

## Full Transcript - Episode 9 - INTERVIEW: Alex Friedman Reveals How He Started & Built a Tutoring Empire From Scratch

Introduction: 00:00:03: Marketing, explosive growth, and revolutionary secrets that can catapult your business to new heights. You're now listening to the underground marketer podcast with your host Tudor Dumitrescu, the one podcast devoted to showing new businesses how to market themselves for high growth.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:00:23 Welcome to the underground marketer. This is the place where we deliver the real truth about marketing and explore big ideas that help new businesses thrive and grow into big ones. I'm your host Tudor. And today I'm joined by a very special guest, Alex Friedman. And Alex is a real underground marketer and entrepreneur. He has basically built a tutoring business from scratch. So, it's my pleasure to introduce Alex to you and Alex, why don't you say hi to our listeners and tell us briefly about yourself and how you got started.

Alex Friedman: 00:01:01 Sure. Hi, I'm Alex. Hello listeners. How I got started. So I was one of those entrepreneurs that I think didn't intend to start a business. I didn't think I would be a business owner. I started tutoring kind of for the hell of it because someone asked me to, and then little by little, I realized like, oh, hey, I could do this instead of a full-time job. And then, you know, a few years later I was like, oh, hey, I can make an actual business out of it. And then there was a whole long journey. So I'll let you lead the conversation through various parts of it.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:01:33 Okay. That's really cool. So, I mean, you got the idea of starting in tutoring when you were working a job, is that correct?

Alex Friedman: 00:01:43 Uh, yeah, I was working as a consultant. I was a programmer and it was my first job that wasn't a full-time job, it was a part-time job. So I had a flexible schedule and it was also the first time I realized like, oh, I don't have to be a full-time person. I can do things part-time on an hourly basis. So before that, I mean, it sounds so weird now, you know, from my current perspective before that, I just didn't think it was possible. It sounds odd, I guess, but I didn't realize like, oh yeah, you really could make hourly pay. It was amazing.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:02:13 Absolutely. I mean, that's for a lot of people when they see that they can sort of make money independently for the first time, that tends to be a big thing. And a lot of gateways basically open from there. So how did this tutoring opportunity basically knock on your door?

Alex Friedman: 00:02:33 So it came out kind of oddly, I was doing martial arts and the sensei who was a friend of mine, had a kid and the kid was a troublemaker and she knew that I was a problem maker and I was a high school dropout. And she was like, hey, why don't you tutor my kid? You know, the last person to tutor him, he just thought the tutor wasn't smart enough. And I know you're smart and you're good at math. So he likes you and he respects you. So I started tutoring this boy and it turned out, of course, like it was this, this had kind of a long-range thing. So I tutored him for a while and he was incredibly bright, but he wasn't interested in math. I was a math tutor, but he kind of got interested and I kind of followed up over the years and he, he did drop out of high school and he did join a circus. This is real. But then he went back to college

and started taking math classes. So I like to think I have a little bit of responsibility for that. And after I started tutoring him, I was like, oh, Hey, this pays well. And this is really satisfying work. And I had never done work before that was directly satisfying in this way. So I decided, oh, let me see if I can make a business out of it. And that was hard. That part was hard after that.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:03:37: That's really awesome. So, I mean, which part of it did you really like, I guess that it's the part that you're actually interacting with people more because I suppose that in your previous job, as a consultant/programmer, you didn't interact so much and you didn't really see the effects that your work basically had on one specific person.

Alex Friedman: 00:04:00: That is exactly right. So I worked for, I guess some semi-well-known companies. I worked for a company that does airfare searches used to be called ITA software, but then they got bought by Google. I worked for companies that produce other stuff and I worked, what else did I do? I worked as a research, something or other, and you work on stuff, but it's hard to understand why. Like, maybe there's some abstract satisfaction, you're solving a problem. But okay, so you save some guy, somewhere, maybe, you don't really know, \$10 in his airplane ticket. Like who cares. When you work with a person directly, it's satisfying on a much more primal level. Like I really help this person see themselves in a different way. It's not like I just taught them something. They're like, cool. I got it by it's like, oh, I changed this person's perspective of themselves. And I think like other people, like other industries, get the same satisfaction. Like you're a fitness coach and you see someone go from, hey, I'm an unhealthy like unathletic person to just changing this all perception to like, oh, I can be a healthy fit person. It's very satisfying.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:05:06: Absolutely. I think that's one of the biggest things, even for myself working in marketing and as a consultant, you know, when I see the impact that it actually has in changing people's lives, that's definitely a big thing. It's a big motivator. And I think that actually entrepreneurs when they first get started and I mean, you didn't even see yourself as an entrepreneur initially, but I think that it's very useful if you learn to get your joy out of the value that you deliver, because that sort of motivates you to keep going. And I suppose that you didn't make a fortune just by tutoring this guy. Right? And it was this motivation that actually impelled you to see how you can take this forward.

Alex Friedman: 00:05:52 Yeah, that's correct. I mean, actually, it paid pretty well. I was like, oh, I can make the same tutoring a kid as I do doing programming. And I was like, well, I hate having a boss, I'm really bad at having a boss. At least I was then. And I thought like, well, how do I, like I saw, I smelled freedom. I didn't really see it yet, but I smelled freedom. And I was like, whoa, how do I move towards freedom? So I was like, well, maybe I could tutor some other kids and if I'm making 50 bucks an hour, that was a lot of money in like 2008 for me. Um, so yeah, that, that got me on that path of like, well, how do I keep this going?

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:06:30: Wow. So 2008 that's actually when the crisis, the economic crisis happened, then that's basically when you launched the business.

Alex Friedman: 00:06:39: Yeah. I always thought that like, if you provide a good service and something that people need, an economic crisis isn't a big deal. You know, people... it's interesting. Cause it just repeated the same self, uh, the same thing during Corona where lots of businesses closed and I got very lucky that because I'm an education and specifically education for more like wealthy people, the last thing they're willing to stop spending money on is their kids.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:07:04: Of course. Absolutely. And I mean, it's, it's the thing that you have to be adaptable as a business. We'll probably get to the current phase and Corona later because I think that's very instructive for a lot of people. Uh, but one thing that I think is essential, you know, if you want to be an entrepreneur, if you want to start your own business, you have to be willing to adapt to the market. And I mean, a lot of the big businesses, they do their best not to adapt. You know, I don't know if you've noticed this when you work a job in the past, but that's one of the things that personally I wouldn't like in a job, you know, that they don't give you the freedom to expand, to develop new things. And they actually hold a lot of stuff back.

Alex Friedman: 00:07:50 Yeah. I mean, when you're working for a company, the company has a mission, but then the individuals in them have their own goals and incentives. And I honestly have a hard time fully understanding how anything works at all. And I haven't worked in a business since I was much younger and much stupider and really didn't understand what was going on, but it never made sense to me. Why anyone did anything? I just, I just couldn't figure it out. And I still can't.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:08:13 Yeah, yeah, I see. So, I mean, how old were you in 2008, when you, when you first got into tutoring and you started building this up?

Alex Friedman: 00:08:21 Let's see, was it, it may have actually been before 2008. I think I really made it into business by 2008. I got into it... When was it? 2006, 2007. I was, I guess, my mid-twenties.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:08:35: Yeah. Yeah. That's very inspiring. I mean, it just shows that if you really found the need, or I should say that the need found you more, like, you know, so that's kind of fascinating. So how did you go from having one single client basically to finding new clients? I mean, what was the first thing? Because, you know, a lot of people ask the question, how do I get started from scratch? Like, I don't have anything, you know, I don't know where my customers are. I don't know anything. I've never studied marketing. And I suppose you are in a sort of a similar position. So how did you approach this?

Alex Friedman 00:09:16: I was in a similar position, but I think I was in a much worse position than basically anyone now because there wasn't a wealth of information about how to start a small business. Like the only thing that existed was what was it like, uh, this guy who traveled and he, you know, he had some ideas about it, but there's so much information now, but I'll tell you what I did. And it won't have much bearing on what people do. So I had no idea. I never thought of myself as a business owner or that I'm marketing a business, to begin with. I was just like, whoa, how do I find people? So like I asked my grandma, what do I do? And she's like, well, you know, there's a building with lots of Russian people go post a flyer. So I was like, okay, how do I make a flyer? I have no artistic design skills, little by little. It was like, okay, uh, let me learn how to make a flyer. Okay. How do I print the slide? These are all things that seem like they shouldn't be a problem, but they really are. So I went to the dealer by big buildings, posted flyers, and like someone actually called me. It was amazing. In retrospect, it was the worst thing to do. Like there's like no benefit to what I did. Cause it was like the wrong customer. So it was like low income, Russian people who don't, you know, don't tend to pay for tutoring. It was like the wrong neighborhood. It was the wrong method, it was all wrong, but that was step one. And then eventually I was like, well, I guess I have to make a website. And I forget how I got the idea. Probably some, some marketing guru sold me some sort of nonsense for like two 99. And

I was like, I guess I have to make a website. And eventually, I was like, how do I make a website? Well, uh, there, there was WordPress, thankfully. So I made this like WordPress website. I was like, what do I call this business? I don't even know. And I was like, okay, there's Google Search Engine Optimization. Like, well, I'm in Brooklyn and I'm a math tutor. So I'm just going to call it Brooklyn Math Tutor, because, you know, hopefully, that does it. And somehow, because this was 2008, I think that's when I started as a company, Brooklyn wasn't quite as cool yet. So these things weren't taken yet. And in retrospect, that turned out to be a good choice, but of course, starting the website didn't help like: (1) I didn't know how to make it look good. So like, oh, how do I find a nice theme? How do I write? I hated writing. Like I'm a math guy. And the worst thing...I was, uh, I was the worst writer. And maybe this is for your listeners, right? Since you do copywriting, what I've come to see like over all this times, the most valuable and useful skill for anyone is copywriting. Like there's nothing more valuable than being able, how to write and perhaps now, write and then speak well on camera, but really writing. So I had to learn how to write. I had to like post content, cause I didn't know what else to do. Uh, I had to try to learn Search Engine Optimization, like some basics of it. It was, I was like lost in the woods trying to find the light. It took a long time.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:12:00 And it's really the process, I think, when you're lost in the woods, you know, because a lot of people, they're looking for that system, you know, step-by-step, what do I do? You know, how do I make it work? And they want basically something that's step by step and they will just follow the steps and they will get the result. But of course, as you noticed, you know, that's not how it actually works. You have to try a lot of things. Like you tried first with the flyer in the building then with the website and so on and you have to keep iterating to actually get to something that works. And I think that a lot of people don't understand that. How do you feel that you were, because you mentioned copywriting, right? And you mentioned how we turned out to be one of the most valuable skills that you learned and I sort of agree with that. I think that at a larger scale, communication really is supremely valuable because I mean, you need it for leadership, you need it to create teams, you need it to get your ideas out there. You need it to market, to hire people, to talk with investors, maybe depending on what kind of business you have. So I think that that's definitely one side of it, but another side of it that I see as important is the mindset. So I wanted to dig into this a little bit, you know, how were you in terms of mindset in the beginning and how did you develop and how did you find that it actually affected your business?

