

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

All right.

Quick break to tell you about another podcast that we're interested in right now, HubSpot just launched a Shark Tank rewatch podcast called Another Bite.

Every week, the hosts relive the latest and greatest pitches from Shark Tank, from Squatty Potty to the Mench on a Bench to Ring Doorbell, and they break down why these pitches were winners or losers, and each company's go-to-market strategy, branding, pricing, valuation, everything.

Basically all the things you want to know about how to survive the tank and scale your company on your own.

If you want to give it a listen, you can find Another Bite on whatever podcast app you listen to, like Apple or Spotify or whatever you're using right now.

All right.

Back to the show.

I put out the bat signal today because Sam could not make it to the recording because he has good news.

He just tweeted it out.

The hustle has been acquired by HubSpot.

He'll come on probably at some point and talk all about that, but because of that, he's understandably busy today popping bottles and doing trillionaire shit that you do when the day you sell your company.

The day you sell your company, you're a trillionaire.

Okay.

So I put it out, and I got a bunch of people responding, some people in the DMs.

We got some blue check marks coming in saying, oh, pick me.

And we decided to go with the underdog, pick Trevor McKendrick to come on the pod.

If you suck, nobody will ever hear this, and this pod never happened.

But if you're good, this is your time to shine, baby.

You are one of the all-access past members.

That's how I first got to know you, your chief of staff at Lambda School.

And most importantly, you applied intelligently to this call to action of come on the podcast.

You sent me a screenshot of a bunch of ideas, and so I was like, good.

That's way better than somebody just saying, oh, I'll do it.

I'd be interested.

I'm down.

So you applied intelligently.

So that gets rewarded.

Some other people did as well.

Don't get mad at me if you didn't get picked, but I just said, let's give it a shot.

So Trevor, how does it feel to be here?

Feels super great.

I'm super excited to talk to you.

Do you normally listen to the pod or no?

Yeah.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

No, I listen all the time.

OK, great.

So you already know the deal.

You know how we do things.

Actually, you probably know how we should do things, which is more about ideas than sometimes we get off script and bullshit too much.

So we'll try to stick to the script here.

So ideas, are you, do you consider yourself an idea, man?

I try to be as much as possible.

Yeah.

I got my list whenever something comes down, write it up.

OK.

Whatever your ideas are.

So what I want you to do is you start spitballing ideas.

And if it's interesting, we'll start talking about it.

If it's dumb, I'm just going to say that's dumb and we can pass if it's just I have nothing to say.

OK.

And so you're going to be the machine gun firing out ideas and I'll just be deflecting and doing whatever I got to do.

All right.

So let's do it.

Let's go.

What ideas you got for me?

All right.

First up, I call it the \$5 headshot, which is everyone wants a good headshot.

Everyone's vain.

Everyone needs a good headshot, but most headshots suck.

Yes.

Like why?

We have all these editing tools.

We have all these things.

Why don't people have good headshots?

So the idea is pay \$5 for an app that all it does is takes a headshot, editing tools specifically for a headshot, lighting the whole thing.

And the way that you grow it is you can share like three or four of your favorite pictures with your friends, with the app logo at the bottom.

They vote.

This worked for like 99 designs.

Nice.

So you get like confirmation that you got a great pick, people, everyone else downloads the app and then you got to pay five bucks to download your favorite.

Okay.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

So, so you have a headshot for your Twitter account, which is Trevor Kendrick.  
Did you pay to get this headshot taken?  
My wife is a wedding photographer.  
So she did it.  
All right.  
So your wife did it for you.  
You're on this yellow background.  
Was that the real background?  
Or you photoshopped a yellow background?  
Photoshopped.  
It didn't stand out.  
Gotcha.  
It was white before that or what?  
It was like a outdoors background or something.  
Okay.  
Gotcha.  
So you cut it out.  
Okay.  
So you look at the thumbnail of this podcast, that picture you see is not just a picture.  
That's an investment.  
I went and paid some guy \$270, \$300 maybe.  
I don't remember what it was.  
Basically, some guy was doing Facebook ads and the Facebook ad was amazing because he just had a normal looking photo that somebody had as their like kind of LinkedIn bio.  
And then like this like ultra like sick looking photo of that same person and he's like, I can do this for you.  
I take professional headshots.  
If you take your career seriously, just come in and get a good photo taken.  
You're going to want that to do things.  
You know, that's something I would make fun of publicly, but privately I'd be like, damn, I kind of wish, you know, when somebody asks, like if you're talking at a conference or they always ask, do you have a headshot?  
And I'm sending them this like shitty low res thing of me from college.  
And they're like, you don't even look like that anymore.  
That's you 70 pounds ago.  
So I went and got this done and I paid \$300 for this.  
So I'm a believer that people would pay for this.  
And I do think the tech could do this well.  
I don't know how this is much different than just like a normal photo editing app like face tune or some shit like that.  
Is there something that's actually head shotty?  
There's friction.  
So like setting up your lighting, lighting's everything for pictures.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

So like the app can tell you, Hey, your lighting sucks, pivot right or left until it looks good.

And it's like, okay, you got the dotted outline.

Take it here.

It can also do things like there's friction between like exporting for like the 90 different platforms that your headshot needs to go into, right?

So it can just one click bump out to all the different formats.

And if you look at like the face tune of the other apps, the photo editing controls are like super complicated.

There's like, for people that are like the most vain want to like make every pixel perfect.

I think you could dumb it down a ton for like average Joe just wants a solid pick and make real like controls just built specifically for getting a headshot, which is a lot simpler.

Okay.

I like it.

I'm a fan of this idea.

And I liked the little viral mechanic of, Hey, which, because I did this, I sent it to my wife.

I sent it to my sister.

I said, Hey, which of these pictures cause when you go to a photo shoot, they're like, here's your gallery, but you can only own two of these.

And I'm like, you know, shift alt F4, you know, whatever, like I can take screenshots of all this shit.

So, so, so don't try to limit my downloads, bro.

But basically, yeah, I did get their opinions and that was a kind of viral mechanic.

All right.

That's a good idea.

I'll give it a B plus.

What else you got?

All right.

Next one.

So we always talk about like product, product, product, like tech world is obsessed with product.

We're always trying to feel like experiment and find the best product.

But what about a product that's built on experimenting with distribution channels and things that aren't tried and aren't as known in the tech world?

Like, so for example, using like direct mail.

So like direct mail, you can find people that the tech world doesn't find like our grandparents and then you can come with a product like just an example is like newsletters are super hot right now, but I promise you that our grandparents are not into newsletters.

I don't even know that like that's a thing right now.

How do you, and this idea came because like my grandparents are always asking me about like what's new, what's interesting, blah, blah, blah, and it's like, I wanted like a thing I could point them to like, Hey, to talk to your grandkids better, like what they're

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

into, check out this newsletter and it's like, okay, well, how am I going to find them? Probably not Facebook ads to be too expensive, but like direct mail.

There's no startup using direct mail to target grandparents.

So yeah, what do you think of that?

Okay.

So I didn't fully understand the idea.

So basically you're saying there's channels like direct mail, then what's the business or what's the idea here?

I might have missed it.

Cause I started thinking about it.

I started riffing on it in my head and I kind of missed what you said.

So explain it simpler to me.

I kind of changed it halfway, but the idea is how do you keep your grandparents informed about what is cool for their grandkids?

Okay.

So here's a fun, silly idea, which is just every, you know, schmuck with a newsletter right now, every schmuck with a sub stack, pay for \$7 a month, we'll print out your, your sub stack, we'll mail it to your mom and your grandma because they miss hearing from you.

And they actually care much more about you than your shitty sub stack subscribers do.

So okay.

That's just a goofy idea.

But if you combine that with a company I invested in, addressable, addressable.

Have you heard of these guys?

I have not.

Super cool company.

If you go to addressable.mail or addressable mail.com or something like that.

They have robots that hand write letters and the handwriting is literally done with a real pen.

So it's not like a font.

It's actual writing with a robotic hand that looks like a real human's handwriting.

And they do this for real estate agents or sales people who need to keep like in constant contact with clients and potential clients, or they do a lot for nonprofits who want to like think donors or potential donors.

