

Creating a Side Project:

8 Stages, 43 Strategies & 59 Tools



A practical guide on how to become a
Viking and beat every problem you will
face when building a side project.

How can I become successful starting a side project?

Becoming successful with your side project is complex. Doing it without spending any money is even harder.

Coming with the idea, writing the business plan, designing the product, developing the website, launching the project, growing it into a business and monetizing it may sound like 8 impossible tasks. But they are not. In this guide, we will have a deep look at each stage and learn how to carry them out, with the appropriate tools and spending the least money possible.

Warning: You won't be taught how to become a millionaire overnight. Close this ebook if you hate working hard.

Let's get started!

Author



Hey! I am Rich Clominson, co-founder of [Failory](#). I created this eBook based on my experience and with the help of my two co-founders.

Failory is a community where failed startup owners come to tell their failure stories and the mistakes they committed, so that future entrepreneurs can learn from them and don't make the same errors.

You can follow us on [Twitter](#) and read more about us on our [FAQ page](#).

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Introduction

On July 15th a couple of friends met in an old cafe near their hometown. The week before they had shut down their latest side project, so the conversation revolved around the mistakes they had committed. Realizing that these errors were the same they had made in previous projects, they decided to build something to prevent anyone from repeating them again. That's how Failory was born.

13 days after, and spending only \$41, our new startup was topping **Product Hunt** and was positioned on **Hacker News'** front page.

The image shows a screenshot of the Failory website homepage on the left and its listing on the Hacker News front page on the right. The Failory homepage features a dark blue header with the word 'Failory' and a red icon. Below the header, it says 'Learn from other entrepreneur's mistakes' and has a 'TECH' category button. The main content area has a dark background with three cards: 'BRISK', 'BUSYMIND', and 'ADDRESSBIN'. The 'BRISK' card includes a small image of a person. The Hacker News listing on the right shows the Failory logo, the title 'Failory - Learn from other entrepreneur's mistakes', and a summary of the site. It also displays a 'Website' link, social sharing icons for Twitter and Facebook, and a 'RECOMMENDED IN' section with a snippet from Hacker News.

▲ Show HN: Failory – Learn from other entrepreneurs' mistakes (failory.com)
108 points by richclominson 123 days ago | hide | past | web | favorite | 31 comments

So, how can you copy our strategies and become successful with your own online side project?

In this eBook, I have divided the process of creating a side project into 8 stages. I will go through each one, analyzing the problems you will have to confront and the ways to solve them.

What you will see in this ebook:

- Practical step-by-step guide to solve the problems on each stage
- The tools we recommend
- Mistakes we committed during the process

What you won't see in this ebook:

- How to make one million dollars in your first week
- How to increase your sales buying Super Bowl ads
- How to become the next Facebook

Let's start with the beginning, how to choose the idea of your side project!



Stage 1:

Idea

Coming with the idea of your side project is definitely the most important part. Let's say things clearly: If your idea sucks, you will not succeed. Therefore, coming with the idea is essential. So, how can I come with an idea for a side project?

You need to solve a problem

That's all. You need to solve a common problem people are facing every day. So, how can you find problems? Well, that's a good question. To answer it, I will divide the explanation into two parts:

Part 1: Theoretical Solution

Here are 5 methods for gathering problems people are confronting:

1. **Pay attention to the problems you are facing:** Easy. Just pay attention to the problems you face. You can focus on the everyday problems, or some specific problems you have when doing something in particular. Think on: Is there anything to improve? Is there anything I would like to change? Try not to lose any new idea. Write them down.

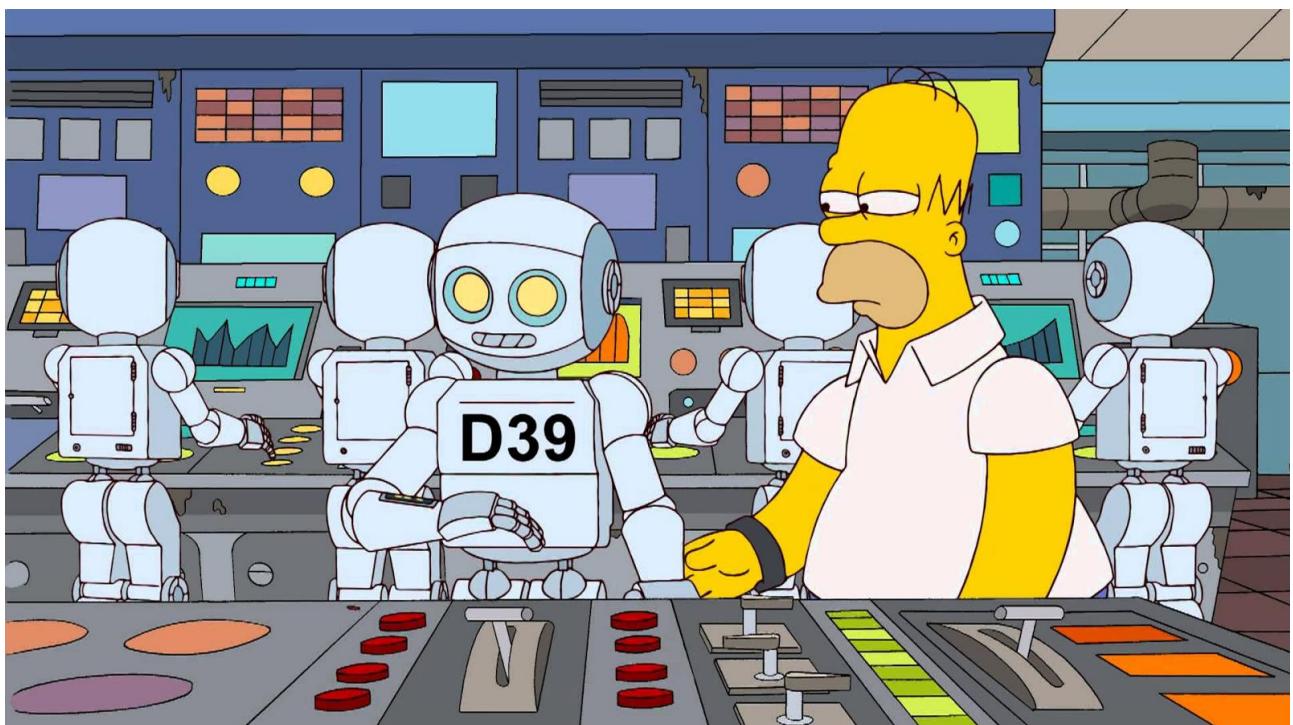
▲ nrmn 2116 days ago [-]

I keep a notebook on my night table with a pen to catalog my ideas as they popup. My ideas usually come as the result of me reflecting on the past day and letting my mind wander. I write everything down, even if it seems highly unlikely to ever come to fruition. I believe this is important as further ideas can be derived that are slightly more 'approachable'. I try my best not to force this process and let it occur organically. The notes are written as a stream-of-consciousness, I sketch and write to my hearts content hoping to capture the idea envisioned in my minds eye.

2. **Talk with other people about their problems:** The problems you face are not enough. You need to analyze the problems occurring in the lives of those around you. Talking to people doesn't mean conducting formal interviews or brainstorming sessions. Just be a curious and empathetic friend. It doesn't matter if it is a small problem.

Find a problem to solve... the more people that are served by your solution the higher the returns will be **#insight**

3. **Reframe existing problems:** In our daily life, there are some trashy solutions to many big problems. For example, is toilet paper the best possible hygienic option? Probably no! There could be other solutions, such as bidets or toilet sprayers. Solutions to existing problems can be changed.
4. **Read Science Fiction books and watch Sci-Fi films:** The seriousness of the eBook was lost with this point. But, it is totally true. You can anticipate the problems people will have in a near future by watching science fiction books and films!



5. **Try new things:** Learn new skills, meet people from different cultures, start a new sport, travel around the world. Expose yourself to more problems!

Part 2: Practical Solution

Well, enough theory for today. Now let's get to the important part: The real strategies and tools you can use to find problems to solve. Below, I list three strategies, step-by-step, to find the problems people are facing:

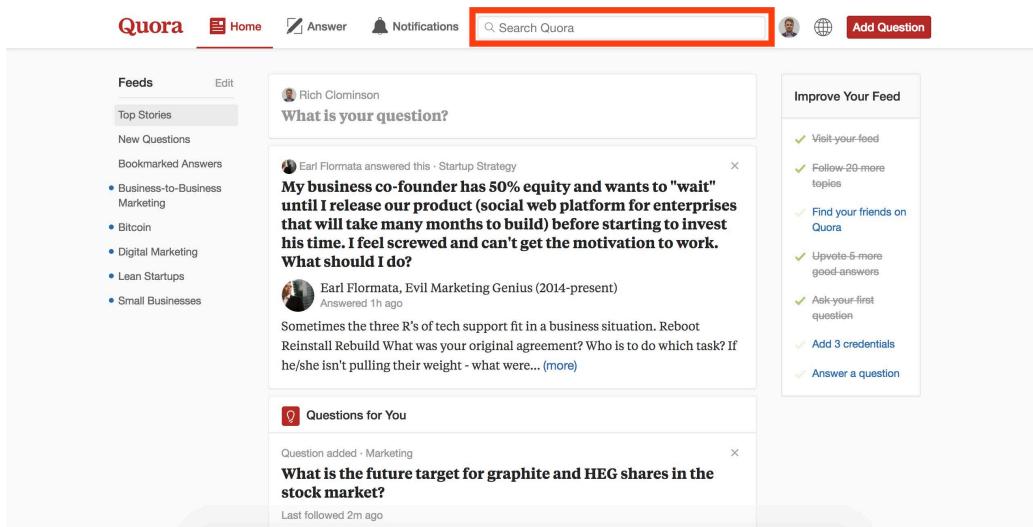
Strategy #1: Quora

You probably already know **Quora**. It is a community where people ask questions and look for solutions to their problems. It is also an excellent tool to find problems to solve!

So, how can I find a problem to solve with Quora? Here are my three favorite Quora-based problem investigation methods:

Search in reverse

Search on Quora as if you were searching for a solution to a problem.



The screenshot shows the Quora homepage. A red box highlights the search bar at the top, which contains the placeholder "Search Quora". Below the search bar, there is a navigation menu with links for "Home", "Answer", "Notifications", and "Add Question". On the left side, there is a sidebar titled "Feeds" with options like "Top Stories", "New Questions", "Bookmarked Answers", and a list of topics including "Business-to-Business Marketing", "Bitcoin", "Digital Marketing", "Lean Startups", and "Small Businesses". The main content area displays a question from "Rich Clominson" asking "What is your question?". Below it, a post from "Earl Flormata" discusses a business co-founder's equity issue. Another post from "Earl Flormata" asks about future stock market targets. To the right, there is a sidebar titled "Improve Your Feed" with various tips and a "Questions for You" section.

People who are looking for solutions usually say things like:

- Is there any way to...
- How can I...

- Who can help me to...

is there any way

Search: **is there any way**

Is there **any way** to increase creativity?

Is there **any way** to decrease daydreaming?

Is there **any way** to easily learn Chinese ?

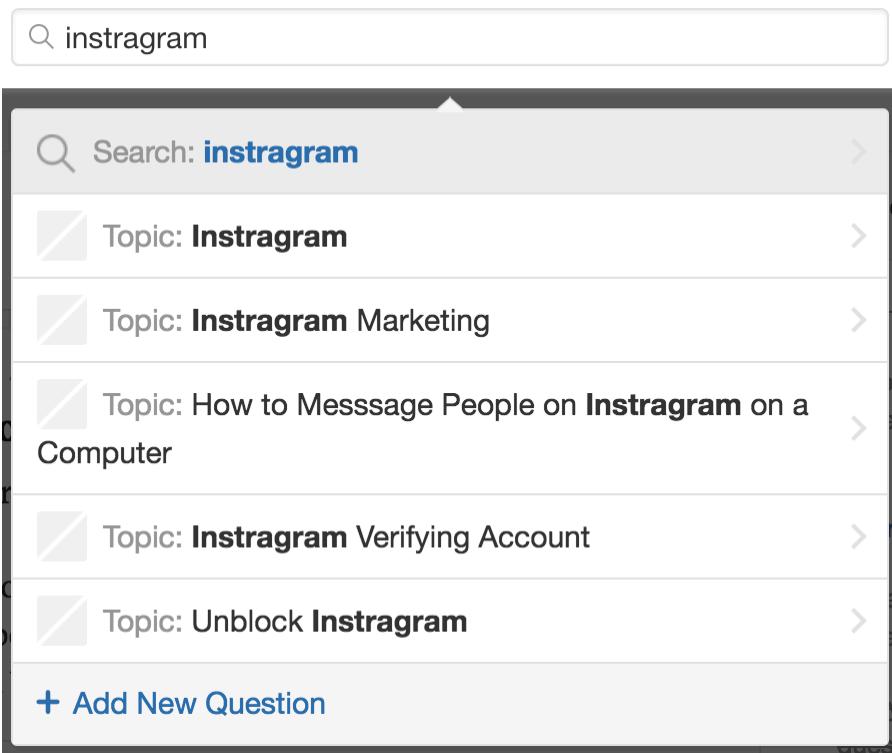
You can now suppose, for example, that people are facing some problems when learning Chinese. So, you can provide a service to help people to learn Chinese easily, like **Chineasy**.

