

Rexan Wong tells *Kathryn Giordano* about designing apps that solve problems he has faced

Coding his way to the top

When 17-year-old Rexan Wong made a social media post last year about an app he was working on, he had no idea it would gain 400,000 views overnight.

The post on X, formerly known as Twitter, showed a demo of Text Behind Image. The image editing tool allows users to easily add and customise words in the background of their photos.

Rexan regularly posted about the process on X, where he now has about 17,000 followers.

Last October, Rexan earned nothing from his apps. This month, he is on track to make US\$5,000 (around HK\$39,200) from social media and subscriptions.

A passionate coder

Rexan is a recent graduate of Hong Kong International School. He is going to a university in the United States this coming academic year.

He began developing apps as a secondary school student.

He hoped he could use technology to solve problems: "I wanted to take matters into my own hands."

For six months, Rexan watched hours-long YouTube video tutorials every day.

Rexan Wong develops apps that young people will actually use. Photo: Handout

He learned the basics and became a passionate coder. He has now won five hackathons, many of which were international.

"I was often the only person under 18," he recalled.

Rexan was used to building hackathon projects, but it was hard for him to gain users. He discovered that many developers used social media to promote their apps and attract users. Rexan decided to do the same.

"I was really inspired. I wanted to be that guy," he said. "I turned that inspiration into action."

Practical tools for young people

In just over a year, Rexan developed several applications that solved problems he had faced.

He built the first product in early 2024, a video editing tool, and it became the launch pad for

other successful apps.

Later that year, he launched BulletPen, an Artificial intelligence-powered tool designed to help students with their writing.

For example, a student can speak aloud to BulletPen, vocalising their thoughts on any topic. The tool will then "write it down" for them, typing it out with more precise and

academic language. The tool is important for students who struggle with writing, Rexan said.

He called it an "accessibility resource" that can help those with learning differences, physical disabilities or who find it easier to think aloud.

"BulletPen functions more like a writing tutor," Rexan said. "[It] ensures educational equity."

Loud and proud

Rexan credited the hundreds of thousands of users across his apps to his social media presence.

Staying "quiet" when you are working on a project is a "disadvantage," he said.

"Share your progress. Once you put it online, you're building an audience – and a personal brand. When it's actually time to launch, you use that audience ... to fuel the launch," Rexan said.

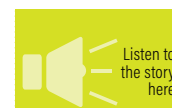
Rexan hopes he can inspire

people his age to get into tech entrepreneurship.

"You just have to stay consistent. You have to stay motivated," he said.

"What I've really learned is that you really got to [build] things fast ... [This field is] super saturated; there's so much competition."

"I was really inspired ... I turned inspiration into action"



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