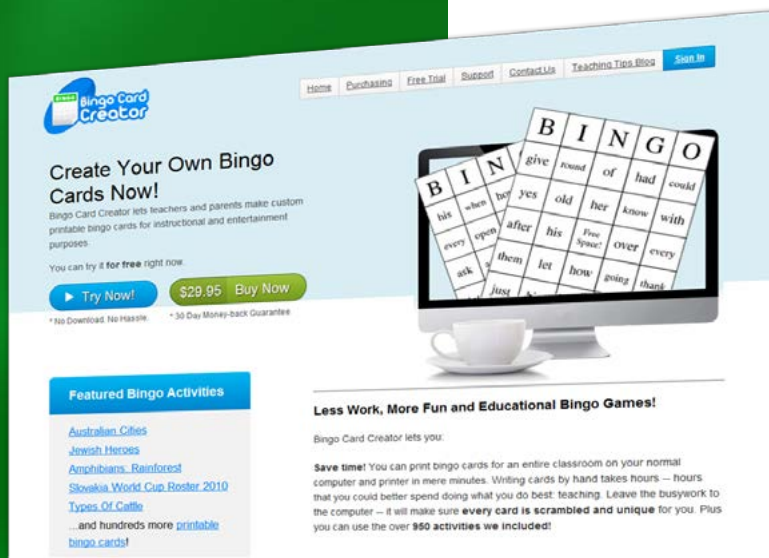# Bingo Card Creator

Visit App

Create an app that helps teachers create bingo cards efficiently.

Project Maker
Patrick McKenzie

Hi Patrick— You are a legend on HackerNews and other forums as "patio11"— most people know you as "patio11" there.

Tell us about Patrick McKenzie and how you got started.

I graduated from Washington University in St. Louis with degrees in Computer Science and East Asian Studies. To make a long story short, I really wanted to be an engineer but was worried about increasing competition from China/India—so I thought if I did one really hard thing plus engineering, I would have a nice safe job at Microsoft for the rest of my life. Japanese is really hard, and Japan spends billions on American software, so I thought that was a natural fit. After graduating, I went to Japan to firm up my business Japanese.

My first job was as a technical translator at the prefectural technology incubator here in Gifu. (I won't tell you which one, but since Gifu is Japan's answer to Kansas, that narrows it down quite a bit.) I was a bit under-challenged at my job, so I spent quite a bit of time playing World of Warcraft in the evenings and wondering, "When does my career, you know, actually start?" Eventually, I decided to take matters into my own hands and create Bingo Card Creator, a small software business. I had no idea whether it would be successful and was aiming mostly to learn things about selling software on the Internet. This would have been back in late June 2006. BCC has grown gradually since then. I eventually switched jobs from translator to engineer and spent a very hard two and a half years at a Japanese mega-corp before reassessing what I wanted from life again. In the interim, BCC had grown to the point

Browser

where it would support me, so I went full-time on it as of April 2010. Since then, I've been doing BCC, consulting, and working on my new business, Appointment Reminder (more on that later).

You started Bingo Card Creator while you were working. How did you find time for both?

Bingo Card Creator was launched on a budget of eight days and $60 and has been profitable since. The main reason that I had time to do both in the beginning was that my job was quite cushy indeed with regards to hours—somewhere in the 35 to 40 region. By the time I became a salaryman and was working 50 to 70+ hours a week, I had already optimized much of the running of BCC such that I could do things like throw a pair of A/B tests up over the weekend and just answer emails briefly during the week.

I'm very happy that I started part-time, since it reduced the stress of running a business considerably. In this last year, I've never been close to starving, but I definitely have transient money issues—such as can I afford to buy my ticket for Christmas now, or do I have to wait until October when BCC has a big month? With a full-time paycheck, that never even entered the radar screen. Also, with my general level of risk tolerance, I probably would never have been comfortable taking the leap without first testing out that I was able to swim.

Can you walk us through the tools you used to build the initial version of BCC?

The first version of BCC was a downloadable Java Swing program written in Eclipse. The website was a template from **Open Source Web Design**, customized by hand in Notepad, since that was the limit of my web programming ability at the time.

What parts of your side project do you do, and what parts do you hire out?

At the start, I did absolutely everything for BCC. Since then, I've largely outsourced web design and writing new content for the website, but continue to do most of the programming, marketing, and customer support myself.

Early Versions