

APPSUMO

+

**\$1 MILLION
ONLINE BUSINESS**

**How Jack Butcher Productized
Himself to Launch a One-Person,
Seven-Figure Company**

+

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INVOICE

TURNING ONE SCREW	\$1
KNOWING WHICH SCREW TO TURN	\$9,999
TOTAL	\$10,000

"Price vs. value."

Illustration by Jack Butcher.

Most freelancers, consultants, and agency owners are strapped for time.

We make a living by solving unscalable projects for people who need specialized services. The problem is, one project equals one paycheck. Often we put in weeks of work and hours of research for one client, only to start from scratch again when the next project begins.

Not to mention that the number of clients we can serve is capped by the number of working hours in a day. As soon as we stop working, we stop earning.

This means **service businesses miss out on one of the most powerful aspects of working on the web: the ability to build, scale, and spread things exponentially.**

Sure, the internet is also great for finding clients, gaining some exposure, and showcasing our portfolios.

But most entrepreneurs don't tap into the true viral nature of the internet. We operate linearly on a toolset that's capable of achieving exponential reach and growth.

Until 2019, this was Jack Butcher's story as well.

Many online entrepreneurs know Jack Butcher as the face behind Visualize Value. It's an online brand that regularly publishes minimalistic black and white graphics that distill complex ideas into simple illustrations that often go viral.

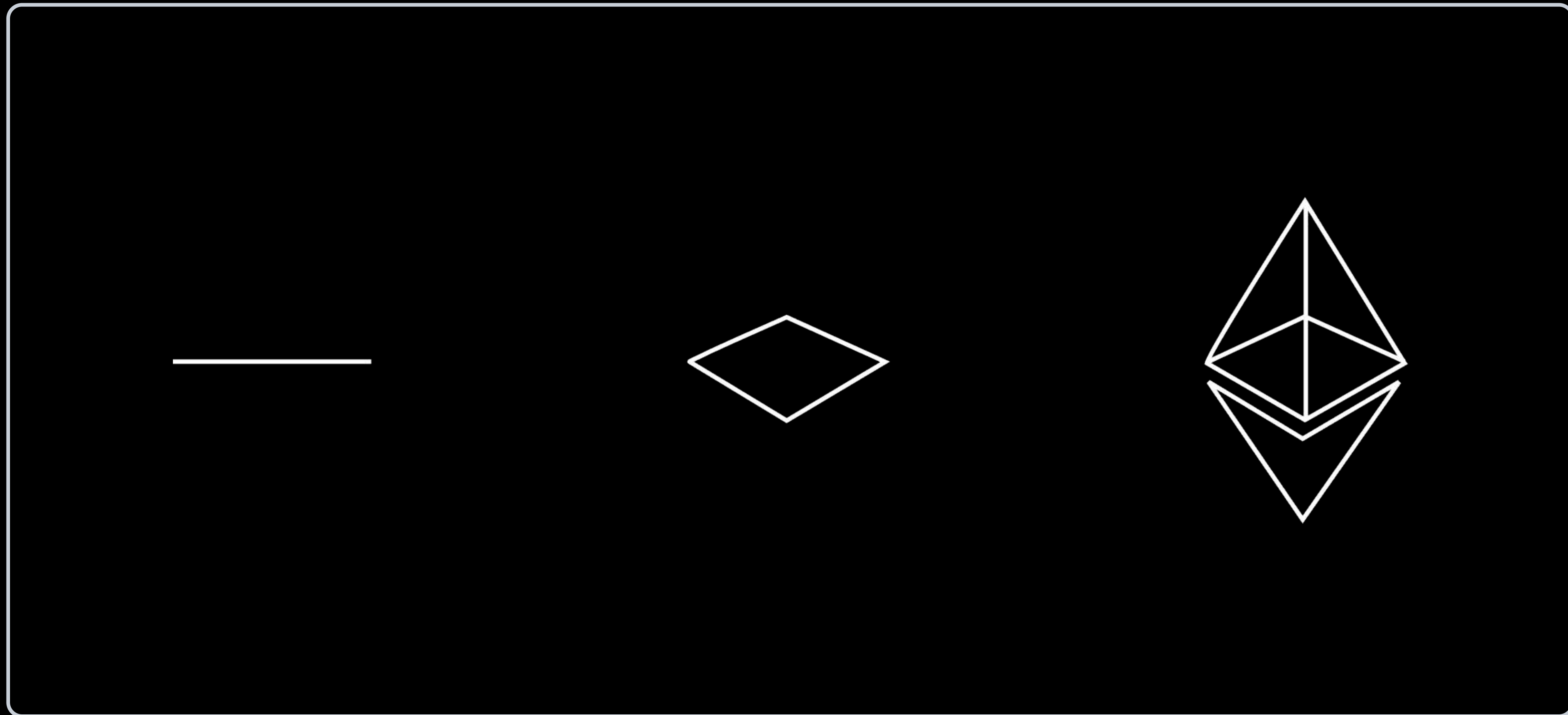


Visualize Value Retweeted



jckbtchr @jackbutcher · Sep 7

web1d: information
web2d: information, people
web3d: information, people, money



44

464

2.3k



But pre-2019, Jack was an agency designer. He worked for many New York firms and eventually launched an agency of his own. Jack had some success as a service business entrepreneur, but eventually learned that there was something bigger to go after with his business.

He didn't stay in the service business for long.

Today, Jack isn't a time-strapped agency owner scrambling to secure his next client contract. **He has almost 150K Twitter followers, earns six figures per month (that's \$1M+ per year!), no longer manages employees, and doesn't perform client work.**

So what changed two years ago? To use Jack's own words, he "productized" himself.



Instead of working linearly, he tapped into the exponential nature of the internet to make his living creating content that solves problems at scale. And we're about to tell you how Jack did it.

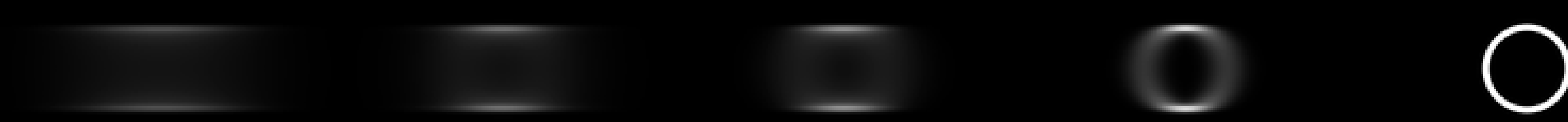
AppSumo partnered with Jack Butcher to create this guide. With it, you'll get two things: (1) the inspiring story of how Jack went from agency owner to \$1M product entrepreneur and (2) the exact tactics Jack used to do it.



EARN WITH YOUR MIND.