The disadvantage of this method is that it covers all kind of problems, so you will have to search deeply until finding a problem you really want to solve.

Search for different topics

This method is more adjustable to your personality and knowledge. It consists on browsing on Quora for topics you would like to start a startup on.

For example, let's suppose I am really interested in Instagram and I want to build a tool to solve a problem people are having with this social media. I would then search “Instagram” on Quora, and visit the topic.



There, I will be able to read lots of questions people are asking about Instagram. So, I would navigate through the page and search for a common problem that I would like to solve. Here I found one:

I have 160k followers on Instragram. On average 12k likes and 1.2k comments.

How much can I charge companies that want me to promote products for them?

Answer 1 of 4 · View All

Terrence Yang, ex-VP, Senior Counsel, Director @ Wall Street bulge bracket investment bank — There are lots of fake followers and fake likes on Instagram so it really depends on how naive the advertisers are and how much fluff is in that data. Also what type of peo... ([more](#))

Okay, so people don't know how much to charge companies for a promotion of their products. A solution that comes right now to my mind is to create an online calculator that calculates how much companies should pay you, according to the number of followers and average likes and comments. Really easy, wasn't it? It's true that there is almost no chance of making money with a tool like this one, but maybe, this calculator can be one tool inside a website

containing many tools that helps Instagram influencers to price and manage companies.

Ask the question

The last method to find problems to solve on Quora is to ask the question yourself! You just need to click where it says “Add Question”, and say something like “Which problems do you face when...” or “What's a ... problem that you face every day?”

The screenshot shows the Quora homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Answer, Notifications, and a search bar. A red box highlights the "Add Question" button. On the left, there is a sidebar with "Feeds" and "Edit" options, followed by sections for "Top Stories", "New Questions", "Bookmarked Answers", and a list of topics including "Business-to-Business Marketing", "Bitcoin", "Digital Marketing", "Lean Startups", and "Small Businesses". The main content area displays several questions. One question by Ryan Biddulph asks about getting backlinks from strong sites. Another question by Osmar Sant asks how content can help improve SEO. A third question asks for help finding a song based on a partial lyric. Each question has an "Upvote" button, a "Downvote" button, a "Follow" button, and social sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. An "Answer" button is present for each question. To the right of the main content, there is a sidebar titled "Improve Your Feed" with a list of seven items, each preceded by a green checkmark and a small icon.

Answers will probably start to arrive, and you will have hundreds of business ideas to carry out.

At the same time, if you don't want to ask the question, you can (again) search for it. Doing it, I found a question asking which are the biggest problems you face as a startup founder.

I then looked at the answers and found that a big problem was recruiting the team.

 Raja Emmela, former COO at Headrun (2014-2015)
Answered Nov 18



There can be a slight change between product and services startups. Here am curating from services side which I went through at Idntyti & Headrun. Making it to the point.

1. Finding the right team or recruiting. By the time we train, they start looking out in less than a year or two.

Therefore, I came with an idea that can stop the recruiting problem, by providing a tool that helps you interview your candidates with real practices.

Strategy #2: Twitter

This strategy works well with any social media, but I prefer to do it with **Twitter**. It is on Twitter where people usually post the problems they are having and ask for solutions.

And when people tweet their problem, pick up your diary and write it down!

People who need a solution usually tweet things like:

- Anyone knows how to...
- I need help with...
- I don't know how to...

So, you can search for these phrases on Twitter.

And with a deep search, you will find great tweets that can lead to new business ideas. For example, I found the following one:

Does **anyone know how to** be 21 and not go bankrupt? Asking for a friend

8

39

153

Many young people are facing economic problems. A solution to this could be a tool that provides practical financial guides. Quite interesting :)

Strategy #3: Reddit

I couldn't finish this stage without mentioning **Reddit**. Reddit bridges communities and individuals with ideas, the latest digital trends, and breaking news.

By subscribing to communities, called subreddits, like **AskReddit**, your fellow Redditors will provide you thousands of problems people are facing every day.

You just need to use the search bar, shown in the upper corner.



Search for things like:

- How do I
- How do you
- Sucks
- Can't seem to

For example, I searched “Sucks” and I found a post with a photograph that reflected a problem: PS4 games are too expensive.



After analyzing the situation, I came with an idea for a business: A website in which you can rent PS4 games for a short time. You win it and you return it. I think it doesn't exist yet, and it could become really successful.

Idea of Failory

The story behind the idea of Failory is completely ironic.

With my two co-founders, we have tried building many side-projects with little or no success. Tired of failing over and over again, we decided that we should take an advantage of all the lessons we have learned from failing, and help other entrepreneurs avoid committing these errors.

When our last startup failed, we hit upon the idea of creating a website that would collect stories of failed startups, in which we would reflect about the mistakes they committed. Using Quora we found that many people were interested in knowing the reasons for the failure of startups and the lessons of their founders.

The screenshot shows a search results page on Quora. The search term is partially visible as "Why do so many startups fail?". The results are filtered by "All Types".

- Why do so many startups fail?**
Answer 1 of 735 · View All
Auren Hoffman, SafeGraph CEO. fmr LiveRamp CEO. Started & sold 5 companies – While it is counterintuitive, many start-ups fail because they go after too big of a market. ... Many start-ups try to be 0.1% of a fifty-billion dollar market rather than ... [\(more\)](#)
- Is it true that most 90% startup fail in the next years?**
Answer 1 of 3 · View All
Rosa Alnasser, 8+ years as Marketing Manager and Product Owner. Currently, at LeanMonitor –
Unfortunately, it is the true.
As Chaitanya Banala says the Product Market Fit is one of the most popular reasons why startups fail. It is very important to take into account... [\(more\)](#)
- If 90% of all startups fail, why do we never hear about all the failed startups in Silicon Valley?**
Answer 1 of 33 · View All
George Sawyer, in and around Silicon Valley since 1995 –
You've forgotten about the dot com crash *already?* <joke>
Actually, if you haven't heard, its because you aren't looking or listening.
I guess you aren't *in* Silicon Valley. St... [\(more\)](#)

Consequently, we realized that a website that interviewed failed startup owners could be useful for many wannapreneurs.

You now know the strategies to discover a problem to solve. However, it is useless to have the idea if you don't carry it out.

In the following stage, you will be learning how to write a business plan and program the future of your startup!



Stage 2:

Business Plan

I will make this stage a short one. When building your side project there are too many things to do. There is no time for you to write a business plan as long as The Holy Bible. In fact, many of my successful side projects didn't have a business plan!

But let's suppose you really need to write down what your side project is about. Keep it short and sweet. Here are the essentials:

1. **Problem:** If you have followed the steps numbered on stage one, you have probably found a problem people are facing and thought of a solution. Therefore, it is essential to describe in a few lines the problem you are trying to solve and what causes it.
2. **Solution:** Your business plan should not only describe the solution, but also explain the step-by-step process you will carry out to solve this problem. Let's suppose you read that many small YouTubers are facing problems when monetizing their content. So, you think of a solution: Give them free money every day. Okay, but... how will you carry out this solution? From where will you take that money? By explaining the steps in your solution, you will also realize whether it is possible to carry it out.
3. **Audience:** You should define the people who will find your solution useful. In some cases, it will be easier than in other ones. For example, on the case mentioned before, your audience is clearly small YouTubers. But, let's say you create a side project that gives films recommendations to users according to the films that they have seen before. The audience could be "film lovers". But the concept of film lovers covers a huge and uncertain group. So, in this case, you should probably carry out a survey. To ask for feedback and opinions of your users, I fully recommend you [Ask Users](#). It will let you add surveys like this one on your website:

 Please, answer to a question!

X

Tell us about yourself, what do you do?

I'm a product manager

I'm a designer

I'm a developer

Other

Powered by  Ask User

4. **Competition:** I personally believe this stage is the most important one. When starting a side project it is an obligation to research your competitors. What I love to do, is a small mind map of how each competitor solves the problem, their marketing strategies, and their monetizing plans.
5. **Marketing Strategy:** “Build it and they will come”. No, they won't come. It's a lie. You will have to create a dazzling marketing strategy to grow your side project into a business. From the launch (which is developed on stage 6) to the acquisition of new customers, you will have to work smartly. Try new things, not only common methods. And please, think bigger the typical Facebook, Twitter and Hacker News strategy.
6. **Monetization:** Well, this is a controversial point. Many people argue that it isn't important to define the monetization plan for your side project before starting it. Instead, they say you should choose how to monetize it once you have some users and customers and understand how they act. I totally disagree. By choosing a monetization strategy from the beginning, you can take the biggest advantage of the launch and gather emails from interested potential customers (prospects, in other words). Then, you will have the chance to base your monetization strategy around those prospects, turning them into sales! Other profitable routes many side projects take are advertisement and affiliate marketing. The launch of your project can bring you big revenues.

Example of Business Plan

I said I wanted to make this eBook as practical as possible, so I want to give you some inspiration with an example.

Lets “create” a new side project. I searched Quora for “movie”, and found this question.

What are some of the best movie quotes ever?

Answer 1 of 1,900 · View All

Jaidev Deshpande, Python developer, student of machine learning, signal processing and data science. — **1. Al Pacino's Academy Award winning moment from Scent of A Woman** ... You're building a rat ship here. A vessel for sea goin' snitches. And if you think your preparing these ... [\(more\)](#)

Here the resulting side project idea: A website containing the best movie quotes with an accompanying video of each one. Although it might not seem like I am solving a problem, I am answering a question many people ask themselves.

Business Plan

1. **Problem:** People want to know the best movie quotes.
2. **Solution:** A website containing some great movie quotes. I will take the quotes from online list articles and filter them according to the type of movie. I will then build the website with a simple framework.
3. **Audience:** The audience is mainly “film lovers”, but their interests are not enough. I should also make a research on gender and age.
4. **Competition:** There aren't any websites doing the same, but there are some big articles numbering their favorite movie quotes. I should then pay

attention to how were the articles promoted, who read and shared them, and what blogs linked to them?

5. **Marketing Strategy:** I will launch it on social media and film communities. I will then try to acquire some daily traffic with SEO.
6. **Monetization:** I will monetize this side project with ads on the website and affiliate marketing with a link to each movie on Amazon.

Simple, wasn't it? It only took me 5 minutes, and while it's true that it has some vague explanations, they are enough for a little side project.

Failory Business Plan

I have to confess that at first, we didn't trust too much on the idea behind Failory. We decided to start it just like a "thesis". So, the business plan was quite rushed. Showing it would make me lost all your trust. Our business plan didn't include almost anything of what I have said before!



Stage 3:
Design

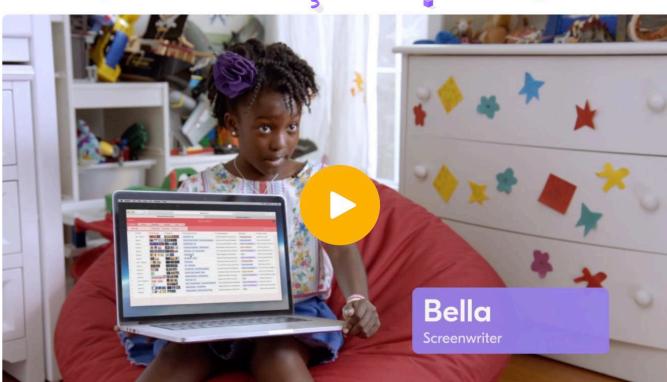
Advice: If you are a designer, you probably won't learn anything on this stage, so you might just skip ahead.

