

Shaan's Big Lessons



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Special thanks to Brittany Metz for Illustration and Amaan Sayed for the help!

INTRO

I sat down and distilled 12 big things that I use all the time.

This is like when Lucky Charms released the “marshmallows only” version of their cereal. Just the best stuff.

4 Best Techniques
4 Best Frameworks
4 Best Philosophies
= 12 Big Things

enjoy.

- shaan

(ps. if you're not a subscriber and someone bootleg'd this to you, do yourself a favor and join the email list:
<https://shaanpuri.com>)

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Frameworks

- 1) Your To-Do List is Killing You
- 2) How To Kickoff a Project
- 3) Big Mario Marketing
- 4) Getting Un-Stuck

TAKEAWAY #1



Your To-Do list is Killing You.

I used lists for years.

I loved writing the list...and then as soon as I put the pen down the anxiety started.

Long lists end up collecting dust, and serve as a guilt trip.

They also “bury the headline”. In your day, there’s probably one thing that is way more important than everything else.

The one thing, that if you just did that alone - your day would be a success.

I call that my **ONE BIG THING**. (OBT for short).

Instead of making a list - I ask myself, what's the ONE highest impact thing I could do today.

Take note my friend. I said "impact" not "difficulty". Don't confuse the two. Sometimes the high impact thing is a 15 minute phone call. That's it.

And if I do my OBT, then whatever I do the rest of the day is gravy.

I have zero-guilt once I've done my OBT.

This simple daily productivity technique has made me WAY more productive, and way less stressed.

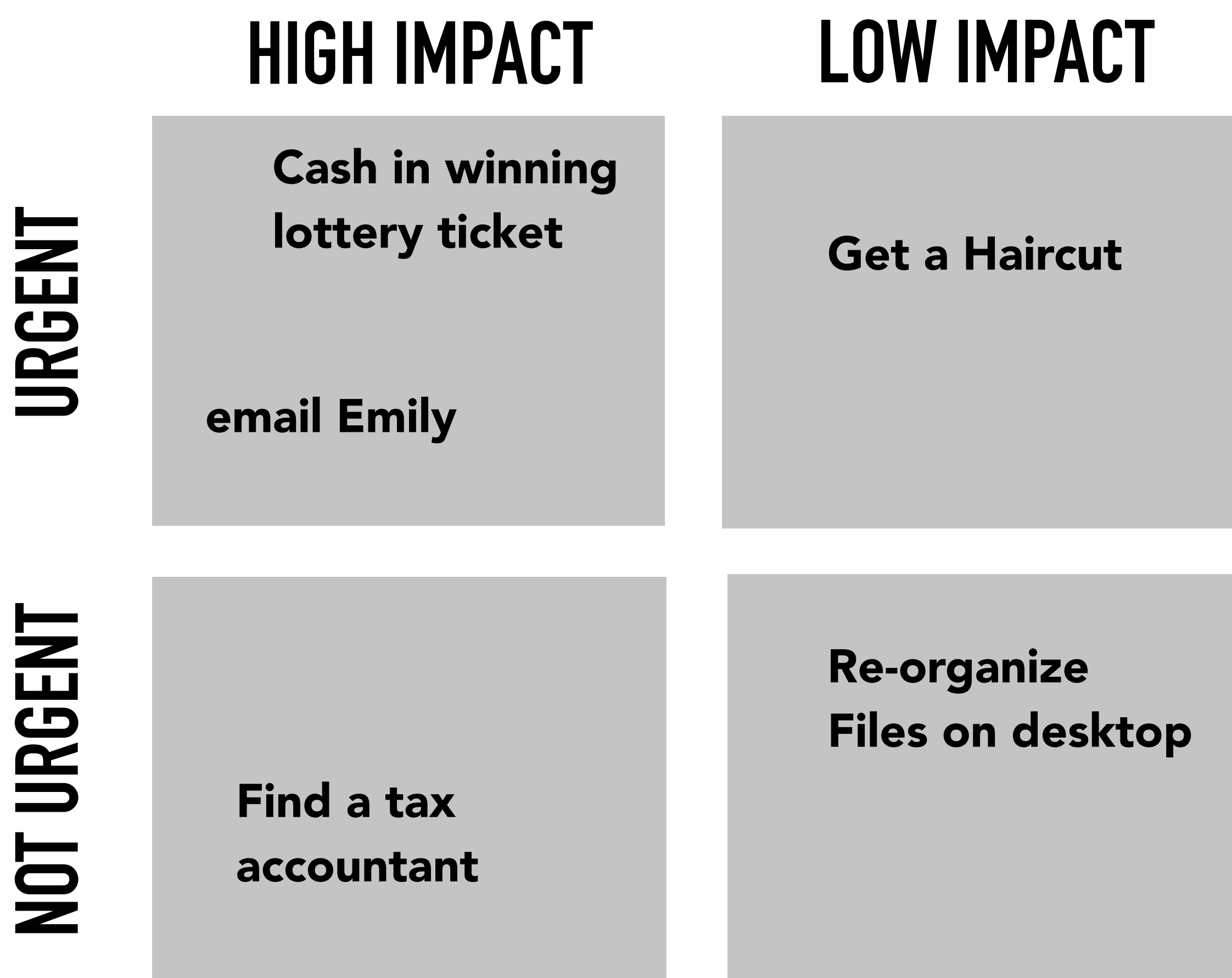
...b..bu...but what about ALL these things I need to do?

OK - even with an OBT, you sometimes have a bunch of stuff that you need to get to...eventually.

It's good to write those down, so you don't forget.

But not on a list.

Instead, use what I call - **The Power Box**.



It's like a list, but it maps every task based on **urgency** & **impact**.

When a new thing comes up...just triage it into one of these boxes.

A powerful way to organize your day.

Dive Deeper

[Check out the "One Thing" by Gary Keller](#)

TAKEAWAY #2



PROJECT KICKOFF

Whenever I start a new project - I make a Kickoff Doc.

There's 4 key components to my Kickoff Process:

- 1) Define "Winning"
- 2) Set "Anti-Goals"
- 3) Back of the envelope - what does it take to get there?
- 4) 1 Hour, 1 Day, 1 Week, 1 Month

Notice what's not on this list:

- research
- asking others if it's a good idea
- worrying
- grand vision statements (these come later)

Here's a rundown on how I approach each part:

#1 - Define Winning

I set clear, measurable goals.

