akosma software

Adrian Kosmaczewski

2013-05-23

They say things come in pairs in this life.

Yesterday I closed my company, akosma software, also known by the Swiss government as "akosma software - Adrian Kosmaczewski", federal number CH-550-1058663-5. This company was born out of a whim, a desire for change. I had toyed with the idea of starting my own business for years, without fully realizing the insane amount of work and dispair that it brings, together with an almost boundless freedom of creation.

As a matter of fact, akosma software was literally a byproduct of the App Store and the Post-PC world. When the iPhone first came out, in 2007, I told my wife that should Apple publish an SDK for it, we were going to San Francisco, to attend WWDC and right after to start a business around it. And so it happened, when in March 2008 they released the first iteration of what would later be known as the iOS SDK.

June 2008 saw me among those who bought a ticket to see el Jobso introduce the iPhone 3G, version 2.0 of the iPhone OS, and, well, MobileMe. Anyway. I came back to Switzerland to start writing iPhone apps, much to the skepticism of almost everyone around me. It took me 1 year and a half, maybe even 2 and the arrival of the iPad, to actually be able to make a decent living out of akosma software. The local market took some time to take off, but when it did, it literally exploded.

As an anecdote, it is interesting to remember that I got fired from my job a week after returning from WWDC 2008, and I was somehow forced to start my business right away.

Another intesting anecdote was meeting Daniel Pasco during that first WWDC: hearing him urging me to start my own business around the iPhone was a big influence to me.

The most profitable run of akosma software lasted probably 2, maybe 2 years and a half. During that time I turned down investment and buyout proposals; I truly wanted to go through the creation of a one-man company all by myself, to see what was behind it. I wanted to grow akosma organically. I did not want to do any offshoring or outsourcing. I almost hired someone, as a matter of fact.

I taught myself taxes, financial plans, NDAs, contracts, negotiation, invoicing, basic accounting, all while dealing with bugs, breakpoints, IDEs, autorelease pools and memory leaks.

I attended my fourth WWDC last year, knowing that it would be my last; not because the soldout times have become insane (which acts as a natural barrier to attending, anyway) but because the whole thing was over for me. After Objective-C had been named the most popular programming language two years in a row by TIOBE; after half a billion iOS devices had been sold; after countless new companies started doing an incredible job at mobile app making, the appeal of the novelty, the thrill of the discovery was over. iOS will grow and still be relevant for the next 10 years (at least). I will probably still work in this industry for some time. But not like this.

What happened, then? In many ways, akosma software can be both seen as a failure and as a success.

If I say that I failed, of course, there is nobody to blame but me. Last year, as I felt that the market was changing, as bigger and better companies were doing what I was doing, I concentrated my efforts in the one segment that brought me the most happiness, and which I thought would grow and foster the most: teaching. However, that alone could not sustain my family, so I decided after a year of trying different formulí¦, that it was time to throw the towel.

On the other side, I also think that akosma software was my biggest success to date. As a last wish, I hope that it made a difference. I hope that the code left behind in Github, the answers in Stack Overflow, the blog posts, the books, and the teaching lessons will live on. Yesterday one of my first South African students left me a message in my Facebook page saying "thanks for teaching me iOS". I take that as the legacy of akosma software. I take that as a success.

What is next? I actually do not know. I am currently looking for job options, evaluating quite a few interesting ones, and maybe one day I will own a business again, who knows. I learnt quite a few things about making a business in Switzerland, so I hope to use that knowledge again in the future.

I want, again, to thank all of you; your support humbles me and I am very glad that you were there, paying attention and giving me feedback in every step of the way. In these 5 years I have learnt more that I would have ever thought I could. I met incredible people, in 4 different continents. I have spoken at many conferences. I have had hundreds of students. I have even reached premium frequent flyer status at a couple of airlines. I guess I will use those miles for some time off soon. I could use some time in a white, sunny beach, somewhere.

In no particular order, I want to name some key people I have met or worked with during these five years, all of whom have been fundamental to akosma software in many different ways: Daniel Steinberg, Mike Lee, Jí¸rn Larsen, Anice Hassim, Gabriel García Marengo, Dominique Jost, Daniel Pasco, Ciro Mondueri, Graham Lee, MC Casal, Sabine Dufaux, Daniel Fozzatti, Jens-Christian

The best is yet to come, though; just because, well, paraphrasing Tony Stark in the final scene of "Iron Man", I am the akosma.