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Gili Golander: So it's really important, in my opinion, to try out the new platforms because there's more space to grow there.

Tim: Hello, hello, and welcome to In the Know. This podcast is dedicated to all those listeners who want and need the best strategic and tactical advice on engineering growth. And for Season 2, it's all about digital commerce. All right, buckle up. We'll see you on the inside.

Buckley: Hey Tim, thank you for that wonderful intro. All right insiders. Hello. It's me. It's Buckley here. This podcast is meant to help you leap ahead of the curve with actionable growth strategies, tactics, tools so you can grow your business. And make sure you also check out my blog over at beintheknow.co for awesome content and ideas on growth, if I may say so myself.

So speaking of awesome growth if you were thinking of developing an app for a mobile device and you want it to be successful or if you've already developed an app for a mobile device and all you heard were crickets when you launched, this episode is gonna be for you. Today we're gonna go deep into how to effectively promote your app to get the kinds of results that you want to see.

And today with all the apps out there, you simply can't rely on a strategy based on hope, hoping that it'll go viral. You really have to put in the work, and so you're gonna be excited to hear this case study with my next guest. She's gonna blow your mind with her download numbers of her app Bazaar, and she did this without hardly spending any money on advertising. She's a UX specialist, which means that she knows how to design software that makes for a great user experience.

And as we've learned in many of these episodes, the user experience is just key to gain user adoption. She's written award-winning publications on web design trends. She's the CMO and cofounder of Bazaar, which was named one of the best of 2014 apps in the Apple App Store, which is quite an accomplishment with the sheer number of apps today. So Gili Golander, it is so great to have you on today.

Gili Golander: Oh, it's wonderful to be here Buckley. Thanks so much for inviting me. I'm really excited about this.

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Buckley: Yeah, I'm like buzzing right now Gili. I'm so excited. In doing some research on apps, I stumbled upon your article. And when I read about your success – congrats by the way –

Gili Golander: Thank you.

Buckley: – I thought wow! That is so cool. And having owned a digital agency where we developed apps, I know how difficult it is just to conceive of and develop the app and then go through the complexities of making sure everything is talking. And that's just the beginning, right? The hardest part is actually getting people to find, use, and then pay for your app. And so when I read about how many downloads you had with the amount of money spent, I was blown away.

Gili Golander: That's true. Developing a product, a good product is, like, I would say the basics. You have to have a product that people love and want to use. And then there's the grinding hard work of getting people to know about your app and about your service so they can actually use it. So –

Buckley: Yeah, well, be –

Gili Golander: – two parts to this equation.

Buckley: – yeah, well, before we dive in to talk about how you achieved how many downloads?

Gili Golander: We're past 3 million at the moment.

Buckley: Oh my heck. And then you went from zero to how many downloads, a half a million?

Gili Golander: Yeah, we went from zero to a half a million within a couple of months.

Buckley: Oh geez.

Gili Golander: And I'll talk about the ways and the strategies we used to get there.

Buckley: That's great. So before we talk about that, give us a quick snippet about you, your role, and your company if you would.

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Gili Golander: Sure. So I'm a cofounder of the company, and I do all the marketing. So I'm the CMO. And when I say marketing, I mean, like, a lot of things. I do PR and content writing, and social media, and I do analytics, and a lot of other stuff.

Buckley: Welcome to the world of the new marketer, right?

Gili Golander: Yeah, you really have to be, like, a full stack person, I think, today to be a marketer because to do it well, you need to combine data, qualitative data and quantitative data, and be everywhere at the same time, and listen to people. So it's really a challenging and wonderful job.

Buckley: Yeah. And tell us a little bit about your company.

Gili Golander: So Bazaar is a photo editing app. It's a little bit like a little photo shop in your pocket, but it's really easy to use. So our audience is mainly photo enthusiasts. And we do actually have also a support for Photoshop, and that's something we dealt with Adobe recently.

