

The Placement Diaries: Week 33 - Apartment Tours, Thinking About What Could Have Been, and Making a Start on the Written Reflective Report

29th April 2022

So, the only main eventful thing which got me out of the house this week (because one thing I've realised about working from home is that it's a drag) was touring apartments, and figuring out where I'd stay for my final year. I signed up to see 3 different ones, but I only managed to see 2 of them, which was more than enough. The first one I saw turned out to be my favourite since it was the closest to the University, and was affordable, plus the apartment itself was modern and decently sized, not to mention the fact that it also had a balcony plus some other outdoor spaces, which was a win.

The second one (which I was supposed to see) was a long way away, so out of reach that I got lost trying to find it, and when I did eventually find it, the area wasn't that great since the house (literally a terraced house with no front yard) was on a very steep hill. In a way, I'm glad I didn't view it (mainly because none of the keys worked, which meant no one could get in), because I probably would have been disappointed by it.

The final one I saw was extremely disappointing, a lot smaller and worse than I expected, since what I saw online was a far cry from what I saw when I actually went in there, so by having one really good option made decision making a lot easier, and in the end, I put a deposit in for the first apartment that I saw straight away since those ones are popular for a reason, and also because I wanted to be able to get it whilst I still had the chance, instead of being forced to settle for less.

Apart from touring apartments, I've also thought about what could have been, mainly following on from what I explored last week, because last week, I focused on future reflection, but this week, I'll focus on the past, but not so much in a narrative way, rather focusing on the future based method of reflection, but making it so that it reflects the past, if that makes any sense. I'm thinking about how this year could have been if I stuck to my original idea, maybe scaling it down a bit so that it'd be a bit more realistic to achieve, instead of trying to do 5 years' worth of work in one year, and unsurprisingly getting overwhelmed and burning out because of it, essentially trying to do the work of at least 10 people.

If I simply scaled down my original idea into bitesized chunks (instead of trying to do everything in one go, like this was supposed to be the be all and end all), I wouldn't have felt as frustrated as I currently am, mainly with the fact that I wasn't able to expand

on my original idea at all, and inevitably had to settle for less, which is something that I didn't want to end up doing, but I had no choice, since I ended up settling for less just to be able to get through the year, as well as having something (no matter how small) to show for it. I could have turned the ridiculous amount of things that I was trying to achieve in such a short amount of time into long term goals instead, just so that I'd know what it was that I was working towards.

I would have been a lot easier on myself, mainly focusing on what I already knew about this original idea, and I would have built my way up that way, instead of trying to teleport to the destination, but having no idea how I'd get there, so if I could do this year again, I would have my long term goals, and I'd also have small steps on how I'd achieve them, ideally with those steps being as clear as possible so that it'd be hard to miss, maybe adding deadlines and having an accountability partner to avoid procrastinating.

In order to avoid procrastinating, I would set a tight schedule with a little bit of room for flexibility, maybe prioritising tasks so that I'd know which ones I'd do first. I would also block distractions (in this case, mainly time wasting websites), so that I'd have no choice but to do the task itself, maybe having a reward that I'd get after completing the task (an incentive, if you will), with all of these small tasks building up to the point where I'd end up achieving my goals without realising it because I would have been so busy doing the work, but also knowing when to take time out in order to avoid burning out.

I would also change my scenery often, maybe working in different places on different days to make things interesting, just so that I'm not chained to my desk all the time, because staying in one place for too long is one surefire way to kill all of your creativity, inspiration, and motivation. I'd do what I did in the Before Times (i.e. before the pandemic), where I wandered around town, mainly to get out there a bit, and mainly to collect my thoughts about what I'd do next, contemplating all this over a coffee, maybe making my way to the nearest art gallery and/or library in order to get some inspiration which you can't really get on the internet, because one thing I've realised is that the internet is extremely boring these days (save for a few tiny corners I've found which are really interesting, but then again, you have to dig around in order to find them), with everything essentially being the same thing but in different packaging.

