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I Developed A Niche Chrome Extension For Amazon Merch Sellers That Makes \$120K/Year



Rick Blyth



Published: April 19th, 2022

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Rick Blyth

Founder, **Micro SaaS Founder - Rick Blyth**

\$10K

REVENUE/MO



1

FOUNDERS

0

EMPLOYEES

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

Hi, my name is [Rick Blyth](#) and I am the founder of the [Merch Wizard](#) & [KDP Wizard](#) chrome extensions which I developed for niche Amazon sellers.

Initially, I started these SaaS (Software as a Service) apps as a side hustle whilst still working my (unfulfilling) corporate job. After some early positive feedback from my target audience, I quickly became hooked on fixing problems for them with my apps!

Receiving direct, positive feedback from this user base was incredibly fulfilling and it was such a stark contrast to the typical “back office” role I was used to as a techie. It felt like it was finally my time to shine.





I started with several smaller free apps before launching my flagship product for a monthly/annual subscription - Merch Wizard. The app helps sellers on Merch By Amazon (Amazon's Print On Demand Platform) organize and manage their listings & designs, saving them time by making them more efficient, and giving them more time to create and release more products.

I then went on to develop a second app, KDP Wizard, for Amazon sellers on the Kindle Direct Publishing platform on Amazon. There was some crossover with the Merch By Amazon community and several users were asking for a similar app for KDP, so it was the obvious next step. Using only organic traffic, I was able to have a successful multi-five figure launch for KDP Wizard.





I went on to earn \$10k MRR (Monthly Recurring Revenue) in subscription income from both my apps before deciding that the time was right to sell and exit my Micro SaaS business.

The sale process went very smoothly thanks to the groundwork I'd put in to ensure the key SaaS metrics were trending in the right direction. That said, I was still shocked when the apps ended up selling at the full asking price within just 5 hours of going live!

After the sale, I took some time to reflect on what I'd learned over the past few years of bootstrapping my apps. Having gone full cycle from an unhappy full-time corporate job to be able to quit my job with confidence and finally on to selling and exiting my apps, I feel like I'm well placed to help other software developers to start building their own profitable bootstrapped apps.

As such, I've compiled all my learnings into a 100 page [Micro SaaS Handbook](#) which is available to download for free on my website and I've also started a [YouTube Channel](#) to help other software developers get started building their subscription apps.

Eventually, I will be diving back into building a bigger Micro SaaS app utilizing everything that I've learned and with a much bigger exit in mind. For the time being though, my focus is on sharing the knowledge I've gained over the past few years of going it alone and inspiring others to take their first steps.



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

I was a 20-year career dev, rising through the ranks from Junior Developer to Tech Director. However, when I reached the “pinnacle” it wasn’t everything I hoped it would be. It was chaotic, stressful, and unfulfilling.

I started reading self-improvement books and one, in particular, would change my life forever - **Rich Dad Poor Dad by Robert Kiyosaki**.

Immediately after reading that book, I started looking for ways to make passive income outside of my day job. I looked into selling on Amazon and had a brief stint selling physical products via Fulfillment By Amazon (FBA) but it wasn’t for me.

