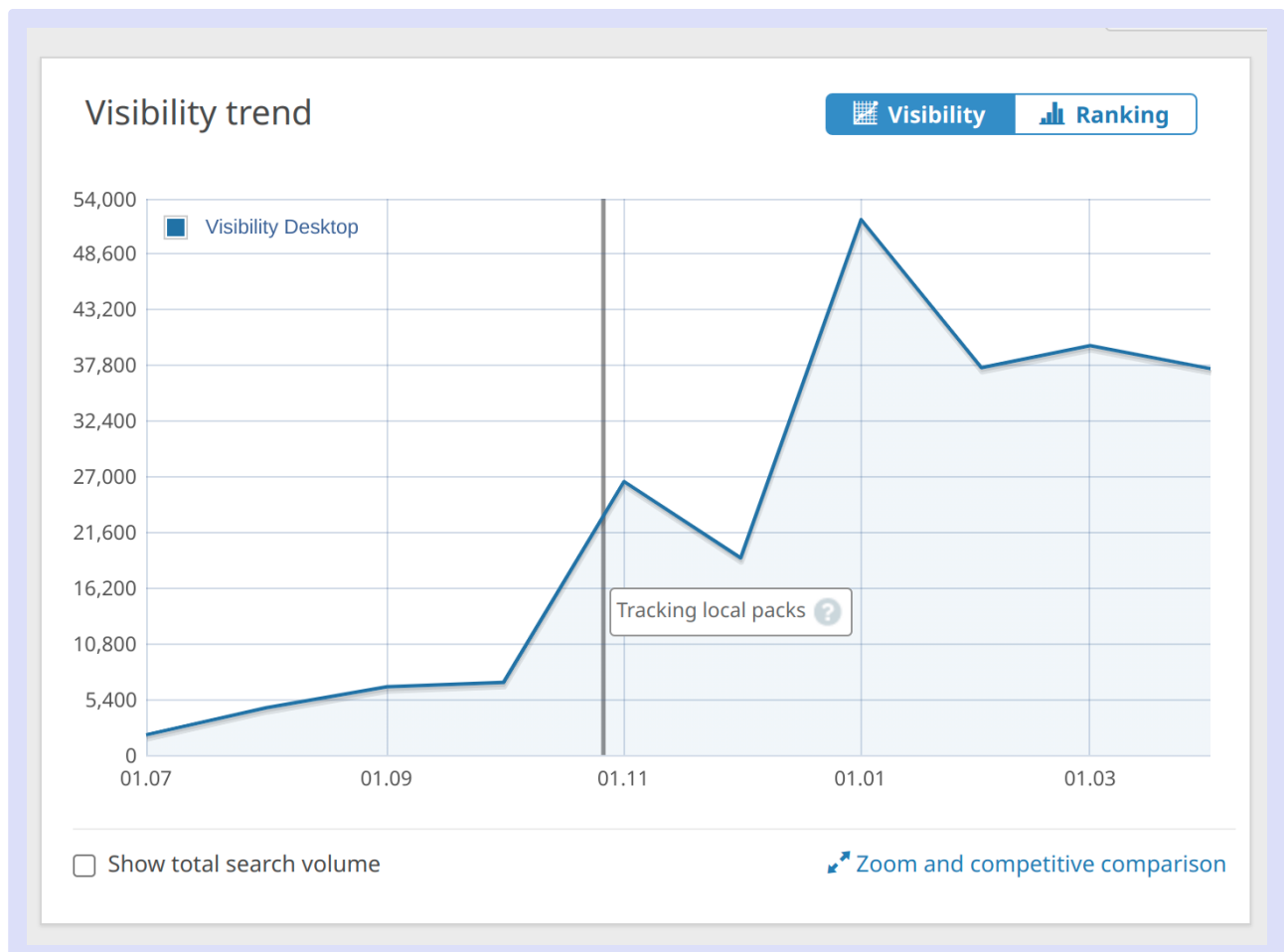
After realizing how important is SEO, even more as at the time (and most of my traffic still is to this day) is based on organic search and "word of mouth" from users I started to do some research (mostly on Youtube) on what is SEO and how to improve it, along this journey I tried multiple SEO tools and websites (mostly the free ones) but the end settled for a paid solutions that I'll talk down bellow.