Advice: If you are not a designer, you will probably learn a lot of things on this stage.

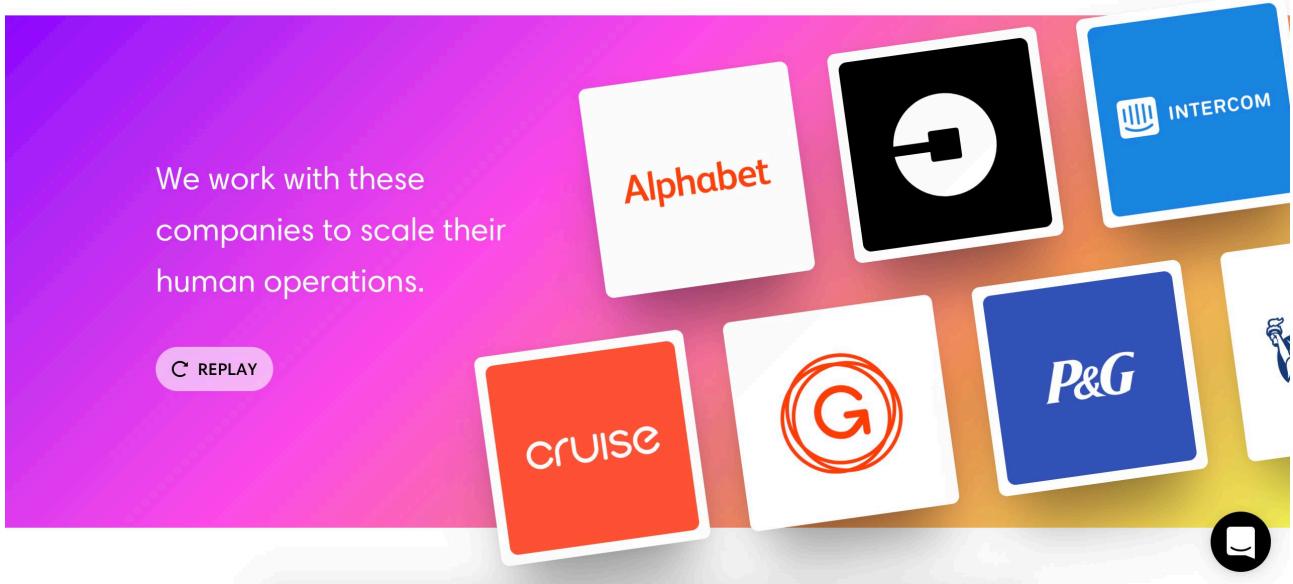
Designing a good looking website is one of the hardest part of creating a side project. I think having a good-looking interface with a great user experience is one of the most important things of a website (apart from loading fast!).

Everyone, no matter their business knowledge, should be able to follow my previous steps. But now, you need to use your creativity. It's no longer a matter of copying the steps listed here. You will need to be original and create a nice website.

Beautiful websites convert better. But, what do I mean with beautiful websites?



The screenshot shows the Airtable homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Product, Templates, Universe, Pricing, Sign in, and a red Sign up button. Below the navigation bar is a large image of a young girl named Bella, who is identified as a "Screenwriter". She is sitting on a red beanbag chair, holding a laptop that displays a screenshot of an Airtable database. The database interface shows various columns and rows of data. To the right of the image, the text "Organize anything." is displayed in bold black font, followed by a subtext: "Airtable makes it easy to organize stuff, people, ideas and anything else you can imagine with your team." At the bottom right of the image area, there is a "Sign up for free" button. In the bottom right corner of the entire screenshot, there is a small caption that reads "This is a great website" in red text.



And **this one** too

So, what makes these websites awesome? Well, it's a big set of things. Let's examine this last website and come with some tips and tricks to design a beautiful website for your side project.

Scale Website

Scale is an API that lets companies outsource manual tasks. With one line of code, companies can employ a human to do on-demand tasks like data extraction, calls, or categorization.

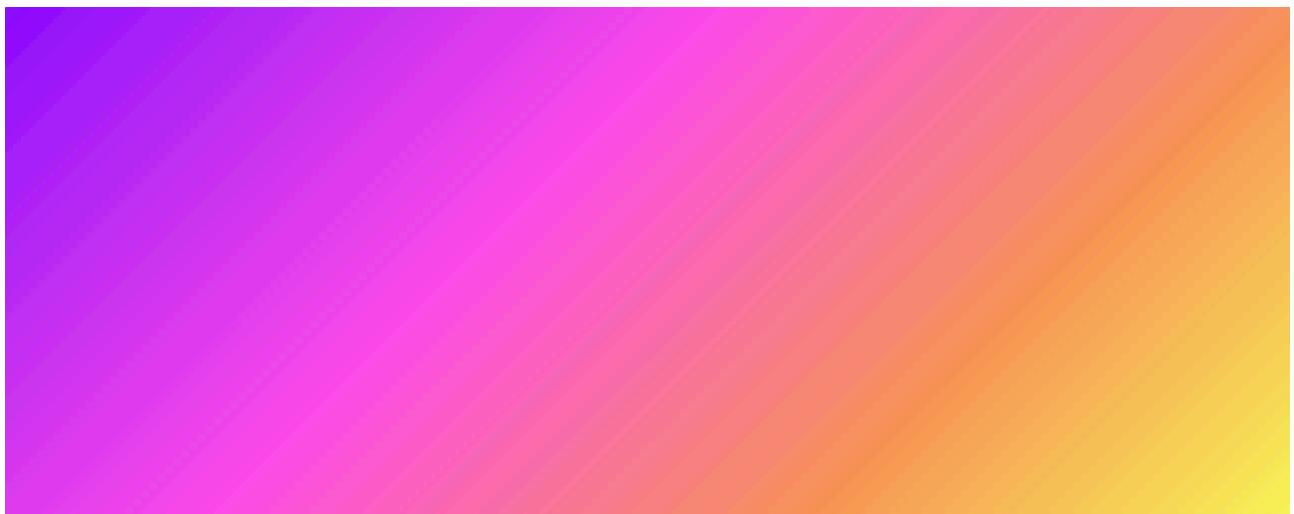
At first glance, this is what enchants me:

1. Gorgeous Colors
2. Clear Typography
3. Provocative Call to Action
4. Wonderful Illustrations
5. Brilliant Animations
6. Useful Demos

Let's analyze each one deeply.

Colors

Look at the color palette of Scale.



I personally love it. This gradient is almost impossible to ignore. You see it or you see it. There aren't any other chances! And how it looks combined with the white background of the website, and the images in front of it is just... a masterpiece!

Typography

Scale uses a typography called Harmonia Sans. Made by Jim Wasco in 2010, Harmonia Sans provides a modern and cool, yet minimalistic, aspect to the website. With the use of different weights, the designers of Scale were able to produce a great contrast between titles and paragraphs.

Harmonia Sans Std Light

Hark! Toxic jungle water vipers

Harmonia Sans Std Regular

Mozart's jawing quickly vexes

Harmonia Sans Std SemiBold

Then a cop quizzed Mick Ja

Harmonia Sans Std Bold

The job of waxing linoleum f

Harmonia Sans Std Black

Wham! Volcano erupts fier

The website of Scale also makes a good use of opacity. The typography is black, but, while the titles have an opacity of 100%, paragraphs have much less opacity. Let's watch an example.



Elegantly Simple

Scale is the easiest way to build human-powered features. It's 100x better than Mechanical Turk.



Accurate

We hand-pick our Scalers to make sure they do great work, and our accuracy is over 95%.

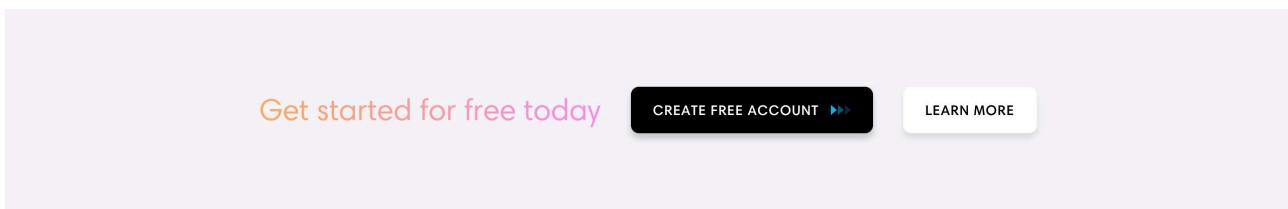


Fast

We return responses via webhooks in minutes.

Call to Action

Having provocative call to action buttons not only makes the website look nicer, but also increase the click rate, and in the case of Scale, new users.

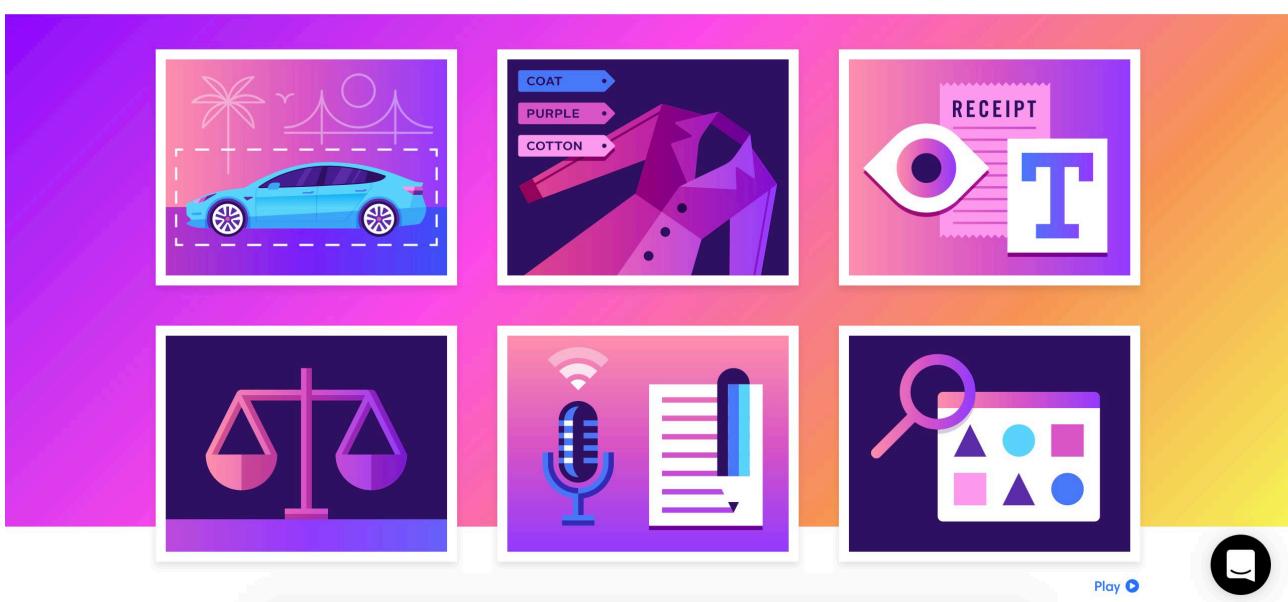


Look at those buttons. I personally see them and want to click on them. Again, they make a good contrast with the background and the font colors. They are minimalistic and provocative.

What do I mean with provocative? When you saw for the first time this screenshot, the first thing your eyes watched was the black button. And that's exactly what the designers of Scale want. They don't care if you read or not read the previous paragraph. Neither if you clicked on "Learn More". They want you to create a free account and then, after the demo, start paying for their product. And in most cases, they achieve it.

Illustrations

The website of Scale is full of high-quality illustrations. At the moment you enter the website, you find yourself in front of these six illustrations



You probably don't understand what they mean, but at least, they keep you on the website. Using the same colors of the gradient behind, the Scale designers created six minimalistic illustrations that perfectly represent their business.

A bit of scrolling and you find yourself with some new illustrations.



Look at these icons and their colors. Aren't they awesome? Or I am so in love with this website that I can't be objective? I personally really like them. With only a few lines they perfectly represent each feature of Scale.

Animations

"Animations are not just for cartoons anymore. From full-screen moving images to small hover effects, touches of animation are popping up everywhere. Animations are trendy, fun and user-friendly."

