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I Built An App That Helps People Manage Panic Attacks [2M+ Users]



Ania Wysocka



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ABOUT

BUSINESS

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SAVE



Ania Wysocka

Founder, **Rootd**

1

FOUNDERS

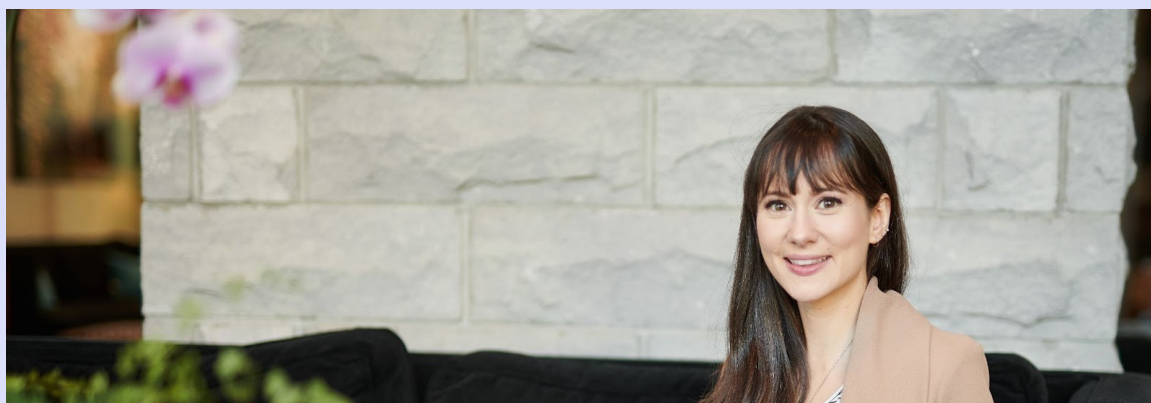
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EMPLOYEES

Hello! My name is Ania, and I'm the founder and creator of **Rootd**, an app for anxiety and panic attack relief I've bootstrapped to over 2 million users in over 150 countries.

Rootd makes anxiety and panic attack support available in users' pockets (or on their wrists) anytime, anywhere - including in moments when other valuable resources such as counseling are not.

The app helps users feel brave enough to return to school or work, depend less on their partners, feel less isolated, and reclaim the amazing potential in their lives.