They send them handwritten things through the, through direct mail.

But how do you do that at scale?

Right.

If you're a nonprofit with a 10,000 person email list and you're just getting lost in their email inbox, well, you could send, you know, personal letter to them through direct mail, that would take a long time to send 10,000 addressable makes it easy because they have robots that can write thousands of these per day.

So I invest in these guys because they're crushing it and they have an open API.

So like maybe you get hand, you use addressable to do the handwriting and they also mail it

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

for you and you just have to find the use case that will make sense for it.

So they're doing it for real estate, for sales, for nonprofits, and it sounds like what you're talking about is like keeping in touch with grandma and grandpa or different things like that.

Is that right?

Yeah.

And there's, I just like the idea of channels that non tech people have not explored or looked at and like using, you know, handwritten signatures to like customize the thing, make it feel more special and addressing like an older audience, I think it's that checkbox.

Yeah, that's cool.

Like I told these guys, you know, for e-commerce, e-commerce is always looking to like increase retention and lifetime value of a customer and these little things go a long way.

Now if you try to do a handwritten letter through, you know, yourself to your customers or through your, maybe your 3PL who packs your orders, they'll charge you like a, you know, 50 cents or 75 cents just to put an insert in and that's not even personalized.

So with addressable, if you're sending it for two bucks and your customers are worth \$100 plus to you, that could be a worthwhile investment, a personal touch where they feel like this is kind of a wow moment by this brand I bought from.

And for the brand, maybe you're going to like step up and be able to drive more lifetime value because you can see that those customers come back in order.

And that's the best part about addressable is they, because it's all programmatic, they'll tell you, cool, this person you sent the piece of mail to, did they go back and act on your website?

You can connect those two dots because it's the same, you know, user ID and email that you uploaded.

So they'll pass it back and then you could check, did they take any actions?

So I think that maybe you could do this for e-commerce as well.

Awesome.

Should we go on?

Yeah.

Next one.

All right.

Next thing is virtual shadow CEO.

So work.

So I'm the chief of staff for Austin at Lambda School and one of the things that was super interesting about that is you get to like get into the brains and see how somebody actually works.

Like how do they process their email?

How do they choose who to talk to you?

And like the real details, you know, we saw this a little bit with when you did all access pass.

And I think like what I want to do is shadow a CEO for a day, like record their screen, watch how do they do email?

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

How do they do like literally these little decisions?  
Because I think that most people would be shocked as an example by how fast these CEOs make decisions about big things, how they like view what to act on.  
And there's just no, there's no version of that.  
What do you think?  
So if I'm the CEO, why am I letting you record my screen and all that?  
We got to figure out those details later, man, this is the value prop to the customer.  
Okay.  
So I liked the idea of being able to shadow CEOs.  
I'm obviously a believer in that.  
I did it myself.  
When I moved to San Francisco, I specifically didn't go start my own company.  
I wanted to work with somebody who had done it before and I literally just said, I want to sit right next to you and see how you operate.  
Cause you've clearly had massive success.  
This was to this guy, Michael Birch.  
I said, you've clearly had massive success and I would love to just work with you.  
You know, I think you seem like an awesome guy.  
My secret intent was, look, if I could just see how this guy operates, then I can operate more like him.  
You know, my, okay, I won't tell this other story, but I have a second version of that, which was Scott Harrison is the founder of Charity Water and he's kind of like this really inspiring guy.  
If you ever go listen to him, give a talk about Charity Water, you know, you're moved, you're moved to take action, to donate, to do all these things.  
He's an amazing storyteller.  
He's building like a tech company, but it's a nonprofit, right?  
Like the people who go work there are like ex-Adobe and you know, Google and wherever else.  
Mostly those folks don't leave for the nonprofits because he's pretty, one of the reasons he's a pretty charismatic CEO and he pitches a big dream.  
So I emailed him once and I said, Hey, can I just come shadow you for a week?  
And I said, I'll work, you know, I'm going to take a vacation.  
I'm going to tell my company I'm taking a vacation, but my vacation is I'm going to come shadow you and he said, yeah, let's do it.  
And so I'm a big believer in this shadowing idea for the record.  
I never did actually go do it, but I'm a big believer in the idea.  
Not big enough to actually go do it, but enough to email the guy and ask.  
Now the question is, how do you make this payoff for the giver of access, right?  
When I did the all access pass, I charged for it.  
You know, I made good money doing it, so I was charging for the access.  
So how would you maybe solve that problem?  
I think I would.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

What would I do?

I got an idea for you.

I think a lot of times for these CEOs, money is not the driver legacy is so something like masterclass.

They do make money on masterclass, but I think the real appeal is kind of to the ego.

It's like, we're going to like document this.

We're going to capture you in this like super high quality thing and you're amongst this elite group of people who are like masters of their trade.

So in comedy, we did it with Steve Martin and basketball.

We did it with Steph Curry and in business.

We wanted to do it with you.

Howard Schultz, like that's their pitch.

So maybe you could do it that way.

Maybe you could capture it as a little documentary day in the life.

It's going to be sort of overproduced and like a spin thing, but I think that's maybe the only way you can get them to do it.

There's like a slightly tweaked version of this, which is recording how just like not CEOs, but like normal people work and like giving feedback on like how to like work more efficiently.

Yeah, you work better, which I think would be hard to do, but if a CEO believes that they can get even 1% improvement like in a workflow that they just don't even know about, I think the ego idea is actually better.

But if CEOs believe like a 1% thing is worth it, then that's also another angle.

One version of that that I think is kind of cool and weird is we've talked about this app or this company called Deep Sentinel before on the podcast.

They're basically like a security camera company like you put the camera outside your house, but there's somebody remotely watching it for you.

So whenever it beeps that there's somebody there, there's actually a human being watching it that like will then send you a message that says hey it's all okay or hey there actually is a threat and we're monitoring it, we'll call the authorities or whatever else, right?

And so there's like a security guard for the everyday home.

So I think there's a version of this that for meetings because I'm often in meetings and I'm watching people and I'm thinking man, they have no idea how they're coming across. Either they're being rude, their body language is totally disinterested.

They're too aggressive, they're too passive, you know, whatever it is, I wonder and meetings are very important, right?

Like at Twitch, there's just one room that's the big meeting room, it's on the ninth floor of the office and it's the big boardroom table and it's where basically the CEO kind of sits there all day and different teams come in and talk to them.

Like the amount of value that's in that room, right?

In terms of people time and their salaries and the decisions that get made is all like super critical, but there's no feedback loop of like how are you doing in these meetings?

How are you running meetings, right?



## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

There's a lot of like executive coaching, but they're kind of like therapy.

So I wonder if you could marry these three ideas, right, marry the idea of executive coaching and the deep Sentinel and meetings.

And the way this would work is you put a little camera in your meeting room, that gets piped to a coach.

The coach is going to watch that back, watch back the meetings and find game film like a like a basketball coach would and say, they'll chop it up and they'll say, Hey, they'll send it to you after the fact, you know, like a day later, you know, like four hours later or whatever.

And they could say, Hey, look, during this meeting, when this person was saying this thing, you were, your body language is totally disinterested or confrontational.

And look, you can see, if you pause right here, you can look and see their reaction to it.

So that's a moment where you can improve.

Cause imagine like how much better we could be if we got that type of feedback that athletes get where they get real footage that says, you look, you did this, maybe you could have done why instead.

And then by the, you know, for the next game, they like have that little movie in their head.

The question I'm asking myself for like all of these ideas for you is like, how much are you considering viability when you're riffing on ideas for me is like, I was like, I don't think the most important thing to Sean, which is why I was like, I'll pitch this shadow CEO thing.

We'll figure out the hard half later.

And then you like struck it down.

So I was like, Oh shit, like, maybe I got a, maybe my, my calibration was wrong.

Don't react to me.

Just do what you do.

Say what you think is interesting.

But I would say like, I always in general with ideas, I think if you're looking at viability too early, what's going to happen is you're right most of the time that this is a bad idea or it's not feasible or it's too expensive or whatever else, the 10% of ideas that actually had potential, you kind of struck down too early.