Animations improve the user experience, increase conversions and engage with your users. There is no reason for not using them. It's a must! Moreover, they humanize the website. There are many brand website that looks to "placeholder-ish", like if they weren't created by humans. Animations can be used to solve this problem. Throughout all the website of Scale, you will find different animations, each one with a specific purpose. Let's take a look at them.

This is the first animation you will find just when you enter the website. To be truthful, I am not that crazy about this animation, but at the same time, I don't dislike it! The design of the animation is great. But I think the users that have just arrived at the website can't take a big value of it.

There are some other animations on shadows and buttons, such as [this one](#).

I find this one not only good-looking but also really useful. It provides visual and interactive examples of what you can do with Scale.

Demos

And finally, the designers of Scale made a great work embedding short demos of the product on the landing page. But, what do I mean with demos? I am making reference to [this](#).

They are live previews of what you can do with Scale. Instead of having to create a free account only to test the features and decide whether you find Scale useful or not, these live previews show users what they will be able to do, without even giving their email. And, in the end, Scale gets more valuable contact data, as the users have already tested the API and have registered because they liked what they saw. So they are really well designed and increase conversion. Great work!

All in all, the designer of Scale made an awesome work designing the user experience and interface of the website. With a few different resources (that you should be also using in your side project) they made a beautiful and high converting website.

Design Steps

As I have said, I can't give you the step-by-step to design a side project. But I will give you some tips and tools that will probably help you when designing both the brand and the website.

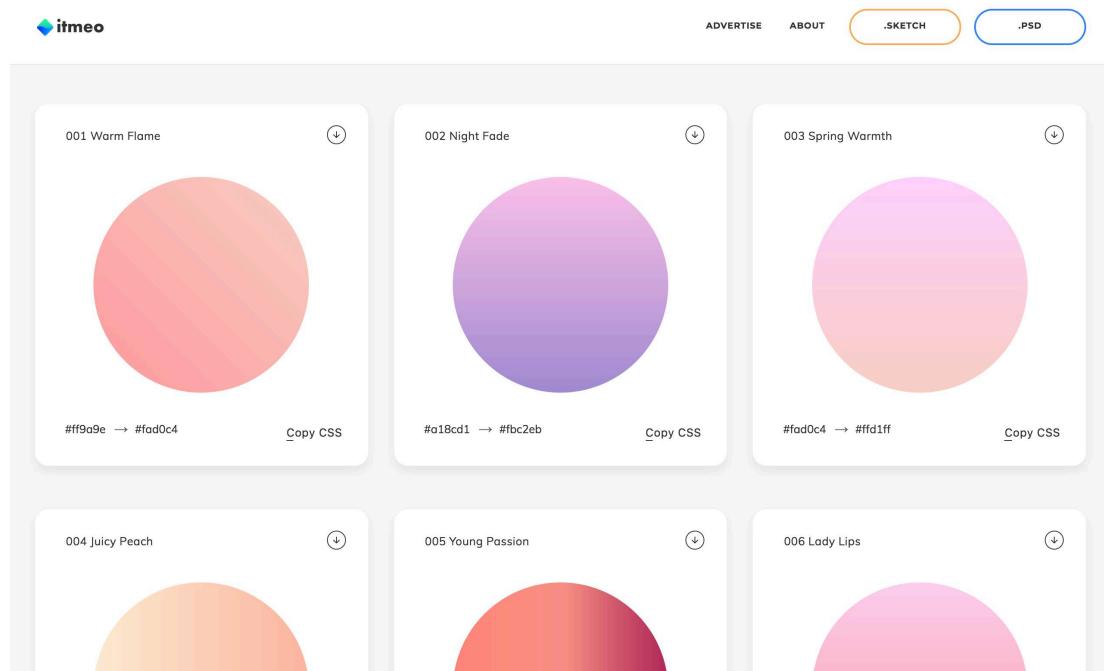
Branding

Every side project needs to have a logo (unless it is a really small one). I personally find designing a logo one of the most difficult parts of the design stage. I always end up with some typographic logo variations and choose the worst one. But I want to help you to design a great logo.

Before designing the logo you need to choose a color palette. These are my two favorite tools to do it:

- **Colors**: They call it the super fast color schemes generator. Press spacebar and you will be instantly creating beautiful color palettes that you can adjust and refine, to then, export and use it to your side project.
- **Color Hunt**: A collection of hundreds of color palettes, created and voted by users. Search for your favorite one (it won't be an easy task, they are all great) and start using it!

Instead of using specific colors, there are many startups that are using gradients. Right now, this is trendy. So I want to recommend you **Web Gradients**. It collects 180 free awesome gradients, that will help you design the background of your website.



When selecting the color, some people like to analyze the color psychology, to understand what will the brand provoke in users. I find this image really useful.



Now that you have chosen the color of your brand, it's time of designing the logo. The logo of your side project doesn't need to be created by the designer of the Nike one. You can write the name of the project in a great font and use it as a logo. But some people prefer to create a remarkable logo. So how can you do it? There are basically two paths.

Path 1: Design it yourself

This is the hard one. But this difficulty means higher quality results and less money spent.

To design the logo, you will need a tool to create some illustrations and edit the typography. I love **Adobe Illustrator**, but I understand it is quite expensive and hard to use.

I can't explain how to design a logo in this short guide because this process involves months of learning and years of practice. But I will recommend you some tools to get some inspiration:

- **Dribbble**: If you are into the design movement, you will know it. But for those tech guys who are reading this eBook, Dribble is a community of designers who share small screenshots showing their work, process, and current projects. You will find lots of designers publishing their logo concepts.
- **Logopond**: It is an inspirational site that showcases the logo work from designers of varying abilities all across the world.
- **Awwwards**: This awesome website doesn't exactly showcase logo projects. Instead, they daily choose the best website designs. But you can still get some logo inspiration by going through the winners of Awwwards and analyzing their logos.

Collect some inspiration and start designing your logo!

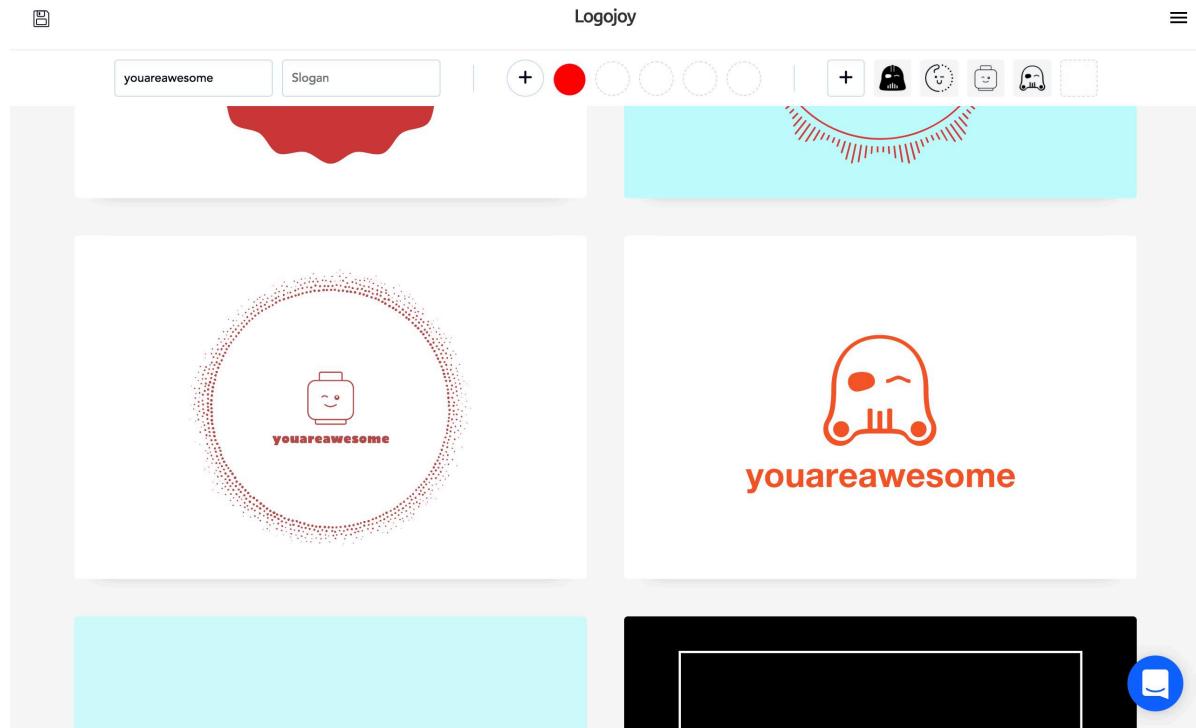
Path 2: Designed by others

This path is the easier one. But you will probably get lower quality (yet great) and more expensive results.

There are three kinds of tools that will let you obtain logos designed by others.

The first type of tools is machines. Yes, I know this doesn't give too much confidence. But, I guarantee you great logos, trust me! With the following tools, you will be able to ask AI-powered machines to design you a personalized logos:

- **Logojoy**: It uses artificial intelligence to instantly generate beautiful and unique logo ideas for your business, according to your tastes. Prices go from \$20 (a few Starbuck coffees) to \$165 (you won't need this plan).



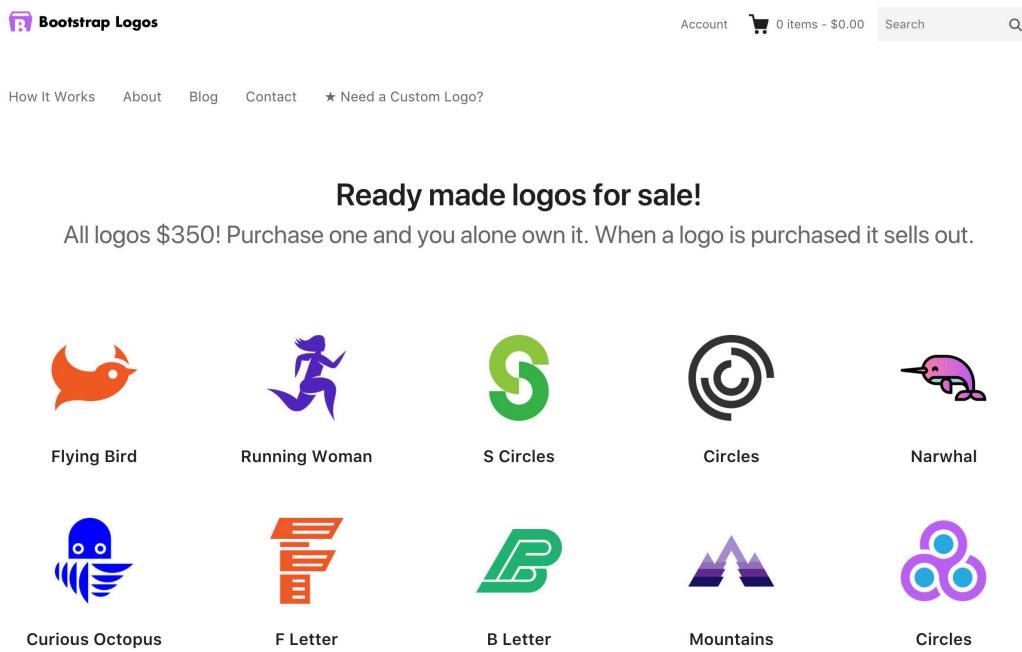
- **Logopony:** Powered by artificial intelligence, this tool helps you design an awesome and unique logo, containing even some icons. Paying \$19, you will get a web quality logo. If you pay \$49 you will get lots of sizes and combinations.
- **Emblem:** Emblem lets you create your brand for free. Pick your font, adjust your colors, add an icon, and you have your new logo.

The second type of tool I want to recommend you, are open source libraries containing free logos you can easily download and start using:

- **Logodust:** An open source library of minimal and ready to use logos, for personal and commercial usage. They don't even ask your email
- **Free Minimal Logos:** Some free minimal logos. Don't think of them as your final design but rather as a starting point to kickstart the design process.

And the third way to get logos, is by paying not unique ones. With "not unique" I mean that you simply download the logo from a library of already designed illustrations. You then can add to these illustrations the name of your company, and make them more personalized. Let's take a look at these tools:

- **Logo Porn:** For \$350 you get a sexy logo, that can only be purchased once, and unlimited color revisions, as well as PNG, PDF, EPS, SVG files.
- **Bootstrap Logos:** Quality, off-the-shelf logos for builders and dreamers with big dreams but small budgets. \$350 each logos! When you buy one, only you have the rights to use it.



