

**EPISODE 21**

**[0:00:00.5] DT:** Hello hackers, thanks a lot for joining us for another episode of the Hacking UI Podcast where we hack our way through design, development and entrepreneurship. I'm David Tintner.

**[0:00:08.7] SS:** I'm Sagi Shrieber.

**[0:00:09.8] DT:** For today's episode, we decided to do something a little bit different.

**[0:00:12.0] SS:** Yeah, we have a lot of one on one calls with members of the Side Project Accelerator to discuss how they are doing and where they're at and what kinds of challenges they are facing. We had one of those calls lined up with Rizwan Javaid, a batch one member and as we started talking, we realized that this could be super useful to a lot of other people as well.

**[0:00:28.2] DT:** Rizwan is a UX designer in California and just before he joined the Side Project Accelerator, he decided he wanted to start building his personal brand and getting themselves out there. Rizwan started speaking publicly about sketching and we caught him as he just got back from speaking at a UX conference in Poland. In this discussion, he opens up to us about his biggest challenges and work together to find ways to tackle them and layout a strategy for him going forward.

**[0:00:47.0] SS:** We hope you find these useful and if you're interested in joining the Side Project Accelerator yourself, applications for batch two are now open until November 10<sup>th</sup>. All right hackers.

**[0:00:56.5] DT:** Let's get hacking.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:01:08.5] DT:** All right everyone, so we are here with Rizwan Javaid, a member of the Side Project Accelerator batch number one. Rizwan, how's it going today?

**[0:01:16.5] RJ:** Doing great. How are you guys today?

**[0:01:20.0] DT:** Not too bad, thanks. So we're excited to talk to you today, do something a little bit different on the podcast and understand exactly where you're at, what's going on and where you plan on going and all the goals you have for your side project and building your personal brand. Before we start, why don't you give everyone your background? Tell everyone who you are.

**[0:01:37.5] RJ:** Sure. So I'm a UX designer, I work at an agency in Roseville, California and I've been in California for about four years. So I worked on different types of projects, mobile, web and also I have a side project that I work on. I've created a IOS app called UX Alphabet and you can download it from the app store. It's a handy tool for a common UX terms that will help you when you need them.

So I've done a few side projects and then as I had the opportunity to join the Side Project Accelerator program, it came at a good moment because I was ready to start building my brand, I wanted to take it to the next level and not knowing the details. I'm sure I could find out what I needed to do but with the Side Project Accelerator, I was able to quickly reach the next level so I was able to learn about setting up email list and all the small details that go into it.

Having that support and the support of the people that are in the program and David and Evie and just being able to ask questions and be set up quickly with the email list. Then also to start writing, which was another goal of mine and that also pushed me forward to start to write continuously instead of once in a while. Even though it is challenging to write, having the support there really helps. Right now I'm at a spot where I want to continually build my brand and that is where the Side Project Accelerator really helped me.

**[0:03:14.8] SS:** Cool, you have a lot of speaking gigs going on right now and you speak a lot?

**[0:03:17.0] RJ:** Yeah, I've also — this I identified what my weakness was and that was speaking, whether in person or in public. So I really wanted to make the goal of taking it, from a weakness to a strength. I started speaking on a topic that I really love which is sketching and so

I started speaking at local meetups and then slowly build that up and I slowly gained the confidence to speak in front of people I didn't know. So I applied at smaller conferences and then present it there, kept gaining confidence and kept applying to conferences. The last conference I presented at was at Krakow, Poland, which was a mobile development focused conference. So it's going good, definitely want to keep pushing it and hopefully next year's going to be even stronger.

**[0:04:10.3] SS:** Nice, very nice. Do you travel and lecture with the same presentation? Like the same lecture that you're getting about sketching?

**[0:04:18.2] RJ:** Yes, because I've had good feedback from designers and non-designers, I feel like there's a need for non-designers to sketch as well because it can help everybody not just designers, we all have ideas, we all need to share them, we're all in the same meetings, designers, developers, product managers so the faster we can sketch, the better it is and there's a bit need out there that I sense. I'm definitely going to keep trying to speak about it and share those ideas out to help others succeed.

**[0:04:46.4] SS:** Could you be maybe, because I mean you have right now, this experience of someone who started from even kind of being afraid of talking to people in front of people and now lecturing at international conferences, can you give some tips to our listeners of how to start?

**[0:05:02.7] RJ:** Well at first I had to prepare a talk and that's the most important thing is to have a good talk and it doesn't have to be completely finished, it could be a main idea that you can keep building upon but have enough to get started, reach out to local meetups, they're always looking for speakers and being in the Sacramento area, there is meetups but there's not a lot of people that requires the talking. So meetup organizers are always looking and welcoming people to talk and so email them, call them, whatever you have to do and you know, reach them and just offer to talk.

A lot of this meetups have lightning talks and submit your talk over there for five minutes if you can talk on a topic, I think you can keep expanding it to a full presentation and so starting from

there slowly just building your presentation, building your confidence slowly, I believe that's the way to go.