"I want to achieve financial success and not stress about money!"

^terrible goal. What is 'success'? By when?

"I want to have \$5M in liquid assets by age 35"
^a good simple goal

So how ambitious should you be with your goals?

Shoot for the moon or be realistic?

Trick question - do both.

I set two goals.

- **A good goal** (if we hit this, things went well)
- **A f*ck yea goal** (self explanatory. some people call this a "Stretch goal" but i prefer my lingo.)

#2 - Anti-Goals

There's an old saying when it comes to deal making. "You pick the price, I'll pick the terms".

Basically - even if you get the price you want. If the terms are screwed up. You'll be screwed up.

What if your dream was to be a musician. And guess what - you did it!



But while you're touring the world, you gain weight, get addicted to drugs, your marriage is in shambles, and your kids don't recognize you....you won the battle but lost the war.

I stole this from my new friend Andrew Wilkinson. Setting **Anti-Goals**.

These are the things you **DON'T** want to happen along the way.

Write them down. Now you know your goals, and your anti-goals.

#3 - Back of the Envelope, how might I get there?

I am a big fan of running quick numbers on things early on. Even when I have no clue how to achieve my goal - doing a quick calculation can show some of the options.

If I want to make a million dollars. I can make a \$1 app and sell it to 1M users. Or I can create a \$100k product and find 10 customers.

The back of the envelope is meant to walk through some scenarios, and identify which number seems "hard to hit". That becomes my focus. How do I get that number?

Then I brainstorm strategies to get to that number.

#4 - 1 Hour of momentum

This is the most important step. Never leave the scene of a decision without an action.



So I end the kickoff by brainstorming things I can do in an hour to build momentum.

Not research or planning.

Things like - can I talk to a customer? Can I create a prototype that I can then show to a customer?

This whole process takes about an hour - and creates a ton of momentum. Give it a shot.

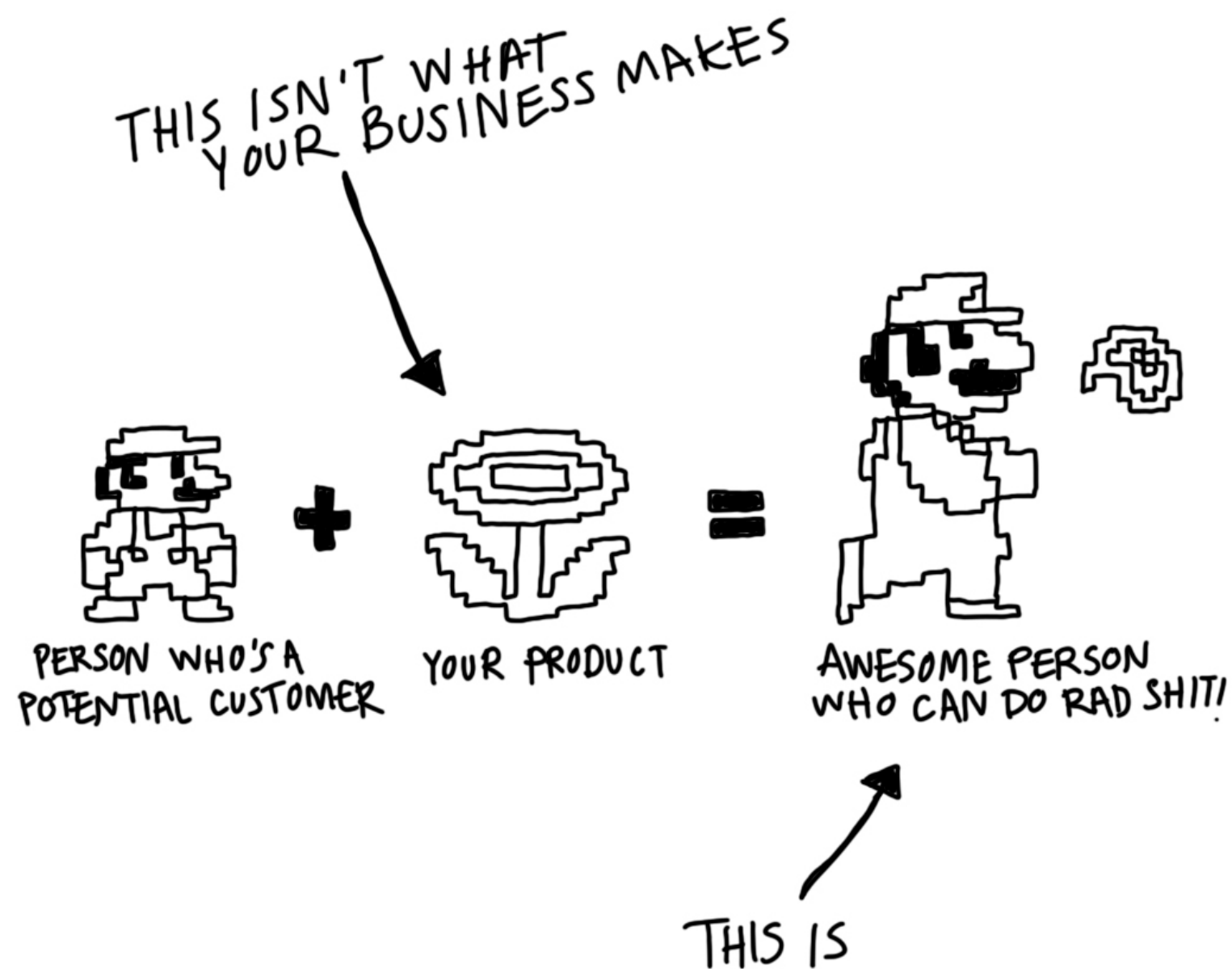
Dive Deeper

[Get the Project Kickoff Template](#)



TAKEAWAY #3

MARIO MARKETING



BIG MARIO MARKETING

Inspired by UserOnboard

The day you understand this framework, is the day you learned marketing.

If you're considering going to business school to learn marketing - let me save you 2 years and \$200k in one diagram:

Your customer = little mario - one bad move away from failure

Your product = an item mario can use

The result = big mario, shooting fireballs and kicking everyone's ass.