Now that we have the brand of our side project, it's time of designing the website.

Website

Designing the website is a hard task. But we have already analyzed Scale website, so you should only copy some of their strategies. Remember, you need:

1. **Gorgeous Colors:** You can get them with the tools given above. I personally recommend you to use gradients!
2. **Clear Typography:** Many of the **Google fonts** are okay. In Failory we use the font **Lato**.

3. **Provocative Call to Action:** Add provocative buttons that attract users! You can find some **inspiration** here.
4. **Wonderful Illustrations:** Creating great illustration is a complicated task. But I want to recommend you a tool. **Joy Design** is a website created by the guys of **Design 4 Merch**, with some high quality (and free!) illustrations.
5. **Brilliant Animations:** Make your website interactive.

When designing websites for a side projects I usually don't have too much time. So I simply copy parts from different websites and put them together. Done well, you can get a really good-looking website.

But how do I put them all together? In most cases, I do it while I develop the website. In some others, I use **Sketch**, a well-known digital design mac tool. For Windows, I recommend you to use **Photoshop**.

We now have the idea, the business plan, and the design. Lots of hours worked, but you can't still see the side project. Keep calm, now it comes (in my opinion) the coolest part. Let's get into the development of the website.



Stage 4:

Development

Advice: If you are a web developer, you probably won't learn almost anything on this stage.

Advice: If you are not a web developer, you will probably learn a lot of things on this stage.

It's time for bringing your side project to the real world. It's time to create the website. There are basically two ways of doing this:

Coding

If you are not a developer, don't follow this path. I recommend you to code your side project website, only if you are really into web development. There are thousands of languages and millions of frameworks to do it, so I can't explain each one. But if you are a website developer, you probably already know which one should you use and how to.

Visually Development

There are many people who have lots of ideas to make businesses but think they can't execute them as they don't know any programming language.

Learning how to code a website will take you many weeks, and even months. So learning web development only to start a side project is not a fair treat. Instead, there are many tools to create a website without writing a single line of code. Quite interesting, isn't?

CMS

On the one hand, there are lots of CMS (such as the worldwide recognized **Wordpress** tool) that lets you create a website just by editing and customizing (almost nothing) a template, which you can get for free or buy on **Theme Forest**.

If you don't know anything about web development and your project is really simple, then I totally recommend you to go this way. If you then want to grow your side project and customize your website a bit more, you should then change the technology of the website.

But wait. Going this way doesn't mean choosing any CMS, buying the cheaper theme and start editing the website. No. You should first analyze the features of each CMS and select which one do you prefer. For a standard side project, you will find really useful Wordpress. It's a great tool, cheap, and with a lot of templates ready to use. But there are also some other great CMS, such as [Squarespace](#). I still recommend you [Wordpress](#). And please, don't even think on using Wix. Please no.

Code-Free

On the other hand, there is a quite new movement called "no code" or "code-free". It consists on creating websites and web applications without coding, using certain tools. In many cases, the code-free tools are used to create MVPs, which are minimum viable products that help the founder validate the idea.

You would get surprised if I tell you all the famous websites and applications that can be duplicated without coding. From a simple checkout page to a marketplace similar to Airbnb, [this amazing website](#) contains some awesome courses in which you can enroll to be taught on how to create different web applications without knowing any programming language.

So, which are the tools that can be used to create websites without coding? Product Hunt has launched a [collection](#) of tools to build and launch your product, with no coding abilities. I have personally seen some skillful people who have created awesome products with them. They aren't as limitless as programming languages, but some of them are really close.

To design the website of your side project, I fully recommend you [Webflow](#). We used it to create Failory. It only took us two days to design our website! You

need to have at least a basic knowledge on HTML and CSS, but Webflow makes the website design process much easier than the competition. Moreover, the price is quite reasonable.

Bram Kanstein is really into the code-free movement. He is creating **some courses** where you will be able to learn how to build minimum viable products without code. He hasn't launch it yet, but you can subscribe to the newsletter to receive the first lesson for free.

Okay, so you now know which are the available technologies to create your side project. But before continuing to the next stage, I want to introduce you a new concept called "build in public".

Build in public

The build in public movement is quite new and it is being promoted by many "startup influencers", such as **Ryan Hoover** (founder of Product Hunt), **Mubashar Iqbal** (side project maker) and **Pieter Levels** (serial maker).

Building in public means sharing with your audience and customers your progress on the product. Okay, so they are the typical email updates with the news of the company? No! It is a better and more interactive way to make your users get involved with your brand. You will be asking for their opinion and recommendations and adapting the product according to this feedback.

But, which are the benefits of building in public? In **this article**, Ryan Hoover lists three of them:

- **Increase engagement:** When people believe their feedback is acknowledged and they saw their ideas incorporated into the product, their investment in the product increases. This is caused by the ownership bias, according to which people value things more when they feel that they own it.

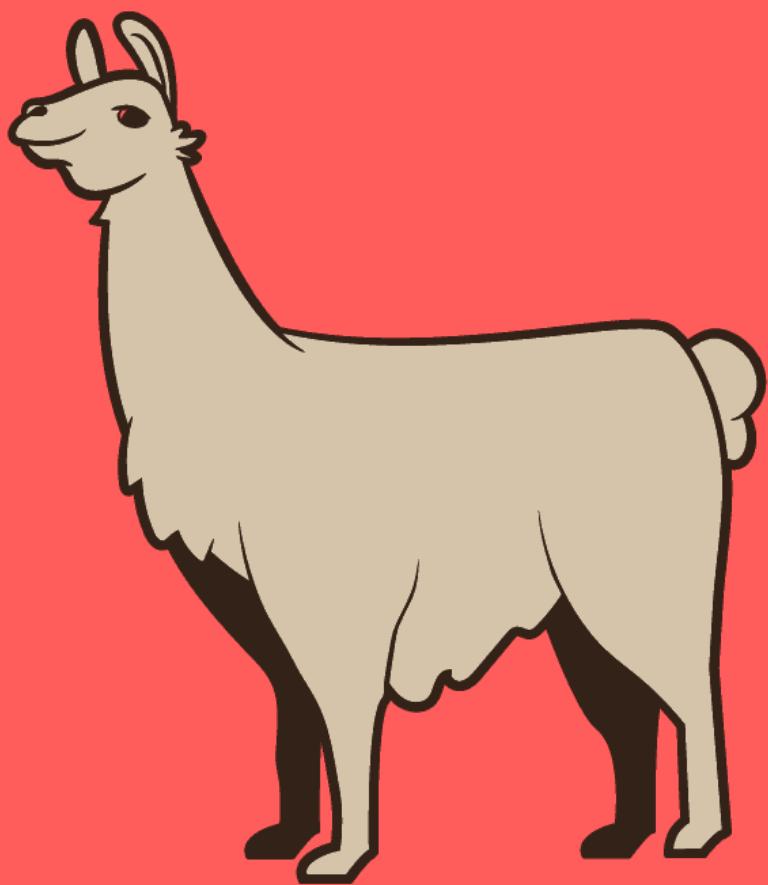
- **Get feedback:** As I have said, having a pretty UX design increases conversion. When building in public, you have easy access to feedback. Opinions from your users about your design mockups can help you create a better product.
- **Create HYPE:** Building in public generates excitement on users, who will be helping you to promote the product once you have launched it.

There are many tools that will help you build in public. These two are my favorite ones:

- **Publicly:** It is a simple way to share with your customers the progress you are doing with your product.
- **Ship:** It provides different tools to collect emails, create a waitlist, and keep users updated with the latest news.

One of the best examples of how to build in public was carried out by Pieter Levels. He took the build in public movement to another level and streamed on live the entire process of creating **Hoodmaps**, from the first line of code to a functioning web app. It took him only four days and he achieved the front page of Reddit. Read his amazing story [here](#).

So you now have the website built. It's time for getting some feedback and improving the product before launching it.



Stage 5:
Feedback

If you have used the “build in public” strategy, then you have probably collected some valuable feedback. But if not, everything you have done until now is based on your beliefs and tastes.

But before launching, we need to get some feedback from our potential customers. We need to maximize the launch campaign as much as possible, therefore, our website mustn't have any stupid mistake.

So, let's get into the ways of getting feedback without even launching your side project.

I want to recommend you five strategies, with their respective tools, to get user feedback:

- **Cold Emails:** It is really simple. It consists on sending cold emails to different kinds of people who can give you distinctive feedback. For example, you can send these emails to people you met on social media, to influencers on your market, to people who have built similar products, and even to clients of your competition. You will probably find these tools useful:
 - **Beta Testa:** By paying £5 you get access to a spreadsheet with the contact details of lots of registered testers, who will happily help you improve your website. Just send them an email and you will get a lot of feedback, from the design of your website to the copywriting of it.
 - **Mailtrack:** When sending cold emails, a great habit is to track who opens the email and who answers it, as well as who completely ignores it. Mailtrack is a free tool that allows you to do this in your Gmail.
 - **Reply:** When you have to send many emails, you need a tool to automate this boring process. Reply automates email outreach workflows and tracks the analytics of the campaigns.
- **Surveys:** They work really well when you already have some customers. But they are quite more complicated to carry out when you

haven't even launched your product. Yet, there are some ways of collecting user feedback using surveys. The hardest part is getting people to complete these surveys. So I want to recommend you three tools that will facilitate you the task:

- **Survey Monkey**: This well-known tool lets you create surveys and get insights from people. But how will we get people to complete them? Survey Monkey has an interesting feature to buy responses. It is not cheap, but you can define the audience you would like them to complete.
 - **Typeform**: Similar to Survey Monkey. It lets you create forms and get responses. But this tool does not allow you to buy insights. To get them, we can use Amazon Mechanical Turk.
 - **Amazon Mechanical Turk**: This tool is used to ask workers to complete small tasks, and pay them a small fee for their work. We can then use it to hire many workers to complete our survey. I personally don't recommend it, as the insights are usually really low-quality.
-
- **Usability Tests**: It refers to a technique that is used to evaluate a product or service by testing it with representative users. It provides important insights to improve the design of the webpage. I want to recommend you two tools that I have personally tested and I love:
 - **User Testing**: It is a tool that provides videos of real people speaking their thoughts on your website. The feedback you get is usually really helpful, but I think it is quite expensive. Maybe you can use it once you have grown it into a business.
 - **Hotjar**: This great tool allows you to capture the screen of your visitors and learn through videos how do they interact with your website. Similar to User Testing, but the problem is that you need to get some traffic to your website. The best of all? It is free. (Well, freemium)

- **Social Media:** People on social media are usually really willing to help. You have to take an advantage of this, and get feedback from people surfing the internet. These three strategies can help you a lot:
 - **Slack:** There are **lots of communities** on Slack, in which you can join and meet new people with same interests. They are a good way to ask for feedback on your new product. You can do the same on **Telegram**.
 - **Reddit:** There are lots of creative ways to ask for feedback on Reddit. Some people prefer to publish on certain subreddits updates of their project, explaining on what are they working to improve the product. People usually answer it with some feedback and recommendations. Other people prefer directly to ask for feedback.
 - **Facebook Groups:** There a lot of Facebook groups around helping and giving feedback. But I don't recommend them. I prefer to acquire feedback from Facebook groups that go around the topic of my project.
- **Friends and Family:** When getting feedback, your friends and family can help you a lot. But it can result being a double-edged weapon. If your family and friends are 100% honest with you, then it is probably a really valuable feedback. However, in most cases they aren't, so your website stays with its mistakes.

There are many other creative strategies to obtain feedback. **Andrey Azimov**, for example, attached an iPad with his app running on it and a feedback box to the wall.



He doesn't describe it as a big success, but I am sure you can find some other free ways to get feedback in which you can get many great insights.

So, you have your product built and upgraded according to the feedback you received. You have been working lots of hours, without obtaining a single penny. But now its time of launching it.



Stage 6:
Launch

The launching part is the moment in which your project meets the real world. With a great launching campaign, your product will receive a lot of traffic, and, hopefully, new users.

Okay, I like this. But how can I carry out a great launch? Each side project has a different campaign, but they all share some promoting strategies. Therefore, I will now number a few tools and websites that will help you launch your website.