**[0:05:55.6] SS:** And how did you choose what you want to talk about, how'd you do the sketching thing?

**[0:06:25.1] RJ:** I saw that — being a designer you would think designers would be sketching all the time but I was one of those designers who just did enough to say that I did sketching in my process, then I would just jump to the digital world and just be comfortable over there. I never really took advantage of sketching in my design process and I realized that was lacking and that was keeping me from being a good designer. Then I did this 30 day challenge where I sketched every day and...

**[0:06:31.2] SS:** Then I did the 30 day challenge, David's cheering in the background.

**[0:06:34.9] RJ:** Yeah, I'm actually doing it with David right now. I'm a little behind but I'll catch up. But that was a way to quickly just get the practice, get in the habit of sketching every day and so after the 30 days, I saw a big transformation and I actually was sketching way past the 30 days, I couldn't stop sketching. So that really help me see the power of sketching and now I, in my design process, I love being in that phase and then I'm kind of saddened when I have to go to the digital world because you lose that connection with your ideas, your paper and the pen. It was to transform myself and just become a better designer.

**[0:07:20.4] SS:** After I saw you, you went and you gave those lightning talks and then you started giving longer talks and how did you improve your talk? Did you ask for a feedback? Did you pass out surveys? What did you do to improve?

**[0:07:34.1] RJ:** Yeah, I passed out surveys at the end of my talk and then you know, after a few weeks of really struggling, I would finally get to reading the feedback, which is another challenge in itself is how do you...

**[0:07:48.0] SS:** How'd you deal with the feedback?

**[0:09:17.4] RJ:** Yeah, exactly, it's not always a great sense of that but that's the only way to grow because in my mind I could do a great... I think I'm doing a great job but in fact, it could be really bad and knowing those specific points where I need to improve, that's where you find out from getting feedback.

**[0:8:07.4] DT:** Can you give an example of some feedback that you got, constructive feedback that helped you improve and something that you did to improve from it?

**[0:08:14.5] RJ:** Yeah, some of the feedback I received earlier was in my talk, I have, I talked about sketching and then I have some sketching activities for people to do and so it was speaking for say 15, 20 minutes and then during sketching and so some of the feedback I received was to try to mix up the speaking and the sketching activities. So do five minutes of speaking and then an activity and then another five minutes of talking and then activities. That was a feedback and that was great to hear because I would never have known that I would just continued the same way I was going.

So the last conference I was presenting at, I tried that out and it was a great way to get people involved quickly with the activities and be more engaged with them. So that was one way that took the feedback and tweaked my talk, which came out really great. And then another point of feedback I have been receiving, which is continuing challenge, is how to bring energy to your talk and for me if I'm talking one on one with somebody, I have the energy, the passion and I'm there but when it's a big group of people, it's a whole different situation. That's challenge that I'm still working on and I continually receive that feedback and so that's my next mountain to climb.

**[0:09:30.4] SS:** Can you give, just before we go on to the next subject. I just want to kind of like pick your brain, do you have any tips for creating a good talk and for building a nice presentation?

**[0:09:40.6] RJ:** Yeah, definitely. Building a talk like I said, start off with a main idea but go out there, read about the topic that you're presenting on, so you can get ideas from other people who are speaking on the same topic. And then try to incorporate the main points and interesting facts or figures or quotes into your talk. You don't have to come up with everything, you can bring in the knowledge that's out there and share that within your talk.

Then, as it relates to presentations, the actual slides, I always say, less is more, which is really true, you want to have less information, less text on each slide, don't just throw everything out there. I'm sure we've all seen bullets and bullets of bullet points, 10, 15 bullet points all in one slide, just people who cannot read that much. They're either going to be reading or they're going to be paying attention to you and so you want to want them to be paying attention to you instead of sitting there, trying to understand, trying to read and then missing exactly what you're talking about. Have less information on each slide but have a strong purpose behind it.

**[0:10:49.0] SS:** So public speaking, how do you now reach out for the bigger conferences?

**[0:10:54.4] RJ:** I search online. Lately I've been going on twitter and finding out about different conferences when their call for proposals, open and close. There's different websites that focus solely on these conferences and when their call for proposals open and when they close and so, even if the call for proposal has ended, you can usually get on their mailing list so that for next year, you'll be informed exactly when they open. Because a lot of times I've really been excited about a conference but then find out that I just missed the deadline and so being on their mailing list is a great way to make sure you don't miss the call for proposal.

**[0:11:31] SS:** Yeah, can you name those sites that you use?

**[0:11:33.8] RJ:** One is Lanyard.com, that has a lot of conferences. The other one I can't remember right now but if search on Twitter for "call for proposals", you'll get a lot of good results and...