Illustration by Jack Butcher.

Design intern to \$1M revenue business owner



"For clarity, slow down."

Illustration by Jack Butcher.

Putting in the work

Jack Butcher studied graphic design at the University of Wales, Cardiff. After graduation, he moved from the UK to New York in 2011, with no network or experience, to kickstart an agency career.

Things got off to a slow start. Jack applied to 150 jobs through Craigslist. All 150 jobs turned him down, except for one: the agency that hired Jack as an intern.

An early moment at this first job has stuck with Jack ever since. One day, he stepped into his boss's office to present a few projects he was still working on. Jack began the presentation: "I know these aren't good enough yet but I just want—"

"Stop," the boss interjected. "Why are you showing me? I don't want to see it. If you know it's not good enough, then why on earth would you waste my time?"

This offhand remark from his boss became a meaningful step forward for Jack's design career. Jack learned the value of doing his best work. He also learned the importance of iteration.

"If I know in the back of my mind that I haven't taken my work as far as I can logically take it—or if my work is not a reflection of the best of my abilities—then why am I publishing it?"



From his first internship, Jack entered the “agency lifecycle in New York.” In other words, he bounced around from agency to agency. He played various roles over the years, including designer, creative director, and art director.

Eventually, Jack began to wonder if he could launch an agency of his own. If the boss could do it, why couldn't he?

Early entrepreneurship

Jack launched his advertising agency, Opponent, in 2017. Turns out, he'd been right: he could be his own boss. Jack found his first clients and began building his team.

Jack was successful running his own agency. But he ran into the same timetrapp that most service business owners experience. Jack found himself answering calls during all hours of the night for international clients. He had to hire and manage big agency teams just to make up for the inefficiencies of working with his biggest clients.

Entrepreneurship was working... but something needed to change.

The famous Twitter thread



Naval @naval · May 31, 2018

How to Get Rich (without getting lucky):

5.1k 60.6k 161.8k



Naval @naval · May 31, 2018

Seek wealth, not money or status. Wealth is having assets that earn while you sleep. Money is how we transfer time and wealth. Status is your place in the social hierarchy.

185 5.7k 30.6k



Naval @naval · May 31, 2018

Understand that ethical wealth creation is possible. If you secretly despise wealth, it will elude you.

58 2.3k 17.3k



Naval @naval · May 31, 2018

Ignore people playing status games. They gain status by attacking people playing wealth creation games.

54 2.4k 16.5k



Naval @naval · May 31, 2018

You're not going to get rich renting out your time. You must own equity - a piece of a business - to gain your financial freedom.

89 4.9k 27k



Naval @naval · May 31, 2018

You will get rich by giving society what it wants but does not yet know how to get. At scale.

64 3.3k 22.8k

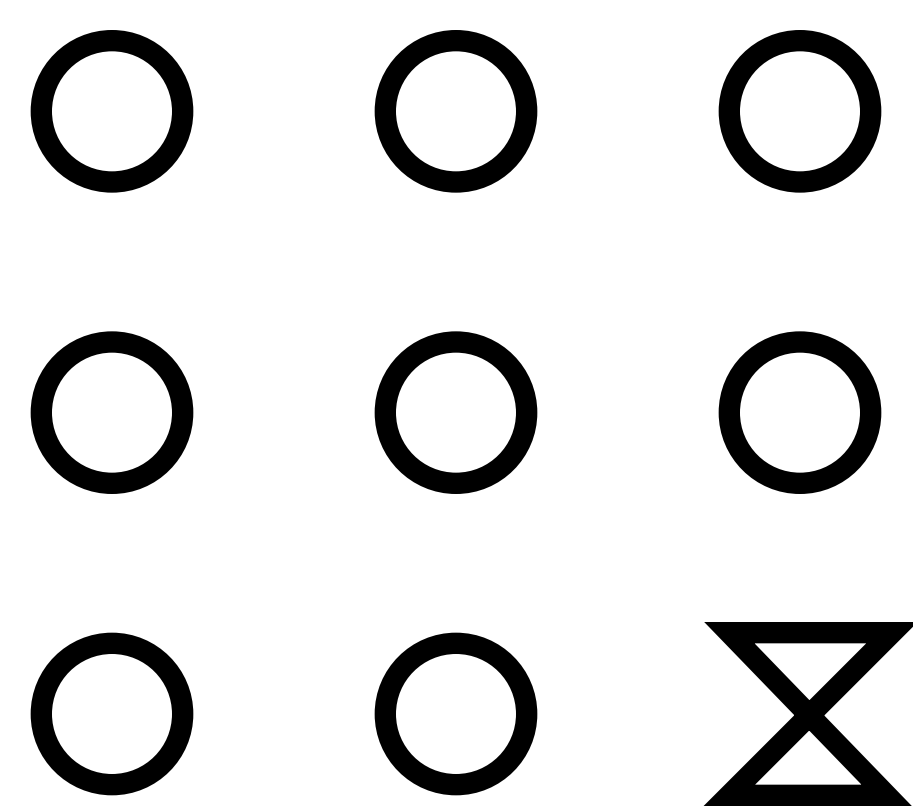
Since 2010, Jack has used social media to showcase his design skills online. With the start of his business, he also began using it to market his agency.

One day, Jack stumbled upon a famous Twitter thread by AngelList founder, Naval Ravikant. The thread was titled “How to Get Rich (without getting lucky)” and it introduced Jack to several new concepts about technology and running a business.

Jack remembers this thread as a turning point for his career. He began looking for ways to implement some of the ideas—like doing work that scales—into his business.

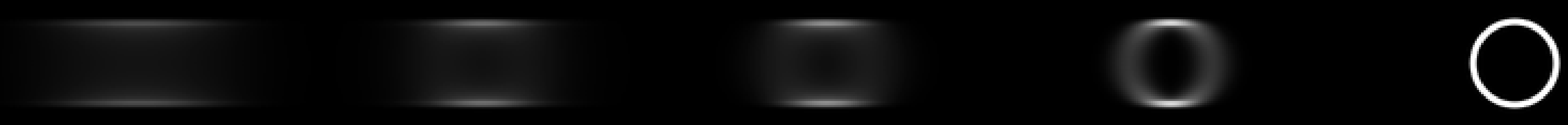
Jack took a hard look at his agency and asked: What am I uniquely good at in this entire process?

Jack concluded that one of his great strengths was creating keynote presentations. You know, the kind that agencies prepare to win over new clients. Sales presentations and pitch decks.



UNIQUENESS.

Illustration by Jack Butcher.



"For clarity, slow down."

Illustration by Jack Butcher.

