“Nobody’s going to do it for you.” You’re probably sick and frickin’ tired of hearing that, especially if you were one of the millions who lost their jobs in the past five years. Or, if you’re one of the many entering the technology job market that continues an accelerated rebound. Or, if you’re one of the many currently in a dead-end programming job, banging away on code while management bangs away on you. And you’re absolutely miserable.

Yep, sick and frickin’ tired, but I’m going to tell you this a lot throughout this book, so sit tight: Nobody’s going to do it for you. No one is going to take care of your career management, your livelihood, your family, or your future.

In fact, many of you mentioned above did what I did—you took a chance to start something of your own. Or in my case, it was to look to buy something to then make my own.

Early in 2010, at the very height of the recession, I had a great job running a marketing software and services company side by side with the founder, an East Coast transplant. The company had grown out of the fossilized remains
of Silicon Beach— what Santa Cruz, California, was referred to in the late 1990s—back in the dot-com days. Software sales were flat in 2010 and had been heading that way for a couple of years. This was unfortunately no surprise at the time, considering that most of the human resources (HR) technology companies that purchased our software had frozen their marketing budgets. Much of the world had ground to a halt. The saving grace? Our agency services business was growing, meaning that a smaller percentage of our market wanted to hire us to be their marketing and PR agency of record. One of those clients, a small leadership-development firm with what I thought was pretty cool intellectual property (IP) and a possible future software footprint in the HR B2B marketplace, was looking for a buyer.

And I was looking for a new opportunity—something to truly call my own. I had helped dozens of clients launch and grow their businesses, including my current employer, so why not me?

At the time I had an affinity for leadership development, emotional intelligence, and people development. (Still do, thankfully.) So after research and due diligence, and many, many sleepless nights (partly from a toddler in tow and a new baby on the way at the time), I parted with my partner, boss, and friend, and the only stability I had known for over seven years. I started down my new path.

A path that lasted about five months. Holy shit.

What happened? Fortunately, I think about that less and less these days. But when the realization came that the business just wasn’t there; that I neglectfully didn’t see the burning forest beyond the pretty green trees; that it would take