

[Transcript] My First Million / From \$300k to \$35M+ Selling Dog Ramps with Ramon Van Meer, CEO & Founder at Alpha Paw

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.

There was a cup on the table.

I remember we were drinking water, a little paper cup.

We were at this burrito place and you were like, if I could buy this cup for five cents and sell it to you for seven cents, that's my passion.

Ramon, he is back.

The guest from episode two, which was one of the best episodes ever of this podcast.

And then it was taken down for a bit.

I don't know what happened.

There was something.

We got to take it down and make a little edit.

People started hitting me up.

Hey, what happened to Ramon's episode?

That's how much people cared.

They wanted to know.

People were just keep attracting.

Is that episode still in the library?

Something happened.

Some people noticed, which was amazing to me.

And now you're Twitter famous as of today.

Well, because of you and Sam, yes, because you and Sam retweeted me and I got like almost 8,000 followers overnight.

I went from 2,000 to 11,000 within 24 hours.

So wow, well, it's not just because we retweeted, I retweet a lot of stuff.

You told a great story.

I'm just actually going to, I want to find the hook here because you did a good job.

Did Sam write this for you or did you have him edit this because this was so well done?

I felt like you can't, this can be your first thread and you started off this good on your first thread.

How did that happen?

No, well, it's Sam dripping off the whole tweet.

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So Sam actually helped me.

Okay.

This will work.

This is the concept.

It's a little bit like how you format it.

Then he gave it a little bit like, I would start with this, I will do this and I will explain that.

Then of course I explained it.

I sent it to him and he said, like, yeah, this looks great.

How would you have started it normally?

And then I'll read what the end result was.

What would you have normally sent?

Or what do you remember what your V1 might have been?

Yeah.

Well, like you, you and I are friends.

So you also know me personally, typically I would not start off with like, I bought something for just little as acts and now we're doing why I will not too, too braggie.

Yes, but, you know, Sam said, like, no, that's, you need to do that.

And you know, it's true as well, right?

So why not just explain it?

That's what people get people interested.

And now I think we have 7000 likes and a bunch, like 1000 plus between you said two and a half years ago, I bought a dog ramp business for \$300,000 already interesting.

What the heck is a dog ramp business?

Since then I've sold \$35 million of dog ramps.

Boom.

That's the hook.

Right.

Yeah.

Yeah.

This little thing turned into a big thing.

And then the promise.

Why you should read this thread.

I'm going to explain why I bought it, how I scaled it and why I bought a business versus starting from scratch.

But first dog ramps question mark.

And then that is, and then the little hand pointing down, like come read more.

That is, uh, you didn't take my power writing class, but that is exactly what you would have been my star student in this.

If you had done this as the example, because it has all three elements, right?

What I call the frame, I bought it for 300 K and I've sold 35 million.

So that's the, the wow factor.

Why should I pay attention to this?

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And why do I stop scrolling, right?

So you have a scroll stopping number, \$35 million of dog ramps.

You have a curiosity gap, which is what the heck is a dog ramp and how did this guy do it?

I have a promise, which is I'm going to tell you a B and C, but first dog ramps, which is like you gave them a lightweight entry way that they have, even if they don't want to know how you bought it, while you scale it, all the operational stuff, I do need to know what the heck dog ramps, what the heck.

And so, uh, beautifully done.

And then you tell the story and the story is kind of amazing because people know that I don't talk about what my e-commerce business is, but they know that I have an e-commerce business.

What they don't know is that it started because we were hanging out in your backyard and we were talking and the whole time we're talking, uh, your phone is just going cha-ching, cha-ching.

It's like the, and I didn't even know what this was, it's the Shopify, Shopify is like notification sound and you didn't even notice it because it's always just normal to you.

Your phone was sitting on the table and I was like, do you need to get that?

Like what is that sound?

And you go, oh, sorry, that's like sales.

And I was just like, you know, people love this idea of make money while you sleep, like passive income, oh, make money while you sleep.

That is a sexy idea.

Yeah.

It was even better.

It was like, you were just chilling and having fun and money was just being made for you on the side and just like a little cha-ching every five minutes.

And it was literally in that moment, I was like, I'm going to do this.

I'm going to start an e-commerce business because I can't sit here and just let Ramon have all the fun.

This is too good.

So you inspired me to do it for sure.

That's awesome.

Yeah.

I had to turn off that notification because it drove me crazy eventually, like, cha-ching, cha-ching every time there's a sale.

But it was fun in the beginning, almost like that, you know, a door front release each time.

Yeah, exactly.

And if you're on YouTube, if you're watching the YouTube channel, which is just, I don't know, what is it, youtube.com slash myfirstmillion, I think, or hustlecon, something like that.

Just search myfirstmillion on YouTube.

You'll find it.

But you can see the ramp behind Ramon.

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So he's got the, all the products behind you.

So the company's called Alpha Paw.

That's your thing.

So we're going to talk about a couple of different things.

I thought it'd be fun, have you on your substitute teacher for Sam and like any substitute teacher, the class always has more fun when the sub comes in.

So, so that's what we're going to do.

I think we're going to talk about a couple of things.

I want to talk to you about kind of buying and selling, buying businesses rather than starting businesses.

So how you do it.

And we'll go through some examples, maybe of what's out there.

And then we'll jump back and we'll dig into kind of like your story.

So how the heck you got started.