Alex Friedman: 00:13:26 Oh man, that's such a big thing. And it's very interesting because it's not only mindset. I mean, mindset is just part of it, but you're like, my maturity in general, like life skills and communication skills, right? It's not copywriting per se. It's communication and written communication. I was a terrible communicator because I come from the Soviet Union and I think we talked about this before, like in the Soviet Union, people don't have feelings or at least we treat each other like we don't have feelings, we're overly direct, we don't read any nuance. We don't know how to deal with people who have any kind of sensitivities. It's like, what? No, you're stupid. What you're talking about. I think I was particularly bad at it in some way. What I was good at, I was good at talking to kids. Cause I had this odd thing where I kind of treated everybody at the same social level as me, which kids liked, because I didn't treat them like kids, but adults didn't like, and, and the parents, my clients were older than me. So I wasn't really good at talking to them at all. So it took me, I mean, years, one - to even realize this was a problem. Like, forget about solving it. Like first, you have to know that this is a problem. And then know that this is fixable. And that was like, I think some of the biggest changes I went through was like realizing how many of the difficulties in my life. And of course, this wasn't just business. This was like my personal relationships, relationship my family relationships, et cetera, for every girlfriend, everything, how much of it is drastically affected to the extent that it's

impossible to imagine until you really understand it by like communication skills, empathy, like just like how much nonsense you have in your mind. Like how clearly you think, how much you can understand other people. So, I mean, I could write a book about it, but it was a huge change. And as I got older and worked on these things in my business went much, much, much, much better of course, because I could talk to people better. I was better able to just, I wouldn't say negotiate, but like negotiate situations, navigate situations, talk to people in my twenties. I didn't know how to talk to customers at all because these people who were like, you know, just kind of like, well off people and they're in their like late thirties, early forties. And then I started seeing, as I got older, I was like, oh, Hey, these people actually start, uh, start to see me as an adult. And I guess I am an adult. And then as I got older still, I realized, you know, I'm not actually the best person for this job.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:15:54: And that's sort of probably how you got into hiring people, right?

Alex Friedman: 00:15:59: Uh, that's how I got into hiring, getting a manager. Um, I first had to like get tutors and this was like a big mindset shift too, you know, going from freelancer to business owner. And I was like, so reluctant because I didn't want to be a business owner. I don't know why, like looking back, like what kind of moron was I, but I didn't want to be a business owner. I thought it was for like weird people. And so when I first came to hiring tutors, I was really clueless about how, just like looking back, I didn't really know how to talk to people. I didn't know what to filter for. I did know how to tell if somebody was good at math, but that was it. And as it turns out, that's like such a basic thing and you need much more than just "I could do this job". Like, will you show up on time? Are you nice, are you reliable? There's so much. And I got much better at that over time. And I could talk about our hiring process, how that changed drastically as well.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:16:54: That's awesome! One thing going back slightly to the mindset thing, a lot of people, when they start out, they deal with fear. You know, like, they're not sure if this is going to work out, and that sort of holds them back. You know, they don't know how to navigate that sort of fear and anxiety. Like for example, when you decided to put flyers out there, a lot of people wouldn't even have taken that sort of action just because they would not feel comfortable with it. So I wanted to ask you how you felt in terms of that and if you've dealt with fear and how did you basically navigate it at the beginning? Because there's a lot of uncertainty there.

Alex Friedman: 00:17:33 Yeah. I'm trying to remember. It's hard to go back. I definitely don't remember if I had feared that things don't work out. One of the ways I think to deal with some of these fears is to create situations where like the failure mode isn't catastrophic, you know, so a tutoring company, you don't invest really much money to kind of invest hustle. If it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out. I did have a huge fear of investing money into things, like coming from an immigrant family, it was incredibly hard for me to say "I'm going to post these flyers. I don't know how much it's going to cost, it's going to cost me some money. And I don't know if I'm going to have any return". That was hard. And that's something I kind of like slowly worked on. I didn't have much social fear cause I was too socially inept at the time. I wasn't concerned. Like what if people catch me posting flyers? And I kind of assumed most things won't work. I think that's kind of a good way to go into things. It's like, you're just trying stuff out.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:18:29: And you didn't have an expectation necessarily that it would work out.

Alex Friedman: 00:18:34 No, I just really wanted to do it. And I realized the way I'm like set up there's no real way to fail. Like there wasn't really any way to fail. You just kind of either, with this kind of business, you either give up or you succeed eventually.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:18:48: Yeah. I mean, it does make absolute sense. So then what was your first big win? You know, like what was your first, let's say, client, that you actually got by yourself, you know, without being recommended by somebody else or how did you actually get your first client, apart from that very first one?

Alex Friedman: 00:19:08: I think I may have gotten one client for posting those flyers. It was like, some like Russian lady with, with a kid. And I worked with that girl for quite a while. And even though she was like, not the typical person I wanted to work with because she was pretty young, but the mom was like, "oh, hey, like make her be a grade ahead". I'm like, "I don't know anything about fourth grade, but let's try it out" . It was really fun. And then I had a client who was, what was it? I think she was an adult. And she liked working with me and all these people have found me through my website eventually. And I can tell you some interesting things I learned that like, I just didn't know. So, when I made the website, at first, it was just me. I was Brooklyn Math Tutor, singular. And what I did differently than other people at the time was I did what we call content marketing. I just didn't know it was called that. And since I was like learning about the tutoring industry, I just started writing what I learned. It's like, Hey, why is this so expensive? I had no idea. Like, I didn't understand why it was expensive. So I wrote for clients, why is it expensive? Like, how do you do this? How do you... not like the specific math stuff, but just like why do tutors suck? Or like, why does somebody cost this much money? Or like, where do you find someone for cheap? Like, don't hire me if you're broke, here's what you do. And then I had another such like, everybody's like interesting revelations. I was working with this pretty cute girl that was only like a little, a little younger than me. And she was in college, right? So that was a little bit tough. And I started asking people like Hey, why did you choose to work with me? And I thought it would be, hey, because I have credentials and I have good SAT scores. And she said, oh, you look like a nice Jewish boy that would be good at math. And I was like, I was just shocked because I didn't realize that that's what people like. Now it makes sense. People choose you based on your character. But it was shocking to me to learn that.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:21:03: Because you came from basically this very math science-y background. So you probably didn't connect that well with the more emotional side of things. And really they, because the way people make judgments is very emotional. And because we tend to think of ourselves as rational, we sort of struggle to see that in other people.

Alex Friedman: 00:21:27: Yeah. When we're stupid about life, we tend to think that we're rational. And that, as you learn more, you realize that like, there is a part of you that at the best of times, can act rational about certain things and that that's as good as it gets.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:21:42 And then with content marketing, did you have to do anything to actually get your website to rank higher into Google? Was that even something, something that you were thinking about, or how did you really approach this? What were the metrics basically that you're judging your progress by?

Alex Friedman: 00:22:02: I don't quite recall if I had specific metrics, but I wasn't, I just kind of wrote about things that I thought would be useful and it was easy at the time. I have to say, it'd be much, much harder now, there's so much more competition now. And I've seen people do

this much better than I did and much more successfully because a website called, oh, I forget what it's called. But I do like, just like amazing content about test prep, PrepScholar, they're called PrepScholar, look them up. That's like the right way to do it. Like everything you could possibly want to know about test prep, they've written it. So anything you look, it comes up and I was basically doing that about tutoring. The other thing I did was that since my business was a local business, I created a Google places page, which was very helpful. And I asked people for reviews and some people were nice enough to leave them. And it, I think it made a big difference. You know, people say, Hey, here's like, you know, a bunch of four-star reviews or five-star reviews. And I compare to what other people did, to what they did wrong. It's like, okay, this guy's photo. He looks like, well, he looks like a predator.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:23:07: I see, that's really awesome. And I think that it really goes because a lot of people, at least that I know, and a lot of the younger entrepreneurs that I know, they sort of look for something that's going to scale very quickly and they don't want to bother basically with the more organic stuff. And personally, most of the successful businesses that I've seen have grown to a large degree organically, you know, and not through PPC and so on, but then a lot of people, they just want to do PPC, you know, they just want to do ads and grow that way. So I wanted to ask you, have you done in that period, any sort of advertising online via Google, you know, maybe Facebook and if so, what sort of results did you obtain and how did you go?

Alex Friedman: 00:23:59: Sure. So this is something that I've thought about a lot too, and I'll kind of summarize it. I've never paid for marketing that works at all ever. I've tried to pay for marketing like that, and it has never worked. Like nothing has ever worked where you pay directly for impressions or for whatever. Like I advertise in a local theater... I think I tried Facebook ads. I tried Google ads sometime before that. I actually bought Andy's PPC course, which is good. And I learned a lot. And then I realized like, yeah, the cost per click in my niche is like at least 10 to \$15 per click. And it's hard to tell who's clicking. And I'm like, man, if I'm really spending that much, like, I think there's better ways to do it. There's better ways to get kind of like long lasting building results. I should be writing more content. So I remember reading about PPC and people saying, oh, it's an easy way to try things, but I haven't found it to be so. Maybe it's like a fear of spending money. And now it's like a lot of money - want to get 10 people? Oh, it's like 300 bucks. But I found that creating content that's genuinely useful for people builds trust, builds relationships, like, okay, this person wants to help me. And it also, I think to, to market with pay-per-click is a specific skill. I can kind of pay for ads. And if you haven't done it, you're not good at it. Just like, you're not good at anything else you haven't done. So if you just throw money at Google and you're not like a PPC expert, like I it's going to suck or Facebook. So I haven't had any luck. And every time I look back to try it, I've kind of been reminded why I don't want to do it.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:25:40: Yeah. I definitely see that. And I mean, one thing that really fascinates me is that I've come across people who have spent \$10,000 plus for example, on Facebook ads and they got zero results, but they still want to spend more money. And you know, for me, something in that equation doesn't make sense. You know, if it's not getting your results, at some point, you have to think that there has to be a better method, you know, to get your clients.

Alex Friedman: 00:26:13: I have a friend who I met through some local group and he started a business, which I actually think has a lot of scalability. And I asked him what he's doing to market it. And he's doing PPC ads and he spent like a thousand dollars a month and he's

maybe gotten like 10 clients total. And I'm like, well, dude, if you're spending that much money, why don't you pay someone to just create some good content that people will find because people are searching for your stuff. You just don't know when they're searching. They may not be searching now, they may be searching later. And like, think how much, how many, like how much content you can create for the thousand dollar a budget. It's a lot.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:26:45 Absolutely. Absolutely. And the other thing is you can even hire a Salesforce and the direct Salesforce tends to get, if you manage them well, tends to get much better results for that amount of money. I just think that people are naturally attracted to the fact that it seems easy, but actually paid advertising, especially online, you know, and I will say, especially online because there are problems with online advertising that you do not find with direct mail or stuff like that. For example, click farming is a huge problem online, like a lot of the clicks that people get when they do PPC, they're not actual real people who would ever be interested in what they have to sell. You know, I've actually run, for example, some experiments with trying to get likes for a Facebook page. And you can get likes very cheaply, you know, for like 1 cent alike. But those are basically people whose profiles basically do not look authentic. Like you see them liking stuff that the same person couldn't possibly like, things that are opposite one another. You know, like they have interests, for example, in fundamentalism. And then at the same time in atheism or something of that nature. And they have thousands of things that they like, you know, it's like, they like everything.