**[0:11:46.4] SS:** Cool, you're fine, awesome.

**[0:11:47.0] DT:** So I want to understand, going back to the bigger picture of everything you're doing, you decided you wanted to start speaking and writing because you want to build an audience, right? And you want to build your personal brand. So when you're speaking and you're at a conference, how are you getting those people who heard you speak into your audience?

**[0:12:02.5] RJ:** Well, I also share with them — I haven't been during this but I do need to do is share my weekly newsletter with them. Right now because it's on hold, I have been actively engaged with it or putting it out. So I haven't been announcing it but announcing it at the end of your talk is a great way to bring the audience into your brand basically.

**[0:12:24.8] SS:** By the way, I heard like on a podcast called ConversionCast, they have an episode about like some trick at conferences to get more people on your mailing list, which is based off of text messaging and at the beginning of the — and you have to do like twice, at the beginning of your talk and at the end of your talk. So one person over there gave an example where he said, "Okay, now everybody, raise your phones," and people expect you to say, "Now put them on silent." But instead he said, "Now, you can text like "mail me" to this number and you'll be on the mailing list," or something like that. It was nice.

**[0:12:59.1] RJ:** Oh, that's cool. Yeah, and I also at the end of the talk, I'm really engaged with the people on Twitter and Facebook and, you know, other social media platforms who are sharing my talk and, you know, just being engaged with them. That helps them feel more welcomed and invited and so I can start building relationships through there. So when I do start sending out my newsletter again, I'll have an audience as well who will have heard me talk which is great.

**[0:13:27.6] SS:** Yeah, it's totally, I guess they know you already.

**[0:13:31.8] RJ:** Yeah. So in that sense, I'm definitely — even before my talk, I'm there tweeting and sharing other speakers' talks and just trying to be engaged at the conference with the attendees and organizers and the speakers so that it just feels like I belong there and I'm in there with everybody.

**[0:13:52.9] DT:** Definitely. Let's talk about the newsletter for a little bit because you mentioned you started the newsletter and it's on hold now. So first, can you tell us what is — you were sending a weekly newsletter, right?

**[0:14:02.2] RJ:** Yeah.

**[0:14:02.6] DT:** What was in the newsletter, what was your weekly newsletter?

**[0:14:05.9] RJ:** My weekly newsletter, it started off with a little wider subject matter; it was design, it was sketching, it was personal challenges and you know, just a little bit of everything. So it wasn't, when it started, it wasn't really focused and then slowly as the weeks went on, I started to bring it back to sketching. So I wanted to focus solely on sketching so I can have a stronger voice instead of the more diluted voice amongst everything that's out there. I wanted to position myself in the field of sketching as a voice instead of being everywhere all the time.

**[0:14:47.9] SS:** It's a nice niche to be in.

**[0:14:49.2] RJ:** Yeah, that's definitely, you know, it's a big need. There's a lot of people talking about sketching but there's a place for everybody in this field.

**[0:14:58.2] DT:** I think you touched on something interesting though, that you started the newsletter, you said, more towards a broader subject. And then narrowed it down afterwards. Why? Was that based off like just a gut feeling or was there some feedback or something that you felt needed to be changed?

**[0:15:11.5] RJ:** I think I just wanted to feel, because I'm already talking about sketching in my talks at conferences and I'm really focused on sketching, so why not take that and just bring my newsletter and also talk about sketching? So tried to become a voice in the sketching area and stronger voice. Because for me, I feel like it's better to be focused than to be everywhere, talking about everything. So I can have other channels where I talk about everything but for this channel I believe, I just wanted to be more focused so I know exactly what I need to do each week.

**[0:15:51.9] DT:** That's awesome, and I want to follow up with that but just before I do that, I want us to take a quick break and give a shout out for sponsors for this episode.

[SPONSOR BREAK]

**[0:15:58.7] SS:** As you've heard, application for the next batch of the Side Project Accelerator are now open. If you are motivated to get yourself out there, build an audience and learn to make passive income, then we want you in.

**[0:16:09.2] DT:** In the first eight weeks of the program, we have a different lesson each week.

**[0:16:12.5] SS:** Week one.

**[0:16:13.1] DT:** We clear all obstacles and help you build a sustainable routine for working on your side project.

**[0:16:17.3] SS:** Week two.

**[0:16:18.1] DT:** We start building your email list and begin to send a weekly newsletter.

**[0:16:21.7] SS:** Week Three.

**[0:16:22.6] DT:** We go over our writing methods and help you create your very first content upgrade.

**[0:16:26.1] SS:** Week four.

**[0:16:27.9] DT:** We dive into automation and give you our secrets to get a shit load of stuff done in a very short period of time.

**[0:16:32.3] SS:** Week Five.

**[0:16:33.2] DT:** Is all about building your army. We show you how to hire freelancers and outsource the work that you don't want to do.

**[0:16:38.3] SS:** Week Six.

**[0:16:39.4] DT:** Is a lesson about monetizing and by the end, we've laid out your plan to make passive income from your side project.

