

Book 4:

Quitting my job

**(\$4,000/month,
early 2021)**

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Preface

Before we begin. A disclaimer.

1. Zero advice

Most advice is bullshit. Or someone trying to sell something.

So I'm not going to give you any advice in this book. I want that to be clear from the start.

You only learn by doing. Not by studying. Listening. Or even reading books like this one.

So when you're done, close this book and go build a business. Experiment. Try things. And learn.

2. I don't own any of these ideas

If you find that I'm talking about things that you have thought, said, or even written before, I believe you.

Don't be stupid like me, I sometimes get mad when that happens.

At the end of the day, you are reading this. So we are somewhat similar.

3. This is not a playbook

I made my first million in my late twenties. Worked at an MIT startup. Competed in Muay Thai, kickboxing and BJJ. Completed a marathon and a triathlon. Became part of a Cambridge research study. Invented software that helps people with epilepsy. Traveled the world. And even got to meet and have coffee with one of the inventors of the internet.

That's all true. But none of it was intentional.

I was and still am a total idiot. I just kept going and got lucky. You'll see that very clearly in these books.

Cause luck is a real factor. And if anyone tells you it's not, they are full of shit.

4. These books get better over time

I am not a professional author, that's easy to see.

But my writing has improved since I started.

So these books get better over time.

Hang in there.

5. Too personal, too much information

Finally, this book might become too personal at times.

You can skip those parts.

If you actually end up reading these books to completion, you will know me better than some of my closest friends.

Which is weird. I know. But hey, at least you can call me your friend. And I mean that.

Book a time and we can setup a virtual coffee.

So now, let's begin, my friend.

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Introduction

That's it. It's done.

I just quit my job to go full time on Cyberleads.

It's been a long time coming. I launched CyberLeads nearly one year ago. But it's been three years since I first started building products seriously and dreaming about this moment.

My first 19 products failed. CyberLeads was my 20th.

If you want the full story of how this all unfolded, you can read the previous books.

In this book we'll talk about something special.

Probably the most important milestone.

Quitting your job to go full time.

Recap

Here is a quick recap of the journey so far.

While in university, I spent 2 years perfecting and launching an app that went nowhere.

Then, I discovered bootstrapping and started building products.

In my first year of building products, I launched 10+ products and managed to get up to \$100/month.

In my second year of building products, I focused on one of those products and managed to get up to \$200/month.

That wasn't enough, so I had to throw in the towel and get a full time job.

Then, in my third year of building products, while working a full time job, I launched CyberLeads and surpassed my salary.

Now I'm about to quit my job and go full time.

This is the story.

Part 1: Why I quit my job

Many people ask me why I decided to quit my job.

And why now, as opposed to sooner, or later.

Well, here are my top 10 reasons.

1. I realized that dream jobs don't exist

The first reason I quit my job was because I realized that dream jobs don't exist.

Actually, I thought that this would be my dream job.

Or to be more precise, I was terrified that it would be my dream job.

I was afraid that I would fall in love with the company and forget all about my dreams and my side projects. They would seem like a distant dream I can hardly even remember.

"Oh yeah. Back in the day when I used to build little side projects.. Cute."

After all, it ticked all of the boxes:

- It was an MIT startup
- That worked with NASA
- Built life saving medical devices
- Offered a good salary, perks and benefits
- Sounded cool at parties and to my parents
- And was the best job I get with my credentials, a CS degree from a free university in the countryside of Greece

Thankfully, I was wrong.

I wasn't talking to NASA scientists at lunch break. And I wasn't saving lives with my code on a casual Tuesday.

I was tucked in a corner, coding internal dashboards.

It was just another job.

2. I've had consistent results

The second reason I quit my job was because I've had consistent results.

I could worry all I want. And I could come up with excuses all day long.

But CyberLeads has made more than my salary six months in a row.

Even though my systems are not ideal. Even though I still don't feel like I'm standing on solid ground.

There are many things I don't like about my business.

