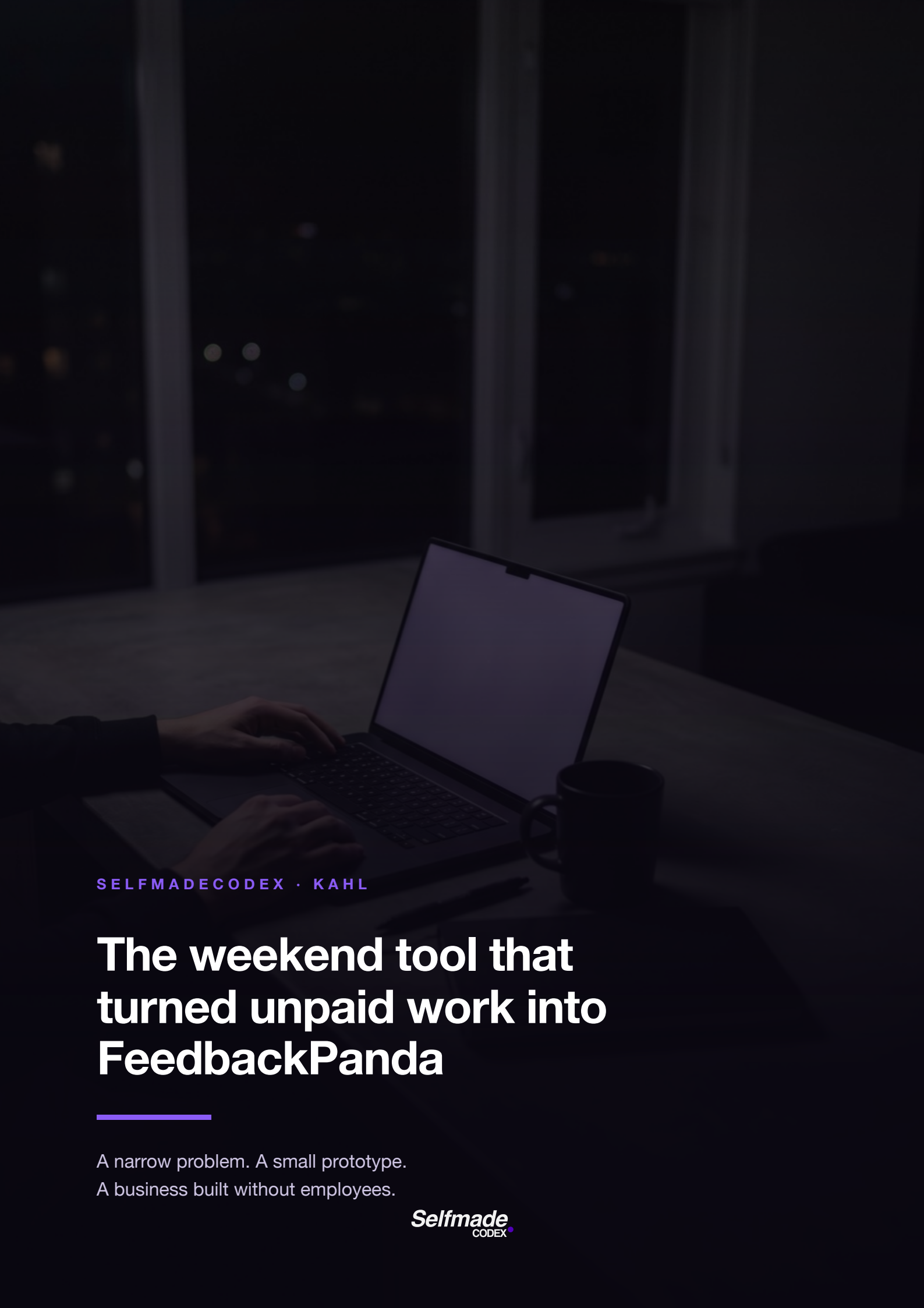




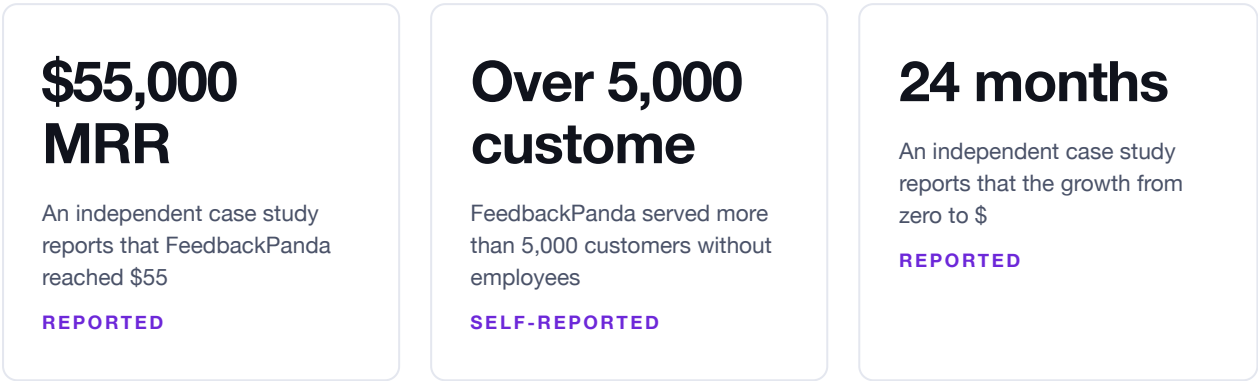
SELFMADECODEX · KAHL

The weekend tool that turned unpaid work into FeedbackPanda

A narrow problem. A small prototype.
A business built without employees.

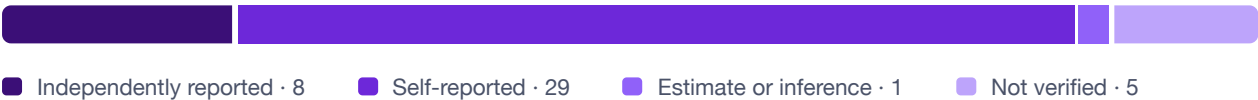
Selfmade
CODEX