**[0:16:44.2] SS:** Week Seven.

**[0:16:45.7] DT:** We discuss all sorts of new ways to reach your audience and get started with videos, podcasting, and live broadcast.

**[0:16:50.9] SS:** Week Eight.

**[0:16:51.2] DT:** That's all about demo day. You present your project to the world.

**[0:16:55.0] SS:** Oh yeah. But the program doesn't end there, you'll have lifetime access to our community and that means that each month, we will bring in expert for private closed Q&A session. Our experts from that one include Tobias Ben Snider, Jeffrey Zeldman and Paul Jarvis among other amazing leaders.

**[0:17:11.6] DT:** Applications are open until November 10<sup>th</sup> so apply soon.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[0:17:16.8] DT:** You said that it's currently on hold the newsletter? So I'm curious, what's preventing you from putting it out?

**[0:17:22.2] RJ:** Yeah, this is definitely a challenge because I started and I'm starting strong and you know, a month into it, I kind of got disheartened I think by looking at the analytics and, you know, how many people are opening, how many people are clicking, the email and reading it so I know it's not — the expectations shouldn't be like, it needs to be a hit in like three or four weeks.

So I think I just kind of focused too much on the analytics part and you know, the numbers and always checking as soon as the email will go out, I would just be there refreshing and you know, thinking about that and I think that kind got me down.

**[0:17:58.7] SS:** That sounds familiar.

**[0:18:00.7] DT:** Same thing, I can really relate to that. When we were starting the hacking up newsletter, it was really the same kind of vibe that every email would be so interested in the open rate, the click through rate and really trying to mess with it and we took it even I think potentially worse direction for people starting out was that we started trying to optimize these stats at a very early stage rather than just putting out value and good stuff and good content that we try to say like, “Okay, what can we do to work on getting the click rate .5% higher, the open rate, you know, 3% higher.”

When I think, like you said that this analytics, you took it the direction of analytics kind of bummed you out, we took the direction of the analytics we’re driving, what we were delivering and I think both of us, this is something that happens a lot to people that the analytics don’t always help you, that you should be just be focusing on value and good content and not getting consumed by it.

**[0:18:53.1] SS:** I think that it’s something also about believing in a way and the path that you’re walking because I have it now too with my new Vlog. I keep bringing it up but it’s so hard for me. I just opened a vlog last week and uploaded like three episodes, each episode took me like so much time to edit and to work on and to record all day and then after all, you get like what? Maximum like 50 people that watched it, not even one like, not even one comment, not even one person sharing it, not even more subscribers on your YouTube channel.

Then you’re like, “Come on, should I keep doing this? Am I really giving you value?” I don’t even know what to talk about on my vlog. I can really fill you in that and I’ve been there with the podcast and we’ve been there with the newsletter and I’ve been there in my previous newsletter. So I think it’s something so common and Neil Gaiman, have you seen his commencement speech, *Make Good Art?* You know he talks about the battles that once you put out a piece of content, it’s like, once you write something, it’s like you take a bottle, you’re on an island and you take a bottle and you put it in an ocean and you hope for someone on the other end to receive your message and then return your message back.

That's like almost impossible, then every time you put a content, all your heart, you put it in the ocean and you just pray for someone to get it and nobody gets it, again and again, and again and again. But sometimes, eventually, someone will get it and then when he gets it, he will return it and then the bottles, he says, they start returning like crazy, that's when the turn point happens.

**[0:20:33.8] RJ:** Yeah, that's a great story and I believe I am at that point too. I'm really trying to get out of that habit and the next push, which will come soon, I think this was just the break I needed and, you know, now I'm recharged after having come back from speaking and thinking about what I did wrong and, you know, adjusting and then, I want to give value also, I don't want it to just share links that are already out there and just that everybody is sharing. So that is the challenge is to bring value and the way I'm thinking right now is to not have this long newsletter.

Just even one solid focused story, sketch, whatever it is that can bring value to the reader, I think that will be much better than this long email of links from all of the place and putting 10 hours into it or however many hours and then getting frustrated. I think I need to just to readjust my strategy and then start small and then grow big, instead of starting off big and then expecting all the results. So I think I just need to switch my strategy and I think that would help.

**[0:21:44.5] DT:** And honestly, it's exactly how you said you got into speaking by starting the lightning talks, the small groups. I think it's a good point that what you just said now about starting small with the newsletter, it looks the same to me, the analogy applies there as well.

**[0:21:46.5] RJ:** Yeah, I think it's easy to forget that even though, you know, we know that yeah. I've seen that work and I've seen other newsletters that do a good job where I think there's a newsletter called "Sketch-clinations" where...

**[0:22:08.3] DT:** Yeah, I like this one. I'm a subscriber.

**[0:22:09.7] RJ:** That's a really great one, it's one sketch each week I believe it is and that's it. It's great, I read it and I love it, I learn something new and that's it. I'm sure it takes a lot of time to produce it but it's still effective, it's engaging and it's not overwhelming and so I think that's the way I'm going to do it.