Alex Friedman: 00:28:12: Yeah, yeah. They're not a real person.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:28:14: Exactly. So I mean, a lot of online advertising is plagued by this problem. And if you're not aware of it and if you're not somebody who works consistently with this, then you're not going to know when you fall in this trap. And I mean, I've audited a lot of accounts for clients who're doing PPC or some form of direct advertising online. And a lot of them are played by this problem and they don't even know about it. Even the ones who are successful, you know, they could increase their bottom line by pretty much 30% of their profits, I mean their ROI, you know, just by getting rid of the clique farming that they're affected by. So I think that it is a big deal and I don't know why it's so popular, you know, perhaps all those glues.

Alex Friedman: 00:29:00: I think it's addictive. It's very quick. So like, oh, I put some money in, I got to like roll the lever and to see the meter results. And I think you mentioned something when speaking earlier, like the people, you know, who are successful, tend to build things up slowly and organically, you know. Like Nicholas Talib, he has this, I forget whatever quote, but it's like anything that's quick to build is quick to be destroyed. Anything you could do real fast is also very fragile. So if you're paying for PPC and then suddenly someone, you know, comes in and they're bidding double or whatever, like, boom, that's it. What are you going to do?

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:29:40: Yeah, I agree. We're changing the algorithm which, you know, distributes the money in the ads differently. It just can screw everything up, you know, in one go. And I definitely agree with that. The problem is like you brought up something that's supremely important, in my opinion. You know, namely the fact that ads are quick feedback and we tend to get addicted indeed to the things that are quick feedback. And we tend to have a big problem, like a big, big problem with following things that take a long time to get results and to give us feedback. And basically I wanted to ask you how that affected you, especially at the beginning of your journey, like when you started doing content marketing and so on. I don't suppose that, you know, the first article you posted, you had 10 clients knocking on your door,



right? So how did you deal with the lack of feedback there and how do you generally recommend to people to deal with things that take a long time to work out?

Alex Friedman: 00:30:43: How to deal with the lack of feedback? I think I didn't expect anything to happen anytime soon, so I was pleasantly surprised. I'm currently starting a YouTube channel with a friend and he's been previously successful. So when things don't happen right away, he's like, oh, our video didn't get as many views, we have to change strategies. Like dude, dude, dude, we posted like four videos, like calm down. So part of it is your expectation. Like if you, if you expect things to happen quickly and they don't, you're going to feel bad. So I think it's better, what is it? A man who expects nothing is rarely really disappointed. I would say what I did was I, I focused on really providing interesting and useful information nobody was doing. I think it's harder now because it's a lot more information out there to be really, truly unique truly like unique. But I was thinking, all right, if people find this, if someone wants to know, then that I want them to find this and they will. And I, and I don't know when they will. And it doesn't, it didn't really matter to me to get feedback right away. I was just like, I think this is what I should be doing. So how should people deal with it? Be useful to people. I think, really, be useful and people will find you and will appreciate will we'll, we'll appreciate it eventually. It's useful. And if it's not, you know, Google is good at helping you find stuff you want, as long as it's not political.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:31:54 Yeah. I can agree with that. Yeah. I think that's that's, that's the solid strategy. The difficulty that most people have is that they that they, they struggle to, you know, because it takes a concentrated effort that needs to be consistent and for a longer time frame time frame in order to start seeing results and they struggle, like they begin it, . rRight?. And they, they post, as you said with your friend, you, they post one, two, three, four, five videos and they see that there is very little response from the market. And then you know, that their mind starts thinking, oh, this is not working, y. You know, what's going on?. Maybe I shouldn't spend my time doing this. Maybe there is something better. How would you recommend that people deal with these sorts of thoughts?

Alex Friedman: 00:32:42: YUh, yeah. I mean, I think one of the, you mentioned like coming from a math background, I think people with a mathy backgrounds, a certain kind of backgrounds, we have this idea that we're smart enough to understand the world that like the world can be like understood with, with like our, our, our logic skills and, and our like deduction and whatever reasoning skills. And one of the most useful things I've come to see is that the world is just far too complicated for us to try to predict anything. So it's, it's futile to think about, oh, maybe there's like a better, like, oh, this didn't work right away, I. Let me try something immediately thereafter. I think you do have to know when to give up, but you have to know that you have to come to terms with the fact that like you don't understand, you're not going to find the best optimal solution, right? There's like, there's maybe like just because Jessica, some video goes viral, d. Doesn't mean you can replicate it. If you could, if anybody could, they'd be super rich right away and know nobody's doing it. So I think one is like, accept your limitations. Like, and just the reality that you won't both know the best solution, you just kind of have to hope that what you're doing is doing is, is useful and good enough and eventually works out. And maybe the other one, this I haven't tested this. So this is just coming out of my butt. But like, see how, how long it's taken other people to build stuff. Cause most of the ones I see like, oh yeah, this guy, this is the one I mentioned before he had, he had this blog about how he traveled high travel. And he They had a very interesting book and it was like 365 Days to Overnight Success. His theme Steve was like an overnight success, but he was like, I was writing every single day, a. And like, it wasn't overnight for him. F, for us, i. It just happened, for, for him, h.

He was working for a long time. So I think if your idea is valid and if you're doing something which is valuable and you're getting some kind of feedback, keep at it. Because if you keep changing gears, you will definitely not get anywhere. Like you will certainly not get anywhere versus you might not get anywhere and you might get somewhere.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:34:44: I definitely agree with that. And with the advice, I mean, the way I phrase it is that I say that you have to trust the process, you know? Exactly. So you have a reasonable process that you, for whatever reasons you expect, is expected to get you those results at some point in time. So you have to start the process and then you have to trust it so that you can actually get there. And if you lose faith in the process, then you know, you don't have any anchor pretty much. And you're just going to jump from one thing to the next. And we see a lot of people who are stuck, you know, especially beginners, they jump jumped from one thing to the other and they're never successful in anything because it's a learning process.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:35:28 You know, it takes time. You actually need to figure out and it's and the it's the small fine tune months and the small improvements that, you know, one today, one tomorrow and so on, and they add up and you don't realize, you know, how much better you are in a month if you improve everyday.

Alex Friedman: 00:35:48: Yeah, there's it does actually a great book. I read about this called... I think it was actually called Good to Great. And so the title. And he talks about things like about like, what has helped businesses? Like, like what has taken good businesses to become great businesses? And one of them was this idea -. I think it may have been a different book. I apologize if I have it wrong -, is that improvements happen.? Like there's, there's no one like one event that you like do this thing and then bam, like you've taken off. Like it's such a common trope common like trope in and modern culture.

...Tudor Dumitrescu 00:36:17 Like, oh, this actor got discovered - . It was like this one event. Yeah. But in practice, it's not how it works. Like, it's just, like you said, it's like little incremental improvement,. Kind of like spin up the flywheel and like get the him to flywheel. He has this whole chapter on the flywheel. It's very hard to get going get a going. It's big and it's heavy and it's like standing still and you kind of get it going and. And then it's the a little improvements there. There's no like one big shove that makes it happen. Not , not, not for, I think, I don't know, t. The 99% of companies. , Maybe some, just get massively lucky with the first thing they do, but those are outliers and you can't replicate them. for sure.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:36:55: For sure. And I mean, even to attempt to replicate them, you have to be out there. And a lot of people, they don't take any risks, they don't do anything, so the chances of success, if you like that are zero, you know. L, like I like to say, you have to actually do something and put yourself out there to even stand a chance. So going back a little to your business then, , then you mentioned that you basically started growing through content marketing and initially it was just yourself. What was the point when you sort of said to yourself, I need to hire a tutor because hiring a tutor came first before a manager, right?

Alex Friedman: 00:37:33: Oh, long before. Yeah. Yeah.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:37:34: Okay. So what was the point, like, where you one year in the business, you know, how long after you're basically working yourself, did you decide to do that and why did you do it? How did you do it? And basically how did you approach the entire process?

Alex Friedman: 00:37:51: So I did it too late. I did it poorly and I didn't do a good job of it overall. And I would have done it completely differently now. But how I actually did it was I think it was close to two years in and I was at the point where I was like, okay, I have a lot of clients. And I see that like, uh, I kind of need to scale. And I, I didn't, I didn't think of it as that, but I was like, I need help to manage these clients. I need help to like, make some money. And I was like, I was really, I didn't feel good about the idea of giving out clients and then taking a percent, a percent cut. Like I felt bad about it looking back, like, come on, man. But so how do I find this person? I don't quite recall. I think I posted an ad on Craigslist. I found some, some girl who seemed seemed who's pretty reasonable. Oh no, before that, they'll be for that. I found someone else who contacted me. And I tried since he made a bit to remember, clearly I tried like coming with different arrangements. How do we split this? I felt really bad about the idea of being like, I'm the manager and you get like 60% of the pay. Cause I didn't like it like, I didn't want to be in that position. But this is something that I think is interesting to note is II, you see now the tutors actually do want to be in that position. I didn't want to be in the position of working for someone else, but other people love being in the position of working for someone else. And it's weird. Like they don't want to take the risk. They don't want to take the initiative. And Um, and I didn't, I didn't understand that because I had that, that fallacy of whatever it's called that I think everyone's like me and they're really not, like we're, we're quite different. So how was that process? It was very was like very, uh, unstructured. I talked to a person to person. I was like, well, this person's probably good enough. I don't know. I didn't know what the hell I was doing. That's how I would put it.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:39:32: I see. So when you decided to start with the hiring, what was your revenue like race?

Alex Friedman Tudor Dumitrescu 00:39:38 Hm Mm, I don't recall. It wasn't a lot. How much was I making a month? Maybe like 2-3 thousand two to 3000. The thing with tutoring is that it that it's, it only happens during certain hours. So it's kind of harder to put in to get like 30 hours of work a week. Maybe you get like twelve. get like dwell. Yeah. It's going to be hard for me to recall the revenue. It wasn't, I wasn't making much money at money than at all, but I was like, okay, like there's, there's more demand than I can comfortably handle. And also I found that after a certain amount of clients clients, I, I just started doing a bad job, like past, like 10 clients a week. I was just just was tired. I remember days with snowstorms. I'm like biking to some customer and I'm killing myself to get to their home and through a foot of snow. It was awful.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:40:22 Yeah. You didn't have the energy to handle more clients. I mean, would you say that you're sort of an introverted person because introverts generally - and I'm an introvert as well - we tend to lose our energy, you know, when we encounter a lot of people in the same day.

Alex Friedman: 00:40:45: Absolutely. I mean, I think people are surprised because I'm very social, I'm talkative and I love to engage with people, but then I need to get the hell away from them. I'm okay with like individuals, I can hang out with like one person for a while. If they're not... if they have a high, what is it, like signal to noise ratio, if they're not full of crap, but I can talk to them, but I get easily overstimulated by groups of people, by being in the city, you know, traffic noises. Just stuff that gets to me.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:41:05: I'm the same. Yeah. Because a lot of people are also surprised about me because they think I have a big mouth and I'm really outgoing and so on

and so forth, which is sort of true if you put me in a social setting, but that's draining on me. You know, I don't like it if I can choose, you know, I choose not to.