I first want to give the people and myself really kind of a crash course on this process of buying businesses.

Cause I was amazed when you told me you bought this business for 300,000.

And did you buy this off of flippa or quiet light or would you have to buy in this?

Yeah, I bought this on a similar broker like quiet lights.

They're not around anymore, but it was a similar broker.

Not as flippa, but it's more of a broker.

And when you bought it, I was sort of like, what the heck, like who does that?

I didn't even know anybody who does like off these like random websites.

Like I could see you buying something for a few thousand dollars, but 300 grand I thought was a lot.

And I was like dog ramps.

What the heck.

And you had told me then that you're like, yeah, the business is doing good and the person really wasn't doing any marketing or they didn't run any Facebook ads, I think was the case.

And so you just saw like a clear growth lever.

So break it down.

Like, why do you do this?

And then how do you do this buying businesses thing?

Yeah, me personally, I think it's also like what's your personal preference, what's your skill set?

You know, people are really good at going from zero to one are really builders.

Others are really good at going from one to 10.

And those are, you know, scalers, I'm not really good at building.

I'm better at scaling.

And so I like to buy versus builds because it gives you a lot more speed.

It gives you history and data.

And it's similar like real estate where I try to find crappy houses that you need to

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fix up, but in a good up and coming neighborhood, if that makes sense.

Right.

So good market.

Yes.

Good market.

There's a market fit.

You know, if this house was amazing, you would be able to rent this out for two, three, four times more than the current owner does.

It's the same with websites.

So I look for websites that have a good product mix, product fits, has history.

It doesn't have to be, you know, going really well.

I'm not looking for websites that are overly optimized.

So I tend to not buy websites from other internet marketers because they already did all the things that I probably would do for it.

So it's not really room for growth.

What was the person like, or what was the business like when you bought the dog ramp business?

So describe kind of what you saw and what made you decide, yeah, I'm going to buy this one.

Yeah.

It solved a real problem.

I wasn't aware that this is actually a problem.

I have a dog, but I have a pit bull.

I don't have a small dog.

And so there's a real problem for a niche audience that you really can target on Facebook.

Those were the good old days that you really could niche targets still on Facebook.

It had not a lot of competition at that time.

Not a lot of people were promoting ramps on Facebook, Instagram, or even Amazon.

The website was a very crappy website where I knew that if we switch to Shopify, we'd increase or improve the copy, the pictures, et cetera, the conversion rate would most likely increase.

This case, the two founders were not doing any Facebook ads.

There was no paid acquisition happening at all.

And even though they had a decent side customer database, they were not emailing even existing customers, let alone trying to capture a card of bannermint.

So this was a good market, which is pets.

It's a house that you said, okay, if I renovate the kitchens, the floorboards, the countertops, which is like redoing the website and the branding of it, the copywriting.

And then lastly, they're not even trying to rent it out.

They don't rent.

They don't post it on Craigslist.

They don't have flyers out in the neighborhood saying, come rent my place, which is they weren't doing paid advertising to get customers.

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So you saw it, you bought it, and you grew it.

What's another example?

So let's walk through some real examples and then you tell me kind of like what you like or dislike about some of these businesses, because I know you did some research on what's out there today.

Yeah.

So for example, there's one out, it's sort of a cross work puzzle website.

So think of when I think a lot of people play these words with friends games or cross or scrabble games.

And then there's a website out there apparently that you can just put in your letters and it will give a bunch of words recommendations website.

Yeah.

Exactly.

I love it because it's so, there's no nothing to do.

Like you, I think there's probably a database that's already pre-billed that you can buy.

You build it basically once and then it's just trying to get SEO traffic, you know, to your website.

So for example, there's one for sale now for \$9 million.

They started it in 2017, it does 3.5 million in revenue.

And because there's no really team needed, it's like, it's almost all profit.

It's like three, around \$3 million of profit.

And it's just printing money basically.

I like these type of niches where not a lot of people think about, but there's definitely a huge search volume.

What would you do?

So give me two pieces on that.

So the first is with something like this, would you, how would you try to grow it?

Or would you, would you not buy this because you say, I don't know how I would grow this where I get a faster payback on my money.

So what would you do?

What would you think about the growth levers for this one?

Yeah, that's a good question.

I will personally not buy it at the moment because the price tag, typically I only buy things in a couple of hundred thousand dollar range, not millions.

Without knowing too much of the current business model, I definitely would try to increase RPMs, meaning how can we squeeze more advertising dollars out of the same traffic?

They get like tens of millions of visitors a month.

And I looked at a couple of similar websites and I think there's a huge opportunity by placing ads differently just to increase RPM.

Similar, if you have an e-commerce, you want to increase conversion rates.

If you have a content site, you want to increase RPMs, meaning how to get more people to click on the ads or things like that.

So I will do that.

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Secondly, I would look and do research like for sure, if there's a huge segment of people that love Scrabble, what other games do they like and maybe build a sub-assistor website that does, I don't know, like what's it called, Sudoku or whatever.

So that's the two things that I would, if I would buy this type of website.

And basically, when you buy something like this, most people say, I don't have nine million dollars.

And I think when you started doing this, when you first started looking at these websites, you also didn't have enough money to buy one of these.

So tell the story of how you first started going to these websites, even when you didn't have enough money to buy one of these companies.

Yeah.

I've actually bought and sold websites that started with buying something for \$500 and then sold it for \$1,500.