“ no matter if you are using a free solution or a paid one, use either solution. Don't leave it for later, or you will regret it.

Around a year and a half or two years ago, I noticed that growth had stagnated while I was releasing more features and updates than ever before. After doing some research, I realized that I was way down on page +3 of Google, and therefore all my users came from word of mouth (the referral program didn't exist at that time).

I started to look at multiple SEO optimization tools and decided to try a couple until I finally decided on one (I will talk about it later on). With this tool, I increased my Google ranking by a lot. Now I will show up as one of the first results for most related searches, and we do get a good amount of traffic from Google.

Here is a graph from January 2021 showing our Google visibility:



At this time, around 40% of our traffic comes from search engines.

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

It took a while, but now FreeMcServer.net is a profitable business (around 1k USD a month in profit, with around 1k USD in expenses, so about 2k USD gross), but it's not yet at a level to be able to hire people. Still, it can fully cover its bills and save some money to re-invest back into the platform.

At the moment, we do sell premium credits, but most of our revenue comes from advertisements on our website (over 95%).

We intended to provide most of our services for free from day one and not through a paywall. If you want to support us, you can, but you can do almost everything without spending a cent on it.

I can share some stats that ran for our [2021 year in review](#) to show our growth:

“ The sooner you keep your SEO at the top, the sooner you will appear on Google's front page.

In 2021 we welcomed 325.391 new users; these users created 255.394 new Minecraft servers (+13.1% from the previous period).

Our peak of servers running at the same time increased by 7.03%.

According to Google Analytics, our unique visitors increased by 6.08%, page views increased by 14.36%, and new users increased by 4.43%!

During this time, a total of 5.504 servers were upgraded to premium plans (most of the credits obtained via free methods such as the Referral system)

In the next few years, one of our main objectives is to expand further into the American market, as our user base currently is very Europe focused (we started with server locations only in Europe, and even when we expanded to North America we had considerably weaker servers in North America).

Very recently we deployed our first high-performance node in North America to replace one of our older ones, this new machine will improve performance for users near this geographic location.

We will expand our hardware even further in this location and start some marketing efforts targeting users in this location, mostly thru influencer marketing.

While our social media channels are not our focus (I know, I need to invest more there), we currently have 664 followers on Facebook, 269 followers on [Instagram](#), 206 followers on [Twitter](#), and around 7600 followers on [Twitch](#), and about 3230 followers on [Youtube](#).

While all our [support team](#) is volunteers, we now have nine volunteers helping to keep the platform going and three others in the past.

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

The main lesson I learned is to take care of SEO from day one and always assume it will be a success.

We recently got a push because of the recent Minecraft “Deep Dark” update, which brought many eyes back to Minecraft and its related services.

Another big one is don't procrastinate. If you have things to do, do them sooner than later. The sooner the customers like your product, the sooner you will shine.

What platform/tools do you use for your business?

One of the main tools/providers I used to grow was [Scaleway](#).

As a leading multi-cloud provider, Scaleway supports startups of all sizes, and they offer the perfect combination to grow: cloud resources, infrastructure advisors, and startup experts. Scaleway knows what it takes to build and scale a startup, and this is why they launched their Startup Programs in 2020.

These sector-agnostic programs help notable startups scale their business and extend their network in the ecosystem.

I have been using them for a while and was part of their [startup program](#) (and it was a BIG push on my growth). It is better than any other cloud provider's startup program that throws money/cloud credits at you, and that's it. They will do that as well (and with a generous amount, I might add).

In addition to offering you free cloud engineers to help you scale your infrastructure in the right direction, they will invite you to many different events, from networking events to technical events to arranging meetups with venture capital firms to expand your knowledge of entrepreneurship and how to proceed.

