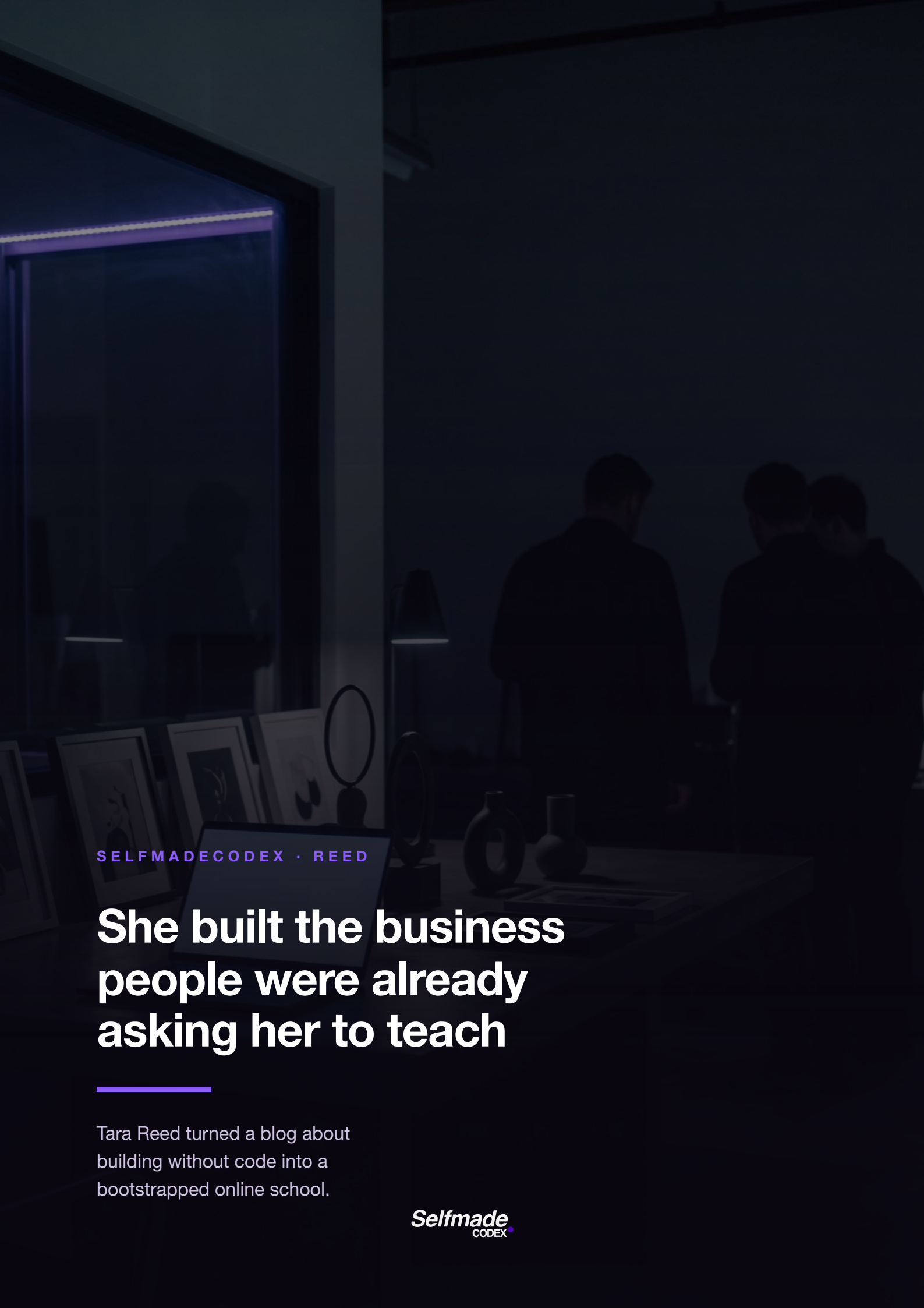




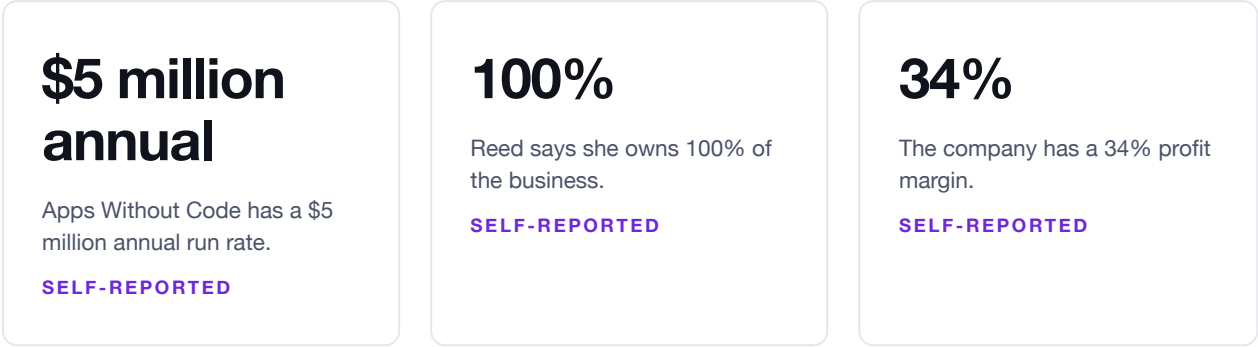
SELFMADECODEX · REED

She built the business people were already asking her to teach

Tara Reed turned a blog about
building without code into a
bootstrapped online school.

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:



we ended up building this algorithm that matches people to artwork based on their tastes

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She Was Not Trying to Build a Course

Tara Reed was building an art startup when her audience started asking a different question.

Reed had built Kolleto, an art product that matched people with artwork based on their tastes. The first version was built without code, according to her account.

She documented the process on her blog and later gave a TEDx Talk about building apps without code. The same question kept returning: could she help other people do it too?

At first, she treated the request as a distraction. Kolleto was the company. Teaching was something on the side.

Then she contacted blog subscribers and offered to speak with them by phone. She helped five people launch apps, according to her account. That small experiment became Apps Without Code.

The distance between the original idea and the business was not a master plan. It was a repeated question, followed by a conversation.

- Reed founded Apps Without Code, which teaches people to build apps without coding.
- The first version of Kolleto was built without code, according to Reed's account.
- The early customer signal came from people already following her work.

Details about Kolleto and the early process are based on Reed's account.



02

The Product Was More Than an App

Apps Without Code taught people how to build an app and what to do with it afterward.

