

Side Projects Coming Up With An Idea

From Alex Chiou's course [Build Side Projects With 500k+ Users: Coming Up With An Idea](#)

Alex's Side Projects

1. Random Name Picker - 1,100,000+ users
2. Random Number Generator - 880,000+ users
3. SQL Practice Pro - 700,000+ users
4. Simple Flashcards Plus - 195,000+ users

Side Project Playbook

1. Find a small and boring (but popular) problem
2. Copy what others are doing as a foundation
3. Sharply fine-tune to make your version better (performant code, handle all cases, free / add free)
 - a. Can I make it faster? (reduce clicks or latency)
 - b. Can I make it less broken? (fix bugs)
 - c. Can I make it less annoying? (remove adds, paywall)
 - d. Can I make it more intuitive? (better design)
 - e. Open source the code unless the app is full stack and I don't trust myself as I might accidentally leak an API key
4. Be a master Honer not an Innovator (win by being better)

Level 1: Local Utility App (the goal)

- Completely self-contained product
- Relegated to 1 tech stack
- Often doesn't need Internet access minus initial access
- Level 1.5: Calling someone else's external API
- This is 90% of Alex's apps

Single Player vs. Multiplayer

- Single player (build a project where a solitary user can get value from it)

Keep the Stakes of Failure Low

- Think about what failure means with your project (an idea where you only need to worry about building)

Simple is Complex

- Everything becomes complex when you reach a certain level of quality and execution
- **Take a “simple” idea and build it with a stunning degree of quality**
- Beautiful simplicity brings technical complexity

Market Research

1. Do a search
 - a. You should be in a space where people care about
 - b. Be better than the vast majority of the competition (go into an existing area and win with quality)
 - c. You are looking for “medium” competitiveness (be in the middle between nothing exists at all in this space AND multiple huge tech companies competing)

Look for Gaps

- Too many steps
- Too much going on
- Annoying banner ads

Your Superpower: Thinking Small

- You can compete in open spaces (find neglected areas - competition is other indie developers)

Idea Scorecard

- ☐ Something you or a loved one will use
- ☐ Level 1 idea
- ☐ Single player
- ☐ Small cost of failure
- ☐ Market validated

Bias Towards Action (Doer Not a Thinker)

The Ideal Flow

1. Have idea
2. Build idea
3. Product succeeds (hopefully, but they can and will sometimes fail)

Just Keep Building

It's a Numbers Game (Take More Shots on Goal)

- You probably won't strike gold on your first try
- If a project fails, move on to the next one
- If you're following this course's advice, the cost of trying again is low

Main Message

- Build Build Build

Go Deeper: Follow Through

- Beautiful simplicity is technical complexity
- Build for someone you care about
- It's all about getting users
- Win by being better (Honer instead of Innovator)
- Build, build, build

Now Go **DO** Something Good

- Side projects in particular require long-term action
- Side projects produce huge benefits but also require consistent time spend
- Watching a course is great, but you must put the ideas into practice

Alex's Homework For You

- ☐ Find 5 software flows in your life that can be improved
- ☐ Talk to 3 friends or family and see if tech can help them
- ☐ Evaluate all the projects on your resume vs. this course
- ☐ Come up with one side project idea
- ☐ Share your project idea!

How To Share with Alex

- In his group office hours
- Share in the Taro Forum (paused for the moment)

Side Project Idea Sharing Template

1. Name of the project
2. Inspiration (why are you building it, who are you building it for)
3. Competitors
4. Build plan (platform, tech stack)

Example Project Idea Share

1. Random Name Picker
2. A good friend of mine is a math teacher and needs to call on students randomly
3. Some existing apps in Google Play but all are bad:
<https://play.google.com/store/search?q=Random%20Name%20Picker&c=apps>
4. Android, vanilla Kotlin + Jetpack Compose

Ways To Go Deeper

- [Office hours](#)
- [Taro Forum](#) (paused for the moment)
- [Attend Taro Events](#)