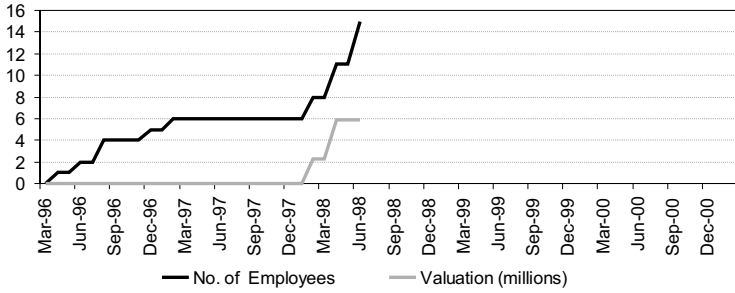


# June 1998



# Walla



Letting go felt very good—until I lost my grip.

Jeff and I were getting tired. Tired of wearing so many hats to work each day. I fantasized what it would be like to focus on only a few jobs at a time. Independent middle managers, that's what we needed. Just a few talented people who could relieve our burden in several areas. We were much too picky to ignore the little things. There were many parts of the company neither Jeff nor I had time to run as well as we believed they should be run—like managing the software development process.

I had been searching for someone to run a programming group. Most of the dozens of people I interviewed had high expectations, but showed little promise. Most of them had nowhere near the management experience that I had. Yet they expected salaries that were half again or double mine. I wanted someone more experienced than me at managing technology personnel, not someone just out of school.

The headhunters sympathized, “That’s just the way the market is right now. These are the most sought-after people in the Valley. Most of the good ones have already been hired by the consumer-oriented Internet start-ups. And we can’t get their attention because they’re vesting their options that are worth a small fortune. When they cash out, they’ll probably retire. If you change your mind and decide you’re willing to pay a quarter to a half million, we might be able to find some candidates with more than a couple of years of experience.”

I had this momentary vision of putting my own résumé out there, getting a job making so much money without the daily fear of going broke, or the constant worry over what was not getting done. It hadn't really occurred to me how much experience I had gained in the last two years. I was a veritable veteran of the Internet boom. Scary thought, because I felt that I knew so little about the frontier I was heading into.

I was trying to hire guides, only to find that they didn't know