- Social is my main channel, which is unstable
- I'm in a market with high churn
- My revenue is wild and fluctuates
- My growth is not as smooth as I would like it to be
- People compete with me all the time
- I make myself vulnerable by sharing all my numbers

But I cannot argue with the numbers and facts.

My growth may be wild and unpredictable because of the nature of social media, the naturally high churn of the market, and my high prices.

But you can't put a saddle on these mystical beasts. Actually, you shouldn't. You should embrace them.

In a perfect world, I would like to have predictable, scalable systems that work while I sleep.

Be in market with super low churn and customer lock in. Have SEO for customer acquisition. Have smooth, predictable, stable growth.

Have MRR as my main metric.

But we don't live in a perfect world.

I have to adjust my sails to the wind. Not try to change the weather.

Yes, my business is wild. But it has been growing consistently.

3. I fell out of love with engineering

The third reason I quit my job was because I fell out of love with engineering.

For years I thought that I loved coding. As soon as I started working as a software engineer, I realized that I didn't love coding, but creating. Software was just my tool of choice up until then.

But writing unit tests and coding internal dashboards is not what I call peak creativity.

Actually, writing code for eight hours per day made me sick of it. That's the reason why many parts of CyberLeads are built with no-code tools.

Also, meetings about scalability, legacy codebases, updating our clusters with the latest tech and sharding our databases for peak performance are not my thing either.

The only thing I enjoyed talking about were product related stuff. Competition. Positioning. Features we should add or remove. Funding. Lucrative markets.

Higher level stuff. Not tweaking and perfecting small components of larger systems.

Maybe I'm not an engineer at heart.

4. I stopped learning

The fourth reason I quit my job was because I stopped learning.

I hardly learned any new technical stuff there.

The things I learned and took with me were all intangible.

- Like seeing what companies look like. Understanding that they are slow. That it's not scary to compete with them. And that most employees are lazy, including myself.

- Or flipping my priorities 180 degrees. Instead of wanting to create a unique product that changes the world, I decided to change my world first. Make money and escape the rat race. Then, I can worry about changing the rest of the world also.

- Or understanding that I don't have to work all day to progress. I only worked for two hours per day, and I made those hours count. Two hours were enough. It was mind blowing.

But, I learned those things straight away. In the first 2-3 months.

After that, I was just coding internal dashboards.

5. I was spinning my wheels

The fifth reason I quit my job was because I was spinning my wheels.

After learning all the intangibles above, my day job became mundane.

I was present in meetings, and executed the tasks that were assigned to me. At a speed that was fast enough to not get complaints from my manager and team.

When I wanted to focus on my day job to get shit done, CyberLeads' growth would slow down.

And when I focused on growing CyberLeads, my performance would dip at my day job.

It was impossible to do great work, at both, at the same time.

6. I was blind but now I see

The sixth reason I quit my job is that I saw another way.

There was a specific day that changed everything for me.

It was the day I realized that CyberLeads' monthly revenue surpassed my monthly salary.

I shared it online and the post blew up, resulting in even greater revenue.

Many people congratulated me and commented small nuggets of wisdom. But there is one specific comment I will never forget.

I'm paraphrasing, but it went something like this:

"You'll never be able to go back now. It's one of those things that once you see it, you can never unsee it again. It happened to me as well. Many, many years ago."

I gained confidence. I knew there was another way now. And I knew that my days working for someone else were limited.

It honestly felt like I took the red pill in the Matrix.

Every meeting. Every performance review. Every 1 on 1 with my manager. They all seemed meaningless.

I will never forget one day specifically, when my manager asked me what I want to achieve in the future.

I didn't understand if he meant personally, professionally or specifically within the company, so I asked for an example.

With a smile on his face, as if he was proposing something I could not possibly resist, he told me:

“Well.. for example.. you may want to become the respected, go-to guy for the 'biomarkers dashboard'.”

What. The. Fuck. At that moment, I wanted to laugh. But to be honest, if I didn't have CyberLeads, I would probably want to cry.

7. I want to embrace risks

The seventh reason I quit my job was because I want to embrace risk taking.

