

The Placement Diaries: Week 19 - Redirecting (again), Making a Start on Creating NFTs, and Exploring My Options

21st January 2022

It feels like I keep going in circles to the point where it's actually getting annoying now because I want to actually move forward and make this whole placement year worthwhile, by getting out of the research stage because I've been there long enough, longer than I should have been there for, to the point where it's getting ridiculous.

I also did a quick review with all of the advisors, so that both parties know what's happening, and the general advice that I took away from both of those meetings was that I should just play to my strengths, as well as sticking to what I already know because it will end up being easier in the long run, instead of forcing myself to become someone that I'm not. Whilst I was stubborn about keeping my original idea, I realised that the advisors all had a point, and over the course of the week, I'm slowly starting to accept the fact that they're right, that I should just focus on things that I can realistically do in an afternoon (in this case, I can easily spin up an illustration, and I can also write a decent article, sometimes I can even accomplish both within the space of an afternoon) because it will make life a lot more easier.

I've also realised that just because something is interesting doesn't mean that you should do it, especially if it's outside of your comfort zone and your skillset. However, I'm at a crossroads, and all I want to do at this point is to just hone in on what I'm naturally good at, and just work from there, so the logical option for me at this point is to probably capitalise on my skills, maybe set up a blog (in a place where I know that people will read it, or at least come across it) where I create my own illustrations, which to me, seems the easiest way to focus on my strengths at the same time, without thinking too much about it. I've tried to talk myself out of focusing on my strengths, mainly deeming them as "too easy" by taking them for granted and automatically assuming that everyone can do what I can do (turns out not everyone is cut out to be an illustrator, but I know that I'm definitely an illustrator, so I should just focus on that, along with writing, both of which seem to go hand in hand really well), but I can't talk myself out of what I already know.

On the flipside, I've forced myself to become someone that I'm not (in this case, a web designer, developer, programmer, and open source contributor), by convincing myself that all those things are interesting, and whilst they are, those aren't my strengths and I have to accept that. I could have the biggest growth mindset in the world, but if it doesn't come naturally to me, it won't work, no matter how much hours I put into it, and there's a

reason why I struggled to understand maths as well as the reason why I was always that kid who drew in the margins of their books, whereas there were others who were the opposite. On top of that, my business plan was way too complex, especially for a first draft, since it clocked in at over 10,000 words. Man, that's a whole thesis in itself (I'm probably going to ace final year at this rate), and no wonder why I didn't know what to do because it was so complex that I just didn't know where to start, or how to go about it, since it was essentially 3 or 4 business plans rolled into one, as well as it reading like a 5 or 10 year plan instead, for a business that will probably never exist because it's out of my comfort zone, and my skill set.

I know that I can't realistically create a whole website from scratch within an afternoon (and a professional one at that), nor can I sit down and code for hours on end (without having to refer to tutorials) because those things make me lose the will to live if I actually do them. Maybe I just like the idea of coding, and being a programmer, but I know that I realistically can't stand doing those things because it feels like my personality gets squashed and that I have to box myself in. I can read all the articles, get all the motivational advice, put in as many hours as I can, but it won't happen. It wasn't meant to be. I tried to make it happen, and all that happened was that I was way too hard on myself, trying to force myself away from the strengths that I already had, working against what I had instead of working with it, and I think working against your strengths is the worst thing that anyone can do, since you're essentially throwing yourself away in order to force yourself to become someone that you're not.

The saying "fake it until you make it" doesn't work here because people will know that you're faking it, no matter how much you try to prove otherwise, and at this point, it's just a lie, where you're not only lying to yourself, but you're also lying to everyone else, at the cost of seeing your natural strengths starting to diminish because you haven't been working on them for a while. Sure, I could fake it if the thing is actually within my skill set, but that's different. I can fake working for big clients, so that they will actually hire me (in this case, I could realistically create a magazine cover for the New Yorker, or for some other big client, so that they can potentially see it), as well as setting up a blog in which I create my own illustrations so that I can get jobs and commissions working as an editorial illustrator and/or a guest editor, because I know that I can do those things, and I've been doing those things for as long as I can remember, mainly without realising it, and mainly because those things don't feel like work to me, whereas they'll probably feel like work for others.

In short, I can easily spin up an illustration as well as an article within an afternoon, but I can just about muster the motivation to code something within that same time frame, and at this point, it's just a no-brainer. I need to focus on the things that don't feel like

work for me (in this case, creating illustrations and writing) because I lose track of time when it comes to those, and to stop focusing on things that feel like so much work for me (in this case, coding), no matter how interesting and lucrative they seem.

Speaking of capitalising on my work and on my strengths, I've made a start on creating NFTs, after spending almost a year of hating them and the community behind it, mainly because NFTs seem to be the way forward. I did it out of curiosity, mainly because everyone that I follow seem to be involved in this, and that I might as well join in (despite being one who hates trends) just to see what all the fuss is about. Worst case scenario, I end up ditching NFTs and I just set up an Etsy shop instead, which are pretty much the same things since both involve selling artwork, just that with NFTs, everything's digital to the point where you have to use cryptocurrency to buy one, as well as it being the future of buying things (cue "the future is now, old man"), as well as the idea of NFTs not only being interesting, but also it being something that I can realistically do. Okay, setting everything up was a bit hard, but I think I've got the hang of it, and it's only the second day, as well as minting (basically selling) my first NFT. I haven't actually sold it, I've just put it up for auction, and the NFT in question is a self destructing gif that I created 2 years ago.

Going forward, I think I know my options. I have no choice but to ditch my original business idea because it's way too complex, and the main aspect (creating experimental websites) is outside of my skill set as well as my comfort zone, not to mention that it would take me years to be able to realistically do it. I have to accept that I can't just radically change an industry that I only know a bit about. I can't just talk myself out of my strengths by trying to avoid the things that come naturally to me (where the act of doing those things don't feel like work to me), because that will only set myself up for failure and disappointment. I have to capitalise on my skill set and on my strengths, whether I like it or not, because at least I'll be in the chance of becoming one to watch, instead of just being average. Also, despite the fact that something seems really interesting in theory, doesn't mean that it will be the same in practice. I can't force myself to be someone that I'm not. You're either naturally good at something, or you're not, no matter how much work you put in.

So, that's been my week. A tad bit existential, but we're getting there. I've put up an NFT on auction, and I hope someone puts in an offer soon. I've also had to redownload social media onto my phone because that's the only way I can connect with people in this day and age (although it did feel like a psychedelic rollercoaster when I first got back onto them), but within reason and within moderation of course, although that's easier said than done. It feels weird to be back, but I have no other choice or alternative. I've tried the alternatives, but they don't work.