

Confession: I Try to Turn Every Company I Start into a Folk Band Called “Sepia Springs”

My name is Roland. When all this started, I was just a 20-something with a passion for the banjo. More than anything, I want to be a folk-hero, strumming away on the Jo with my band, “Sepia Springs”. After years of trying to put the Springs together, I’ve been met with absolutely no interest from my fellow musicians. Probably because my songs suck. And yeah, I wish my songs were good, but that’s just the way things are. I write the songs I write and they’re the thing I’m most passionate about in this world. The only way I’m ever going to make my dream a reality is by somehow tricking Sepia Springs into existence.

Etsy

It began fairly simply. Over the course of a week, I learned how to knit cup-holders. I showed my musician friends some original designs, featuring characters from Mr. Robot and Game of Thrones, and casually dropped the idea of starting an Etsy page. They could handle the organizational aspects and I would focus on the knitting. Impressed with my needlework, they agreed!

We were soon making about \$800 a week with my cupholders and mug-covers. Everything was ticking along - the group had never been closer. I knew the time was right! At our weekly meeting, I said I had a new, exciting design for one of our cupholders. The team was incredibly intrigued as I reached down into my bag and rustled around for dramatic effect, before finally pulling out my Banjo. They were confused at first, so I began pickin’ away and belting a Sepia Springs original by way of explanation. Tommy, who had been doing the lion’s share of the organizational work, put his hand on my instrument to stop the music. He asked what was going on.

I explained that, since we had become so close and successful, the obvious next step for our company was to give-up the useless knitting bit and become a folk-band called Sepia Springs. A couple people laughed. I did not. After a few moments, the laughter stopped. Tommy put his hand on my shoulder.

“Roland,” he said, “I think there’s a real future in this. You’re incredibly good at the knitting, and if we keep at it, we could all stand to make a lot of money.”

With a blaze of fury I realized THEY WERE ALL SELL-OUTS! Every single one of them - SELL OUTS!! As calmly as I possibly could, I packed my banjo back into the bag and walked out the door with dignity, though I couldn’t stop myself from uttering “Fuck you, pieces of shit, I quit” before exiting.

They called after me, asking me to come back, but Sepia Springs was calling me from my future. I never knit again.

Restaurant

I immediately took out a massive loan and started a restaurant. Using the skills my French Grandmother had passed on to me, I put together a menu and set myself up as Chef.

Business was difficult at first - I worked day in and day out, presiding over a fast-paced kitchen yearning to prove itself. All the while, I was watching the wait-staff, trying to determine which would be best on the mandolin, and which on the honky-tonk piano.

Customers began dripping through the door, then trickling, and before long we were inundated with reservations through the next two months. A critic from The New York Times wrote about my Jambon persillé “Chef Roland’s entree is almost revolutionary in its flavor. While drawing upon the classic styles of Passard and Lenotre, his use of orange is both unexpected and exclamatory. ‘The master has arrived!’ it shouts, ‘Prepare yourselves for a new paradigm in taste!’”

That very night, I snuck out from the kitchen and put an order into our computer system before scurrying back to my place.

“Chef Roland!” My su-chef shouted when my order came up, “We have an order here for a Sepia Springs? What is that dish?”

I emerged from my office holding a banjo.

“Only the greatest dish in American History.” I answered, launching into a full-speed banjo solo. The kitchen watched, dumbfounded, as I shredded the hell out of an original composition called “Barrel of Monkey Gin”. When I finished, there was light applause. Then, my su-chef asked:

“Seriously, Chef, what is this dish?”

“Don’t you get it?!” I implored them, “This is our chance to rise above being just another 5-star restaurant in the West Village! Everyone who wants to seize their destiny and become a part of my folk band, put your hands in.”

No one put their hands in. Accepting this disappointment with a resigned flip of three tables, I exited my restaurant, never to look back.

Investment Firm

Selling my restaurant left me with a pretty hefty sum of money. So much money, in fact, that if I wanted to, I could have simply hired some musicians to play in a band with me. But that’s not what Sepia Springs is about. Sepia Springs isn’t about strangers hired to work together - it’s about friends collaborating to create a fulfilling vision. It’s about

business associates rising above their meager beginnings as co-workers at a high-level investment firm to pursue the Goddess Music.

I spent most of my restaurant money on an investment license, and poured the rest into some stocks that seemed interesting to me. As I hoped, each of these tripled in value over the next 4 months, and I found myself a very wealthy man once again. I sought out some wealthy investors (ones who seemed to have a passion for music) and set about managing their portfolios.

This was an especially exciting time for Sepia Springs - I wrote many future classics, including "The Tears Beneath Feathers", "Set Loose", and "Gary the Goose". I also netted an average per-investor profit of 362 million dollars, which was nice. The better I could do for each investor, the more they'd like me, and the more willing they'd be to put their largely geriatric lifestyles behind to come be a part of the folk band that was sweeping the nation.

On the fateful day I had made myself a cool 10 million dollars, I sent this email out to my clients:

"To All Investors in S. Springs & Sons,

Thank you for your continued faith in the fine work we do here. As CEO of the firm, it is with great pride I announce that, effective immediately, all your investments have been liquidated. Your portfolios are all hereby closed and S. Springs & Sons will no longer operate as an investment firm. Instead, we are becoming a small folk band called Sepia Springs. Anyone wishing to join, please respond to this email immediately - rehearsals begin next Tuesday, and I expect touring to commence shortly thereafter.

