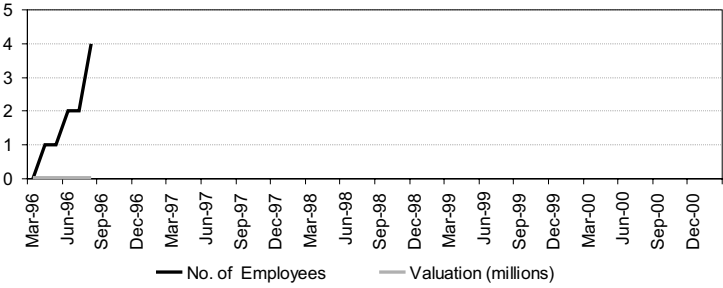


August 1996



Casting



Our first steps and missteps in hiring taught us that the best ideas can be enhanced or destroyed almost overnight with the addition of each new teammate.

We weren't rolling in dough, but for a time we were making more money than we were spending. And the work was piling up.

To help catch up, we brought in a temporary administrator. Mona was a very quiet, seemingly simple, no-frills woman. Every task we threw at her, she handled with courage and ease. She quickly moved beyond administrative work to customer coordination, then content-production work, then software quality assurance, and more. When we had to pull overnights to get a release of software out, Mona was right there beside us—temporary job or not. We eventually hired her, of course.

She moved through dozens of roles at Neoforma and ended up staying there longer than I. While my interactions with her became infrequent over the years, I did notice something amazing about her. She gradually evolved from a shy, somewhat plain woman into a very confident, attractive woman. While I am sure that motherhood and family life had a good deal to do with that, I'd like to think that the unbiased culture and abundant opportunities at Neoforma had something to do with it as well. She was one of the best employees we ever had at Neoforma.

From the beginning, I had been doing all of the computer programming, much of it based on code sketched out by Jeff. As my responsibilities and our customer base expanded, I realized that I needed to hire someone to augment and support our software. After all, I wasn't even a *real* programmer. I was just an amateur.

I provided a few search firms with a detailed description of the type of person I was looking for. Unfortunately, it turned out that people