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How I Stumbled Into A \$300K Business Framing Tweets



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Zach Katz

Founder, **Framed Tweets**

\$25K

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

Hi! I'm Zach Katz, and I started [Framed Tweets](#) to give people a simple way to beautifully frame their favorite tweets as art, to remember and enjoy forever.

You can frame any tweet you want, or pick one from our gallery of tweets from Twitter icons like [Kanye West](#), [Donald Trump](#), or [Elon Musk](#). They come in three styles: Ornate Gold, Sleek Black, and Giant Canvases (which fill an entire wall)!

We launched in May of 2017, grossing about \$20k in our first year, followed by \$110k in 2018. We're on track to double that in 2019 as we continue to scale our advertising.







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

I dreamed up the idea for Framed Tweets a year prior to starting it.

It was December 2015, and I was holed up in my room, avoiding the New Year's party my parents were hosting downstairs. I was scrolling through Twitter, when suddenly, I thought, "what if you could frame a tweet?" (Honestly, that's how most ideas come about, at least for me. They just randomly happen.)

“ That night, I tweeted the link to some random people who I found by searching Twitter. The next morning, I woke up to find Framed Tweets featured on Product Hunt, Mashable, Uncrate, and a few other websites.

I looked all over the internet. I couldn't believe that there was no website that frames tweet. Excited about a potentially great idea, but with zero intention of ever starting a business, I wrote it down in my notes app as one of those funny "what ifs," and completely forgot about it.

Later that year, after graduating from film school in Boston, I worked on a food truck for a few months, until I eventually got tired of making sandwiches and wanted a change of pace. That winter, I moved to Portland, Oregon.

I didn't have a job. I just walked around and worked on music all day. I had a few thousand saved up from my previous internet ventures (I had a large YouTube following and monetized some Twitter accounts, which I sold), but money eventually started running out, so one rainy day in February, I set out to find a job. I printed out my resume and took it to a bunch of restaurants, hoping to be a busboy or something. Unfortunately, I didn't have any experience in the industry, and although there was a brewery that seemed sort of promising, I felt awful. Getting a "normal job" felt like giving up. I walked home dejected and unsure about my future.

On my way home, I encountered a man on the sidewalk who was selling [homemade Sudoku puzzles](#) for \$5 each. After my near-resignation to a life of transporting dirty dishes, seeing this man on the street selling something he made—*without permission from anyone*—was striking. With more curiosity than I've ever had in my life, I asked him if he was making a living selling these puzzles. He told me he makes enough to get by, and that was all I needed to know.

I walked away with a new outlook on life. Before talking to that guy, I had never, EVER dreamed of starting my own business, and now, I was 10,000% confident that I could make a living selling something myself. If some guy selling Sudoku puzzles on the street could eek out a living, anything was possible.

I opened the notes app on my phone, tapped on my 'Ideas' folder, and the first thing I saw was a note that I had written a year prior, which simply read: 'framed tweets.' I hurried back to my apartment and started working on Framed Tweets that afternoon.

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

I knew I wanted to keep things simple. I didn't want to overwhelm people with twenty different styles of frames. I wanted to start with one beautiful, ornate gold frame that suits tweets perfectly.

At first, I considered buying from an American picture frame company, but I couldn't find any ornate frames that were sold in bulk. I did some research and found that [Alibaba](#) was a good place to buy a wide variety of picture frames in bulk. I requested samples from a few companies, picked out the one I liked best, and ordered 500 of them with the last of my savings.



Good thing my building had a freight elevator.

Note: the frame wasn't completely off-the-shelf. We paid extra for a few custom nuances, like using real glass, a thicker backboard, and adding an easel to allow for propping. We also designed it with rotatable tabs to make it extra easy to insert tweets (a style that's surprisingly uncommon in American picture frames)

uncommon in American picture frames).

Describe the process of launching the business.

At first, I had no idea you could easily sell stuff online. Inspired by the guy selling the puzzles, and eager to make sales right away, I started selling them on the sidewalks of Portland.

I found some used frames at a thrift store, picked out some funny tweets, printed them at [FedEx](#) Office, and lined them up on NW 23rd Ave.

