Learning to code, making a software company and being profitable in 1 year

Source

16 October 2022 16 十月 2022

学习编码，创建软件公司并在 1 年内盈利。

Note: Hi! 👋 I didn't planned on having this article public but someone posted it on IndieHackers and it made it somehow to the front page 😅
注意：您好！👋 我没打算公开这篇文章，但有人把它发布在IndieHackers上，它以某种方式登上了头版😅。
This article stops in October for now but I post daily progress here.
这篇文章暂时在十月份停止，但我在这里发布每日进度。

I also made a compilation of all the resources I used to learn programming here
我还汇编了我用来学习编程的所有资源

13/05/2022:

To give some context: I started entrepreneurship in 2017, became a freelancer (media buying / eCommerce), and got decent success.
举个背景：我于2017年开始创业，成为一名自由职业者（媒体购买/电子商务），并取得了不错的成功。
I have ok income, not amazing but not bad either, and I can live quite comfortably since I moved to Indonesia to reduce my living costs.
我的收入还不错，不是很神奇，但也不差，自从我搬到印度尼西亚以降低生活成本以来，我可以过上相当舒适的生活。

During those years, I focused a lot on eCommerce and Marketing (which became my main "job"), but I feel it's time to move to something else considering:
在那些年里，我非常关注电子商务和营销（这成为我的主要"工作"），但我觉得是时候转向其他事情了：

- **The evolution of the market:** ad costs rising like crazy, more emphasis on video content and less technical media buying
  市场的演变：广告成本疯狂上升，更加重视视频内容，减少技术性媒体购买
- **The upcoming economic crisis:** marketing expenses are the first to be cleared in every crisis. Also, consumers focus more on essential & cheap purchases during those times.
  即将到来的经济危机：营销费用是每次危机中首先清算的。此外，在此期间，消费者更关注必需品和廉价购买。

> Note
>
> 对环境变化的敏感，感知、判断，并做出应对行动

**So, I decided to learn to code.
所以，我决定学习编码。**

> Note
>
> 学习能力强，既然做出了决定，就要为这个目标，需要什么就学什么，要有这个自信心

I'm not really starting from scratch, as I have always been interested in this, so I knew a few basics (like the different type of variables), but that's the first time I'm taking a "formal" class.
我并不是真的从头开始，因为我一直对此感兴趣，所以我知道一些基础知识（比如不同类型的变量），但这是我第一次参加"正式"课程。

I'm pretty ok with HTML/CSS (not really coding tho) and have some decent basis in GDSCRIPT (very similar to Python but only used to make video games). Other than that, I never really followed any structured course.
我对HTML/CSS还不错（不是真正的编码），并且在GDSCRIPT中有一些不错的基础（与Python非常相似，但仅用于制作视频游戏）。除此之外，我从未真正遵循任何结构化课程。

I bought a $20 course to learn Python on Udemy. So far it's very easy since I have the basics, but hopefully, it will start getting complicated soon (meaning I learn new things).
我买了一门20美元的课程来学习Udemy上的Python。到目前为止，这很容易，因为我有基础知识，但希望它很快就会开始变得复杂（这意味着我学到了新东西）。

I choose Python because it's a popular language so there is lots of documentation about it, and it seems to be a good language for anything related to AI. No idea if I'll reach this stage but still good to learn something with potential.
我选择Python是因为它是一种流行的语言，所以有很多关于它的文档，它似乎是与AI相关的任何语言的好语言。不知道我是否会达到这个阶段，但仍然很高兴学习一些有潜力的东西。

> Note
>
> 看来是决定专项AI相关，这也是做事情的原则，看准大势，并投入其中，借势而起。

另外一个原则，就是要做自己喜欢的事情。这一点虽然作者没有提起，但是隐在其中了。因为作者已经是一个5年的创业者，且有编程经验，所以应该是在诸多可能性中结合自己的兴趣，选择了编程投入AI这个方向。

My goal is to finish my course by the end of this month and start doing my own projects. Not sure what exactly, but whenever I see something that annoys me I write it down to come back to it later, so I'll pick from that. I'll probably take other courses later to consolidate my knowledge.
我的目标是在本月底完成我的课程并开始做我自己的项目。不确定到底是什么，但是每当我看到让我烦恼的东西时，我都会把它写下来，以便以后再回来，所以我会从中挑选。我以后可能会参加其他课程来巩固我的知识。
There is 36 section in the course, already 11 are done so far.
课程中有 36 个部分，到目前为止已经完成了 11 个部分。