You can actually work in Bazaar or mobile, create your comps, export it to Photoshop, continue there, go back to Bazaar, and it's all seamless and fluid. And we are used globally. Our audience is varied. We have a lot of US users. I would say today it's about 31 percent, and then we have Brazilian users, Russian users, Italian users.

Buckley: Yeah, that's great.

Gili Golander: And I will also go over that in a minute about how important it is to be global.

Buckley: And you're in Tel-Aviv, right?

Gili Golander: Yes, we're based out of Israel.

Buckley: Okay. That's great. How's the Tel-Aviv market for startups today? It seems like it's pretty hot right now.

Gili Golander: Yeah, Tel-Aviv and Israel in general have a really booming ecosystem for startups, and it's really helpful actually because I have to say that the best lessons that I got were from other entrepreneurs. So I really try to reach out and talk to as many entrepreneurs in the

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mobile arena as I can in Israel, and I learn a lot from them. And I also try to give back and help other people who are just starting out.

Buckley: Yeah, that's great. Now, what was the driving force behind the app? How did you know that you had a winner on your hands? I think you had mentioned you took an MVP approach to this. Can you give us some insight here?

Gili Golander: Sure. So I'll give you some history. We didn't start with the current photo editing product that we have today. We actually started three years ago with a different product. We wanted to create this fashion app that will replace paper catalogs. The idea was that people could personalize it and get fashion proposals, and they could swap out the things that they don't like.

And the app would learn their tastes, and they could actually shop from it versus a paper catalog, which is one for all. And you can't do a lot with it except – I don't know – paperclip it. So that was the initial idea, and we set out to do that. We went into a startup accelerator in New York, and we had this deadline of three months until demo day.

So we had to put out, like, this initial version, and that was really a good forcing factor because we were able to accomplish and product a product. But it was a very, very, very lean product, and that's what MVP means is just a minimal viral product that serves people. And what we did is connect the app to Pinterest so people could access their Pinterest account where they've saved, like, fashion items, or so we thought.

And then you could hook up looks together, so you could take a shirt and hook it up with a skirt and shoes and see how it goes together. And then you could publish it, and other people could browse it and see where the items are coming from. So that was a very, very initial product. And what we saw is that actually people weren't just using it to create fashion looks.

They were using it to create home décor collages, family greetings, funny stuff, and a lot of other things. And after a while of seeing this pattern, we realized that we actually have something else on our hands. And people are really anxious and happy to get creative on mobile and become photo editors, people who've never done it before.

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Buckley: Yeah, yeah. So that's a key take away then. When you launched, you were launching into an existing community then, or you're piggybacking a pretty big framework, a channel?

Gili Golander: Yeah, that's true. So that was actually, like, our initial goal, I mean, initial grow tact. We launched into the Pinterest community. So back in 2012 Pinterest was really hot. It started up. Everybody was talking about them. It was growing superfast in the United States where we were staying at the time. And the audience – that's the most important thing, I think – the audience was the exact audience that we were aiming for.

Buckley: Yeah.

Gili Golander: Women, affluent women who are interested in lifestyle and fashion, and so it really worked. Also, we were able to provide these people with a service that they couldn't get anywhere else because before they could only pin together photographs into their boards. But they had nothing to do with them afterwards. So –

Buckley: Perfect.

Gili Golander: – we let them get creative with those photos and see what goes with what, so that was, like, really valuable service for them, which they couldn't get anywhere else. So there was value to the Pinterest users, and to us there was the value of finding this community. People are already interested in the topics that we were covering and also getting press because simply the word Pinterest and fashion and app was very, very easy to –

Buckley: Yeah.

Gili Golander: – generate press from.

Buckley: Yeah, and it wasn't just posting yourself on Pinterest. I mean, there's a lot more that went into it, and we're gonna go over more in depth on how you did that. What about Instagram?

Gili Golander: Yeah. So Instagram we actually started to use Instagram much later, and I think that was, kind of, a hindsight on our part. We should have realized that Instagram was also a very viable community for us, and today we use it a lot.