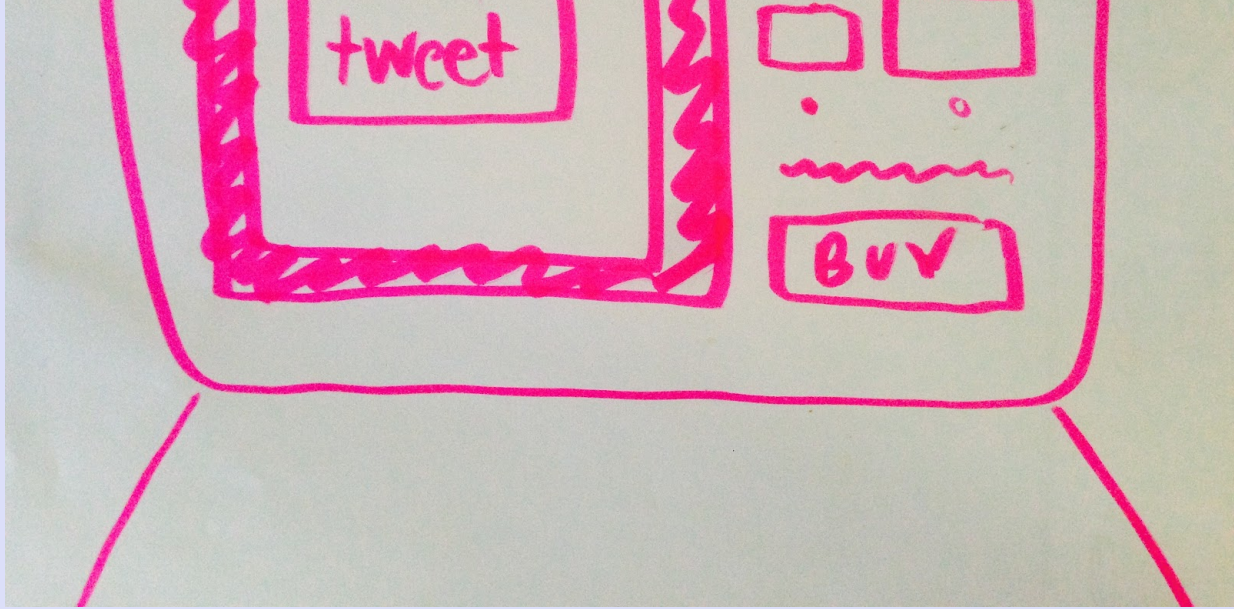


The business was nice enough to let me use their staircase.

I didn't sell many—maybe six or seven, total—but the response was overwhelmingly positive. Groups of teenage girls Snapchatted them. Dignified old men carefully studied the tweets, as if it were the MoMA. Some people scowled. But almost everyone laughed. That's how I knew I had a good idea on my hands.