If I knew for certain that this placement year was going to be in person, I would have made the most out of it, and I would have been a lot more likely to have put myself out there since I would have actually had the space to do it. I've had the time to do it, but not necessarily the space to do it, since I've come to realise that I actually prefer being in person, because it's manageable, and also because it feels a lot more real than trying to do it all online. I can have actual authentic conversations with others, with me coming

as I am, instead of hiding behind a facade, unintentionally creating a personal brand against my will. I've tried offering what I do online, for anyone that listens, but again, it feels a lot like job hunting, just throwing my stuff out there, only for it to go into the void, which I've realised hasn't been effective for me, so my best bet is to actually speak to people, and maybe hand them my business card if they seem interested in what I do, just so that to me, it feels like there's someone out there who wants what I offer.

Obviously, I could go on about this all day, focusing on what could have been depending on circumstances and my own decisions, but similar to the future reflections I did last week, I'd end up writing a whole book about a whole host of different possibilities, to the point where it'd be never ending, so instead, I'm going to go meta and talk about writing the reflective report. Oh, the irony.

Doing a written reflective report is easy, mainly because I do a mini one every week, to the point where it's just second nature at this point, which is what I like. However, when I first started writing these weekly reflections, I didn't think about the end goal in mind, which to me, has been a blessing in disguise, because had I thought about that, I would have ended up being too distracted about what I could achieve instead of doing the most important thing of all: showing up and doing the work.

Starting this was simple, and I didn't hold any high expectations, all I had to do was every Friday (without fail, and no matter what) write about my week, focusing on what I did, how I felt about it, and what I'd do next (although this wasn't set in stone, but the fact that I had to do this every Friday was set in stone, to the point where it was non-negotiable), and so far, I've managed to keep it up, without even realising it.

Now that I've come this far, I can start to think about my end goal: to turn this into a book. I've shown up, and I've done the work, through thick and thin, without overly dwelling on it, because if I focused on that end goal first, I would have been easily distracted. I would have focused on fame and fortune.

I would have spent way too much time thinking about becoming a best selling writer, with my book hitting all the stores, everyone reading it, and instantly loving it, simply because writing is an innate strength and talent for me. My ego would have been so huge that I wouldn't have actually written anything down, fixating on the idea of being a writer rather than on actually being a writer.

I would have focused so much on the destination that I wouldn't have taken the first step to actually get there, and I would have been overly ambitious with what I wanted to achieve, inevitably setting highly unrealistic goals to be done in a ridiculously short

amount of time. I would have been sold on the lifestyle instead of actually putting in the work. In fact, I would have done everything, but the thing that I needed to do: write.

Ironically, when someone else tells me how to write, and inevitably gives me a formula to follow, I struggle. I can only write if I freestyle it, editing it a bit once I've got the gist of what I'm trying to say, because formulaic writing stifles me, to the point where I'm only writing in order to tick boxes. It's the same if I write for an audience, which is why I've always struggled to keep a blog in the past, even though I know that I could easily keep one. It's the pressure of writing the things that they want to read, not necessarily what you want to read.

Throw in the metrics, and now you're just setting yourself up for disappointment, since me and the stats don't get along. The second metrics are involved, I inevitably and unintentionally throw in the towel, focusing on numbers that don't really matter, rather than on what I'm creating and putting out there. If I had to give any of my own advice, it'd be this: always write for yourself. That's it. Even if it is actually for someone else (i.e. a client, usually a publication), always write for yourself. Write the things that you'd want to read. Never mind trying to determine a target audience, because, like the stats, that won't work either, and you'll end up echoing thoughts in the exact same way as everyone else, which kind of defeats the purpose in the first place.

I say all this because if I actually did this with my original idea (start off with what you have, show up and do the work, no matter what, and don't even think about the end goal before you've even started), I would have been a lot further with it without really realising it. I would have been a bit more realistic with how I'd spend my time. Instead of chasing ideas, I'd be putting those ideas to work, building up on what I already knew instead of trying to master everything in one go, and expecting people to flock towards your offerings the second you release it.

I've also realised that my original idea is naturally more of a long term one, but the only thing I can do with it at this point (since it's way too late to actually execute it) is to tear it all down, and build it up again, this time, with no end goals or any expectations in mind, since I would simply set a non-negotiable time (i.e. every Wednesday morning, I will do some creative coding and publish it, no matter what), and I'd do it. Slowly over time, my end goal will start to form, but this time, I'd actually have the work to prove it instead of just ideas that I'm trying to chase.

So, that's been my week, and I can't believe that it's taken this long to realise that what I was doing all along could have easily been implemented within my business idea, but it's better late than never, plus writing that final reflective report will be a breeze.