Twitter Thread by Dillon Zhang Forrest

Dillon Zhang Forrest
@dillonzfo

1/ .@rrhoover wasn't a founder that investors typically like:

- He was solo.
- He was non-technical.

He built and sold @ProductHunt to @AngelList for $20M and is now a VC with @weekendfund.

Here are Ryan's smart tactics to build PH into an industry-known brand... ■■■



2/ Ryan hated hourly pay because he was paid the same whether he did a good or bad job.

He hunted for cheap electronics and flipped them on eBay for a profit. He sold between $150k - $200k in merchandise in high school and college.

He learned he enjoyed hunting for products.

3/ Ryan used to blog a lot.

He knew email was a great channel for re-engaging his audience. His post "Email-First Startups" outlined companies that started as emails, and it went viral on Twitter and Hacker News.

However, the popular narrative was that email was dead and dumb.

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Email-First Startups



Web-first, mobile-first, tablet-first, etc. etc. etc. All startups start somewhere, evaluating several factors (product, market, team, timeline, competition) to determine the right strategy.

One of the less common approaches is the **email-first startup**. Email-first enables startups to:

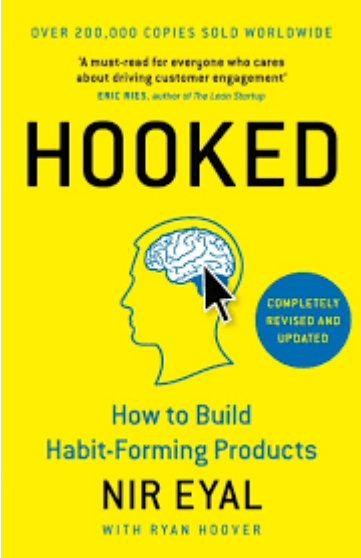
4/ Being non-technical and contrarian, Ryan built an email list as Product Hunt's MVP.

He built it in 20 minutes and got a few hundred subscribers.

Email worked. All his users were active in their inboxes. Email let Ryan experiment with content in ways websites wouldn't allow.

5/ Ryan already built a small following from his years of writing about products and from helping @nireyal write "Hooked."

This following became Product Hunt's first few hundred users.



6/ Press was a good early channel.

Ryan wrote for Fast Company "How We Got Our First 2,000 Users Doing Things That Don’t Scale."

Hilariously, his entire goal with that article was to get Product Hunt an additional 1,000 users! ■■

01-07-14

How We Got Our First 2,000 Users Doing Things That Don't Scale

So you need a crowd to launch to. Here's the way we got one.



[IMAGE: FLICKR USER JOHN ASHLEY]

BY RYAN HOOVER

5 MINUTE READ

7/ Ryan used Twitter to grow too.

As users submitted products, Ryan spent his first hour every morning finding the products' makers on Twitter. He'd invite them to join PH to answer questions and join the discussion.

Twitter and press alone got PH to several thousand users.

8/ When Ryan applied to Y Combinator, PH was growing 50% MoM for three months already.

Although he thought being solo and non-technical hurt his case, he applied after encouragement from @garrytan, @alexisohanian, @KatManalac & @supalyt.

He raised PH's Series A right after YC.

9/ Since he's non-technical, Ryan built PH's team to be remote, by necessity rather than choice.

@andreasklinger joined Ryan as CTO. He was in Vienna and recruited engineers from his network in Europe.

Andreas and Ryan came together with a shared passion for the PH community.

10/ Ryan also had a hot take on customer support.

To him, user complaints were chances to engage his users, not a cost center.

He Command-Tab'd to TweetDeck constantly and saw every PH mention. His responses were so quick that the community felt personable and approachable.

11/ Today, Product Hunt is still the go-to destination for makers to launch new products.

Within my founder circles, everyone takes their PH launch very seriously. PH can move the needle so much that some of my friends take weeks or months to prepare for their PH launch.

12/ Follow @rrhoover! He's great on Twitter.

If you liked this thread, follow @dillonzfo. I tweet daily threads about smart moves by smart people to make money.

If you like investing, I'm building Steady Capital so you can invest in real estate for $100: https://t.co/aRDSj4c29A

You made $924 in passive income

On $2,200 invested over the past 24 months