

How I Lost \$170 Million:

MY TIME as #30 AT FACEBOOK

by Noah Kagan AppSumo.com and Okdork.com

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Introduction

June 16th, 2006 at 11am was the moment I was fired from Facebook.

I remember that day vividly. It marked the end of one of the hardest working, most intense and amazing times in my life.

My manager, TS Ramakrishnan asked me for coffee and to get updates on the latest projects just like any other weekly check-in. I suggested a place nearby -- but he insisted we go to another coffee shop on University Ave in Palo Alto.

Entering the place, I immediately saw Matt Cohler sitting and “waiting” for me to arrive. I was a bit surprised. By the time I sat down, I knew what was going to happen.

You know that moment when someone says, “I have to tell you something” and they reveal something horrible like they’ve been cheating on you? It was that same heart-stopping, body-chilling moment before Matt even started talking.

I blurted out instantly, "Am I getting let go?"

"Yes," Matt said.

My heart started racing. My mind couldn't believe this was happening. How could the "love of my life" and everything I've dedicated the past 9 months to be over?

This isn't real. It's a joke. Where are the candid cameras? I'm hoping to myself.

In the order that I ranked things in my life they were as such:

1. Facebook
2. Myself
3. Girlfriend
4. Family
5. Friends
6. Everything else

I was not alone with these priorities. Everyone else at the company was the same except the few who dated coworkers.

The rest of what we talked about sounded like a Charlie Brown's skit. Blah Blah blah blah.

I do recall asking if there's anyway to save my job or what can I do to make it right. "Nothing" was the ultimate answer no matter from which

angle I asked the question.

The meeting was over and so was my time at the company that was quickly becoming the hottest thing in Silicon Valley. Remember, this was when MySpace was still the hottest thing and Facebook was barely starting to escape being just a college social network.

We all walked back to the office. I was extremely embarrassed and wondered if everyone knew. I kept my head down. I had so much shame about myself. Everyone must be staring at me. Walking by my desk, Darian Shirazi, Facebook's first intern and now the CEO of Radius, asked "what's up?" He could tell something was off. I told him I got fired.

He was in shock. In the back of my head, I wondered really if any of the other engineers at Facebook were surprised. Maybe they had seen it coming. Maybe they had known. Some were glad, I'm sure.

I packed up my stuff, left my BlackBerry (remember those?), and left the building.

I felt like I had nothing. No job. I lived with six other Facebook guys, so no house now. No phone. I couldn't communicate with anyone. My world felt like it was crumbling.

Walking outside with nothing, they wouldn't let me take anything from my desk, I felt extremely empty. What the F could I even imagine doing next? My brain was racing at unprecedented speeds: revenge,

guilt, regret and disbelief.

Seeing a Verizon store on University Ave, I swerved into the parking lot and told the guy behind the counter I was fired and if I could borrow a phone. He graciously obliged.

My first call was to my girlfriend Jennifer. She was in disbelief and asked me what I was going to do. I told her I had no idea, but that I'd see her tonight. She was sweet and supportive as always but I felt so embarrassed and in shock to share that news with her.

Then I went to the liquor store and bought a pack of Marlboro lights. I quit smoking but this felt like one of those right moments.

I drove to the "Facebook" house and went out to the second floor balcony. I slowly took drags on the cigarette trying to process everything that just went down in the past hour. Unreal.

After 30 minutes of praying I wouldn't see any of the other guys at the house, I packed all my things into my tiny two-door Honda del Sol. Fortunately, it wasn't much. But I knew that continuing to live with all Facebook people was not going to happen. My living situation was another casualty in addition to the majority of my social life.

My next stop was to my good friend Johnny's house. I was supposed to be at his house for a barbecue that night anyway, at which were a lot of Intel people with whom I used to work with. When night came, they asked me about Facebook, since they used the site religiously

and I had to lie and tell them that things were great. I couldn't bear to let the news out. You can't imagine how it felt to lie and tell them things were great when it was the worst day ever as part of my job with the company for who I left them.

I ended up drinking as much wine as I could and passing out on Johnny's couch that night.

The next day, I told my parents. I thought of how it must feel for them to tell the rest of the family about my failures. My mom was supportive and said to come home whenever I was ready. Good ole reliable mom.

For months afterwards, I thought that everyone at Facebook must miss me. That Monday when everyone returned to work and found out I wasn't there anymore I thought would be a tough day for the Facebook employees... I got no well-wishes or hey, we are going to miss you notes from anyone at the company. That was part of our natural selection culture. The best survive. That's how the company got to accomplish "world domination" which was what Mark always wanted. I hoped more than anything they'd regret firing me and the website would come crashing down to a burning flame.

Over time, I realized how wrong that mindset was. Time goes on. People get back to work. And Facebook eventually became one of the most popular sites in the world.

Even that hope of them failing in the beginning didn't make the next 6

months any less painful. They were some of the lowest times in my life. Getting that job at Facebook was one of the best things to happen to me. I remember how validated I felt finally getting a job I can brag to people about unlike the sexy grey cubicle walls of Intel.

How could this have happened? One year I was enjoying my extremely boring and cushy job at “Inhell” aka Intel and the next I found the love of my life with Facebook, soon to be cut short after 9 months. Fired. Let Go. However you want to frame it, that is one of the worst feelings to ever experience.

This is the story of those nine months at Facebook, how I got there, how I persevered, and kept going forward when it felt like everything that mattered was taken away. I was one of the lucky few outside of the founding team's close inner circle to join the ranks only a year after the company was founded.

Over those nine months, I had a hand in creating some of the products you've probably used on Facebook: Status (all the updates you do), Pulse (hottest trends on Facebook), Mobile and Pages. You'll read how those products were built and what the culture was like at the time. And you'll also see Mark Zuckerberg's (or "Zuck," as we called him) early leadership techniques.

The goal with this book is to share my story of failure and perseverance along with hearing about the actual insides of what is

undoubtedly one of the most influential companies in consumer technology today. Even in the early days, one can see the well-publicized hacker ethos embodied in the phrase "move fast and break things" in the way we did things. And you'll read about the parties. Oh, the parties.

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