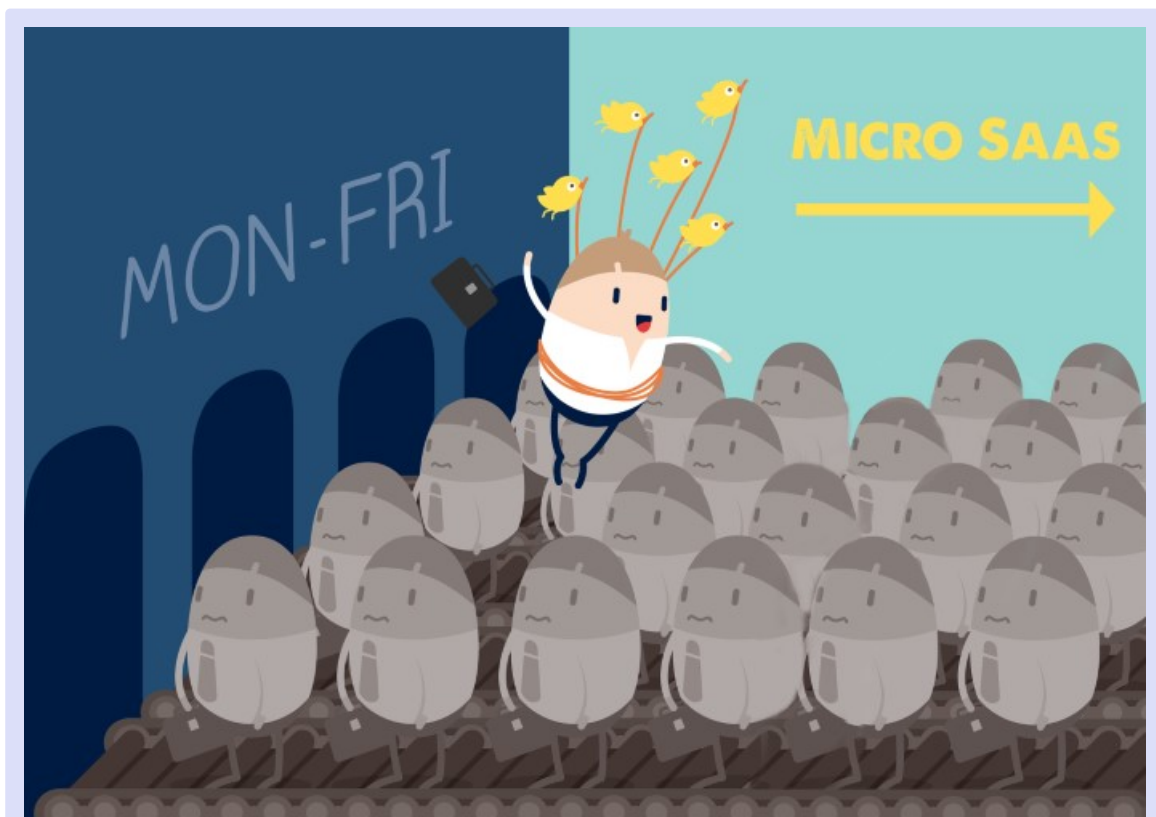
However, it did lead me to discover a newly launched platform within Amazon though called Merch by Amazon. The Merch platform allows creators to upload a design and list it on Print On Demand products across multiple Amazon marketplaces. Each time a product sells with its design on it, they receive a royalty payment. I started off creating multiple Merch designs and received some small monthly royalties.

“ Embrace failure. Move quickly, fail fast, and fail forward.

Given it was in its infancy, the user interface for Merch was very clunky and frustrating to use. It was very time-consuming and cumbersome to try to manage a portfolio of products and designs across the various marketplaces.

It was at that point that I realized I could use my software development skills to create some chrome extensions to make Merch creators' lives better!

Fuelled by a strong desire to quit my job, I worked on growing Merch Wizard relentlessly in my evenings and weekends until I had scaled it to a point where I was finally able to hand in my resignation. Once I was free of the shackles of my day job, I was able to focus on Merch Wizard full time and set about growing the customer base.



