

Book 7:

On the launchpad

(\$8,000/month,
early 2022)

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Not Business Advice

How I made \$1M from my personal projects

Book 7

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Introduction

At last, it's happening.

After many years of trying and failing, I'm about to incorporate my business and set out to complete my initial goal.

Run my own tech business while traveling the world.

Took many more years than I expected. And at times it felt like it might never happen for me. But it is.

Dreams do come true after all.

Part 1: New chapter

I'm in Cyprus. Signing papers. It's January.

To my left, a lawyer. To my right, an accountant.

Outside the window, skyscrapers. I'm incorporating my company.

The name of the company on the paper, a name that I have been dreaming of naming my company since I started building "The Next Facebook" 6 years ago.

This is surreal.

I've come a long way

I can't help but think of how far I've come.

Feels like yesterday when I was building cute little projects, trying to make my first dollar online.

And now I'm the owner of an actual business.

For the first time in my life, I feel successful.

I'm proud of my journey.

Here is a recap and a bird's eye view:

- In 2016, I started building City Vibes and learned how to code. Success.
- In 2017, I was fixated on perfecting City Vibes before getting my first user. Eventually, it made \$0. Failure.
- In 2018, I built and launched 15 products. I spent a week building each, made my first dollar and then reached \$100/month with 3

profitable products. Success.

- In 2019, I spent a full year trying to grow my favorite of those 3 profitable products and tried everything. Eventually I had to give up, accept a full time job and start again from scratch. Failure.
- In 2020, I started launching products fast again and found CyberLeads. Launched it with a landing page I built over the weekend and reached \$300/month. Reached \$2k/month and quit my job. Success.
- In 2021, I tried to grow CyberLeads with SEO and failed. Would have been a failure, but just before the end of the year, I launched a new offer with a single email to my email list and instantly got to \$100k/year. Almost failure, but success.
- In 2022, my plan is to run this new productized service and maybe even reach \$250k/year with CyberLeads. A quarter of a million... Just saying the words "million" and "CyberLeads" in the same sentence is crazy. If I can pull this off, it will be a crazy success.

Looking back, it feels like one year I am stuck. The next year I experience crazy growth. Kinda like 2 year blocks.

But my speed has been increasing:

- 2016: Built a product for 2 years and made \$0.
- 2018: Built a product in 1 week and made my first dollar.
- 2020: Launched with a landing page and reached \$300/month.
- 2022: Launched a new offer with an email and hit \$100k/year.

And my prices have been increasing too:

- 2016: With my free product, getting 4 new customers meant an extra \$0/yr.
- 2018: With my \$5/mo product, getting 4 new customers meant an extra \$240/year.

- 2020: With my \$100/mo product, getting 4 new customers meant an extra \$5k/year.
- 2022: With my \$2k/mo product, getting 4 new customers means an extra \$100k/year.

I think I might be getting better at this game.

Part 2: Finding patterns

Looking back, I cannot help but notice a few patterns.

Shotgun to Sniper

If I strip it down and zoom out, this is all I did:

- Shotgun many experiments until I find a successful product.
- Sniper on that product until I hit a plateau.
- Shotgun many experiments to find the next lever of growth.
- Sniper on that lever until I hit a plateau.
- Shotgun more experiments to find the next lever again.
- And so on and so forth.

For levers of growth, I look in the following places:

- Get more customers (marketing experiments)
- Make them stay longer (product experiments)
- Make them pay more (pricing/offer/business experiments)

And I assume that my hit rate will be around 5%:

- It took me 20 products launches to find CyberLeads.
- It took me 20 experiments within CyberLeads to Twitter.
- It took me 20 experiments within CyberLeads to find the service.

Finally, for CyberLeads, when I was looking for ideas I tried to go channel and market first. And I tried to pick an idea that already existed and was validated.

Again, there are no recipes. Don't get all excited, this might not work for you. But it's what worked for me.

You have to find your own way.

Part 3: Home run

Whether my success was through process, pure luck, persistence or a mix of all, I don't know.

But I finally have something that works. And something that has the potential to change my life.

I just have to make sure I don't fuck this up.

One trick pony

This is something I've been thinking a lot about lately.

That I actually don't care if it was pure luck or if I could do it all over again.