What most people do: talk endlessly about yourself / your product.

What we do instead: tell customers how awesome they will be after using your product

I don't care what you're doing. If you're selling breakfast bars, don't tell me about the granola. Tell me how this bar can save me 20 minutes of time in the mornings by giving me a grab and go breakfast AND I'll lose weight in the process.

🔴 I REPEAT 🔴

Nobody cares about your product.

Literally nobody.

But everybody cares about their own quality of life improving. So that's what you do. Describe how their life will improve, if they use this special little product of yours.

THEN back it up with evidence, social proof, and explanations of why it works.

For example... for the all access pass

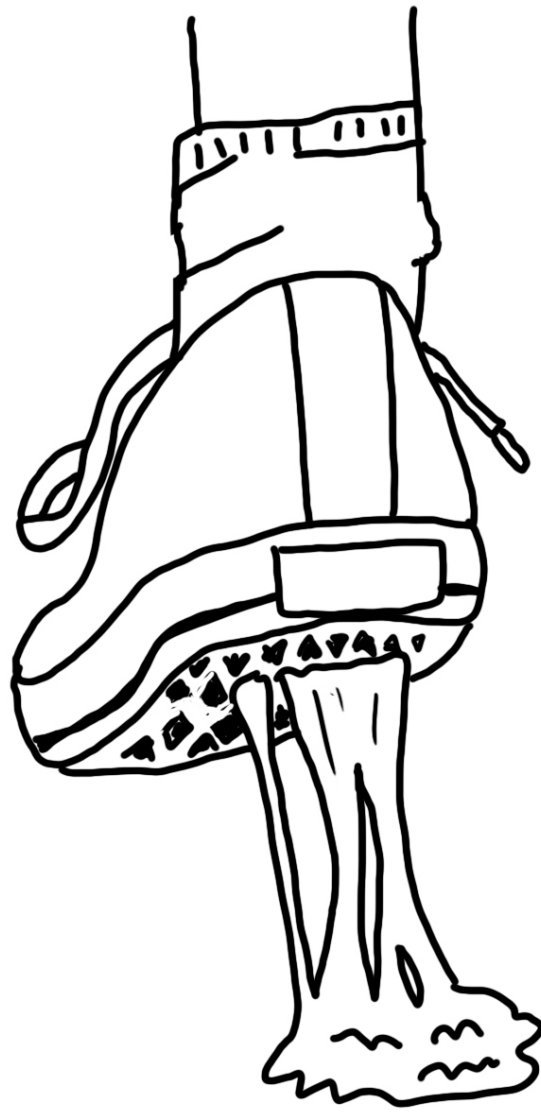
Little Mario == someone who **wants** to build a successful business, but is unsure of how to do it.

Big Mario == someone who is **confident** that they can build a successful business, because they have **seen first hand** how to do it! They are armed with a toolkit of tactics and a blueprint to follow.

Inspired by UserOnboard

TAKEAWAY #4

READ THIS WHEN
YOU FEEL STUCK



GETTING UN-STUCK

It happens.

You get “stuck”. You have a “setback”. Face an “obstacle”, Hit a “wall”, etc..

You want to move forward, but it’s not easy.

And it’s draining.

I call these “plateaus”. And when you’re in a plateau, you feel stuck.

When I was younger, I used to overreact to these types of situations. I’d hit a plateau and feel so worthless.

Like why can’t I make this work?

Then I moved to silicon valley, and I joined twitter - now everywhere I looked I saw people crushing it and it just made me feel more worthless.

Over time I've learned, there are 3 ways to handle plateaus.

1. A dabbler hits a plateau, gives up and moves onto the next
2. A stresser hits a plateau, gets stressed, chugs coffee, loses sleep, and tries to work through it.
3. A master hits a plateau, and greets it like an old friend:

"Ah, mr plateau. I thought I'd be seeing you soon!"

A master knows that plateaus are inevitable and part of the growth process. Why stress over the inevitable? That's like stressing out everytime the sun goes down each day.

I want to be a master, so I created a playbook for how to break through plateaus :

The Plateau Breakthrough Recipe

1. First, relax. Plateaus are always a part of growth curves. This is normal.
2. Start with getting in the right "state" of mind. I make better decisions, and am more creative when feeling loose, confident, happy. Not frustrated, tired, or stressed.

How to change my mental state? The Three M's

- **Music** - duh.
- **Movement** - pushups, run, swim, jumping jacks etc.. for 2-5 mins. The fastest way to change how you feel is through rapid physical change (eg. ice plunge, windsprints, etc..)
- **Meaning** - rather than "shit, this isn't working", reframe it.

For example, I could reframe the meaning behind what's not working as:

- This is an opportunity to try something new
- This is pushing me to get more creative
- This is a chance to sharpen up my skills and learn more



This is going to make for a helluva story later.

For movement, I use exercise or temperature. Pushups, windsprints, jumping jacks, or an ice bath. In two minutes I can totally change my state of mind.

Once I'm in the right state, I start asking my brain questions:

1. What does the data actually say is happening?
2. What is the stupidly obvious thing I haven't tried yet?
3. What would a friend or mentor of mine do in this scenario?
4. What is a 20% tweak I could make that would make a 100% difference?
5. Who's already successfully doing this? What the heck are they doing differently?
6. Who are 3 smart people i can talk to on the phone to help me problem solve this?

What would Suli do?

Whenever i'm stuck, I think to myself what would Suli do. Suli is the best entrepreneur I know.

I've never seen him stuck. He is always positive. Always thinking. Always taking massive action to find a way to win.

He literally texts me in the morning 5 times a month "lets WIN WIN WIN today!"

That's his mindset.

So whenever I feel stuck, I think - what would suli do?

Just asking that question, makes me 20% more creative & determined to win.



OK the final step of getting unstuck: Patience.

I'm an impatient motherfucker in general. And I used to take pride in that.

Patient? Who wants to be patient? Patient people just wait around and do nothing all day.

I'm not patient! I take action!

^ you see - I viewed action taking and patience as opposites.

But then one day, like the modern day buddha I am, I figured it out.

I need to be impatient with action, and patient with results.

I'll say it again, slower this time. **Impatience with action, Patience with results.**

This is the yin and yang of entrepreneurship.