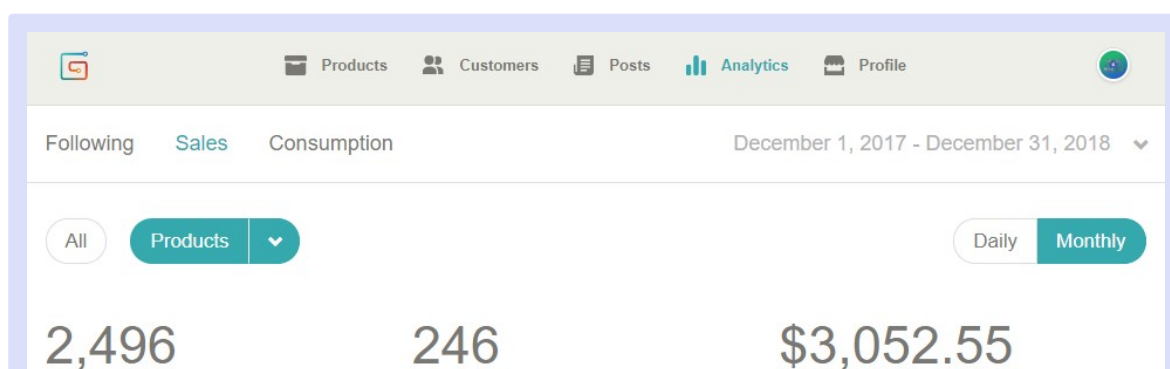
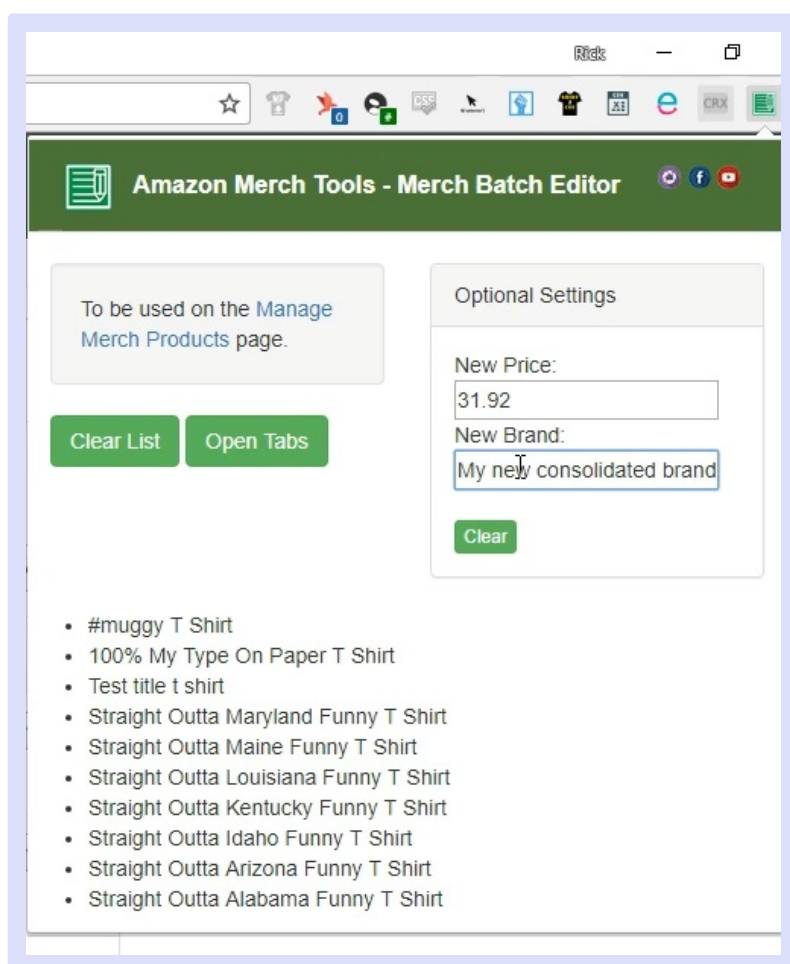
Take us through the process of designing, prototyping, and manufacturing your first product.

I created a few free chrome extensions that fixed some of the immediate frustrations as a Merch creator myself. I gave these early chrome extensions away for free, only asking the user to register on Gumroad to get a free license key that would be emailed to them. Building my email list in the early days was a crucial foundation for the success that followed later on.

I then went on to build my first paid chrome extension which was called Merch Batch Editor. It was a super simple and incredibly ugly chrome extension, but users loved it. I set a one-off price of \$12.99 for this app.