The story in numbers



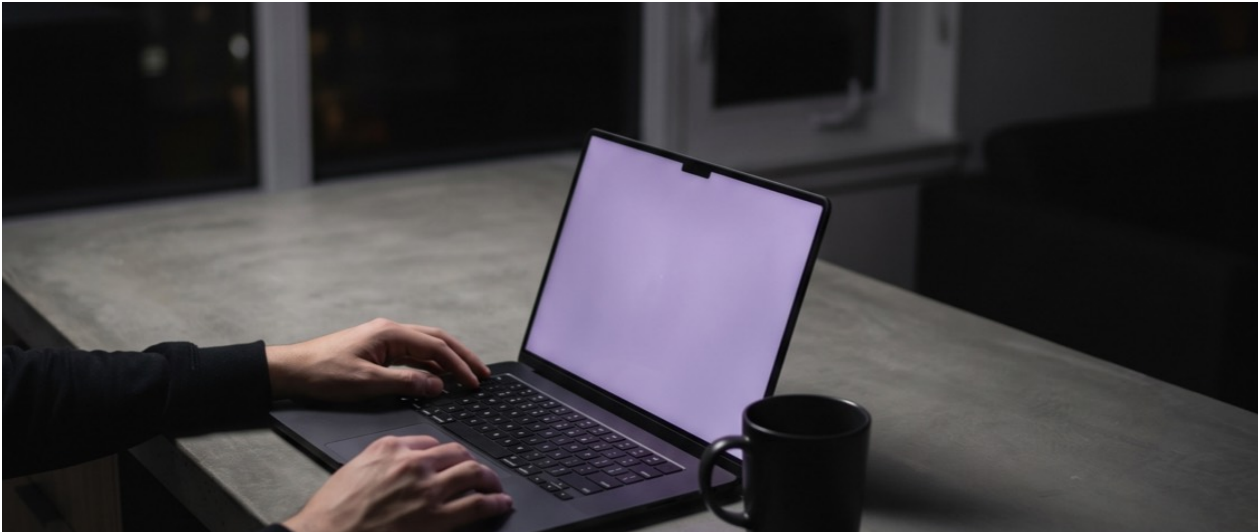
Where the numbers come from

Every figure in this document was checked against its original source. Here is how they break down:



By mid-2019, FeedbackPanda was running so smoothly that they could step away without it breaking.