Follow this and you'll WIN WIN WIN. It's jus ta matter of time.

Dive Deeper

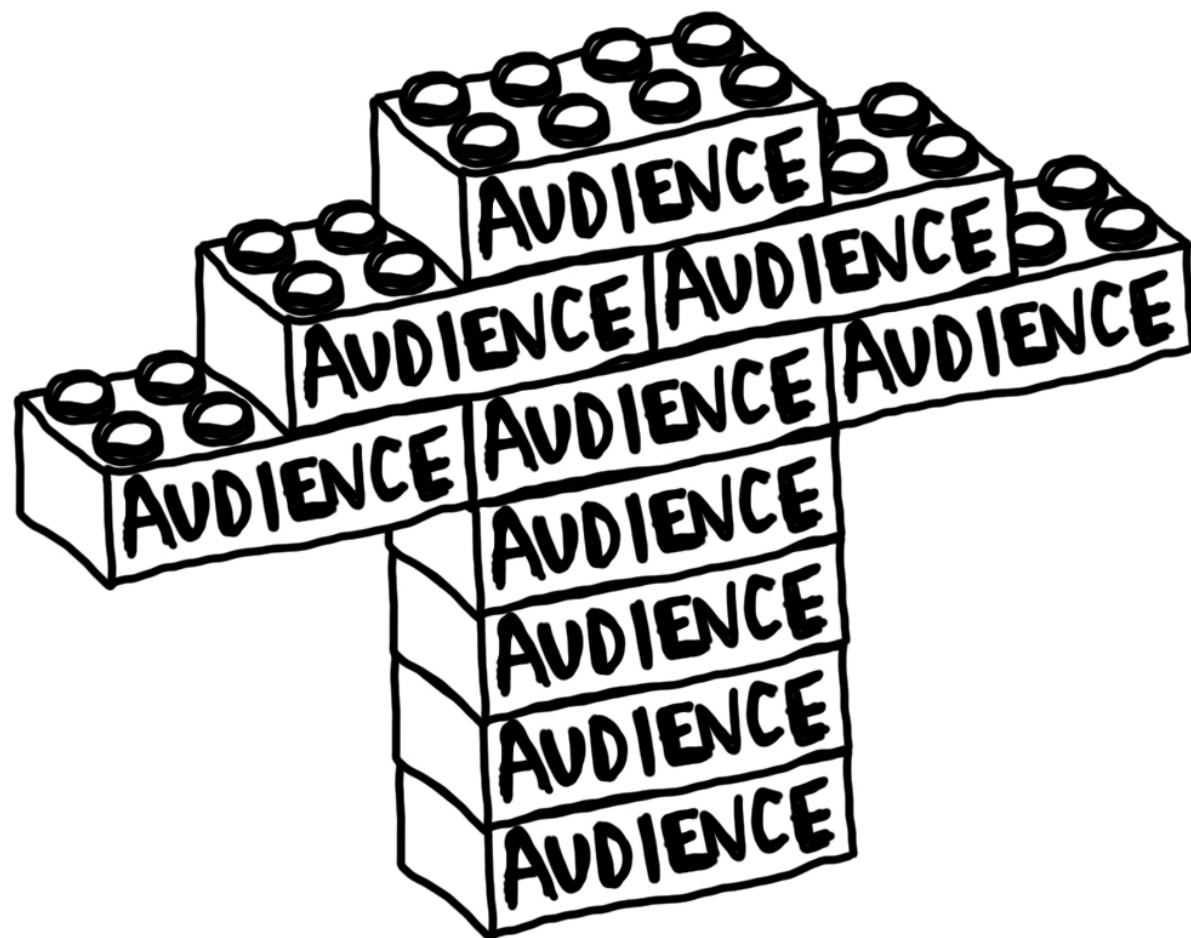
[Check out the Master, Dabbler framework from Tony Robbins](#)



Philosophies

- 1) Having an Audience is Like Steroids
- 2) All News is Good News
- 3) Work Like a Lion
- 4) Don't Sell Saddles

TAKEAWAY #5



BUILD AN AUDIENCE
FIRST

MY AUDIENCE IS MY STEROIDS

If I was you, one of the biggest takeaways of the All Access Pass is how valuable it is to have an audience.

It makes everything easier.

Don't know something? Ask twitter.

Want to spread the word? Mention it on the podcast.

Having an audience gives you **optionality** to build many future businesses. (including this all access pass).

And that's with my teeny tiny audience. Imagine if I was *actually* famous!

You know how easy it is for Joe Rogan, Naval, Kylie Jenner, David Dobrik etc.. to launch new projects, or get problems solved?



It took me 1 year to build my audience. And that was in my spare time. If I had focused, I could have done it in half the time.

If you don't know exactly what you want to build, or what company you want to start....build an audience first.

Build an audience in a topic area you care about, or a group of people you know well.

It can be a newsletter, a podcast, a YouTube channel etc..
Choose whatever medium is fun for you (because this stuff takes time, so you better enjoy creating the content).

Now...how to build an audience?

That's another topic for another day my dear..



TAKEAWAY #6



All News is Good News

Two big mistakes founders make (that I've learned not to make anymore).

1. Bad news demoralizes them
2. Therefore... they subconsciously avoid looking in places where there might be bad news (like, the metrics dashboard)

For us - all news is good news.

When something is working...good news!

When something is not working... good news! we learned something!

I create a culture where we want to see the data, whether it's good, bad or ugly. This creates habits where people seek the truth (they go look for the data), because we celebrate whatever the finding is.

And when the news is 'bad', we don't panic or get demoralized. We focus on the learning. What does this result teach us?

This sounds obvious. This is a lesson I could teach a 3rd grader.

So why is this such a big takeaway?

Because in my experience, 98% of founders don't operate this way. They ride an emotional rollercoaster, based on good or bad news.