Alex Friedman: 00:41:29: Also, introversion is orthogonal to shyness. Like there are extroverts who are shy and they're really weird, but you know, you could be not shy. You could be socially skilled, but yeah, you're just, you get tired from it. And I'm like that, my wife is like that. Most people I know who are, I think, sensitive people just get tired from stimulation because we, I don't know why, but that's how it seems to be. We think more or we're more easily affected by the stimulus versus people who like, I just can't tell if anything's happening inside their mind at all.

TLike things don't seem to penetrate, but they're okay.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:42:10: Yeah. Yeah. I see. I see. Right. So going back here, so you basically didn't have much revenue, but you decided because, I mean, in terms of, from, to be in a position where you say that you can easily give money to hire people, because this is the anxiety. The reason I bring this up is because this is the anxiety for a lot of people, you know, they wonder, you know, should I start hiring already because I sort of am not making that much of a revenue, you know, is this the right thing for me? And I think that your example, and certainly, you know, the first time I opened my agency and I started hiring people, it was a big thing. And it was a big deal for me mentally, you know, because I didn't know if I could actually do it, but by doing it, you know, I actually, I started earning much more and of course, then it became easier to support it and sustain it and actually grow it. But the first time you do it and you start hiring people, you do have that. Or at least I did have that going through my mind, you know, if I'm actually ready to do it.

Alex Friedman: 00:43:16: Well, I cheated, you know, because as a tutoring agency owner, I don't hire people. They're contractors. So the structure of the business is set up such that if there isn't work, there's no expense for me. It's not like I have to pay them a fixed salary. So I think the first person I even vaguely hired was my manager, like eight years later. And that was scary. Cause like, oh my God, I'm gonna pay her like some small fixed amount that it's scary. It's scary. Yeah. But it was scary just to have another, like, to add complexity to the system because, you know, it's kind of clean when you're a freelancer, like, hey, you're giving me work. I do work. We're done. And then you suddenly add this layer of management and overhead and okay but now I'm making only 40%. And yeah. It's scary.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:44:06: Yeah. Yeah. And I mean, the thing that you said about the contract deal, where they basically get a commission from you and you don't pay the tutors any fixed amount, that's really good. And it actually took me a long time to learn that, like, you know, initially I thought that you have to have people in an office and everybody has to be there and that's how work has to be done. You know, it took me quite some time to realize that, no, you don't actually need to have people in office. People can work from anywhere. And, you know, basically I ended up being way ahead of, you know, because everybody after COVID, they started to learn about working from home, working from wherever, you know? So as I learned about these things and they started implementing them with the people that I worked with, I sort of moved to the arrangements that you had with your tutors. Like nowadays I work with several copywriters. I call them need copywriters. And they would handle along with me managing the project and all of them are paid at least in part based on the results that they achieve. And that's much better both ways because they get paid more, you know, and they actually have to reach those targets and those results.

Alex Friedman 00:45:25 Absolutely. Um, yeah, the person that I actually hired was my manager because I was, I didn't even hire her. Actually, I ended up doing something similar. Like I ended up creating this kind of hybrid scheme where I pay her some fixed very small, like maintenance amount. And then as we work together more, I said, you know what? Like, you're really taking a lot of ownership. I'm just going to give you 25% of the profits of the clients you manage And I realized like, it so cleanly aligns our incentives because it's like, I don't like telling people do this, do this. You should be in the office at this time. I mean, we don't have an office, right. Her office is wherever she happens to be. And it works super well because it's like, well, she sees what happens if you don't get back to clients. Like they don't sign up. So it directly it's directly affects her income. It provides good incentives for everyone.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:46:23 You mentioned Nassim Taleb earlier. And this actually reminds me of the book about Skin in the Game and his idea that, you know, people, in order to actually produce results, they need to have skin in the game. And the moment when, as you said, the incentives are not aligned for the two parties, things can go awry.

Alex Friedman: 00:46:46 Yeah. Like Google ads, like this Google really has incentive to make ads as cheap as possible.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:46:52 Yeah. That's exactly the question. I mean, that's one of the things, because those companies, they do sort of try to combat click farming, but at the same time they do make money out of it. You know, like if a click farmer clicks on your ad, they still charge you. So you know, are the incentives really aligned?

Alex Friedman: 00:47:08 Of course, they are trying to do stuff, but it's murky. It's murky. It's like they're in a position where like, well, like they don't have an incentive to make it as cheap as possible for us. Let's just say that.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:47:22 Yeah. I definitely agree. So hiring then was key for you to growing your business, especially when I presume you hired the manager. So what was the idea there? And after you answer this, I'm also very curious how you developed your hiring process and basically: what do you look for in people? How do you judge people? You rely on your gut? All this sort of interesting discussion. But let's go first with hiring the manager.

Alex Friedman: 00:47:52 Ah, well actually we can't because it's in the wrong order - the manager was a tutor. So I'm going to answer the second question first and then talk about the manager afterwards, it was kind of a natural extension. HiringSo, uh, hiring tutors was, was, was super critical. And I was, I was very bad at it because I didn't know what to look for. So over time it's time I it's one of the few things I say, I think I nailed it. I really figured it out. And it took me a long time to go from having people that weren't reliable, weren't untrustworthy or whatever, to having people that are like... none of my current tutors give me problems. It's just amazing. T Um, that book - Ggood to Ggreat -. Maybe let me backtrack a little bit. I used to have all sorts of problems with problems with, with tutors, just like you do with anyone you work with, people can show up on time or they were rude or they're unpredictable, unreliable, hadunreliable had issues.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:48:41 And my first thought, as you know, a capitalist, I was like, well, maybe I'm not paying people enough to be, to be whatever. Or maybe I need to like, you know, go extreme ownership on them and try to train to like train them or whatever. And it turned out that that's really not the case. There was a really good line that. I read in the book and. Good to

great. And it said, uh, "when you hire the right people, management problems disappear." And I found it to be so true. I found that like, my tutors who were newer and they were kind of filtered by better hiring processes w. We're just so much better on average. I mean, I had some exceptional tutors before, but on average they're just so much, it's not that they're better. It's just that there's!t's that? There's no catastrophically bad tutors. I just don't have anyone who's thatsaid.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:49:25 So what did I do?So, so what, what did I do At first, at first? I was like, okay. I want to get a math tutor, so they have to be good at math.. So I'm pretty tough. I had interviews. I'm kind of ruthless, but I was only ruthless about like, how, how good they are. So if they didn't know something, I'd be like, all right, look like you can't come in here. Tell me you're amath tutor and you can't do algebra that's no, no, no. But I would kind of let personal things. I didn't pay attention to them as much, you know, I was like, okay, this person is trying or whatever. Like I wasn't looking at it seriously. And then over time, here's what I did to get good tutors. I post on Indeed. I used to post on Craigslist, same thing, but now Indeed is more popular. And if you look at most job ads, they're like, I don't know, like a hundred words long. They're pretty short and they're kind of vague. And you're like, I don't know. So I think I will send it to you for your amusement. But my job ad looks like a sales letter. I think it's very long, like I've never seen such a long post. It takes you through this whole process. Like you're in a dungeon and you're like, all right, look, I'm going to save you all the time of talking to me and calling me, like read this then you will know everything you need to know about whether you're a good fit for this company. Soo people basically read it and I have all these ways, like, look, if you're this kind of person it's not going to work. Like if you're ever late, it's not going to work. Do you take like more than 48 hours to get back to emails? It's not going to work. Like, do you like to travel? It's not going to work. It's like all of these conditions I started realizing like, what kind of conditions make people...they create room for drama because it's like, it's a probabilistic event. Like if there's a one out of any chance of something happening, if you try it enough, it's going to happen. So you just have to have people who don't have it. So I used to be like, oh, this person's whatever, but they're cool. Let me look at it a different way. Here's maybe a much more succinct way of saying it. I used to look for people who have exceptional, positive traits. And now what I do is I ruthlessly filter out anyone with negative traits that I know might cause problems. So anyone that's like, all right, I think this person might be unreliable? Out. This person might have like an attitude problem? Out. Like there was like one girl that like, you have to trust your gut because it's very interesting in a negative sense. Like you can't trust your gut in the positive sense. We all want to say, oh, this person's great. Like, okay, it's more like you have to like, find anything that looks like a red flag because it's always, someone said like, like cockroaches, if there's one, there's going to be more. So like, I'll give you some examples. This girl is writing to meet me at some place. And I was interviewing a bunch of tutors. This was for an interview. And I was like, Hey, I'm so sorry. I won't be able to make our meeting at this time. Can you do... I put like 2:30 or 3? Andthe answer was like one word. Yes.

And I was like, aha. Right? Like here, here's somebody who like, doesn't think before they speak and doesn't communicate clearly. And so I wrote to her, I was like, Hey, look like, um, this is, this is not useful, whatever. So I don't think it makes sense for us to meet. And instead of her being like, Hey, I'm sorry, I got a nasty response. I was like, oh, I was right. Of course I was right. Yeah. Lots of stuff. So basically what I do now is I have this long, long post that's very clear what kind of person I'm looking for and what specifically doesn't tend to work. And what I find happens, attracts people who see that I'm serious for one and who more or less passed the criteria. Like they kind of like, cause like, it's basically, it's like, look, if, if you're, if you're not communicative, you're not going to be it. If you think me texting you or like emailing you and expecting a response is too much, like no, go away. And I think people have honest enough self-assessment they're like, oh yeah, I'm a prick. Like, I don't want to, I, I am looking for something more, more, uh, I don't want to communicate like... no problem. So it took me a while

to get to that process. And the way we do it is..with my manager, I'll tell you about her later. Her, I got lucky - I hired like way before I had any of this. I interview the person, the manager interviews the person. And back when I lived in New York, my wife would have to be the person with me. And we were kind of focused on this like avoid problems at all costs. So if any of us had an issue, I would say no.

Yeah. Like if anyone said something doesn't feel right, cause you don't need to know what it is that it doesn't feel right, you know, it's like, you may be able to name it later, but your intuition is good at spotting problems. And I found that in my life, but also, especially in business, anytime I try to ignore a problem and think, oh, it's fine. Like it's never fine. It is never, ever, ever fine. It always comes up at some point that bites you in the ass - guaranteed. So, that's our hiring process. Do you have any questions about that in specific? Like I'm not sure what, which I covered, which I didn't.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 00:54:26 I don't have any questions, but I think that it's just fascinating. So I have some comments - you mentioned the ruthless aspect of it. And I agree because I'm the same. And a lot of people complain about it when it comes to hiring, but it's effective. You know, you actually need to judge people and to be quick at it. And a lot of our society, you know, it trains us, you know, don't do that. You're a bad person, if you do that and so on. And that's what I think holds a lot of people back when it comes to getting good at hiring and managing other people, like you have to face the truth and the reality, whatever that is, even if it's painful, you know, it might be painful even to you to tell somebody that you don't want them, you know, but it's the truth. You have to do it. So that would be one comment. The other one that I wanted to make is that I've also found the same thing with regards to trusting your gut in the negative sense, which you mentioned.