But, even with the low price, I had very low expectations that anyone would want to buy it. After all, I wasn't going to run any ads to it, just rely on organic traffic methods.

However, I was soon proved wrong as this super-basic tool made me over \$3,000!





Merch Batch Editor - my first paid chrome extension which took a weekend to develop but made me over \$3k

This small app was the building block to my bigger chrome extensions and helped me earn the trust of the users and build a reputation in the community as a trustworthy app developer.

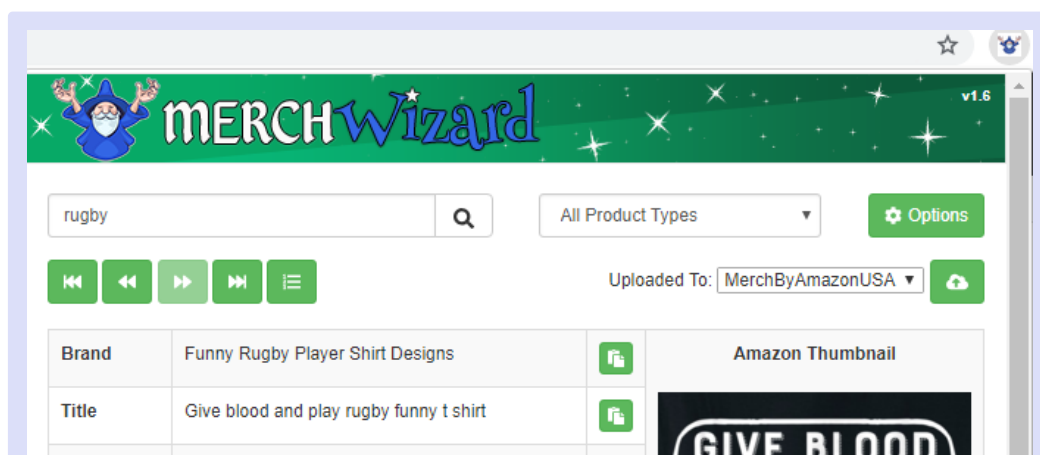
Then one day whilst I was out walking my dog, I had a lightbulb moment. I wondered if I could build an app that combined my previous apps' functionality with a new way of organizing the ever-growing and unmanageable portfolio of products that Merch sellers faced. That was the start of my flagship app, Merch Wizard.







I set about building a barebones MVP to **validate my Micro SaaS idea** and promised myself I'd ship it within 90 days no matter what.


I made a prioritized list of the must-have features for the MVP and noted downtime estimates against each one. I slashed my list of must-haves down to the point that the app would be functional and out of the door in 90 days. The app would do what it promised to do and it'd be a glimpse into the potential that the app could be to excite early adopters.

By day 60, I had the prototype to share with a small team of beta testers that I had assembled from power users of my previous apps. After receiving their invaluable feedback and making some tweaks ahead of launch, I was ready to hit the launch button.

I had been building up some pre-launch hype on social media and getting my email list warmed up too. I published the app on the chrome store, emailed the users of my free tools, and posted about the app in relevant Facebook communities.



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Merch Wizard MVP (Cringe)

The launch went well and I received some great feedback and feature requests which encouraged me to continue to develop the app.

Driven by the desire to quit my day job, I could see a glimmer of light at the end of the dark tunnel and I went full steam ahead, driving for that light. I worked tirelessly on the app during my commute, on my lunch break, in the evenings, and at weekends but it was truly a labor of love.

After a particularly prosperous Black Friday sale, I decided to leap and finally quit my job to work on Merch Wizard full time.

Describe the process of launching the business.

As I touched on in the previous section, I started by giving a lot of value for free to my target audience. I built up a small but highly targeted email list of community members that were happy to use tools to increase their productivity.

In addition to releasing the free apps, I was also active in the community's Facebook groups adding value where I could.

Once I'd built up a trustworthy reputation within the community on the back of my free apps and valuable contributions, I was able to successfully release my paid app to a warm audience.

