

Developer



Solo Startup Founder



My indie hacker story.

JOM LAUNCH - KL, Malaysia 2022



@tdinh_me



tonydinh.com



news.tonydinh.com

“Indie Hackers”



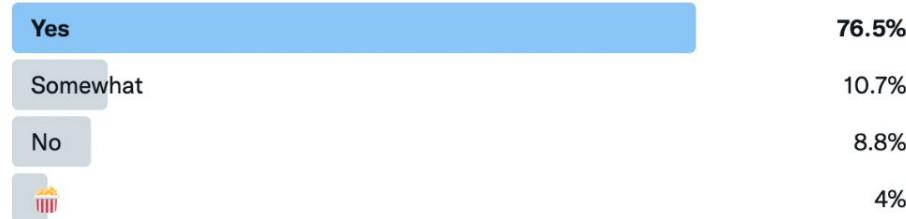
Tony Dinh
 @tdinh_me

...

I wonder how well-known is the term "Indie hacker" in
my audience bubble

Do you know the "indie hacker" term?

(comment below 😊)



544 votes · Final results

7:58 PM · Jul 18, 2022 · Twitter Web App

indie • hacker

noun

1. person building an online project that can generate revenue
2. person seeking financial independence, creative freedom, and the ability to work on their own schedule



Tony Dinh

👤 29 years old

🇻🇳 From Vietnam

💻 Software Engineer

🔨 Full-time Indie Hacker



Tony Dinh

👤 29 years old

🇻🇳 From Vietnam

💻 Software Engineer

🔨 Full-time Indie Hacker

Startup Founder?

~1 year old startup

~1 year old startup

3 products

~1 year old startup

3 products

Monthly Revenue: \$18,000 - \$25,000

~1 year old startup

3 products

Monthly Revenue: \$18,000 - \$25,000

Number of employees: 1 (Me)

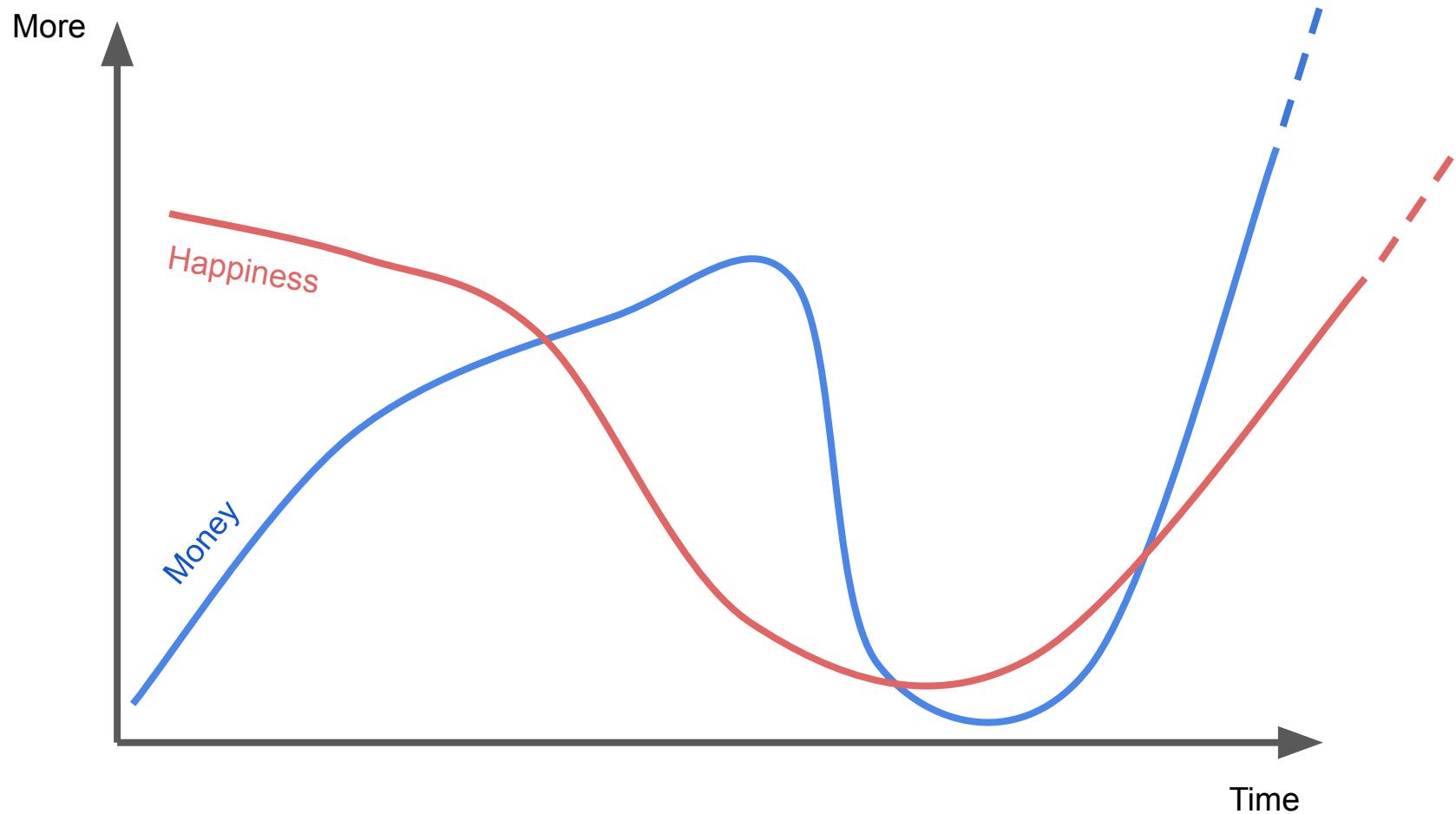
No more meetings

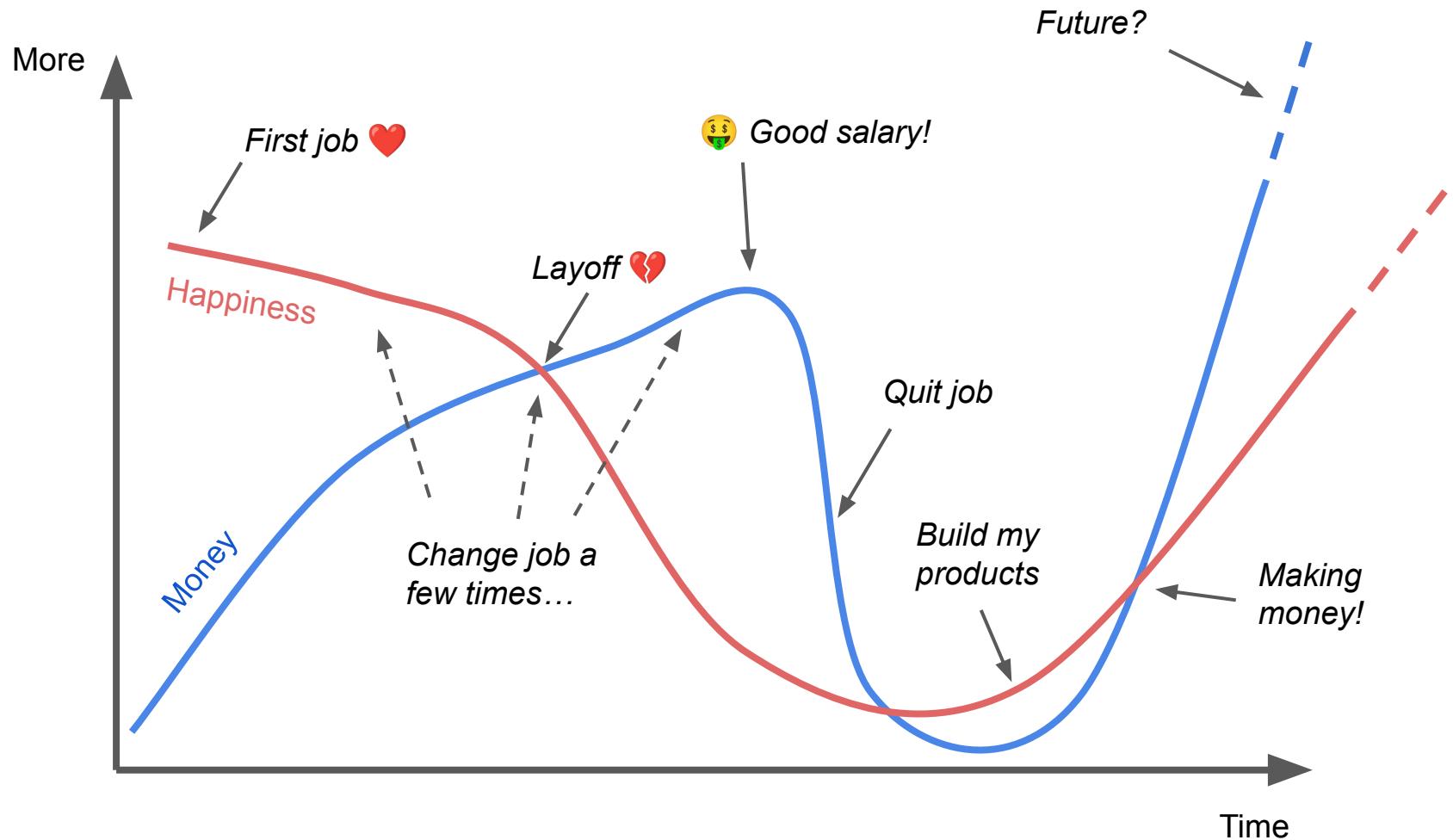
Work on products I love

Travel!