And I think that's very important because we sort of notice these patterns and we've seen them before, but we can't exactly pinpoint, you know, when we've seen them before, but our intuition knows it. We've seen it before, we know how it's going to play out, but we can't quite put it into words, you know? So if you don't trust that you can make a lot of mistakes. So I think that's, that's also very important the way nowadays that I do it when I have to interview somebody and one tactic that I found very useful, and it actually approaches what you mentioned about how you post your ad and you write the bad stuff in it and so on. The way I do it, one of my most important questions that I basically ask them is I describe them the job when I actually do the interview at its toughest, you know, the hardest day in that job, you know, I describe it to them and I tell them how much it's going to suck, how it's going to be like and so on.

And I discovered that there are basically three different answers that people give. Number one is they say, yes, yes. I want to do it. You know, I have no problem. Let's go. And if they answer like that, it's bad. And it means that basically they're desperate, you know, they will do anything to get hired and you don't want that person. And that's the first answer. The second answer is that they start to have second thoughts, you know, and they, they're not sure. Well, I'm not sure if this is for me anymore and so on. Then, you don't want that person because probably they're not going to have the commitment that you need when the going gets tough. And the third answer which you're looking for is basically that they face up to the challenge and they're willing to do it, but not in an overly enthusiastic way.

Like they're realistic about it.

Alex Friedman: 00:57:27 There's two things I wanted to add - one I touched on before. I used to think that, you know, cause I had like unprofessional behavior from tutors. I thought, oh, I'm not paying them enough. And then in that same book, that book was very good, the Good to Great book, like he did a lot of research. And one of the, another key takeaway is that job performance doesn't depend on salary. Like basically, you can't motivate character. Like if

someone's going to really do their best or not. And if you pay them more, it doesn't really matter - as long as you're paying them enough. Right?. It has to be enough. So I used to think, I need to get these more expensive people. And then I found like, they're the same. You just have to find people that have the right attitude. And the other big thing, this is probably very, I don't know this, this is not related to a lot of businesses, but it's related to mine, so I'll share is, like, years, like not that long ago, I realized there's two kinds of tutors, two kinds. One is like side hustle people who are like, hey, I have a cool degree. And I look cool and people think I should be good at teaching. So I'm going to, like, I have some other passion, like I'm into art or I'm a starving actor, but I went to Harvard so I can make good money as a tutor because parents are dumb and pick tutors from Harvard. And I realized that those people are paying. Like some of them can be good, but you can find people that are cheaper and better, that are professional educators. People who are actually dedicated to teaching. What I found is that they are much better, have like a massive investment in education, have better attitudes and like cost less, it's just crazy. Like once you realize that, like that, you're gonna have people that want to do the same kind of job with vastly different qualifications and the people who are more qualified are like more humble, cost less and do better. You just have to know that that's what you're looking for.

Tudor Dumitrescu 00:59:24 That's fascinating. And I definitely agree with that. I mean, I found the same thing that job performance doesn't really correlate with salary. Like, of course, I agree with, you have to pay people enough, but beyond that point, and that's actually a mistake that I've seen people make and also people suggested to me many times about this, like, you know, friends and so on. You know, they see that somebody did a good job, for example, and they suggest, oh, you should pay him extra. And I'm like, no, I shouldn't because he should do a good job. You know, I shouldn't reward him above and beyond what he normally gets rewarded in terms of monetary compensation, just because he did what he's supposed to do, you know, like that's the wrong mindset and you train people, you can train people the wrong way if you do that, you know?

Alex Friedman 01:00:14 Yeah. The salary is not to do a poor job, the salary is to do a good job.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 01:00:17 Exactly. Absolutely. And I totally agree with that. And I think that a lot of people make a lot of mistakes with hiring and I don't know exactly why, you know, I think that a large part of the reason is that they want everybody to like them. And if you want everybody to like you, it's difficult, you know, to hire people and to be an objective judge of others. It's just hard. You know, you can't judge someone's character and at the same time, you know, cling on to what they will think about you.

Alex Friedman: 01:00:50 Yeah. So you asked me about my manager, right? I didn't get to that part yet. So, I'll tell you how I hired my manager. So my manager was one of our tutors that was working for me. And she's just a very, very nice woman who is like vastly overqualified to be a tutor. I mean, she used to teach, she has kids and I kinda actually had several managers before this one. I really foolishly tried to partner with one of my previous tutors to be a manager - that didn't work. And then I just started realizing, all right, I need someone with the right kind of character. And then I was like, oh, I have this tutor who is very nice. And she is good at the subject, she's a math tutor and she used to be a math teacher. And she's like an actual grownup human being for God's sakes. Like she's not a kid. So I approached her. I was like, Hey, would you want to be the manager of this company? I can't pay you almost anything, cause I have no idea how much, like what's going to happen. And I don't know how to do this - at all. I don't know how to have a manager. I don't know how to like, split the responsibility between us, but



would you be interested because it might be something that works out well for you in the future? Uh, I'd love for someone to like, take over more of it. And she took a chance on us, you know, because I was like, look, I could pay like five bucks an hour when you happen to be around your phone. And then more if, if like, you know, if somebody actually calls So we, so went through a whole process of like training her. So I got a bunch of tutors to like call her andat like, play funny roles as irritating parents. Because I also, this one I didn't mention, but besides being kind of ruthless about filtering our tutors, I also filter our clients.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:02:25 Like if someone calls and they sound like a pain in the ass, I try to like steer them away from our company. Nice. Because it's just going to hurt me and hurt our reputation and hurt and hurt, you know, our, our tutors. So like we had like training phone calls, which I guess if I had a lot of managers, I would like make it something systematic and organized. And then I kind of just gave her like little by little. I was like, all right. So, you know, you will, you're taking, like when you have this much time, you know, take phone calls, see what happens and we would like talk about it. And so she kind of basically like had like on the job training for like probably close to like six months to a year and just like slowly took over more clients and throw that process with like, figuring out, okay, like, okay, this doesn't work like this, this method of paying her doesn't work, uh, or like this has becomes really irritating and it evolved.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:03:19 And I see, like, I wouldn't have been able to do it from like zero to where it is now. It kind of had to go in this process and it's at a super good place. Cause like I know her, she's reliable. Like we get along, she has a good personality, uh, for the kind of ourpar clients. Like she's very nice. I'm, I'm not as nice, but she's nice. And she's sensitive. She's not going to say anything accidentally offensive, which I would, um, just this last time. Yeah. And like, it was just kind of like back and forth, you know? So I don't, I don't, I think there's similar kinds of roles, kind of like a salespersonsales person who getswho gets like, who gets mostly paid by commission. And that's kind of what she is like her job is, is, is a client manager. And I felt like the best way to compensate her -

cause she sees, like, Hey, like why am I making a hundred thousand dollars a year while she's doing all the work? That doesn't seem right. So to compensate her, we set it up so that the clients she manages, she gets, you know, the like 25% of the recurring, I guess, net, but more or less the profit from the minus some like minor expenses, which, which, as I mentioned, like creates a good incentive. And it's amazing how well things work when you work with competent people who you trust . It's just like it's mind blowing.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 01:04:34 Yeah, absolutely. I think that that's one of the keys for any sort of business to grow. And I mean, what sort of numbers are you doing nowadays? So after you have one manager still, I suppose and the tutorsnow, is that right?

Alex Friedman: 01:04:48 Yup. So if you talk about like last year and this year, this year, I think is going to be bad, it's going to be like 25% worse thanBoris and last year, but like in the last couplecup last, last two years, I think our revenue was like close to around like 260two 60 or 300 thousand.0,000. So it's not, it's like it's somewhere in that, in that painful phase between like a tiny company and like a small company. And so my, my profit is about 40% of that or maybe around now, 35% of that. So somewhere around there, you know, there's coststthose ports like credit card fees and annoying stuff. So, you know, my, my yearly income isn't super high, right? Like it's, it's been around like somewhere in the low six figures between like 90,000,to 110.000, depending on how you want to do expenses. And adding the manager, uh, cuts into that, you know, by, by a goodbye good chunk.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:05:35 But, I have like four hours of work a week. Like I got the Tim Ferriss four hours . I don't actually even have four hours of work. It's only some weeks I haveout, four hours of work.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 01:05:45 That's awesome, because, I mean, you've, you've built a business that allows you to live the lifestyle that you want. And I mean, that's, that's great. And I mean scaling to 300 K, but starting from scratch with the tutoring business, I mean, that's quite big. I think you should definitely be proud of that, you know?,

Alex Friedman: 01:06:05 Wwhat's interesting is now I see, manMatt, I could have done it in like a third of the time or less had I had like any clue at all.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 01:06:12 How would you have done it? So, if you were to go back and you were to do it from scratch today, how would you do it?,

Alex Friedman: 01:06:17 Wwell, that's interesting. That's like the next thing I'm working on, out is like helping other people in my position, like a big part of it is just like avoiding mistakes.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:06:23 Like knowing how to like, you have a lot of standard operating procedures, how to deal with situations that are like easy to figure out now, like setting up the right system. Um, all the little improvements I made to make things more efficient, understanding the kind of customers I have because my customers are not like me. Like I'm an educated person that's broke, that comes from a broke background,. wWhereas our customers are kind of like the, the, the elite of New York city in a sense like Princeton and whatever. I shouldn't make fun of them. You know, they're not bad people. So, you know, I would start looking for them in the, but the right place, I would still do content marketing. I think if I had to start from scratch..., I got, I got really lucky. I chose a niche subject that's in demand. That was pure luck.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:07:09 Like I just happened to be good at something. If I was like, hHey, I want to be a Spanish tutor, I would have been shit out of luck. In like Chicago, like it wouldn't have worked. So if I was to do it now, I would try to find something that's in demand. There's a lot of things like that... and make a nice website that seems to matter. I would do social media. I personally hate social media, but I would do social media. I would make videos. I would basically try to find the free channels that like get their attention. Like maybe I would, even if I was younger, I'd even do Tik Tok. I will shoot myself before I download Tik Tok - that's cause I'm almost 40, right? Like it's just, it's inappropriate. But I mean, Gary V disagrees, but you know, like we have, we have our different boundaries.

So I would do some things the same. I would just avoid the multitude of mistakes that are like totally waste of time, waste of money. I would try to like find, you know, where these parents hang out. Yeah... that's kind of vague. But if you ask me more specifically, I can try to give a better answer.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 01:08:19 So, I mean, what would you say that the top five, the first thing I want to ask is basically what are the top five mistakes that you would, what you would avoid?

Alex Friedman: 01:08:28 Oh, man. One, partnering with someone - like don't partner with people when you don't know anything about business, I've done this like twice, like thinking that you need someone to have some skills, like if you're a young, like learning, whatever it is, unless it's like, I don't know, you don't need to learn like crazy 3D design skills, but like basic things like writing, web design, like simple web design.

\ And in fact, now you don't even need to know web design. Like all these themes are like gorgeous with like drag and click. Like you don't even have to try. So thinking you need help. Like whatever you need help with, like learn it yourself. Like, cause you need to have either money to hire someone. And if you don't, like, don't think that bringing in another person's going to make things better. It's gonna make things infinitely more complicated because now instead

of just dealing with yourself, you have to deal with a human being. And if you're young, you don't know how to deal with a human being. You just, you just don't know. And it's like more complicated than a marriage in any way. So like one, I wouldn't partner with anyone. Two, I wouldn't like waste time on flyers and things like that. Or at least not the way I did, maybe I would... I mean, I wouldn't be as indiscriminate. Like, you know, if I did any kind of in-person advertising, I'd probably do it with like something more cute, like pens or pencils, not like flyers. Everybody does that. I wouldn't work as much. This is another thing I mentioned in our call before, but I got kind of lucky because I started managing my business after kind of a break when I was physically away from it. And so I had to manage it instead of tutoring and what a lot of people do is they get stuck in the freelance trap where they're too busy, freelancing instead of actually creating a business. So I would try to like get to the point where I'm orchestrating the business as quick as possible. Oh, biggest one - biggest one.