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Buckley: Now, one thing that struck me from your article – and I thought this was genius – is that you had already had a global plan. Being from Tel-Aviv, you already thought globally. And like you had mentioned it's all over different app stores. Walk us through your process, how you came up with this, how you planned it out strategically, and then how you implemented it tactically.

Gili Golander: Yeah, that's true. So being from Israel, which is a country of 8 million people, you immediately know that your audience or your customers, your market is not gonna be here in Israel. So you think global from day one. And we initially launched the app only in English, but then right after that we also localized the app store description into Russian in the app because one of my cofounders is Russian speaking.

So we could do that on a zero budget basically, and what happened afterwards was really mind blowing to us. At the moment that we launched, only 4 percent of the apps on the Russian App Store were localized to Russian. So any app that would speak to people in their native language had a huge, huge benefit for users.

It was easier to find. It was easier to understand, and, of course, easier to use. So we saw immediately, like, a huge uptake in the Russian App Store downloads because app stores are different for regions and locations. It's not one app store for the entire world. It's different ones.

Buckley: Yeah.

Gili Golander: And until this very day, Russia is like our No. 3 market, and we were Top 10 in their photo video section for a long, long time. So seeing that success led us to believe that we should go after more and more localizations in countries, but we did it in a strategic way. So what we did is we translated the description on the app store to all the available languages.

So on the Apple App Store, it's about 22 languages, and we did it fairly cheaply using services like **Fiverr** or One Hour Translation. And then we saw what I call a pull where if there was a pull from a specific country or specific locale, then we would go ahead and also localize the app itself because the app store description takes care of downloads.

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But then you want users to stick around and use your app and feel at home, and localizing the app itself is what provides that feeling for users. So that was, like, a second stage, and for some languages, we didn't broaden that if there was no pull.

Buckley: Sorry about that. When you're talking localization, you're talking about just the description, or in the app itself, are you actually localizing it for each language? Tell us how far you went with localization.

Gili Golander: Okay. So localization first I put an app store description, name, key words, and all that. So this is, basically, the main data that you find on the app store. We also localized the screen shots because screen shots today it's not really a good thing to just put your app's screen shots. You should really think about it like as a little movie that people can scroll and see like a storyboard.

Buckley: Yeah, awesome.

Gili Golander: So you should add some textual references, textual titles, and explain to people – tell them a little story about your app, why they would want to use it because at least from my experience, people rarely read more than the first three lines of the description because that's what's visible. They won't expand usually, but they would look at the screen shots, at least the first one, two, or three.

So that's where you need to tell your story, and that's where we also localized. And the second tier if we saw that this specific language was generating downloads and increasing downloads, this localization, so we went ahead and localized the app text internally in the app. So first step app store made it. Second step is the actual app content.

Buckley: Now, up to this point, how much money had you spent on localizing with Fiverr and One Hour Translation?

Gili Golander: Very little. I think maybe a few hundred dollars. The first ones we actually did ourselves, and I used some family members who are Brazilian or Spanish speaking. And then the other languages we did on those services.

Buckley: Wow! That is amazing! And so here you are. I mean, what's the population of Russia, 150 million?

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Gili Golander: Yeah, it's a huge country.

Buckley: And so they've got 150 million users. We tend to not even think about Russia, and yet, it's the third in your lineup in terms of country or destination downloading your app?

Gili Golander: Yeah, and Brazil. Brazil, I think, they're, like, 200 million people, so amazing audiences and amazing markets that people should just not ignore.

Buckley: Well, I love that. Now, let's talk about that metadata a little bit more. I don't know who came up with this term, ASO, app store search optimization. Did you come up with this?

Gili Golander: No, no, it's, like, an official term. I think it comes from the days of SEO, so people wanted something that sounds the same.

Buckley: Yeah. No, so it's very interesting. You had said, "You've gotta ASO. Do app store search optimization like a pro." Take us through that. How did you do that, and how did it help get visibility?

Gili Golander: Yeah, okay. So I'm mainly gonna cover an IOS app store optimization, search optimization because that's, like, where my main specialty is. And so the first thing is how people find apps. So the main way that people find apps today is actually through search on the app store.