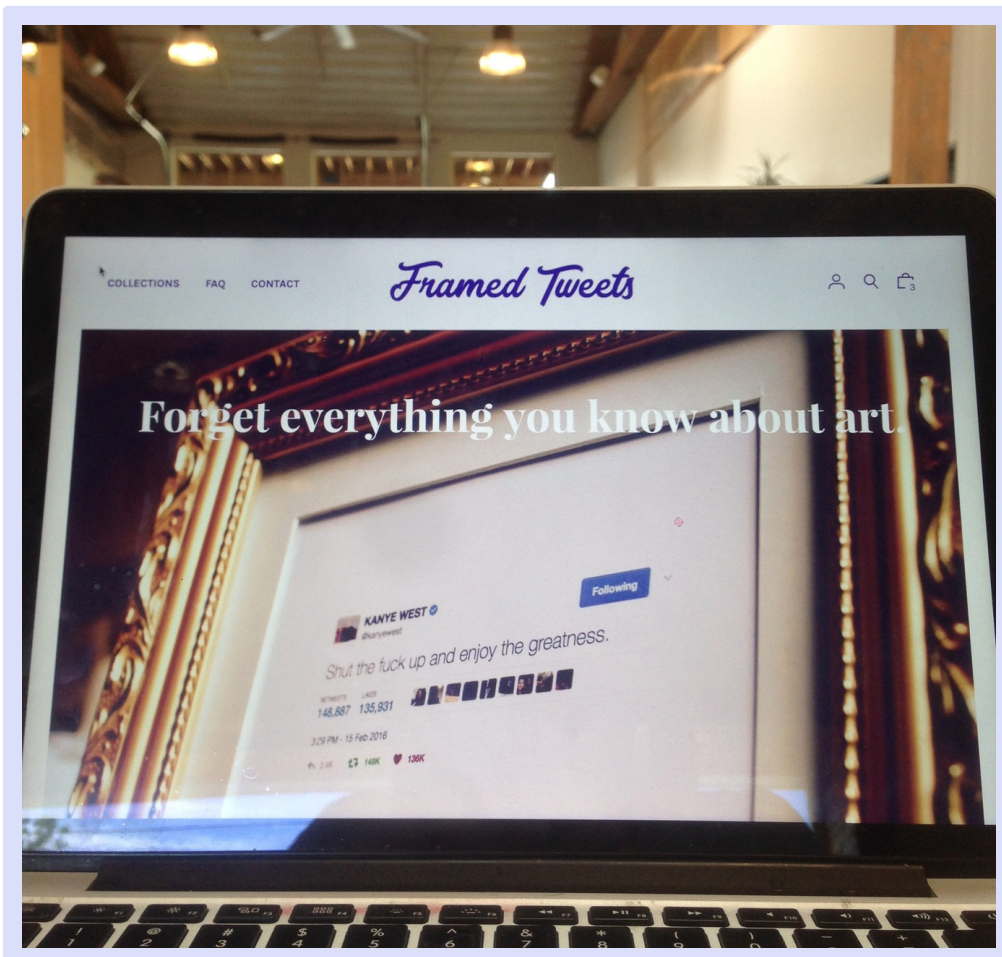
Tired of unsuccessfully hawking tweets on the street, I decided to try selling them online. My first mistake? Spending two months and \$2,000 trying to get some guy on [Upwork](#) to build an e-commerce site from scratch, because I had no idea something like [Shopify](#) existed. Lesson learned!





My first mockup.

Once I discovered [Shopify](#), I spent about two months getting the site ready: Taking product photos, curating tweets, organizing them into categories, writing a FAQ page, etc. Finally, it was ready to go.



Working on the website.

I launched the website on May 5th. That night, I tweeted the link to some random people who I found by searching Twitter for “frame this tweet.” The next morning, I woke up to find Framed Tweets featured on [Product Hunt](#), [Mashable](#), [Uncrate](#), and a few other websites. (My favorite article came out a few months later, in which I had some fun embellishing to Portland’s [Willamette Week](#).)

While that press led to about 100 initial sales (~\$5,000 worth), the traffic eventually fizzled out,

and I was back to square one.



Fulfilling orders from my apartment.

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

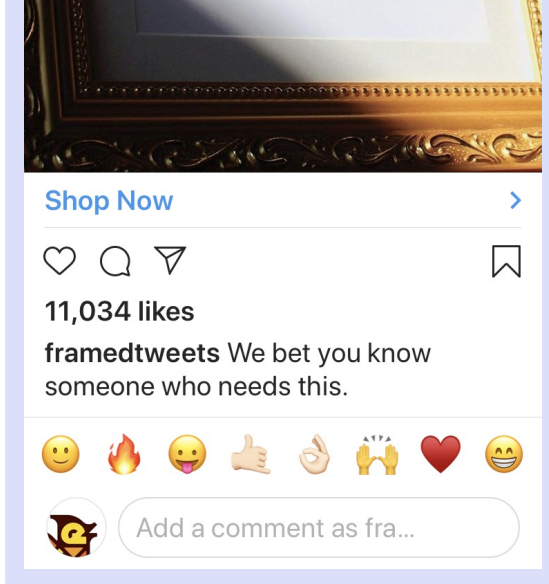
The #1 most important thing you can do is find a way to consistently get people onto your site. Press is no substitute—even if your store gets featured in the New York Times, the traffic is still going to wither away a few days later, and then you're back to square one. Which is why a "scalable marketing machine" (Facebook ads, Instagram ads, Google ads, etc.) is so important.

“ No marketing leads to no sales. Some marketing leads to some sales.
And lots of marketing leads to lots of sales.

Instagram Ads

These have been our bread and butter, and 90% of our sales are attributed to them (in fact, we're not even advertising on Facebook at the moment, because the return on Instagram has been so much better).





One of our best-performing Instagram ads.

