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★ The accidental entrepreneurs: Layoffs are all too common these days. But for some, losing a job means gaining an opportunity

Premium content from Boston Business Journal - by Chelsea Lowe, Special to the Journal

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Jeanine Hamilton was a victim of the recession, but she didn't stay a victim for long.

After Hamilton was laid off from her corporate staffing and recruiting position in 2008, she created her own personnel company, Hire Partnership.

Now, Hamilton presides over a four-person Boston outfit that she reports brought in \$1.1 million its first year and is on track to earn more than twice that by the fourth quarter of this year.

"To open a staffing business in 2008 was definitely a challenge," said Hamilton, whose business ranked at No. 19 this year on the Boston Business Journal's list of temporary placement firms.

"I think any time you open your own business where you have everything riding on your shoulders, it's scary. ... I had a lot of sleepless nights."

However, she said, those moments were few. "I was confident. I knew what I was doing ... knew that this was ultimately what I wanted to do."

Hamilton is not alone. Although the current climate has put many out of work — often for long periods — some of the victims have emerged victorious.

Recession business-success stories are almost cliché. (Often cited: Microsoft, the iPod, IBM, General Motors, FedEx and Burger King.) Layoffs might not have played significant roles in their creations, but savvy businesspeople realized that the right products usually find their markets in spite of hard times.

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W. Marc Bernsau

Husband-and-wife team Julie Ganong and Alan Mons started bakery Chococoa after they were laid off.

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