Another great tool I used (and discussed before) was the SEO tool. This tool is [Seobility.net](#); pretty much, you just type in your URL, and they generate a report of what you need to change on your site to improve its visibility following their instruction, I went into Google's front page, so it's a handy tool.

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

My top tip is always to assume it is going to be a success, don't be like me and think, “ill just make a proof of concept”, to attach to my CV.

Because if it has success, you will have to re-write your whole platform again from scratch to handle the massive load, and if it doesn't do well, it's still better to have a shinny project in your CV than one duck-taped together.

You should avoid making the same mistake I made.

My other big mistake was not thinking about SEO from day one. The sooner you keep your SEO at the top, the sooner you will appear on Google's front page.

at the top, the sooner you will appear on Google's front page.

While I think you should invest in SEO and SEO analytics tools from day one, you probably can use many of the free alternatives around in the beginning.

But no matter if you are using a free solution or a paid one, use either solution. Don't leave it for later, or you will regret it.

Where can we go to learn more?

If you want to learn more about the platform or even start a Minecraft server (it's free, after all), you can do so on our [website](#).

Or you can follow us on our social channel:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Twitch](#)
- [Youtube](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

Or you can reach out to me directly at nuno [at] [freemcserver.net](#).

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



Nuno Facha, Founder of FreeMcServer



Pat Walls, Founder of Starter Story

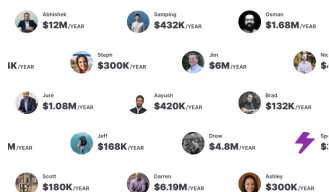
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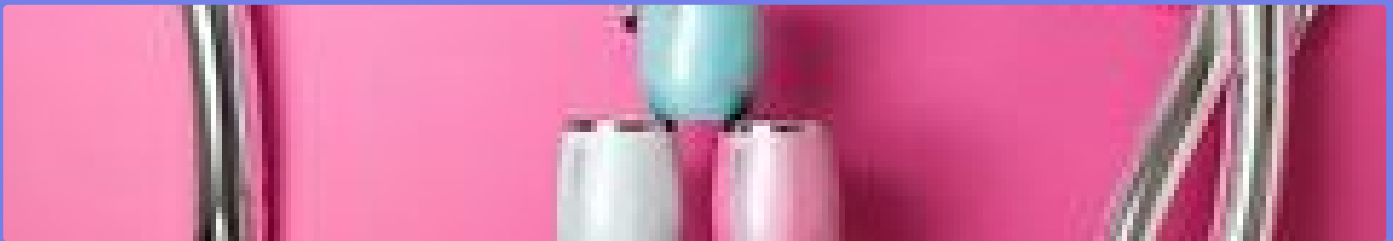
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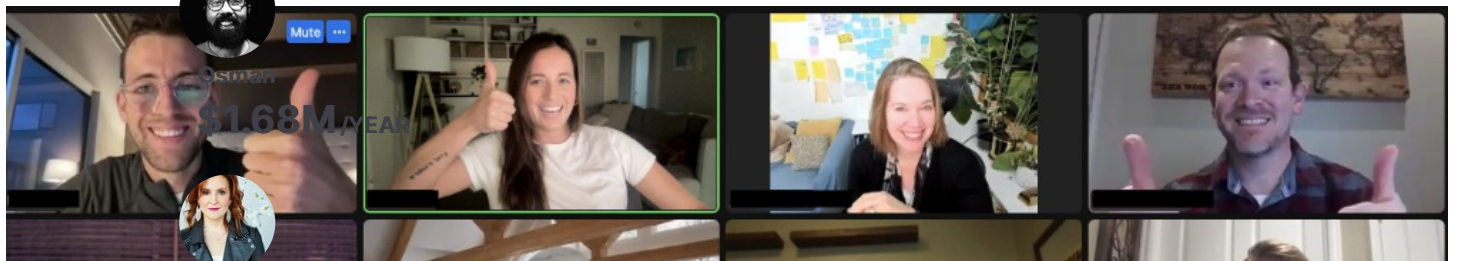
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