I'm ok with being a one trick pony. Running the same business for decades. I don't feel the need to prove to others or even to myself that I could do it again.

I didn't always think this way though.

Two years ago, when I finally launched CyberLeads and found success, I had a grand vision.

I was going to be building, launching and running multiple products similar to CyberLeads at the same time.

After all, they are so similar to CyberLeads, for sure it will work out the same way for all of them!

Well, after getting smacked in the face by reality with a few failed launches, I decided to dedicate my full attention to CyberLeads.

Baseball analogy

This is what it felt like.

I'm playing baseball.

I've taken 19 swings and all of them were a miss. Then my 20th swing was a massive success, CyberLeads.

The ball is so high in the air you can barely see it. It's the perfect opportunity for a home run.

But instead of running, I suddenly got cocky and thought that I could hit the ball perfectly again.

And decided to just sit there and wait so I can try to do it again. Maybe even better this time.

Thankfully I snapped out of it fast.

And now I'm running.

Defining a home run

I don't think that hitting a home run means achieving the best possible outcome.

CyberLeads isn't the best product I could have ever built.

It's a business that works. That keeps working. And that keeps growing slowly. Hopefully for years, or even decades.

It lets me work for myself. Work on myself. Take risks when I want to. And step back when I don't.

Make a lot of money. Save a lot of money. Have time. And live well.

That's it.

Part 4: On the launchpad

Everything seems to be falling perfectly into place.

I've setup my new base. Incorporated my company. Determined my investment strategy. And even signed my first clients.

All that's left is to start.

Deciding to leave

Italy looked perfect on paper. Until it wasn't.

I had a 90% tax exemption. I lived on a beautiful island. And I was enjoying my life. Yes.

But the language barrier, bureaucracy and taxes were making it very difficult for me to justify living there.

My accountant throwing Italian documents my way, asking me to sign them and pay thousands of euros by Monday.

Going to the municipality and not having a single person to speak English to.

Realizing that I would be paying almost half of my money to taxes if I continued to stay there.

And being tied down, as I'm legally required to stay in Italy for 6 months of the year.

Maybe I should leave.

Comparing setups

I did what everyone does.

I read books, spoke to accountants and paid consultants.

Most recommended multi-country structures. Holding companies. Flying in and out of countries.

But I had already been tricked once with the 90% tax exemption. So I decided to be cautious.

I don't care about individual tax rates or benefits. The only thing I care about is how much money I put in my pocket at the end of the year if I make \$100k in profit, \$250k in profit, \$500k in profit, etc.

And check all the ways you could do that. Being self employed. Having a company. Taking everything out as dividends. Etc.

They were recommending their expensive services to me.

But all I needed was a simple business, in a low tax country.

The complicated setups that promised zero percent tax were ended up being far more expensive. And way more risky.

Cyprus

Cyprus didn't sound clever, cool or sophisticated.

But it won in every category. And that's what matters.

First of all, they speak English and Greek. I wanted to be able to speak the native language fluently and understand the culture.

I wanted to be able to look at my accountant, lawyer or landlord in the eye and say.

"No, this is what I want. I know how things are done here."

Secondly, it's in the EU so I don't have to deal with visas. And it's close to my families in the UK and Greece.

Thirdly, it's low tax. If I make \$100,000 in profit, I get to keep \$85,000. Way better than the \$50,000 I would keep in Italy.

And finally, I wanna travel. I only have to stay on the island for 2 months per year. The rest I can be wherever I want.

Once the company was set up, I turned to investing.

And once again, I almost overdid it.

I decided to keep things super simple.

One year of cash in the bank. And all the rest in index funds and a little bit of crypto.

Appendix

Wait, so all this book just to tell me that:

- You decided to go all in on CyberLeads
- You registered a simple company in a low tax country
- And that you keep some cash, invest the rest of your money into the S&P 500 and a little bit of it in crypto

Yes. Sorry if it's too simple.

So this is my final setup:

- My business and tax residence is in Cyprus.
- My customers are mostly in the US, EU and UK.
- My banks are in Italy, Greece, Lithuania and Belgium.
- My broker is in The Netherlands.
- My investments are in US market.
- And I live all over the world.

Feeling like a global citizen.

I actually wrote a 10,000 word essay with all of my research, but this is not the place for that.