I made this post for public accountability and "force" me to do it regularly. It might also help people who want to get into coding to find some ideas to start. It's probably gonna be boring tho.
我写这篇文章是为了公共问责，并"强迫"我定期这样做。它也可能有助于想要进入编码领域的人找到一些想法开始。这可能会很无聊。

Worst case, I'd have learned a new skill that will be valuable. Combined with my already existing business and marketing skills (advertising, idea testing & prototyping, team management, customer study, manufacturing, etc…), I'm pretty sure that would give me a safety net for the upcoming crisis.
最坏的情况是，我会学到一项有价值的新技能。结合我现有的业务和营销技能（广告，创意测试和原型设计，团队管理，客户研究，制造等），我很确定这将为即将到来的危机提供安全网。
Of course, I'll still keep my existing marketing clients for now.
当然，我现在仍然会保留我现有的营销客户。

18/05/2022

A bit more than halfway through my course. Things started to get more complex, so it means I'm learning.
我的课程已经过半了。事情开始变得更加复杂，所以这意味着我正在学习。

Learning to code and making the course's exercises takes more energy than I thought, that's def not the kind of thing I could do while being hungover or sleep-deprived (at least for now).
学习编码和制作课程练习需要比我想象的更多的精力，这不是我在宿醉或睡眠不足时可以做的事情（至少目前是这样）。

My pattern to learn is:
我的学习模式是：

- Watch the course 观看课程
- If I find a new functionality or something I want to understand better, pause the video and make tests on my own
  如果我发现新功能或想要更好地理解的内容，请暂停视频并自行进行测试
- Make the exercises after each video
  在每个视频之后进行练习
- Take a 5-10 mins break after each complicated exercise (doing dumb stuff that doesn't require brainpower)
  每次复杂的练习后休息5-10分钟（做一些不需要脑力的愚蠢事情）

19/05/2022

Made my first "real" program that interacts with online stuff. It's a dad joke generator that connects to an API to get the jokes and return a random one inside the program. Very basic but that allowed me to test all the concepts I learned so far

制作了我的第一个与在线内容交互的“真实”程序。它是一个爸爸笑话生成器，它连接到一个 API 来获取笑话并在程序内返回一个随机笑话。非常基本，但这允许我测试到目前为止学到的所有概念

23/05/2022

Seems like I've finished learning the base concepts of Python in my course, and I'm now starting the interesting parts.
似乎我已经在我的课程中完成了对 Python 的基本概念的学习，现在我开始了有趣的部分。
The next module will be about web scrapping; Something that can provide a shitton of value if done right.
下一个模块将是关于网络抓取;如果做得好，可以提供大量价值的东西。

So far, I understood most of the concepts. There were a few things that didn't really make sense IMO but still understood them, so, I'm pretty happy about that. I'll probably hit a roadblock at some point, but it's expected
到目前为止，我理解了大多数概念。有一些事情在IMO中并不真正有意义，但仍然理解它们，所以，我对此感到非常高兴。我可能会在某个时候遇到障碍，但这是意料之中的

To give some context, I've been doing this almost all day every day since I started.
为了提供一些背景，自从我开始以来，我几乎每天都在这样做。
I wake up at 6:00 to go to the gym, then go back home and code until I go to sleep. Of course, I have to make "breaks" to eat, rest my mind and do client stuff, but overall, I'm mainly doing code.
我6：00起床去健身房，然后回家编码，直到我睡觉。当然，我必须“休息”吃饭，休息一下，做客户的事情，但总的来说，我主要是做代码。

27/05/2022

Almost done with the course. Only 2 sections left. Web scrapping is absolutely amazing, I can now get pretty much any data I want from any website.
课程几乎完成了。只剩下 2 节了。网络抓取绝对是惊人的，我现在可以从任何网站获得我想要的几乎任何数据。

For example, I can program a bot that will navigate through every page on a website and find every single email address. Could make an amazing tool for lead generation, even tho it already exists.
例如，我可以编写一个机器人，该机器人将浏览网站上的每个页面并找到每个电子邮件地址。可以制作一个惊人的潜在客户生成工具，即使它已经存在。

I'm going to take an additional course later on Python Data Scrapping, but for now, I have the basics.
稍后我将参加一门关于 Python 数据报废的额外课程，但现在，我已经掌握了基础知识。

29/05/2022

Finished the course Yesterday. I still have some exercises I haven't done, but I wanted to jump directly into more real-use stuffs, so I'm currently learning to make web apps using Flask, a tool (framework) to use Python as back-end (server).
昨天完成了课程。我还有一些练习没有做，但我想直接跳到更实际的东西，所以我目前正在学习使用 Flask 制作 Web 应用程序，这是一种使用 Python 作为后端（服务器）的工具（框架）。

01/06/2022

Alright, now that I've learned the basics to make a local server, I can code my own apps.