Like, the common figure that you would hear is about 62 percent of the people find apps through search. So it's really, really important. And I think the second best, the second largest way people find apps is through word of mouth, okay. So, like, word of mouth is harder to control.

Buckley: Yeah.

Gili Golander: But for search there are things that you could do to make your app a lot more discoverable. And there are – I think that you pointed out at the beginning – over a million point two apps in the Apple App Store, so it's really like a haystack of apps. And you really want people to find your app when they're looking for a service that you're providing.

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So the way to do that is to focus on a number of things. I think the most important thing is your app title and app keywords. So on IOS as a developer, when you're entering the metadata for your app, you have two fields. One is title, and one is keywords. In the title, you can put your app name, but you should really use that space to also give a short description of what your app is doing.

So you could say Bazaar – photo collage editor or something like that because those words that you are using in the title are, actually, like, the most potent keywords. And so it's really important not just to leave it to the app name.

Buckley: And on those keywords, what tools are you using to help you come up with the right keywords?

Gili Golander: Yeah, so you really should use a keyword research tool that will help you find keywords that are generating traffic but also don't have too much competition and are right for your app. So I use a tool called **AppCodes**, but there is also a very, very well-known tool called a sensor tower, which I intermittently use. And there's a bunch of other players in this field.

But there's one for every budget, and you should really check your assumptions. And it's something that we repeatedly do. On every version, we look at where we are with the keywords. How are we ran for each and every one of them in each of the different markets, by the way, and we improve it iteratively as we progress with the app. So it's not something that you do once and just let rest. It's something that you do iteratively.

Buckley: Yeah, we'll put those links into the show notes for listeners. Tell me when you go about doing the keywords, what are some of the limitations? Are there limits to the amount of character uses, or give us some best practices there.

Gili Golander: Yeah, so on the Apple App Store, you can have 100 characters worth of keywords, and you should really be mindful of a couple of things. First, you separate your keywords with commas, and you should not put any spaces there because those are just, like, wasted keywords. You should not repeat what you have in the title because both of them are keyword fields essentially.

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And you can also avoid using words from your category or from your developer name or from, like, stuff, like, free or app because those things are added automatically by Apple. So no need to put that –

Buckley: Ah, --

Gili Golander: – free –

Buckley: – good point. Great point.

Gili Golander: – keyword in, and I just freed four or five characters from your keywords field. And the second thing about keywords and the name as well is that you need to be mindful of localization in this respect as well because it's not enough to just take your English keywords and translate them. Different locales, different languages have different terms in which they speak of whatever services. And there's different traffic spores, different types of competition. So you should really localize for each app store or language separately. What works in Russia may not work in the United States and vice versa.

So this is something that we really put a lot of effort into it, and I sometimes listen to what people would say on my app on Twitter. And they would talk about it in different languages, and then I would pick up words from how they talk about my app. Sometimes they would use slang.

If it's young people, a lot of the times they would use slang words. And then I could take that word and use it, and it's unique for me. I know people are looking for it. I tested it with my keyword research tool, and I have a winner.

Buckley: That's amazing! I mean, we could spend an hour or two just talking about keyword research. But it's interesting to me personally how you can find those terms if you don't speak that language, right. Do you have to have somebody on staff going through all those comments and picking out those keywords and then putting them into the tool? What's the best way of doing that?

Gili Golander: Yeah, so since we are very small staff and I do most of the marketing tasks myself, what I do is normally I pick up social media. I just write ideas to myself, and every time upon submission, I test out

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those ideas and keywords and see if there's keywords that I'm using that are not working. I just toss them out, and I replace them. And I try new things every time.

So it may not always be bulletproof, but at least I've got a consistent stream of ideas to pull from. I also read every review on our app on the App Store because reviews are also a place where people tell you what they think about your app. And they mime the terms what they are using to describe what they are doing with your app, so that can help you.

And also, another thing that I should mention about the keywords. We should really not think of them as just keywords. Think of them as small sentences. A lot of people are searching using verbs. Like, they want to make a collage, or they want to edit something. If you just think about it as separate words, you're, kind of, missing the more complete picture and might miss out on opportunities.