STARTUP ANATOMY FALLSTUDIE · INDEPENDENTLY REPORTED





The path

- 2017
Danielle was teaching English online to Chinese children, and Kahl was working as a software engineer for a German IoT company.
- 2017
Kahl began building the FeedbackPanda prototype on weekends.
- WITHIN A FEW WEEKS AFTER THE
According to Kahl, FeedbackPanda became profitable.
- WITHIN TWO YEARS OF BUILDING
Kahl and Danielle ran, grew, and sold FeedbackPanda.
- 2019
FeedbackPanda was sold to SureSwift Capital.
- 2020
An independent case study reports that Kahl self-published Zero to Sold.
- 2021
An independent case study reports that Kahl wrote The Embedded Entrepreneur.



01

The Problem Was Already Waiting

Before there was a product, there was a repeated task nobody wanted to keep doing.

In 2017, Arvid Kahl was working as a software engineer at a German IoT company, according to his account. His partner, Danielle, taught English online to Chinese children.

After 12-hour teaching days, she spent two more unpaid hours writing student feedback. The same content went into Excel spreadsheets and Word documents again and again.

They did not begin with a broad market thesis. They began with a problem inside their own household.

- Audience: online English teachers working with Chinese children
- Problem: repetitive feedback work after long teaching days
- Initial insight: a narrow problem could be worth solving if it appeared often enough

The working hours, tools, and original context are self-reported by Arvid Kahl.

A Small SaaS for a Specific Niche

FeedbackPanda was built around one audience and one recurring job.

The founders discussed a small software tool that could handle the feedback work. Kahl built the first prototype on weekends.

The product was a bootstrapped SaaS business for online English teachers. It was not designed for everyone who wrote reports, managed students, or worked in education.

That narrow starting point gave the product a clear question to answer: could it make teacher feedback faster and less repetitive?

- Customer: online English teachers
- Product: software for preparing and managing student feedback
- Funding approach: no external funding, according to Kahl
- Operating model: two founders and, according to an independent case study, no employees

The company name, SaaS model, funding approach, and staffing details are self-reported unless marked otherwise. The two-person, no-employee description is reported by an independent case study.

The First Build Came Before the Big Plan

The first version was built around an observed task, not a presentation about a future company.

Kahl developed the initial prototype on weekends. The founders focused on the one problem they believed mattered most to their chosen audience.

They then reached teachers through communities those teachers already used. Danielle handled marketing almost exclusively through a teacher community, according to Kahl. Comments and posts helped create word of mouth.

The sequence was simple: observe the work, build a small version, put it in front of the people doing that work, and listen to what happened next.

- Start with a clearly defined group
- Choose one costly or repetitive task
- Build the smallest useful version
- Talk to customers where they already gather
- Expand only after the first problem is understood

Weekend development, teacher-community marketing, and word-of-mouth distribution are self-reported. The independent case study also reports initial spread within online teacher communities.

Revenue Arrived Before the Story Was Finished

The business did not need a large audience to become a business.

According to Kahl, FeedbackPanda became profitable within a few weeks of its public launch. That is a self-reported timeline, not a general benchmark.

An independent case study reports that the company reached \$55,000 in monthly recurring revenue over 24 months. The same case study describes the operation as two people with no employees.

Those figures describe this company. They do not establish what another product should earn or how quickly it should happen.

- Revenue model: recurring SaaS subscriptions
- Reported profitability: within a few weeks of public launch, self-reported
- Reported MRR: \$55,000 after 24 months, independent case study
- Reported structure: two people, no employees, independent case study

The exact pricing, customer acquisition cost, churn, and sale amount are not available in the supplied material.



05

Distribution Stayed Close to the Customer

Growth came from being present in the places where the niche already exchanged advice.

The founders did not begin with advertisements or a venture-backed growth machine. An independent case study reports that FeedbackPanda initially spread through online teacher communities and used no advertisements or venture capital pitches.

Community posts and comments created word of mouth, according to Kahl. The product could then serve more customers through automation and optimized processes.

The company was also built to reduce dependence on its founders. An independent case study reports that it could operate without them by mid-2019.

