A year in review - The first year of Stedman Solutions, LLC.

The TL;DR summary: Life is good, business is good, and I am loving it. Ready to roll with Year 2 of Stedman Solutions, LLC.

The Details

It has been an interesting year. I officially formed the business about 3 years ago, but never worked at it regularly until April 1, 2015. Prior to April 1, 2015 had a full time position at a company in Bellingham.

My long term plan had originally been to go full time at Stedman Solutions, LLC in June of 2016 at which point my wife would have completed her schooling to become a nurse, and we would have had some additional family income to help while I got things rolling with Stedman Solutions, LLC.

“the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry”

In life, things don’t always work the way you plan. At the end of March 2015, my full time position came to an end due to what the company called a “lay-off”, one person in the lay-off, that’s me. I learned later that the employees there had been told by management that I had left of my own accord. Can you smell something fishy with that? Things are awesome today, and I am so glad every single day that I no longer work there.

So there I was March 31th, 2015 in a position felt much like that of a historic military leader who burned the ships after landing on the shore to prevent the troops from retreating. The point of no return, I was all in (or out depending on the perspective). I knew what I wanted to do, but I certainly wasn’t entirely ready; no business structure, no marketing plan, and no client leads. That was a very scary point in time, but I knew what I wanted to do, I was going to be an independent consultant focused on SQL Server.

With my 25 years of SQL Server database and programming background, at that point in time I was certainly up to the challenge technically. I was an overly skilled self-proclaimed consultant with no clients.

I stayed up late on March 31st 2015, built my new business website at http://StedmanSolutions.com where I outlined my services that I planned to offer. Wrote a basic press release (link) that I posted late night on March 31st.

http://stedmansolutions.com/2015/03/31/announcing-stedman-solutions-llc/

April Fools Day 2015

The interesting part of the announcement was that nobody actually saw it until April 1st... April Fools day. I actually received a couple of comments about the funny April Fools Joke that I was out consulting on my own. If you are going to start out on your own, or announce any major changes in your life, never announce it on April Fools Day, it is just a bad idea as I found out.

I reached out to many people that I knew through LinkedIn, Twitter and other social media, and quickly had a short term arrangement worked out for some part time DBA and Disaster Recovery Planning work with a local company. That eventually turned into a longer term project that gave me the step up I needed to build the foundation for my SQL Server consulting service. One year later,

and I am still working with that first client (and others), and loving it.

In the first 6 months, I ended up working with 4 clients overall, 3 of which I still work with today on a regular basis. I have worked on some great projects, got to know some really great people, and experimented with different types of SQL Server consulting work, learning how to be a consultant every step of the way.

At the 6 month point I had a slow month. One project had wrapped up, and 3 others were waiting for final budget approval to get started. There is was on a Thursday before flying to Las Vegas for a SQL Saturday event, with no work in the queue. I was wondering if this was the beginning of the end.

When it rains it pours.

Just two days after returning home from that SQL Saturday trip in September, the work started coming in. Just 3 more days after that I had more work than one person could do, and I was now booking projects out 30 to 60 day in the future.

The work has continued steady from mid September, and continues to be awesome.

This past October when I attended PASS Summit, one of my goals on that trip was networking to figure out who I could turn to when I was ready to add another person to the Stedman Solutions, LLC consulting team.

In January of 2016, Randolph West, a friend agreed to join me to help out with the growing demand for SQL Server Services. Having Randolph as part of the team has really helped bring some sanity to my life. Randolph has been more than just someone to work with, he has been an inspiration and an advisor. It’s lonely being the solo consultant, and having someone to bounce ideas off of or to help when things get crazy is awesome. Thanks Randolph.

My favorites

Making SQL Server run faster. Taking that query that others have attempted to speed up, finding the specific issues, and providing solutions that save hours of time for my clients. The queries that take more than an hour to run are especially fun challenges. The favorite bit is when that query can be tuned to run in just a few seconds rather than hours. It is amazing how often those multi-statement table valued functions are the culprit.

What’s next…

Keep going, focus on happy clients, and focus on a better work-life balance.

Related Links

- StedmanSolutions.com
- Stedman Solutions Raving Fans page
- Introducing Stedman Solutions