And all you needed to do was think about them a little more, tweak them a little bit, pivot it to an adjacent market and all of a sudden a bad idea became a good idea.

So all right, a quick message from our sponsor, you know, I was thinking about the shortest day of the year earlier.

And while we technically have the same amount of time as every other day of the year, the lack of daylight makes it feel so much shorter, which is exactly the same kind of feeling as working with disconnected tools.

Our workday is the same length as always.

But before you know it, we spent three hours just fixing something that was supposed to be automated.

Thankfully, HubSpot's all-in-one CRM platform can serve as a single source of truth for

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

managing your customer relationships across marketing, sales, service operations with multiple hubs and over a thousand integrations and an easy to use interface.

HubSpot lets you spend less time managing your software and more time connecting with your customers.

Learn how HubSpot can help you grow your business at [HubSpot.com](https://www.hubspot.com).

My process is desirability first, then viability.

So the desirability was, yeah, I actually think you do learn a lot from shadowing people.

I didn't understand what the incentive was, why the other person would desire it, why would the CEO desire to have their moves tracked.

And so that's why I went for a different idea that I think I've personally seen that these meetings are worth thousands, if not tens of thousands of dollars each, and that was hard for me to fathom until I worked at a big company.

But it's true.

If you're a partner at a consulting firm or you're an executive in a company, every meeting is worth thousands of dollars of your time, other people's time, and then the decisions you make multiply that to become hundreds of thousands of dollars ideas or millions of dollars.

Maybe you could get coached like an athlete gets coached.

I find that to be interesting, but also so weird that I don't know how to interpret it.

All right.

Next idea.

Shopify for cash-based doctors.

So if you want to get a procedure done, you can get it done generally a lot cheaper if you pay straight cash and more doctors in Mexico or what are you talking about?

What's going on here?

Who's taking cash?

I've never paid a doctor in cash, nor have they asked me.

Is that a thing?

This is like a growing trend in the U.S. where people are in the minimum insurance, yep, because it's just so much cheaper to get a cash procedure done.

So there are individual loan doctors offices that have like rolled their own to be able to accept a direct payment.

But this is like a, you know, call it like a secular shift, a growing trend.

So second half of this, you know this because you were almost a doctor.

Being a doctor can suck a lot because you lose most of your independence depending on what type of doctor you are.

One way to regain that is to open your own practice and a way to bump that even more is to like not deal with insurance, right, and just like sell to your clients, right?

And so making that as easy as Shopify to start being able to do that.

Yeah, I like that idea a lot.

I didn't realize this cash payment thing was a big deal, but just a quick Google tells me that there might be a there there.

That seems like a, like a real opportunity.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

I don't know enough about it to like intelligently talk about ideas, but I know enough to know that that's where there are opportunities like that.

And I'm just curious in general, who is building the kind of Angel list, Stripe Atlas, or what not for starting your doctor's practice?

Like I'm guessing today that starting a practice is a bunch of work, a bunch of paperwork, a bunch of legal work, a bunch of insurance work, compliance work, and like whoever figures out how to streamline that into like what Angel list did for starting funds, what Stripe Atlas did for incorporating companies.

And I'm sure somebody to say that exists.

I bet you you could take it down like one more order of magnitude and friction and make it even easier, right?

Cause like you could have said legal zoom exists.

Why do you need Stripe Atlas?

And then you use Stripe Atlas and you're like, Oh, okay, yeah, that's exactly why you need Stripe Atlas.

And I bet you somebody's going to do that for doctor's practices.

Yeah.

Okay.

Next one.

So it's more of like a, almost like a reality show thing, which is, and it's also like an entrepreneurship hustle behind it, which is like, watch me as I try to get on the Joe Rogan show.

What does that look like?

Who am I talking to?

Who am I networking with?

And the end goal is really specific, really clear.

So just a mission.

Yeah.

Just a mission and like, how do I get there?

How does that happen?

Okay.

I like that a lot.

I'm a fan of ambitious mission.

Watch me document my journey because you have a no lose situation.

You're going to get a bunch of people rooting for you.

That actually increases your odds of the thing happening.

Even if it doesn't happen, you got a bunch of people who really root for you.

And like, I think Pixar has this quote, which is like, it doesn't matter if the hero wins, but it does matter how hard they try something like that.

And basically that the audience is there not to see you succeed.

It's there to see you try to succeed.

And that's one of Pixar's like golden rules of storytelling.

Don't make it too easy for the hero.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

The audience is there to watch you try to succeed.  
I think that applies to basically every YouTube channel there is.  
They have to have something to care about, right?  
And like, whether you succeed or not is like irrelevant.  
So what would yours be getting on Joe Rogan?  
Yeah, I do Joe Rogan.  
That's that or like Sam Harris, which is like a not my first million.  
One of them.  
Yeah, I want guys making the video today.  
We hope we hope.  
Yeah.  
I think Joe Rogan's a great one.  
I mean, Oprah, whatever, maybe last generation.  
I do think also it's cool to have something be authentic and slightly quirky.  
So like, it's one thing to say, you know, I want him Joe Rogan is good.  
I think the Joe Rogan one is good.  
But I think a better one might be like, let's say Michelle Obama, not Barack, but Michelle.  
Because I think if it's an obvious you just want power, people don't root for it as much.  
But if it's like something that's someone that really mattered to you and you have like a real story about why that matters to you and why you why you want it so bad, you want it more than you should.  
That's what will get people to share it because it's sort of more remarkable than what we all want to be rich, right?  
We all want to be famous.  
So it's like, I think it's got to be both specific.  
And I actually think quirky specific will work better.  
So it's like getting on, like, you know, the Maury Povich show might work better than Oprah or whatever it is.  
Totally.  
I mean, you're good at ideas, man.  
And they build a sense of like community around the quiriness people like select in.  
We saw this with the Wall Street Bets thing.  
I think that's one of the reasons why people got behind it, right?  
There was the David versus Goliath underdog story.  
People love that.  
There was the like, you know, revolution.  
People love that.  
They could get a little bit rich if they were doing it.  
But there was also the absolute randomness of what was going on.  
Why GameStop?  
Why like, you know, this Reddit Wall Street Bets, this quirky community going after this random ass stock and trying to take down the big guy, you know, like, it's interesting when it's that versus, I don't know, if it was Microsoft, would it have felt the same?

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

I kind of don't think so.

I think because it was GameStop, there was even more juice to that story.

Yep.

And there's a lot of people like they want to start a podcast, I want to start a new grow an audience, but you need like something to talk about that makes you interesting and having a mission.

Yeah.

Let's do the next one.

So one of the things we see at Lambda school is we're training people to be programmers to get a job, technical skills, but 50% of getting a job is having like the right social skills.

Like how do you network?

How do you email?

How do you, how do you be like a white collar worker?

This would be, you could do any number of things, but I think one course that you could offer is like how to email as a professional.

The hard part about this is that people that don't know, they don't do it right, don't know about it, right?

And so you have to kind of convince people that there's value here, but it is a huge gap in the people that are like trying to make it.

And there's so many little tweaks and email that we don't get taught anywhere.

Don't love that one because I think that it hurts in two ways.

I don't think people will tell other people they're, they're taking that course necessarily because it sounds kind of stupid of them.

And then the second thing is that the problem you said, which is that they may not realize that they need it.

And so this might be one where like when we have to give medicine to our dog, you have to put it in a pill pack, which is like a treat that you shove the pill into.

So it's like, here I'm giving you this treat, but the thing you really need is this pill.

And so I kind of think maybe you'd need a different hook, which is like people come to learn, you know, X, a thing that they feel like is a, something that they are aspiring to do that they want to do, and then in it, you deliver some of their vegetables that they need to take, which is like, Hey, by the way, here's an email, we do this little, here's another way.

Here's another way.

Okay.

That's going to work.

A little assessment.

So the old, you know, American pharmaceutical industry thing, you diagnose the problem, then you sell them the solution.

So you could make a viral sort of quiz, which is like, what company do you write like?

And you have to write it.

