It was my lucky day; the ratty old trailer park I bought with every dollar I had (a $5,000 down payment) just appraised for TWICE what I bought it for. My refinance came through and I now had $100,000 in the bank, I still owned the park that was making me $35,000 a year in cash flow, and I no longer had to manage the property personally.

That was just one property I owned at the time.

In a little over three years out of college, armed with the tools I was fortunate enough to be given by my parents and mentors, I had made a successful investment in real estate that provided me enough to live on and quit my "day job" to focus on building my own business.

Along with that investment, I made others in mobile home parks, apartment complexes and even a dog daycare facility (more on that later). I'm no genius, I didn't join an investment course in real estate, and I didn't pay for a business coach. I did it by asking questions from successful people and copying their "systems" for success.

I was fortunate to have been surrounded by savvy real estate investors. As crazy as it sounds, I'm compelled to pay it forward by sharing what I've learned, just like it was shared with me. That's why I wrote this book, to help real estate owners waste less time,have more fun, and be more effective in managing their real estate investments.

Taking control of your investments is a daunting task; there are so many moving parts it will make your head spin. It was overwhelming for me to say the least, as all I had was a decent understanding of how to value a property (basically a spreadsheet) and an Internet connection. I was in way over my head.

But I figured it out, one task at a time.

I took each task, asked the right questions, and made micro-solutions for each one. The hardest part was trying on all the different hats, realizing they didn't fit as well as I liked, and wearing them anyway.

What I mean is that you need to be able to identify problems and solve them. That's the stuff of managing real estate. Once you get comfortable with problem solving, then delegate that responsibility to somebody else so you can scale and take on the next project. That's systems.