Just regular ol' Instagram

Just posting to Instagram has worked pretty well. Sometimes I'll post a photo of a product and we'll get three or four sales. Other times, nothing will happen. Instagram is unpredictable like that. But I also haven't been putting as much effort into crafting beautiful photos, which the algorithm loves—that's been on my perennial to-do list.

Twitter

I'll let this screenshot do the talking:



Press

We've been featured on a few big sites, like Mashable, Hypebeast, and GQ France. We didn't

do any PR outreach—it all just happened randomly. I'd love to get some more press, so if you write for the New York Times and want to write a story about how tweets are changing the art game, hit me up :)

Influencers

We occasionally send free framed tweets to people with lots of followers on Twitter or Instagram. Sometimes, they [tweet](#) about it, although we don't ask them to.

It's hard to know exactly how many sales this kind of thing yields, but I feel like it's a pretty good long-term strategy, building awareness and whatnot.

Email marketing

This is something that we haven't invested much in yet, but are looking to build up soon. If you're interested in working with us on this, please get in touch!

Other sales channels

Our Etsy store makes up about 5% of our sales. What's nice is that they're all organic sales from search (in other words, people searching for "Kanye West gifts" as opposed to), so since we're not spending any money on marketing there, profit is higher.

We occasionally get sales from Amazon and eBay too, although our presence on those sites isn't built up much yet.

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

Things are going pretty well!

Sales are steadily increasing as we scale our Instagram ads. We're grossing about \$20k per month from Instagram ads, spending about \$300/day. Our ROAS hovers around 2.

Operations-wise, we now work with a fulfillment center that prints, frames, and ships all of our products, so I don't have to handle any of that myself anymore, which allows me the freedom to work from anywhere in the world.

I'm also working on growing my other business, [Memes On Canvas](#), spearheading the internet-content-turned-IRL-art industry :)

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

Working with a marketing agency has been huge. At first, I spent weeks trying to figure out how to run Facebook ads myself, but I honestly didn't have the patience or experience to do them myself. Once I hired an agency, it made a huge difference, and sales started to really take off in a reliable way.

“ Success isn't always overnight, and it usually takes a hell of a lot of problem-solving and persistence than you expect.

Broadly-speaking, there are always going to be new and unexpected challenges. For example, the exact day I started Framed Tweets, Kanye West deleted his Twitter. Which meant manually re-creating all of his now-deleted tweets people were buying. Or a few months later, when Twitter changed the entire design of tweets, and we had to re-upload hundreds of product images (this will probably happen again soon). Or the many times we've failed to order inventory on time, and had a hundred upset customers pissed off about not getting their order in time for Christmas. There are always going to "speedbumps" on the road to success in *any* endeavor, which I view as a way the universe "teases" you, simply to prove your dedication to achieving what you want.

I've also learned that business isn't some boring thing that involves just filling out a bunch of forms, which is a misconception lots of beginners seem to have. It's actually more like a form of art. Essentially, every problem can be solved with creativity, which is why I think that being open-minded and thinking expansively are two of the most valuable assets that you can have. I believe that everyone is fundamentally creative in their own way, which means that anyone can succeed at business if they

Do things "the hard way" first, then look for easier ways as you go

In the early days, I printed all of the orders at [FedEx](#) Office, took them back to my apartment to frame them, then carried the boxes to the post office. When that started taking too much time, I bought a professional-grade printer and discovered that USPS will [pick up](#) from your home, for free (!).

When *that* started taking too much time, I found a fulfillment center to print/frame/ship orders, which now allows me to run the business from anywhere in the world, and scale it up to the moon.

Don't bother keeping your amazing idea a secret.

Before I started Framed Tweets, I was scared to tell people about my idea, because I was afraid they would steal it. Now, I can't believe how silly that was. Over the past year, there have been a few copycat businesses, but they've all given up. Execution is *everything*.

Honestly? This is the first time we've published our revenue publically, and now that we've done so, I *hope* people compete with us. I think people are starting to get tired of looking at screens 24/7, and will appreciate more opportunities to bring the internet content they love most into their physical, tangible world. The more the merrier.

What platform/tools do you use for your business?