It just comes in and says, Oh, you need to write an email to your boss saying that you're

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

going to be late today, or, you know, you're going to be out this week for due to personal reasons.

And your co-worker is going to cover it for you.

Just write that email.

And then it tells you, you write at the level of a Wells Fargo employee, or like, no, you write at the level of a McKinsey associate or partner, or you're a lawyer or whatever.

And I think that would be viral.

And then you can upsell the, by the way, what do you think of my diagnose the problem, then sell them the solution idea.

I think it is a much better version or it's a great way to sell what I was talking about.

I think it would be super tough to judge kind of what the writing level is.

Oh, it's just arbitrary.

Doesn't even fucking matter.

Right.

You just, oh, you're just like labeling.

Yeah.

You just like, you know, you take a couple rough here, like, what's the average word length that they're using?

How many words total did they use?

Did they, you know, whatever, you could program in just a couple of quick things and, and you do, it doesn't matter.

It's like a personality quiz.

Right.

Like I referenced Michael earlier.

He was the investor of my previous company.

When he previously launched a social network, he was trying to think about how do you get users right away?

He had just sold his company to a company called tickle, which back in the day, all tickle did was quizzes and they started with really like kind of the kind of scientific personality quizzes that are like deeply rooted in whatever bullshit science that those are rooted in.

You know, they sort of evolve based on what the market wanted to like the most popular quiz was which dog are you and you just take a quiz about shit you like.

And then it's like, you're like a wiener dog, you're like a poodle and people would share that.

They would love their results and it went viral.

So that's how tickle grew to like a hundred million dollar company was through these quizzes.

So when he wanted to see the social network, he's like, all right, cool, we need a social network.

But like, how do we get all the users?

He said, he went back to the well, he made a quiz and the quiz was the best friend quiz.

How well do you know me?

So you would answer a bunch of questions about yourself, which is your favorite topic.

Then you would send it to your friends and it would say, Hey, this is a quiz to see how

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

well you know me.

They're kind of intrigued.

How, you know, let me see what I get.

They would try to answer what you, you know, what your guess, what your answers are, and they would get a score at the end of, you know, here's your best friend score.

You're a 76% or whatever it is.

And then it would say, by the way, you should do this too.

You take your quiz and send it back to them nine days, one million members.

And so I've definitely seen these kind of like simple viral quiz type things, the really high engagement and high sharing.

They're not great for longevity, but in this case, you're actually selling a course.

You're not, you're not trying to get them to come back and keep taking a writing assessment.

And then you can have people compete against each other for like which label they are, how good they are.

And that's an incentive to share it.

You can track between your friends and then you're the whole time you're selling whatever course it is that can help.

Right.

Improve the writing.

Okay.

So if any Lambda school student wants to make a project out of this, I will respond.

Is that how it works?

Can I just be like, I'll pay \$3,000 for any student who makes a good version of this.

Can I do that at Lambda school?

We'll get you someone for free to try for a month.

Oh, perfect.

Okay.

So you heard this on the podcast.

And then this is my mission.

I'm going to collect, I'm going to call it a hundred thousand email addresses of people who take this quiz that's going to be built by a Lambda school student as they're like internship project.

I'm going to show you how viral this can go.

I love it.

All right.

This justifies my presence here to Austin.

I can be like, yeah, I got it.

I got it.

I pimped.

It's your investment too.

So we're good here.

We're good on both sides.

All right.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

Exactly.

Next up, a, call it GitHub for contracts or for lawyers.

So if you've done any deal on the face of the planet involves lawyers, it is the biggest pain of the ass because you're sending word docs back and forth from each other with red lines and it's a whole thing.

So getting this started would be difficult, but the idea is creating a GitHub where you can track changes on a single doc between all parties.

You can't hide anything on a single place and it's easy to track and it's one thing.

The benefit of this is you become the platform for contracts that everyone uses and the trick is how do you get those first users?

So this idea has been around for a little while and it does feel like this should exist.

I was also like, I think five, six years ago, I was like, why doesn't this exist?

And I talked to our lawyer and she was like, well, the thing is lawyers don't really love to change anything.

We all use desktops and laptops and we use Microsoft Word and we all understand it.

Like we have our file history and I'm like, no, but it could be so much better if you just did it this way.

And so, you know, I think the challenge here is just a lawyer adoption.

I know this company, Ironclad is doing pretty good here, but I think this is a good idea that when it happens, it's going to seem so obvious, but I don't know how you get lawyers to use it because I think that's where the real point of friction is for this, unfortunately.

So they should do it.

Should is not, not, yeah, an actual need.

Should is not will or what's that phrase like, you know, if grandma had balls, she'd be grandpa, type of thing.

Yeah.

That's what this is.

They should want it.

If they, everyone did what they should, then the world would be a different place.

All right.

So the next idea is children's books.

Like pick the thing that pick the value that a parent wants to get into their kids and like make a children's book for that.

For I've seen like children's books are all like the healthcare system or about like libertarian is and whatever it is.

Like parents want to like plant these freaking ideas into their kids heads.

And so make like a decent children's book for, you know, pick your topic of choice.

Okay.

Don't love it.

Next idea.

Next idea.

All right.

All right.



## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

What is the best idea on your list?

Have you already done it?

Or is there one that you've got like in hidden in the wings?

I'm not hiding anything.

I'm doing my best already.

What else we got?

Okay.

Answer me this.

I had said a Lambda school for X idea before I said a Lambda school for executive assistance before.

Was that a bad idea?

And I'll give you the two sentence why EA's make actually great money.

So they make almost like a, you know, a programmer is a big leap ahead of where you were.

If you were a kind of like not in the white collar tech industry.

So EA's in the tech industry will make \$5,000 plus, I believe.

And could be, you know, 120 or 30, 140.

I think that's possible.

Check me on that if I'm wrong, but I believe that's true.

So there's a really specific set of teachable skills, like the actual skill of calendaring, how to do that, how to do meeting minutes, how to organize, you know, these events or sort of like little off sites or whatever it is.

So just, I think it's something that can be taught in six months where you could become a staffing agency.

Basically, you could say, Hey, hire from us.

We have a guaranteed pipeline of really good EA's that whenever you need one, they come out with, you know, a specific set of skills.

Cause I think typically right now, EA's are just people who were doing one thing and then they get asked to do it and then boom, now you're in EA and learn on the job.

You know, they're like kind of in rare quantity because when somebody has a great EA, they never want to lose them.

It's like that executives, you know, safety blanket is that EA.

So they never, they, they work with them for like 10 years sometimes.

So there's like a lack of liquidity.

What do you think of that idea?

Am I off?

So there's like two ways you could do it.

I think it could work.

Assuming the salary for these EA's is high enough.

The one way is like the pure Lambda way where you train them, you help them get a job and then they pay back like an income share agreement.

But the other way is to, and we've started toying with this to Atlanta school is, you know, collecting on an ISA is hard, making sure everyone that comes to your school actually wants a job can be hard.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

And so instead of getting paid for an ISA, you turn into an actual staffing agency. And if you're actually good at training people, you can take someone who doesn't have the skills, turn them into someone who does and then charge them out as an actual agency, right? And then when, you know, if someone really likes their EA, they can like buy the contract off of you or whatever.

And I think that second way solves like a lot of problems.

It solves for like the selection issue and it actually, it gives you a better feedback loop on whether you're doing like training them well because you're actually hiring them them out, right?

But yeah, I think, you know, barring ISA is being totally like kind of shut down by the government.

I think it worked for any, any number of industries.

Okay, cool.

Let's do two more ideas and then we'll switch and you get to ask me whatever questions you want.

All right.

Here we go, man.

Bible stories to get you to fall asleep.

So the reason I like this is because this whole ASMR genre has A, it's a trend and B, there are specific Spotify people and YouTube people who all they do is they'll talk slowly for you to fall asleep.

But so like, how do you do that better?

Well, you make people like feel good about it in the process, right?

And so you read them the thing that they're supposed to be reading or they feel like they're supposed to be doing in the first place and it like happens to make them like fall asleep.

Okay.

I like that idea.

I like combining anything with sleep with anything with religion.