- 1. Background**
- 2. Become indie**
- 3. Grow my products**
- 4. Scale?**
- 5. Key lessons & learnings**
- 6. Q&A**

Enter your email to receive monthly updates from me



news.tonydinh.com



@tdinh_me

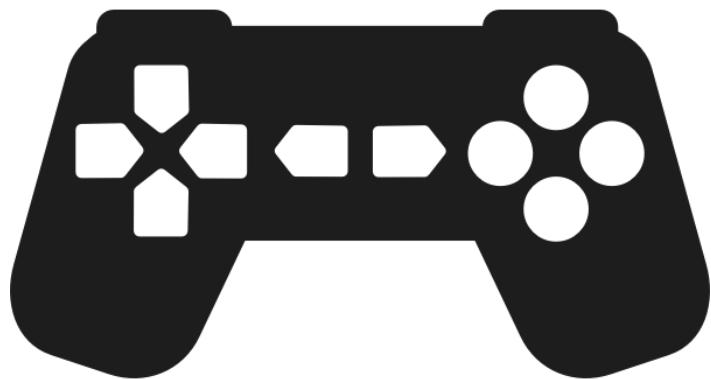


tonydinh.com

Everything else

I tweet everyday
(for the last 574 days)

Background



Free Pascal 3.2

File Edit Search Run Compile Debug Tools Options Window Help

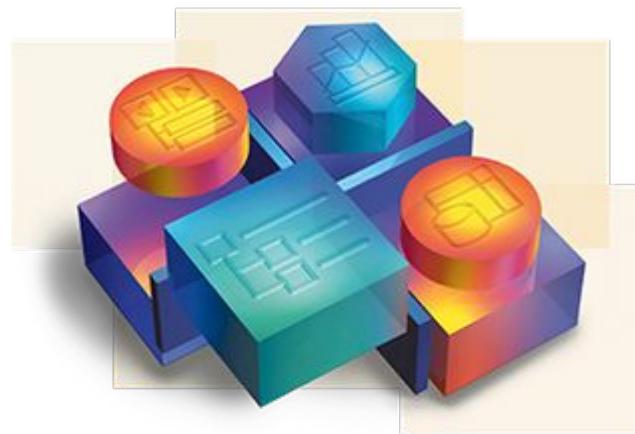
[] SOL4.PAS 1=[+]

```
var F,L:real;
  i,j,n:integer;
  x:array[1..10] of real;
  y:array[1..10] of real;

begin
  write('n=');readln(n);
  FOR i:=1 TO n DO
  begin
    write('x['+',i,',']=');readln(x[i]);
    write('y['+',i,',']=');readln(y[i]);
  end;
  begin
    write('x['+',n+1,',']=');readln(x[n+1]);
  end;
  y[n+1]:=0;
  F:=0;
  FOR j:=1 TO n DO begin
    L:=1;
    FOR i:=1 TO n DO
    begin
      IF i<>j THEN
      begin
        L:=L*(x[n+1]-x[i])/(x[j]-x[i]);
      end;
    end;
    y[n+1]:=y[n+1]+y[j]*L;end;
  writeln('y[',n+1,',']=',y[n+1]:1:0);
  FOR i:=1 TO n DO
  begin
    writeln('x[',i,',']=',x[i]:10:10,' y[',i,',']=',y[i]:10:10);
  end;
  begin
    writeln('x[',n+1,',']=',x[n+1]:10:10,' y[',n+1,',']=',y[n+1]:10:10);
  end;
  readln;
end.
```

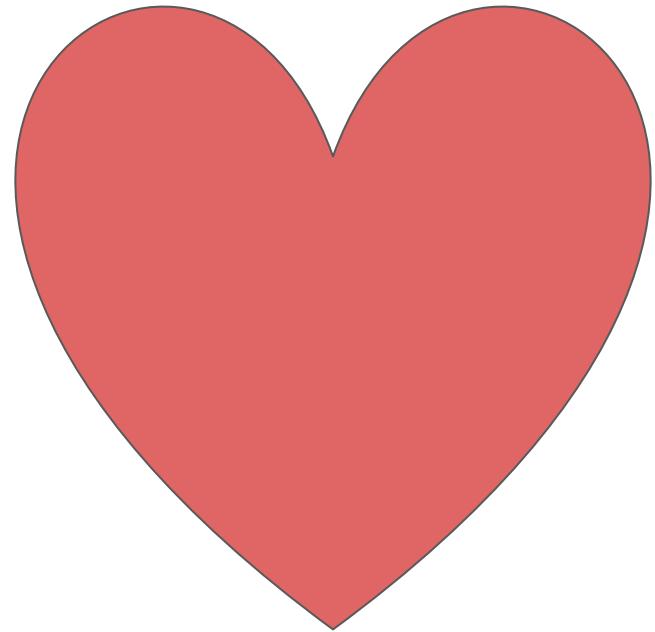
37:23

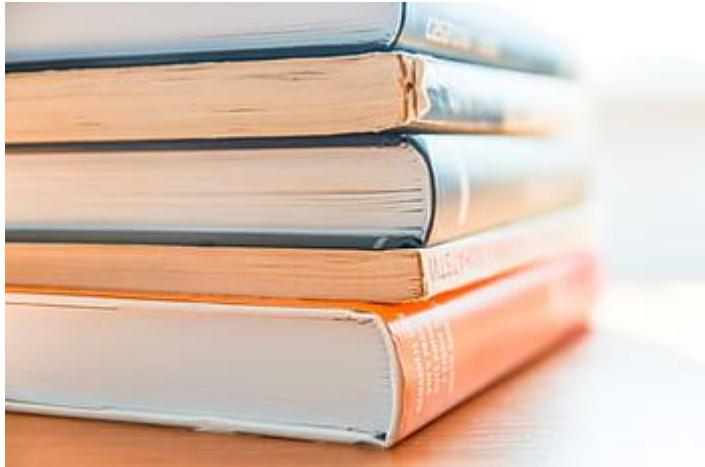
F1 Help F2 Save F3 Open Alt+F9 Compile F9 Make Alt+F10 Local menu



Microsoft
Visual Basic 6.0







Studied Software Engineer in VN

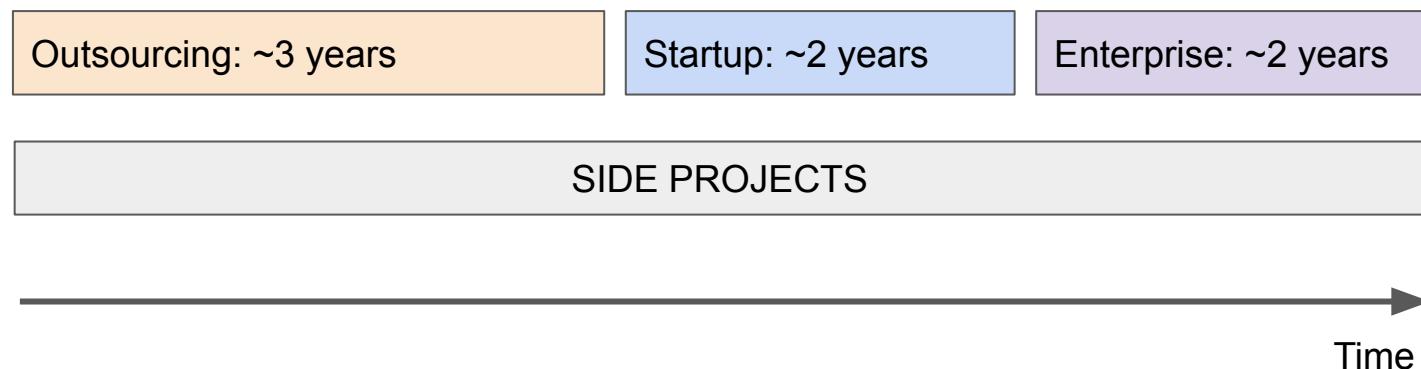


Worked as a freelancer on
Wordpress, PHP, Android



android

Worked as a software engineer for 7 years



The Switch

\$0 → \$300 MRR & Quit job

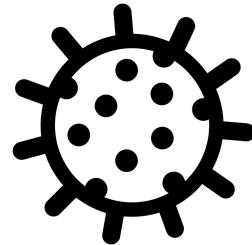
~1 year before I quit...

The background



Be Independent

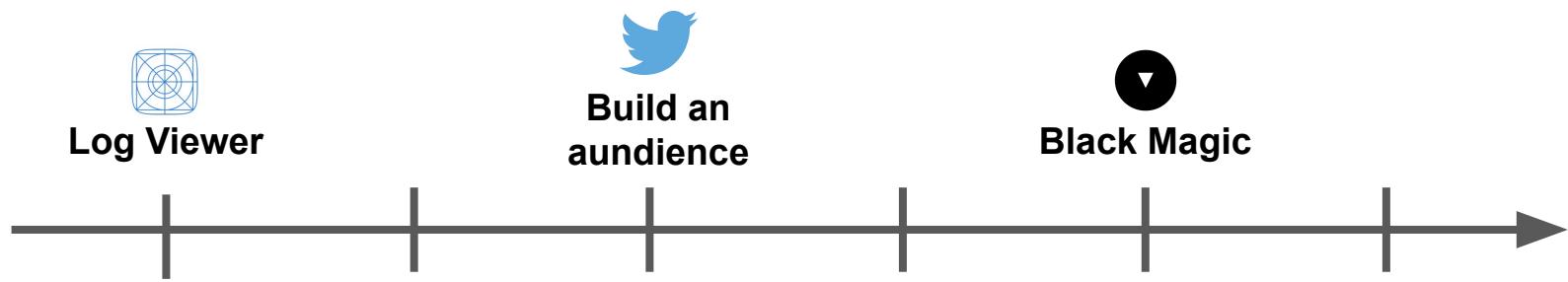
The trigger



COVID19

Side Projects

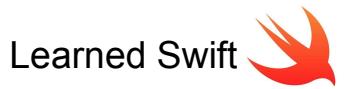




~1 year



Log Viewer



Built a log viewer app

Worked on it ~6 months

The screenshot shows the Xcode interface with several open windows:

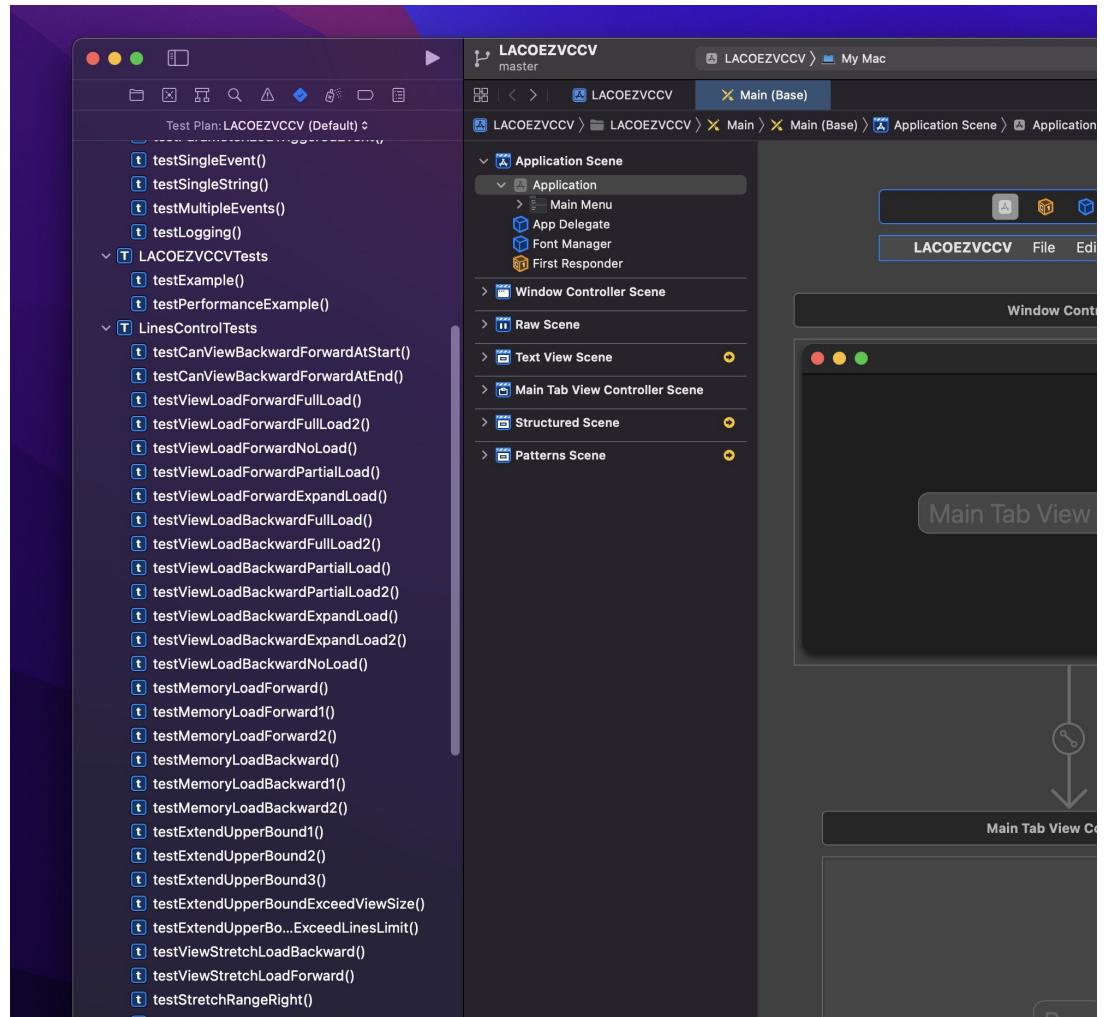
- Test Plan: LACOEZVCCV (Default)**: A list of test cases under various test classes, including `testSingleEvent()`, `testSingleString()`, `testMultipleEvents()`, `testLogging()`, `LACOEZVCCVTests`, `testExample()`, `testPerformanceExample()`, `LinesControlTests`, and numerous memory-related tests.
- LACOEZVCCV - Main (Base)**: A file browser showing the project structure: `LACOEZVCCV` > `LACOEZVCCV` > `Main` > `Main (Base)` > `Application Scene` > `Application`.
- Storyboard Preview**: A preview of the storyboard showing a single tab view controller with a title bar labeled "Main Tab View".
- Storyboard Editor**: The storyboard editor showing the "Main Tab View Controller Scene" with a single view controller node.

The app was way too complicated

Failed because of **over engineering**

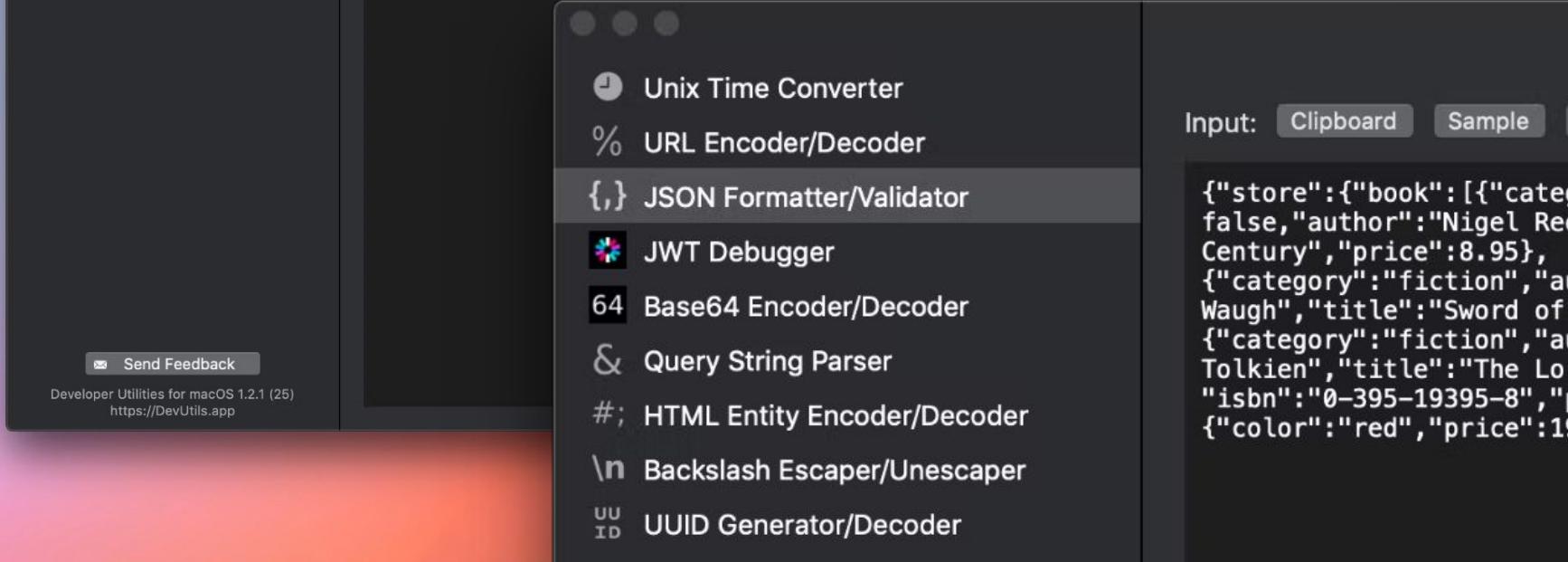
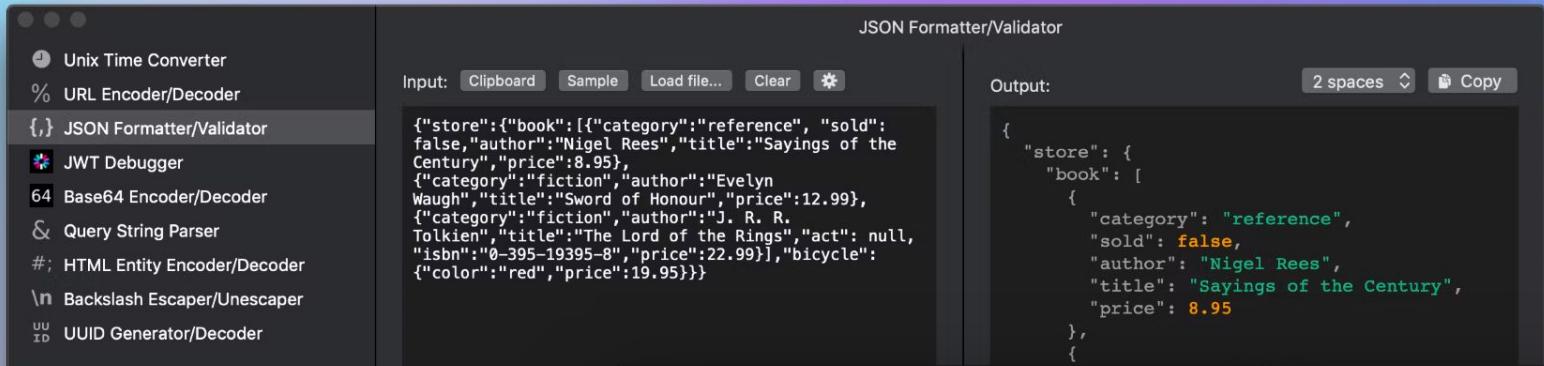
- Beautiful UI
- Beautiful code base
- 90% unit test coverage
- Involve 3 different programming languages
- Complicated cross-platform architecture
- ...

Lost interest and never release it



(but I did learn Swift  , which I never regret)

Another attempt



Built the first version in about ~2 weeks

Used it by myself

Shared it with friends

There was positive feedback



* Show HN: DevUtils.app – Developer Utilities for macOS
241 points by trungdq88 on Sept 27, 2020 | past | 105 comments

Sep 27, 2020

The screenshot shows the DevUtils app page on Product Hunt. At the top left is a green hexagonal icon with white '</>' symbols. To its right is a laurel wreath badge with the text 'Product of the day' above '3rd'. Below the icon is the app's name 'DevUtils' with a dropdown arrow, followed by the description 'Developer utilities for macOS'. To the right are two buttons: a light gray 'Visit' button and a red-bordered 'UPVOTED 255' button with a red upward-pointing triangle icon.

