

The Placement Diaries: Week 5 - Going With The Flow, Using LinkedIn, Attending the First Workshop, and Actually Putting Together a Business Plan

15th October 2021

Can you believe that it's basically been a month since I first started this EPY journey? Time flies really quick when it comes to stuff like this, and the journey so far has been... interesting, I suppose. Normally, I've been using to-do lists in order to keep track of what things I need to do, as well as what things I've done, but I personally find them counterproductive and counterintuitive since I rarely tick everything off from my list (I mean, has anyone ever successfully completed a to-do list without cheating and exploiting loopholes?), and when I do, I just add more things so that I can tick them off. I guess one downside to this is that it's hard to talk about the week if I don't have any evidence of what I've done, so I'm just recalling things off the top of my head.

However, ironically, I've been fairly productive this week for some reason, and I think it's because I decided to ditch the to-do list and actually get on with the things that need to get done instead of faffing about with a list, and stressing out about that list because if I don't get everything done within that day, it means that I haven't been as productive as I'd hoped to have been, so now, I've been thinking "right, I've gotta get this done" and I just do it, instead of hyperfixating on the list of things that need to get done. It's also helped me lower my expectations a bit since I can focus on the things that I can do within a certain amount of time instead of being really hard on myself and expecting to complete a month's worth of work within a week.

Some people swear by lists (which according to the MBTI, they're usually Thinking and Judging, xTJ), and others find them stifling (which according to the MBTI, they're usually Intuitive and Perceiving, xNP), and I've got a feeling that I fall into this category). I find them stifling, because they usually work against me (maybe I'm not using them right), so for me, I personally find it easier to go with the flow, and do things as I go along, but each to their own, and what might work for one person, might not work for others, which is why planning for anything seems stressful because something unexpected might happen, and you won't be able to do the thing that you planned on doing because of that unexpected thing, which means all your plans go out of the window.

Anyway, onto using LinkedIn. I first got it a couple of months ago, mainly to see what all the fuss was about, and so that I could apply to jobs without having to throw my CV into the void (spoiler alert: I did end up throwing my CV into the void). At first, I absolutely

despised LinkedIn (I used to lovingly call it StinkedIn because of how much I hated it), but now, I've gone used to it. Maybe I've become a boring old corporate drone (I hope not), or maybe because people treat it like it's Facebook, and the platform's a mix of professional and personal content, because there's nothing worse than appearing to be a robot who has no personality and is only programmed to speak about one topic and one topic only. I see that platform as a networking site, where you get to make connections with other people in your industry, as well as actually knowing what's going on in your industry.

I've come across a few satirical people (ADWEAK is one of my favourites, and their posts about onion-style headlines make me laugh every time), and a few normal ones, so everything's in moderation. However, one thing I absolutely hate on LinkedIn with a burning passion is when people create engagement poll posts where there's a question with a really obvious answer (you know, those ones that go "Should internships be paid? Click Like for Yes and click Love for No"), and honestly, this should be a rant in its own right because they're so ridiculous that I just can't even, and you can tell that the person who posted it just wants a little bit of love, as well as being liked by others.

Another thing I don't like about the platform are the fake "Graphic Designers" who work for Fiverr or some other freelancing service where freelancers are a dime a dozen (who are usually from a Southern Asian country, but I'm not criticising where they're from, since I'm basically an integrated foreigner, meaning that my grandparents came from one of those countries to come to the UK back in the 60's) because this cheapens the industry itself and real Graphic Designers (usually the ones who make the effort to get a degree and know Adobe like the back of their hand) aren't taken that seriously, especially if the client knows that they can get something done cheaper, which doesn't end well, because you get what you pay for, and usually, those "Graphic Designers" use pre existing stock images, so I wouldn't trust them.

Now, I'm no social media expert, but I think if you want to be successful on social media, you've gotta at least be yourself a bit. I've tried creating different online personas, but they've never worked for me because it feels fake, like I'm pretending to be someone that I'm not, and honestly, it's tiring trying to keep up with appearances and putting on a show in order to get followers of all things, and you can tell when someone's being fake because it shows right through the screen since they use a lot of templates and post very similar content to the next person to the point where everyone ends up posting the same damn thing that it gets hard to tell who's who anymore, and this is very common in the Tech Startup Twitter bubble/echo chamber (honestly, I can't even set foot in that space since it's swamped in lots and lots of homogeneity, with people (usually guys) building stuff in public (so that other people can nick their ideas and write them off as

their own, therefore creating even more noise that sounds the same), and with everyone saying the same things, usually boring old threads about why Javascript is good for literally everything ever, and basically saying "degree bad, Twitter good", which is actually very harmful to those who want to get a degree, or are in the middle of getting one, since it shows a lack of understanding of why they use the tools that they use, instead, using all of the shiny new toys that they can get their magpied eyes on), so if you want to go far, be yourself a bit and people will recognise you as the one who decides to be themselves, instead of the person who tries to fit in and does what everyone else does.

This week was also the first workshop out of the workshop series, and let's say that it was interesting, getting to know new people seemed exciting and daunting at the same time, but I mostly enjoyed it, and I actually felt like an extrovert for once (I'm not sure if it was because I had a coffee about an hour before the event which made me hyper as well as giving me jiggly legs, but I'm sure it was because of that), so it was all good. The fact that it happened later on in the day felt a bit magical for some reason (I don't know why, but doing things when it's dark (apart from sleeping) always feels different and magical, like you've got some sense of freedom, such as the feeling of going to work in the morning when it's still dark outside and everyone else is still asleep, or the feeling of getting home as its starting to get dark), but maybe I'm just a night owl in denial, with a morning person's routine. Who knows?

I also decided to use a piece of software called "Validate" (mainly because it was introduced and recommended to me), which basically helps you put together a business plan, step by step, and is interactive. I found it really helpful, and honestly, it feels much more easier creating a business plan that way instead of staring at an empty business plan template, and not knowing how to go about it, so that's really helped me so far since it takes a serious thing and makes it less serious.

So, that's been my week so far, now it's time to create some products and test out my new ideas, probably also reintroducing and repurposing my original idea so that it can work with my current idea of creating a freelance/small business hybrid, which is aimed at both businesses and customers, where I'll sell both products and services. One rubbish thing is that my Creative Cloud subscription has expired (and I really don't want to have to pay for it, even if I can get a huge discount on the software, if I know I can get it for free via the University, and I also don't want to have to commute just to be able to use the software on a fancy Mac), so I have no choice but to give the free alternatives a spin and see how they weigh up with the Industry Standard (like the customers are probably going to give a damn about how their lovely prints were made, and which software was used to create them).