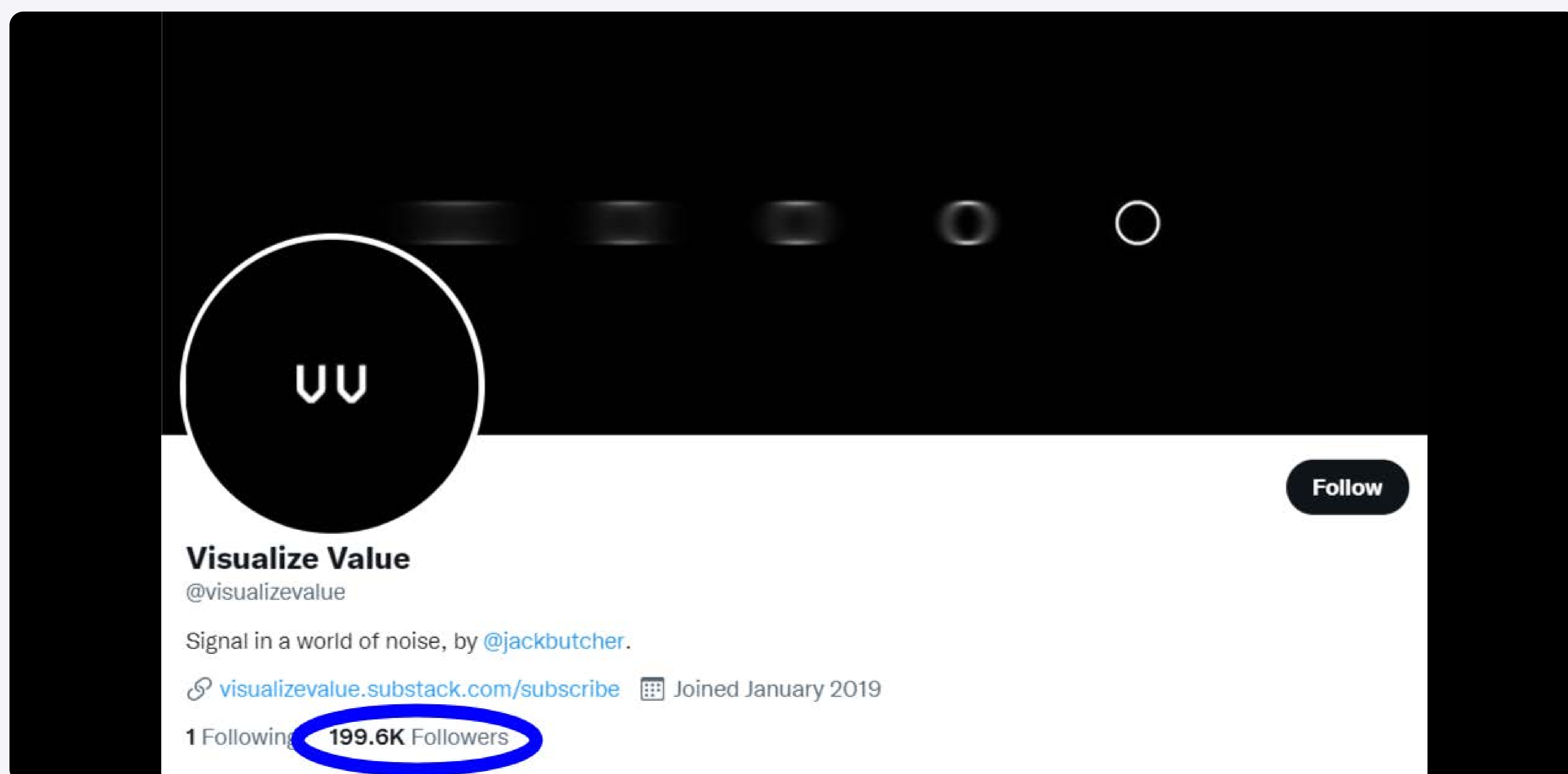
Most agency owners hated creating these. But Jack was good at them and enjoyed the process. Now he wondered if he could turn this ability into a single service for clients. He would give up all his advertising services and offer just one service: distilling big ideas into short, punchy presentations.

Visualize Value was born.

Productize yourself

To market his new business, Jack decided to just create and publish simple illustrations that tackled complex ideas—and then share them on his Twitter.

The concept worked even better and faster than Jack expected.