*Thank you for your business,
Roland Vasco"*

I leapt with joy as emails began pouring into my inbox, but my elation turned to sadness as I read their contents: "ARE YOU INSANE?!", "This had better be a joke, or I will sue.", "You've made an enemy of the wrong man, asshole." I was heartbroken - not a single person interested in playing music!

Knowing an up-and-coming band like mine could never survive the heavy litigative efforts of 20+ multi-millionaires, I spent about 100k to buy a new identity far away from Wall-Street.

California Tech Company

"Where are the dreamers? Where are the visionaries who believed in more than just business?" I wondered, as I moved away from the big city. "They'll surely be the people who are willing to give up the sedentary life to perform 'Cat Eatin' Beans' with me."

With this in mind, I relocated to Palo Alto, California, and enrolled at the University of Southern California as a programmer named Daryl Cheesus.

Computer college was fine - the four years passed quickly, and the awards when I graduated felt pretty nice too. My professors were nice (they kept saying things like “you’re changing the way we think about programming on a base level” or “you’re like watching Mozart at the piano”) but the vast majority of my mental energy was dedicated to perfecting Sepia Spring’s costuming. I was looking for something simple. Something unique that said “We are Sepia Springs! Welcome to the open plains!”

After graduating, I was heavily recruited by nice websites like Google, Facebook, and The US Department of Intelligence, but obviously none of those fit into my plan. I founded a start-up called “SepSpr” - a really simple new app designed to drive your car for you.

The App really took off and, sure enough, my company began to grow. We expanded our business to the air, installing SepSpr in planes and helicopters. Over the course of 2-3 years, it became industry standard. The App now had a staff of over 400 I could draw upon to be a part of the band, but my eyes had finally opened. SepSpr had touched hundreds of millions of lives.

Surely there must be 4 people out of millions who would want to be a part of Sepia Springs!

On what many thought was going to be an ordinary day, I created a mandatory update to the app. It basically replaced all of SepSpr’s previous functionality with a playlist of me singing 4 Sepia Springs classics, followed by an invitation to come to Palo Alto and audition for the band. With a calm click of the enter key, the update flew out across the world and I sat back in my chair, taking a calm deep breath.

After several minutes of silence, voices began growing more confused and frantic outside my office. One of my Head Designers burst through my door.

“Daryl, we’ve been hacked!”

“Hacked by music!” I exclaimed!

“You don’t understand,” he continued, “we’ve received reports from all over the world. SepSpr is malfunctioning. All it will do is play some sort of awful music.”

“Well that’s a subjective opinion.” I responded with wisdom and talent, “Do we have any responses that seem to enjoy the music?”

“Daryl, countless car-crashes are occurring right now. We’ve received reports of over 20 fatalities already.”

“...what?” I could feel myself going pale.

“Daryl, the app has stopped driving cars. All it does is play the worst music anyone has ever heard. We need your help out here, **now!**”

With that, he ran back into the office. I realized with disappointment that I had been so overcome by my dream of starting a band that I had caused a global wave of death and destruction, almost certain to create a sense of mass-hysteria. At least I had learned a lesson - people shouldn't die in pursuit of your dream!

As people began panicking, I packed up my essentials and snuck out the back door - probably best to get a fresh start away from all this tech nonsense. I never really enjoyed it anyway.

Law Firm

Perhaps feeling guilty over the hundreds of deaths and injuries I had caused, I decided I should become an attorney. Obviously, I went to law school, graduated, became an intern, started my own practice, blah blah blah I know what your wondering - how many songs had you written? More than 40. My favorite so far was “Taper the Jumpin’ Cat” (I practiced it every night with the ole ‘Jo).

The next 40 years were a bit of a blur. I got married to a beautiful woman and had 5 children with the intention of bringing them into the Springs, Partridge Family Style. The firm was good - lots of cases or whatever. Finally, I called a meeting of the Phillbin & Sons Partners (Phillbin was the last name I picked up when I ditched my old identity). My children and grandchildren surrounded me - many of them had followed me into this business and, hoping to keep them near for this very day, I offered them jobs at the family firm.

Looking around at the meeting, I was reminded of a similar meeting, not so many years ago, when my Etsy team made the largest mistake of their lives. After taking a moment to gather my thoughts, I began in the quavering voice of a 85-year old:

“Friends. Family. Now is the moment you’ve all been waiting for. It’s time I retire and start my folk Band Sepia Springs. I know it’s a lot to ask any of you, but who might be willing to join me.”

For a moment, everyone was silent. As was tradition, I had not told any of them about my dream, instead focusing entirely on bonding through success of the firm. I became scared this was going to be more like my Etsy meeting than I thought.

Then, my oldest child, Dalton, took a step forward.

“Dad, I’d be honored to play with you.”

As he spoke, he pulled a harmonica out of his pocket.

“Me too.” Exclaimed a couple of my grandchildren, running to get their guitars.

“And us!” chimed in everyone else, eagerly gathering whatever they could find to make some music.

I’d never been happier. Tears began streaming down my face - it had worked! It had finally worked! Sepia Springs would finally ride!

It’s with this happy thought and a smile on my face that my heart finally gave out and I died, surrounded by my closest family and friends. Right before I passed into the next world, finally fulfilled, I managed to whisper a last message to my son:

“I was responsible for the SepSpr massacre.”

The End