Buckley:

Oh, fantastic point. I think that's great. Those long tail keywords especially using verbs. Great idea. Now, one of the things I always hope to get across to people I work with as well as our newsletter subscribers or listeners is that you really have to own your growth, right. And it starts with owning your story, and in your case, you definitely owned your growth. And you owned your own story and telling that story in your own PR. I thought that was incredible. Walk us through this, and let's put a cap to this whole case study.

Gili Golander:

Yeah, okay. So when I started out, I really had no marketing or PR experience. I was a user experience designer before, and I had a technical background. But I didn't know much about, like, the tech PR world. But since we have this sexy product and it was connected to Pinterest boards, so I knew that I wanted to get on the radar of this very large tech blog.

I wanted us to cover our launch, so I looked up their list of reporters. And I saw who was covering fashion tech, which was our domain at the time. Once I knew who their reporter is, I could go into her Pinterest boards. I made sure she had a Pinterest account, and I saw she had a lot of cool pictures there. I actually used their product.

I hacked into her Pinterest account. It's public. And I created a collage from them. And I was in Israel at the time, and I waited 'til it was, like, 9:00 a.m. New York time. And I tweeted it to her, and

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I asked, like, would you like to hear more. And she replied. She said, like, “Ooh, neat.”

Buckley: That is a great idea. Ingenious.

Gili Golander: Because it was personal, and she immediately, of course, recognized that it was things that she herself collected, things that she liked. And she wanted to know more about this, and then I wrote her an email. I followed up with an email with more explanations, with screen shots, and boom. A week later we were in that tech blog out of nowhere.

And it was really successful because it was personal, and it wasn't, like, a mass email or anything like that. That just doesn't work so well. And the other thing that people should know is that the actual major tech blogs, they don't generate so much downloads. But they do get replicated in a lot of local blogs around the world, and that generates, like, a ton of downloads. And we saw a lot of downloads from Brazil and from Russia and from a lot of places just because of that article. So that was, like, eye opening for us, our initial step into the PR domain.

Then we continued to work on our app, and we saw the pattern of how people were using it. And we decided to pivot the app into the photo editing field. And we worked on it for quite a while, and then we wanted to relaunch the app as a photo editing app. So this time I took a little different approach. I used what PR people call an embargo, which means you're not gonna give out your story exclusively to one reporter.

You're gonna tell a few reporters, a few select reporters, that you targeted very specifically before. They're covering your domain. They might be interested in what you have to say. They're in the blogs that you want to appear on, and then you send them, like, a week before you're launching. You send them an email, and you tell them we're gonna launch this and this.

You give them some data points. Would you like to hear more or try the app before it gets public or any other incentive like that? And whoever replies you say here's the data. The embargo date is this and this. The time to release is this and that, and they actually respect that. If they're a well-known journalist or a well-known

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blogger, they really respect that I would not write this information before.

And that creates a level playing ground for the journalists. They don't have to worry that someone else would beat them to the story, and the story would still be used when it's published. And that's what they care about. They don't want to be second. They want to be first, and everybody can get to be first this way. So we were actually able to generate a lot of PR using this method. It came up to over 50 blogposts and use site mentions using this method.

Buckley:

Oh, yeah, I think that is fantastic. Very actionable information on how to launch an app, how to get amazing amount of downloads from 0 to 500,000 downloads on a shoestring budget. I think it's fantastic. Before we launch into our final round of questions, I'd like to take a quick second to thank our sponsor. I hope you're enjoying this episode. Hey, let's take a quick second to thank my sponsor **SamCart**. What a wonderful tool. Brian Moran and his team over there have created a shopping cart, an ecommerce company that really is focused on the marketing company that wants to grow and do up sales. So they have this amazing one click add-it-up sale component.

Their integrations are great. Their built-in integration with payment gateways is already there. It's a fantastic, fantastic shopping cart experience. You can find them over at samcart.com or head on over to my resource page. I do have them over there at beintheknow.co. Now, back to the episode.