But before, there are three things we need to check on our website before launching it:

- **Functionality:** Make sure everything is working. Test every URL, each button, the forms, the links, etc.
- **Server:** Assure your hosting supports a big number of visitors. We can not afford to get our server down. It could mean many sales lost.
- **Backups:** Make sure you have some backups of your website.

Now let's go with the tools:

- **Product Hunt:** I have probably talked too much about Product Hunt, but I couldn't avoid mentioning it as a great (and probably the best) method to launch your project. Product Hunt surfaces the best new products every day. As it is full of product-loving enthusiasts who will happily share your new project, PH is a must place where you need to share your work when you are launching it. If you get many upvotes you will probably end up being on the first page of PH, which is a really great achievement! In the case of ending up being #1, your traffic will have an enormous spike and 5.000 - 10.000 people will probably enter to your website. Moreover, I want to recommend you a tool called **500 hunters**, in which you will find the list of the 500 best hunters on Product Hunt. To make the launch on PH more successful, I recommend you to reach one of these leaders and cordially ask them to promote your project. Failory ended the day as the #1 product, which gave us a lot of traffic, new interviewees, and many new email

subscribers. Below, I tell a bit more about our launching story, some mistakes we committed and a few lessons.

- **Hacker News:** You should (almost always) publish your side project on Hacker News. It is really difficult to make your way to the front page - nearly impossible. But it doesn't hurt to try. Take into account that the majority of Hacker News audience are developers. So, if your project is tech-related or something developers can find interesting, then you have big chances of succeeding. If not, just try. Nowadays, Hacker News is really oversaturated, so don't get disappointed if you achieve nothing but 0 upvotes.
- **Designer News:** It's really similar to Hacker News, but instead of tech-related post, people post links related to (as its name says) design. Again, if your product has any relation with the world of design, it will probably achieve some success, bringing you many new visitors to your website. If your product doesn't have any relation to design, and designers wouldn't find it useful, then just ignore this strategy.
- **Reddit:** Publishing your side project to some subreddits is a really great strategy. Some subreddits that can be used to promote your side project are [/r/Entrepreneur](#), [/r/SideProject](#), [/r/Startups](#), [/r/SmallBusiness](#) and [/r/InternetIsBeautiful/](#). Read their rules and promote your project according to their guidelines. If you are able to get some upvotes and achieve the first position of the subreddit, then you will receive a big traffic. Pieter Levels took launching in Reddit to [another level](#), and achieve the front page with this startup Hoodmaps.
- **Social Media:** Share the project on your social media. I would especially focus on Twitter. A common strategy is to keep updated the people on the traffic your site is receiving, sales made, feedback received, etc. during the launch day. You can even contact some influencers in your market and ask them to share the project on their Twitter. Just be imaginative, and use creative methods to be promoted on social media.

- **Press:** Getting press coverage is really difficult. Your product needs to be really innovative and disruptive. If not, it is almost impossible. **Promotehour** lists hundreds of places to get press coverage for your startup. You can try sending cold emails to some of their journalists. But please, do not send generic emails to thousands of journalists. They will completely ignore it. A great strategy to reach journalists is:
 1. Search for journalists who have written content related to your side project.
 2. Send them a cold email with an attractive subject and a great pitch. Explain to them you have found them through the article you have previously searched associated with your project.
 3. If their answer is positive, coordinate the press release for the day of the launch of your product.
- **Blog Posts:** This is not a launching strategy, but can be carried out the day after launching your side project. It consists on writing articles (generally on **Medium**) about how the launch day went, the traffic obtained, the users acquired, the sales made, and all other interesting data. A great example is [this article](#).

Failory Launching

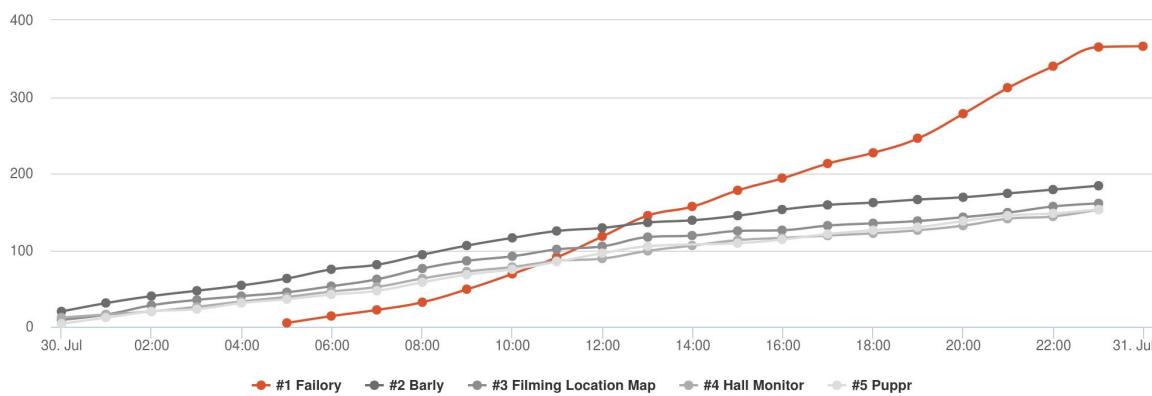
The launch of Failory included:

Product Hunt

A few days before launching Failory, we asked the hunter number 1 on Product Hunt, Kevin William David, to publish our website. This was a winning strike. His popularity on PH helped us a lot to end up being the #1 product of the day.



Most Upvoted Products of Jul 30, 2017
#1 Failory (366 votes)



Charts by [@tophuntsdaily](#) | Data by [@producthunt](#)

Unluckily, when we launched Failory on PH, **Ship** didn't exist so we didn't collect any email before launching. Somehow, we managed to get +800 upvotes!

When we were published on PH we committed a big mistake. We published it on Sunday, a day in which not so many people enter to PH. So, we didn't receive the traffic we were looking for. Lesson learned: Never launch your product on weekends. Also, Kevin published our product quite late (you can watch it on the graph below), so the first few hours we weren't on the top 5 products.

One last thing, I totally recommend you to answer comments on PH as quickly and as optimistic as possible. There will be some negative feedback.

Constructive critics are great but don't pay attention to those who don't have a reason for what they say.

Hacker News

Becoming trending on Hacker News is really difficult. Publishing your new startup on Hacker News is a must to do so we did it, but we weren't expecting to get many upvotes there. However, for some strange reason, people loved the website and was upvoted 108 times. I think (I can't remember well) that we achieved the front page!

▲ Show HN: Failory – Learn from other entrepreneurs' mistakes (failory.com)

108 points by richclominson 123 days ago | hide | past | web | favorite | 31 comments

Designer News

We knew that many of the people who could be interested in Failory were designers. Therefore, we published our website on Designer News. 0 upvotes. 0! Apparently, designers didn't care much about Failory.

Social Media

There is not much to explain. Just the common social media promotion: Twitter, Facebook, and Google+. We committed a big mistake when developing our website: We didn't put it simply for people to share the interviews. This was a fatal mistake. Lesson learned: Always add share buttons. Put them as simple as possible.

Cold Emails

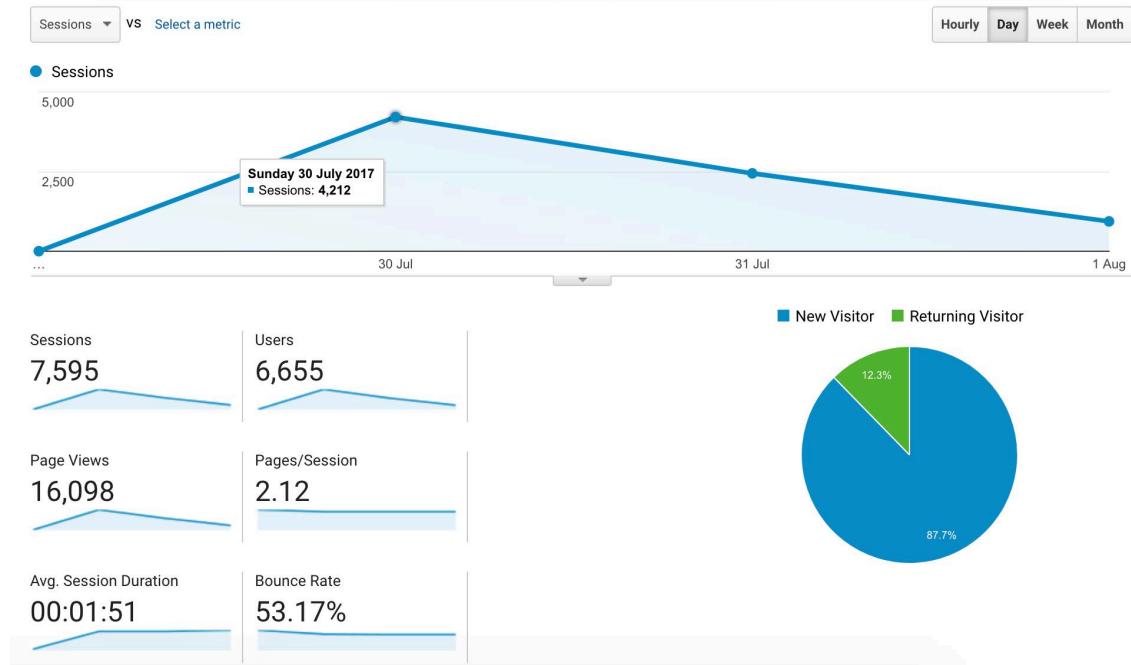
We advised the people we had interviewed that Failory was now published. Many of them helped us with an upvote, a share and some links on their websites. We also sent some emails to influencers and people who usually tweet about startups. But it was a complete failure.

Press

Unluckily, when we launched Failory we didn't get any press release. We had neither money to invest in the project, nor time to wait for journalist.

Therefore, we didn't contact any startup and tech news portal. Analyzing this I realized that we should have sent some cold emails to get some press. The idea of Failory was quite disruptive, and the story behind it really interesting. So, it could have been a success!

This was the analytics of the first 3 days of Failory.



Also, 509 people subscribed to our newsletter, which was a lot. It was the 7.65% of the users who visited Failory.



Stage 7:

Growth

Okay, so you have already launched your side project. You will continue receiving some traffic for the following days, even weeks. But if you don't continue advertising your product, it will definitely stop converting in a near future. Therefore, we need to keep growing the project.

We will now see some marketing strategies that will let you achieve a big growth. But before, there still one thing to do. Based on the feedback you have probably received from the launching, improve your product. Your audience will not only tell you the bugs they found but will also recommend you some features and ways to improve the project. So there will be a lot of work to do.

Now let's get into the marketing strategies. It is necessary to clarify that not all the strategies work for every side project. You will have to personally find which one works the best in your case.

Content Marketing

Content marketing is a form of marketing focused on creating, publishing and distributing content. Content can be thought as anything that communicates a message to the audience. From blog articles to online courses, content marketing covers an enormous amount of methods that can be used to attract new customers and users.

I am doing content marketing right now, with this eBook. Millions of companies are doing it so. And side project should also.

Creating content generally takes a lot of time, and your market is probably already oversaturated of content. However, I have demonstrated myself that if you create a really great content, it will acquire a lot of readers.

So, as a side project maker, which content should I deliver? As I have said, there are hundreds, if not thousands, types. These are the ones that drove me more traffic and provoked more conversions:

Blog Articles

Almost all companies are releasing blog articles in which they show their expertise on the topic. In fact, more than two million blog posts are published every day. 99% suck and don't achieve any success. So we want to be part of the 1% remaining. How can we do this? Brian Dean, the founder of Backlinko, created the **Skyscraper Technique**. It consists on three steps:

- Step 1: Find great content about the topic you want to write
- Step 2: Make something even better
- Step 3: Reach out to the right people

Easy, huh? If your article is great, and you promote it well (content promotion is explained below), you will not only receive a lot of traffic and possible sales, but also many backlinks which will help you rank your website on Google (SEO is explained below). Remember that you need to get off the beaten track. "How-to" guides, interviews, case studies and lists usually work well.

Furthermore, to get even better results with your blog articles, you can use lead magnets. Lead magnets are an irresistible content we give for free, in exchange for an email.

Another strategy to attract customers with blog articles is guest posting. This means writing and publishing an article on someone else's website or blog. Again, it will not only increase your traffic but will also transfer to your website some SEO juice. The steps behind guest posting are explained in **this insane article**.