DevUtils ▾
Developer utilities for
macOS

Visit UPVOTED 255



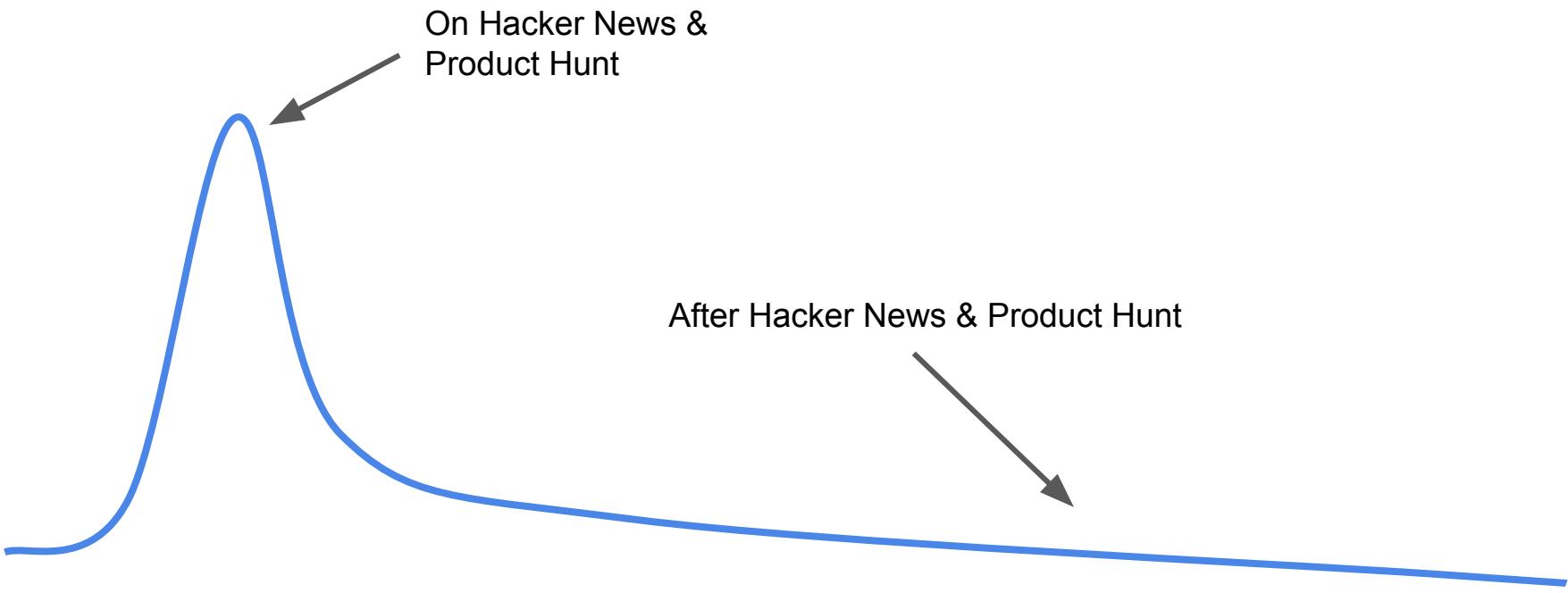


PAYMENT

US\$9.00 USD

Succeeded ✓





On Hacker News &
Product Hunt

After Hacker News & Product Hunt

Tried to get more traffic but failed



Got disappointed, paused for a little while

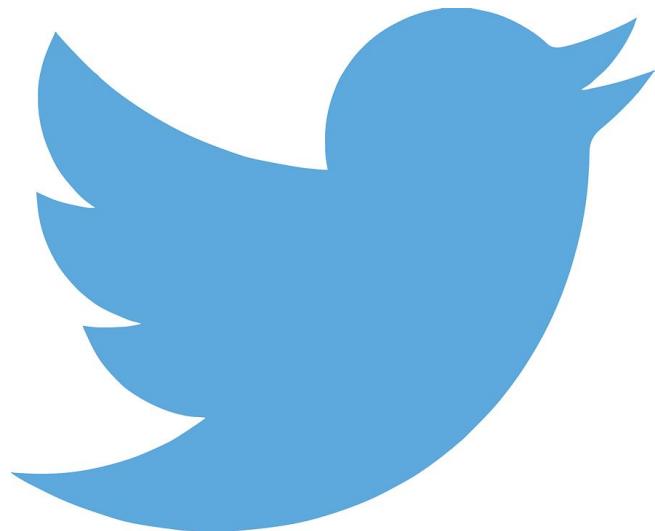


Log Viewer



DevUtils





A friend introduced me to Twitter



Tony Dinh @tdinh_me

~100 followers

...

My life as a dev has greatly improved since I use
DevUtils app, and it's on sale! 😊



DevUtils.app @devutils_app · Nov 25, 2020

DevUtils.app is on sale! 😊

Use BLACKFRIDAY_DEVUTILS_2020 for a 30% off! 🎉🎉🎉

Download now:

7:09 AM · Nov 27, 2020 · Twitter for Android

1 Like

~December 2020

Build an audience...



Tony Dinh
@tdinh_me

Google is going to buy a Team License of
DevUtils.app!! 😱🐶🎉



[REDACTED]
to support, Software ▾



Hi Team,

Hope you are safe and doing fine

I am from the Software Procurement Team of Google. Google
is interested in using your product DevUtils.app.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]
Services provided by HCL on behalf of Google

11:07 AM · Jan 29, 2021 · Twitter for Android

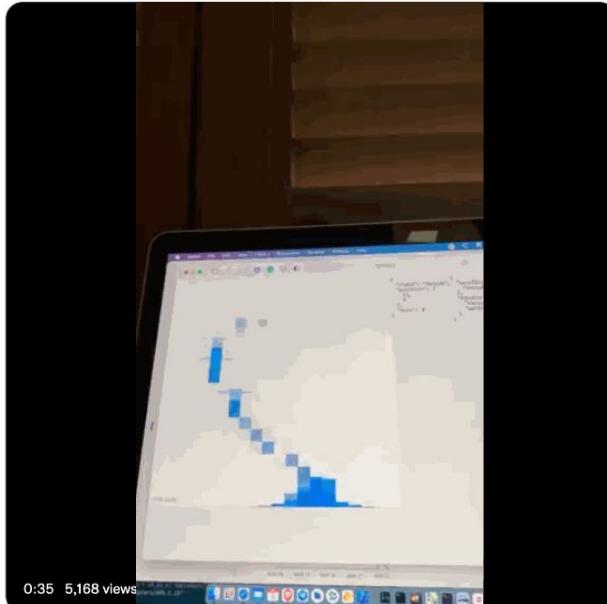
1 Retweet 1 Quote Tweet 16 Likes



Tony Dinh @tdinh_me

...

Took me 10+ hours to make this water simulation with pressure. What can I do with it?



0:35 5,168 views

4:00 PM · Apr 5, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

10 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 185 Likes



Tony Dinh @tdinh_me

...

I'm starting to like this bird app



10:23 AM · Apr 7, 2021 · Twitter Web App

1 Like

Build in public



Tony Dinh
@tdinh_me

...

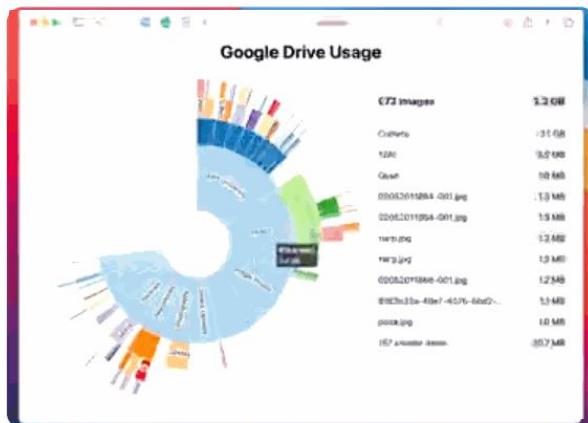
A quick demo for a tool I'm building to analyze your Google Drive storage usage.

What do you think? 😊

[DB]

I just created a waitlist form, please let me know if you are interested! 👉 drivestats.io

#drivestatsio



6:06 PM · Apr 9, 2021 · Twitter Web App

1 Retweet 13 Likes

DriveStats.io

- Google Drive storage analyzer
- Built in ~1 week
- Earned ~\$50 revenue (non recurring)
- Sold the whole product for \$1,800K



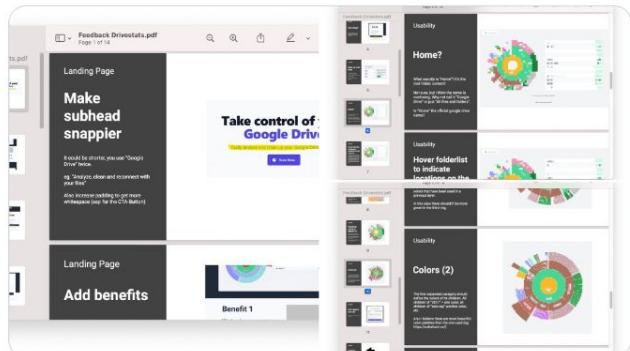
Tony Dinh 
@tdinh_me

OH MY GOD 

A beta user of [drivestats.io](#) just sends me this desk with 14 pages of feedback items with detailed comments and screenshots. WOW 

And the best part: all of the points are valid and so valuable!

Kon, if you see this, thank you very much!



6:44 PM · Apr 17, 2021 · Twitter Web App

2 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 76 Likes



Tony Dinh @tdinh_me

...

IT'S HERE!

3 weeks ago, I started to build a tool to help you analyze your Google Drive storage and find out what's taking up most of your precious space.

👉 [DriveStats.io](#) is now available for everyone to use!

Give it a try, feedback welcome! 🙏

RT appreciated! ❤️



[drivestats.io](#)

DriveStats.io - Analyze your Google Drive storage usage

What is taken up your Google Drive? Find out and clean up now.

9:09 PM · Apr 20, 2021 · Twitter Web App

6 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 20 Likes



Tony Dinh @tdinh_me

...

FIRST PAYING CUSTOMER!