What's next?

That's it.

I've setup my life and business in Cyprus.

And opening a new chapter in my life.

Traveling the world.

And building the new version of CyberLeads, the one that will take me from the \$1,000s per month, to the \$10,000s per month.

Let's see if I can do it.

I'm afraid it won't be easy.

Time travel

Hey. This is Alex from the future writing this.

I decided to clean up and re-post my blog posts as free books.

Nothing changed. Even if I disagree with things I said back then.

Regardless of marketing or algorithms, the greatest books have always ended up in my hands through recommendations.

So if you enjoyed them, you can do the following:

- Share them on X or LinkedIn
- Message me so we can have a chat

Or don't. It's ok.

Thank you for reading.

Credits

Finally, special thanks to everyone that inspired and supported me, whether they know it or not.

- Pieter Levels, thank you for building in the open and making this movement happen for all of us. It was your revenue tweets and blog posts that made me realize that I could do the same.

- Courtland and Channing Allen, thank you for building Indie Hackers and putting a name to our little movement. I have read every single post, listened to every single podcast and have day dreamed countless times being on your show.
- Patrick and John Collison, thank you for building the tool that has allowed us all to make a living online. No joke, Stripe changed our lives. In awe of what you're building with Arc Institute. And huge fan of your podcast "Cheeky Pint".
- DHH, thank you for bringing common sense to the tech industry. Reminding us that you don't need to run a VC company and become a billionaire to be successful. And that you can have work life balance.
- Jason Fried, thank you for sharing your contrarian views regarding work. It's inspiring to see how ahead of the culture you were with remote work and SaaS. Your books are awesome too.
- Pat Walls (and Demi), thank you for replying to my emails back in 2021. Also for your awesome daily blog, which definitely inspired me to continue to write daily. Finally, thank you for showing us the power of focusing on one business, which you can adapt and evolve over time.
- Daniel Vassallo, thank you for introducing me to Taleb's books and philosophy, they changed my world view and helped me with my journey. Also for sharing your authentic thoughts and taking a stance, even if it's not popular.
- Stamos Venios, thank you for inspiring me to start this journey and for teaching me that you learn by doing, not studying. Your story inspired me a lot. I've told you this directly, but it's true. You are one of the main reasons I'm here today.
- Sam Parr, thank you for sharing my little business with your audience. Even more importantly, thank you for always being nothing

but kind and generous to me. Funnily enough, your show, "My First Million", helped me make my first million.

- Derek Sivers, thank you for having the most awesome blog on the planet. Also for writing all your books and giving everything back to charity. You are awesome.
- Jon Yongfook, thank you for building and failing products at the same time as me, from 2018 to 2020. You launched BannerBear roughly at the same time I found CyberLeads, after roughly the amount number of failures. It was cool to not fail and succeed alone.
- Damon Cheng, thank you for showing us that even indie makers can acquire and grow businesses. Your run from quitting your job till today is legendary.
- Marc Köhlbrugge, thank you for building WIP.chat. Seeing other successful makers public TODOs made me realize that everyone just builds things, fixes bugs and makes mistakes. Like me. This was actually one of my most important realizations. It was frame breaking.
- Danny Postma, thank you for showing us that even indie products can exit to a larger company. And that even after an exit, if you want it bad enough, you can go back to square one and try again and again until you succeed again.
- Jason Cohen, thank you for your amazing blog and talks. Probably the best business blog in the world. And for your talk on boutique bootstrapped businesses. Seriously, that talk helped me niche down, raise my prices and change my life.
- Dru Riley, thank you for running an amazing campaign for CyberLeads together, back in 2020. Those high revenue months were the final push and confidence I needed to quit my job. Thank you my brother. Forever grateful.
- Andreas Klinger, thank you for being a class act and making an effort to help me find a job when I needed one. Also, for always

replying to my emails and DMs.