So Gili as an app provider, let me ask you this question. What's not working out there? I've gotta ask this because I'm sure you've tried a lot of different things, and I'd be remiss not to ask you that question first.

Gili Golander:

Yeah, sure. No problem. Yeah, we try a lot of things, and most of them don't work. So it's a good question. I'll tell you what didn't work for us. At the time, we had a Facebook page, and we tried to make it very interesting. And we put a lot of effort into our Facebook posts, and we tried to grow the community on Facebook. And it was really, really hard, and it didn't work.

And the reason being is that Facebook changed their news algorithm at the time, and so less and less people were exposed to your page's

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content. Whereas before it was a lot easier to grow communities on Facebook. It became really hard unless you, of course, want to pay Facebook for promoting your posts.

And even that didn't work so well according to our efforts. We did some tests, and we thought we targeted users, it generally was exposed to an audience that was not very high quality. So Facebook as a growth platform didn't work for us. Pinterest did because it was new.

So it's really important, in my opinion, to try out the new platforms because there's more space to grow there especially for small startups, for companies that are just starting out. You don't have the marketing budget to just pour out ads all day. You want to create something interesting and unique, and you can do that on the newer platforms.

Buckley: Yeah, that's fantastic. Great advice. Now, as an app provider, if you were to hire one person today in your growth or marketing department to really Bazaar, what kind of person would you hire and with what kind of skillsets and why?

Gili Golander: Yeah. I think, I look for people who can do many, many things, not just one because, I think, marketing today is about combining data. It is about looking into the app store reviews and generating those terms or ideas and also what's wrong with the app or what people are looking for. But also, looking at the data, at the events that we generate in the app, and how people are using it and combining all this to generate marketing ideas.

So I would like for this person who is not afraid of analytics, who is not afraid of digging into a lot of data and generating ideas from it. And also, I think, you've gotta have some knowledge in social media. YouTube is the second largest search engine today after Google. So you really have to be there if you have visual things that you can show.

And there's a lot of new platforms, Snapchat and others who are really interesting too to figure out them. So your marketing hire really needs to be someone who is, I think, very eager to learn new things and eager to try out various things and not afraid to fail.

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Buckley: Yeah, yeah, fantastic. Now, last question. Would you mind leaving us and the insiders with your best growth or marketing tip or piece of advice that you've learned along your journey? That'd be great.

Gili Golander: Yeah. So I have a really, really basic piece of advice and that is to listen to your customers. The reason is that as entrepreneurs we have this hot idea. And in our head, it's something that is really cool and neat, and everybody needs it. But when that idea meets reality, oftentimes we realize that it's not actually what people need, or they need something else.

So I think if we can get people what they need and they're not getting at the moment, then we have a hit on our hands. And it's really worthwhile to listen to what customers say. It doesn't necessarily mean you should do everything that they say. Of course, you should have your vision, and you should have your path and your idea of what you want to build.

But you should definitely listen to what your customers are saying because your product doesn't have any value if nobody's using it. That would be my advice.

Buckley: Well, that's – yeah, great, great advice. Simple but powerful. Well, insiders, if you want to check out an amazing app and see what it takes from a user experience and user design and interface perspective to be one of the best apps out there today, you've gotta check out Bazaar App on the App Store. It's a great photo collage editor for mobile devices. It's easy. It's fun to use, and you'll really enjoy it. Is it available on Google Play, or is it just the App Store?

Gili Golander: No, at the moment, it's available for Apple only.

Buckley: Okay. And that's Bazaart with two As. What an amazing case study Gili. I learned a lot from you personally. I'm so happy for your success and coming on and sharing with our insiders on how to get it done today. So thanks again for coming on Gili.

Gili Golander: Thank you very much Buckley. It's been my pleasure.

Tim: We appreciate you joining us for this episode of In the Know. You can find show notes, past episodes, and special giveaways for insiders at beintheknow.co. Thanks again, and we'll see you next Tuesday on In the Know.