US\$5.94
ORDER

TAX WITHHELD -US\$0.99
FEE -US\$0.80
ORDER NET US\$4.15

Wed 21st Apr 2021 20:19

EARNINGS US\$4.15

DriveStats.io Basic Plan
Wed 21st Apr 2021 20:19

CUSTOMER

Email	
Country	United Kingdom

TRANSACTION

Method	PayPal
Identifier	
Checkout	
Source	drivestats.io / drivestats.io

6:29 AM · Apr 22, 2021 · Twitter Web App

9 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 221 Likes

From December 2020 → April 2021

100 → 400 followers 

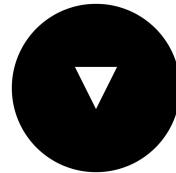


From December 2020 → April 2021
100 → 400 followers 🎉

My Twitter:

- Memes & Jokes 
- Threads 
- Build products & share in public 
- Do creative stuff on Twitter 

Do creative stuff on Twitter



Black Magic



Tony Dinh
@tdinh_me

...

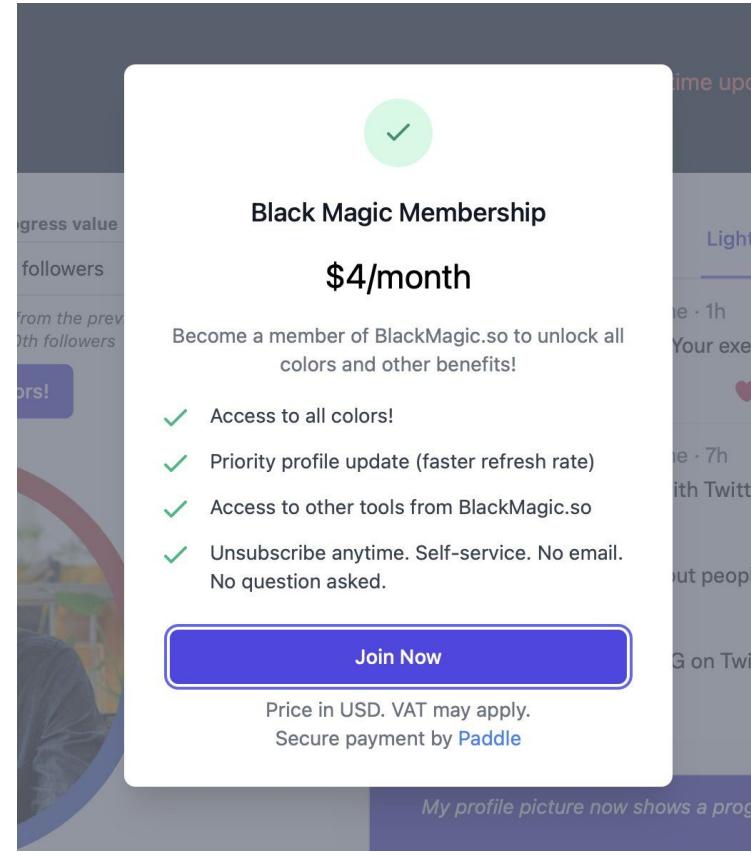
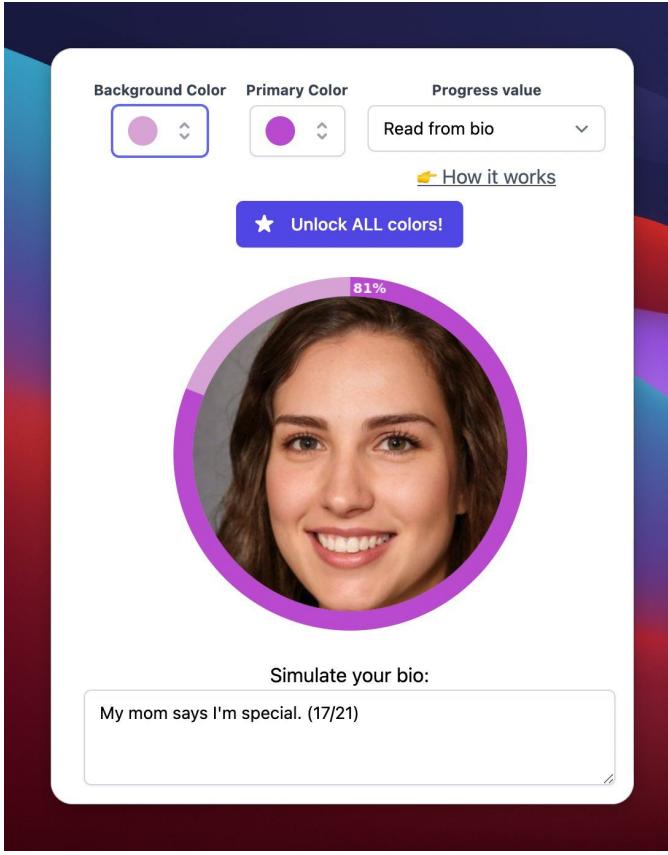
My profile "ring" now show the progress to 1k follower (~95% so far). Automatically updated.

How do you like it? Or is it too annoying on your timeline?

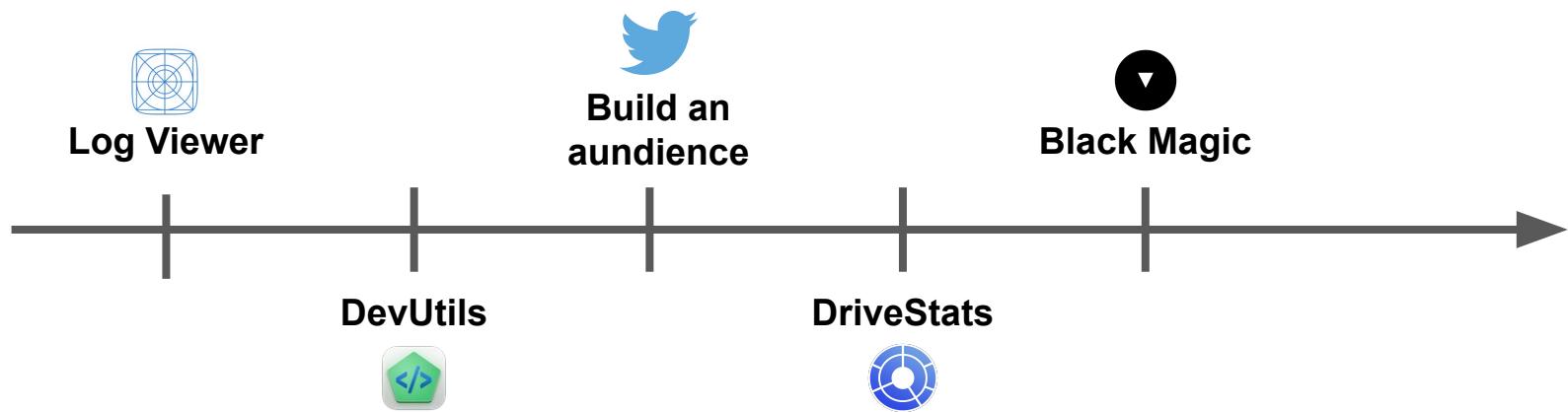


11:56 AM · May 11, 2021 · Twitter Web App

1 Quote Tweet [40 Likes](#)



Script → Product: Twitter Black Magic





Tony Dinh @
@tdinh_me

OMG OMG OMG

Black Magic has the FIRST PAYING MEMBER!!!

That's \$4 MRR, YESSSSS

Thank you so much, random Twitter user! Black Magic won't disappoint you!



The screenshot shows a payment confirmation page from Stripe. At the top, it says "Order #XXXXXX" and "Completed" on May 31st, 2021, at 02:29. The total amount is US\$4.41. Below this, there's a summary of charges:

Method	Amount
TAX WITHHELD	US\$0.41
FEE	US\$0.72
ORDER NET	US\$3.28

The customer information shows an email address and the United States as the country. The transaction details include a credit/debit card method, an identifier, and a source (blackmagic.so / blackmagic.so). The order history lists the following events:

- Customer Subscribed (Black Magic Membership) on May 31st, 2021, at 02:29.
- Purchased for US\$4.41 via Visa card ending in 5432 on May 31st, 2021, at 02:29.
- Checkout Started via BlackMagic.so / blackmagic.so on May 31st, 2021, at 02:29.

11:45 AM · May 31, 2021 · Twitter Web App

1 Retweet 1 Quote Tweet 175 Likes

May → July 2021

- Adding many more creative features to Black Magic
- Grow slowly, but with recurring revenue
- Actively building an audience



Tony Dinh 
@tdinh_me

...

1,200 active users on [BlackMagic.so](#) now! 

13 paid members (\$52 MRR)

8:10 PM · Jul 12, 2021 · Twitter Web App

3 Retweets 83 Likes

By August 2021...

~\$300 MRR (Monthly Recurring Revenue) from Black Magic

~\$200/mo from DevUtils (non recurring)

~8,000 followers

~1,500 active free Beta users

Great momentum, consistent traffic to both DevUtils & Black Magic.

Great confident

Quit job

- Handed in my notice.
- Aimed to get to \$1K MRR within a year.
- Mentally prepared to not have income for 2 years.



Tony Dinh 
@tdinh_me

...

Gonna pin this 

After 7 years working as a dev, I quit my job to pursue my dream: build software I love and make a living out of it.

I have:

- Ideas
- Backup plans
- No wife, no kid
- Saving for 2+ years
- And most of all: Faith in myself

Let's see if I can make it! 

4:50 PM · Aug 18, 2021 · Twitter Web App

84 Retweets 11 Quote Tweets 2,428 Likes

Growth

\$300 MRR → \$2K MRR → \$10K MRR

DECEMBER 16, 2021 ❤ 156 💬 63

👁 9212

\$322 → \$2K MRR in 60 days by building in public

Two months ago, I received an offer to buy my SaaS (name: Black Magic) at \$40,000, all cash. Black Magic was about \$322 MRR at the time. That was > 10x ARR – a...