- Vic, thank you for helping me find the next lever of growth for CyberLeads. No joke, you helped me change my life.
- Mubs, thank you for launching 50+ projects in public throughout the years and showing us how fast one can build.
- Andrey Azimov, thank you for your epic 2018 run, becoming Maker of the Year and changing your life. Your scrappiness and determination were infectious.
- Dimitris Raptis, thank you for being one of the very few people from our little hometown that is in our little bubble and industry. Also, thank you for reminding me that working on products you enjoy is more important than the money you make.
- Katerina Limpitsouni, thank you for being the final person from our little hometown that is in our little bubble and industry. I've used your designs and illustrations countless of times. They are awesome.
- Dimitris Kourtesis, Nikos Tsoniotis and Stefanos Tsiakmakis, thank you for accepting me in your startup incubator back when I knew nothing. Thank you for teaching me that killing projects is just as productive as building them. This was one of the biggest lessons I ever learned.
- Justin Jackson, thank you for your essays and podcasts regarding the importance of markets. You might not know it, but they were super impactful to me and helped me end up in the lead generation market, which helped me find CyberLeads and change my life.
- Josh Pigford, thank you for being one of the first people to show your complete list of failed products before your big success. I remember seeing the list and preparing mentally to go through the same. I built 19 failed products, then the 20th changed my life. Thank you.

- Nathan Barry, thank you for being one of the few people continuing to share revenue numbers after reaching millions in revenue. We have small businesses like myself doing that. We also have huge public companies doing that. It's great to have companies in the middle, like yours, do that too. Also, thank you for showing me the value of niching down and focusing on one segment of the market at a time. It really helped me grow CyberLeads and change my life.
- Ali Salah, thank you for being one of the OGs from 2018 and showing me that slow, consistent growth, in a saturated market, while focusing on product, can actually happen. This hasn't been my own experience and it's another example that anything and everything can work, there are no magic recipes.
- Michael Aubrey, thank you for being another story of hard work. Seeing you try for multiple years before finally achieving success is inspiring. Reminds me of my own journey.
- Reilly Chase, thank you for showing me that you can build a boring business, on top of an existing platform, and grow alongside it. Been inspiring to watch you grow over the years, build a team, a house and a life for yourself and your family.
- Rob Walling, thank you for your books and for your amazing podcast. I've listened to so many episodes over the years and there is always something interesting to take from them, because you and your guests talk from experience, not theory.
- Jack Butcher, Bilal Zaidi and Trung Phan, thank you for the awesome podcast, the great art and the funny memes you've all been sharing with us for the past many years.
- Nico Jeannen, thank you for showing us that building and exiting multiple little businesses is possible. Also for keeping it real and sharing the good and the bad. There aren't that many people that do that and it's inspiring to see.

- Marc Lou, thank you for setting a new standard on shipping fast. I thought I was prolific for shipping 20 products from 2018 to 2020, but you took it to a whole new level. Respect.
- Peter Askew, thank you for blurring the lines between boring and cool. Selling onions online is simultaneously one of the most boring and one of the coolest businesses in the world.
- John O' Nollan, thank you for inspiring me to build a remote business and travel the world. You were one of the first entrepreneurs I looked up to, and still a massive fan.
- Harry Dry, thank you for showing me the power of storytelling and copywriting. Seeing your Yeezy.Dating saga unfold in real time back in 2018 was awesome and your climb to the top of the copywriting world is inspiring.
- Jordan O' Connor, thank you for your amazing blog. I remember reading every single post, multiple times, as you grew your business from zero to tens of thousands of dollars per month, changing your life for yourself and your ever growing family.
- Sahil Lavingia, thank you for building Gumroad, it helped me make my first \$100K online. Also, thank you for challenging the status quo, thinking out of the box, doing things your own way and never being too busy to reply to my DMs back in the day. Truly grateful.
- AJ from Carrd, thank you for showing us that you can build and grow a simple, elegant and useful product by yourself and make great money without charging high prices. Frame breaking.
- Alex Napier Holland, thank you for being real and having authentic thoughts and opinions. Your are one of the very few non BS and non cringe people on my timeline.
- Florin Pop, Mr Purple, thank you for staying humble and ambitious at the same time. It's inspiring to see you set goals and then go after them.