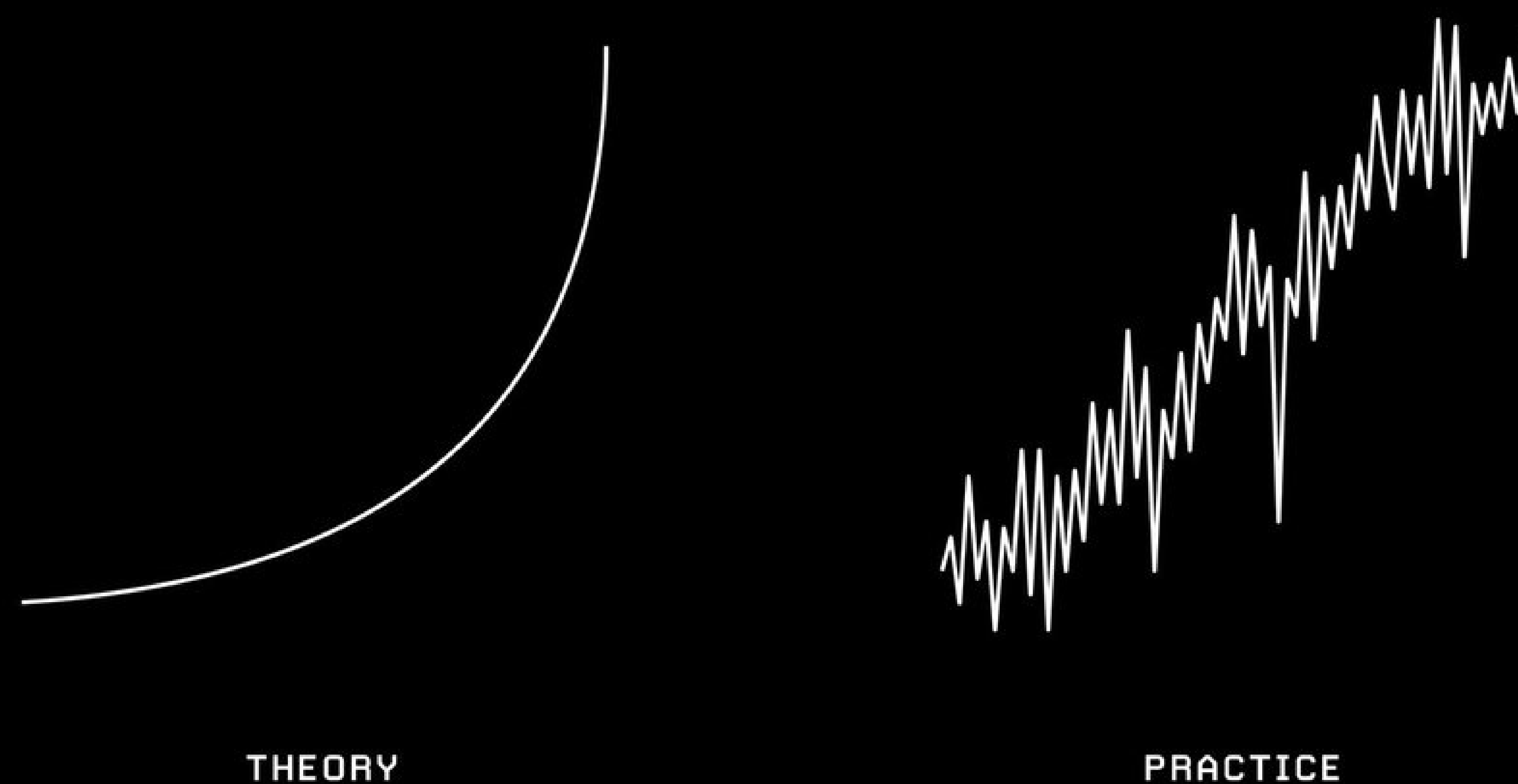


Clients began hiring him. Meanwhile, his designs started catching real attention. People were sharing them. Even Naval—the man whose Twitter thread originally inspired Jack’s big change—retweeted some of Jack’s designs.

Before long, Jack couldn’t handle all of the clients wanting to work with him. He productized his design skills by teaching others how to distill their ideas into simple graphics. In other words, **Jack built information products that sold the *process* instead of his custom *service*.**

The sales trickled in. Jack now made a living through productizing himself instead of creating custom work for every new client. Today, Visualize Value generates more than \$1M per year—and all of it comes through products that scale.

3 steps to productizing yourself



"In theory, there is no difference between practice and theory. In practice, there is."

— Yogi Berra.

Illustration by Jack Butcher.

So what does this mean for you?

For the rest of this guide, we're going to dive into the exact steps Jack took to escape the linear nature of running a service business. You can steal his ideas to help you earn more money in less time, doing the work you love.

We've distilled the ideas of productizing yourself down to just three core steps.

■ **Step 1: Put in the reps**



"Finding that first client is very difficult. It requires the unscalable stuff, like applying to 150 jobs or sending 100 sales letters. It's posting 100 illustrations on Behance, Twitter, or Dribbble."

- Jack Butcher

It all starts with the work that doesn't scale.

Jack honed his design abilities and grew his online reputation through a method that he calls "get going, then get good."

Before you build processes and products that scale, you must first hone your abilities. Copywriting, design, development—there are no shortcuts to mastering these skills. It’s all about putting in the hours, weeks, months, and years to hone your particular skill set.

Doing the same task over and over doesn’t count either. Jack says it’s not about reaching 10,000 hours. **It’s about achieving 10,000 iterations.**

Many people call this Deliberate Practice. More than just engaging in mindless repetition, Deliberate Practice requires you to constantly hone your skills, find and correct errors, and seek out feedback from people who can help you improve.

Whole books—notably *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell, *Deep Work* by Cal Newport, and *Peak* by Anders Ericsson—have been written about Deliberate Practice. **Here’s a snapshot of how to implement Deliberate Practice:**

- Create a specific goal that you would like to achieve
- Put in an enormous amount of purposeful (read: not habit-based) reps
- Focus your reps on specific challenges within your discipline. For example, a basketball player who’s bad at free throws would put in intentional reps to improve their free throws. The intent is to become a more well-rounded player.
- Create a system for receiving and implementing feedback that continually sharpens how you practice

Publish what you learn and create

As you put in the work to learn your skill, Jack also recommends putting in the reps of publishing your work.

When it comes to becoming an in-demand service provider, resumes matter less and less every year. These days, it's all about proof of work. What are you writing, designing, and developing? Everything you publish—from a blog post to an online portfolio to a tweet—helps distinguish you from every other creator online.

The combination of practicing your craft and publishing consistently online eventually turns you into a magnet for the people who may want to hire you. Before you know it, you're an in-demand service professional.

Here are a few tactics for building an ongoing publishing practice:

- Create a publishing routine that you stick with. This might mean setting aside an hour on your calendar each week for writing.
- Design a publishing calendar. This allows you to plan content weeks or months in advance.
- Engage. As you publish your portfolio and ideas online, people will inevitably begin to react and respond. Don't leave them hanging! Engage with every person who engages with you.
- Decide what you'll create in advance. Writer's block is a symptom of being unprepared. If you can plan what you'll write about or create in advance, it's easier to be productive when it's finally time to put pen to paper.

Step 2: Discover repeating processes

"It's not about never doing things that don't scale. It's about not repeating yourself when you really don't have to."

- Jack Butcher



As you put in your reps, and as clients start requesting your services, there will almost immediately be opportunities to systematize parts of your job.

Most freelancers and agency owners start every new project with a blank page. The research and work from the previous project don't translate to the new client work. You have to start over every time.

The first step in productizing yourself is creating processes that help you automate your business. It may go against everything you know, but you want to "lose" your job and replace yourself with good systems and tools. Here are some common examples:

► **Create email templates:**

As you work with more clients, you'll begin to catch yourself sending similar emails often. These might include onboarding emails to teach clients about your processes, feedback emails after a project has concluded, or follow-up emails when you need certain information. All of these emails can be templated. Instead of rewriting the same message a thousand different ways, you can copy and paste your message for efficiency. Most new clients need to send you similar types of information. Repeatable email templates make it easy to never forget a single detail. (Need some email templates? Try [this one](#). Or [this one](#).)

► **Process documentation:**

Instead of explaining how you work to each new client, send them an article or video of how you break down each project. This does two things. First, process documentation saves you time by quickly onboarding new clients. Second, the documentation doubles as a marketing tool, showing new clients that you're a true professional with standard processes. As you document your processes, you can also find new ways to optimize them and get more done in less time.

► **Vet clients with copy:**

Jack cut his advertising services down to just one core offering. In that way, he drew a line in the sand, stating that he only works with a particular person on a very specific kind of project. You can do the same and end up with higher-quality clients. It's as simple as niching down your marketing copy to only your core services. Customers will self-select instead of making you vet every new inquiry.

► **Use forms**

What kind of information do you regularly gather from clients? Instead of gathering that data on a long call or in an email, create a form that you use with every new client.

Find repeating processes in your business. Turn them into systems that help you work more efficiently.

Step 3: Solve problems at scale

Now for the real fun part. The final stage of productizing yourself is finding ways to solve clients' problems—without your personal involvement.