The program did not stop at development. Reed built the offer around three connected problems: making the product, finding customers, and creating a business model.

That distinction mattered. A person can build an app and still have no clear customer, no distribution, and no reason for anyone to pay.

The program also included white labeling. An app could be rebranded for a company or organization instead of being sold only as a low-priced consumer download.

The free workshop became the front door. The paid program provided the hands-on training and support behind it.

The offer evolved from answering technical questions to helping participants think like owners of a small product business.

- Free workshop or webinar for interest and education.
- Paid training program with app development, customer acquisition, and business-model work.
- White-label option for companies and organizations.
- Lifetime access was part of the offer at the time of the Indie Hackers interview, according to Reed.

The program structure and lifetime-access detail are based on Reed's account.



03

The Build Started With Conversations

Before building a larger system, Reed tested whether people wanted help badly enough to talk about it.

She started with the audience she already had. Blog subscribers received an invitation to discuss how she might help them build an app.

The first version of the service was not a polished learning platform. It was a set of phone conversations and direct help.

She worked with the first five participants, according to her account. Their questions exposed what the program actually needed to cover.

Only after that did she replace the individual-call approach with a webinar. The webinar could explain the core idea once, answer recurring questions, and make demand easier to observe.

This sequence is easy to miss when looking backward. The system came after the conversations. The conversations came before the system.