School and society tried to teach me to play it safe.

But everything good that has happened to me was through some amount of healthy risk taking.

You cannot live in bubble wrap and expect to grow. You need to leave your comfort zone.

Taleb's Incerto books really changed my perspective on risk, randomness and life. Highly recommend.

They remind you that life is chaotic. And you shouldn't try to change that. Embrace it's unpredictability and make it work for you. Not against you.

You will have to take risks. But not all risks are the same.

With some risks, you should be super conservative. Risks that could ruin you if they go wrong.

Like taking a massive loan. Or robbing a bank. Or putting all of your money on a new crypto coin. You get the point.

Take enough of these risks, and you will pay for it.

These are asymmetric bets, with far more downside than upside.

But with other risks, you should be the opposite. Wild, experimental, and playful. Risks that won't ruin you if things go wrong. And that will

bring you a lot of upside if they go right.

Like starting a new business with zero capital. Or moving to another country. Or starting a new hobby. Or going to a party. Or, even tweeting. Best case scenario, you get customers, build an audience, and make friends. Worst case scenario.. well, there is none!

These are asymmetric bets, with more upside than downside.

Take enough of these risks, and you will be "blessed with luck".

And then you should apply the barbel strategy, which in this case means avoiding medium risk bets with medium upside.

Like climbing the corporate ladder for years on end. For a somewhat guaranteed result. And a somewhat fulfilled life.

I loved this framework. It reminded me of my own way of thinking. But I was never able to articulate or formalize it. I started thinking in it more deeply.

Ok, so what does leaving my day job look like?

In which category of risks does it fall into?

8. I've stacked the odds in my favor

The eighth reason I quit my job is that I've stacked the odds in my favor.

Instead of leaving right away when I could, I decided to stay at my day job longer.

One reason was to honor the contract I had signed. I didn't want to leave the company and my team out of the blue.

Another reason was to continue saving up money.

I managed to set aside almost \$50k. Which means that even if for some crazy reason I was to start making zero dollars per month

starting from tomorrow, I would still have enough runway for 2 years.

- \$10k from my grandfather.
- \$15k from my day job.
- \$25k from CyberLeads.

Thank you grandpa. You don't know it, but you helped your grandson achieve his dreams. Rest in peace. Love you.

So now we have:

- A business that's growing and making more than my salary
- Two years of runway, if everything goes to shit

If things go well, I am free for life. I gain my freedom. I scale CyberLeads. I travel the world. I set even more money aside.

If not, and for some reason CyberLeads goes to zero, I still have two years of runway to figure things out.

And again, even if for some even crazier reason I am completely incapable of generating a single dollar in the next two years, I can always just find another job and try again.

At least I will have a cool story to tell, and I probably will have travelled a lot.

Hmm.. That's a good bet. I'll take it.

9. I want clarity of mind

The most important reason I'm leaving my day job is to have a clear mind. To stop having to think about things that are irrelevant to CyberLeads. Like meetings. Or sprint deadlines. Or what my manager thinks of my performance.

That being said, I'm not planning to work ten hours per day on CyberLeads, either.

My goal, from the beginning, was freedom.

Financial freedom. Location independence. Control of my time.

The same way I don't want to be dragged into meetings all day long, I don't want to work on CyberLeads all day long, either.

Actually, I don't even think it's necessary.

I remember working 10 hours per day on the wrong things back in Greece, going nowhere. You know this very well if you've read my previous books.

This year I've been working for 2 hours per day on the right things, and I had amazing results.

I believe in hard work, but I also believe that direction is more important than speed. And I want clarity of mind to make sure that I'm going in the right direction.

So I don't want more time. I want clarity of mind.

10. I want to feel alive

The final reason I want to quit my day job is to feel alive.

Sometimes you just want to throw yourself in the fire. This is one of those times.

I want a big change. Similar to how this time last year I left Greece and moved to Italy, to start this full time job.

Small incremental improvements are great. Small habits can change your life. Yes. But sometimes you are not looking for a small incremental change, but for a big earthquake that will shake your foundations.