My focus around this time:

- Building an audience
- Improving Black Magic + DevUtils
- Building products

October 2021
A big new thing: Magic Sidebar



Tony Dinh @tdinh_me

...

A completely new Twitter Web experience!

Coming out soon.....

The screenshot displays the new Twitter Web App interface. On the left, a sidebar menu includes Home, Explore, Notifications, Messages, Bookmarks, Lists, Profile, and More. The main area shows a profile card for "Tony Dinh" (@tdinh_me) with a bio about being an indie developer and quitting his job to build software. It also lists 609 Following and 13.9K Followers. Below the profile is a "Newsletter" section for "Tony Dinh's Newsletter". To the right, a "Your Profile" dashboard provides real-time analytics for tweets, likes, retweets, and impressions, along with a chart showing consistency over time.

10:17 PM · Oct 16, 2021 · Twitter Web App

44 Retweets 14 Quote Tweets 672 Likes



Tony Dinh 
@tdinh_me

A completely new Twitter Web experience! 

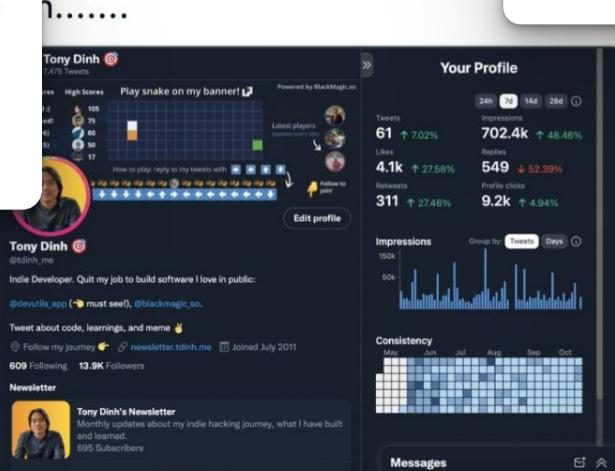


Marko  Denic
@denicmarko

Replying to @tdinh_me

No way, man... This is beyond black magic.

12:09 AM · Oct 17, 2021 · Twitter for Android



Saurav Purohit
@SauravPurohit4

Replying to @tdinh_me

This is so cool Tony 

12:21 AM · Oct 17, 2021 · Twitter for Android



Dagobert Renouf
@dagorenouf

Replying to @tdinh_me

So beautiful 😍 crazy it's not the default twitter experience, makes so much sense

5:13 PM · Oct 17, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone



Shaan
@shaanforlife

Replying to @tdinh_me

Holy cow 

10:24 PM · Oct 16, 2021 · Twitter for Android

Release Private Invite-only Beta

Free to use while in Beta

Early Bird Discount

Build in public

Iterate everyday



Tony Dinh
@tdinh_me

...

Magic Sidebar helps you understand what caused a big jump to your follower count or engagement rate!

Reply " below for an invite code!

The screenshot shows a dark-themed Twitter interface with the Magic Sidebar open. The sidebar displays engagement statistics for six tweets. The tweets are:

Tweet Content	Likes	Retweets	Quote Tweets	Comments	Favorites
Magic Sidebar...	65.1k	259	13	150	303
That feeling...	40.2k	561	48	53	73
Web Dev is ...	30.1k	352	48	24	88
Get ready fo...	9.2k	93	1	5	71
I'm starting ...	6.5k	46	1	15	29
Is there real...	4.3k	12	0	6	9

Below the sidebar, the main tweet content is visible, including the timestamp (0:00), views (8,738), and a blue 'Reply' button.

12:11 PM · Oct 26, 2021 · Twitter Web App

9 Retweets 9 Quote Tweets 217 Likes



Launch



Tony Dinh @tdinh_me

...

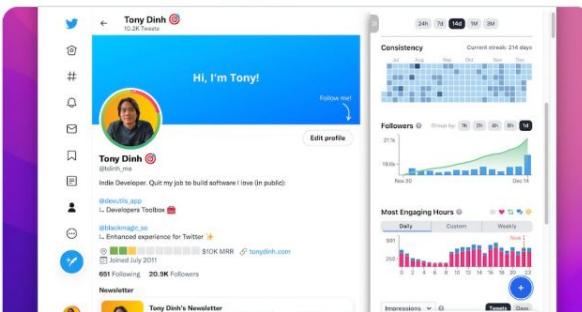
🎉🎊🎈 Magic Sidebar is LAUNCHED!!! 😱🥳🥳🥳

It is no doubt THE BEST product I have ever created.

➡️ Magic Sidebar will change the way you use Twitter!

Please come join me on PHI! ❤️

(⌚ RT appreciated! 🙏❤️)



producthunt.com

Black Magic - Product Information, Latest Updates, and Reviews 2022 | Product Hunt

Show a progress bar on your Twitter profile picture. Track your progress, make yourself accountable, or just have some fun! Show progress to: - The next 10, ...

3:03 PM · Dec 16, 2021 · Twitter Web App

140 Retweets 41 Quote Tweets 633 Likes



Magic Sidebar by BlackMagic.so ▾

Powerful enhanced experience for
Twitter



Visit ▾

▲ UPVOTED 1,404



Why it worked:

- Build a useful product
- Get free users
- Private invite-only free Beta + create hype
- Build features & share in public
- Talk to customers
- Prepare a launch well

Unfair advantages:

When I started building the Magic Sidebar, I already have:

- 14K followers (~9 months to build)
- 7K free users (~6 months to build)
- Experience: frontend, backend, payment, UI/UX, etc.. (~7 years to build)

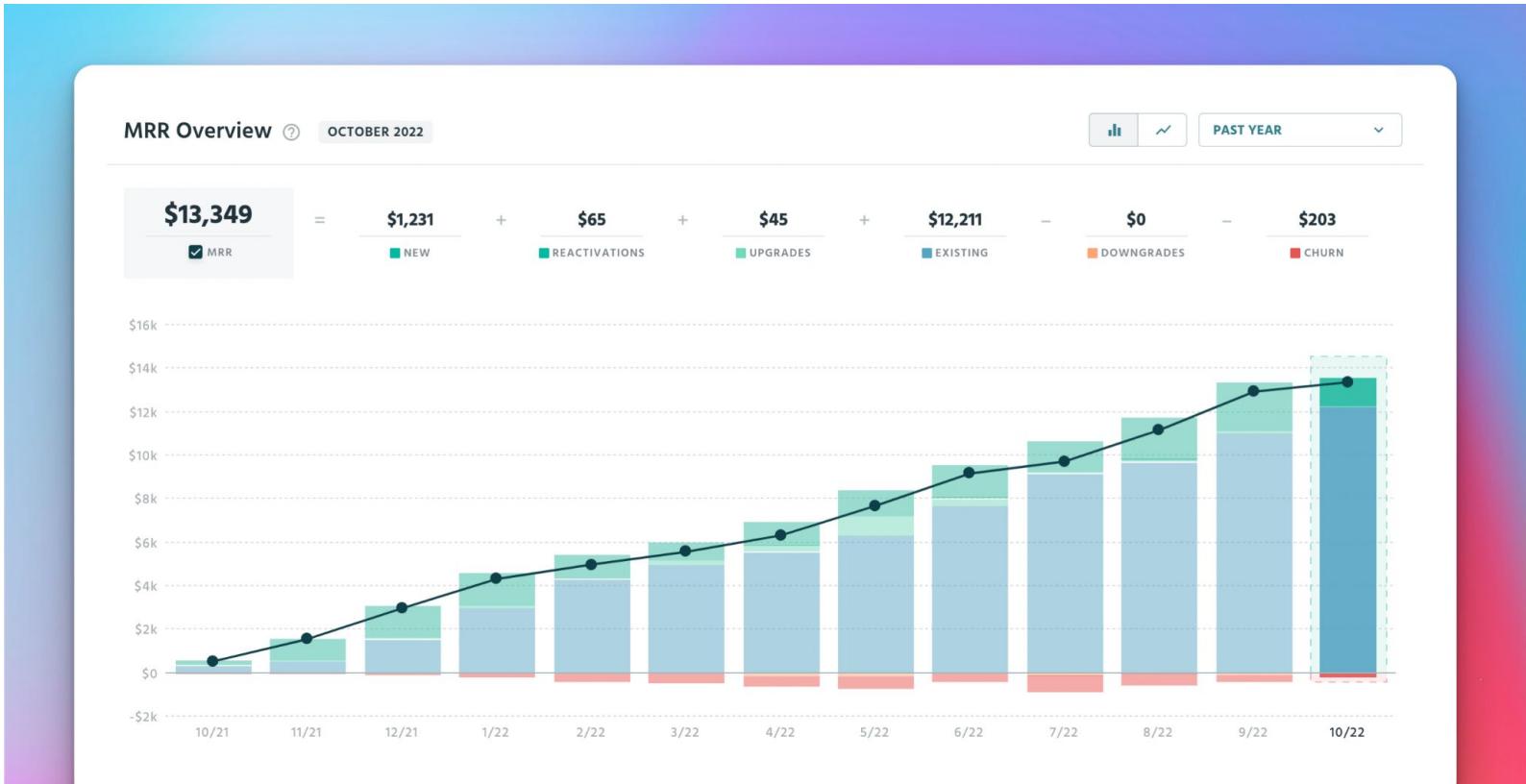
Build your own unfair advantages

"Black Magic has revealed insights I never knew about. The ability to see past interactions with individual profiles is the killer feature for me."



Daniel Vassallo / Entrepreneur
128.9K Followers

Continuously grow with ever since!