- Distribution: existing teacher communities
- Acquisition: community conversations and word of mouth
- Operations: automation and documented processes
- Scale: more than 5,000 customers without employees, self-reported
- Founder dependency: reduced over time

The customer count and founder-dependency claims are self-reported. The absence of advertisements, no VC pitches, and mid-2019 operating status are reported by an independent case study.

The Missing Mistake

There is a useful gap in this story: the painful lessons are mentioned, but not fully named.

Kahl has said that the founders experienced painful lessons. The supplied material does not identify the specific mistakes.

That limits what can responsibly be reconstructed. It would be easy to fill the gap with familiar startup advice about pricing, hiring, positioning, or technical debt. None of those details are documented here.

What is visible is the constraint they chose: a narrow audience, a focused problem, weekend development, and a business designed to run with little operational overhead.

- Documented challenge: repetitive work had to be translated into a useful product
- Documented constraint: the initial product was built alongside full-time work
- Documented limitation: the specific mistakes are not identified
- Practical caution: do not treat an incomplete public story as a complete playbook

The reference to painful lessons is self-reported. Specific mistakes cannot be stated without additional source material.

Five Lessons That Survive the Hype

The useful part is not that the company grew. It is where the first decisions were made.

First, start with a specific group of people. A defined audience gives you somewhere to look and someone to speak with.

Second, find the recurring problem that costs that group time or energy. Danielle's feedback work was not a theoretical inconvenience. It happened after every teaching day.

Third, build the smallest useful version before expanding. The first prototype was built on weekends, around one job.

Fourth, reach people through communities they already trust. The founders went where teachers were already talking.

Fifth, document and automate the business. A product is more durable when its value does not depend entirely on the founders being present.

- Specific audience
- Recurring problem
- Small useful version
- Existing communities
- Lower founder dependency

These lessons are interpretations of the documented sequence, not guarantees of business results.

How You Might Start This Model Today

The first step is still available, but it should begin with evidence rather than branding.

Choose a group you can reach directly. Speak with people who perform the same recurring task. Ask what they repeat, where they lose time, and what they already do to work around it.

Collect examples before building. A shared document, spreadsheet, or manual service can reveal whether the problem is frequent and specific enough to solve.

Create one narrow workflow. Test it with a small number of real users. Charge only when the product removes a problem they already recognize. The appropriate price and timing depend on the market; the FeedbackPanda story does not provide a universal formula.

Use the community as a research channel, not just a promotion channel. Keep notes on objections, missing features, and the words customers use.

Only then automate the repeated parts: onboarding, support, reporting, and internal handoffs. The aim is not to look like a company early. It is to learn whether the work deserves a company.



09

How You Might Start This Model Today (2)

- Today: name one reachable niche
- This week: document one repeated task
- Next: test a manual or lightweight workflow
- After evidence: build the smallest version people return to
- Later: automate what is already working

This is a present-day interpretation of the documented model, not a claim about what the founders would do today.

Tools and Resources

The original story does not require a complicated stack.

For discovery, use the tools your audience already uses: community forums, group discussions, spreadsheets, and direct conversations. The important output is not a polished database. It is a clear record of repeated problems and exact customer language.

For a first workflow, combine a simple landing page, an intake form, a payment method, a support inbox, and a place to track product requests. The specific vendors are a choice, not part of the FeedbackPanda evidence.

For operations, document the steps that repeat. Add automation only after the manual version is understood. Keep a record of which tasks still require a founder.

Kahl currently presents The Bootstrapped Founder as the home of his books, course, podcast, YouTube channel, newsletter, and other founder resources. The supplied material also identifies Zero to Sold, The Embedded Entrepreneur, Find your Following, and Bootstrapper's Bookshelf.

There is no affiliate recommendation on this page. The resource list is included as context for further research.



11

Tools and Resources (2)

- Research: existing communities, interviews, spreadsheets
- Validation: landing page, intake form, manual workflow
- Operations: documentation, support inbox, process tracking
- Further reading: Zero to Sold and The Embedded Entrepreneur
- Further resources: The Bootstrapped Founder, podcast, YouTube channel, newsletter, and Bootstrapper's Bookshelf

The named resources are based on the supplied material. The suggested tool categories are general working methods, not product endorsements.

Sources & transparency

Every figure in this document comes with its source. Anything the person only stated about themselves is marked as self-reported.

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