I started on Flippa 12 years ago.

And I've bought a Piñata website that sells Piñatas.

You can send a picture of Sam and it makes a Piñata of him.

Yes.

A company in Texas would make a Piñata and then ship it directly to the customer.

So I bought that for \$5,000 that's great together, improved the website traffic and made my money back in two and a half months and then sold it a month later for \$22,000.

So it's not huge numbers, but those really helped me to grow a little bit and really get a lot of experience.

When I started SoPOP, I actually saw a similar website for sale on Flippa that was for sale for \$100,000.

Was in the daytime TV era too.

And the topic was about daytime TV.

Of course, I didn't have money.

I had like a couple of thousand dollars.

I was not able to buy that.

But what I did is like, hey, let's see if there is something there.

Let's do a small test, build a fan page, see how the engagement goes and then see if there is something there and then grow from there.

I guess we should explain.

You created, if people have listened to episode two, they know the full story.

We won't go the full story again this time, but your claim to fame, what episode two is about is telling the story of how you created a Soap Opera content site, like a Soap Opera website that was basically just saying, hey, you're watching Days of Our Lives or you're watching, you know, I don't know, The Young and the Restless.

Here's the recap.

Here's the spoilers of what's coming next.

So you kind of built like a spoiler site for daytime soap operas, like who the heck thinks of that?

And then you ended up selling it for \$9 or \$10 million cash.

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And that's like an amazing, amazing exit.

And this is from a guy who has never watched a soap opera episode in his life.

So I think people loved that because it was so A, random, but B, interesting and relatable how you did that.

And it sounds like one of the ways you were getting business ideas was you were going on these websites.

And you said, I think you had told me at the time, you're like, I saw a website for sale that was also in the daytime TV niche that was like \$100,000 for sale.

And you were like, cool, like, I don't have \$100,000, but if this is worth \$100,000, maybe I can make something like this.

And then you went through this process where you said, okay, how can I test these ideas?

Because when I met you, I was like, all right, what's your passion in a Silicon Valley style?

And you were like, you know what problem you really want to solve, what topic, what industry really passionate about?

And you were like, there was a cup on the table.

I remember we were drinking, we were drinking water, a paper cup, we were at this burrito place and you were like, if I could buy this cup for five cents and sell it to you for seven cents, that's my passion.

Like I like to buy things and sell things for a little bit more.

And I'm basically an internet marketer and I don't care if it's cups or dog ramps or soap opera spoilers.

It doesn't matter to me.

I love the process of like business and selling things.

And I was like, that's amazing.

You know, I love the sort of self-awareness and honesty.

And then when you were testing ideas for before you created the soap opera site, you went on Facebook.

And if I remember correctly, you basically made like 30 fan pages or something like that.

Because at the time you could promote a page, a fan page on Facebook for like cents.

You could go get a bunch of likes of your Facebook page.

And a lot of likes weren't worth too much, but you could kind of test what topics are people most engaged with, what topics if I post content in this page, will I get a bunch of likes for.

And I think it ended up being like the top three were something like, what was it?

It was like right wing politics, like soap operas and what was it the last one?

It was like a wrestling or something like that.

Yeah.

Wrestling was really popular.

Soaps and politics, cars were also pretty, pretty high up.

Right.

And you know, I hate politics, I don't want to do politics.

What's the next best one?

Soap operas.

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Okay.

Hire this woman in the Midwest to write blogs every day about soap operas and then drive traffic baby.

So let's go sell some paper cups.

Exactly.

And I just didn't really overthink it.

I didn't write a business plan.

I just like go and went on Upwork.com.

Hey, looking for a writer that can write soap opera spoilers, put a very simple blog

up just to test to see would people go from Facebook onto a blog and write the story.

And that's how it basically started and then, you know, started with 10 cents a day from making from Google AdSense and then a dollar a day and then \$10 and that's how it grew.

Right.

Okay.

Let's look at a couple more deals and then we'll jump around again.

So give me, give me another one that you saw before you came on the pod that you want to talk about.

Yeah.

So this, this is one I just saw an hour ago.

I just thought I was interested.

Interesting.

It's a goat milk soap website, they sell goat milk soap.

What the heck is that?

Yes.

So apparently goat milk soap is a better for the environment and it's better for, they say it's cruelty free because apparently a lot of soaps, the traditional soaps they do testing on animals, et cetera.

So they claim and like forgive me for people that, you know, know about goat milk soap.

I, this is the first time I've heard about it and that's why that intrigued me.

It could probably be a product that people that use this are very passionate about it.

Same like, you know, people that are into keto or super passionate or, you know, there's tons of these examples where it's a pretty small niche, but people are so passionate that they, they will spread the word for you.

So this is why website, you can find it on flip off, just search goat milk soap.

And I'm looking at the listing.

It says four years old monthly profit \$20,000 a month.

It's got a 29% profit margin and it's selling at a 1.8 X multiple, right?

So, okay.

So what is that?

So let's say 20 times 12.

We don't do public math, but we do type things in to 40 to 40 times 1.8.

So it's selling for 400, something thousand.

Is that right?

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Correct.

400, 425 is the asking price.

Right.

Okay.

Amazing.

So walk me through how do you think about something like this?

Yeah.

First, I will do a little bit of research about the product.

Does goat milk really work?

Is it more of a gimmick or is it actually solved a problem or are people really, you know, interested?