I'm always experimenting with new apps, but here are my tried-and-true favorites:

- [Shopify](#). I wouldn't even consider using anything else to run an e-commerce store. Worth it for the 3 A.M. support calls alone.
- The [Shopify](#) theme [Turbo](#). Blazing fast, looks amazing, tons of features, constantly being updated.
- [Hypervisual](#) for landing pages. and to spruce up the collection and product pages. I tested

[Hyperlocal](#) for landing pages, and to spruce up the collection and product pages. Tested DOZENS of landing page builders for [Shopify](#), and Hypervisual is by FAR the best. I love it so much.

- [Klaviyo](#) for email
- [Fera.ai](#) for checkout page adjustments, social proof pop-ups on the site, and “get it by” shipping countdowns.
- [Okendo](#) for customer reviews.
- [Onlinejobs.ph](#) for hiring Filipino virtual assistants. \$2 USD/hr is actually a competitive wage there because the cost of living is so low.
- [Lucky Orange](#) for heatmaps, to help with improving our conversion rate.
- [LiveRecover](#) for texting customers who abandon their cart with a coupon code. We just started experimenting with this, but it seems promising.
- [Snappic](#) - Automated retargeting ads for Facebook and Instagram. Has driven a consistent ROI for us.

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

- [The War of Art](#) - The Bible of creative productivity.
- [Derek Sivers' blog](#) - Wisdom that applies to both art and business.
- [My Uncle Oswald](#) - Did you know Roald Dahl wrote books for adults, too? This is one of the most entertaining stories I've ever read, and it contains wildly potent lessons in entrepreneurialism.
- [The Millionaire Fastlane](#) - This book is aimed at people who want to break out of the 9 to 5 world, but I'd recommend it solely because it made me completely rethink wealth, and what it takes to become rich.
- [The ONE Thing](#) - When I was trying to do a bunch of things at once and was having trouble deciding what to focus on, this book helped a lot.
- [The Philosophy of Andy Warhol](#) - “Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art.”

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

Find amazing people to work with.

One good way to run a successful business is to outsource everything to people who are better at it than you. How to find them? Talk to people, and they'll surprise you. Some examples from my life:

- A few months after starting the business, I made a post on [reddit](#) asking for help marketing Framed Tweets, and I met a guy named Max, who runs a marketing agency called [Paradise Growth](#). He's not only been running all of our ads campaigns ever since, but has also taught me almost everything I know about business along the way (for example, without his guidance, I wouldn't have even known to look for a fulfillment center, and I'd probably still be packing orders from my apartment!).
- Last summer, after emailing a customer apologizing for his order being late, he referred me

to his friend's fulfillment center that could handle our volume. We're still working with them to this day.

- I even met a girl on Tinder, and instead of going on a date, she ended up helping me with an influencer campaign!

With the *entire world* at your fingertips, and with basically zero effort or risk in chatting someone up in the DMs, you might as well talk to as many people as possible. You never know who you might hit it off with and end up changing your life.

If you don't have traffic, you won't get sales.

I used to freak out when I wouldn't get any sales all day—despite only getting like, 30 visitors—and think “what the hell am I doing wrong? Maybe no one likes my product. Maybe changing the font will help. Or maybe making the logo cooler...”

Turns out, I just wasn't getting enough people onto the site. That's where the scalable marketing machine comes in (Instagram ads in our case).

I forget where I heard this quote—and I'm definitely butchering the phrasing—but it goes something like:

No marketing leads to no sales. Some marketing leads to some sales. And lots of marketing leads to lots of sales.

Success isn't always overnight, and it usually takes a hell of a lot of problem-solving and persistence than you expect. I truly expected Framed Tweets to be an overnight sensation, and to make millions of dollars immediately. That didn't happen, and two years later, it's basically just starting to be profitable. Patience is key. But it's easy to be patient when you enjoy the challenge. Which leads me to...

Do something you actually like doing! This might be obvious to some people, and it might not apply to people who can easily tolerate anything in the pursuit of money. But personally, I can't fully invest my time and energy in something unless I love it. I've always been a huge fan of Twitter. It's my cup of tea, and selling tweets is the most exciting business I can imagine.

Where can we go to learn more?

- Website: framedtweets.com
- Twitter: [@framedtweets](https://twitter.com/framedtweets)
- Instagram: [@framedtweets](https://www.instagram.com/framedtweets)
- Email me, zach@framedtweets.com

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



Zach Katz, Founder of Framed Tweets

Framed Tweets has provided an update on their business!