That's when you have the best chances of growing exponentially.

Similar to how the conquerors intentionally burned their ships upon arrival. You either conquer the land, or you die trying.

Of course, that's just a figure of speech. I'm just typing on a laptop.

And I could always just find another job if things don't work out.

The time is never right

I'm very confident in my decision.

I took my time, and I didn't rush anything. I stacked the odds in my favor, and I honestly believe that I will make it.

I had predicted that when the time is right, leaving won't even be a dilemma anymore. And that's how it feels. It's not a dilemma. I see absolutely no reason to stay.

Staying one more year at my day job to save an extra \$10k will change nothing. It will probably just keep me back.

At the same time, I understand that I cannot predict the future.

Sometimes, you just have to say "fuck it" and go for it.

Quitting my job

Ok, it's happening. It's December.

I'm looking at my dashboard and revenue analytics.

I've surpassed my salary for 6 months in a row.

And I have around \$50k in savings.

I can't help but feel like this is it.

It's time to quit.

Handing in my notice

I talk to my manager and hand in my notice.

I explain that I won't be renewing my contract at the beginning of the new year.

He's cool. Or at least he pretends to be.

I wouldn't be canceling my contract, just not renewing, so I could have not notified them at all.

However, I decided to notify them more than 1 month in advance.

Big mistake.

Escaping the circus

From the moment I handed in my notice, all meetings stopped having meaning.

No one cared about my opinion anymore. And it was awkward talking about stuff that would be implemented when I'm gone.

During those meetings, I would either work on CyberLeads, or just open my notes, write and daydream.

Actually, everything you read above were written in those meetings.

With my new, sober, third person perspective, I remember realizing how we were all playing a game.

We are all playing "business". Pretending to be serious, professional adults performing complicated activities.

And overcomplicating what we do to justify our salaries and positions.

Software engineers overcomplicating software. Designers overcomplicating design. Marketing overcomplicating marketing. And so on.

It's performative. It's a circus.

I can't wait to leave.

Enjoying the game

My daily updates became one sentence long again.

Similar to how they were when I first started working at the company, when I was still pure and naive.

"I fixed the bug we found yesterday and now I've moved on to the next feature from the backlog. That's it from my side. Thanks."

On the other hand, my teammates were still playing the game:

"I ran an investigation for the new service that we want to deploy and scale on AWS and took into account the different parameters, especially given that cost is an important factor. I also started working on our migration to AuroraDB and started working on the implementation of blah blah blah blah..."

I couldn't even understand what he was talking about.

One year ago, I thought it was because I was new.

Now I understand that it was on purpose. By design.

If me, a fellow engineer from the same damn team could not understand, how could a non technical product manager, designer, marketer or anyone else from the company understand?

Well, they couldn't. And that's the point. He was playing the game.

And appeared as a rocket scientist. A genius at work.

It was amusing.

The dark side of the show

Although the show was amusing, there was a dark side to it.

If I had joined the company before building any products of my own, maybe I would never build products.

After all, everything is so complicated!

- You need a team of engineers to build your product
- You need a team of designers to design your product
- You need a team of marketers to market your product
- You need a team of salespeople to sell your product
- You need a CTO to make sure you can scale to the millions
- You need a CEO to come up with the vision
- You need a CFO to take care of the finances
- And you probably need funding or savings to hire all of these talented A-players, run ads and invest in growth

You cannot do everything by yourself.

Don't be naive and stupid.

Cloak and dagger

My manager was not happy with me.

I have some ideas as to why, but I'm not entirely sure. Completely out of character, he fired me 1 day before my last day. Literally 1 day.

- He might have been mad because I was leaving. He asked me to stay for another 3 months to help them out, but I refused.
- He might have been mad because he was following me on Twitter and saw me focusing on CyberLeads more than my job.

- He might have been mad because I wasn't vocal in the meetings anymore and did the absolute bare minimum after handing in my notice.
- Or like most of my teammates told me, he might have been jealous seeing my progress going from nothing to something.