Is there a need for this?

And again, if it's a gimmick, that's fine too, right?

This is not like an, of the answers, no, we'll not buy it.

It's just important to know.

Right.

Back to the, to the pinata example.

Exactly.

How many, because it's very important too for like all bit ideas have to be a hundred million dollar idea.

Like I think a million dollar a year business is amazing as well.

Right.

So maybe goat milk soap is, you know, a very passionate niche product.

I will do research like, okay, how many people in the US search for it?

You can use Google trends or you can use all kinds of search volume trackers that you can see how many people are searching for this keyword.

I will look on Instagram or they're like, is there a rabbit fan base, you know, like goat milk, you know, fans, uh, or Facebook groups.

Then I will also look on Amazon.

Is this sold on Amazon?

If yes, how is the trend and what is the sales?

And then you can use a tool called helium 10 to see how much revenue a listening is doing.

It's by the way, really amazing tool to do research.

I do the same for pet products, you know, I look what is trending on Amazon, what is, you know, blowing out the waters for sales.

And then I will do research if we should also start selling that.

Then I look of course on the business stuff, like business is the, is the trend up or down or flat.

And also like most of the business I bought were either flat or down because that's how you know, you get, you know, a good deal.

So even if it's flat, even if it's not trending up, I still would, you know, potentially buy it.

What is important are the traffic channels diversified is a hundred or 90% coming from

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just Facebook or is it just emails or is it just, um, SEO?

That could be a little bit, you know, risky, especially if it's all paid traffic from Facebook, there's all the e-commerce founders or listeners on this podcast will know, you know, Apple can make an update and suddenly, you know, the paid traffic landscape change.

So I'm looking for diversified channels.

Then of course I look at revenue profit margins so you can really calculate like, okay, if I pump, is this going to be more of a scale where I can pump more money into Facebook? I put a dollar in, I get \$3 back, or is this more like of a long-term play where I have to create SEO content that, you know, is less costly, but it's a longer game.

And then also what's important to understand what you're buying are the trademarks, are the patents, is their email subscribers, or in this case, they have a 43,000 email subscribers. 33,000 SMS subscribers.

I think there's a social media.

All these things, in my opinion, are valuable because that's the same with when I bought Alphabet.

I had a huge Instagram following, a huge Facebook following, they had an email list, they had trademarks and patents, all that was, you know, included in the sale.

And if you, those are great, those are the assets.

So let's take a business like this.

Let's say it's \$400,000 listing.

How does it work?

You know, if you don't have \$400,000 lying around, you know, in a briefcase like a, like a, you know, evil, evil genius, what do you, what do you do?

How do you buy a business like this if you don't have \$400,000 lying around?

Yeah.

So you can use SBA loans to buy internet businesses.

SBA loan is basically a business loan, small business loan that I don't know when they started a few years ago, where they now also fund internet businesses and you can borrow up to 90%.

So technically you can buy something that is for sale for \$400,000 and you only have to put down \$40,000 and the interest rate is pretty low, it's anywhere between five and seven.

So it's, it's higher than a mortgage, but it's much lower than a traditional, you know, a business loan for people like us.

Right.

Then the second thing you can do when you see an asking price of \$400,000, you can always, there's a cash upfront offer and then you can offer like, Hey, I will pay you \$250,000 cash upfront at closing the remaining 150K.

I will pay you spread out over the next 12 months interest free.

So every time I buy a business that's never 100%, 100% cash on closing, I always have 60 to 80% cash on closing and the remaining is either sellers notes or earn out.

And that keeps the seller, you know, helpful because they're, you know, they need to help you out plus it lowers the amount that you have to loan.

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So let's just say, let's just do a little loan calculator.

So the SBA loan is what, 10 year loan, something like that?

Yes.

So 10 year loan.

So you did the full amount, no seller financing just for simplicity, simplicity here.

So you put down 40K, you're going to take the other 360K as a, as a SBA loan.

And let's say you're paying 66% a year for 10 years.

So your monthly payment on that loan is going to be \$4,000.

This business makes \$20,000 a month of profit.

So you take the \$20,000 a month of profit, you pay back your loan for four, you're left with 16K of profit every month right now.

So you could buy this today and be making money.

And so that, that difference, let's say 16K, you only put down, you know, you only put down \$40,000.

So it only takes two and a half months for you to get all your equity back.

And then you're, and you're profitable every single month and you can reinvest some of that into growth.

So that's like a pretty sweet deal.

And that's more than most people are making at their quote unquote safe job.

Correct.

And SBA, the beauty with SBA loans, they, of course, they look at your personal, personal credit history and et cetera, but they really look and make a decision, the lenders on the business.

So they will never fund you if there's too high of a risk, right?

If they think like, oh, if we cannot, you know, the borrower cannot pay the interest month over month.

So it's an amazing tool.

Actually, he spoke with Joe Valley from Quiet Light Broker today and he told me a story where there was a woman, she bought a business for 1.25 million with an SBA loan two years ago and just closed and sold the same business for 5.5, I believe it was in the five range, but put only 10% down.

So she only, she didn't even put 200K down, but her return was, you know, or million.

Yeah.

Yeah.

So if done right, you know, SBA loans is a really great tool, a good leverage tool to get into internet businesses or buy a business.

Amazing.

Yeah.

Yeah.

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 had the same amount of time as every other day of the year, the lack of daylight makes

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it feel so much shorter, which is exactly the same kind of feeling as working with disconnected tools.