You're gonna, you're gonna appreciate this. I would have a mailing list as soon as possible. Like I didn't want to learn how to write and I didn't want to send people emails. And so like I have had like, God knows how many customers would just never kept their email. And now I see like, those are the absolute, most valuable things you can do is like mailing lists - start mailing people. Nobody can take away a mailing list, like get good at mailing lists. Get good at that. Like that kind of like communication. Cause it seems very antiquated, but it's so valuable. Like people respond to emails. They don't respond to Tik Tok posts. Of course, maybe they do. I think that's four...oh, the other mistake is like hiring problematic people. Like that's the other biggest thing, is like hiring people that have a bad feeling about that.

I'm like, oh, but this guy or this girl, like, well, but she's got a PhD from Yale. Well, you know what? Like, it doesn't matter basically putting up with things that do or can cause trouble down the line. I would not do any of those, including customers like getting rid of bad customers. Like just anything that's a pain,, get that's a pain get rid of it now instead of later, that's five fine.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 01:11:27 Yep. Perfect. So I agree with pretty much all of them. I just wanted to say about partnering. I think it can work. It hasn't worked for me generally. I think that it can work. I've just been kind of bad at choosing generally in my past. I mean, I've not been the best person at choosing partners, but I agree that it works much better if you go at it alone many times and if you have to choose a partner, then you need to be really good at choosing the right partner, you know? And that's difficult.

Alex Friedman: 01:12:00 But, you know, like, why would you be good at it? You have no reason to be good at it if you've never done it. Right? So I think someone who's done business before and like, you know, we talked at the beginning of this podcast about like growing as a person and learning to deal with yourself and others. If you're young, if you're like a young guy listening to this, like you don't know yourself, like forget someone else. Like you don't even know like what a good partner would look like. You know? Like some people get lucky and you hear about them. Maybe you have a best friend you like, you have a good working relationship with, and maybe you run a lemonade stand together or maybe whatever you did. Like maybe that's okay. But it's so hard just to learn like the mindset of a business owner and to try to combine it with like dealing with a person who has different motivations than you.

It's really tough. Like I'm working with, I'm kind of partnering with people on things now. And I'm like, man, I could not have done this even five years ago.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 01:12:58 It's harder than hiring. You know, I will tell, I will give you that it's harder than hiring, you know, finding a good partner.

Alex Friedman: 01:13:02 A hundred percent. It's much harder because you can't get rid of them. Right? There's so many mistakes to make. Like not only the person, like you have to have the right character, they have to have, like, you have to, you have to get along with them. You have to have the same vision. They have to be as motivated as you. And that's something I found that I'm having a hard time. Like I find people that I like, but they don't have the same motivation for them. Like, yeah, we're doing this, but it's kind of like a side thing.

I'm like, well dude, like it's never going to go anywhere as a side thing. So there's just so many like stars that have to align. And I think, when you get older and more experienced and maybe if you know, more business people that you have a relationship with them or something, then yeah. Like, it definitely can be successful. And I think I suspect that the return is not linear. I think it's probably more geometric... to get the right people. You can do something extremely good. And you know, I was reading a book on this, based on like they're like saying like hire everything, like hire someone, the good, everything. Like that's great. If you have like exceptional people skills that you know how to do that, and you have the access to those people, I'd love to hire someone to do everything.

And I could even pay for it, but like, I don't know how to find those people reliably.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 01:14:17 That's the biggest problem. And I mean, that's why hiring - when finding partners, I mean, - is much harder than hiring for pretty much any other position in your company. As you said, the variables are so vast and so many stars, as you are saying, need to align. It's just very difficult to get right. And I agree. I think that if you have a lot more experience under your belt and you interact with these people a lot more, it can get easier. But I think that it's always something that's going to be hard, you know? And you need to be very careful when you do it, you know, think very carefully before. And I agree from a mindset point of view, you definitely don't need a partner for most businesses. You know, you can start them on your own. I wanted to ask you one more thing about one of the other factors that you mentioned. So you mentioned the mailing list. So, I mean, tell me a bit about that. How, what are you doing in terms of your mailing list now? How are you getting people onto your mailing list? Are you running any sort of funnel? You know, how does that work?

Alex Friedman: 01:15:19 No, no, no. I mean, I'm hopeless. I was talking about a mail list of your previous customers. Like I didn't even have that. Like it's that bad that I didn't like keep track of who my customers were and didn't like email them next year and be like, Hey Jenny, like, hey, summer's over, get your kid back in tutoring. I didn't even do that. That was, that was the mistake. I don't have like a funnel or a mail list or anything like that. I guess I could, I haven't considered it. Maybe I should consider it. But I'm just talking about like the, the like, keep in touch with your customers because you know, they'll work with you and then they're done. But if they haven't worked with you for six months, like a lot of people will remember like, oh, we had a great experience, but some of them might not. So it's good to like give them a gentle poke and say, hey, we have some new, like, useful content. Like we figured something out. Here's like how to cure anxiety about math, like something. And I, before COVID, I was sending out emails like every couple of months and I think it helped people remember that we exist. And during COVID, I was like, man, I don't know what to do. I have no idea. I don't know what to tell them.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:16:24 Yeah. Yeah. I see. I think that in your case, a mailing list can be something that is very, very useful. And I mean more expanded, like imagine that somebody checks out your content, for example, and then they also join your mailing list. You can spend a lot of time nurturing them. Like you've made a big effort putting out all the content to get them to your website. Once they're there, it sort of makes sense to me from a business point of view that

you capture them and you nurture them. And I mean, imagine if you can connect with those people without having to bring them back on your website.

Alex Friedman: 01:17:09 I thought, yeah. But see like, this is maybe something that you can advise me on because I feel like I've gone to a point where I just don't care anymore. Like, I feel like I want someone else to do that part. Like I spent 10 years. That sounds crazy... that it's been 10 years, but I spent a long time on this and it's like, I'm not interested in the subject of my business anymore. I used to really care. I was a tutor. I haven't tutored anyone in a long time. Like I'm not in the mental space to be writing about like, hey, the SATs are canceled this year -What should you do? Or like governor Cuomo is, you know, like screwing up our school system, blah, blah, blah. So I want to find someone who is interested in that and can write. Cause I see like, you know, contrary to what I said before, like you should, you should definitely like have skills at a moderate level, but at the end you got to hire people who do these things. well, like, like there's people who will write like 10 times faster than me and they do it well. And there's no reason why I should be it doing instead of them. So how do I find someone to do this part?

Tudor Dumitrescu: 01:18:10 Right. So I would say that the first thing is to look amongst the people that you are already hiring. If there is somebody who has the enthusiasm and who has the interest to move, try it,

Alex Friedman: 01:18:20 I've tried.

Tudor Dumitrescu: 01:18:22 You've tried already. All right. So then I, then I would say that you definitely want to look for somebody who has written content, specifically content in this niche, in education, education related content. So, um, job boards are useful platforms like Upwork are also useful places like indeed. Uh, but again, you have to screen really carefully for the person and vet them. Well, one of these things, one of the important factors when you're hiring for such position, I've hired similar positions, VAs people to help me manage stuff that I do on a regular basis, create content and that sort of stuff.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:19:04 You need to vet them really well. And you need to set up processes to get your content created and distributed in multiple formats. Like I'll give you an example. So I'm doing this podcast for example, and the podcast is basically a great way to also create content and share valuable content, something that's high value for me as well. And I can do myself, you know, and the beauty of it is that these podcasts, they get recorded. Transcripts get created based on them automatically pretty much by software. Then they get inspected by a VA and the writer, you know, for any mistakes. And then based on the actual podcast and the ideas in it, these people are going to take the most important ideas and create other content based on them. And so I have basically a system and all I do is the, the actual recordings and then everything else, the whole distribution of content email by email, on the blog.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:20:09 And so on, gets done by my team. And I think that you want to set a process that sort of like this, you know, look at creating content. If you're going to do it in a way that is going to be easily replicable in different formats and somebody, you know, they, they don't have to be a genius, but they can take this content and put it in other formats. If you want to hire somebody to do the whole thing, you know, I would say that obviously look for somebody who has the passion and the interest for it, uh, have the get-go and then get them to create the content in the format that's easiest for them. You know, so if they prefer audio content set up a podcast or something with them and two weekly episodes and then get somebody else, a writer,

you know, to actually take those episodes, identify the big ideas and create content based off them.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:21:04 A lot of the, the thing that actually works when it comes to creating content I found out is that you need to get the core ideas. You know, the, the hard part is the core ideas and the big ideas, basically behind the things, the, the details, and actually putting them out in different formats. And so on. Those are the small details. If you get the big ideas, right? The other stuff you can have your team to get on and do it.

Alex Friedman 01:21:35 Hmm. This is probably the next step for me, for my, for my, uh, Mehta business of helping people run, run. These tutoring companies started on the student companies.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:21:43 Tell me a bit more about that actually. I mean, we've talked about your main business, we've gone through a lot on it. You know, we've covered a lot of ground, how you've started, how you've grown through content marketing, how you've hired people, how you've actually built this into a stable, let's say organization that's positioned to grow.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:22:02 So, I mean, tell me about this new initiative.

Alex Friedman 01:22:06 Well, so sometime ago I was looking at, you know, what do I do next? Is businesses kind of going okay? And I'm sort of losing my, I guess, losing my passion for it. Like I'm not, I'm not as kind of aged out of like really caring about this. You know, I haven't been in school for a long time. I haven't been tutoring people for a long time. So like, well, what do I do as like, oh yeah, you know, I've kind of good at running this kind of company. So like, well, why don't I help other people run this kind of company? Because there are tons of tutors out there who I think would like to be a little bit more independent than like working for, uh, some agency or, or God forbid, one of those like online platforms.

Alex Friedman 01:22:41 And I was like, well, why don't I help them? Because one of the biggest things in business is like, knowing that it can be done. Um, if you don't think it can be done, you don't do it. If you say, oh, this guy did it. Or like, here's just like some, step-by-step not all of it step-by-step but some of it really is like, these problems are solved. These problems that seem hard are really not hard, um, to seeing that can be solved or better yet partnering with someone here we're talking, partnering who can do like the difficult things or the irritating things for you. So sometime ago I saw this blog called food truck empire. This guy basically made an entire blog about running a food truck, even though he's never run a food truck. So I was like, all right, if this bastard could like make money telling other people how to run a food truck without ever running a food truck, I could certainly make buddy telling people and healthy people burn tutoring companies.