**[0:22:31.8] SS:** Pretty awesome. By the way, as a very good illustrator called Pablo Stanley, have you seen his stuff?

**[0:22:38.5] RJ:** Yeah.

**[0:22:39.2] SS:** It's funny as hell. Yeah, I will go with that but I'll also say this: if you think that what you have right now is kind of like the newsletter that you would like to have, don't change it. I mean think about it like, people will come. Don't say, "I'll invest less time or I will make it small just because my list is small." Be small and simple if you think small and simple is smart and will give value to your readers and that's what you want. But if what you want is what you have right now, don't change it. Don't worry, the numbers will come.

**[0:22:11.0] RJ:** Yeah. No, definitely, it's not worrying about the numbers. I think that's the main thing for me and I just need to be realistic and see how much I can do, how much time I can invest and then you know, invest that much time and then try again. Just keep trying because this is not a small challenge. It's big effort. People — it's not easy to do. If it was easy, everybody would be doing it. It's got to take some time. Sometimes for some people it's easy, for other people it takes two, three times, four times but eventually you get there and just like anything else, just got to keep trying and...

**[0:23:53.2] DT:** I think you meant two, three, 400 times.

**[0:23:56.2] RJ:** Yeah, definitely.

**[0:23:58.5] DT:** No, I'm always, I'm thinking about this a lot now and the 30 day challenge you mentioned. So I'm writing an article every day. One of the reasons I wanted to start doing it is because I realized that almost ever famous blogger, every blogger who has like a lot of traffic, a lot of readers, a good audience has hundreds of blog posts and I said, "Okay, I've written maybe 50, 60 blog post, you know, that I published I my life." I'm saying, "Wait a second, if I want to be, you know, have a great audience and have a great blog and be a thought leader then it's not going to happen with just one more post or two more posts. It needs to happen with hundreds more.

So that was one of the reasons I started this challenge because I said I want to do it quickly, “Okay, let’s write a post every single day.” But I think just being consistent is so important and, like you said, it’s really hard to do and it’s not something that everyone could do because if it was easy, everyone would do it, exactly what you said. So one thing I can say with that, that we found with our newsletter was to automate everything. Was to automate a lot of the processes so that it wouldn’t take 10 hours, so we can provide a lot of the same value we wanted, provide even better value and spend our time on providing that value and not on like this administrative tasks.

**[0:25:06.2] RJ:** yeah, that’s where I think a lot of the challenge is spending the time to promote it or, you know, to upload it or to this other secondary tasks from actually creating it and you definitely have to promote it but if it takes twice as long to promote it than to actually write it then you could be writing two, three other blog posts in that amount of time. So basically, it’s a game of just balancing your time that you’re not spending too much time with the secondary task than the act of writing.

**[0:25:38.6] SS:** Yeah, going back to the Side Project Accelerator and your progress, what were your challenges along the way and what you got to right now, what your challenge is going forward?

**[0:25:51.6] RJ:** I think it was the consistency in coming up with an idea and then writing about it and then promoting it. It was hard to get the timing right and getting into a rhythm was a little difficult. I was starting out from the beginning, so I think getting the timing right is just a natural thing. You just have to do it more and more to get that timing right.

**[00:26:12.9] DT:** Can you talk about that for a second because this is something that everyone asks and we hear constantly like one of, if not the top reason that people are not working on the side projects or not building their personal brand is because exactly what you said, getting the timing right and finding a routine. Have you changed your life in any way to build that routine?

**[00:26:29.5] RJ:** I think the way I changed was to spend more time on it. So putting more time into it and then seeing which day, if I am done on a weekend I have more time to promote it and

then start fresh on Monday with the new idea and then on the weekend promote it. So it was just finding that rhythm, that was a challenge and trying different things. So it's seeing which one felt better, felt more sustainable. It's going to be different for everybody. Having a family and kids, that definitely reduces the amount of time you can invest in it. So waking up early, sleeping late and trying different things to see where that sweet spot is.

**[00:27:15.1] DT:** Yeah, that's what I'm really curious about is exactly that. You know, with family and kids it's really hard and I know a lot of people say they don't have time at all. So where is it? Is it that you're working — and you're also working full-time so are you getting to write and to sketch and work on your newsletter and stuff, is that before work or after work or only on the weekends?

**[00:27:34.0] RJ:** It's all of those. It's waking up two to three hours before everybody else wakes up so you have that quiet time and luckily I am a morning person. So I'd rather wake up early, 3 - 4 o'clock and work on...

**[00:27:47.9] SS:** Whoa.

**[00:27:49.0] RJ:** Have that time. Then it's hard for me to stay up late.

**[00:27:53.9] SS:** That's when David goes to sleep.

**[00:27:55.5] RJ:** Yeah, that's tough. But even though once I go to sleep, I have a couple of hours afterwards to myself, quiet time that I can focus on writing and whatever I need to do. And then on the weekends, it's trying not to bring this work into the family time but making the sacrifices before work or before they wake up and after they go to sleep and just adjusting my schedule that way so that it doesn't affect my other responsibilities.