Our work days, 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 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).

This is one of the tricks.

Now, what do you give people a sense of how do you make sure you're not buying a lemon?

Yes.

I get a question a lot.

When you go to [flippa.com](https://www.flippa.com), I would be careful because [flippa.com](https://www.flippa.com) is a marketplace.

Anybody can just upload their listing or their website and basically claim whatever.

It's on you to do the diligence.

If you go to a broker like Quietlight Brokers, they basically do all the vetting for you.

They will look at the business.

Is everything legit?

The risk is much smaller.

But regardless, if you're new to this, if you are, you know, it's your first business, you can hire a due diligence company, [Centurica.com](https://www.centurica.com) is one.

I think those are the biggest, well-known.

You pay, you know, it depends on the listing price, but it's as cheap as a couple hundred dollars and it goes up from there.

But they do all the due diligence for you.

They look through all the traffic.

Is it legit?

Is the revenue legit?

Is whatever, everything they claimed, is it all legit?

And then they come back to you with like, well, we looked at all the data, all the numbers.

You bought it for 1.2, but we think it's actually worth 900K because these are the reasons.

So definitely recommend going with a due diligence company like [Centurica](https://www.centurica.com).

Gotcha.

Okay.

And give, okay.

So these are the business you could buy.

What was the first kind of like, how the heck did you become a view?

Right?

So how are you figuring out how to do this?

Give people kind of a, not, you don't go deep into any one, but just describe kind of the journey and then I might poke into some of the sound interesting.

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So okay, you're Ramon, you're born, and I don't know, I don't know when you got your entrepreneurial start.

What was the first kind of like entrepreneurial venture?

Were your new teens or 20s or what?

My first real business was an construction business.

I've done things before that, but we're like nothing really significant, but I think the way how I started the construction company is really my DNA, that makes sense.

Because if I look back a lot of other companies, I started basically the same.

I didn't know anything about construction and the story, I will keep it very quick, but I think it's maybe could be helpful for people that maybe are overthinking steps or overthinking things.

I was out of a job, was 20 years old, had to pay my rent, co-work of my mom said, I need a painter to paint the inside of my house, I can pay you X.

I forgot the number, but it was like a month's worth of money that I made in three days.

So I thought, oh, this is amazing.

I can be my own boss, it's a lot of money.

The harder I work, the more money I make.

That was really what intrigued me.

If I can do this in one day, I will actually make the same amount of money then in a whole month.

So you got paid on your output, not your input?

Correct.

And as you know, like in my high school, drop out, so there was not that.

What year did you actually drop out?

Officially 15, but I stopped really going when I was 14.

Okay, so that's basically ninth grade, right?

That's US ninth grade.

Yeah, I don't know what it is there.

Okay, my mom actually got a letter from the board of school to, with an official waiver, like, okay, your son doesn't have to go to school because in Holland, you have to go to school mandatory to 16.

They actually gave me a pass because no high school wanted to accept me, but that's a different story.

That's a good guy.

On Sunday night, she paid me out and said, this is amazing.

So a Monday morning, I came up with a name, house improvements or home improvements, one of those two, built some, designed a couple very ugly business cards, made a one page website and put an ad out on the Dutch version of Craigslist.

And I thought, you know what, let's just not do only painting.

Let's do like, we do everything, construction, like remodeling from A to Z, whatever.

And you don't know how to do any of that, by the way, no, no, I don't know anything.

I barely was able to paint.

So what gives you that confidence to say, I'll, I'll renovate everything A to Z and yet

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I don't know how to do anything A to Z.

I think that's the naive thing part of me that I still have is like, let's just see first if I can get a job and then figure out like how to solve or do the job.

And so an hour later or two hours later, I got an email from a guy saying, Hey, I'm looking for an electrician and I am rewiring the whole building, blah, blah, blah.

I said, sure.

No problem.

I will see you tomorrow.

I'm a ninth grade dropout.

I'll be there in three hours.

I got this.

I went out to bought an official construction outfit.

So I really looked like a construction guy or like, you know, and I went there the next morning and disclaimer, of course, I will not have done things that will, you know, potentially kill people, but I just wanted to see like, you know, I don't know, like maybe it was something simple.

Maybe he gave me the tour and it was like, I couldn't even understand the words he was saying, like, oh, we need to wire this and we need to do it.

And the floors were open and the walls were open and I was still playing along, but in my mind was like, there's no way I can do this plus it's dangerous as fuck.

So he went out to run some errands.

I waited for him because I didn't want to be like, you know, an asshole just go left or waited for an hour.

He came back and I was like, listen, I'm going to be honest.

I don't know shit about the construction company.

I don't know shit about Electra.

I just started yesterday.

I want to build a construction company, but I don't know anything.

And he was because he was an entrepreneur.

He laughed his ass off and he actually gave me work.

He said, like, your hilarious just helped me with, you know, getting, you know, supplies over here.

Yeah.

Yeah.

And he paid me the same amount of dollars or euros hourly rates than he would have done before.

I think also, by the way, if we have young listeners, I think it's so important to do those things when you're young because if I would do it now, I'm 40 years old.

Not in dairy.

I don't think it's not in dairy.

It's not like, oh, I appreciate your hustle.

No, it's like, Hey, you're a con man.

Yes.

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So if you're young, take advantage.