- David Park, thank you for sharing the good and the bad so openly and authentically. Not only in business, but in life too. Your story is inspiring.
- Andrea Bosoni, thank you for showing me the value of being consistent and for being one of my Italian brothers. It's been great your amazing content for all these years, whenever I see your posts I always get a nice feeling of familiarity.
- Flavio Copes, thank you for showing me the value of writing daily, with the simple heuristic of "do stuff, encounter problems, write about the solution". Your website and blog remind me of what the internet was originally made for, real and authentic.
- Lim How Wey, thank you for sharing all of your knowledge around SEO. It was really helpful to me. And thank you for always being kind and supportive, I truly appreciate it.
- Arvid Kahl, thank you for sharing the story of exiting your SaaS business. It's been awesome to see you re-invent yourself and write your books.
- Swyx, thank you for inviting me on your podcast back in the day and for always being kind and supportive. Also for being prolific and constantly working on new things and technologies, it's contagious.
- Dmytro Krasun, thank you for showing me that progress happens slowly, then all at once. Your journey is awesome.
- David Perell, thank you for spreading the benefits of writing and specifically of writing daily. Your essays, podcasts and newsletters are fantastic.
- Noah Kagan, thank you for building AppSumo and for always keeping it real and honest. Seeing you embark on random new side quests like YouTube and being successful is cool to see also.
- Andrew Wilkinson, thank you for showing me that you can build insane wealth with boring businesses. Your essays and books are

amazing. It's great to see your progress from being a freelancer, to running a small studio and being afraid to hire people, to managing hundreds of employees, to running a portfolio of companies, to finally going public. Insane.

- Andrew Gazdecki, thank you for building Acquire (formerly MicroAcquire) and helping indies like myself exit our companies and change our lives. Gazdecki style.
- Steph Smith, thank you for all the amazing essays. I remember reading "How to Be Great? Just Be Good, Repeatably" and realizing that I don't have to be fancy, just consistent. Also, every single one of your MFM appearances was great.
- George Mack, thank you for being one of the few, modern, original thinkers, popularizing new terms and expanding the lexicon. Your newsletter is one of the best I've read in my life, your ability to explain concepts is on another level.
- Jonathan Garces, thank you for all the amazing memories working on CyberLeads together. You are the only business partner I've ever had and helped me more than I could even imagine. It was a blast, my favorite business era.
- Lachlan Kirkwood, thank you for all the amazing chats over the years, going through similar milestones and challenges with our very different businesses. I'm really proud of you exiting your business and re-inventing yourself.
- Vytas Bu, thank you for believing in me and trusting me to work together. Even more importantly, I'm grateful to call you a true friend and thank you for treating me like a brother.
- Andreas Asprou, thank you for reminding me what true wealth is and for pushing me to take a break and write these books. I wouldn't have done it without you.
- Max DeMarco, thank you for inspiring me to continue being the main character of my life. You always have main character energy

and it's contagious. Seeing you grow and always challenge yourself was amazing. Hope to make it to your next Muay Thai fight.

- Niklas Christl, thank you for being one of the most successful yet humble and honest people I've met. That contrast is amazing and inspiring. Hope to see you soon and catch up again.
- Giuseppe Ettore, thank you for growing side by side since 2020. I still remember showing you CyberLeads when it was just an idea, during lunch break at the office. Time flies. We started our jobs on the same day in Milan, we both quit our jobs since then, have achieved a lot and always support each other. And I believe we always will.
- Justin Gluska, thank you for the amazing chats in New York. I hope to see you again somewhere around the world.
- Eracle, thank you for welcoming me to Las Palmas. We had many amazing chats and nights out. Hope to visit again.
- Nikolas Konstantinou, thank you for welcoming me to the island of Cyprus. You have always helped me when I needed help, without asking for anything in return.
- Dawid Cedrych, thank you for being a dream client and for showing me that true business is a win-win game. I'm forever grateful for your trust in me, for encouraging me to write and for always being humble and real.
- Pete Codes, thank you for featuring me in your awesome newsletter and for being supportive over the years. It was also cool meeting in person a few years back.
- Jonny Ward, Daniel Ward, Doug Ward and David Carter, thank you all so much for being generous enough to invite me one of the impactful coffee/dinners of my life, when you had absolutely nothing to gain from me. I will never forget.

- Mohammad, thank you for giving me perspective on life and how you can continue being happy and positive no matter what happens.
- All the staff and friends at Cafe Nero for giving me free coffee and letting me write my books all day.
- Eneas Lari, for being my best friend in life.
- My family.

And to all the people that have supported me over the years or have shared my books. If I missed you, it's not on purpose.

Constantly updating this list.