- Document a real project in public.
- Notice repeated questions from people who already trust the work.
- Invite a small group into direct conversations.
- Help the first participants before automating delivery.
- Turn repeated explanations into a workshop or webinar.

The sequence is reconstructed from the supplied account of Reed's first steps.



04

She Sold the Help Before It Was Fully Built

The first paid version was an experiment in demand, not a finished machine.

Reed sold the first program for \$900 per participant, according to her account. The second intake had 70 participants, also by her account.

Later, the intensive program was priced at \$1,900 at the time of the Indie Hackers interview. The price was attached to a broader promise: not just learning a tool, but learning how to find customers and build a viable model around an app.

The white-label route created another pricing logic. Instead of relying on small consumer downloads, participants could license a rebranded app to an organization. Reed said pricing could start at \$3,000 per year and go upward.

Some students closed sales before finishing their products, according to Reed. That detail changes the order of operations. Customer evidence could shape what was built instead of the product being built in isolation.

None of this removes the hard part. Selling early creates obligations. It also creates information that a private build cannot provide.



05

She Sold the Help Before It Was Fully Built (2)

- First program: \$900 per participant, according to Reed.
- Second intake: 70 participants, according to Reed.
- Later intensive-program price: \$1,900, according to Reed.
- White-label pricing: from \$3,000 per year and upward, according to Reed.

All figures on this page are self-reported by Reed.



06

Distribution Followed the Audience

Growth came through channels that already had access to people with the problem.

The first sales came from direct conversations with potential participants. That approach was personal, but it did not scale well.

Reed then formed partnerships with people and organizations that already served relevant audiences. Affiliates and social-media takeovers extended that approach. The business borrowed attention instead of trying to manufacture all of it alone.

Free workshops and webinars became a repeatable way to explain the offer and build an email list. They also gave potential customers a chance to see how Reed taught before paying for the program.

Paid advertising on Facebook and Instagram was added later, according to the supplied account. By then, the company had a clearer offer and a stronger sense of who it was trying to reach.

The pattern was incremental: direct contact first, borrowed distribution next, paid acquisition after the message had been tested.

- Direct conversations with existing subscribers.
- Partnerships with organizations and people serving relevant audiences.
- Affiliates and social-media takeovers.
- Free workshops and webinars.
- Later paid social advertising on Facebook and Instagram.

The acquisition channels are based on the supplied account of Reed's growth strategy.



07

The Wrong Path Can Still Look Like Progress

Reed's hardest decisions were not only about tactics but about choosing the kind of company she wanted to run.

With Kolleto, Reed initially followed the venture-capital path. The company went through 500 Startups, and she says it raised approximately \$300,000. She later recognized that a scale-at-all-costs company was not what she wanted to operate.

She also delayed leaving Kolleto longer than she needed to. The old company had history, effort, and identity attached to it. Those are real reasons to hesitate, but they do not necessarily make the next decision clearer.

At Apps Without Code, she was initially resistant to hiring coaches or paying for outside help. Keeping control can feel responsible. It can also slow down a business when the missing capability is already obvious.

She prioritized conversions, revenue, and profit margins over branding and public visibility. That focus helped the business operate, but it also meant less attention went to how the company was perceived.

The lesson is not that one path is universally correct. It is that the business model has to match the life and operating style the founder actually wants.



08

The Wrong Path Can Still Look Like Progress (2)

- A funded company can be the wrong company for its founder.
- Delaying a transition has a cost, even when the existing work is meaningful.
- Avoiding outside help can protect cash while limiting speed and capability.
- Conversion and margin work do not replace the need for visibility forever.

Kollecto, 500 Startups, the funding estimate, and the listed challenges are based on Reed's account. The approximately \$300,000 figure is described as an estimate.

Five Lessons That Survive the Hype

The useful part of this story is not the reported outcome; it is the order in which the evidence appeared.

First, pay attention to repeated questions around work you are already documenting. The audience may be showing you a problem before you have named it.

Second, test demand through real conversations. Five conversations cannot prove a large market, but they can reveal whether the problem is specific enough to discuss and urgent enough to act on.