You know, Sam was also really genius of doing that as well.

Right.

Like you can just get away with so much more of showing hustle, but also like, I think he appreciated that I waited for him and just be like honest, like, Hey, listen, I don't know shit about this, but he gave me a really good tip.

He said, in order to own a construction company, you don't have to know everything or do yourself. If I were you, find freelancers, you focus on getting the projects and then you outsource it to freelance.

But that's what I did and found an electrician, freelancer, plumber, you know, everything you need, a whole crew that you need.

And two weeks later, I got a second job and I didn't do anything.

I just had my

Sam dispatched some of their, yeah.

I sold it for 10K.

My cut was like around 5K.

And that's how I basically grew the construction company.

And within a year, a little over a year, we were like a 20 to 24 people, depending on how many projects we had.

And at that time we did close to million dollars or million euros, sorry, a year in revenue.

And you're like 19, 20 years old, something like that.

Yeah.

And that's the only one when we were a year in.

And so what happened to that?

Happy ending or sad ending to the story?

Well, very quick, maybe story about how I scaled the scaling part, I think it's also could be helpful for people is that the big problem with construction is every, like the job is two weeks and they have to find another job.

Their job is four weeks, they have to find another job, right?

So it was really hard to keep the guys busy and really, you know, make sure that the projects align, if that makes sense.

So I thought, Hey, who can I find?

What can I do so I don't have to find jobs anymore?

Real estate investors, they buy apartment buildings all at once.

They all need to be renovated at once.

So I went to local real estate meetups.

That was actually horrible because I was a really out of my place.

I was way too young.

I was like, you know, blue collar guy with all these fancy pants.

But one thing leads to another that I met the biggest real estate investor in my region that I lived and he was like literally bill buying apartment buildings at the foreclosure every month between 20 and 100 buildings at the time.

So now he became my client and he was my client to the end.

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Basically, I never had to search for a new customer.

So that was all the good news.

And I made a bunch of mistakes, cash flow projection was one where construction, you really, it's a similar, a little bit similar, like with e-commerce, I think you could grow yourself into bankruptcy, if that makes sense, making, for example, you with a construction same with e-commerce, you have to put a lot of money up front.

I have to pay every Friday, the crew, I have to buy the supplies, but I only get paid all the way at the end when the project is done.

So the faster you grow, the more projects you have, the more money you have to put out in the open and you have to wait for it.

So that started, that was really, and that was just not good at cash flow projections.

Well, I just didn't do it.

And another thing that really was bad was growing too fast that I have to hire people that I normally would not have hired and really lost grip of the business.

That makes sense.

And, you know, it started to break and I had to close the company after three years, more or less.

And mutual buddy, Sully was at my house this weekend and he said something like, I don't know, maybe you already, maybe this is the guy you already talked about, they said, you said you had some like mentor kind of help you early on somebody who really changed the course of your life.

I don't know, is he talking about that guy who gave you that first kind of insight to hire freelancers or is there somebody else he's talking about?

No, it is a different story.

Okay, tell that one.

All right.

That story was before my construction company.

I was almost 18 or around that time.

My mother kicked me out the house.

You have to, you have to figure your shit out.

So I have to pay rent.

So I had to find a job at a local Best Buy, the Dutch version of Best Buy.

A couple of weeks in, I said, like this sucks, right, like long hours, whatever.

And there was a guy came coming in in a nice expensive suit.

He wanted to buy something was not in stock.

He gave me a business card and says like software solutions.

And I didn't know anything about software or programming or whatever, but I knew solutions because it or solution, whatever, I didn't know anything.

I just knew like, okay, hey, there's a lot of money to be made and a lot of opportunity in, because this was like the early internet days, right?

Like, you know, I'm an old fuck, right?

This is like before 2001, before the internet bubble, as people remember.

And so I didn't know what he was doing, but it was something in software and solutions.

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You knew it was good because he came in a fancy suit or you separately had been thinking about the internet?

I had separately been thinking about, because I always was like trying to, you know, oh, let's buy this type of product in Germany and then try to sell it in Holland.

Like I was always trying to build these, doing these schemes legal, of course, but internet was just like this whole new, like for me, my like, this was like amazing.

There's so many, so much opportunity.

And so I knew that I just didn't know like exactly what, how to get started.

How to even, you know, write a line of code or whatever.

So I started stalking him as a, hey, and this is again, the benefit of being young.

Like hey, I want to get a job at your company.

And he said, we're not hiring, but I kept stalking him respectfully, but I did stalking him for months, like three, four months to a point where he said, you know what, I'm so sick and tired of this in a good way.

Let's make a deal.

If I'm going to give you a book on Friday, we have an internal exam for programmers.

If you pass that exam, I will hire the company will hire you and give you a six months internal program to become a Microsoft developer.

But you have to promise me if you fail this exam on Friday, you have to leave me alone for the rest of your life.

It's okay.

Let's do it.

They know what it was expect.

He gave me a book about Microsoft Database Access Database Program.

See that if my life was depending on it, did exam and I passed.

I didn't pass a plus, but I passed enough.

And so they gave me a job and for six, the next six months, they trained me.

I was able to become a Microsoft software developer within this company.

They gave me a lease card, they gave me a laptop, they gave me like phone.

Like it was, it was insane.

So this guy really changed my life because I think learning how to code really is helpful also in other ways in your life.

Because it really, you analyze problems in situations just different when you know how to code.