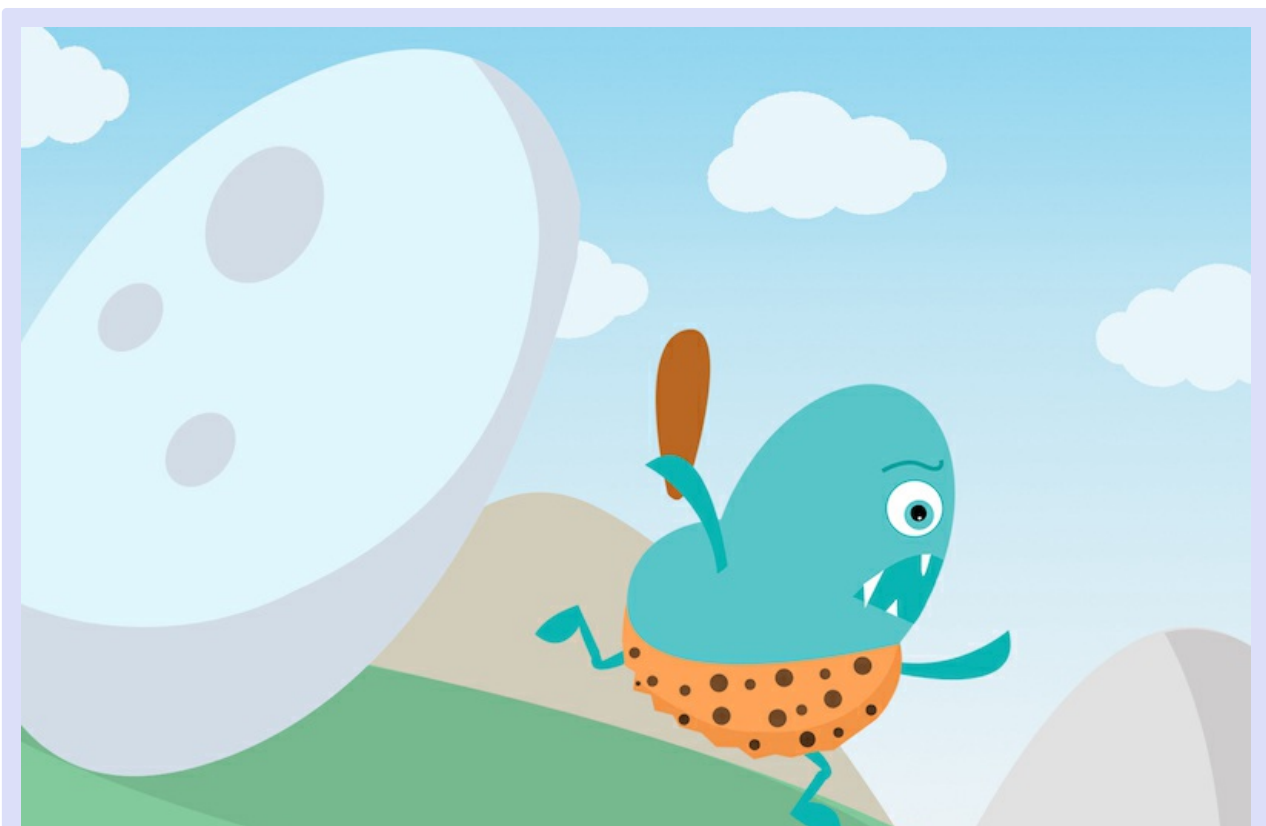


What's your backstory and how did you come up with the idea?

Rootd came to be due to personal experience. Like many people, I went through life thinking that anxiety and panic attacks wouldn't happen to me and that those who did experience them were simply too "stressed out".

But when my first panic attack came out of nowhere during my final year of University, I realized that the misconceptions I had about anxiety and panic attacks were wrong. Far away from home, on student loans, and with no family doctor, and I couldn't find or afford the support I needed. My instinct was to reach for my phone to find an app that could help me process what was happening but couldn't find anything.

The way you understand panic attacks when they first strike can have a huge impact on your healing process. Once I'd done the research and discovered the techniques and strategies needed to manage and overcome my panic attacks and anxiety, I knew I wanted to use this knowledge combined with my graphic design skills to create a resource for others in a format tailored more towards my demographic.





Take us through the process of building the first version of your product.

The concept for Rootd was formed as paper and marker notes, illustrations, and wireframes in my notebook. One day I created a disgruntled monster illustration, and that little guy has grown to become Rootd's mascot Ron, who serves as users' companion and supporter throughout their journeys in the app.

“ I've lived with anxiety and panic attacks and built the solution I needed.
Turns out it's a solution that millions of others resonate with too.

After a ton of work refining these ideas and navigating my journey with anxiety, my passion for the idea of Rootd was too strong to ignore, and I set out to bring it to life.

For version one, I turned the work in my notebooks into real wireframes and mock-ups using Photoshop. Then I found a student developer and worked with him to publish an app to the App Store and Google Play, which I launched on World Mental Health Day.

This first version of the app had way fewer features or functionality than the Rootd of today, but what it did have was Rootd's core values and components of stigma-breaking design and accessibility.

As it still is today, the big red panic attack button was front and center in the app, and completely free to use. Rootd started out with this very niche focus on panic attack relief which enabled it to immediately resonate with users and gain 5 star reviews.

User story



This is I think the first app I've ever left a review on. This app includes THE most effective grounding exercise I've ever attempted. Very quickly installed it in the midst of a fairly severe panic attack, nearly dissociating, and after opening the app experienced instant relief. Rootd just did, in my first use, more for my ability to handle anxiety than the combined effort of every therapist and psychiatrist I've ever seen. Thank you, Rootd Team. From the bottom of my heart.

@rootd_app

User story

Describe the process of launching the business.

As I mentioned, the first version of Root'd was launched on World Mental Health Day, which helped provide a very clear story for a launch-day press release.

One great thing about the app stores is that after clicking “publish,” your product is immediately available to every iPhone or Android owner across the world. Of course, they have to learn about it to download or use it, but the potential to place it in their hands is taken care of.

My key focuses at the start was focusing on the niche of “panic attack relief” in the app’s keywords and other App Store Optimization efforts, and ensuring every user truly had a 5-star experience and would write a review to reflect that. I responded to every single review and started conversations with users as much as possible.

“ The future looks like bringing Rootd from 2M to 10M+ users and making it the go-to anxiety relief resource globally.

Rootd is bootstrapped, and I built the first version with only a few thousand dollars, and all my activities across the business shared the theme of maximum impact for minimum cost. Looking back, that helped build an amazing foundation for Rootd to thrive.