Okay, we have created an awesome blog article with +7000 words, but.. nobody is reading it! No, people won't come unless you promote your content. It's simple, they don't have any way to reach it. So you need to carry some content promotion techniques.

Some techniques are the same used on the launching. Great articles usually receive many upvotes on Hacker News, Designer News, and Reddit. Obviously,

social media is a great way to promote articles (you should share it at least twice). Sending the post to your email subscribers is another strategy. Some advanced methods are named in [this article](#).

Infographic

Infographics are everywhere. This is because visuals are processed thousands of times faster in the brain than text, making them 30 times more likely to be read than a text article. For these reasons, they are a great type of content we should be using on our side projects. They only have one “problem”. If you are not a designer, you will probably have to confront some complications while creating them. But here it comes the solution: [Canva](#). This great tool lets you create beautiful infographics only dragging and dropping.

eBooks

Launching free eBooks will not only improve your content marketing strategy but will also help you build a bigger email newsletter. Writing them is really time-demanding. It implies the previous research, the brainstorming, the writing part, the editing, and the design. But in most cases results are impressive. If you are looking to create an ebook, I recommend you [this great how-to guide](#).

Videos

Videos are shareable, are easy to consume, increase the engagement, improve your SEO. If content is king, video is queen. There are many ways to include videos in your content marketing strategy. One easy and common strategy is to turn [blog posts into videos](#). Another strategy is to create how-to videos.

Podcast

There are many reasons starting a podcast can boost your content marketing strategy. During the last years, there has been a rise on mobile, making podcasts easier to listen anywhere you have some extra time. There has also been a decline in reading. People want to still acquire knowledge, but without reading too much. Furthermore, lots of new podcasts have surged, accompanied by millions of listeners. Creating a podcast can be a great way to differentiate from your competition.

Press Release

How can I convince a journalist to write a story about my business? The simple answer: Get their attention. However, as I have already said, getting press coverage for your side project is not that easy. Your idea needs to be disruptive and your story really catchy.

There are certain ways to get journalists talk about your project, especially if you focus on small-medium portals. **Thousands of articles** teach you how to get press coverage, but I want to summarize all this long process in 4 steps:

1. **Find Bloggers and Journalists:** Search for journalists from different media (you can find a lot [here](#)) who have written about the topic of your side project. One strategy is to spy your competitors, look for their press coverage and search for the journalists. Another strategy is to search on Google “site: the URL of the media + topic”. For example: “site:entrepreneur.com failed startups”.
2. **Gather Contact Details:** Once you have decided the journalists, you need to search the way to reach them. Almost all of them have Twitter, so you can reach them through direct message or a tweet. If you prefer email, the media usually publishes it. If not, you can make a deep research and look for

their personal website in which they have probably added their contact details.

3. **Contact Them:** You need to write a great email. Journalists receive hundreds of emails per day, so again, you need to be disruptive. To begin, your subject needs to catch the journalist. If you don't grab him quickly, you lose him. Secondly, the content needs to be short, concise and directly to the point. If you can be weird and shock the journalist, awesome.
4. **Follow Up:** Finally, follow up them after a week if they don't respond.

Remember, when you are just starting, don't try to get press from TechCrunch, Mashable, The Verge, The Next Web. Look for smaller medias!

SEO

You have probably heard about SEO (or Search Engine Optimization) a lot of times. Lots of companies have grown amazingly with this strategy, and I personally love it.

But, for those who still don't understand what is SEO about, it is the process of getting organic traffic from search results on search engines (in most cases on Google). The O of SEO means optimization, which refers to a series of strategies that you can take to move your website and content up on Google searches. Optimization can take many forms. Learning all of them, requires a lot of time and constant updates on knowledge, as the factors Google take into account to rank your website are always changing.

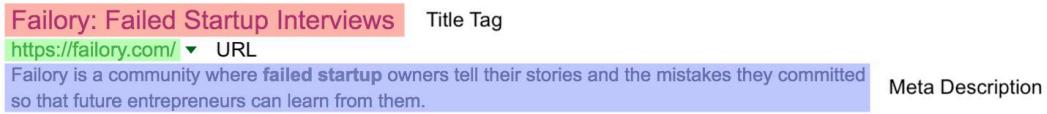
However, I want to make a short introduction with the basic information you need to get on the road to professional quality Search Engine Optimization. In a certain way, SEO is divided into two facets:

SEO On Page

Refers to the optimization of individual web pages in order to rank higher on search engines. This includes optimizing:

- **Content:** Google has stated that content is among the top three ranking factors. So, to get a page ranked for a specific keyword, you need to create great optimized content. But, what are keywords? Keywords are the words and phrases that people type into the search box of a search engine to find websites that match what they are looking for. So, our website should appear or rank when people search for these keywords. How can we do it? Basically, you need to add these keywords, and variations of them, to your article. Okay, awesome but, how can we find these keywords? You need to find keywords that have a high search volume, low competition and are supported by your content. There are thousands of tools that will help you. This process is called keyword research and **this** is a great article to learn how to carry it out.
- **Images:** You should add images to your articles. They not only contribute to the SEO of your article but also make it more vivid. Some practices to optimize your images for SEO are:
 - **ALT tags** with the keyword
 - Correct image name with keyword. Please avoid names like DSC204.jpg
 - Use responsive images
 - Reduce image file by **compressing** the pictures
- **Code:** You will need to add some SEO information to the code of your website:
 - **Title Tag** is the title text you see in every tab of your browser, on social media shares and more importantly, in the search results. The optimal length of the title is between 50-60 characters and you

should include your keyword in it. Moreover, try to create an attractive title, to make people click on them when searching on Google. The code of the title tag we use in Failory is “<title>Failory: Failed Startup Interviews</title>”, looking like this on search engines:



- **Meta Description** is a short description of your web page or article, which appears, in search engines, below the URL of your website. The keyword you are trying to rank with that web page needs to be in this summary. In code, the meta description looks like this: <meta name="description" content="Failory is a community where failed startup owners tell their stories and the mistakes they committed so that future entrepreneurs can learn from them.">, and looks like the above image.
- **Sitemap XML** is a document with a list of all the pages of your website that helps Google and other search engines better understand your website while crawling it. It is really simple to create a Sitemap XML. You just need to enter to XML-sitemaps and enter the URL of your website. This tool will automatically create you the Sitemap XML of your website. Then you should only upload it to your public_html directory and **send it** to Google Webmaster.
- **Robot.txt** is a text file that instructs web robots how to crawl pages on your website. There are many options you can adjust in this file, but at the beginning, a .txt file saying: “User-agent: * Disallow: /” is more than enough.
- **Speed:** You need to keep the loading time of your website low. In first place, to improve the SEO. Secondly, to prevent visitors leave the website without even having fully load. To improve the speed of your website you should start by checking it with **this tool**. This website will tell you if the speed is poor, average or correct, and will recommend

you some steps you can carry out to improve it.

SEO Off Page

Off-site SEO refers to strategies taken outside your website to rank in search engines. Building backlinks is at the heart of SEO Off Page. Backlinks? What? Yes, backlinks. A backlink is created when one website links another one. They are really important for SEO, as search engines took them as a signal that the content on your website is great.

Backlinks can be categorized in “Nofollow” and “Dofollow”. The first ones aren't taken into account by search engines. We don't care about them. We have to focus on the second ones. By default, all links are dofollow. These type of backlinks are counted as votes of quality by search engines.

It is important to clarify two things. The first one is that the more authoritative websites that link to you, the better rankings and traffic you'll get. The second one is that each backlink has an anchor text, which is the text containing the link to your website. The best is this anchor text to be the keyword you are trying to rank for.

There are infinite strategies to get backlinks to our website. In [this article](#) from Kissmetric, the most basic ones are explained.

Here are a few ways you can increase your link count:

- **Social media** – getting on sites like Digg or StumbleUpon don't just drive a ton of traffic. The increase in visibility also improves your chances of getting linked to.
- **Directories** – There are many [directories](#) on the web. Take the time to submit your web site to the ones that compliment your content.
- **The top 100** – If you want to rank for a specific keyword, the best links you can get are from sites that already rank in the top 100 search results for that keyword. Granted, some of the sites that rank for the term you are trying to rank for are your competitors, so they will not link to you, but some will not be your competition and you can always shoot them a nice email asking them to link to you.
- **Forums** – Many forums allow you to create signatures, in which you can link back to your web site. As long as those links are not no-followed, they will help with your rankings.
- **Competition** – The easiest way to get links is to see who links to your competition and write them an email telling them the benefits of your web site compared to your competition. Roughly, 5% of the web sites you email will also add your link.
- **Dead links** – There are billions of links on the web, so expect a good portion of those links to die over time. Web sites go down and many of the links pointing to that web site are still active. If you email those web sites informing them of the dead link, and that your content is similar, there is a good chance they will replace the dead link to one going to your website.

Paid Advertising

Paid ads is another strategy to grow your side project that, while they are quite expensive, can have a big return on investment (ROI).

There are many ways to get paid advertisement, but we will only look to three of them:

- **Google AdWords:** They work really well, because the people who click on your ads and arrive to your website are already interested in your topic, as they were searching for it on Google. We see them on almost every Google search, but nobody clicks on them, right? Incorrect. In fact, 64.6% of people click on Google Ads when they are looking to buy an item online! So we need to start using them. **This** great article teaches you how to create a profitable Google AdWords campaign. But wait, before spending a single penny on Google AdWords, try to get a promo code in which you spend a certain amount of money (generally \$25) and Google gives you another amount of free money to spend on Ads (generally \$75). This is an example of Google AdWords.

Google AdWords

Shop for laptops on Google

Laptop Model	Price	Offer	Seller
Acer Aspire E 14" Laptop	CA\$ 249.97	Best Buy	
HP Stream 13.3" Laptop	CA\$ 299.99	Best Buy	
HP 15.6" Laptop - Black	CA\$ 385.99	Best Buy	
Lenovo ThinkPad T410	CA\$ 289.99	Best Buy	
HP 14" Laptop - Black (AMD ...)	CA\$ 299.99	Best Buy	
HP EliteBook 14" Laptop- ...	CA\$ 349.99	Best Buy	
HP 15-an050ca Star ...	CA\$ 899.99	The Source	
Acer Aspire ES 15.6" Laptop ...	CA\$ 399.99	Best Buy	

Laptops - Amazon.in

www.amazon.in/Laptops/b?ie=UTF8&node=1375424031

Results 1 - 24 of 721 - Amazon.in: Buy Laptops from popular brands - HP, Dell, Lenovo, Acer, Sony and more for best prices at Amazon.in. Browse Windows, Mac ...

Dell Laptops - Lenovo Laptops - HP Laptops - 10000 - ₹20000

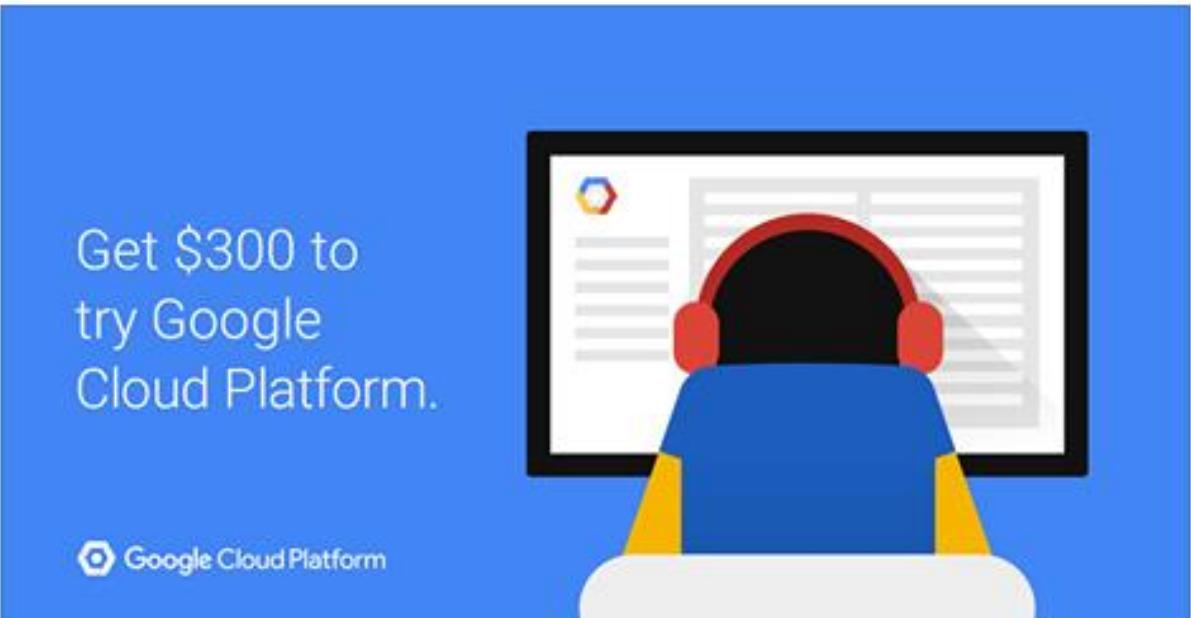
- **Facebook Ads:** They also work really well! They are quite more invasive than Google ads, as people are playing around Facebook when they appear. One of the best features of Facebook ads is targeting. Facebook knows a lot about you. More than you can imagine. And while the platform is free to use, it has a big price: your data. They are selling your data to advertisers and companies, which lets them offer

to advertisers a big amount of targeting options. The options available include demographics (location, language, age, gender, education, work), interests (industry, entertainment, family and relationships, hobbies, sports) and behaviors (automotive, digital activities, purchases, travel, events). So, if you know who can find your side project useful or interesting, you will be able to reach and attract them.

