

**Derek Gathright** | Scribbles & Bits

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## Planting Seeds

Posted on June 7, 2011 by Derek

6 years and 6 months ago I was a recent college grad, unemployed, and recently I was horrible at sales. Not because I'm not social and can't communicate, but being on the side of the customer, not the employer. *"No, you don't need that, it's a better model, and you won't use most of the features. Here, this one is a better fit for you, you even need this at all."*

Needless to say, sales managers don't really like that attitude.

Being fired turned out to be one of the best things to happen to me. Instead of being unfulfilling for me personally, I decided I wanted to do programming professionally on computers for about 10 years at that point, but never thought of it as a career until it really became fun.

So as a 24 year old (f)unemployed person, how do you spend your time? Trying to find something of course.

Alright, that statement deserves a little explanation. If you know me, you know I'm a soccer fan. Now me, well you at least know that part about me. I'd been attending Kansas City Major League Soccer's inception (1996) and was very involved in the KC team's

A few days after I was given a pink slip, on Dec 9th, 2004 the Wizards ownership pretty much given up hope on the team and were putting it up for sale. That was when I knew there was little chance someone was going to come in and buy an MLS team.

were buying it to move to another city. We knew there wasn't much hope in keeping it going to lose it without a fight.

Being without a job, I had more than enough time to take the initiative and get things started. (Heart of America Soccer Foundation), I wrote forum posts, sent out emails, hoped, and put my web skills to the test by creating the HASF [website](#). Within a few weeks, we were meeting with investors, internally, with politicians, and with potential ownership groups. Our goal was to make the team as attractive as possible to anyone interested in making a significant investment in the ones selling the team, but we could make a pretty convincing argument that the team was worth it for whoever was buying it. It was a collective voice that needed to be heard.

Also within a few weeks, I had a job interview for a web developer position at a local company. During the interview, I was asked all the typical questions, some technical, and some non-technical. My lack of professional experience was pretty evident, cause I had none. They asked, *"you have a website you've built that you could show us?"*

Luckily...

*"Sure, I just built one a few weeks ago"*, and we pulled up [hoasoccer.org](http://hoasoccer.org) on the spot.

I was pretty proud of it, and they could tell. I enthusiastically talked about all the things I could do with it.

Later that night, I got a phone call, and a job offer. Accepted!

As I ventured into a new career, over the next few months my involvement with the team was still involved, but I just didn't have enough time to spend the majority of each day on it. At that point, more qualified individuals took leadership roles and did an amazing job. On August 31st, 2006, the team was finally sold to a local ownership group for \$20

owners to get a stadium built for the team, ensuring its long-term home is Kansas. Those heavily involved with HASF joined the new ownership group, filling a variety of roles: VPs, Designers, Community Managers, etc... It's a very talented, passionate group. On building my career, they continued on the journey to build a world-class soccer stadium in Kansas City. I continued to watch from the sidelines, rooting for them every season.

At the time, I was working as a developer at an advertising agency, and not having a friend from HASF, emailed me one day about a meeting with a family friend of his. We heard the pitch, and the challenge was exciting. I was in the process of buying a steady job and going month-to-month contract at a startup was a pretty dumb idea, but I blame her. But, I took it, and had an extremely satisfying 2.5 years there. It ever [chapter](#) in my career. Meanwhile, construction for [LIVESTRONG Sporting Park](#)

A journey that started on Dec 9th, 2004, is going to conclude on June 9th, 2011. After 6 years of hard work one group of people have done to accomplish something unique in Los Angeles, but am making the trip back for the first game in the new stadium this season. It's pretty amazing walking into that stadium for the first time. There's a personal connection to it. I imagine what it will be like for those people who have been there every step of the way. As a distant result of the same origin (HASF), I accepted a [new position at](#)

It boggles my mind to think what I'd be doing if I didn't wake up one day and decide to start a team. If I don't co-found a non-profit interest group that had nothing to do with soccer, I wouldn't have my first programming job at a startup. If I don't work at that startup where I learned the engineering side of a company, I don't get the experience to actually lead the new team. What directly led to where I am today.

The takeaway from this story is that you need to be driven by your passions and follow them in your way. When you are motivated by things that you love, you'll make awesome things and keep doing it, over and over. You need to continually plant seeds for the future. These seeds will turn into trees.

You never know, someday one of those trees might look like



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