

**Starting Your Own Business**  
*A Series for Budding Entrepreneurs*  
**Getting Started**



## Getting Started

“Jeff, this isn’t personal, but I plan to bring in my own person for your job.” So, with those words my journey to owning my own business began December 5, 2001. The firing wasn’t about my performance on the job, but about the fact that the new president wanted to bring in his own VP of business development and marketing. Presidents get to pick their team, and sometimes your number isn’t on their roster. So, nothing personal, Happy Holidays Irons Family 2001 – I wasn’t sure if I wanted to put that announcement in the Christmas letter.

Losing my job was a very stressful event – say goodbye to your coworkers, friends, and that biweekly paycheck. Christmas presents to buy for the family, the family dog dying from cancer, my wife crying because she was certain that we would have to sell the house and would be out on the street early in 2002, and then buying two new replacement puppies after the other one was euthanized following expensive surgery at Auburn University. Yes, 2002 would have to be better.

I had always thought about starting my own business ever since two college classmates of mine agreed that the three of us would start a company 10 years after graduating from engineering school at Virginia Tech. They did. I didn’t. They later reaped their rewards when they sold the company for \$38M – with the majority of the cash sales price split between the two of them. I had decided earlier that I was more interested in pursuing the next rung on the aerospace and defense ladder of success rather than starting a business. Silly me.

It was after almost 20 years in defense marketing that I got the chance to live my dream of becoming a business owner. The signs had always been there – but I had ignored them.

My checkered career included stints in a technical aerospace society, Capitol Hill, and defense giants like General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman and the Boeing Company. I lasted anywhere from 3 to 6 years at each one before moving on to “greener pastures” all around the US. I actually made it to Vice President twice, but those positions were short-lived. For some reason, I just wasn’t satisfied, no matter what position I obtained, how much I made, nor what part of the country we lived. Like I said, the signs were there that I was looking for something different.

Fast forward to 2007. ironSclad Solutions, Inc. has been in business for over 5 years. The company is an S corporation that provides medical, disability and corporate liability insurance for its employees (my wife and me). My 20+ clients during this time have included companies with roots in Huntsville, or other companies outside the region who are interested in establishing a local foothold. I have an IRS tax ID number, corporate bank account and credit card, and a business line of credit to balance out cash flow (more about this very valuable tool, later). Taxes for the corporation are filed quarterly. ironSclad Solutions, Inc has a license to operate as a business in Huntsville, and is a member of a number of local organizations, including the Huntsville Madison County Chamber of Commerce.

I have learned a lot along the way from being fired to owning a business for over 5 years. It is the lessons that I have learned along this journey that I would like to share with each of you. I always wanted to start a business, but the time was never “right” for me (because I didn’t know what to do, and was afraid of the risks), and it took that gentle

push “out of the nest” to get me started. This is what I want to share with you in forthcoming articles.

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