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

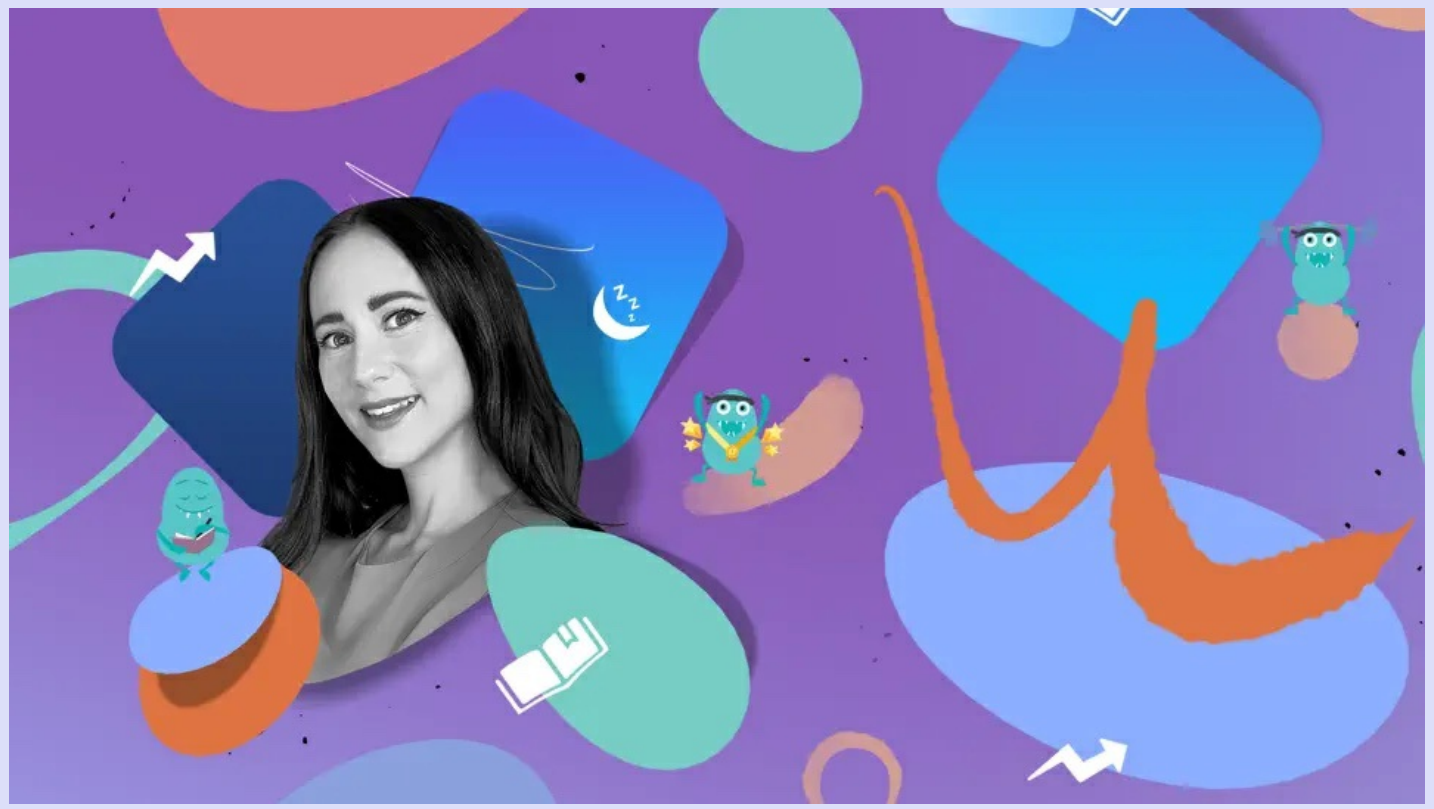
Ultimately, what has worked best is an intimate understanding of the problem and solution. I’ve lived with anxiety and panic attacks and built the solution I needed. Turns out it’s a solution that millions of others resonate with too.

Responding to user reviews and customer support has had an incredible impact. It means I work a lot of nights and weekends, but my passion for my business is so strong that I still enjoy this even when it’s tiring.

Another powerful growth driver has been working on Rootd’s app store optimization, as this drives organic growth. On the app stores your keywords, screenshots, description, ratings, reviews, downloads, app reliability, and more all complement each other, so building an amazing solution and clearly and attractively presenting it are pretty much critical foundations.

Beyond that, I’ve had success with finding ways to create stories around Rootd. At the beginning of each year, I take out the calendar and plan what Rootd’s big story for each month will be. For example, October is World Mental Health Day, and March is International Women’s Day. Then every month I am diligent about following through with new features, new in-app events, and new stories.

So far, Rootd has been featured in the app stores more than 100 times, has been App of the Day and Developer Spotlight in several countries, and has been featured in publications such as Women's Health, Time Magazine, Healthline, and more.



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

Rootd is now award-winning, scientifically validated, trusted by over 2 million users in over 150 countries, and has thousands upon thousands of 5-star reviews from people around the world who say the app has changed their lives.