That makes sense.

But today you don't consider yourself like a coder, like let's say for your e-commerce website, you're not the one going and making changes.

Do you do it like sometimes early on before you hire people, do you just do stuff yourself or no?

Like learning it back then and using it back then and learning how to think that way was helpful.

Yeah.

And at that time, I had to learn visual basic.

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That language doesn't even exist anymore.

So it's like, I know how to read PHP and HTML and you know, I know, I know how to do it, but I'm like, I never do it basically.

I think it's more of breaking down what was so frustrating as a programmer is like finding bugs, so you have like, you know, a 10,000 line code and there's one thing breaks.

You have to go through like all the codes, but it really trains your brain like, okay, how to really try to narrow down what it could be and where the problem could be.

And that's my set you can use in all kinds of other, you know, real life situations.

So I don't, a program right now.

Okay, fair enough.

And we got five minutes left.

You had a game you wanted to play at the end.

Let's do, let's do the game.

Okay.

So I wanted to ask you, it's very silly, but I was, and why did you want to play this game by the way?

Because I think your audience would like to know these questions like, would you rather so to root your rather, give the people what they want.

Yes.

All right.

So here's the first one, would you rather be the CEO of Apple or the president of the UFC?

Oh, okay.

President of the UFC, like Dana White, too much travel, I'm traveling.

I'm on the road all the time dealing with all kinds of head event planning.

Like when I threw my wedding, I was like, this is the only event I'll ever throw like this.

And for the UFC, every weekend that they throw, you know, a mega wedding.

So no way I'm doing that.

I also wouldn't really want to be the CEO of Apple.

So I'll take the job.

I'll go buy your company for half a trillion.

I'll buy my company for half a trillion and then I'll peace out.

All right.

That's awesome.

I saw this on a meme, actually, would you rather have dinner with Jay-Z or take \$500,000 cash?

\$500,000 cash.

Easy.

What would you do?

Would you take dinner with Jay-Z?

I feel like you might be a, I want a unique experience person.

No.

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Yeah.

I will take the cash to it.

There was all the debates, like people saying like, you should take Jay-Z because he's going to give you-

Let's say \$50,000 cash, \$50,000 cash, I think is a closer bet here.

Yeah.

Then I will, in the situation I'm right now, I will take the dinner.

If I have no money, I will take the cash.

Right.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I'm in the same boat.

I think the dinner's most likely going to be kind of lame, but you know, I get a good story.

Who knows?

Maybe, maybe we hit it off.

Maybe he's interesting.

\$500,000, that's, you could go buy your charity dinner with Jay-Z for \$90,000 and have the rest left over for, for goods after that.

Or you can buy a goat milk soap website.

Right.

Exactly.

I mean, whatever.

That's the question.

Would I rather have that goat milk business today or this dinner with Jay-Z tomorrow?

I'll take the goat milk business today.

Thank you.

Yeah.

Let's do, would you rather bootstrap a million-dollar business or VC-back \$10 million year business?

I think I would rather have a VC-back \$10 million year business.

I'll tell you why.

I think that once you can get a business to \$10 million, I think the odds of you being able to get it to 50 or 100 are quite high.

I think zero to 10 is a lot harder or more likely to, to round down to zero than 10 will stay at 10.

So I think 10 million, really what you're saying is, Hey, just stick with it for a little bit longer and you'll be at 30, 40, 50, 70, something like that million within two, three years.

So I think that's the case.

And then I'm actually, a lot of people think VC means your VC forever and that you're in this endless chase.

They're like, well, the VCs say you need to grow.

The VCs say, you know, you'll have to raise your next round.

My experience with VC has actually been quite different, which is VCs give you the money.

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They might want you to do something, but it's your call, what you do.

And like, you can raise one round and never raise again from VC, or you can raise one round and grow it the pace you want.

They might strongly advise you to do something, but it's on you to say, look, are you going to fire me?

Do you have the power to do that?

Are you going to fire me?

If not, then I'm going to need you to, you know, shut the fuck up and stay in the backseat and like, let me do what I'm going to do here.

So I think the 10 million dollar business is just better than the bootstrap to one million.

Then very quick for the listeners that have an idea, but not the capital, would you tell them to try to get VC money or try to get the company started, get some revenue and then do the VC route or?

Yeah.

I mean, this is going to sound cliché, but it's true and whoever is doing this needs to hear this, which is the raising money is not the, is not the goal.

Like, so a lot of people are like, Hey, I want to talk to you, like I'll invest in a company and they'll say, I want to talk to you about, you know, what metrics we need to do to be able to raise an A in nine months or, you know, we're starting planning for our series B, I want to talk to you about what metrics we need to do to hit the B. And I'm like, I understand what they're saying and it's good to be thoughtful and plan, but there's a sort of implication that raising money is the milestone and it's like, Oh, what business, what does this business need to do to be able to achieve this outcome?

And it's actually the opposite.

It's, I have a business outcome I'm trying to get to, I'm trying to get to 10 million in revenue with 20% EBITDA.

I'm trying to get a 20% market share in this market or 5%.

I want to grow 20% a month.

You have a business outcome in mind and then you just say, do I need more money to make that happen?

Yes or no.

Money is the fuel.

It is not the destination.

It is not the, it's not the point of the journey for, for, for raising money.

