COURAGE GARIKAI



THE ONE-PERSON STUDIO

Seven Products, One City, No VC

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Contact: couragegarikai@atomicmail.io · library.coldcode-si-labs.workers.dev

For my sons.

May you grow up in a world where you can build whatever you want from wherever you are, on your own terms.

And for Nyasha, who believed this was a book worth writing before I did.

The One-Person Studio

Seven Products, One City, No VC

Courage Garikai

ColdCode Si Labs · Harare

About this book

I run a software studio by myself from a small office in Harare, Zimbabwe. As of 2026, I have seven software products in active use, all profitable, all built and maintained without employees, without co-founders, without venture capital, and without working more than 40 hours per week. I did not sell a company for millions and retire. I did not raise funding. I did not build a unicorn. I did not move to San Francisco. I build software in the city where I live, for

customers around the world, and I support my family from the revenue.

This is not a memoir. It is a technical and practical book about how to build and operate a multi-product, one-person software studio: how to choose products that one person can build and maintain, how to price them, how to launch them, how to support them, how to manage seven products without burning out, how to handle payments and taxes and customers and outages and marketing from a desk in a city that is not a tech hub, how to design a business for a lifestyle you want rather than a lifestyle someone else tells you to want.

The title specifies "seven products, one city, no VC" because each of those constraints is deliberate:

- **Seven products.** Not one product. Not one startup focused on a single billion-dollar market. A portfolio of small, focused, profitable products that each serve a clear need. I did not bet everything on one idea. I built seven. Some are larger than others. Some took

three weeks to build; some took a year. They share infrastructure, code, and a common approach. Collectively they produce enough revenue that I do not need a job.

- **One city.** I live and work in Harare. I am not going anywhere. This is not because Harare is the best place in the world to build software (it has load-shedding, slow internet, currency volatility, and no local venture capital). It is because it is my city. My family is here. My life is here. Building a global software business from a non-tech hub city is not only possible; it has specific advantages that this book explores.

- **No VC.** I have never raised venture capital and I have no intention of doing so. VC is a wonderful tool for companies that need it — companies pursuing billion-dollar markets that require massive upfront investment to win. It is a terrible tool for a business designed to be small, profitable, sustainable, and owned entirely by the person who built

> it. VC forces growth at all costs, exit pressure, and a loss of control. None of those are compatible with the business I want to run.

This book is not for everyone. If your goal is to build a unicorn, take a company public, or sell for $100 million, this book is not for you. If you want to manage a team of 50 people, this book is not for you. If you believe that raising venture capital is the only valid way to build a software company, this book is not for you.

This book is for programmers, designers, makers, and founders who want to build software that supports them — software that pays the bills, solves real problems for real customers, does not require a team of 20 people to operate, and leaves room for a life outside work. It is for people who would rather own a small, profitable, sustainable business than swing for a billion-dollar exit with 0.1% odds. It is for people who live in cities that are not San Francisco, London, or New York and want to build global software businesses from where they are. It is for people who believe that making $100,000–$1,000,000 per year from software you own entirely, working

reasonable hours from your home city, is a more than acceptable definition of success.

I am not famous. My products are not household names. My revenue is not disclosed in TechCrunch. But I have built something that works: a sustainable, one-person software business that supports my family, gives me complete autonomy over my time, produces software that customers pay for and value, and does not require me to sacrifice my life or my location for the business. That is enough. More than enough.

This book covers: - Part I: The one-person studio thesis — why this model works, who it is for, and what it requires. - Part II: Choosing products — how to find, evaluate, and select products that one person can build and sustain. - Part III: Building — technical decisions, tech stack, code reuse, speed, quality, and shipping. - Part IV: Pricing and launching — how to price, how to launch, how to get your first 100 customers. - Part V: Marketing and growth — how to grow seven products at once without a marketing team. - Part VI: Operating — support, bug fixing, updates, outages, payments, accounting, taxes,

legal. - Part VII: Life and sustainability — hours, burnout, time management, the psychology of working alone, growth vs stasis, the long game. - Part VIII: Place — building from a non-tech-hub city; Harare as a case study; advantages and challenges; how to operate globally from anywhere. - Part IX: Deeper practice — the first year month by month, financial anatomy of a solo studio, writing as a core skill, design without a designer, email, when to kill products, the products I didn't build, health. - Part X: Lessons learned — legal basics, copycats, raising prices, difficult customers, sabbaticals, mistakes made, generosity, and advice to someone starting today. - Part XI: The code itself — a tour of a one-person codebase, why I use a monolith, why I don't use React, dependency management, testing, bad code in production.

Let me show you how it works.

Sample provided free for review. The complete book is available at https://library.coldcode-si-labs.workers.dev/