Suggested Post

 **Google**
Sponsored · 

Focus on doing what you do best—building better applications.
Get started with \$300 in credit.



Get \$300 to try Google Cloud Platform.

 Google Cloud Platform

Build what's next

Sign up and get \$300 to spend on Google Cloud Platform over the next 60 days.
Start building what's next today.

CLOUD.GOOGLE.COM 

- **Sponsorship:** The last strategy of paid advertisement is sponsorships. The best three types of sponsorships are newsletters, podcasts, and events. In the three you should start by searching for one of them related with your side project. A fantastic tool to find newsletters with

a similar audience to your project is **Sponsored Tech**. A good tool to find events to sponsor is **SponsorMyEvent**. Once you have found the right newsletter, podcast or event, you should then contact their creators or organizers and pay a fee. Prices vary according to the possible clicks or leads you will get.

Social Media

All side projects should have some social media accounts. They can help you reach your audience and promote your product and updates.

But your social media contributions can't be only promotional. You need to provide some value to your followers. One way is to share quality content you have found. **Quuu** is a tool that suggests you content to share on your social media. Another way is to engage with your audience. Asks them questions, opinions, feedback. The third way is to keep it current. Post frequently. Share content every day and publish memes that are relevant to your audience.

Finally, you should use social media accounts to achieve other marketing objectives like content promotion.

Email Marketing

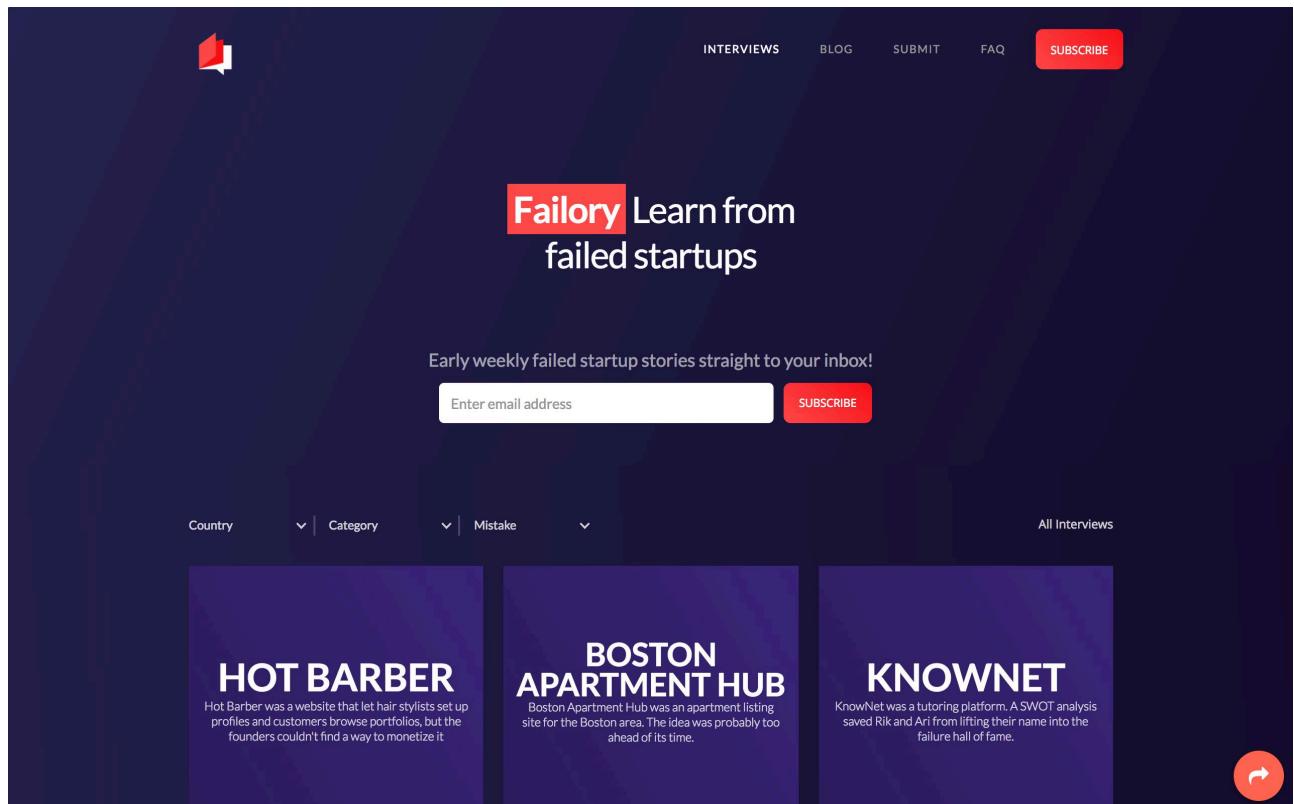
Despite the arrival of social media, email is still the number one marketing channel. It has been proven that people are more likely to buy a product if they arrive to it from an email, rather than social media and search engines. That's why you should (if you haven't already) start collecting emails.

We will be covering the two principal parts of email marketing: Subscribers and Newsletter.

Subscribers

Email subscribers are the people who provided you their email for a specific reason. In the case of Failory, because they want to be updated on the latest interviews added.

Before sending emails to your subscriber, you need to get some. Therefore, your website needs to have a subscription form with all the contact information you want people to complete (email, name, age, gender). Try to put this form the most visible possible. For example, in Failory we have it almost at the top of the website.



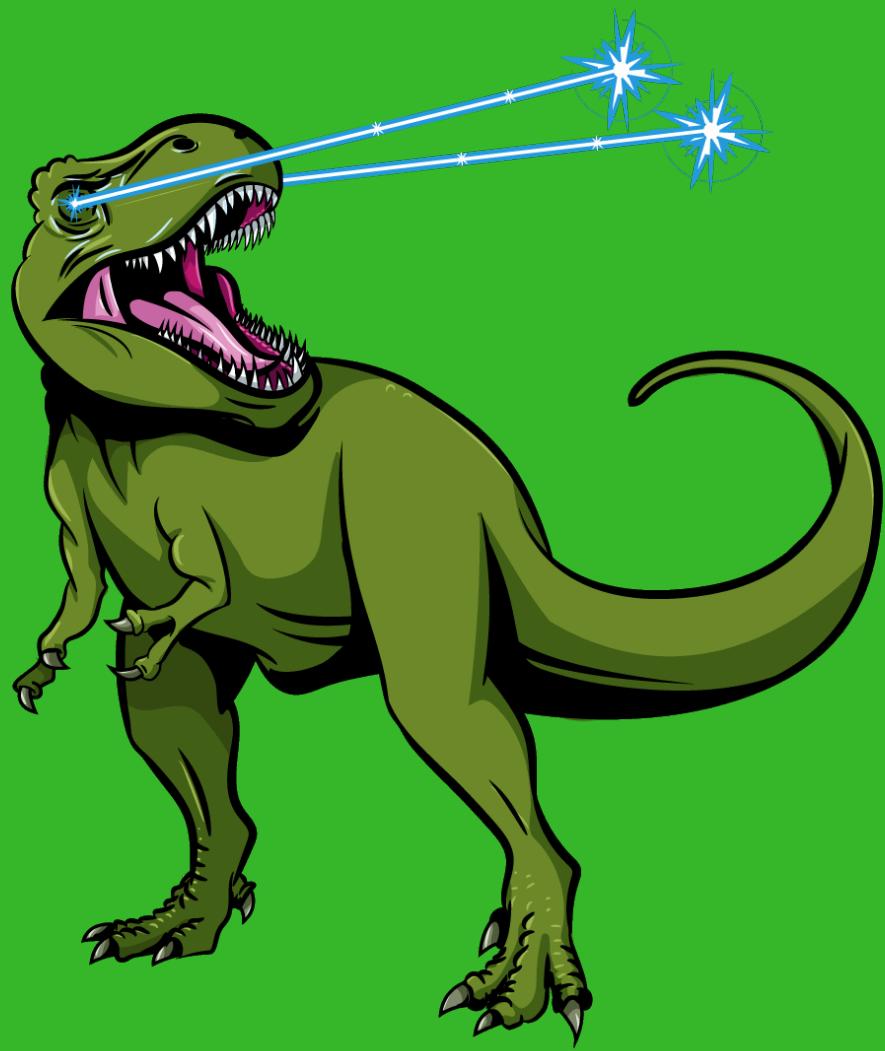
Moreover, you need to give people a good reason to sign up to your list. And one last thing, please avoid problematic subscription processes. Make it as easier as possible.

If your content is great and your newsletter meets the above requisites, you will probably start receiving some email subscriber. However, you need to keep promoting it to increase the mailing list. One great way to increase the number of subscribers is giving free stuff in exchange for emails. For example, a free eBook teaching how to create side projects.

Newsletter

Let's suppose you have collected some subscribers. It's time for sending them emails. A great tool to do it is **MailChimp**, which is free until you reach 2000 followers. But, as you get more email subscribers, it turns to be quite expensive, so you should look for an alternative.

To carry out a successful email marketing campaign you will need two things: An engaging headline and interesting content. Also, you need to balance your content to be 90% educational and 10% promotional.



Stage 8:
Monetize

Despite I considered monetization as the final stage, it isn't necessarily. Some side projects are monetized from the beginning, which is a great strategy because of the spike received in the launch. But many other people focus on growing their project and then monetize it.

If your side project is a **SaaS** or is selling a product, then you have probably started monetizing it since the beginning. But, if it is a simple website with a cool idea, that doesn't sell anything, there are some ways to monetize it once you have grown it.

- **Google Adsense:** If your website receives a considerable amount of traffic, you can include ads to your website. Every time someone clicks on them you receive some cents. The truth is that they don't look nice. So, if you want to keep your website clean, don't use them. But, if you don't care, they can be a great source of income.
- **Affiliate Marketing:** This stands for the action in which you refer someone to an online product. When that person buys the product based on your recommendation, you receive a commission. Amazon has an **affiliate marketing** program in which every sale they make to a user coming from your recommendation (this is track with a specific URL they give you), they give you a fee of up to 10%. This method works really well with reviews of products.
- **Sponsorships:** Instead of buying sponsorships (as mentioned above in the growth stage), you can sell them. You need to have a newsletter or a podcast. Once you have grown the number of subscribers or listeners, you will start receiving proposals to sponsor you.
- **Premium Content:** Premium content is a type of digital content that may be accessed for a fee, and is usually of higher quality or more desirable than free content. They can include eBooks, white papers, case studies, research papers, videos, seminars, checklists, infographics, consultations, etc. Creating an unmissable premium

content subscription (with a reasonable price) can be a winning strike.

Donations can also be a way to earn money with your side project. There are some people who will value all your work and will donate you some money. But, it can't be your monetizing plan.

Conclusion

So now, its your turn of starting your own side project. You now know the strategies you can carry out on each stage and the appropriate tools to do it. So there are no further excuses!

If you have found this eBook useful, it would be awesome if you could share it on **Twitter** and **Facebook**, and help some else create and grow their side project.

Unluckily, the eBook finishes right here. But I would love to keep the contact with you. Please **let me know** if you start your own side project!