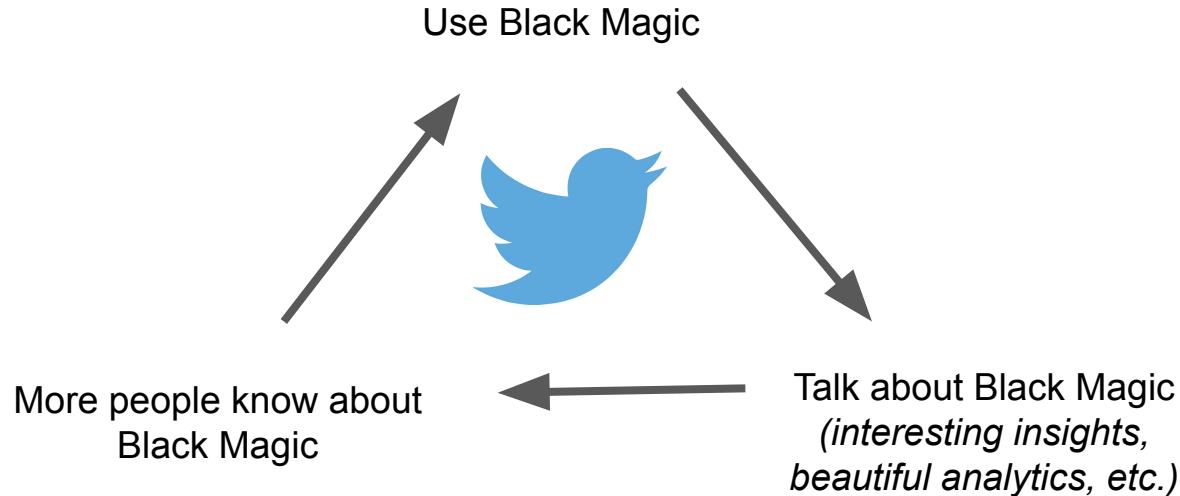
Do Marketing?

Product-led growth

Product-led growth (PLG) is a business methodology in which user acquisition, expansion, conversion, and retention are all driven primarily by the product itself.

Product-led growth

Product-led growth (PLG) is a business methodology in which user acquisition, expansion, conversion, and retention are all driven primarily by the product itself.





ADHD Jesse
@adhdjesse

...

Replying to [@tdinh_me](#)

I'm having kind of a wild day on the bird app and it's nice having [@blackmagic_so](#) to help me keep track of what's going on. 😅

Impressions
2.7m Top 1.22%

Profile Clicks
8.8k Top #3

Likes
32.2k Top 3.93%

Engagement Rate
1.84% Top 57.32%

Replies
359 Top 2.57%

Retweets
7.9k Top 2.03%

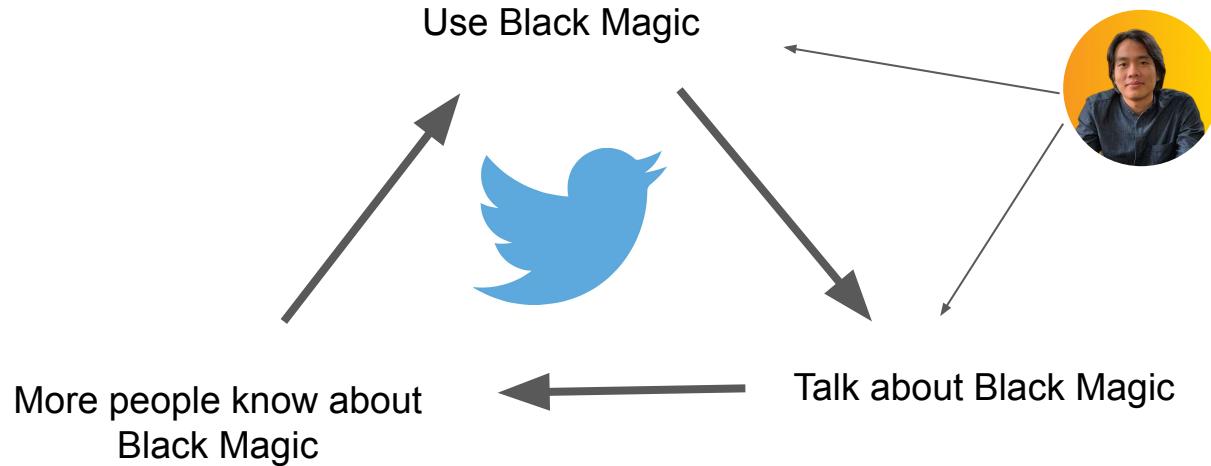
1:08 PM · Sep 29, 2022 · Twitter Web App

3 Retweets 10 Likes



Product-led growth

Product-led growth (PLG) is a business methodology in which user acquisition, expansion, conversion, and retention are all driven primarily by the product itself.



By June 2022: \$8K MRR

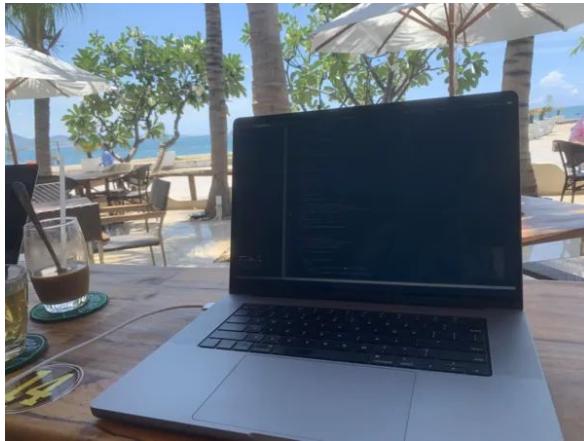


DevUtils



Black Magic





Live and work at the same time

I keep making more products

What's different:

I have so many unfair advantages:

- Huge audience (easier to validate, get customers, spread the words, etc.)
- Huge customer base
- No expectation & less stress

emoijai.com

A website to suggest emojis based on text

Spent 1 day to build

Failed (no sales, no one wants it)

Still good for engagements



Xnapper 📸

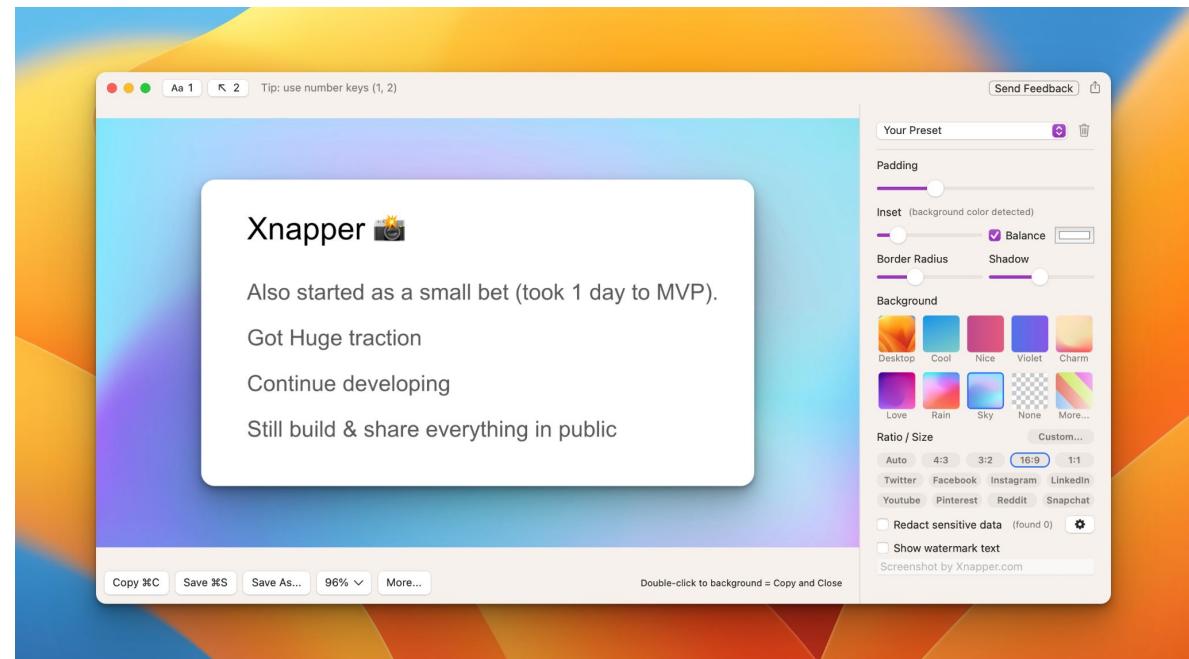
A screenshot app for macOS

Took 1 day to build the MVP

Got huge traction

Continue developing

Build in public





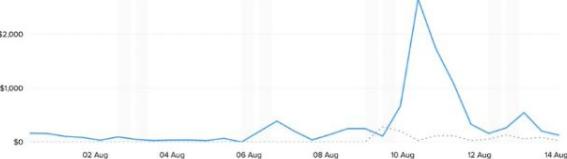
Tony Dinh
@tdinh_me

...

Xnapper made \$10K this month!

Not recurring revenue, of course. But that's ok 😊

REVENUE	TRANSACTIONS	Avg. TRANSACTION	REFUNDS	COUPON SALES
\$10,245	412	\$24.87	\$210.37	\$4,397
▲ 809.4% from \$1,127	▲ 598.3% from 59	▲ 30.2% from \$19.10	— N/A from \$0	▲ 629.8% from \$602.50



6:52 PM · Aug 31, 2022 · Twitter Web App

1 Retweet 1 Quote Tweet 325 Likes



Xnapper ▾

Take beautiful screenshots instantly



Product of the month

2nd



Product of the week

1st



Product of the day

1st

Visit ▾

▲ UPVOTED 1,859

Repeat the same strategy

- Build MVP fast
- Build in public
- Free beta + early bird discount
- Talk to customers
- Make the launch day special



Tony Dinh
@tdinh_me

...

I'm obsessed with screenshot ratios.

So I'm experimenting with...

SMART RE-LAYOUT!

A screenshot tool that makes your screenshots beautiful automatically

This banner is special!

28 day summary (with change over previous period)

Metrics	Value	Change
Tweets	1,219	+50.7%
Tweet impressions	2.78M	+28.2%
Profile visits	457K	+13.5%
Mentions	5,035	+18.6%
Favorites	41.9K	+2.9%

Jun 2022 - 24 days so far...

TOP TWEET (earned 227K impressions)

Xnapper iOS is ready for testing!

