Starter Story

Thanks for doing an interview with Starter Story! Some tips:

- The more **detailed and specific** you can get, the better this interview will be received :) -- more exposure to your business!
- **Tell your story** and make it personal! **Be honest and transparent**. Connect with the readers - they are also entrepreneurs - it really makes a huge difference!
- The bullet points below the questions *in grey italics* are suggestions to inspire great answers.
- Use links, paste in photos, videos, and format it however you want. It will all transfer to the final post. Embed Facebook posts, tweets, Instagram posts, YouTube videos, etc just paste the raw link on it's own line like this: https://www.instagram.com/p/BsOGuIcndj-/
- Break up big paragraphs (it will read better).
- Download Grammarly browser extension for spelling and grammar checking inside Google docs! (really helps)

Many of our readers are people just starting their own business. So really think back and reflect on those days :) And have fun!

If you want to know what stories have done very well and for some inspiration:

- Starting A Preppy Clothing Brand Making $21k/mo (100k+ reads)
- Growing A Brand to $1.1M/month at 23 Years Old (200k+ reads)

Interview:

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

1-2 paragraphs; make sure to include…
- Introduce yourself and the business you run.
- What's your flagship product or the main products you sell and who are your customers.
- Final sentence about how much money you're making today or some other compelling measure of your progress or something unique about your story.
- Finalize this section with an attractive image.

(Write your answers in paragraph form here, and delete the bullet points above)

Hi everybody, my name is Philip and I'm the founder of Tiiny.Host - the simplest way to host & share your web project online. It's perfect for prototyping, demos, testing, learning to code and small web apps.

The majority of our users are designers, freelancers, agencies and students. We make it super easy to host your website on the internet with no prior hosting experience needed and it's the reason why we're so popular.

I started it around 2 years ago and to date over 40,000 websites have been uploaded and we're currently at $2,000 MRR (monthly recurring revenue) and doubling every 3 months. It's definitely been a rollercoaster couple of years, we were making less than $100 MRR for about the first 12 months but then skyrocketed in the last. It just goes to show the trajectory of Saas business and the internet.

What's your backstory and how did you come up with the idea?
2-5 paragraphs; consider including…
- Talk about **YOU!** and your personal journey
- How you came up with the idea
- How did you know this was the right idea to work on? Was there an "aha" moment? How was this different to other business ideas you had?
- any expertise/background you had in this area
- how you validated the idea/products
- your financial/career situation at the time

During my teenage years I taught myself how to develop websites. I was always fascinated by having a presence online. Something that you've created, visible for the world to see. I eventually started building websites for other people and did a small amount of freelance work. Personally I loved graphic design & programming so web design was the perfect combination.

Naturally, I later studied Computer Science at university and finally learned how to programme the correct way and all it's related intricacies. My first job was at a very large US bank, a career sought after by many. However, I quickly realized that I wanted a more entrepreneurial journey through life and so had a few side hustles and eventually left to work full-time on a startup. Unfortunately none of them grew to become very successful but I learned so much from them by the time I started working on Tiiny Host.

I didn't necessarily know that Tiiny Host was the right idea to work and neither settled on it based on market analysis. I knew I wanted to work on a SaaS project and so thought about what would be the best intersection of my skills and personal interest. In fact I foolishly did very little market analysis but chose to fix a problem I asked myself "why is it so difficult to host content online today". With the modern day cloud, it's actually very easy to do so - if you knew how. I previously had a lot of experience with web hosting and so decided to make it more accessible for the world.

It turned out that Tiiny Host wasn't the only product in the space making web hosting easier. There were a handful of other products on the market but they all tackled the problem in a different way. To be honest if I realized how many other competitors there were already in the space, I may not have settled on this idea. However the combination

of luck, my unique take on the problem and my background resulted in a successful business.

Take us through the process of designing, prototyping, and manufacturing your first product.
2-4 paragraphs; consider including…
- Take the reader through the manufacturing and design process of the products
- If you sell digital product/services, talk about how you designed those services/offerings, designed the initial features, the early user interfaces, MVP, etc
- Initial prototyping, nailing the formula/ingredients, getting the packaging right, ordering your first run/batch of products- How you found your manufacturer/challenges in this process
- Startup costs, and legal stuff (Regulations, patents, etc)
- photos/screenshots of "the early days" work really well here - working hard with the team, prototyping products, handling inventory, etc