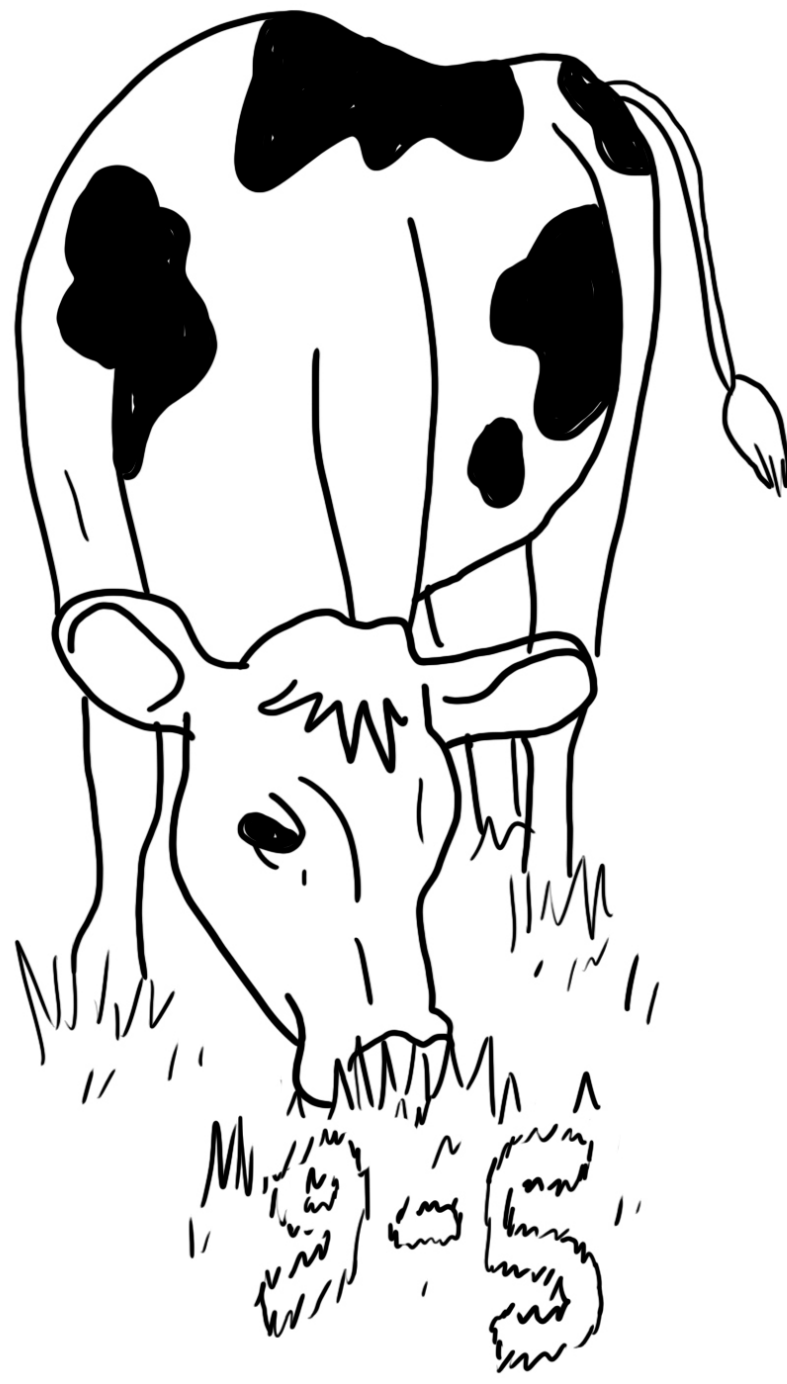
Don't ride the rollercoaster.

Your entrepreneurial life will be more fun and more successful if you adopt this mantra: **All News is Good News**.

Dive Deeper

Check out the rejection calculator that you can use to see how many rejections you need to get to a yes

TAKEAWAY #7



WORK LIKE A **LION**
NOT A COW

Work like a LION. Not a COW.

I stole this from Naval.

I heard it and I LOVED it.

Today - we're trained to work like a cow.

Cows stand in a field all day. Slowly, chewing weak, low nutrient grass.

Everyday, the same thing, at the same slow pace.

This is how we are trained to work. 9-to-5, Monday-thru-Friday, 50 weeks in a row.

Instead - we should work like a LION.

Lions sit. wait. observe. looking for their prey.

When they see it. They SPRINT. Hunt. Catch.

EAT. enjoy. celebrate.

Rest. Relax. Wait for the next juicy prey.

This is how winners work. high intensity, focused on high value projects. With frequent breaks to rest and recover.

Your boss may not like this. But this is the way.

Work like a LION. Not a Cow.

Dive Deeper

[Read how Naval thinks about working hard](#)



TAKEAWAY #8



DON'T SELL SADDLES

Have you ever read the memo the CEO of Slack (\$18B) sent his employees before they launched?

If not, stop reading this and Click the link. Read that shit and come back. It's a must-read.

I'll explain it in stupid simple terms.

If you're operating in a new/niche market, promote the lifestyle, not your product.

Put differently - if you're a company that makes saddles. Rather than talking about how your saddle is better than other saddles to a niche market.

...what if you promoted the lifestyle of horseback riding to the masses instead?

That's why the CEO of Slack explained: "We don't sell saddles here". Rather than selling their chat app, they sold the dream of working without so much damn email.

We put this into action while promoting our course.

The course is niche (learning how to buy businesses), so instead of selling the course - we started promoting badass entrepreneurs who have done this and built \$100M+ empires doing it.

We ignored our saddle (the course) and instead promoted badass cowboys who ride horses (eg. Chamath, Andrew Wilkinson, etc..)

Ask yourself. Should we be selling our saddle? Or should we be selling the dream of horseback riding... and when they need a saddle, they'll buy from us.