Take beautiful screenshots on mobile ++

Reply below, I'll DM you the link to test!

pic.twitter.com/PJawexTGab

Top mention (earned 1,101 engagements)

Leonid
@leoleonid · Jun 6

Last week I made an icon for the Xnapper app by @tdinh_me.

Tony works at the speed of light. Had to work the same way

But it's only one icon, right? Not really. A little bit about what it takes to make one icon.

7/7 pic.twitter.com/18ORF03DhU

Page updated daily

Page views: 1,729

Profile visits: 457K

Mentions: 5,035

Favorites: 41.9K

Followers: 4,502

Retweets: 1,086

Profile visits: 372K

Mentions: 2,48M

New followers: 2,754

3:19 PM · Jun 25, 2022 · Twitter Web App

56 Retweets 14 Quote Tweets 1,044 Likes



Tony Dinh @tdinh_me

...

Xnapper can now "balance" your screenshot automatically

Now you can take screenshots without sweating your fingers and still have a beautiful result to share!

The image shows a composite screenshot. On the left, a Twitter profile card for 'Tony Dinh' (@tdinh_me) is displayed, featuring a placeholder image for the profile picture. The bio reads: 'Take beautiful screenshots instantly - iOS app. One click to take a beautiful and ready-to-share shot.' Below the bio is a 'Following' section with several categories: Linux, UX design, Internet of things, Data science, and Artificial intelligence. To the right of the profile card is a 'Your Profile' dashboard. The dashboard includes a timeline section with a single tweet from 'Jun 19' and a metrics section showing growth in various engagement metrics. The metrics section includes:

Metric	Value	Change
Tweets & Replies	1.3k	↑ 66%
Impressions	2.6m	↑ 30%
Likes	16.8k	↑ 40%
Replies Received	3.4k	↑ 40%
Retweets	507	↑ 25%
Profile Clicks	20.3k	↑ 50%
New Followers	2.9k	↑ 35%
Conversion Rate	-14%	↓ 10%

Below the metrics is a 'Top Interactions' section showing user avatars.

5:20 PM · Jun 21, 2022 · Twitter Web App

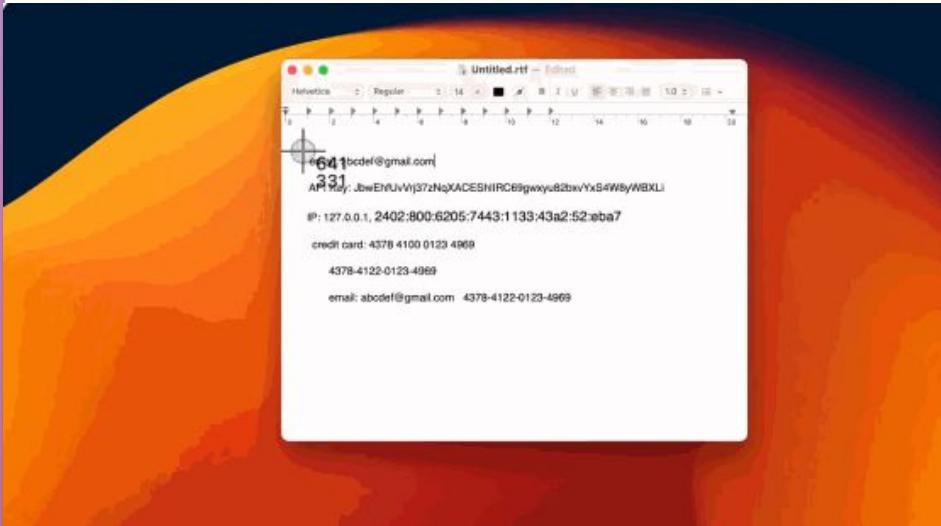
27 Retweets 10 Quote Tweets 722 Likes



Tony Dinh ⚡
@tdinh_me

...

A screenshot app, but very smart



1:12 PM · Oct 10, 2022 · Twitter Web App

148 Retweets 13 Quote Tweets 1,932 Likes

askcommand.com

A macOS app to lookup frequently used commands

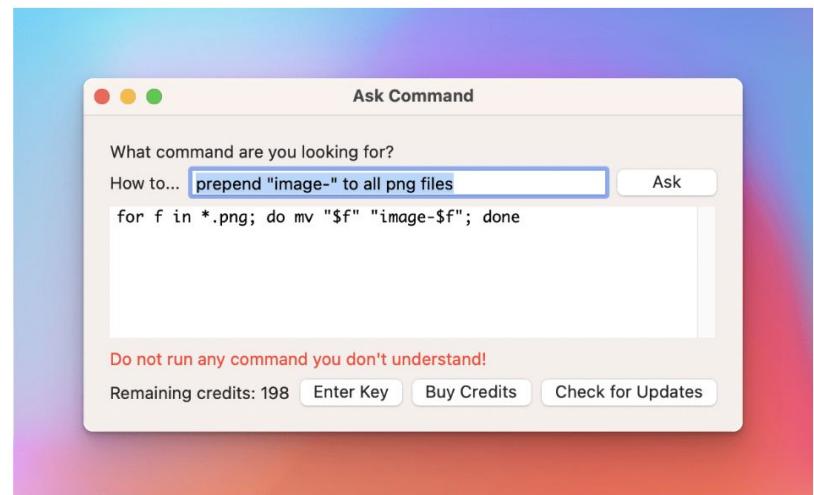
Built the first version in 2 days

Shared on Twitter



Ask Command

A tiny app to remind you about those commands you always forget. Powered by AI.

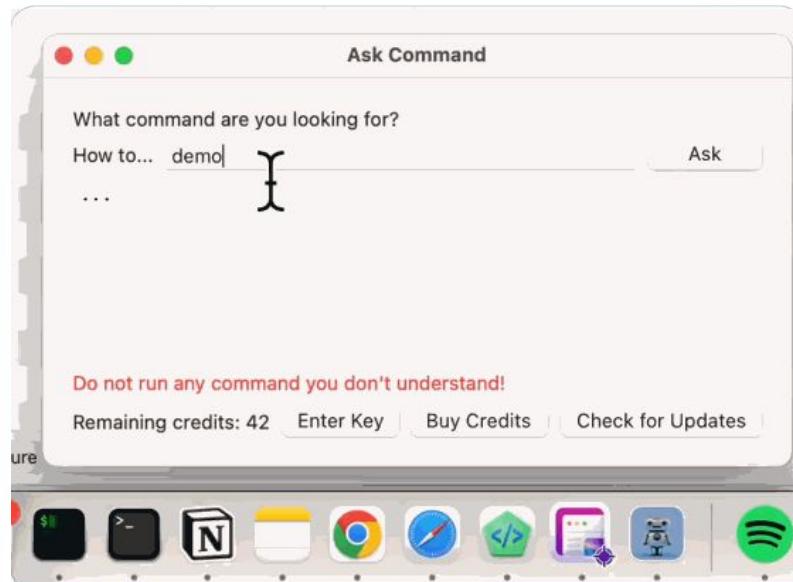




Tony Dinh
@tdinh_me

...

This app is going to save me so much time



12:11 PM · Sep 27, 2022 · Twitter Web App

475 Retweets 61 Quote Tweets 5,152 Likes

● Sales

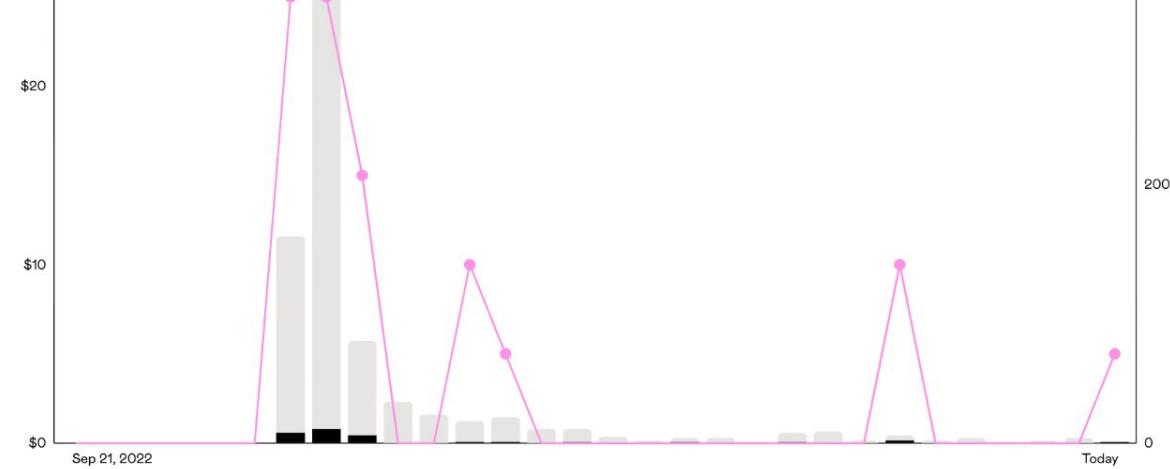
33

● Views

752

● Total

\$95



To be continued!

Enter your email to receive monthly updates from me



news.tonydinh.com



@tdinh_me



tonydinh.com

Everything else

I tweet everyday
(for the last 574 days)

My Learnings

Be a generalist

I don't restrict myself to any specific tech.

Took me ~1 year to learn Swift just so I can build macOS apps

80/20 rule.

Find problems that directly related to you and solve it

Give yourself an advantage

Don't jump on building new ideas right away

The “wait test”

Product-led growth & viral loop

Product markets itself, so you have more time to code.

Build an audience

Optional.

It's an advantage you can build for yourself.

Compound effect.

Ship early, ship small, ship frequently

- Focus on the core value
- First version should be very simple
- Involve your customers in the process
- Listen to feedback (but don't listen to everything people say)

Be patient and good luck!

It's a long term game.

On average, it takes ~2 years to become ramen profitable.

Don't quit your job before you have calculated all the risks.

It's possible!

It's possible to become a solo founder
working on a small product
in a small niche
that brings enough revenue for you and your family
to live an independent life and be free.



Thank you!



@tdinh_me



tonydinh.com



news.tonydinh.com