Describe the process of launching the business.
2-4 paragraphs; consider including…
- Talk about your "launch". Tell us specifics about your launch strategy and execution. How long was it before you started seeing a lot of customers?
- Creating your website and initial online presence (screenshots of original website!)
- Talk about how you financed the business. Credit cards, loans? Detail out your costs.
- Talk about your Kickstarter or other crowdfunding process if applicable.
- Biggest lessons learned from the process of starting, as well as lessons learned from the launch

(Write your answer here…)

Since launch, what has worked to attract and retain customers?
3-6 paragraphs; consider including…
- growth advice/recommendations for aspiring founders based on what you've learned
- Steps taken to increase traffic and sales.
*- readers love a **breakdown** of your marketing/traffic efforts - e.g. social media, facebook ads, other ads, PR, email marketing/newsletter, networking, SEO, partnerships, etc - **Screenshots!!***
- don't just list what you do... also talk about how you do it and why it works/doesn't
- How you bring existing customers back.
- Screenshots of FB/Amazon/Shopify/GoogleAnalytics graphs and dashboards work really well
- also Amazon: Huge topic currently. Tried it as a sales channel? Think it's great or a bad idea? Strategy? Competition? Ads?
- Include examples (links and screenshots) if you reference PR, successful campaigns, social media posts, etc

(Write your answer here…)

How are you doing today and what does the future look like?
2-3 paragraphs; consider including…
- Profitable?

Our financials are quite simple. Today, our Monthly Recurring Revenue is ~$2000 and ~95% is profit if we just take into account our infrastructure costs. A lot of our current expenses are on tools, services and contractors important for growth but not the running of the business.

We currently do not run ads or have any customer acquisition costs. Our users find us organically through Google and our SEO tactics.

- Email subscribers: 25,000
- Average time on site:

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

If you're coming from a technical background (i.e. you're a software engineer) you really need to sharpen your marketing skills. You should be spending 50% of your time writing code and 50% of your time marketing. It's the most important lesson that I've learned over the years.

What platform/tools do you use for your business?

Over the past two years I have accumulated a lot of tools, here's a list of the most important tools & services I've used:

- <u>Crisp Chat</u> - Instant Messaging support

- [HotJar](#) - User Experience analytics
- Google Analytics - Website analytics
- [G Suite](#) - Company email
- Email Octopus - Email marketing
- [Stripe](#) - Payments
- [Google reCAPTCHA v3](#) - Spam protection
- Amazon Web Services - Platform hosting
- [Sentry](#) - Bug tracking

Additionally the following communities have been an invaluable support group:
- Indie Hackers
- Indie Beers & Indie London
- Weekend Club

Lastly, I'd like to mention my marketing consultant Rhys who's been instrumental in making up for my lack of marketing thinking.

What have been the most influential books, podcasts, or other resources?
1-2 paragraphs; consider including…
- Books and podcasts that truly inspired you and your business, and a brief description of why they are valuable.

(Write your answer here…)

Advice for other entrepreneurs who want to get started or are just starting out?
2-4 paragraphs; consider including…
- your top tips and learnings; things that might not be obvious
- mistakes you often see other people making
- inspire us!!!

I also hear a lot of aspiring entrepreneurs complain that "all the good ideas have been taken" and that you really need a groundbreaking idea to be successful. The reality is that a successful business is 1% idea and 99% execution. There are countless examples of successful businesses that haven't re-invented the wheel with their product. The recipe I've used for Tiiny Host was to simplify an existing idea and target a different audience. This can be applied to an infinite number of industries. You can be successful by just making an existing product better or updating it to fit with the current times. You can also be successful by re-positioning an existing product for a different audience.

I also think that it's very important to align the business that you want to start with something that you're interested in or represents a part of you. With Tiiny Host I had a long fascination with the web and experience with hosting. I say this because you will be

spending a lot of time on your business and there are often more troughs than peaks in entrepreneurship. It's vital that something more drives you than the financial rewards.

Are you looking to hire for certain positions right now?

Yes! We are actually looking for part-time (paid) content marketers & writers. Tasks include: generating ideas for content/social media, writing, marketing strategy, cross posting & promoting our content across relevant platforms, forming partnerships and general marketing strategy. We're always open to new ideas.

If you would like to learn a lot from being part of a fast growing micro SaaS platform just DM me on twitter (@_baretto) or email us (hello@tiiny.host) It's a bonus if you come from a technical background!

Where can we go to learn more?

- Website: https://tiiny.host
- Twitter: @tiinyhost @_baretto
- Blog: https://tiiny.host/blog
- Email: hello@tiiny.host
- Indie Hackers: https://www.indiehackers.com/product/tiiny-host

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