I nurtured several relationships with influencers in the Merch space, adding them as affiliates of my app. I then went on several live shows on Facebook & YouTube reaching global audiences that I would never have reached on my own. Each time I went live, I would always do a live demo of the app (I mean, what could go wrong!) and take questions live.

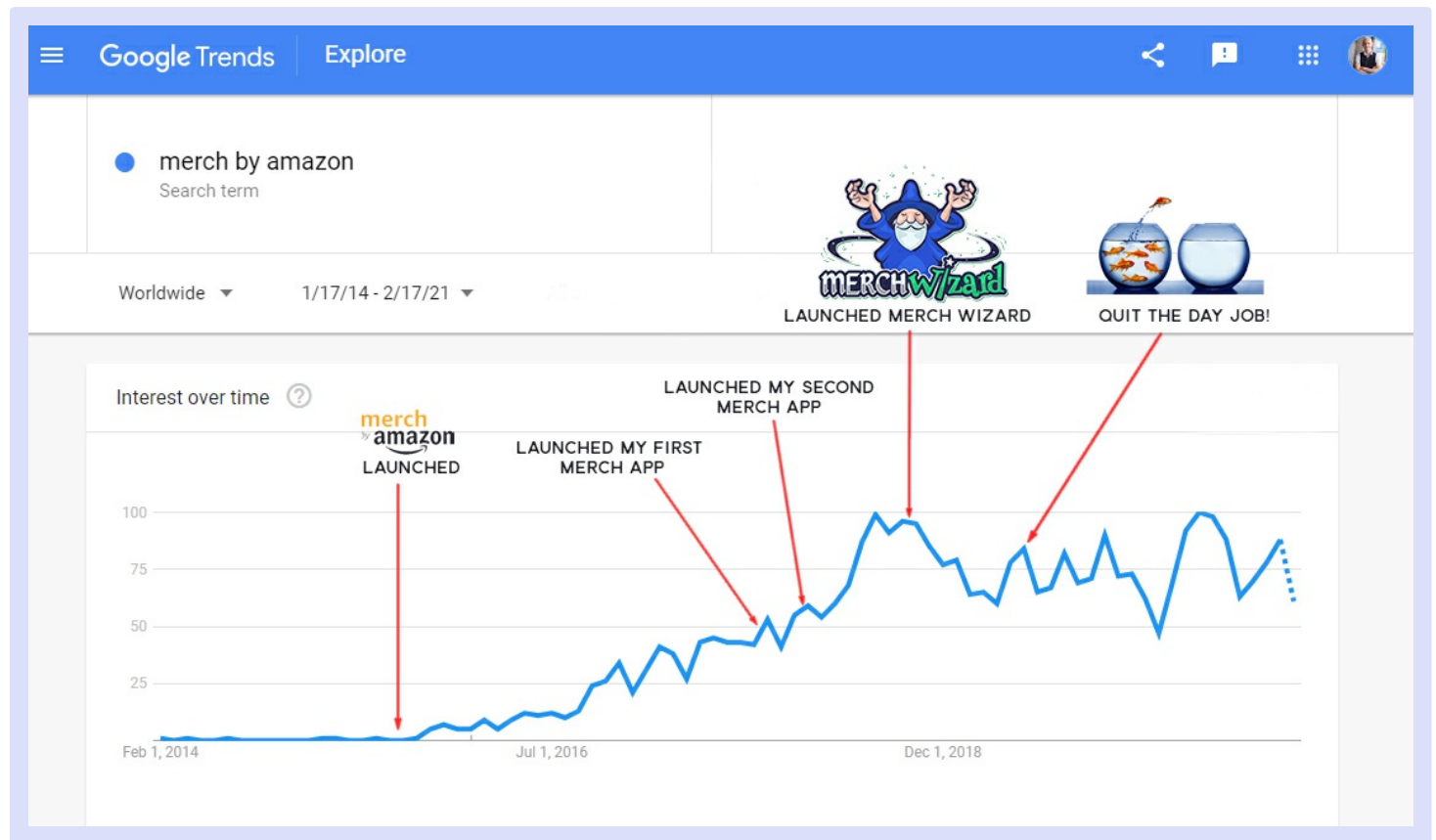
Harvesting these audiences that the influencers had brought a really good boost in subscription income. Also, by providing great customer service and continually adding new features, existing users were generally glowing about Merch Wizard and recommended it in forums and groups when people asked what tools they use to solve certain problems.