**[00:28:24.1] DT:** That's dedication and I think that is something that what you said, you're waking up three, four in the morning sometimes, people see that's a sacrifice. I figured that would be, it could be even miserable potentially. But you know that's a sacrifice. If you care and you want to succeed and you have to be committed and you have to sacrifice something somewhere.

**[00:28:42.3] RJ:** Yeah, that's going to be a part. Yeah something has to give and I'd rather give up my time, my personal time than family time or have it affect other responsibilities and so because I want to feel good about what I am doing. This is important to me as well and so giving it the fair amount of time that it needs so that I feel good about it as well.

**[00:29:03.7] SS:** Sure and now that you got the routine set up in a way and you said you want to get back in track with the newsletter, right? What are your challenges now going forward?

**[00:29:12.0] RJ:** Now, it's again deciding my focus is about sketching and then how is it going to be manifested in the newsletter? I was thinking maybe doing a sketch of a concept, sketching out a concept each week and then mixing it in with the writing and so I think again experimenting with what feels comfortable and what I can continue to do and what will keep my energy levels up and keep me pushing. And so not restricting myself by saying, "Well I'm just going to write." Even though I wanted my passion, it's sketching and drawing and that side, so making sure that I'm loving what I am doing, writing and sketching and drawing and mixing those up.

**[00:30:01.5] SS:** And by the way, you mentioned like thinking about what you're going to do in the newsletter, how about giving tips for sketching? One tip a week or something like that. Have you thought of that?

**[00:30:12.2] RJ:** Well, thank you for the tip. I think that will be something I'll keep in mind and yeah, that's basically the goal is to provide ideas, tips, support, examples to the readers and so there's definitely — there's a lot that can happen. You'd think if you're restricting yourself to one area, you're going to have very few ideas or very few ways to have that come out. But like you just said, there's tips, there's examples, there's techniques, there's a lot that can happen and I think just to listing them out and trying out new things and seeing what sticks and what people want but not getting bogged down with analytics, I think that's the lesson I've learned.

**[00:30:56.1] SS:** Do not look at your analytics.

**[0:30:58.1] RJ:** Yeah, I mean it's good to look and see what's going on, but not be just focused solely on that.

**[0:31:04.9] SS:** Yeah, do you mind sharing right now how many people you have on your list?

**[0:31:09.1] RJ:** I believe I have about 60 people on the list.

**[0:31:13.8] SS:** Okay, cool. Listen, everybody, now, go to Rizwan's site, we'll put it here on the show notes, what's the link?

**[0:31:21.6] RJ:** It's rizwanjavaid.com.

**[0:31:23.2] SS:** All right, rizwanjavaid.com and just sign up to his newsletter, let's get him started with his audience. Actually, I loved your emails, I received your newsletters when you started and I already told you that but I really loved your newsletters.

**[0:31:39.2] RJ:** Thanks.

**[0:31:40.7] SS:** If you change them, I'll be good with what you change. But if you leave them just the same, just the way they are, I really like them. So just so you know, I think they are really good and have a lot of value already. But whatever you come up with, I bet it will be very cool.

**[0:31:43.5] RJ:** I have the energy to start back up, I think I just needed that break and you know now I'm going to do another push and learn from what I've done before and, you know, just try to get feedback from the readers as well and to see where, how it needs to evolve.

**[0:32:07.4] SS:** Everyone who is listening right now, listen, 60 is an amazing number because you start with zero, you start with not even having a list, not even having a blog, not even having a blog with a form to sign up for your list like nothing, okay? You did all that in Side Project Accelerator which is a very long way to go.

**[0:32:27.4] RJ:** Yeah, I mean, yeah, putting it into perspective before I heard about the Side Project Accelerator, it was just an idea. One day I would get to it — who knows when that would have happened, it was always that desire to start this process and then the timing was perfect. I heard about the Side Project Accelerator program and just jumped on it as soon as I heard about it and it was amazing, the amount of progress I saw in just one month, I didn't write that much but I wrote more than I had written before. It's amazing to see the progress that I've made and others have made as well.

**[0:33:07.5] DT:** Rizwan, I want to ask you, one thing that you're doing is, you're putting in so much extra work on the side project and building your brand and talking about the newsletter now and giving an extra push. So all of this extra work, what is success for you? What would you say as, "I've been successful, I've achieved what I wanted to do"?

**[0:33:24.2] RJ:** That's a great question because it's hard to think about that when you're just starting out. But I think success would be being able to see people appreciate your thoughts and your ideas and value those and having conversations with people and seeing people come to you for thoughts and ideas and I don't think there's a number, I wouldn't put a number on it but you know, I think you start to get that understanding that people are listening to you and they value your opinion.