Dive Deeper

[Read Stewart Butterfield's blog post](#)

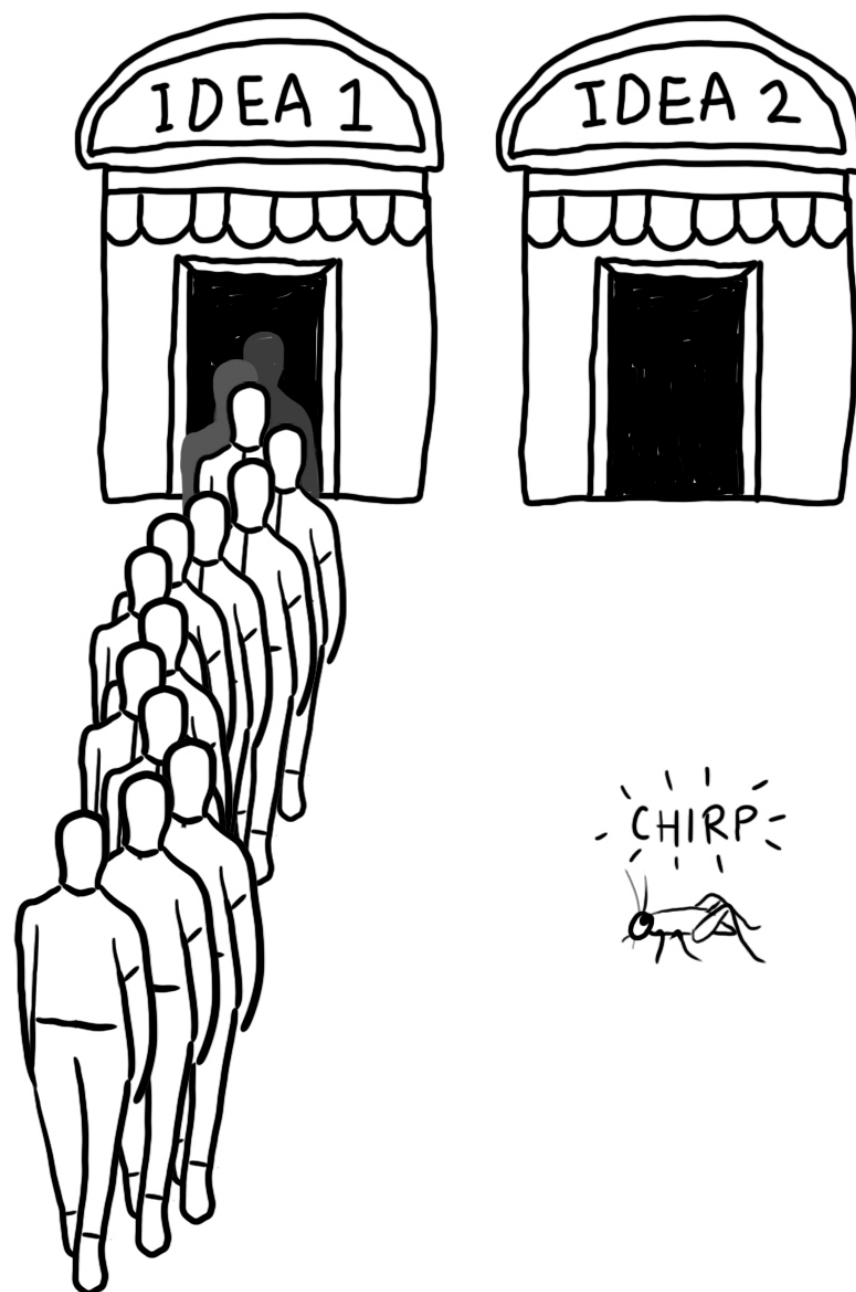


Techniques

- 1) Validating Demand
- 2) Cold Emailing to Close Sales
- 3) Rapid Prototyping
- 4) Hiring a Great Operator

TAKEAWAY #9

VALIDATING YOUR ECOMMERCE IDEA



Validating Your Ecom Idea In 4 Hours

Everybody has some “idea insecurity”

Is this a good idea? should I buy \$10k of inventory? Will people buy this or will I be stuck with 2,000 units of soap dispensers in my garage...

To combat this - I’ve developed a set of tools/tactics to try and validate ecommerce ideas quickly. It’s not foolproof, but it’s definitely worth doing.

This screencast shows you how I do it, live:

TAKEAWAY #10




How Brex Does Cold Emailing

“Good Artists Copy, Great Artists Steal” is what Pablo “Big Paint” Picasso used to say.

Like a great artist - we stole this sales tactic from Brex, and used it to close nearly \$500k in 2 days.

We used it for fundraising, but you can use it for pretty much any sales process that happens over email.

The Tactic



Matt Bowden <mattbowden@brex.com> [Unsubscribe](#)

to me ▾

03:16 (10 minutes ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

Hi Vinayak,

My Chief Sales Officer asked that I reach out to you (see below).

For context, Brex is a corporate card designed for companies like yours. We don't require a personal guarantee, offer higher credit limits, and the best rewards program available on any corporate card offer.

Do you have a few minutes for a call this week or next?

[Book time on my calendar!](#)

Warmly,
Matt

----- Forwarded message -----
From: Sam Blond <sam@brex.com>
Date: Jul 16, 2020, 10:09 AM
Subject: Meeting with Vinayak
To: Matt Bowden <mattbowden@brex.com>


Hey, check out BiteSpeed. They're not on Brex yet and I think we can help them.

Can you try to set a call with Vinayak? Offer to waive card fees and get them on the accelerated rewards list if they are open to trying us out by the end of the month.

Sam
sam@brex.com
913-908-1544

--

Matt Bowden



[405 Howard Street](#)
[San Francisco, CA 94105](#)
[brex.com](#)

This was genius because:

1. It feels special - it makes you feel like you've been handpicked for the offer from someone with authority (like the Brex head of sales)
- 2) It feels raw - being able to see a whole thread feels raw and real and not like a cold email at all
- 3) It feels friendly - all of the language in both of these emails and the transparency is v friendly, way more than normal cold emails

Here’s our version:

Hey [redacted]

Nice to meet you! Shaan saw that you signed up for the [All Access Fund](#) waitlist and wants to open up a spot for you to invest

Happy to share some more detail with you:

- To invest, you're required to be an accredited investor
- Here's a deck ([LINK](#)) that will walk you through the key points

Give the deck a read and let us know if you're interested in jumping in!