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

I was fortunate enough to find an expanding niche, which is probably one of the most critical

steps in the process of making your life easier. As you can see from this Google Trends graph, being in an expanding market is way easier to launch products in than in one that's in decline.

As the adage goes, it's best to sell to a starving crowd!



One noteworthy activity I did early on was to host a conference for my niche's audience, seeing as there was no European-based conference at the time. I had never organized a conference before but I do like a challenge!

By hosting this conference I was able to gain further trust in the community; increase awareness of my app; network with influencers; meet Merch Wizard users in the flesh and get their invaluable direct feedback.



After the initial launch, I continued to add more features whilst staying on top of customer support. It's tempting in the early days to just plow on by adding new features whilst support takes a backseat.

However, I would recommend as soon as you know that your solution is gaining traction (post MVP) that you invest your time into creating a helpdesk ticketing solution and a thorough **knowledge base**. This early investment will serve you well for years to come as you can direct customers to knowledgebase articles rather than repeatedly replying to each of them with individual customized feedback.

Also, my advice would be to do all the support yourself in the early days and try to get the users on a call/screen share rather than going back and forth over several days via support tickets. That way, you can rapidly resolve any issues that your users are experiencing and at the same time ask for their honest feedback on the app. This direct feedback from your user base is invaluable and will help drive your product roadmap forward.

Customer satisfaction is the foundation of the growth process. There's no point in having a high number of users try out your app only for them to leave the next month due to it being buggy or the support team being unresponsive.

Take this snippet from a Merch Wizard review, which was left by an early adopter who was super-impressed with the quick response to his support queries. Imagine being a prospective user and reading this review, you'd be reassured that even if you did have any issues running the software, they'd be resolved quickly.



Merch Wizard is the answer to all my "wish list" requests for an easy to use, effective, and robust software that has ALL the features I need to store, organize, edit, and upload my listings.

Additionally, the customer service is the best I have experienced in the Merch arena. Rick and his team are very responsive to Facebook messages and group comments. It doesn't seem to matter what time of day or day of week it is, I always get answers back within a couple of hours...many times within minutes. It has become an indispensable tool in my arsenal and has saved me countless hours of work with so many amazing features to store, organize and edit over 8,000 listings. If you have thousands of listings in your inventory, then you owe it to yourself to get the Merch Wizard ELITE. It is worth every penny...and then some. Thanks to the team at Merch Wizard for all you do for the Merch community. It is much appreciated!