My first project is going to be an app that improves text reading, especially for people with dyslexia. It already exists, and there are APIs available, but I don't like the way it's done so I'll create my own.

同样的事情，做的更好的效果、更高效，也是一种创新。

Might sound complicated explained like that but it's not, just a few loops and list comprehension and I should have a similar result. Then, I'll just have to plug it into a web app.

That's my goal for June 2022, having this first app ready and available for public use (so, both front and back-end)

03/06/2022

Well, I did it, I just realized my first web app, Augmented Reader! The reader is almost fully functional, it just needs a few tweaks and a better UI, but it works.

Here is a screenshot:



That's only for the "website" version tho, now I want to make it a chrome extension that can "Augment" any page to be read faster.

04/06/2022

Some courses were on a discount so I bought a pack of 4 for $50

- Javascript (70h)
- Advanced web development (60h)

- Advanced data scrapping (10h)
- Machine learning & AI (40h)

That's going to costs me 180h in total, but I think it's worth it. It will probably take 3 months before finishing them all, more likely 5-6 since I'll hit roadblocks at some points and will do training projects.

I'll start with the machine learning one, seems like a crazy interesting topic, and highly valued.

Edit from the future: I compiled a list of resources I used to learn A.I here

06/06/2022

Never thought I'd one day understand something like that:



I've always been a bad student in maths in school, and so, I thought "Hey, it's just not for me".
I even remember one of my teacher telling me I'll never be successful. Funny considering that a few years later I was already making two or three times her salary.

Anyway, to dive deeper into AI and shits, I need a better understanding of maths, so, whenever I see something like that in the course, I have to dive into it and make research to understand.
So far, it's not super complicated, I understand the concepts. Can't wait to go to the first practical applications!!

15/06/2022

I'm now comfortable making AI that can make an analysis of "basic" data (organized data like a spreadsheet, to predict values)
From what I learned so far, the concept of machine learning itself is not that complicated, the hard part is to gather data and make them usable since computers can only deal with numbers.

I mentioned a project to a client I have for my marketing agency, he was extremely interested and told me to make this priority #1.
The problem here is to get the data. If I have them, I should be able to make a great product.

22/06/2022

Learning:
So, I was looking for AI projects, and I ended up taking another course, but this time focusing on the theory and "math" part. Unlike the previous course where I mainly learned to use some pre-made libraries, this one showed me the mathematical model behind AI. The course is made by one of the most influential people in the AI/Deep Learning field.

I struggled to understand the "pure math" part since I have 0 background so I had to make some research, but now I get a way better understanding of how it works from the inside out. There are 3 courses. First, one is supposed to take 3 weeks, I ate it in 3 days and even got a "graduation". 2nd one is taking one month, and I'm almost done with it. Then I'll have one last one and I should have a robust beginner level. Enough to make cool stuff with AI and actually understand what happens under the hood.

For anyone wondering, I'm doing it all day, every day from 8h to 21h with small breaks on dumb stuff (social media) to cool down my head, thus why I'm able to move quickly.

Building:

Other than that, I pitched a project idea to my client and he was pretty hyped. He actually asked me for a quote earlier today. The project isn't even started or anything, it was just an idea. Not sure I'll be able to execute, it since I need to find a way to gather "sensitive" data, but if I manage to do it, I might be up to something!

Predictions/Freelance:

There is a drop in sales on my client's website. KPIs are good, and it's supposed to be the very best month of the year. The only reason I see is simply people purchasing less because of the recession and fear. I told him some time ago it would happen, and it's happening now. I made a new strategy for him that include pivoting to a new positioning etc… But I won't go in-depth here since it's not really the subject.

16/07/2022

Been quite a while since the last update.

Learning:

Finished the 2nd AI course but didn't go for the 3rd one as it wouldn't be really useful for now. From there, I started to learn JavaScript in another Webdev course. I'm now done with the "front-end stack" (HTML/CSS/JavaScript) as well as Python for the back-end (Node.JS soon). I'm not an expert, but now I know the basics, I can build most of the stuff I want.

