

HOW TO MANAGE LIFE, LEARN FASTER, AND ENGINEER GREAT PRODUCTS

A personal knowledge selection by Konstantin Saifouline.

With this book I want to give insights into how I manage my daily life around engineering and building great products. Because I like simple explanations, this is not a 500 page book but rather a simple guide with helpful documents and videos that I would have wished for myself when I started out on my journey.

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Preface.

To give you a better understanding of how I think and work, you should first understand my journey and how it led me to the point where I now travel every three months to another continent on Earth, learn new skills faster than ever before, and engineer solutions to the most important problems humans will face in this century.

Every day of my life feels highly rewarding, and if I wish you to take one thing away from this book, it's how you can achieve this kind of rewarding feeling for yourself with the work you do.

Other than that, I will lay out some of the most beneficial learnings I made and sources that helped me understand engineering, physics, and the history of how to build great companies and products.

Start.

I was a 16 year old boy from a small town in Germany called Dresden with the goal of becoming the biggest DJ in the world with multiple internationally known songs. While I was in 10th grade, I usually played at friends' house parties and became known under my DJ name Pytro. In the summer of 2022, I decided to take my first step and write an email to the owner of a local event party group.

I got an answer after three days with a date when I could come play at an outdoor party. I prepared around 20 songs, which later turned out to be a big mistake, as I learned when I ran out of tracks after 40 minutes of playing.

I received around \$60 for playing, but more importantly, I successfully mixed for the first time on real CDJ 2000s, a real club DJ controller, and I felt real momentum in something I did for the first time.

Before playing this first set, I had already released two songs on Spotify that barely made more than 1,000 streams. And even when my set time at the club was so early that only five people stood in front of the decks to dance, this moment turned out to be the beginning of my journey in the music industry.

The second time I got the chance to play, around four weeks after my first set, I played a warm-up set before the German DJ Soundbystyle who was booked as the main act of the evening. Later that evening he asked me if I would like to come on his tour to play in more than 30 different clubs all around Germany in the next five months and learn real DJing.

From that moment I was almost every Friday after school on tour playing in clubs like Bootshaus Cologne, the #5 best club in the world in 2022, while also focusing on building a social media profile and producing music.

Rise up.

School was at that time my lowest focus point, and so my grades got worse and worse until my teachers actively approached me, asking if I really wanted to do my Abitur, the highest degree you can get in German high school.

But I resisted. Even when it was less my will than the will of my parents, I stayed in school and gave the minimal amount of work needed to make it work.

Often I sat in the back of the class and used the time in lessons to produce music in FL Studio or intros for the next DJ set.

It was a stressful time. I went from spending time with friends outside before the summer of 2022 and playing at house parties to being a professional DJ playing sets all around Germany.

I also felt that in some of my relationships, I lost connection to a lot of my friends and became more separated, spending my evenings mainly behind my laptop or on the way to clubs.

When I turned 17 on December 22, 2022, the mental weight of DJing from 11 pm to 5 am on most of my recent weekends got to a point where I had to push back.

Doing three things at once, DJing, producing, and managing school, was too much. I decided to put the focus on the thing that mattered most to me: making music to reach a lot of people.

Compound.

In the first half of 2023, I played four sets, and I now spent almost every weekend driving two hours from Dresden to Berlin to connect with people from the music industry.

I remember the first time that I went there, I didn't book any hotel and just took a sleeping bag with me. I said to myself: either I'm social enough and find someone where I can stay overnight, or I will sleep outside in a park.

The evening when I arrived, I spoke with a lot of students and ended up drinking a beer with them, but in the end I took a hostel nearby in a 6 bed dorm room for \$45 a night.

It took me three months until I was connected enough to Universal and Sony Music that I got into my first sessions.

In these three months I also started posting videos on TikTok, and for the first time it clicked.

I had never had more than 10,000 views on Instagram or TikTok before, but in early 2023 I got into the techno remix trend early.

Especially one remix stood out on TikTok: Blonde Chaya by Amaru and Gringo Bamba, a half German, half Peruvian rap song, was blowing up on TikTok, and I made a techno remix of it that constantly got 50-100k views in videos.

Some of my connections into the music industry now also came from DMs I received on Instagram, and at the end of 2023 I released my remix together with Niklas Dee, who was one of the biggest upcoming DJs in Germany at that time.