Jay Bayne a year ago

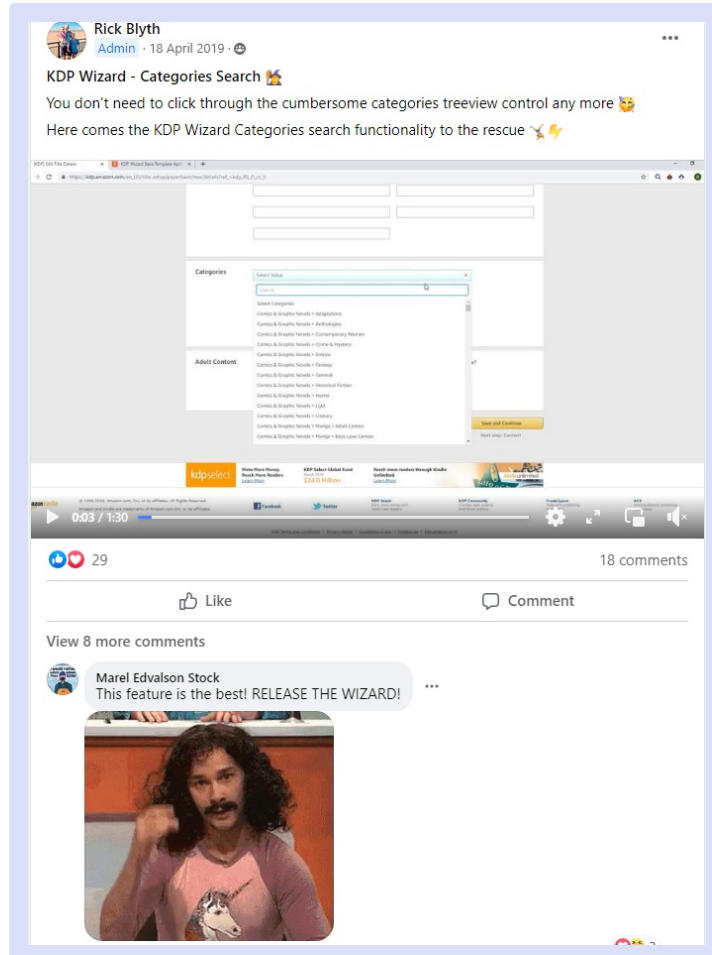
Going forward, I put together a small micro-team of Merch power users around me that helped out with testing, graphics, promotion, and support too. Being able to bounce ideas off the team was extremely valuable.

We went on to build a second app, KDP Wizard for Kindle Direct Publishing sellers. For this product launch, we built up anticipation by building a content calendar in which we drip fed each feature's description and the benefit to the user of it to them

each features description and the benefit to the user of it to them.

People will genuinely get excited about your app launch if you're drip-feeding them solutions to their problems.

Here's an example of a simple post I made in the KDP Wizard Facebook Group showing a searchable Treeview control I'd been working on to replace the clunky native Treeview control. Despite its simplicity, the group's users loved it because they knew it'd save them so much time every time they listed a book:



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

I've been fortunate enough to sell my apps and have had some time to reflect on my journey and contemplate the big question - what should I do next?

I have decided to share my story and help other programmers start their own Micro SaaS apps as side projects. One day they could grow their apps to a point that they're able to quit their day jobs as I did.

So, I'm making it my mission to help other software developers do what I've done and unlock the potential they have inside them. To visualize how to go from Idea to Exit I have put together a video on my YouTube channel showing how to build your own Micro SaaS in 10 steps.

Eventually, I will be jumping back in the ring for Micro SaaS round two. I'm looking forward to building something bigger and better next time, utilizing all the knowledge and experience I've gained since going it alone. My next Micro SaaS will be built to sell from day one, bootstrapped and I'll be targeting a much bigger exit.

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

Firstly, make sure you're working on your business rather than working in your business. If you are the only asset in your business you've created a job for yourself, not a business.

Hire a small team to help out with tasks that aren't your strength or that you don't enjoy so you can pull the biggest levers in the business.

In addition to that, make sure your business is built to sell from day one. For example, on a practical level, before you take a dollar from your customers, ensure all payments are going to a business account rather than to a personal account.

“ There will never be a perfect time to start, so just start right now and learn as you move forward.

In the case of subscription model businesses, asking customers to re-enter their payment details to re-subscribe, later on, is far from ideal as many people will churn at this point. Also, if you ever look to sell and exit your business, likely, any subscription income that's not paid into the business accounts would be excluded during the valuation.

Finally, I'm a big believer in continuous self-development and discovery. You should always dedicate some part of each day to learning from others. Over time, this will compound and you should see great results in your efforts.

What platform/tools do you use for your business?