This means turning your skills into resources that can sell 24/7. You can be awake or asleep, sitting at your computer or vacationing on a remote island. Your ideas and skills make money, and you get to choose your level of participation.

You can't skip the first two steps: putting in the reps and discovering repeatable processes. You must put in years of deep work to know how to solve real problems. And then you must understand through ongoing client work what sort of problems you are uniquely capable of solving.

But with your experience, you can begin the ultimate goal of productizing yourself. Here are some of the most common ways:

► **Write a book:**

One of the most common ways to learn a new skill is to buy a book on the subject. You don't have to write a two-hundred—page book and get it published through Penguin Randomhouse. You can create short, actionable books and self-publish them.

► **Create a course:**

Online courses come in many forms. You can rent a studio and record a professional-grade course. Or do a stripped-down, budget-friendly version by recording your voice over a screenshot powerpoint presentation. The point is, if you have unique knowledge that can help other people solve a problem, creating a course is one of the best ways to scale your knowledge to reach and help more people.

► **Sell templates:**

Sometimes solving someone's problem simply means giving them the answers. A template is powerful. It gives someone the right framework for their solution. All they have to do is fill in the specifics.

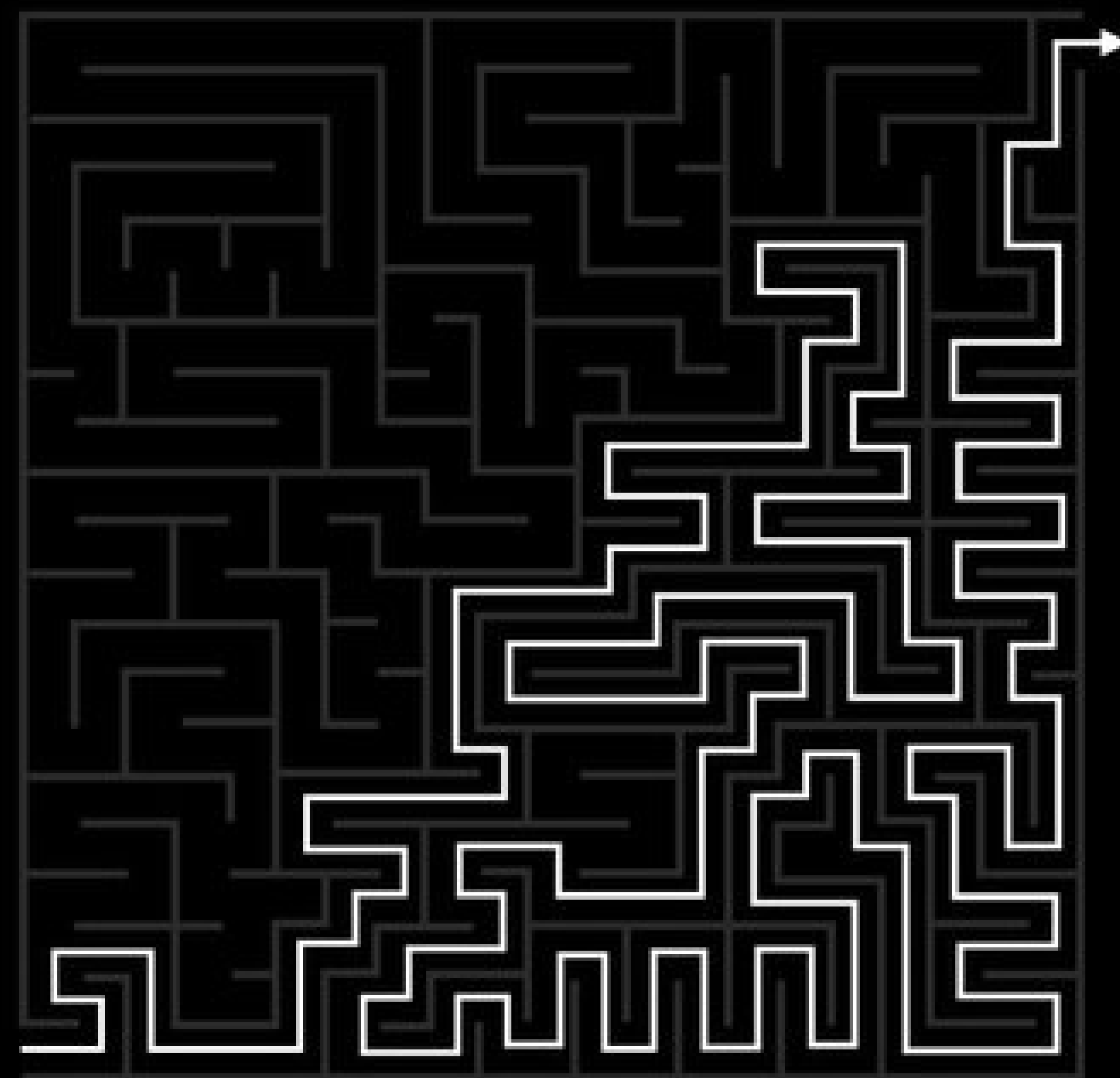
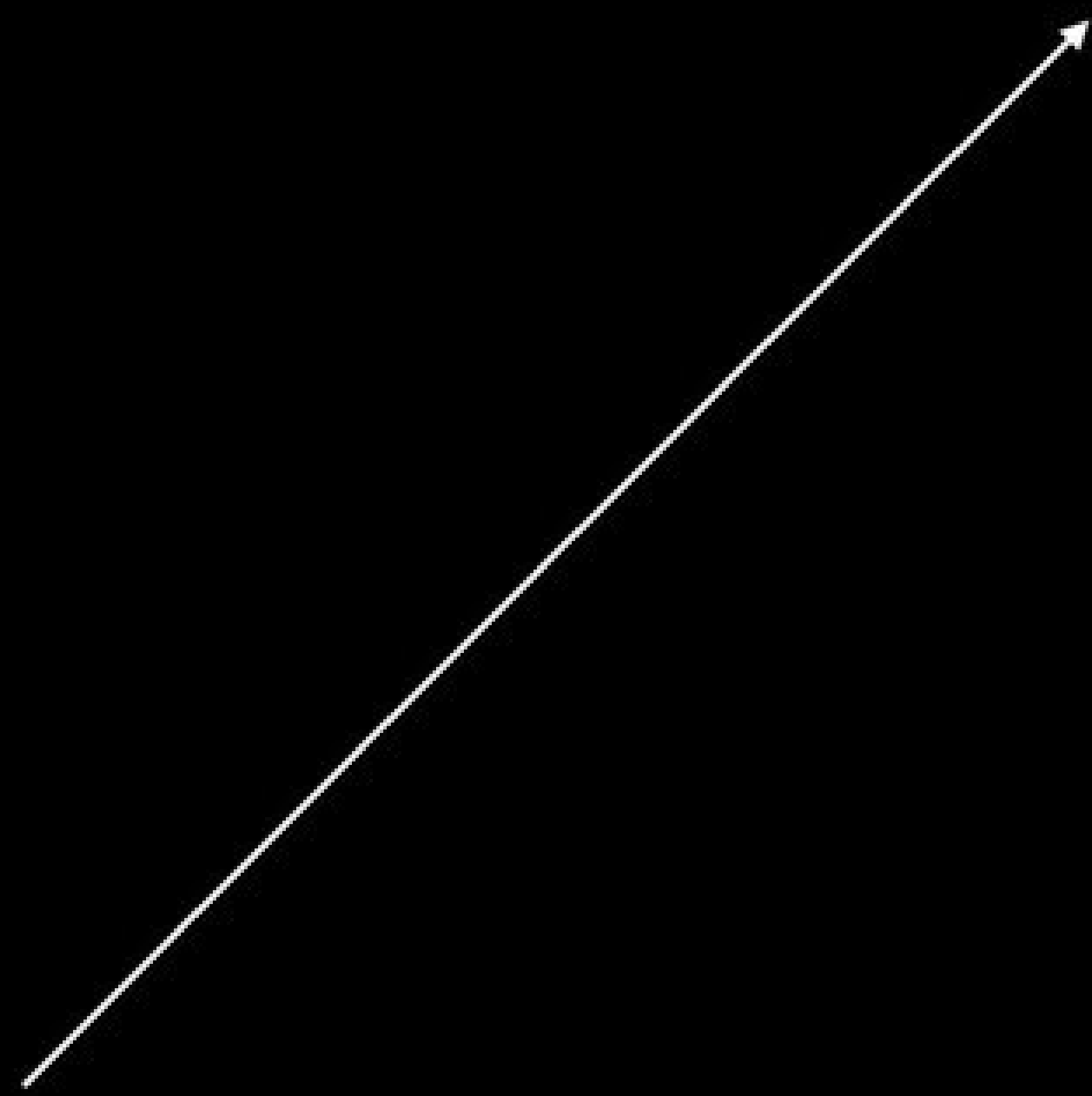
► **Automate your service with software:**