12 months after launching Framed Tweets, I've updated my business plan. I've been able to...

12 months ago, we followed up with Framed Tweets to see [how they've been doing](#) since we published this article.



Pat Walls, Founder of Starter Story

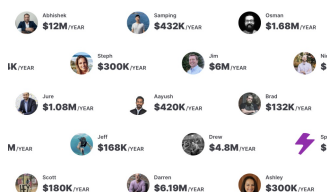
Want to find more ideas that make money?

Hey! I'm Pat Walls, the founder of Starter Story.

Get our 5-minute email newsletter packed with business ideas and money-making opportunities, backed by real-life case studies.



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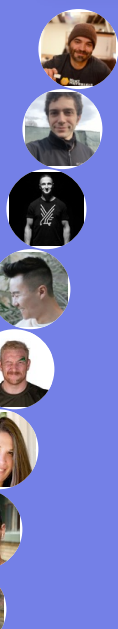


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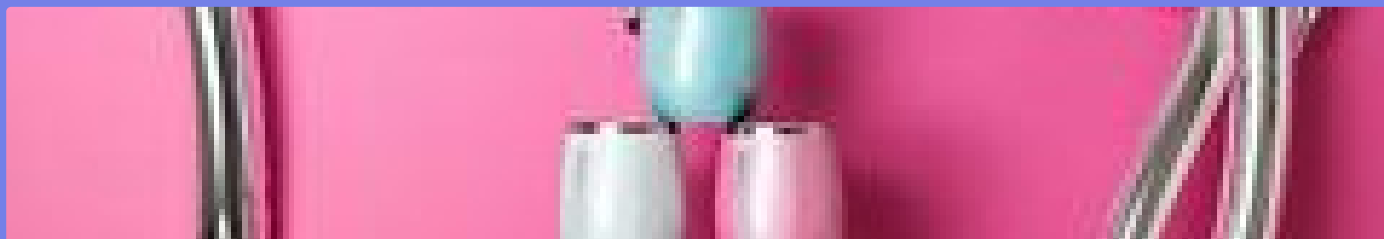
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Dylan

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



Drinkware brand

\$12M / month



Chris

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



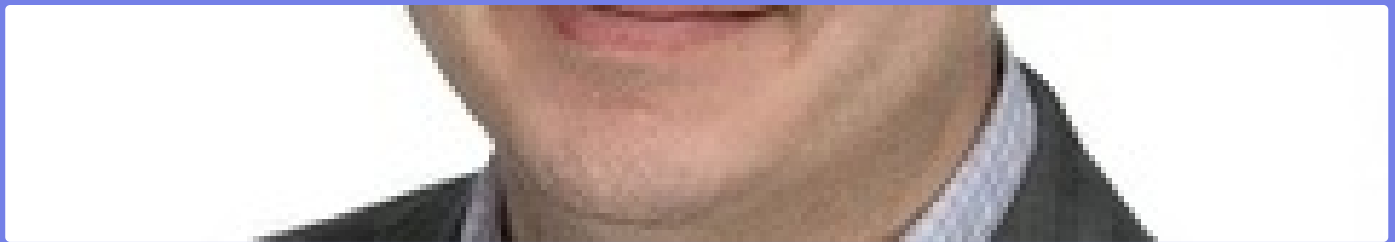
Seo agency

\$10M / month



Matt

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



Finance blog

\$2.13M / month

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You're no longer building alone, because you have thousands of founders who are telling you to keep going.



Michael

\$1.08M/YEAR



Scott

\$300K/YEAR



Chad

\$1.2M/YEAR



Garrett

\$300K/YEAR

Resources to keep you building



Abhishek

\$12M/YEAR

Building a business is not a game of luck.

It's about taking action every day.



Samping

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Sam Parr

My First Million

I love this website.



Rand Fishkin

Moz / SparkToro

Love Starter Story's transparency.



Johne Vang

Be The Match

You can't find this information anywhere else.



Trent Baren

Instagram

So much valuable information.



Bilal Budhani

Entrepreneur

I was hooked on Starter Story as soon as I discovered it. Resonated with me right off the bat.



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Michael

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Low Capital Ideas Make Money Blogging E-Commerce Ideas



Michael

START YOUR BUSINESS

How To Find Ideas TikTok Bio Ideas Learn SEO Grow Your Business

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