

From Greg Isenberg's Greg's Letter

This new thing called "distribution software"

That sentence feels **strange** because for decades we've been taught to separate the two. Content is YouTube videos and tweets. Software is Excel and Salesforce. But when you look at how new products are being built and distributed, the line has dissolved.

Like content, software works in formats. You don't know which one will resonate. You experiment, you release different takes, you throw formats into the world until one catches. When it does, you double down.

I keep seeing the same pattern everywhere. A developer ships a random Chrome extension that removes LinkedIn cringe posts. Gets 50,000 installs in a week. Buried in the settings menu is a link to their actual business, some \$49/month developer tool.

A SaaS founder builds a salary negotiation calculator that goes viral on Reddit every three months. His actual product is HR software. Forty percent of his leads come from that stupid calculator he built in a weekend.

An AI company launches a tool that turns your selfie into a Renaissance painting. Millions use it. The tool makes zero dollars. But the AI company's API business underneath makes millions.

This isn't random. There's a new playbook emerging and most people haven't noticed it yet. Software isn't just becoming easier to build. It's becoming disposable. And the smartest companies have figured out that disposable software might be more valuable than the real software they're selling.

I call it Distribution Software. It's any free tool built solely to funnel attention toward something else. Not your product but the thing that makes people aware your product exists. Software as marketing, except nobody realizes it's marketing because it actually works.

The economics are insane when you do the math. Traditional marketing means spending \$50,000 on Google Ads to get 500 customers while fighting rising costs forever. Distribution Software means spending a weekend building a toy, getting 50,000 users, converting 1% into customers, then building another toy next weekend.

[Claude](#), [Cursor](#), [Lovable](#), [Bolt](#) etc turned the cost of building software from a \$100k engineering project to a Saturday afternoon. But most companies are still acting like it's 2015, having meetings about their product roadmap, carefully planning their one perfect

product. Meanwhile this guy I know ships a new tool every two weeks. Little utilities related to his main SaaS. A log analyzer. A JSON formatter. A database visualizer. Each one takes two days to build. Each one has his company's logo in the corner. His customer acquisition cost is basically zero.

The best practitioners aren't even hiding it anymore. Look at Perplexity's answer cards all over Twitter. Each one is a perfect screenshot, branded subtly, spreading organically. The cards aren't the product. They're Distribution Software for the actual product. ElevenLabs conquered voice AI not through advertising but through memes. Every viral voice clip of Obama playing Minecraft or Trump singing Taylor Swift was Distribution Software. The memes were the marketing.

Look at Cluely. They started with a controversial Chrome extension for cheating in coding interviews. It exploded, obviously. Then they started shipping new formats. Overlays for enterprises. Team collaboration tools. Consumer features. They're publishing software the way a media company publishes articles. Testing formats until one unlocks sustainable growth.

What nobody understands is that Distribution Software inverts everything we know about product thinking. Normal software wants to keep you inside. High engagement. Long sessions. Daily active use. Distribution Software wants you to leave. Get your answer and go. Share it and forget it. The exit is the entire point. You're building for ejection toward your actual business, not necessarily retention.

The patterns are becoming clear. There are Trophy Generators which create something people want to show off. Quizzes that tell you what kind of founder you are. Website graders. Anything that outputs a shareable score. There are Micro-Solvers which are single-purpose tools that fix an immediate problem. Color palette generators. Regex testers. JSON formatters. They solve the problem in ten seconds but you remember who built it. There are Controversy Machines that generate debate. An AI that ranks your tweets. A calculator that tells you if you're underpaid. Anything that makes people argue in comments. And Format Flippers that transform content from one format to another. Thread to blog converters. Video to summary apps. The transformation is the value, your brand is the byproduct.

Okay, Greg but how do you go about finding ideas to build simple distribution software. Fair enough...

Find something people Google related to your space. Not your product but something adjacent. If you sell CRM software, build a business card scanner. If you sell design tools, build a color picker. Build the simplest possible version. We're talking 200 lines of code. One weekend. Make it work, ship it, move on. Put it everywhere. ProductHunt. X. Reddit. The relevant Discord servers. Don't promote your main product. Just share the tool. Add subtle routing back to your main thing. A small logo. A "Made by" link. An

optional email capture. Don't be aggressive. The tool should work without any of this. Then build another one next month.

Note: you can find startup ideas, trends, prompts to build them at [Ideabrowser.com](https://ideabrowser.com). Unfortunately, we'll be raising prices soon for the paid plans but you can lock into a plan now [here](#).

The compound effect is wild. Each tool is a net in the water. Most catch nothing. Some catch a little. One catches a whale. But unlike content marketing, these tools keep working forever. That salary calculator you built in 2022 is still bringing in leads. That Chrome extension from last year is still installing 100 times per day. You're not building a product. You're building a constellation of products, each one a tiny satellite orbiting your main business, each one pulling in attention from a different corner of the internet.

This is already the default strategy for smart companies, especially in the AI space and a bunch in the bootstrapped software space. They've got a graveyard of side projects that somehow drive 30% of their revenue. They built them as experiments. They kept them because they worked. But now with AI tools you can be intentional about it. You can ship Distribution Software as a strategy, not an accident.

I watched a founder last month go from zero to \$50k MRR using nothing but Distribution Software. No ads. No sales team. Just a new micro-tool every Friday afternoon. A markdown to PDF converter. A cron expression builder. A timezone calculator. Each one with a tiny link back to his actual product which is boring B2B workflow software. But people remember him as the guy who builds useful stuff. When they need workflow software, he's the default choice.

The platforms are starting to catch on. [ProductHunt](#) is flooded with micro-tools. Chrome's extension store is basically all Distribution Software now. Even Apple's App Store has a growing category of apps that are really just marketing for other apps. Soon there will be infrastructure for this. Platforms to deploy micro-tools instantly. Analytics for tracking viral spread. Marketplaces for buying and selling Distribution Software that works. When that happens, every company becomes a software publisher. Every marketing team becomes a product team. Every growth strategy includes shipping a new tool every week.

The companies still buying ads and writing blog posts will wonder why customer acquisition suddenly got impossible. The answer will be simple. Their competitors stopped marketing and started shipping. Software used to be the business. Now software is just content. And the companies that understand this will own distribution for the next decade.

The arbitrage is sitting right there. AI made it possible. Most companies haven't noticed. But once they do, once everyone's shipping Distribution Software, the window closes. Right now though you could build something this weekend that brings in customers for

years. The tools are free. The playbook is clear. The only question is whether you'll ship your first piece of Distribution Software before your competitors figure this out.

The future of marketing is shipping software that markets itself. Software that spreads. Software that people actually want to use, **even if just for thirty seconds.**

This new thing called distribution software...yeah it's pretty cool.

Looking forward to seeing what you build.