Are there parts of your job that a good dashboard, automation, or other software could solve? If so, you can hire developers to create that tool and then sell it to your clients.

(Oh, and when you launch your first product, [sell it on AppSumo!](#))

All of these products allow your ideas and skills to reach and benefit more people, at a rate that's exponential rather than linear. And that's how you escape the entrepreneur time trap.

Learning and building in public



"The plan vs. the process."

Illustration by Jack Butcher

The other side of productizing yourself is building an online brand. Rather than investigating one-off tactics, we're going to dive into deeper themes as part of a larger system that helped Jack grow his influence online.

Here are some additional strategies for productizing yourself, achieving mastery, and building an online brand.

Feedback and iteration

The idea of productizing yourself came from iterating on the Visualize Value business model. The first iteration wasn't a product. Jack simply turned a skill into a service.

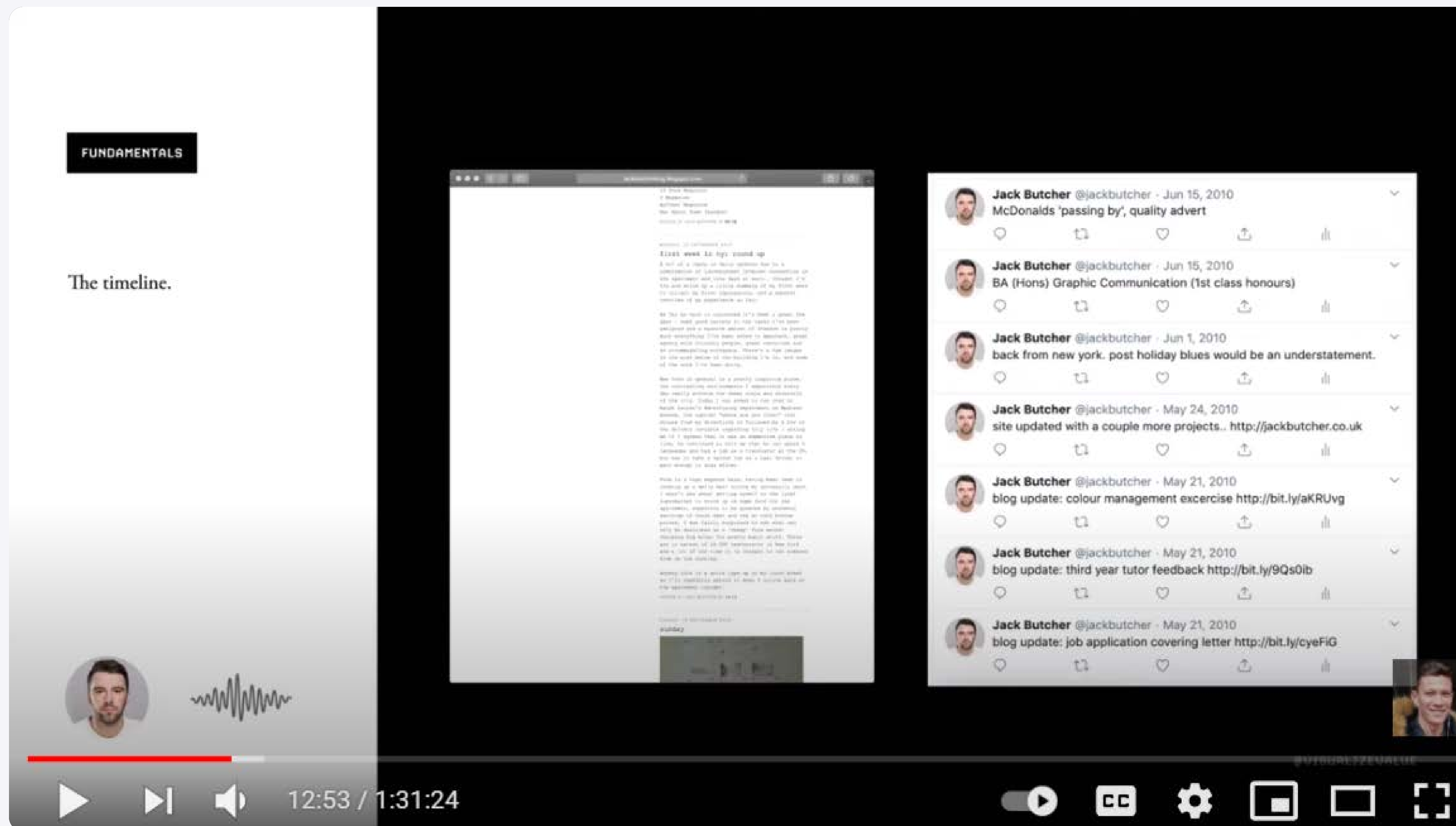
Within his business, **Jack started adding structures and automations that gave him back some of his time.** Instead of a 20-minute phone call, Jack took clients through a process involving forms and videos that provided the client with what they needed to work with him. He used these onboarding resources as leverage. He no longer had to spend as much time on repeating tasks.