The remix quickly went to over 1 million streams on Spotify, and I now found myself in production sessions with Ely Oaks, Lavinia Hope, and many other talented artists.

Before the remix blew up, I remember playing it in a club with 500 people who all didn't seem to be interested in the song. Just two or three months later, after the remix took off, I played in the same club in front of 3,000 people, and some started screaming when they heard the first seconds of the song.

The feeling of going on stage and having thousands of people dance and sing to something you produced was truly magical, and it made all the pain I had to go through in the years before worth it.

The Podcast.

When I turned 18, I received a message on WhatsApp from a guy in my class. His name was Tade Mehl.

Tade and I barely had contact in class in the years before, but in recent times he seemed to be someone interesting who had also chosen his path early by joining an insurance company and developing investment skills at 16 years old.

From time to time we met, and in January 2024 I received a WhatsApp message asking if I would like to start a podcast with him where we would speak about our learnings from what we were doing.

At that time I spent a lot of my free time after school producing or traveling for sessions, so I was not sure if that was something I wanted to do. Indeed, I had never considered doing a podcast about business or the music industry before.

But this was exactly what happened, and we started the Rich&Rave Podcast where we invited people we knew from the German music and startup industry.

In 2024, my TikTok account reached 4k followers with some millions of views, and a new remix I produced gave me the opportunity to work with a nationally well known influencer.

After releasing a remix I did of one of his songs, he invited me on his tour, and I played for the first time at beach clubs in Croatia and big clubs outside of Germany.

I also made DJ events at that time at local late night shops and rented clubs for shows. But the effort I put into building out my DJ profile also had some costs. The highest cost was money. Most of the shows I had until this point were not highly paid, and with more and more money going into traveling with the podcast, I was again standing in front of the decision of where to put my focus.

Development.

It was in December of 2024 that I decided together with Tade to go all in on the podcast, which also meant that we would rebrand it to the name HUGE Conversations.

With HUGE Conversations we also started a YouTube channel to film the podcasts we did.

It was an investment of time and money from both of us that we made no money from. But it had a different kind of incredible value. We learned from people who successfully created value in the world, either by building billion dollar companies like the founder of Trivago or the CEO of Freenet, or by being experts in their field, such as a sex expert, body language expert, or long term relationship expert.

The show never really took off, with the most viewed video having 40k views on YouTube and 100k views on Instagram, but it allowed me to learn on a level I had never experienced before in school or by working in the music industry.

With the start of 2025, we traveled to Dubai, London, and Austria to visit our guests.

We always tried to make the experience for our guests as special as possible. One time we bought a 2 meter bamboo and cut it down into small 20cm pieces with a custom sign on it that we printed at a nearby printer store for Leander Kirschner, who was the founder and CEO of the record label Bamboo Artist.

Another time we bought a globe for \$15 and put on it a sign saying "spark around the...", a gift for Dan Ram, a worldwide speaker who was an advisor to Jake Paul in his early years and got to know Barack and Michelle Obama.

From him I learned that Jake Paul always had a notebook to take notes from important conversations, and I started doing it from then on too.

2025 was my final year of high school at the Waldorfschule Dresden, where preparation for the Abitur takes 13 years. One month before my final exams, I founded my first company, a German GmbH, for our podcast production together with Tade.

We wanted to bring the quality of our podcast production up from what we had filmed up to that moment with an iPhone 15 Pro, and we had a Web3 model in mind to give out digital shares of a podcast.

To achieve that, we got a small angel check that made it possible to buy the setup needed to make our production ideas possible.

At that time, we came up with the idea of ECHO, a digital video biography that we wanted to do of living people. The video biography was planned as an extended podcast, and so we started preparing what should be our first 12 hour one session video interview. Our first guest for that show was Leon Richter, a German influencer from my hometown in Dresden.

We put more energy, time, and money into this one recording than ever before, doing interviews with his family and building a set that would sustain 12 hours of continuous filming.

Funny enough, we planned it at the same time my final exams started, and so I had to prepare for two major projects at once.

To help us film, I asked Martin, who was a good friend of mine and had already taken photos and filmed a lot when I was DJing. He and another friend called Jonas, who I produced music with in my early music career, made it possible for our setup to work for the whole 12 hour 4K recording with three cameras.