And so I would just say like, yeah, when you start, when you have the idea, the goal is, okay, well, I need to get like one customer, 10 customers, a hundred customers, a thousand customers, you start doing that.

And then at some point, if you get stuck because you lack the money, meaning you truly, you need to go buy inventory or your paid ads are working, you just need to spend more to get to the next milestone, then you raise the money.

Don't raise, don't raise as your excuse to go do the business.

Yeah.

And you also see a lot of deals where people approaching you and, you know, me in a little

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bit lesser way, but I do feel like there's a lot of people think they need money to launch a business, but actually don't.

Because they think, oh, it needs to be pretty or it has to have all these functionalities.

But maybe they could just like start with one functionality and just have, you know, a fiber design and just do it and, you know, do it, at least get started.

Yeah.

So to fund are people who have created a company and like made all the mistakes, ended up with a small win where they got a taste of winning, but, you know, not, not, not enough to go retire on a yacht because the next time they start, they're like, not going to waste those six months on design mockups and branding and getting the trademark and all this other stuff.

Like they know what are the traps and they know what, what you really need to do versus what you think you need to do.

And there's a big gap there, but usually even if somebody tells you, experience is the best teacher because the voice in your head, typically from most entrepreneurs I meet, the voice in your head typically is giving you some bad advice your first, first time through.

And it's okay.

Like just go do it, learn those lessons.

And then the second time you're much better off.

Yeah.

I agree.

Then last question, would you rather do a boxing match against Sam or do an Ironman with me and Suley?

Both.

I'd rather do the boxing match with Sam because that sounds more fun and exciting than like an endurance race.

But yeah, so I would do a boxing match with Sam.

I think that'd be great.

You know, I've always wanted to like feel what it's like to be in a real fight.

Like, I think I got into like one or two little altercations when I was younger, like in high school or middle school, but it was always like, I hit the kid and then he, he ran away or like, yeah, he hit me and then I got broken up and it's like, it never, yeah, I was like, okay, let's do this.

Let's get, let's start.

No one's going to break this up.

And the point is to actually get in a fight.

So I would do it.

Although Sam is definitely like, you know, on horse tranquilizers or whatever, like horse, you know, growth hormone or whatever he's taken, that guy's built like an absolute monster right now.

So, you know, I need a little training period, but I would do it.

Actually, a lot of people, because he's been posting videos of me and him sparring, you know, he wants to become a fitness influencer now.

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And his credit, by the way, he posts pick, he posts videos of you hitting him and him going down.

Normally when people post the cherry pick, what makes them look good?

He does the opposite.

He posts of you hitting him at liver shots and him falling down over and over again, a compilation.

Yeah.

And to be also to his credit, he, he started four or five months ago, not super serious, not that he's doing it every day, but he, he actually got really good, really fast.

Um, you know, I've been training much longer, but a lot of people on the Twitter, uh, comments actually are voting for, uh, you versus Sam.

So maybe we should give the parents what they need.

Let's give the fans what they want.

Yeah.

We need, we need like a Kickstarter or GoFundMe or something.

It's like, if, uh, if, if, if certain number of people vote for this or buy the pre-buy a pay-per-view \$5 pay-per-view of this, we'll do it.

We need like whatever, 10,000 pre-buys.

Okay.

10,000 pre-buys.

That's the goal.

10,000 pre-buys of a \$10 pay-per-view.

And then we'll do it.

Okay.

Let's set it up.

And then you can hear me like, I don't know, four months to train and we'll, we'll film the training.

Four months to train.

Yeah.

Or to six.

Each one can get one, uh, good trainer, a boxing trainer, uh, do, do what you want to do.

Boxing or MMA or.

No.

Boxing.

I don't have time to learn five martial arts.

We'll get to the point where we're both shitty at boxing and then we'll do it.

Yeah.

Let's do it.

I think we should do it.

And then maybe Suley and I can box too as the pre-links.

The undercard.

Yeah.

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We should, we should get.

The undercard.

Anybody.

It's a CEO boxing tournament.

Yes.

And we stream it, uh, and we do it in a really small, ratchet like boxing gym here.

That's right.

And also we can go there and then we'll just stream it for, for the people.

Right.

And then pre buys.

That's a lot, but I think it's doable, especially if we can get the support of your listeners.

Yeah.

We're saying it now.

Uh, people will just have to see, uh, we'll just have to get them a link and let's get them a link and let's do it.

Yes.

All right.

I can't wait.

All right.

Perfect.

Um, okay.

I got to run.

I got to do a call with this guy.

Ramon, thanks for being on.

Where should people find you?

So now your Twitter famous.

So is it Ramon Van Meer?

Is that your, your Twitter handle?

Right.

Actually, I feel so dumb.

Uh, I don't know.

Actually, let me see, um, because I barely used it since until yesterday.

Yeah.

Ramon at Ramon Van Meer, all together at Ramon Van Meer.

Go buy, if you have a small dog, like I have a multipoo, uh, I have four of your ramps in my house because it's a lifesaver.

Uh, otherwise your dogs get like, you know, injured backs and they're jumping off couches and stuff like that.

That's like, imagine jumping onto something or off of something that's three times your height.

And that's what they're doing.

And so these ramps are onto the bed, onto the couch, upstairs, you know, that's how I use them.

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So go buy, go buy some ramps from Alpha Paul.

Oh, thank you for the plug.

Uh, thank you.

Thank you for talking and I see you at the, at the boxing match.