

[Transcript] My First Million / #33 - Pioneering The No-Code Movement

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.

We call it a visual software development platform.

It's a way for people to build things that typically coders build, just in a completely visual environment.

For us to be truly successful, to be able to build a tool that builds other products and services, you can't do that overnight.

The next six months were really, really tough.

What we thought was going to bring in income, we didn't have anything coming in at this point.

And when you have a family and rent and car payments and all this stuff and kids need to go to school, then just stuff started falling apart.

Couldn't get a trademark, one of the co-founders got us motivated, day job got a lot more interesting.

I think we had raised like 300K and we're really struggling and went to Paul Graham and said, this is really hard on us.

I was waking up every morning with panic attacks.

My wife was like, this is not healthy.

Healthy.

Yeah, why do you want this?

Is this what startups are about, right?

They've got 75,000 paying users.

They just raised a monster round of investment, 72 million, series A.

Those other website builders are kind of like iMovie and then Webflow is like Final Cut Pro.

This feels like the Gold Rush or like the Pioneer era of the space where we're at the very, very beginning of it, sort of like the web in 1999.

No technology in history has ever spread so fast.

Products are going up on product hunt and like hitting number one, you won't even know that it's built with no-go tools.

The analogy to me is like eating food.

Not too long ago in history, I would have had to go out there and hunt and forage.

Yes.

[Transcript] My First Million / #33 - Pioneering The No-Code Movement

Today it's abstracted away where I don't even have to think.

I push a button on my phone and the meal appears.

When you remove those barriers, magical things happen.

Even something that feels slower to other companies or founders, getting to where we are today seven years from now, for me it just feels like a natural progression to a much larger company because we want to be around 50 years from now.

Right.

We want to be a foundational company.

\$5 million is not enough.

\$10 million.

\$15 million.

\$500 million.

\$850 million.

One or two people in a bedroom actually put threats to these like giant multi-million dollar companies because you have creativity and you have nothing to lose.

Add another zero to that price, buddy.

Add two more zeroes.

Every week we sit down with self-made millionaires and ask them, how did you do it?

I didn't start a podcast.

I started my own personal business school and the teachers are the successful entrepreneurs behind the biggest brands and businesses that we find today.

I wanted to know the real stories with all the details like, how did you get your first hundred customers?

What did it feel like when shit hit the nail?

I asked them, how did you spend your money now that you're rich?

And what would you do if you were starting over from scratch again today?

If you're like me and you want to own your own business instead of living a nine to five job, this is the podcast for you.

The hustle presents my first million.

All right.

Here we are.

Vlad, you are in the Twitch office.

It's basically Christmas Eve.

No one's here except for us and we are recording this podcast.

I'm excited to have you on because we've been talking about no code tools and generally I like anybody with a good startup story and I think you have one for those you don't know.

The Velazza founder of a company called Webflow and Webflow is a company that is doing phenomenally well right now.

If you're in Silicon Valley, I would say you guys have that hype train right now.

Do you feel that?

Definitely the last year has been a lot more hype trainee.

Yeah.

But it wasn't always like that.

[Transcript] My First Million / #33 - Pioneering The No-Code Movement

We'll talk about that.

Not at all.

So they have the hype train right now because they've got 75,000 paying users.

They just raised a monster round of investment, 72 million series A, which is 10 times more than a typical series A, I think.

So they're doing phenomenally well and we're going to find out a couple things.

So I'm interested in chatting with you because I want to know what's the backstory.

I've heard little bits and pieces that tell me this is not like your typical, yeah, I worked at big company.

I quit.

I started a company.

It succeeded.

Like it's not that.

So give me the two minute version of the Webflow history and then we'll dive in deeper after that.

Two minutes.

TLDR I started Webflow four different times, starting in early 2005, back when I was still in college, ended up being my senior project.

Then I started to try to start it solo a couple of times, you know, incorporate it, try to build this thing based on .NET, you know, we're looking at a Windows machine right now.

Then the company that I sort of based all the technology on went out of business.

Always good.

Yeah.

Exactly.

And kind of gave up.

Then I got married, started working into it, sort of needed a real job, met a couple buddies that into it.

We were, you know, all fresh out of college, working on pretty boring things there.

And kind of got together and try to give it another go.

So I had a couple co-founders try to start it out.

This was like the Web 2.0 days, you know, the heyday of like startups starting to happen, like the Google Maps era where you can actually build something in the browser.

Right.

YC was just starting up.

That was really exciting.

Started pitching investors, got the whole like entity going, then just stuff started like falling apart.

You know, couldn't get a trademark.

One of the co-founders got like less motivated day job, got a lot more interesting.

My wife and I started talking about kids.

So all these things added up and it was just like fizzled out.

Right.

And then over the next seven years, just kept working into it, moved to Sacramento.

And then a series of a couple, like really, really, you know, out of the blue events got

[Transcript] My First Million / #33 - Pioneering The No-Code Movement

me to think, think about Webflow again.

And was it the same idea each of those times or it's just the same name and you're trying to do different things?

It's generally the same idea, but it sort of started on the backend and moved more and more towards the front end.

So the first idea was really about how do you automate backend development and make it visual.

Right.

And then over the years developed into more what you see.

And so if somebody's never seen Webflow, how, what's the simple way you describe it?

Like how should one friend tell another friend about this?

Seven years ago, we used to describe it as like a website builder, you know, sort of like Wix Weebly.

Right.

You need a website and you don't know how to code?

Yes.

Exactly.

But it ended up that wasn't a good description.

So now that the kinds of things people build with Webflow are just entire businesses, product services, et cetera.

So we call it a visual software development platform.

So it's a way for people to build things that typically coders build just in a completely visual environment.

And it's kind of a new thing.

Maybe the closest we had before was Dreamweaver or things like that where you had a little bit of that visual flare and then you had sort of a code editor on the side.

We're trying to make that but completely visual.

So ends up people build a lot of websites with it, but we're moving a lot closer to any kind of software.

So what can it do that Wix, a Weebly, a Squarespace doesn't do, right?

Because those are good if you want to make it out of the box thing where it's like, here's my portfolio.

Here's my storefront with just like a contact me button.

Where does Webflow go deeper?

So Webflow is essentially an abstraction layer over HTML, CSS and JavaScript.

So people start from scratch, Wix and Weebly, you're literally picking a template and sort of moving some content images around.

But then if you look at like, just pick a random set of a thousand startups every year, like you go through their websites, they don't look like any of the templates, right?

Because people are sort of like going to Sketch or Figma or whatever, creating their own brand and then going to implement that in code.

Webflow is the first program that can actually take those designs and enable a designer to implement any one of those, like custom, super, super custom layouts.

The way I think about it sometimes is those other websites.