Thanks,
Ben

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Shaan Puri** <shaan@allaccessfund.com>
Date: Wed, Sep 9, 2020 at 4:17 PM
Subject: Can you let [redacted] off the fund waitlist?
To: Ben Levy <ben@allaccessfund.com>

ben,

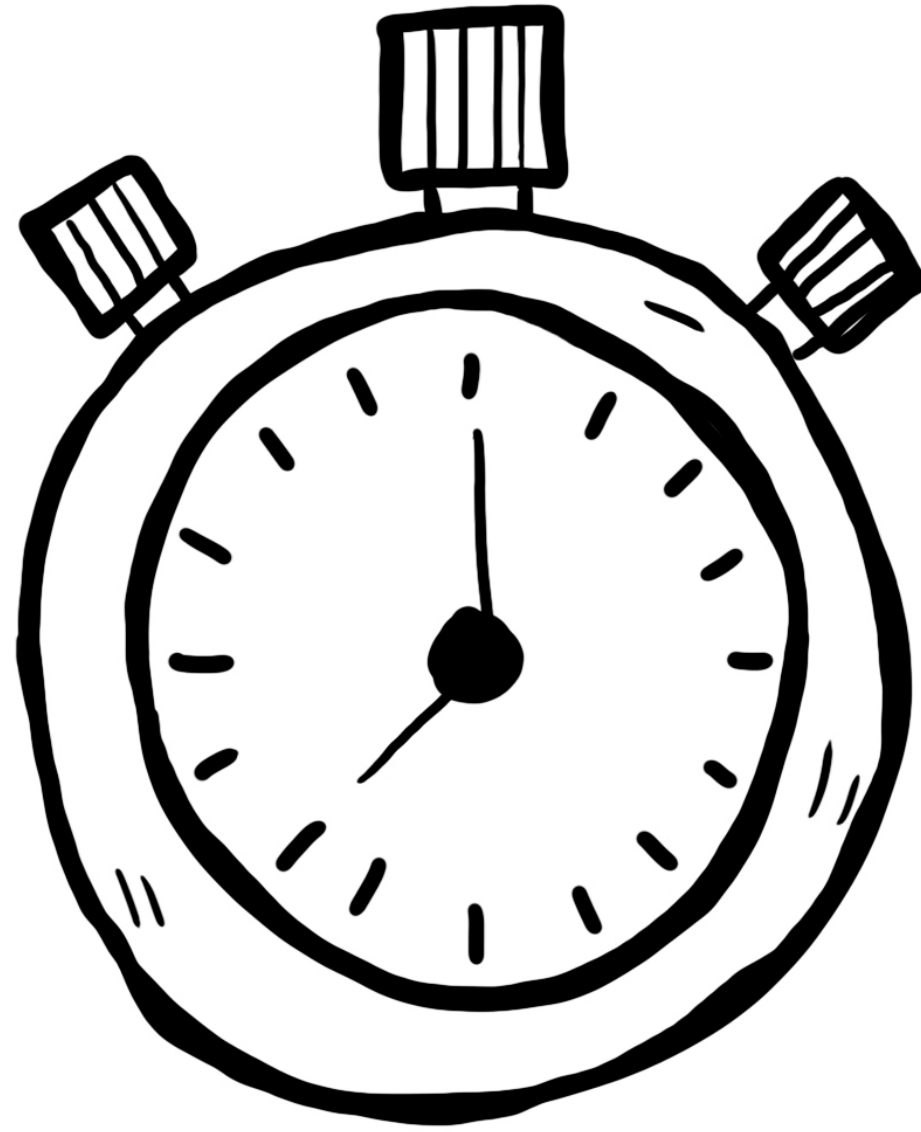
I saw that [redacted] signed up and his background looks really good for the fund (he helped grow [redacted] and has an exit under his belt:)

Can you reach out to him and offer him one of the spots that just opened up in the fund?

-shaan

Great artists steal - so keep an eye out for great tactics others are using...and try putting your spin on it!

1 HOUR WEBSITES



KILL YOUR INNER PERFECTIONIST

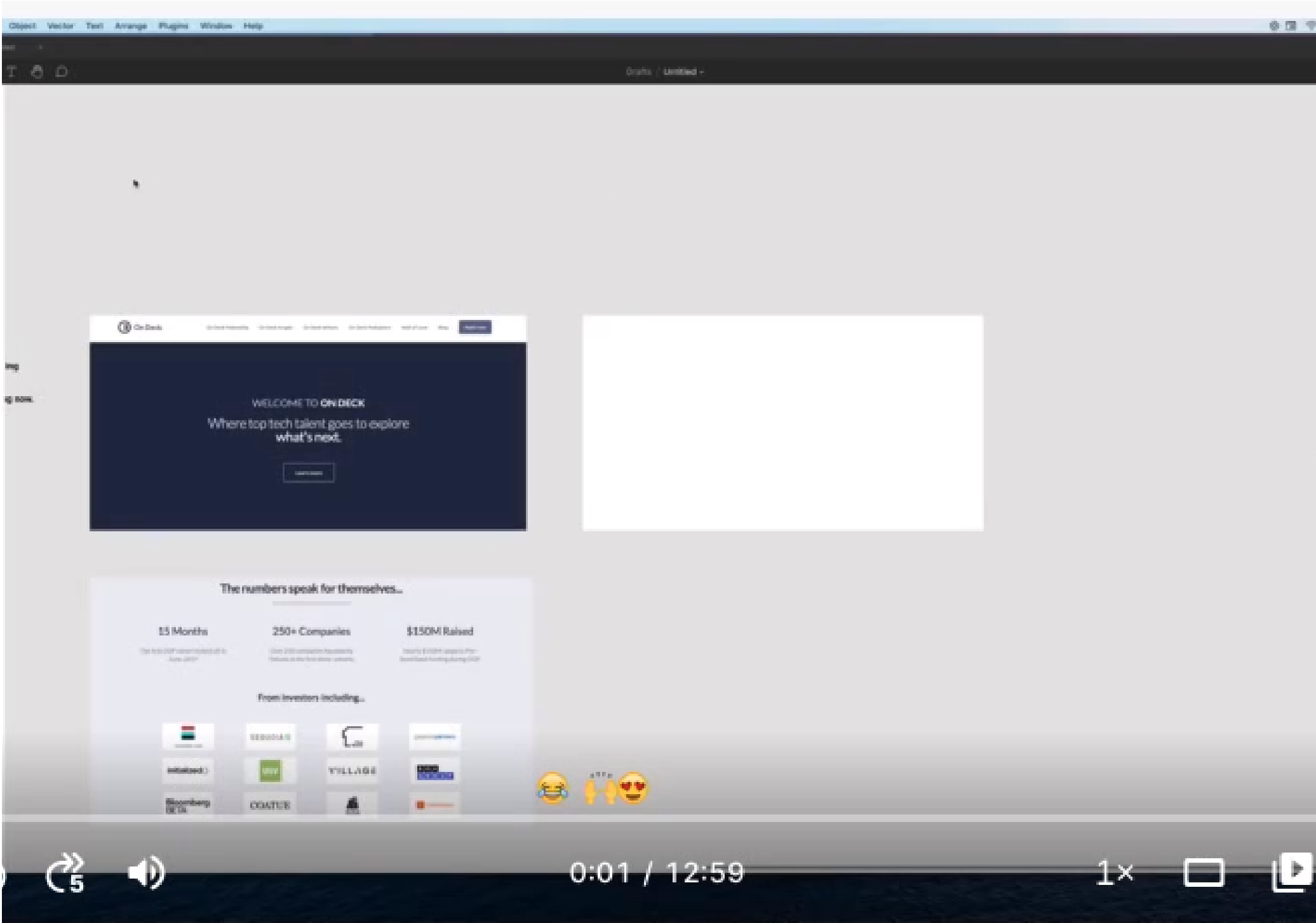
If you've been following along the All Access Pass - you've probably noticed how fast we move.