Jack continued optimizing based on feedback and requests he received from clients. This provided insights into his clients' needs, which helped him iterate on his business as he constantly optimized to eliminate unnecessary redundancy.

A few iterations later, Jack literally created a product out of his services. Instead of working with him directly, clients could purchase an informational product that taught them how to visualize their value.

Clients now received the solution they were looking for and Jack no longer had to spend his time getting involved.

Build an audience



Source: David Perell

Jack began publishing on Twitter and his blog back in 2010 to an audience of friends and family.

“The only people commenting on my posts were my mom and her friends,” Jack said. But he pressed on. Jack continued to publish online and interacted with the content of people he looked up to. Through consistency, Jack learned what worked. He took note of which tweets were successful and doubled down on them.

Eventually, he stumbled upon the idea to create the graphics that now define his Visualize Value brand. His Twitter took off—but it never would have happened without consistent publishing and experimentation.



“The volume of tweets I sent went up when I had assets—like curriculums—and thought through ideas in depth. Twitter as a vehicle became the main way to direct attention to those curriculums. But if I didn’t put in the work to begin with, those tweets wouldn’t have the depth. You have these deep developed assets and tweets are like front doors to those assets,” Jack said.

Here are a few tactics for building an ongoing publishing practice:

► **Find your niche.**

It’s hard to become famous as a generalist with an opinion about everything. It’s more effective to become an online avatar for a specific idea, industry, or subject matter. Besides, you can always pivot later if you change what you want to publish about.

▶ **Experiment with different forms of content—on different platforms.**

Some people achieve success on LinkedIn. Others, like Jack, build their audience on Twitter. There's also Reddit, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, email—it's important to find the platform that resonates most with you. Also, don't just create one form of content. Write, create graphics, post photos, create videos. You never know which channel will help you achieve the most reach until you try.

▶ **Be consistent.**

Building an audience doesn't happen overnight. Patience and consistency are two of the best characteristics when it comes to growing an audience online.

(For a deeper dive into audience-building strategy and tactics, check out our guide about how [James Clear grew his newsletter to over 1 million subscribers.](#))

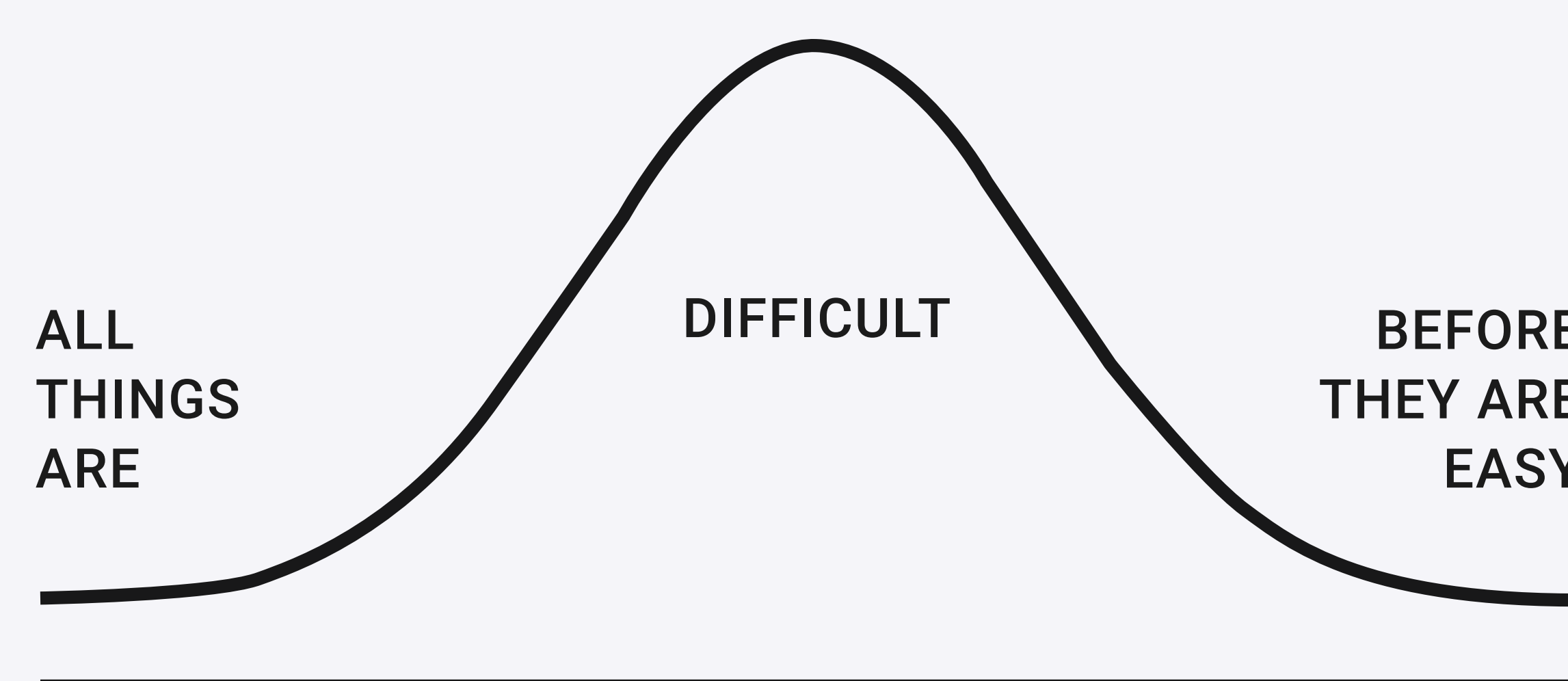


Illustration by Jack Butcher.

The brand iceberg



“The sum of your curiosity, and the time you spent pursuing your curiosity, is your brand.”

- Jack Butcher

A lot of people panic when it comes to building a personal brand. They get worked up trying to decide how to build a following and attract customers. The notion of a personal brand shouldn't be about putting on a show or pretending to be someone you aren't.

That idea misses the mark. Instead, Jack thinks about personal brands like an iceberg. Most of your curiosity, idea processing, thinking, and reading happens below the surface. No one sees it except you. The bits that rise out of the water are your brand. They are the result of the deep foundation you've created below the surface. Your ongoing curiosity—and willingness to share what you're seeing and learning—become a personal brand.