**[0:33:59.2] DT:** I think that's sounds like an amazing goal and amazing success story. But yeah, like you said yourself, it has nothing to do with numbers. It doesn't have to do with necessarily the size of your list and if that's what you define as success and I think like we should all really think about this. I know I need to think about it all the time and keep asking myself. If that's really what you define as success then your goal is not to build a gigantic list at all.

Actually, it sounds quite the opposite, your goal is to be in touch with a few people very closely and really have them listening. So I think that this is like an important thing to constantly ask yourself and think about. I know this has made us think about a lot of stuff with Hacking UI. For instance, as far as growing the list goes, because I think we got to a point with our list, it's now about 22,000 or something like that and we're cleaning it. We've collected probably over 50,000 emails with Hacking UI and one thing I realized when we first started was I didn't have that clear

picture of success and I said, “Okay, I want to be as big as Smashing Magazine, right? Which 300,000, I don’t know, something emails like this right?”

**[0:34:59.4] RJ:** Sure.

**[0:35:00.2] DT:** I think that my picture of success is closer to the one you just described than it is to this Smashing Magazine one. It’s exactly that, it’s helping people and being able to give value and you know, improve the way people are working, kind of just affect their life in some way, it’s not to necessarily reach a half million people.

**[0:35:35.5] RJ:** Yeah.

**[0:35:18.8] DT:** So t’s something I think that’s important with everything you’re doing, you’re already speaking and you’re killing it in the speaking game and I think when it comes to the newsletter and working on the thing that you say you’re challenging a little bit, I think it’s important to really define what that success is for you and that will help you decide more what value you want to provide.

**[0:35:35.7] RJ:** Yeah, definitely. Because if you play the numbers game, it’s never going to be enough, you’re always going to want to reach that next number. But I think if you make the connections with people, and I’ve see that when I’m after I’ve spoken at a conference, when people come up and ask me for my opinion and we have this conversations, there and then online and then we connect through different social media channels and then continue the conversations. That’s more valuable to me than the numbers when I see people listening to our podcast and changing their behavior because of what they heard. Somebody hears this the 30 day challenge and then changes their life or changes their outlook and helps them improve, that’s where I find the value and that’s what makes it special.

**[0:36:27.4] DT:** I guess in the future, there is probably going to come a point where you want to or already maybe, or you want to start monetizing?

**[0:36:34.6] RJ:** Yeah, no definitely. Money is good.

**[0:36:39.9] DT:** The reason I bring this up is because I totally and I think a lot of people would agree that okay, the vision you have for success sounds great, right? Money is good, we all need money to live and we need to find a way to make that money. This is kind of where it kind of wraps around and we say, "Okay, I have this vision of success which is to help people for them to listen, to affect them. But I also want to make money which is also a more analytical thing that I need for success," right? There are numbers involved in money so I think we need to figure out how all of us need to figure out how to define those two different things and kind of merge them into one. "How can I make money while still achieving my vision for success?"

**[0:37:18.6] RJ:** Yeah, I'm at that point too is I'm doing the talking, I'm at conferences and meeting people and talking and putting out a newsletter. But how do I actually make money from all of this? So I think for me for the next step is maybe it's not through the newsletter that I make money, it's maybe creating a class on skill share or this other websites, I can actually still teach sketching and the concepts and the ideas that I speak about.

That could be a way to generate revenue and looking at these alternate ways to bring in money and until I see an opportunity within the newsletter to make money, once I reach a certain threshold, the advertising in the newsletter can bring money or say further down the line I start my own podcast and you know, that could bring in money. There's different ways to do that and I think for me the next step would be to start an online class on these different platforms to start bringing in some money and monetizing this.

**[0:38:20.9] SS:** Awesome. Rizwan, so besides that, we talked about like maybe making an online course. What other ways that we talk about monetizing or growth?

**[0:38:28.2] DT:** The next steps.

**[0:38:30.2] RJ:** Yeah, for the next steps like I said, creating an online class would be an opportunity that I am pursuing. There's also another idea that I've had is to actually bring all the information that I've been talking about and put it into a book format to publish and then that will be a way to monetize my talks and my brand and to help build a brand as well. So I am looking at different areas where I can move into, to help grow the brand as well.

So I'm not going to make the newsletter my only form of outlet or only way of communicating with the audience. I see other ways and other channels that I can use and pursue but I think the main thing is to again start off small. So maybe not doing a full book, but maybe it's like a smaller eBook that I sell and then keep iterating on that until I can find a publisher and publish a full book. So yeah, again, just going back to iterating on small, taking small steps to reach the big goal.