Which sucks, cause I never felt like we were competing, we were playing completely different games and I liked the guy.

In any case, he fired me for "bad performance in my final 2 weeks at work after handing in my notice".

Which is ridiculous.

Especially since in every single 1-1 we had ever had, he had nothing but great things to say. Zero complaints ever.

I was shocked.

It's all about the money

Looking back, I think I know what happened.

And it's way simpler. It's just money.

As complicated as humans are, they are also really simple.

Most people's behavior can be explained by their incentives.

And the most common incentive is money.

A few months back, they fired a bunch of people due to the pandemic. And cut salaries for the rest of us that stayed.

They promised to give us back the money at the start of the new year. But they didn't want to give me the money now that I would be leaving. Even though I was eligible for it.

So they came up with this bullshit excuse to fire me.

Even though they couldn't fire me technically, as they needed to send me 2 written complaints before, I still didn't want to risk it.

I was setting up my business with my accountant and he told me that if I get fired I might lose all my tax benefits.

So we made a deal.

An offer I couldn't refuse

I explained my position that firing me would cause me huge legal and financial problems.

They explained that they wouldn't fire me if I signed that I don't want that money.

It was a stalemate. I accepted.

I remember talking to the co-founder, and I telling him that "this would have been a warm goodbye, but now it's a cold goodbye and a fuck you".

He agreed. He said "Yes, it has turned into a fuck you."

So much drama. All for \$1.3k. Pathetic for both sides.

I had to remind myself that it was just a speeding ticket. I made that money in a week recently.

Which is still hard to comprehend, because up until very recently I wasn't making anything. It still feels a lot.

I remember them kicking me out of all the accounts, not even allowing me to say goodbye to my teammates or the company in the weekly meeting, as was normal practice.

I was kinda shocked. But not surprised. I've been scammed by companies in Greece before.

Why would I expect anything different?

Strip tease show

Actually, the company doing this to me felt symbolic. It re-enforced my decision.

I'm not meant to work for a company.

I had already forgotten about them, the money and the drama.

I got home, put some music on and started dancing and tearing my clothes off, performing a strip show to my girlfriend.

So much laughing. So much happiness.

I'm leaving the circus.

I'm going into the wild.

Appendix

Update from the future, while publishing this book, so I can be fair, precise and correct.

A few months later, I received a payment from the company.

No communication. No explanation. No nothing.

I thought it was an extra salary or payment sent to me by accident. Which I never thought about again.

But while polishing this book years later, I realized that it might have been that money that they owed me.

I checked the amount and it was indeed that.

Maybe they were afraid I would put them on blast on Twitter. Which I never did. Maybe they just changed their mind. Or maybe it was indeed by accident.

In any case, saner heads prevailed.

And I thank them for that. No bad blood left.

What's next

I just quit my job to go full time on CyberLeads.

I'm going to write about it in detail in the next book.

Now I'm in the process of designing my ideal lifestyle.

It's tricky, because I want to keep things simple, and I also don't want to fall into the trap of working on my business all day.

The whole reason I started this journey was freedom.

Now that I have it, let's see if I'll be able to handle it.

Or if I'll crush under the pressure of having zero constraints.

Time travel

Hey. This is Alex from the future writing this.

I decided to clean up and re-post these blog posts as books.

Nothing changed. Even if I disagree nowadays with things that I said back then.

These books are for free.

But if you enjoyed them, you can do the following:

- Share it on X or LinkedIn
- DM me on X and we can set up a virtual coffee

Or don't. It's ok.

Thank you for reading.

Credits

Finally, special thanks to everyone that inspired and supported me, whether they know it or not.

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- Nathan Barry, thank you for being one of the few people continuing to share revenue numbers after reaching millions in revenue. We have small businesses like myself doing that. We also have huge public companies doing that. It's great to have companies in the middle, like yours, do that too. Also, thank you for showing me the value of niching down and focusing on one segment of the market at a time. It really helped me grow CyberLeads and change my life.

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Constantly updating this list.