So you're speaking my language, those are two themes I'm always trying to find excuses to do businesses in because I think they're amazing places to do business.

So, so, so I'm in on that idea.

I like that one.

As a former atheist Bible salesman, I can tell you religion's a good business to be in.

What was that story?

So you were an atheist Bible salesman.

That sounds cool.

I like that.

That leads on the resume.

What does that actually mean?

So I started a Spanish language Bible app that was free to download and you monetize it by buying an audio book of the Bible in the app through it to over a million users.

It was all bootstrapped and then it got acquired by a public company.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

And the reason basically I started it as I was leaving Mormonism.

And so it was kind of something I believed in initially, but later I was like, Oh, this feels like I would get emails from like, you know, poor people in like Mexico, they're like, Hey, they didn't know I was like an app guy that was like a pastor or something. So they'd be like, Hey, can you pray for my son?

His leg is broken or something.

And I was like, Oh, this, this feels a little, is it a little too real for me?

But yeah, I was an atheist Bible salesman and then a company came along and bought it. Okay.

That's amazing.

Why are you a chief of staff?

Chief of staff because I wanted to learn how to run a company without actually kind of doing it first, if that makes sense.

So I get is I get all the visibility that Austin and the CEO have without necessarily like the responsibility of delivering on like a venture backed startup, which is probably not like the best reason, but it's been amazing to go from, you know, I was number 20 to like the 200 people that we are now, who should become a chief of staff?

You should become a chief of staff.

If you think you want to do a venture backed startup, but you're not sure, because it's like the easiest way to test it out with almost no kind of risk or stress on your part.

I mean, yeah, it's regular work and a stressful, but it's nothing like actually being the CEO on a day to day basis.

Like what percent of your day are you doing like bitch work that you don't want to do?

The percent goes down over time as you get good and you earn trust.

But what did it start at?

And what is it now?

Yeah, it started, let's call it at 60% was bitch work and define like what bitch work is for people who don't know what bitch work calendaring, responding to emails, that type of stuff.

Okay.

Today it's like 10%.

So eventually you get good enough for you.

Like we've hired an EA for Austin who like does most of this stuff.

Gotcha.

And now what do you do?

What do you do with the other 90?

Now I do, you know, like big company stuff.

So goal planning, okay, ours, internal comms, a lot of external comms, marketing on the PR side, stuff that's like very broad across the whole company, but not like not super deep anywhere.

And you're basically like as a chief of staff, you're kind of like in a relationship with the CEO.

Totally.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

Totally.

So texting 24 seven access to their email, you know, and Austin's like one of the easiest CEOs to work with, quite frankly, and like super chill and and pretty easy going, you know, it's if you need something, I'm trying to do my best to get to get whatever that is.

What's an embarrassing story about Austin?

You wouldn't want you to tell him podcast, but you're going to.

I don't know if I can do that.

I mean, we can talk about the fund that was not raised for him on Twitter by Sahil, which is like insane.

People haven't seen this is pretty cool.

He was like, oh, should I raise a fund and then saw her like tweeted out, Hey, Austin's raising a fund and then some ridiculous amount of money came in.

How much was it?

The number that I heard was like 30 million.

I don't know which of those actually like came through, but yeah, it was 30 million.

So 30 million of interest, at least through like a survey or type form or something, which I think would translate to roughly based on my fund would translate probably to 20 million of actual commitments, which is no joke.

And then in respect to Austin for not getting distracted by the shiny object and he was like, that's way too much.

I don't need to do that.

So no, so I like that.

Okay.

So I've asked you some questions.

You've given me some ideas.

Let's do 15 minutes or 20 minutes or however long you want to go.

I'm cool.

I'm done with meetings for the day of any questions you want to ask me.

Yeah.

So you've been getting better in shape.

You know, that's a goal that a lot of people have similar to like wanting to start a business kind of like all these classical goals and like some people for whatever, like can't do the thing.

They're like not motivated or whatever the reason is for a long time, you weren't able to get in shape.

I know you say like, I've hired a coach and I like built this system.

Do you think it would have been possible?

I want to hear about how you would have done it without that stuff or if it was just not going to happen.

So I was that exactly that person that was like a shooting all over myself, as we say,

I should get in shape.

I should work out.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

I should go to the gym today.

I should eat better.

I should not take this 10th nacho like whatever.

And I had tried to get in shape.

I had half tried five times, which results in zero times of actually getting in shape.

And so, you know, I'd say there's really like two kind of core things to get done.

This is my Tony Robbins like preaching coming through here.

We don't get our shoulds.

We get our musts.

And so when it becomes a must for you, it happens when it becomes a must for you, you make things move the right direction that they need to in order to just come through.

And so for me, it became a must because it really just elevated to that level of importance to me where I said, I put it as my number one goal for the year.

So you can see a friend made this for me, but he sent this little is actually cool.

I've talked about Ramon on the podcast before saying he's a great guy and he's an amazing friend.

He texted me like, Hey, what are your goals for 2021?

And he made them into this like little print them out, got a man on a little plaque thing and it was like Sean's 21, 21 goals.

And the number one thing you see there is get fit through habits.

And I made it number one and I committed publicly that I was doing this.

So there's no backing out, you know, there's all kinds of little mechanics, but really all the how comes after the why is big enough.

So my why got big enough where I was like, no, no more.

And I made a commitment to myself that I was going to do that and that this was the time the must for me was like, look, if it doesn't happen this time when I have all the resources, I'm literally sheltered in place at home.

And like, you know, I've said it so many times, if this isn't the time, then I'm just not that guy.

I refuse to accept that.

Like I am that guy.

I am that guy who decides something and then does it.

And so it became a conflict of ego with myself.

And so it had to be like, I had to do it.

So that was a must.

And then I started saying, okay, cool, now I'm going to stack the odds in my favor to make it happen.

So that's when I was like, okay, cool, well, what do I need it to be?

I need it to be easy.

Right?

Why make it hard?

So then I was like, cool, I'm going to do it at home.

Not have to go to the gym.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

Let's take that out.

Food, cool.

I'm going to like meal, I'm going to get meal prep service so that I don't have to decide to eat healthy each meal.

Each meal is not a decision.

No, each meal is already in the fridge, meal prepped, boom, like that, that got done.

Then I made it fun because I was like, if it's not fun, I'm not going to stick with it.

So I hired a trainer I liked who's cool to hang out with that, you know, makes the exercise fun.

And I found food that I actually like that's healthy.

And I put no pressure on myself.

I said, it doesn't matter if this takes me three months, six months, 12 months, 25 months, 36 months.

I don't care how long this takes me.

I took 32 years to get fat.

If it takes me three years to get skinny, that's all right.

It's okay with me.

And so that reduction of pressure took a lot of the stress away also of doing it and made it more enjoyable for me to do, to make it happen.

So those were some of the things that like changed for me that shift.

I think it's important to note that you, the order that you did those, because the second was like the infrastructure, whatever the first was like, no, I'm just going to do this.

And I found for myself too, I lost 25 pounds last year.

And it was kind of like the same thing where it's like, no, this is just, this has to happen.

And I think, I think people underestimate just having will, how much having will can make things happen.

You don't get your, your, what you want, you get your musts.

And that's like the biggest thing.

And so once it becomes an actual must, the world will start to move.

My method is irrelevant.

Whether you can afford a trainer or not, and you could, you have the time to meal prep or not, those don't really matter in the end, because the person who, for whom it becomes a must, they will figure out the way to do it, right?

They will, with no, you know, guys in jail with no equipment can just do push-ups all day and then eat slop and get, you know, ripped.

And so there's really no excuse.

I also heard a funny thing, which is my friend said this is totally politically incorrect, but I'm going to say it because I think it's funny.

And I struck a chord with me.

It's not okay to be rich in fact, and he goes, he goes, he goes, if you're poor, look, getting in shape is probably like, you know, maybe not the most important thing for you.