Big companies have more people, money, and bigger brands... To beat them, you have to use speed.

Kill your inner perfectionist.

Learn to make 1 hour MVPs like us.

This screencast shows you how I get things moving, in 15 minutes.

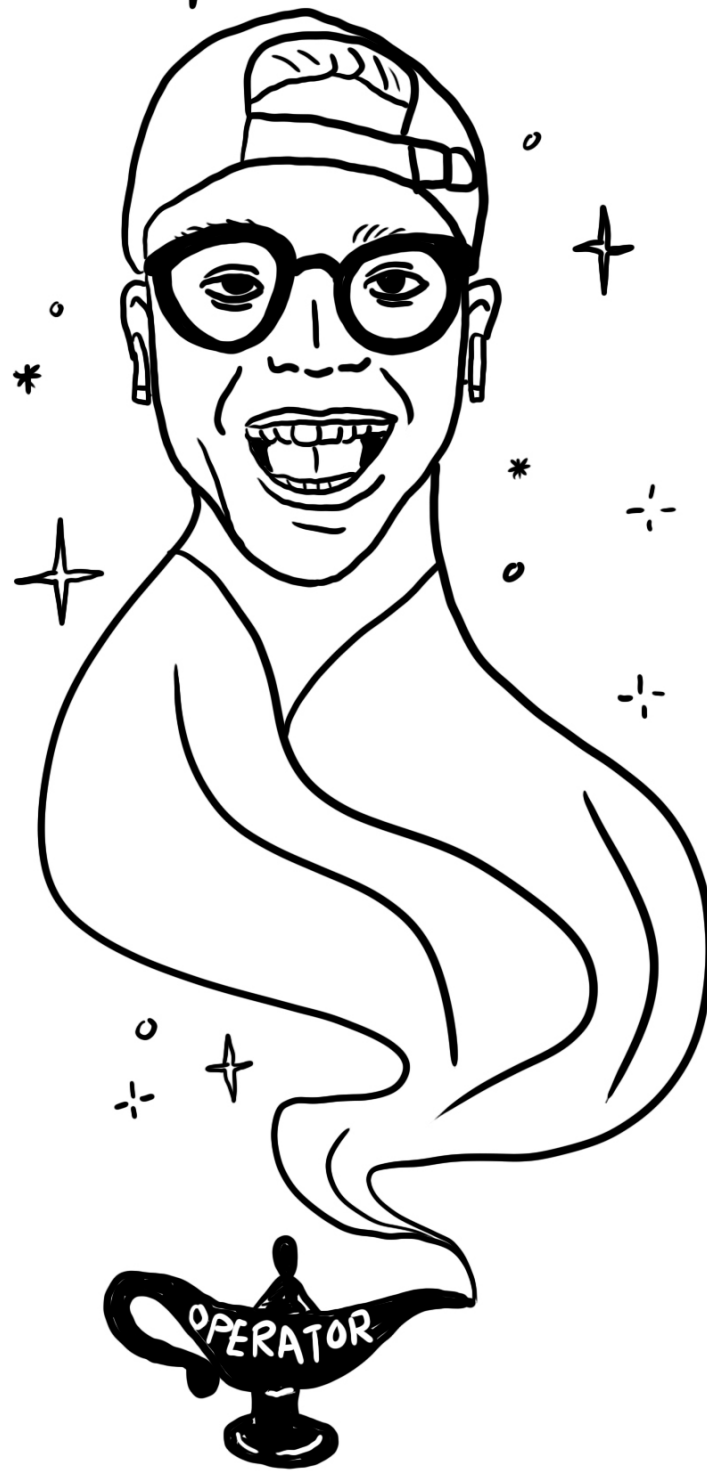


Dive Deeper

[Watch the Loom about Building landing pages](#)

Technique #12

Find Your Ben



Great Operators Are Magic ✨

“How the heck do you juggle so many projects??”

Dirty little secret. I don't.

As I've gotten older, I've started to recognize what I'm best at.

I'm best at getting things started. So to get the heavy lifting done, I actually need a great operator.

Getting one isn't as easy as it sounds. But I'll show you how I do it.

Before you hire, know that it takes time. You have to write the job posting, spread the word, look through 100+ resumes, do 15+ phone screens, do reference checks etc...

First, here are my five rules for getting great operators:

1. Be really clear about what i want
 2. Make sure incentives are aligned
 3. Give them, time, freedom, and money
 4. Let them rip
 5. And the most important rule.... Do something really great - because great people want to work on great projects. If your project is lame, it's really hard to attract a great operator.
- Then, I follow this playbook to bring the search for a great operator to the world:

Step #1 - Write a juicy job posting

I think of job postings like guys think about Tinder. You don't want to look like every-other-guy. You want to be hot and witty and charming and have 3 pictures that show your different sides (shirtless, with friends, and doing some adventurous hobby or cooking).

(to revisit my example, click the link at the end of this)

Step#2 - Don't Just Post On a Job Board

Post where your target person hangs out.

Want a developer?

Post on hackernews. Want a product person? Post on twitter (like I did)

Click this [link](#) to see the actual tweet storm

Dive Deeper

[Check out the onboarding doc that I made for a new hire at Bebo](#)



Thanks for reading

now go forth,
and conquer.

What'd you think?

email me:

shaan@allaccesspass.io