Building:

I made a Chrome Extension of the small web app I coded last time ([augmented reader]), allowing users to turn all the text on a page into Augmented Reading text (basically, highlight some part of the words to read

faster). I'm not going to make money from it, but it's a nice little project that allowed me to test my skills.

Freelance/Predictions:

I mentioned last time that sales are going down. I told my client he needed to change things and gave him many recommendations a few months ago, but nothing has been done so far.

I recently made a list of all the things that should be done to grow the company, with lots of programming-related stuff.

If nothing is done, the company will be hit hard, in my opinion.

We had a call last week, and··· **he told me he wanted to stop in September** because he wanted to replace me with another dude to "try out and see if it changes things because nothing is changing for months".

That would make me without income.

Hopefully, I had my offer ready, so I made a counter-offer to reduce/cut my monthly freelance fee and become the marketing director (CMO) to manage all the marketing in exchange for a profit-based income. If he says yes, I'll go full in, as I'll own a part of the result (I'll do a mix of marketing and programming to grow the company)

If not, I'll stop in September and start focusing on making apps for e-commerce owners (including him).

In both cases, the fact that I started learning to code 2 months ago makes a big difference here. If I didn't, I couldn't have made a good counteroffer. But since I have a mix of skills that isn't super common (marketing + dev), that gives me leverage to offer him value he can't find anywhere else.

19/07/2022

I'm done with the main content of the course. While I still need to learn some topics, they are more niche (like authentication, encryption etc…). I will need them for sure, but later. I can now start building.

I think my first project will be a basic web app card game. You can pick a card, and from it, you'll get a question to ask your partner/friend/etc…
I figured that's a game I often end up playing with friends. There is nothing new about it, it's just a small project to get started.

21/07/2022

The first version of the web app has been published. It's more of a technical demo, but it works well!
I didn't found any app that bring "deep topics" on the table, so it might be a nice little something to try;

I'm pretty sure it's not that hard to turn a web app into a mobile app, considering it's already fully responsive.

25/07/2022

I spent the last few days building a back-end system for my previous app. Pretty good learning experience!

Today, I started to build a new app that mixes a bit of everything I learned. You write a product name and some features, and artificial intelligence generates product descriptions. So far, the technical demo is done:



It's pretty basic for now, but it will be solid once I have the AI trained. Maybe if I make it valuable enough, I'll be able to monetize it.

09/08/2022

I started to code a few months ago (here) and I recently started my first "real" project one week and a half ago. Based on the feedback I received, I'm thinking it has potential, so, I'll focus on developing it and see how it goes. This thread will be my "update".

It's an AI writing assistant that helps you write content. It has two parts: One part with specialized modules that helps you write short content (product descriptions, Facebook ads, etc…) and a long-form editor to write stuff like blog posts, newsletters, etc… (article 100% generated by it here) It doesn't replace a copywriter, but it's a great way to get ideas and get rid of the blank page syndrome.

Yes, I know, similar apps exist but that's a good sign. Also, I have a specific target + value proposition in mind that not many people can focus on (thanks to my experience)

Where I am now:

I started building the app two weeks ago. The specialized modules part is partially done, it can generate good product descriptions and Facebook ads already. The "long-form editor" is WIP but already working and producing good content, I just need to make some tweaks to make the user experience more enjoyable.

Current goal:

Find people around me that would test the app and watch them doing so, to gather feedback on the user experience. That would allow me to improve it

before releasing anything. Then, if I find enough people interested in the app and if they are ready to pay for it, I'll focus on making a "public" version.

No idea how it will go, but I guess it's experience in any case

10/08/2022

I'm making progress. I managed to fix the issues that were left in terms of content creation, now it will likely be customer experience optimization. I released the first version of the app so one of my friends can try it and give me feedback already.
I think I'll focus on improving the UX for a few days and then start giving limited access to people.

Not gonna lie, I'm pretty proud of my work. Those past 2 weeks have been intense, from finding the idea to now having a functional prototype.
(To give some context, I work from 7-8AM to 8-9PM every day, with just a few breaks to eat and cool off my brain)

01/09/2022

After getting some feedback, I decided to start from scratch again. The new version of the app can now generate whole articles just based on other articles links. For example, you find 3-5 similar articles, you paste them in the app, and the app will make a new article from it.