Just like Jack believes you can't shortcut the mastering phase of productizing yourself, he believes you can't shortcut building a personal brand. Both require real depth.

Here are a few ways to nail down your curiosities and interests (and discover your personal brand):

▶ **Ask your close friends**

“If I started a blog, what subjects do you think I’d be really good at writing about?”

▶ **Put your interests on paper.**

Literally, sit down with a pen and paper and write down as many interests and curiosities as you can come up with. Then, circle the 1-3 that give you the most energy and excitement. Build your brand around those subjects.

▶ **Go through your sent emails.**

What type of questions do you commonly answer for friends and clients? What problems do you solve for them? These can be great subjects for a personal brand.

Learn with community and “permissionless mentors”

“While you don’t need a degree in an internet economy, there is something to developing a skill and having community. It’s very difficult to build a skill in solitude.”

- Jack Butcher



The starting place for productizing yourself is skill development. Do you have the ability to solve real problems for people?

In the creative economy, these problems tend to be solved through design, writing, or development. If you haven’t taken the time to hone a specific skill, then that’s your starting place. Great places to start learning are [Skillshare](#) and [Udemy](#). Gain expertise that solves real problems for people.

One of the key ingredients to achieving mastery in a subject is joining a community of people who are all trying to develop the same skill.

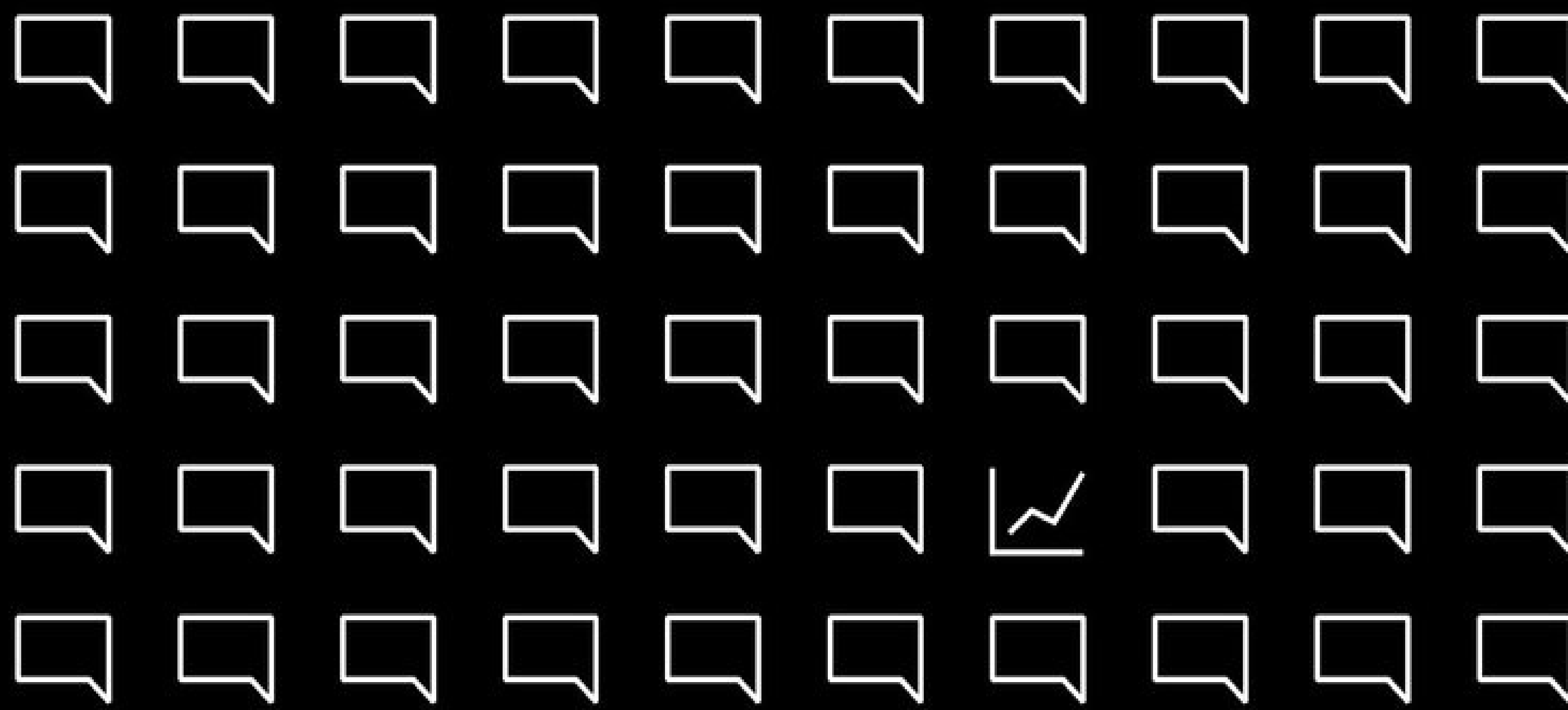
Then, find what Jack calls “permissionless mentors.” These are people who’ve already mastered the craft you’re trying to learn. Learning from them is permissionless because these masters never have to know you’re learning from them. That’s another advantage of the internet: the most skilled people often publish their best work for you to follow for free.

Here are some examples of permissionless mentors. Each of these people is active on social media. Some of them have their own podcasts, blogs, and YouTube channels:

- Productivity - [Laura Vanderkam](#)
- SEO and digital marketing - [Brian Dean](#)
- Habits - [James Clear](#)
- Writing - [Jane Friedman](#)
- Copywriting - [Neville Medhora](#)
- Marketing and business growth - [Noah Kagan](#) (shoutout!)

You no longer have to study at a specific university to learn from leading experts. You can find them online, follow their ideas, and apply their teachings to your work.

Scale your skills



"Advice is abundant, execution is scarce."

Illustration by Jack Butcher

“You will get rich by giving society what it wants but does not yet know how to get. At scale.”

- Naval Ravikant

At first glance, Jack Butcher can appear like an overnight success.

He launched Visualize Value in 2019 and very quickly started raking in six figures per month.

In reality, there are no shortcuts. Jack put in a decade of hard work to learn design, launch multiple businesses, and become a skilled marketer. He then made a decision to follow Naval’s advice by solving problems that scaled.

Jack listened to customer feedback, got intentional about building systems in his business, and eventually replaced his services with digital products—all while building a massive audience through consistent publishing over the course of a decade.

The result is that Jack escaped the service business time trap, and helped many other businesses and entrepreneurs along the way.

For a limited time, get 20% off Jack's most popular course on AppSumo.

The sources that helped us create this guide

● Infinite Loops Podcast

● David Perell Youtube

● Visualize Value