Maybe you don't have access to healthy food.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

Maybe you don't have time.  
Maybe you're working multiple jobs.  
But if you're rich, no excuse, bro.  
And, and I just thought it's like, it went against what I normally see, which is that usually the richer you get, the chubbier you get, and I thought that's so true.  
There's no excuse.  
Your excuses are gone if you're rich to be fat.  
So that in that case, if you have no excuse, then you can't do it.  
You can't be rich and fat.  
And I adopted that.  
And I can't say his name or he'll get canceled.  
All right.  
I'm okay.  
I'm going to keep saying things that nobody can cancel me because there's too many.  
I'm going the Trump route, say everything, and you've eventually become immune.  
You know, it's like a person with a great immune system, you know, after living in the swamps.  
Let's talk about you growing your audience.  
So this is clearly a goal that you have made.  
And you've played around with like the, I think you've called it like the, what red pill are you?  
Like what is the thing that people know you for?  
I think in your Twitter bar right now, it says the idea guy, which is to me is funny because people like always shit on the idea guy.  
So how do you think about growing your audience?  
So also became a must for me.  
I was like, I got to do this.  
And so in the last, it's been crazy dude, in the last 60 days, I think I went from, I don't know, 30,000 Twitter followers to 95,000 Twitter followers and it's just from like a concerted effort to do it.  
And so that part's working, I would say I still haven't found my red pill.  
I am actively searching for it.  
I'm trying out different things.  
So for people who don't know, the red pill framework was this guy, Andrew Finn, who is one of the guys behind wait, but why one of my favorite blogs, I think he listened to the podcast.  
I don't know.  
He followed me on Twitter and DMed him.  
I was like, dude, I'm a big fan.  
We'd love to, you know, hang some time.  
And we talked one time and I asked him, you know, what's the, what's the trick with content?  
And I just asked all kinds of random questions like this, but I said, what's the thing about content that people just don't get?

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

And I forgot one of these questions triggered him to say this.  
He goes, you know that moment in the matrix where Morpheus reaches out and he's got the blue pill in one hand, he's got the red pill in the other.  
And he's asking Neo like, you know, do you want the truth or do you want to just keep living in sort of your fairy tale, fake life?  
If you want the truth, you can see how far the rabbit hill goes.  
And he goes, you know, that's the red pill, like handing him the red pill was basically handing him the truth.  
And he goes, for your content, for your, if you want to build a following, you want to build a big blog or Twitter or podcast, whatever, you got to have your red pill.  
What are you handing society that they're not hearing everywhere else?  
What's the truth that you know that you've uncovered?  
It's just like comedians.  
Comedians do the same.  
A funny joke is just a truth well told.  
I think that's the same thing for people who want to build an audience.  
You got to figure out what is your red pill.  
I'm trying a couple.  
One is ideas.  
So this podcast is about brainstorming ideas.  
And I think it goes a little bit deeper, which is like, look, good ideas are everywhere.  
Those are plentiful.  
And look, the execution is not that hard.  
It could be done fast.  
Just take massive action.  
And so I tell stories about ideas and how I would do them or how somebody else did them and how, you know, it's not that hard.  
It's not that it's not that complicated.  
It's just simple.  
Go do it.  
But I feel like I haven't found that red pill.  
Like I'll give you some examples.  
I look at a guy like Pomp.  
Pomp built a really big audience in the Bitcoin space because his red pill he hits his wagon to was that Bitcoin is the way he did this in 2017.  
He said, I'm going to be the loudest Bitcoin bull.  
I'm going to say that Bitcoin is going to change everything and I'm going to keep telling people how Bitcoin is changing everything.  
That was the red pill.  
He was given everybody.  
There's a bunch of different people who have different versions of the red pill and I'm still searching for mine.  
I would recommend people listening.



## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

So I the all access pass was awesome, but it was paid and now you've basically made it free in the current newsletter.

So just a pump for Sean Puri dot com.

Yeah, I'm trying to get the newsletter to 100 K also.

It has also doubled in size in the last month.

So Sean Puri dot com, if you're at this point of minute 55 on the podcast or whatever and you are not subscribed to my newsletter, that is a direct slap in the face to me and to yourself.

Don't do that to both of us.

You deserve to get this newsletter for free.

What a pitch.

What a pitch.

Okay.

You talk about this concerted effort to grow and I see you have a lot of viral tweets.

You have like these viral threads.

Are you drafting these and testing ideas?

Are you trying things with friends or are you just like pumping the first thing that comes to mind and seeing what happens with it?

Now I have a method to like try to get good at something, which is you form a little mastermind of other people who are in the same boat trying to get good at things.

So we have a text thread.

I think I've mentioned this one once before, but we have a text thread called the hundred K club.

And it was a bunch of us that wanted to get to 100,000 followers at the time I had 30, the biggest guy had 60.

And this was a month ago.

And since then, two people have crossed the hundred K mark.

I'm about to I'm at 94.4 as we tape this.

And the others are going to get there too.

So one thing I've did this when I tried to get good at poker, same thing, go move into a house with a bunch of other people that have the same dream as you.

And every day when you eat, sleep and breathe, you guys are all chasing this dream and you'll be sharing tactics and tips and you'll be inspired by each other's successes.

And when you fail, the other people will pick you back up.

That's the best way to win at something.

So I'm doing that with the content side.

So they basically shared some tips and tactics, how to optimize your, your profile page.

When somebody checks you out after your tweet, that they actually click follow.

When should you tweet out?

Should you retweet compliments of yours?

Should you not?

You know, should you at the end of your tweets, your Twitter thread, it feels awkward.

But if you put in the call to action that says, Hey, if you like this kind of stuff,

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

follow me and boom, your, you know, your followers are going to spike just by doing that kind of awkward step.

So that's really helped me do that.

Plus the consistency.

You know, when I see somebody else's tweet go viral, I'm like, fuck, why isn't that me?

And then I go to, you know, I go that night.

And instead of watching, you know, that 30 minutes of TV or 45 minutes of TV, I write out some content and that's what's worked for me.

That's awesome.

Yeah.

It's, um, one of the things I've tried to do is I don't know if you've heard of readwise.

I've heard of it.

Yeah.

One of the things it does, I let you save Twitter threads and they have a leaderboard of who has the most saved threads.

And so trying to march up that is like a sign of not just quantity, but like quality, like how much people actually like the things that you're making.

I hate those things.

By the way, every time I tweet something, everybody, the first comments are always like at readwise at thredder or it's like, dude, what is this spam?

Like what was it so hard just to read this?

Like why do you need this?

Like compile this for me.

It doesn't Twitter do that.

What is the real appeal of this?

I don't understand.

I love that.

Like these are the people that are like most interested in your content and you're like, what the hell are you doing saving my words?

I don't even understand it.

Why are they doing that?

Why don't they just read the thing?

Because they want to reference it.

So they want to like save.

Oh, it's a bookmark.

They can sort of do a document that they can save and yeah, it's a bookmark.

Exactly.

Okay.

Yeah.

Not saying that smart things.

You don't need to save all the shit.

Just hit the retweet button and move on.

That's all I ask.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

So at least I don't think you talk about this much on the podcast from what I've heard, but it's obvious that one of the things you're really good at and you've told a couple of stories about this is persuading people to kind of get behind whatever your vision or your idea is.

You told some story about you had dinner with this random guy who also had a bunch of charisma and you like, how do you, how do you deal with your superpower?

You know, you have an idea.

You have a thing you want to do.

How do you think about rallying the troops to kind of get people behind you and into a thing?

Well, I think it's super important.

First of all, right?

So I place importance on it.

A lot of people think it's a nice to have.

For me, I'm like, well, that's what I do.

That's important.

I know like that.

I've seen so much value come from it.

I treat it like it's work, you know, it feels like play, but I treat it with some importance is what I mean.

I don't just like hope it happens or like get to it when I get to it.

I'm like, no, let me actively try to do this.

Yeah.

I think people respond best to stories and that's why I talk about storytelling a lot.

That's why I told that story of that guy, Billy, that you remember, right?

Like this guy met in a sushi restaurant and he was so charismatic.

And then I asked him, like, dude, you have this power of persuasion.

I'm like mesmerized by you as awkward as this sounds like we just had a date and that was a great date.

You know, you just took me out to sushi and then wine to dine me.

That was awesome.

How do you deal with this?