I invested a lot into the promotion and spent nearly 40 hours cutting clips out of the video material for short form platforms.

The clips made a few hundred thousand views, but when the day came that we uploaded it to YouTube, it was a massive flop, receiving around one thousand views.

At the same time, my interest in tech and building an actually valuable company grew. I first read biographies like Steve Jobs and Elon Musk by Walter Isaacson and found a deeper interest in building hardware.

The first thing I started to work on was a non invasive BCI (short for Brain Computer Interface). From my research, it seemed like the natural next point after we brought machines with the iPhone so near to the human, to think about what the next step will look like.

I designed caps where the device had a camera in addition to electrodes to directly give the user a better experience in how they can interact with the surroundings.

I was also really interested in going to the USA and seeing how people there are building companies, so I took the next flight to San Francisco, two weeks after my final exams.

Silicon Valley.

It was a warm summer day when I went up the stairs into the plane that should take me first to Amsterdam and from there to San Francisco, California.

I arrived with one of the best feelings I ever had. I knew I was in the right place to achieve whatever I wanted. In the first weeks I explored the city and joined hacker houses in and around SF.

San Francisco is very much a hotspot where almost every incredible person has been at least once. Even then, when people speak of San Francisco, they often mean the regions around it.

Palo Alto and Berkeley were the two places where I actually met incredible people. San Francisco itself was at that time flooded by AI noise and SaaS startups.

One place I especially loved being at was Strada Coffee in Berkeley. I would describe it as a mid size coffee shop with an outdoor area and enough space for at least 50 people. Between the sitting benches grew trees that kept a shadow over your head on sunny days.

During the day the coffee shop was occupied by students from the UC Berkeley campus, which is directly on the other side of the street. In the evening you hear loud music from frats in the hills. A truly magical place.

I spoke with an old couple who had studied there over 50 years ago and still decided to live there and drink their coffee at Strada because it made them feel young.

Problem.

In my time in the US, I learned more than in most of my high school years. Mainly this was because of incredible people that I approached, became friends with, and learned from. Some of these people can be found in the network of the Residency.

Tade joined me after one month in Berkeley. He showed me valuable lessons when he came.

I made a BCI device but had no clear problem for it. I knew that there would be applications for it, but would a highly expensive BCI cap actually be the cheapest and fastest way to fix those problems? Probably not.

This was the lesson I learned at that moment: that it is smarter to work from the problem and then search for the right ideas to solve it instead of starting with an idea and finding a problem for it.

Indeed, I believe that this is the most important point someone can get wrong when they want to build an incredibly valuable company.

I also still see some development needed in the BCI space to make it truly valuable for the consumer market. Nevertheless, I'm quite sure that it will be the next step after augmented reality to combine humans and machines, improve human capabilities, and connect with AI.

Problem(s).

The first problem Tade and I approached together was health insurance in the US. From my perspective, it is one of the hardest problems to fix, and there are many people in the US suffering under it.

The U.S. insurance system is highly complex and inefficient, creating huge administrative overhead that wastes time and money across the entire healthcare system.

I believe that there are parts that can be solved right now, but solving the whole system at once is nearly impossible.

It was also not something I got really excited about working on, and as someone who shapes where to go, it is important to me to fully connect to the problem.

So we didn't continue with it and instead developed a page together where we collected the most important problems for humanity that we could imagine working on and wrote a short summary of each. This helped me in the process of finding the most valuable thing to work on.

Content.

One of the first actions I took when I came to the US was to buy an iPhone 13. Even if I already had a great phone, I wanted to start posting again. This time not to promote music, but to inspire people and find great talent more easily. In the first 2 months, nothing happened. I sometimes posted 5-10 videos per day, each gaining around a thousand views.

Then I stopped posting on TikTok. There was also no benefit for my problem where TikTok would help, and so I focused completely on Instagram. I wrote DMs and asked people who had over 100k followers for advice, and in month 3 the first videos took off and got over 100k views.

After reaching a 10k audience, it became increasingly easier to actually build momentum. The more data is available on posts that work and don't work, the more you can rely on winning concepts and create variations of them.

When you have no idea of the market you're working in you can either aim, aim, aim and then shoot, or you just start shooting and eventually aim a bit. ~ Jeff Bezos

Life.

Knowledge I collected in the last 2 years of my life.

