Twitter Thread by Atharva Kharbade



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This is the story of a guy named Alex, who made $1 million in just 5 months by selling pixels of his website's homepage, when he was broke

16 years later, now he's the CEO of a company worth more than $2 billion

Thread ↓

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Year 2005

Alex has no money in his bank account, and just after 1 month his classes at a three-year university are gonna begin.

Being really determined to avoid student debt, he pulls an all nighter to brainstorm on a question, "How can I become a millionaire"

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Twenty minutes later, he had his answer: Sell one million pixels of advertising space on a website for $1 each.

"I thought, 'This is one of those crazy, quirky ideas, but it just might work.I've got nothing to lose.' " says Alex.

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Tew already had some experience with website design, so with a paltry $100, he quickly bought a domain name and some basic web hosting services and had his website, https://t.co/APDYhSjFTQ, up and running in two days.

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The concept was simple: Businesses could buy 10x10 or larger blocks of advertising space for a $1 per pixel and place their logos and links on his site.

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Tew knew no one would be interested in buying pixel space if he didn't get the ball rolling, so he convinced some family and friends to chip in to buy the first 1,000 pixels.

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He also thought it would be a good story for the media to pick up--"Broke student has quirky way to raise money for college"--so Tew took the money he made from the first 1,000 pixels he sold and used it to write and send out press releases to the local media near his...

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...hometown of Cricklade, England.

The UK media quickly took the bait, but what was even more remarkable-& proved to be the most effective marketing tactic-was that bloggers, online forums and chat rooms also began to embrace the story

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Word of mouth through all the varied media attention quickly snowballed, and within two weeks Tew had sold $40,000 worth of pixels--enough to cover his entire three years of college.

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It didn't take long before media in 35 other countries got wind of Tew's million-dollar homepage idea.

In just five months, Tew reached his goal of selling a $1 million worth of pixels.

In the past two weeks alone, he's received close to 4 million unique hits.

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Part of that traffic was due to his exposure on eBay. With only 1,000 pixels left to sell on his site, he had hundreds of people wanting a piece of internet history.

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"I thought the only way to logically meet some of that demand without starting another page was to put the last 1,000 pixels [up for sale] on eBay."

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A large part of his success is hugely owed to his ability to quickly find solutions and adapt to the many problems that unexpectedly popped up during the past five months.

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One of the first problems he encountered was that his website wasn't equipped to handle the volume of traffic he began receiving.

In the beginning, he had to manually upload every single image and all the links himself.

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As hundreds of orders began pouring in, though, Tew was forced to hire two people to help maintain the website's database and deal with customers.

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The next major problem was that PayPal blocked his account. (PayPal's anti-fraud policy automatically blocks accounts with high volumes of transactions in order to avoid money-laundering schemes.)

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Tew was forced to quickly come up with an alternative payment method to keep up with the volume of orders he was receiving.

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Within three hours of PayPal going down, Tew had found a replacement.

And although PayPal eventually enabled his account again, Tew kept both payment options open to prevent a similar problem in the future.

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Tew also had to learn to release control to others. "In previous projects, I've wanted to do everything," he says.

"With this, I had no choice but to get other people involved."

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So he enlisted the help of family and friends and even a PR person in the United States to deal with the international media.

Tew adds, "I've learned the value of letting other people take responsibility for different aspects of the business."

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This is an excerpt from Entrepreneur magazine's article about Alex from January 13, 2006

For now, Tew is deferring his college degree until next September in order to take time to reassess his career path to determine which direction he really wants to go. "I've had a lot of job offers from some of the hugest internet companies, but I think my long-term future is going into business to do my own thing."

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Now everyones knows Alex (@tewy) as the founder of @calm, an online meditation platform valued at US$2 billion

He walked what he talked. This is what the real hustle is all about, making shit happen no matter what.

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