Alex Friedman 01:23:32 So I started a website. I didn't even finish it cause I, uh, well, my life, all life stuff that happened, but also started making YouTube videos, just kind of like putting out content like, Hey, here's how you do this. Right. Here's how you hire. Or here's like what to do if someone canceled them. And I started in 2018, then I just stopped. Cause Nimmo wife were like, Hey, let's move to Japan. Like that was, that was tough. And I'm starting that again. And we talked about this, you know, when we chatted before. So, uh, basically I'm trying to figure out how I can help people. I don't have like a product to sell yet and I can buy my course for only, you know, \$20,000. Uh, it's going to cost more though. Cause what I want to do is I want to partner with people who don't want to do all the like tedious work of like learning all the stuff I had to learn.

Alex Friedman 01:24:24 And it said one, like here's a guide to like 60% of it. And like you talked to me for the other 40% of it, that's like kind of too hard to write or is this sort of more domain knowledge? And like, I help you start these companies because there's like so many people out there that like are really good, really great tutors, no business sense and no business confidence. So I get like 20 of them, I'll be pretty happy to help them out and make lots of cash.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:24:54 That's that's awesome. I mean, have you got any inquiries so far and what, what's the growth strategy? Are you going to rely primarily on YouTube here? Or what do you envision?

Alex Friedman 01:25:05 One of the very first videos I got, uh, I posted some guy wrote to me and saying, oh, Hey, this is me who like, you know, just spent all my time tutoring, whereas I should be growing a business. And I actually was talking to them about partnering, but I think his wife didn't like day the, uh, for whatever reason, he was an older guy. So I think, I think he was a little bit more set in his life. Um, but actually it could have worked out because like I saw what he was doing. It's like, yeah, he's exactly the kind of person that needs my help.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:25:32 Uh, awesome. Yeah.

Alex Friedman 01:25:32 I know another tutor in person. I was just like, this guy tutors different subject, but he makes a ton of money, but he has no business. Like if even mentioned like, yeah, if I stopped tutoring, I have no company to sell. I'm like, well, why don't you change that? Like, why don't you change that? He's like, ah, all right, fine. So I think I need to find people who are a little bit more open-minded.

So my strategy has been very passive in terms of I'll make some videos, help people, helping people find me, as you mentioned. Uh, that's probably not the best way to do it. I have, I, we talked about this and I remember, I did think about reaching out to tutors, but I was like, ah, I don't know. I have to pay for LinkedIn premium, but I think, I think I should try that they use suggested, which is to like contact people. I hate the idea of spamming, like hundreds of people. Hey, do you, do you want to, do you want to make more money and smell fresh? Like, uh, but maybe, maybe it should be done. I just, I hate getting, I hate when people write to me and offer me things I wasn't looking for. And yet there's a whole history of like direct sales that works.

So I'm a bit torn, please, please convince me.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:26:43 Yeah. Well, for me I've grown pretty much my entire business from cold outreach and some referrals, but, uh, I've done until recently. I've done very little to almost none when it comes to actually doing inbound or content or stuff like that. Most of it has been cold outreach and it can work very well. So I mean, obviously you can't get everybody that you reach out to and obviously your offer. Isn't going to be super relevant to everybody that you reach out to. Uh, but there are some people there who are going to be a, um, a good fit for it, you know? So the way I look at it, you know, the, the initial outreach that you do, you know, that first email that you get to establish contact and the goal of that one is to gosh, their interest.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:27:34 Are they interested in this sort of thing or are they not? Because if they're not, it's not a problem. You know, like obvious the it's not a good deal for them, for whatever reason, they're not interested in it. And basically your goal is to identify the people who are not a good fit, you know, um, and single them out. And then of course, you're

left to the people who reply to you and who are a good fit and you can actually take the conversation forward from there. So, you know, it's sort of, I remember reading this in a book, but they gave the example of racking, a shotgun, you know, in Vegas, in a casino. And you, you look at who actually turns around when they hear the noise. And the author was saying, don't play poker with those people, you know, because they're the good ones, you know, they're not the fish, so you don't want to play with them.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:28:29 So it's a similar thing here. You know, you're racking the shotgun to identify who is actually interested in this and that's how you narrow down your panel. And then you actually spend more time with those people and nurture them, get in touch with them, build a relationship with them and so on. That's the way that I've approached it. And it can work very, very well. But it's important that you actually test a lot of messages for that first message. You know, so I've had campaigns and the most recent one was actually to get new members for the, the discord group that I run. We can put a link to that in the, in the, in the resources for the show. But the idea is that basically I, I send out 600 emails and 300 with one message, 300 with the other, through the 300 that I sent to the first message got zero responses, except one guy who was angry.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:29:32 And he was like, no. Then the second one that I sent out, 300 emails, got 60 responses, and everybody was ecstatic about it. You know, I've maybe had one who said no out of those 60 responses and everybody else said yes, you know, um, and they were interested, some of them apologized for not getting back sooner. Um, so you can have both types of experience. And that first message is really important. You know, you need to craft that move. You're talking about copywriting earlier. You need to craft that so that it's actually compelling and it understands the target audience. It joins the conversation that's already going on in their heads. Like that's very important. You know, you have to put yourself in the shoes of these people and, uh, into what they're already thinking and join the conversation at that point, then they don't feel like they're interrupted.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:30:27 You know, because imagine like you're, you're in a pub, right. Or in a bar and you want to strike a conversation with someone or with a group of people, how do you do it? Well, you sort of listen to what they're talking about and you find the good moment when you can butt in and join the conversation. Right. And it's a similar thing here.

Alex Friedman 01:30:48 Hmm. Okay. So I'm kind of, although I don't hear their conversation, um, I am, uh, gonna approach a bunch of people who might be having that conversation and the ones that are having the conversation. Oh, this exactly what, I'm, what I'm interested in right now and the ones who aren't, they'll be like, okay.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:31:07 Yeah. That's why they say, and the other advice that I give, you know, create an email account on a new domain, right?

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:31:12 So if your main domain is Brooklyn tutor, Brooklynmathtutor.com, for example, then you probably want to get Brooklynmathtutor.net. If your main domain is .com and then have the .net domain redirect to the .com one, if they access it, but create the emails for the cold outreach on the .net one. And the reason for this is that in case, you know, this shouldn't happen if you do it properly, but in case that your, um, email and the domain get blacklisted, your main domain is not affected. You know? So that's the, the one trick that I like to use,



Alex Friedman 01:31:53 You suggest that I use, you mentioned before LinkedIn treasury send emails, or should I do LinkedIn?

Tudor Dumitrescu Both of them can work. So I've used both methods. It depends how you can find tutors more easily. If you, I suppose the LinkedIn for you is easier because you just search for, for their profile, if they have tutoring in it.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:32:12 And then that's an easy way to find a lot of people, emails can be a bit more difficult, I suppose. You'd have to check out if they have websites, maybe, uh, although, you know, if they already have websites and stuff, they may be better leads to start off. You know?

Alex Friedman 01:31:53 Since I'm you're kind of like helping me out, let me ask you a couple of more questions. Does the offer I'm making people make sense to kind of find people that are in this phase or in this mindset where they think, yeah I'd like to partner up with someone. I don't want to deal with all this business stuff. I don't want to deal with those technical stuff. I just want to like tutor or like manage, but I don't want to deal with all the setup because when you're talking to business people, they're like, why the hell does this person need you? What value they're providing? Um, but I feel like it, there is value because all of these skills are not easy to acquire and not everyone has this interest.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:33:05 Okay. Right. So I think that, yeah, the, the offer, so there's multiple things that you can test in your message. So one thing you can test is the offer. Like what sort of proposal do you make to them and how do you actually approach them? Other things that you can test is if you're asking them to fill out a form, if they're interested, or if you're asking just for a reply to the email, generally, the way it works is that you want to set your, um, the level of your ask, you know, because there there's multiple levels, right? You can, you can ask them to do something. That's going to be very hard for them and they, you're not really going to want to do it.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:33:44 And then you're going to get very few responses or maybe even none. And you can also do the opposite and you can ask them to do something that's very easy for them. But it also, at the same time, not very meaningful to actually spotting and identifying the type of person that you're looking for, then you're going to get a lot of answers, but they're not going to be relevant and you'll waste your time with them. So you sort of have to strike a balance. You know, you want, uh, you want to get the most relevant people to reply back to you and you don't want to make it any harder than is necessary for them to do that. But at the same time, you also want to keep the tire kicker and so on out.

Alex Friedman 01:34:26 Gotcha. So maybe one way to do it would be to send out like 10 emails and then like iterate and see what a hundred responses and get 10 emails.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:34:33 Exactly. So all the time, I generally test at least two to five different offers, let's say different angles and then see which one works better. And the, the beauty of this is that you will keep improving them generally over time. So let's say that in the beginning, everything that you do is pretty much testing and you can test five in one go, you test, let's say 500 people and you see whichever one performs the best, but over time, when you already get on a version, which performs decently, well, you can start testing different things, you know, so you can have 70% or 80% of your emails going with your main email out, right? And then you can have the other 20% always going out with stuff that you are testing,

right? So for example, you have your main email, but you want to test new headlines and you'll always have 20% of your emails with a different headline.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:35:32 And then it's very easy to compare the sort of in this case, open rates, you want more people to open the email, to see what it's about. You know, it's very easy to compare the open rates and see if the new headline is better than the old one.

Alex Friedman 01:35:45 Gotcha. Okay. Okay. I, I'm gonna at some point, give it a try because I think that's definitely the next thing to do if I want to be scaling companies, as opposed to just like emailing the parents from the one company I already have over and over and over and kind of doing the same thing.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:36:00 Yeah, yeah. I, I would agree. And I think that this is a, this is a quick way. Like if you, and obviously you have the social skills and so on to actually do this effectively. So I think it's, it's great for you.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:36:13 It's, it's a great next step. Um, and I would say that the biggest problem people have when they start doing outbound outreach initially, is that they don't have the social skills. And then basically everybody they connect with is a fail. And it's a fail simply because they, they don't know how to interact with people. And they don't know who is actually a prospect for whatever they're doing. And they're confused. They waste their time basically with people that are not actually interested and so on. But I would say that most companies, you know, out there are grown through some form of cold outreach. You know, mine was entirely through cold outreach, but there's a lot of companies that have been built this way. And I mean, multimillion dollar companies as well, where the basic form of outreach and the basic form of sales is the direct one with a Salesforce and people calling potential clients, seeing if they can help them and going off that, the other thing here is the mindset thing, right?

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:37:18 So you need to have your mind in the right place. Like, obviously this is about creating value for the other party as well. You know, you, if you, if you put yourself in the position where you think that you reaching out to people who don't want your service and trying to force it on them, obviously I think that you're in the wrong sort of Headspace. And then you may struggle because of that reason.

Alex Friedman 01:37:41 Is it reasonable to reach out when I don't really know what my offer is because I'm not sure what people want. They should. I have more of an idea of like, exactly that kind of like structure I'm proposing before I talk to them.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:37:54 I think you should go straight to talking with them. And the reason why is because this is the fastest way that you actually perfect your offer, you know, by failing and trying it and seeing what happens, like probably you noticed in your past, like, if you look at your past, you mentioned that you've made a lot of mistakes, but those mistakes have actually been essential to actually getting to where you're at today.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:38:17 And we said that it's a process. So it's the same sort of thing here.