And he told me in that moment, he goes, if your intentions are good, they'd use all you got.

Right.

And so same thing.

I don't feel awkward or manipulative.

Some people feel salesy if they're trying to persuade somebody of something or get somebody behind something.

I don't think that I just have a really tight filter at the beginning.

I don't.

I try not to do shit.

That's bad.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

That'll be bad for you or stupid or a bad investment or a bad product.

I try to just deal with good things that I genuinely believe in.

And then I carry zero guilt about sharing those with the world.

In fact, I feel the opposite.

I feel like I'm giving a gift out whenever I talk about it.

When I talk about it, I try to talk about it through stories because I think that's what sticks in people's heads and I think that's what gets people interested in hearing what you have to say.

And so then I started to think about what makes a good story and started to practice doing that.

And anytime I hear a good story, I sort of try to think about what made that such an interesting story.

Oh, wow.

They, you know, like one thing that makes a good story is stakes.

Stakes meaning like what was on the line for the person who was telling the story.

So it's one thing to say, I really wanted this to happen, but I'm, you know, I'm already happy and I'm rich and it's all good.

And, and if it didn't happen, it's all good.

Well, that story has no stakes and so it's not going to stick with people.

But when somebody says, you know, I was down to my last dollar and, you know, if I didn't do this, you know, whatever was going to have bad things were going to happen to me.

And I pushed my chips all in and boom, here's what happened from it.

Now people are invested because stakes matter.

So there's just a whole bunch of different mechanics that make for a good story.

So I try to study those and I actually think I'm just like nowhere.

I'm a white belt at the game of storytelling, but at least I show up to the dojo.

Most people aren't even don't even consider it an art, so they don't practice it.

So when you say using storytelling to, you know, rally the troops, like, let's say,

I don't know, you're recruiting someone for a new project, whatever it is, you find like a compelling story about what you're doing to get them vested or how do you, how does that work?

Yeah, like give me an example of some time where you wish you had the superpower and I'll let me let's see if I've had an experience like that.

I mean, I was kind of using the example of like recruiting somebody.

Let me think about, okay.

So like a project, let's say as a hypothetical example at Lambda, I had a hypothesis that we should make it more difficult to get in, not more difficult, but have a higher bar so that the quality of people in are better so that we're more likely to get paid.

How do you persuade people that that's a thing that, you know, you have to get legal.

You have to get all these people to buy in.

How do you do that?

You got to know your audience.

So if your audience is legal, sometimes people are not, yeah, they have to first be open

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

sometimes they're not open because they are their job literally.

That was just one example though.

I mean, there's the core is first, you got to know your audience.

Where is your audience at?

Is your audience in a defensive position because they're so used to being defensive about things where they feel attacked, in which case, you're not going to persuade them until you get them to put their defenses down.

Right.

Like if you're a boxer and you're trying to hit somebody, it's not about just keep throwing punches.

It's in fact, sometimes you make yourself available so that they stop playing defense and they go on offense and now they become open.

And so first is like, where's your audience at?

Are they familiar with the topic?

Are they down in the dumps and they need inspiration?

Are they defensive because they feel like they're being attacked?

So you got to kind of know where your audience is at first because that will change your strategy on how you're going to approach this.

And then you sort of take out the right story, right?

So if somebody needs inspiration on how something can go, I think personal stories do better than abstract stories.

You know, if I had to pick, let's say we were going to do some project, I wouldn't say, you know, when Napoleon wanted to like, you know, invade wherever, he, you know, had this decision to make it.

That's our decision today, you know, we're making on, should we do X or Y?

That's okay.

History is okay, but it's not as good as a personal story.

Even better is a story about them, about the listener.

That's like, you know, now you're really cooking with gas if you can really tell a story about them.

So I'll give you a story on the recruiting side.

There was somebody I really wanted to recruit and I knew that they were weighing other options and their other options were higher paying jobs at more reputable companies with a more senior job title.

Right.

So like, I kind of had everything stacked against me.

And so first I tried to figure out where's my audience at.

And I saw that they were, you know, somewhat conflicted and there were a little bit unsure and really what was happening was that they were feeling down because their last startup had failed.

They were feeling just like a little bit bummed out about themselves, a little bit low self-esteem.

And so the story I told was really about, I told a personal story about why I joined the company, what had motivated me and I told a story that tracked very similarly to where

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

they were at.

Right.

I was down in the dumps because I had failed before I'm at this guy.

I was sort of hesitant because shouldn't I go with this more sure thing?

But something told me I need to go with, I need to make a bet here.

And here's how it all worked out for me and has this happy ending.

And in you, I see you having these two paths.

Here's what could happen.

You know, you go down this story and here's how this plays out.

Or I think you could go this way and just as a friend, you know, I'm rooting for you to go down path B, right?

Because I think that's going to be the more exciting version.

That's going to be the story you want to tell your kids.

That's the story you want to be telling on stage three years from now when you're at the growth conference and you're talking about how you led this initiative or how you made this happen.

And so I think it's about figuring out who's your audience, what's motivating them right now, telling personal stories either about yourself or about them.

And ideally, like tapping into like, you know, whatever is most inspiring or desirable to them.

How do you get someone who knows, you know, with this person, you're not like negotiating against each other, but, you know, he knows that you have an interest in him joining.

How do you get that person to like open up about what they are actually thinking and what their kind of vulnerabilities are?

You just be honest.

You just be honest.

And you ask.

So if you first say, look, obviously it's in my best interest if you pick us, I'm excited about having you here.

I'm excited about this.

Like, I think you're going to kick ass and, you know, selfishly, like that's the best outcome for me.

But look, I wouldn't pick what's selfishly, like, honestly, you know, you being here is like just a part of my world.

But for you, if you pick this, that's all of your world.

Let's put me second and let's put you first, right?

So I'll say something like that because I genuinely think that's true.

Like they should just make the best decision for them.

And I'll be honest.

Hey, I have a conflict of interest here.

I want you to pick this.

So do you should know that going in?

You decide if what I'm saying speaks to you or it doesn't, right?

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

Because I can just tell you my side of the story.

And if that resonates, it's because it's true for you.

And then the second thing would be like, what was the second part of your question?

Or was that it?

How do you, well, it was, how do you get them to be open about what they're vulnerable about, what they're afraid of?

Oh yeah.

Then you just ask, you're just like, look, I think there's a lot here that makes sense, but you're still undecided.

What's causing the hesitation in your head?

When you go home and you can't decide why are you torn?

And then they usually just tell you why they're torn.

Yeah.

That makes, I mean, basically what I'm hearing is get them to trust you that you have their interest at heart too, and then to literally just ask them.

Right.

And if you don't have their interest at heart, it doesn't actually work in the end.

So there's a self-fulfilling sort of cycle here where you genuinely have to have their best interest at heart or you get screwed in the end.

Okay.

Totally different question.

You have your fund.

I'm sure you see a ton of different deals and ideas.

What is something that you would love to invest in today?

So I did three deals today.

You did three deals today?

They all kind of got confirmed today.

They've been in the works, but they all, you know, sort of got agreed to.

And you do like how many a month, like how is that a, is that a lot or a little sounds like a lot?

That's a lot.

That's not a normal day for sure.

We do like, I don't know, six deals a quarter, seven deals a quarter.

Oh, wow.

Okay.

Something like that.

So, you know, basically two a month roughly, you know, what I want to be invested in right now is I'd love to be invested in Coinbase and Stripe, like late-stage companies.

I think those are like largely de-risked, but still not public.

And so, you know, if I could put a million dollars in there today, I think I'd get two and a half million out in a short amount of time.

So I think those are like attractive for that reason, whatever those numbers are made up.

There's just a high degree of high likelihood that they go public soon, you know, in the

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

next two years, let's say, and that when they do, they're going to be highly sought after stock and it's going to go up from where it is right now.

So I think those are kind of like no-brainers.

The hard part there is just access.

I invested in a company just now, let's see which one can I talk about.

So one I just invested in is called Goldcast.

These guys basically made it so that it's easy to do digital conferences.