Third, teach the business model, not only the technical product. Building is one job. Finding a customer and creating a way to get paid are separate jobs.

Fourth, selling before the product is complete can make the customer part of the design process. It also forces you to confront what the offer is actually responsible for delivering.

Fifth, bootstrapped growth asks spending and hiring to follow real revenue. That constraint can be limiting. It can also keep the company closer to the evidence.

- Document the work you are already doing.
- Treat repeated questions as signals, not interruptions.
- Start with conversations before infrastructure.
- Make customer and business-model decisions part of the product.
- Let actual revenue determine what the business can support.

These lessons are interpretations of the supplied story, not guarantees or universal rules.



10

How You Might Start It Today

The modern version would begin with a narrow customer problem, not with a large course or a finished app.

Choose one group that has a repeated workflow problem. Do not begin with “I want to build an app.” Begin with what the group is currently doing badly, slowly, or manually.

Publish the process as you investigate it. Show prototypes, decisions, and unanswered questions. The goal is not to perform expertise. It is to make the problem visible to people who recognize it.

Invite a small number of people to short conversations. Ask what they do now, what it costs them, and what they have already tried. Listen for behavior, not compliments.

Offer a tightly defined pilot before building a broad program. A no-code prototype, a guided workshop, or a productized service can all expose whether the problem is real.

If organizations have the problem, test a business-facing version. White labeling may be relevant, but only when the organization receives clear value from owning or presenting the solution under its own name.

Use a free workshop only when it teaches something useful and leads naturally into the paid next step. Build the email list as a record of relevant interest, not as a vanity metric.

How You Might Start It Today (2)

Keep the first system manual. Automate only the part that repeats often enough to justify the cost.

- Today: write one public explanation of the problem you are studying.
- This week: speak with several people who experience it.
- Next: sell a small pilot with a clear result and a clear boundary.
- After delivery: turn recurring questions into a workshop, template, or product.

This is a present-day adaptation of the reported sequence, not a promise of comparable results.

Tools And Resources

The tools matter less than the evidence they help you collect.

Use a simple writing platform to document the problem, your process, and what you are learning. A public archive makes repeated questions easier to notice.

Use video calls for early customer conversations. Keep the first discussions manual so you can hear the language people use and see where they get stuck.

Use a no-code builder for a narrow prototype when the workflow can be tested without custom software. The prototype should answer a customer question, not merely demonstrate a feature.

Use a webinar platform for a live workshop once the same explanation has been repeated several times. Recordings can support later distribution, but live questions are often the more valuable research.

Use an email service to follow up with people who voluntarily attended or requested more information. Separate education from a sales pitch and make the next step explicit.

Use a payment and scheduling tool to reduce friction around pilots, calls, and workshops. Track what people actually buy, not only what they say they want.



13

Tools And Resources (2)

Use a basic spreadsheet or analytics dashboard to record conversations, offers, conversions, delivery time, and recurring objections. Keep the numbers tied to decisions.

- Writing platform: document the work and collect questions.
- Video calls: run early research and delivery manually.
- No-code builder: test a focused workflow.
- Webinar platform: teach, observe, and qualify interest.
- Email service: follow up with permission.
- Payment, scheduling, and spreadsheet tools: reduce friction and track evidence.

No affiliate recommendations are included. Tool categories are intentionally generic; choose based on privacy, cost, integrations, and the workflow you need.

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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- The first program was priced at \$900. — \$900 [SELF-REPORTED] Quelle <https://www.indiehackers.com/podcast/180-tara-reed-of-apps-without-code>
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- The program provides lifetime access. — Lifetime access [SELF-REPORTED] Quelle <https://www.indiehackers.com/podcast/180-tara-reed-of-apps-without-code>
- The program has around 250 new participants start each month. — Around 250 people per month [SELF-REPORTED] Quelle <https://peopleofcolorintech.com/front/how-tara-reed-built-a-million-dollar-startup-without-code-and-is-teaching-others-how-to-do-the-same/>
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