A new focus is helping companies and organizations provide Rootd as a form of support to their teams. This helps get Rootd in more hands and supports the business with a diversified revenue stream.

The future looks like bringing Rootd from 2 million to 10+ million users and making it the go-to anxiety relief resource globally.

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

I've learned a ton, more than I even realize, I'm sure! Rootd is my passion most days, nights, and weekends, and I've given so much of myself to it and it's given so much back.

A few things that stand out are:

- Bootstrapping is absolutely a viable option.
- Avoid trying to mold yourself into the "definition" of a leader, because this definition changes over time and is influenced by countless factors. It's much better to use your strengths to lead than worry about looking or acting like the traditional idea of a leader.
- Be as clear as possible in your management (especially in communicating your desired deliverables, associated timelines, and who should be responsible for each element). This reduces miscommunication and associated frustration.
- Build something that helps your users

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

I'll echo the things just mentioned and add that it's important to have confidence in yourself and take a moment to reflect on where you are in life because it's likely you've already achieved many amazing things to get to where you already are.

What platform/tools do you use for your business?

Rootd is built using [Creative Cloud](#), [Figma](#), [Trello](#), among others (and of course the App Store and Google Play).

We communicate through [Google Suite](#), [Mailchimp](#), and our [Instagram](#), [Tik Tok](#), and other socials.

And there are probably others I'm not thinking of. In general, as a lean bootstrapped company I love tools that make a huge impact for less, and I've found that good negotiation goes a long way.

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

I love the [My First Million](#) podcast. It's led me into a new community of fellow entrepreneurs and founders which has been a wonderful addition to my life, as the journey of a bootstrapped solo founder can be hard and lonely.

Rootd got a [shoutout on a recent MFM episode](#) which felt like coming full circle.

Are you looking to hire for certain positions right now?

I'm always interested in meeting Flutter developers. Even better ones who've been impacted by anxiety either personally or through the experience of a loved one, or simply people who resonate with creating an impact for others in need.







Where can we go to learn more?

- [Website](#)
- [App Store or Google Play](#)
- [Rootd Instagram](#)
- [My LinkedIn](#)

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

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Ania Wysocka, Founder of Rootd


Pat Walls, Founder of Starter Story

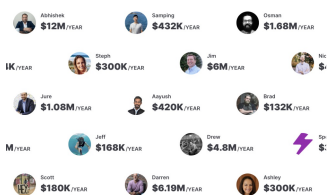
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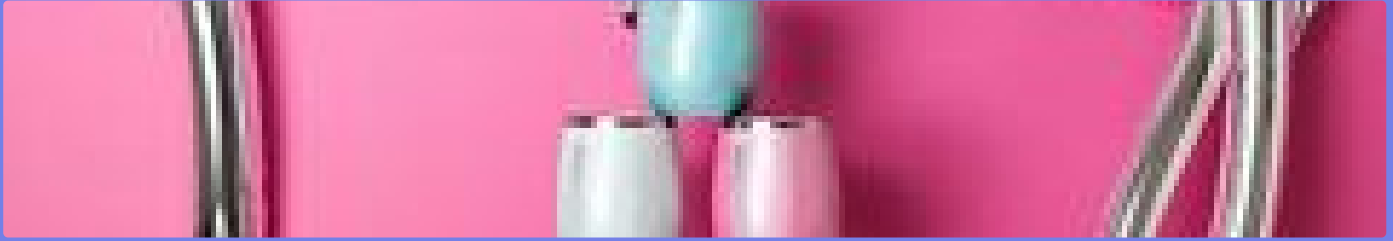
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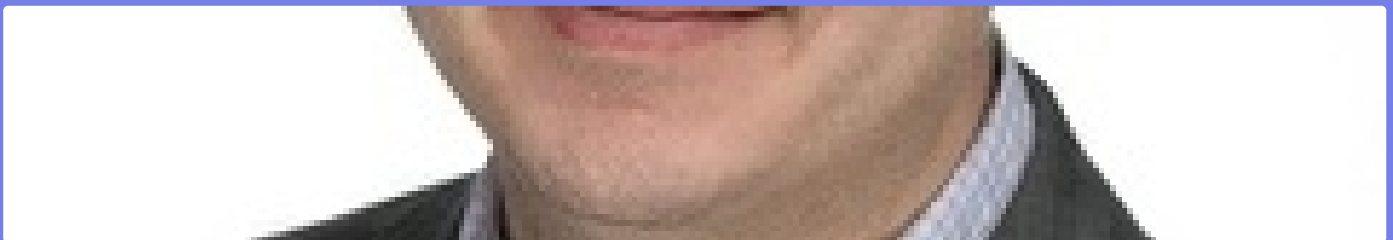
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