You know, you can use Zoom, but, you know, if you're trying to replicate the value of a conference, a conference has like multiple stages maybe where you're speaking on and as a, you know, it has like first an event page where you're like, oh, here's the schedule of today's talks.

And then like you click the button and you go to that person's like conference from the room.

And then when you ask a question, they made it where you can just like pull the question up on the screen and it's big and large and everybody can see the question and you can talk to it.

And then it kind of like you throw the question away and then the next one can go up.

And then after the fact, they let you export all the attendees of the event and you can export those into Salesforce and let's, let's, now those are, you know, potential leads for our business or whatever it is.

They just did a really smart job of saying, Hey, if you're a marketer throwing events for your company, we are the best way to do that.

And it turns out there's just a lot of that that exists in the world.

They're kind of a competitor to hop in, which was sort of got a lot of press because, you know, within like a year, they got like a billion dollar valuation or something nuts.

Because it's just a big space and it's going to continue on post COVID, I believe.

So that's what I'm excited about.

There's a company called Joe coffee.

I think it's really cool that I just invested in, but they did was, you know, Starbucks, if you just look at like Starbucks versus the independent coffee chains, right?

The mom and pops.

And so Starbucks on one hand has all this money to invest in technology.

So the Starbucks app is like amazing, you can order ahead, you can find a nearby store, you can pay without taking out your credit card just through the app.

You can save your favorites.

You get stars every time you go by.

So you're like incentivized to keep coming back.

So Starbucks has this like app that's like this amazing experience.

And then Joe coffee basically was like, Oh, actually, let's just give that same superpower to every mom and pop coffee shop that exists.

And so now if your mom pop coffee shop, you can say, Hey, download the Joe app.

We're on there.

And then, Hey, we'll save your orders.



## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

You can pay ahead.

You can pick up mobile order, like all those good things.

And they're kind of kicking ass.

They have like, you know, I don't know how much I could say, but they have like, you know, over a thousand coffee shops on board using them.

Those coffee shops are seeing an uptick in sales when, you know, when somebody has the app, they'll actually buy a little bit more because you can kind of quickly upsell things.

And they'll come back more because they're getting loyalty rewards and points for every time they come back to you.

And, you know, their favorite order is saved.

It's super convenient.

They don't have to like wait in line.

And so I just think there's a really cool business that falls into this general category called, you know, it's the Shopify model Shopify had this great quote, which is, you know, Amazon is the empire and Shopify is trying to arm the rebels while Joe coffee is doing the same thing.

Starbucks is at the empire and they're trying to arm the rebels with the tools and they need to be able to compete in the modern day world.

Is that Joe dot coffee or Joe, there's like a bunch of Joe coffees Joe coffee company dot com.

I think it's Joe dot coffee.

I think it might be Joe.

Yeah.

Joe dot coffee is it.

Cool.

And so, okay.

You were one of the first people to do a fund, which was rolling fund, excuse me, rolling fund.

Thank you.

When your audience was much, at least your Twitter audience was much smaller.

I assume like your Silicon Valley audience was relatively the same size it is today.

So why were you able to do that?

And like what makes you, what gives you access to the companies and the deals that you see today?

Like if someone's like, Hey, I want to be Sean in five years.

How do they do that?

I was a podcast listener and I felt when I listened to Bill Simmons or Jason Calacanis or different people I've been listening to a bunch of their year, you know, a couple of years of listening to their podcast.

I felt like I know this guy.

I like this guy.

I trust this guy, you know, like I felt that and I was like, man, it's really powerful.

I know podcast aren't super popular.

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

Maybe newsletter is more popular.

Maybe blogs, Twitter, whatever else.

But I just felt like if I'm in your ears for 45 minutes a day, you're going to make a decision.

You're going to say, this guy's annoying.

I like him.

He's stupid.

And you're going to churn out for a decision by you.

Or if you stick around, just like deep trust is going to form.

And I just said, you know, I told my friend, Suley, I said, Hey, I said, I don't know why I want to do this.

It's not a great, like it's not a great use of time for like money.

You know, like I can do more with business.

But I just feel like there's a lot of value in just being in people's ear balls every day.

And he's like, what do you mean?

I said, I just think if you wake up and you're putting me in your ears on your way to work, I'm probably more influential to you than, you know, like 99% of the people that you work with your friends and people you don't hear from all the time, because I'm just in your ears all the time.

Right.

And so, and so I just thought that that was valuable.

So why did the fund work?

The fund worked because I did the podcast for a year.

Whoever was listening at that point was like, cool.

I like this guy.

I trust this guy.

I think this guy's going to do well with his investments.

If I can give him the money, he does all the work.

Great.

That's a great way for me to co-invest into a bunch of cool startups.

So that's why I was able to raise the fund without tapping into anybody I knew in real life.

Is that how you get access to deals too?

You think people know you from the podcast?

It sounds like you had a pretty decent network before the podcast.

Yeah.

The deals, I don't want to come from the podcast, to be honest.

The deals mostly I want to come from my network in the tech world, in Silicon Valley and whatnot.

Because I think that's where the higher quality deals are than just like general inbound.

But it does help me get in because I say, hey, you know, when I shout out Joe Coffey or Goldcast, you know, like, I bet you there's somebody out there right now working at a company who's got like an event they want to host for a bunch of potential customers

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

or like a meetup or, you know, conference that they want to, that they host every year and now with COVID it's all thrown out the window.

They're going to go get customers from this because it's a genuinely good product and I brought it to Limelight.

So it does help me get in because when it's a good deal, getting in is the hard part.

It's, I've said this before, but you know, startups are a unique asset.

It's not like a stock where you, if you want to get in, you just buy it and it's yours.

For startups, you have to pitch why, you know, I pick you, but you have to pick me too.

And so the investors need, that's why you see so many investors trying to build their brand on Clubhouse and Twitter and everywhere else because they want to be known so that not only do they get inbound deal flow, but that when they want to get in a deal, those founders feel like they, they know them and they want them to be a part of the company.

Is it harder and more valuable to raise the fund or to be able to get into the deals?

Or is that like the same thing?

For most people, it's hard to raise the money, right?

Because where the hell else are you going to get all the money to invest?

For me, I probably could have just hit up people with my network and say, hey, I'm interested in starting a fund.

And that was the good news of being in San Francisco for a while was I'd met enough wealthy people

who I'd done business with, they'd seen me and so they would have invested.

So for me, I probably could have got the money elsewhere.

So for me, access is probably more important.

But for the average person, I think that raising the money would be the hard part.

All right.

Do you want to do a couple more?

How are you feeling?

We can cut it off whenever you want to cut it off.

I have 10 minutes.

But if you're like, I don't really genuinely have any more questions.

That's also cool.

I got wild questions like why Bitcoin and not Ethereum?

Well, the answer is actually both.

Right.

I bought both.

I'm like, you did.

Okay.

Yeah.

I'm like 80, 20 split Bitcoin and Ethereum kind of always have been.

I just talk about Bitcoin more because I think the important thing right now is for people to just to understand a simple idea, which is that Bitcoin is like digital gold.

It is an amazing way to store wealth.

Your cash is being diluted and inflated away because Bitcoin is this generation's gold

## [Transcript] My First Million / #151 - How To Go Viral, Grow Your Following & Tons of Ideas with Lambda School's Trevor McKendrick

and it's going to sort of change the world in that sense.

I like to just talk about that.

Ethereum is a much more complicated concept.

I'm a believer in it, but I believe in Bitcoin more.

And I think just for publicly talking about it, I think that talking about Bitcoin is just easier for people to understand and get their toes in the world of crypto.

And then once they taste Bitcoin, they're like, ooh, what else you got?

And I'm like, Hey, here's Ethereum.

All right.

What's called there?

Cool.

Trevor, this has been fun.

Thank you for coming on.

Thank you for bringing energy and ideas.

And we'll see if people like this episode.

Where should they find you, follow you and all that good stuff?

Check out my website, [trevormkendrick.com](http://trevormkendrick.com).

I have a weekly free newsletter.

It's got great stuff for you to read.

And then you can follow me on Twitter at Trev McKendrick.

All right, Trevor.

Good stuff.

Thanks, man.

Have a good one.

Bye.

Bye.