Alex Friedman 01:38:21 Gotcha. Okay. Okay. Now actually, to find a VA to like, be willing to send her emails, I guess that's, that part is not hard.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:38:28 Yeah. It is not hard. If you also want somebody who is going to collect emails for you, there are services such as that. I can recommend a good person to you. You know, I can, after our, um, our interview is over, I can send that to you. Uh, right. So going back briefly, you also mentioned a bit earlier that if you were to start again, you would make sure that there is demand in your niche. So I wanted to ask you, how would you do that? How do you check if there is demand for something when you've never seen started before?

Alex Friedman 01:39:04 You mean in my business in general?

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:39:07 Well, when we were discussing earlier, we discussed what you would do if you were to start from scratch again. So you mentioned that one of the things is you would check that there is demand for it. Like, for example, you are lucky in math that there was demand, but if you chose Spanish, right, it wouldn't be the same.

Alex Friedman 01:39:25 Well, I think in tutoring, it's kind of easy because it's actually very clear, like as long as you have a customer focused perspective, if you're like, if you're thinking, oh, I love, I love ancient history. Like I want to teach that. It's like, nobody cares. Like, it's very obvious if you just open your eyes at all, like what people need help with and tutoring. And it's like the stuff that's hard and cumulative or the, and or the stuff that has a big impact. So you don't have to like, actually really even experiment that much. You just have to be customer focused. Like people need help with test prep. People need help with a lot of test prep. Cause there's tons of different tests and they need help with math. They need some help with science and then everything else is like much less. And yeah, in terms of demand, I think you may be you, you should, how would I test it? You know? Cause the question is like, where do you live? Um, and honestly like also I'm lucky I live in New York city or I lived in New York city and people here have money and they want to spend it if you're living in, I don't know, almost anywhere else. I think it'd be much harder. And I honestly don't know what I would do. I'm not sure how I would do it. Maybe I have to, I'd have to do more social network. Maybe I'd actually go to like the library and say, Hey, does anybody look for tutoring here? I'm not sure. I think, I think your environment, or if you live in a different country, you know, if, if you're not in the states, if you're in like former Soviet union, people are super self sufficient. Like they're not going to pay their kid like math, that's nuts. So at least most of them, maybe I would ask, I would see if there's already any kind of market, but, but it's hard to know, you know, like that's why I think a lot of the step-by-step instructions don't don't work because what worked for me in New York in 2007 and 2008 is just not going to be what works for somebody today, somewhere else.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:41:15 I agree You sort of have to figure it out. And that's, I think that that's the hard bit about business. You know, the fact that, that you have that uncertainty and you sort of need to navigate it and find an answer that going to work for you. And the funny thing is that that answer is not eternal. You know, it's something that works now for you.

Alex Friedman 01:41:37 Yeah. Principals stay like, like social skills are essentially eternal, although they should be proved, but specific approaches to marketing, you know, just so, so much demands where you are, what you're doing. I mean, anyone would, who says like, yeah, this is what you do. Like, I, I have no idea how they can honestly believe that that their approach will work for someone else.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:42:00 I definitely agree with that. And I think it's been my experience as well, especially in marketing. It's so fast paced, everything is changing all the time. There are some eternal, let's say principles that there are in marketing, but the tactics, you know, they change all the time.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:42:16 So I agree. A hundred percent on that landscape changes all the time. One thing that I also wanted to get at in the interview, and I like to ask all my guests, you know, this question, uh, basically, what would you say that your top, when it comes to business or mindset, what would be your top book recommendations? A lot of people, a lot of the listeners are very interested in that.

Alex Friedman 01:43:09 Oh yeah. I have, I have a couple that I, that I, one very good one was, was **Good to Great**. I think I mentioned that one several times. Another good one I read, which I kind of liked was this book called **Company of One**. Although it may, maybe it's a little bit it's so, so I feel like if you want to start a company, it's kind of good to read it and realize you don't need to like work with tons of people or hire tons of people or make things big. There was a really good book by Keith Cunningham. Ah, yeah. **The Road, Less Stupid**. And that book, I think, had this very much like Nicholas Taleb to leave, like advice. It just like don't make dumb mistakes, but he talks about all the ways or at least the types of ways that people make dumb mistakes, quite a transition, ask yourself. I felt that book was like really good. Just like he asks you to basically think about these questions. And they're so powerful aside from that, those are kind of like the best ones in my, in my current memory. But I think what you read has to be based on where you are, like people like reading, like there's a common model. Was it like the E-Myth revisited? I think that's really good for starting entrepreneurs because I talked to people and it's like, oh yeah, like you, you, you should be really like, titled like the beginner. I'm not being like condescending, but like people have these poor ideas that, that aren't connected to reality. And everyone has much of the same poor ideas, and books like E-Myth kind of cover that this whole like, oh, I'm just gonna hire someone to do all the stuff for me. And I'm going to sit back and watch my business, bro. Like yeah. Good luck.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:44:30 Yeah. Yeah. I, I definitely agree. I think that the books that you read should be connected with your journey. I find it's a very powerful question to ask people though for their top five, because generally, you know, it sort of shows the road that they have been traveling and it's sort of showcases their progression. And I think that this is what the most of the listeners find valuable well as well.

Alex Friedman 01:44:56 Yeah. Yeah. I don't think I gave you five, but like I read other ones, like, like what's the name? Tim Ferris **Four Hour Work Week**. Like I think anything that's very hyperbolic is perhaps not useful. I think maybe even better. I once wrote this, like my one or two Reddit posts. I wrote one, that went totally viral and it was about like, like avoiding, uh, like bad advice, which is like most do this advice.

And I think if anything, it's not really what people should read. I think people should avoid reading success stories. This is my personal pet peeve, like avoid reading. Everything was wonderful. And now a millionaire success stories because they're there. So like, even if they're well meant, I think it makes people feel bad. And it also, it, it takes out so much of the like struggle. Cause I, I used to like, it's kind of like porn and you're like, like, oh, I want to read, oh how this guy went from zero to like 10 million a month. You know, while, while like sitting in his mom's basement, be like, I want to know, and then you read it, uh, this is the book, but there's a lot of like these, I think Tim Ferriss has like this, like, oh, that sounds amazing. Then you're like, wait a minute.

Why can't I do it? Like I'm doing what this guy says, but, but somehow I'm not Tim Ferriss. And like, why isn't it working for me? So, so to, to anyone still listening two hours in avoid reading, like toxic, positive, garbage, that, that hides reality from you and doesn't show you what, what, what things are likes. And, and most of these most interviews I find are very curated, not like this kind of interview. Like you read a lot of very curated stuff that if you look at it in any depth, you're like, how did any of these things happen? Like how did any of this happen?

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:46:38 I think I, I agree with you. And I think that the problem is that people, especially as they get famous, they get all sorts of advisors who censure them, you know? And they tell that you must tell this story, you know, exactly.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:46:51 As we have rehearsed it now, you know, not a different one. So every interview becomes an opportunity to actually repeat the same message over and over again.

Alex Friedman 01:47:04 Yeah. I think it's not even people who are famous. It's it's anyone who's like been successful. I've noticed there's some people who will be like really honest. Like this was really hard. This sucked. I was a, I was a loser. I was a moron and made all these mistakes. Like mistakes are really useful to read, but I would say like success stories that aren't, that like don't even understand why these people are successful or are actually like a negative.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:47:29 I agree, and I don't understand why people are so fascinated with them. Like you go on Reddit, for example, and you go on r/entrepreneur

Alex Friedman 01:47:39 Yeah, that's what I'm talking about.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:47:41 Exactly, and you see all those people, all I made \$10,000 in a month and then they have so many likes on it.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:47:46 It's like, why does that matter? You know, why should anyone care that you made ten thousand dollars in a month?

Alex Friedman 01:47:53 It's very attractive. It makes you feel like maybe I can do it. Like if this guy on Reddit can do it and then you read them and it's very, like, it reads like a press release. Most of them, not all of them. And it's like, oh, and then I opened the restaurant, blah, blah. It's like, where did you get the money? Like where like, like, like every, every single line is like, how did you do that? And I think reading like other people's success stories, maybe after a few is, is something people shouldn't do. That's that's my, that's my anti recommendation.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:48:29 Yeah. Yeah. I see. And I can definitely second that I think that what's important is that you actually learn about the process, you know, the struggle that somebody goes through to build their business.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:48:41 And I mean, for any desire that you have, there is a price to pay and you have to know what that price is and the way I like to think about it, you have to be willing to pay it because the problem is when you sort of want something, but you're not willing to pay the price for it, then you find yourself procrastinating. Then you find yourself not moving forward, you know, and basically not getting it.

Alex Friedman 01:49:05 Yeah. The other thing, I think that, that the reason why these stories pissed me off and why I think they're negative is because you're right. For anything you want, there's a price. And all of us have a different amount of money and resources and skills in

the bank. And just because someone was able to do, you know, X from Y I did, I went from this to this doesn't mean that you can.

And, uh, in fact, you almost certainly can't replicate what they did or any, anything like it because you don't have the resources, you don't have their skills, you have a different geography over different everything. And it's not, it's never made clear like, oh yeah, I have like, you know, I went to Yale, I have thousands of connections. My dad is rich. I mean, I'm, I'm being I'm overstating. I have friends in the field. Like nobody says this stuff. Nobody says it. It was, Hey, I like, it was set up for me. They're like, no, I worked real hard. It's like, sure. But like, what resources did you have coming in? Like I was in my mom's basement, negative. On the other hand, I was in America and I'm pretty bright, positive. Right? Like some people don't even have that, like what you have coming in really determines a lot of how things might go for you.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:50:15 Yeah, man. I mean, it really does make a lot of sense. And I mean, success is something that in the end is your own personal journey. So, um, there does come a point where, you know, you can't have ready-made answers. Uh, that's the way that I look at it, you know, like I've learned a lot from the experience of other people from working with other people, from reading what they wrote, comment so and so forth. Uh, but ultimately you have to make your own journey. Like nobody, I there's no book, for example, for myself that actually told me what to do, you know? Like I had to figure stuff out step by step.

Alex Friedman 01:50:54 Yup.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:50:55 Right. So I agree with all of this. And I think that it's been a fantastic discussion. So I wanted to give you an opportunity. Now, if there's any way for people to reach out to you, would you like to provide that a website, your YouTube channel, anything like that?

Alex Friedman 01:51:12 Absolutely. Sure, sure. I will put on the notes. Email me, Alex@tutorempire.com. I may even read the, I do read my email. Uh, please don't look at the website. It's like not even a halfway finished. It's not a good reflection of my skill at running my actual tutoring company. So yeah, Alex@tutorempire.com if you Google Tutor Empire or YouTube Tutor Empire, you'll find my YouTube channel as well.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:51:41 That's fantastic. So any last thoughts Alex?

Alex Friedman 01:51:45 Oh man. You know, I could talk forever, so let's, let's call it a day. Thank you for having me on.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:51:51 That's perfect, Alex. Thank you as well for coming on then. Thank you very much. Take care.

Alex Friedman 01:51:45 You too. Bye-bye.

Tudor Dumitrescu 01:52:01 For our listeners. I hope you've enjoyed this and stay tuned for the next episode. And until next time, keep growing your business and providing massive value to the world. Remember you are the reason why we're all growing richer. Our freedoms are expanding and we're all living in greater and prosperity till next time.