It was a headache to come up with it but I'm pretty satisfied with the results. The first beta testers are now using the app, while it's not 100% perfect, results are usually fairly decent.

The code is not the best, app is probably full of bug, but I'm not sure it matter rn, I'm trying to get a proof of concept, and as soon I have it, I'll be able to hire people.

Main main focus is going to switch from coding & building the app to marketing and user experience. At least until I get enough feedback to make a new iteration.

02/09/2022

Spend the last few days reading stuff about marketing and GTM (Going To Market), it gave me a totally different perspective compared to eCommerce. I'm going to have to find my beta testers one by one, first in the people I know, but then probably cold emailing or something.

I have a pretty good incentive program (Lifetime "tester" plan for free) for those who test the app and give me feedback.

Goals:

– Crash-proof the app (dev)
– Get people to use the app (user experience + product/market fit)
– Get feedback (user experience)

18/09/2022

(0 USERS, 0 CUSTOMERS)

Spend the last week re-making the app to improve the quality and adding Stripe. I think it's now good enough to be used. I'm not a "real dev", and my code is probably garbage from that perspective, but it's good enough for my needs now.

I made a post on Reddit a few days ago, got a couple of people registering on my waitlist. I sent them an email today telling them the app was available, hopefully I'll get some users from it.

The app give you a free limited access (7500 words generated every month), if you need more you can pay a subscription. I think for that kind of app, people need to taste it before actually buying it. I might change the strategy in the future tho.

My current goals are:

1: Getting product/market fit:

How to get there:
– Getting first users to get negative feedback & improve the app
– Getting a first customer to prove that people would pay for it
Will be achieved when:
– At least 60% of the users will be disappointed if they can't use the app anymore

For now that's it. I don't need to make a better code or do social medias. I'm going to focus on getting users one by one.
Since my background is in advertising, I have to learn how to use growth hacking to sparkle the fire.

Sub-goal: Getting users
– Reading growth-hacking materials
– Extract actionable things from it
– Act

20/09/2022

(6 USERS, 0 CUSTOMERS)

It seems like I got my first users!
I made a post on Reddit that was deleted immediately (my bad, probably made it too commercial). However, I then ran a Reddit ad, which allowed me to get users… who crashed the app

Good thing, on the welcome page, I gave my WhatsApp number and one of them was kind enough to text me, so when I woke up, I restarted it and fixed the issue.
(I had a shitload of other bugs to fix later, bug I guess it's good problems to have)

While waiting for the app to get approved, I learned a new sub-language (jQuery) that will allows me to code way faster and made a prototype for a small tool I'll use later to organize my learning materials (resources I found online)

28/09/2022

(23 USERS, 1 CUSTOMERS)

Lots of changes since last week. In the span in a few days after starting the marketing, I saw 10 people doing the exact same app. Not gonna lie, the barrier to entry is low.
So I decided to do something else, way more complicated, an AI that can do customer service for eCommerce
Spend the last few days planning, then made a landing page prototype and posted in a few groups. Got a few people interested by it, so now I'm collecting feedback and making a more advanced prototype

In the meantime, I randomly got my first sale on the blog app

02/10/2022

(5 LEADS, 1 CUSTOMERS)

I kept seeing even more new companies doing the AI blog writer. Good thing that I stopped. I spend most of the week working on a more advanced prototype of the AI to start doing marketing for the waitlist. It's way more complicated to do than just connecting to openAI, as it involve lots of data science stuffs, so the entry barrier is way higher.

I'm going to run ads on reddit, Google, and maybe Facebook later. Target is to get 50 leads by the end of the month to see which feature to focus on first. I'm also going to post on Facebook groups.

05/10/2022

(6 LEADS / 2 CUSTOMERS)

Here is what I've tried those last few days:

- **Google Ads:** Ads are not even being shown –> Stopped
- **Facebook Ads:** CPM is absurdly high ($30, for a lead gen goal, wth) –> Stopped
- **Reddit Ads:** Got banned because they couldn't verify my ID. Fixed now, CPM is ok, but no clicks so far
- **Posting in FB groups:** Posts are removed by admins

Seems like I'm going to have to do a manual approach instead.

I got a second sale from someone I know for the blog writing app. He mainly uses the product description module though.

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Jeannen

Jeannen Consulting LLC
1309 Coffeen Avenue STE 1200
Sheridan, Wyoming, 82801
United States