Both Merch Wizard and KDP Wizard utilized similar platforms and tools, mainly:

- [Gumroad](#)

- [Airtable](#)
- Wordpress
- WooCommerce
- [Zapier](#)
- [MailChimp](#)

In terms of personal and productivity when working in a small team, I'd recommend:

- [TextExpander](#)
- [Slack](#)
- [JIRA](#)
- [BitBucket](#)

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

In terms of books, the one that has had the biggest impact on me is [Rich Dad Poor Dad by Robert Kiyosak](#). In fact, I'd go as far as to say it was a life-changing moment when I read it.

I remember starting to read it one Saturday morning whilst my son was playing in an all-day tennis tournament. By Sunday evening I'd finished the last page and my brain was buzzing with ideas. My view of the standard way of working had just been shattered and seeing the world from this new perspective was incredible. It was this book that set me off on my passive income journey.

I don't listen to many podcasts but when I do it's generally the [Indie Hackers podcast](#), which is always full of value from like-minded SaaS founders.

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

Firstly, embrace failure. Move quickly, fail fast, and fail forward.

If you are somewhat of a perfectionist, you have to check your ego and leave it at the door. Release the first version of your product as soon as you can or you'll risk losing weeks or even months of your life for no good reason.

Take imperfect action but for goodness sake take some action! I have been guilty of over-analyzing, over-thinking, and procrastinating far too much in the early days. There will never be a perfect time to start, so just start right now and learn as you move forward.

Secondly, don't assume you know what your target audience wants. Early on in my time developing Micro SaaS apps, I released two products and I was fairly sure that one of them would be a success whilst the other might not get much traction.

As it turned out, the opposite happened! The app I didn't think much of really resonated with the target audience and the other one bombed! As such, I was able to pivot and spend more time developing the initially unloved app and grew it successfully.

Finally, don't forget to start marketing your product whilst you're building it. At a minimum, you

should be spending 20% of your time on marketing whilst developing your product. This percentage is likely to depend on your product category but you want to raise enough awareness of your product such that when you launch, you do so to a warm and established audience.

Where can we go to learn more?

- [Website](#)
- [Free 100 page Micro SaaS Handbook](#)
- [YouTube Channel](#)
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If you have any questions or comments, drop a comment below!



Rick Blyth, Founder of Micro SaaS Founder – Rick Blyth



Pat Walls, Founder of Starter Story

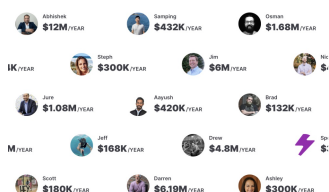
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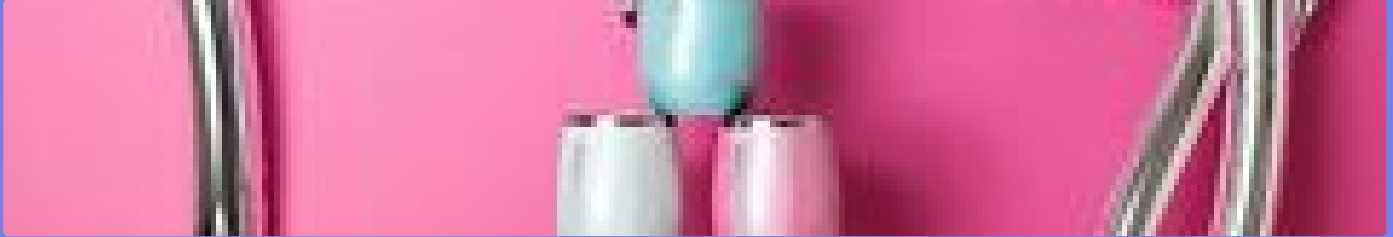
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Scott
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Garrett
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Resources to keep you building



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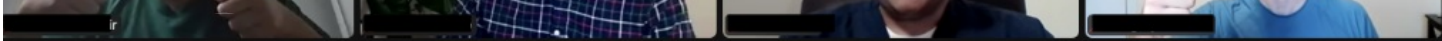
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Osman
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Rand Fishkin

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