**[0:39:35.5] DT:** It's an excellent point. I wanted to just bring up something I just thought about for you that can be really useful. Something that Sagi and I started dabbling in recently is doing webinars and the reason I think it could be actually especially useful for you is because you already have the speaking skills down and you already have presentations prepared. But let's say the limiting factor for you in your speaking right now is physical conferences. You need to be accepted to a conference to arrive there, to travel there, to get everything, all the bureaucracy around that and the other potential obstacle you mentioned was collecting emails or some way to engage with people after the conference. To follow up and to take that audience to somewhere else. So webinars are working really well for Sagi and I right now more as we're starting to teach some of the lessons from Side Project Accelerator this way. So this could be a really nice area for you to dabble in, to start teaching your sketching presentations, through webinars.

**[0:40:29.2] RJ:** Nice. Though the webinars, you're also interacting with the audience as well right?

**[0:40:33.6] DT:** Definitely.

**[0:40:34.4] RJ:** Questions and answers and...

**[0:40:36.1] DT:** Yeah, there's a chat during it and you're taking questions and also you have their email from everyone who signed up and you can immediately send them a survey right afterwards, you can also send follow up packages, invite them to the next webinar .

**[0:40:47.3] RJ:** Nice, that's a great idea. Yeah that's definitely a lot less depends on being accepted to a conference and there's less of a barrier to get to that and you can quickly get to the audience that you want to.

**[0:40:59.9] DT:** Yeah, I think it could be something really cool for you to try out especially you already have speaking presentation prepared and for anyone else listening who has a speaking presentation prepared, this can be an excellent way to use something that you've already done like repurpose that content or to try out a presentation for a new conference that you're nervous about or you want to test something beforehand.

**[0:41:19.4] RJ:** Wow, that's is the value that you can see firsthand on the Side Project Accelerator is getting this type of information of the ideas and that you wouldn't get otherwise. Just having somebody to bounce ideas off of and shared them and I haven't talked about the Slack channel that is used for the Side Project Accelerator. That's a great way to stay in communication with everybody, propose ideas and see what other people are doing so you can steal them but just, it's so much easier to do that when you're in a group than on your own. So thank you again for providing this opportunity to be a part of the Side Project Accelerator team and I think it's a great way to get to where you want.

**[0:42:07.8] SS:** Yeah, and thank you so much for being on board and saying those things. It's great for us to hear this feedback, especially now when batch two is about to start. All right, so before we wrap up like do you have any last kind of tips for anyone starting out their side projects right now?

**[0:42:24.3] RJ:** I would say to whatever interest you, to start small and spend an hour a day, even if it's 30 minutes a day, you can carve out the same amount of time. But just be consistent with it, do it every day and you will see the progress and than if you were just doing it once in a while, you'd kind of get frustrated by the results. But if you do something small each day to get to the goal that you want to be at, just keep trying and there's going to be, like we talked about, there's going to be challenges, there's going to be setbacks, that happens, life happens to all of us.

We all have responsibilities, we all have challenges and you never know what life throws at us but regrouping and then starting back again and knowing where you want to go so that when life happens, it doesn't throw you off track. Just find what you're passionate about and know your goal and just go for it.

**[0:43:25.7] SS:** Great.

**[0:43:25.5] DT:** Cool, thanks a lot Rizwan and just last thing, remind everyone again where they can find you online.

**[0:43:29.3] RJ:** My website is rizwanjavaid.com and I'm also on twitter, @rizwanjavaid and I think if you Google Rizwan Javaid, I think one of my websites will show up some place.

**[0:43:43.1] SS:** And Javaid is Javaid?

**[0:43:.6] RJ:** No, Javaid. It's kind of like java ID.

**[0:43:40.8] SS:** Java ID.

**[0:43:53.3] RJ:** That's one way to read it.

**[0:43:56.1] SS:** Rizwan Javaid.

**[0:43:59.5] RJ:** Yeah.

**[0:44:01.7] SS:** All right.

**[044:01.9] RJ:** I just need to become a programmer for that to make sense.

**[0:44:050] SS:** All right.

**[0:44:47.0] DT:** Thanks Rizwan.

**[0:44:11.8] RJ:** Thank you very much, you guys are great and hope to see you soon.

[END OF EPISODE]

**[0:44:25.8] SS:** All right, so that's a wrap. Thank you hackers for joining us today and we hope you enjoy the show, you can find all the links and resources from this conversation on [hackingui.com/podcast](http://hackingui.com/podcast).

**[0:44:35.8] DT:** If you're interested in joining the Side Project Accelerator, applications for the next batch are open until November 10th. In the Side Project Accelerator, before we go, we put you through eight intense weeks to build the foundations for you to gather your audience. We give you the tools to reach them through a blog and an awesome newsletter. We share all of our tools with you, including the internal software that we build in order to get the job done. You can apply now on [sideprojectaccelerator.com](http://sideprojectaccelerator.com).

**[0:44:11.8] SS:** Last thing, if you enjoyed the show, we would love to hear from you. Just tweet at us @huackingUI or just review this podcast on iTunes. Those reviews really help us out and make our day.

**[0:45:07.8] DT:** We'll see you next week hackers, and remember to keep hacking.

[END]