Musings of A Modern Tech Startup Girl.

It's 2023 and we're living in the age of personal brand experts on Linkedin, Gen Z's "that's so problematic" attitude, job titles your parents don't understand and it's only going to get worse.

If you're scowling at your screen because you love working from home in your grubby oodie and hating Teresa from HR over Teams, then this article probably isn't for you. Although, I'm of the opinion that it's good to read, watch and listen to opinions that might not typically align with yours. I don't necessarily agree with David Icke's belief that we're secretly governed by an ancient race of amphibian overlords but I'm able to acknowledge his thoughts without them consuming my every moment, or feeling the need to tweet him to tell him he's wrong. Whatever Tiktok has told you, life isn't an algorithmically curated feed of things you like.

I work at a tech startup. I've been here 2.5 years and in that time we've doubled in size. I hope you've got the red flag police on speed dial, because here's the bombshell: we're not like a family, but we're pretty close. That's right, I like my colleagues and I like spending time with them inside and outside of work. We're all of the mindset that we want to create something huge, this isn't just a job, it's our community. I spend time with my colleagues on the weekends, we go to festivals together and we climb mountains, literally and figuratively. Our office isn't formal. We rinse each other, we wind each other up and frankly if we had a HR department the phone would be ringing off the hook. Yes, things might go totally tits up. Sometimes, they nearly have, but the things whispered in towered glass offices will always be worse than what you hear out loud in ours.

During a routine doom scroll of Linkedin, I saw a post from a Founder │ Tedx Speaker │ Entrepreneur, you get the gist, discussing that ''company culture'' was as follows:

1. Creating a safe space for employees

2. Open honest communication

3. Welcoming employee feedback

4. Great work-life balance

5. Flexibility and autonomy

6. Empathy, Respect and Kindness

7. Employee Appreciation and Recognition

8. Ongoing Growth and development opportunities

9. Not tolerating office politics and toxic behaviours

10. Supportive Leadership

The post also specifically mentioned that company culture is not ''pizza parties and days off on your birthday''. Imagine if you could have both! Well, we don't specifically have days off on our birthday, but we do get to choose where we go for lunch and when you like your colleagues, it's better than sitting home alone when all your other mates are at work. Our hiring process is arguably over the top and it has to be. We're still small enough that one bad mood affects us all. We've made some wrong decisions and others have decided that this place isn't for them, but that's not unique to us. We are a curated blend of energies designed to stay consistent, to work well together and suit spiritually. What we have works because our founders have created an honest, open and safe environment where we all work hard together, and lead by example. They take accountability when they fuck up and support us when we do. No one is constantly overworked or stressed, or expected to stay till 11pm and still be in at 9am the next day. We're promoted internally, have regular pay reviews, are given responsibility and autonomy. I'm being paid to

write this, but that's because it's 11.26am on a Thursday, I'm at work and my boss is standing over my shoulder telling me what to write. Or is he?

We're in the office every day. We're told hybrid/remote work is the best way to provide a company with a "good culture" but is that just an easy way out for the CEO who can't be bothered to learn their employees names? It takes more effort to create an office environment that makes people happy, so why not let them work at home instead? But look, when your company offers you the chance to work remotely from the Costa Rican office for 3 months of the year, do you say no? Of course not. There are so many benefits to remote work but I do think constant remote working is denying us human interaction that we so desperately need. We are not evolutionarily designed to sit staring at a screen in a room alone all day. Staring at a screen in an office full of other people though? Definitely! I see my points are contradictory, but if you're going to sit behind a screen all day, it's better to be surrounded by people you like who are doing it too, or in the Costa Rican jungle.

Companies that give people the ultimate flexibility to travel whilst working will need to become more mainstream for the next generation of workers who will expect nothing less. 'Working-from-home-but-not-so-far-away-that-you-couldn't-come-into-the-office-at-a-moments-notice' isn't real flexibility. We're not quite there yet, but we're a young company who changes daily and if we're not in the same room, it's not getting done.

The evolution of remote work is for sure, not going anywhere, but the idea of an office in the metaverse is terrifying. Frankly, "Tom, your mic isn't on, we can't hear you" is bad enough. I hope I'm retired on a beach looking after chickens before I'm glitching in and out of a virtual office. It's unlikely because I'm only 29 and the rate of our job economy is transitioning faster than my grey hairs coming through, which is still alarmingly fast.

I'm not suggesting that going to work for a startup is the perfect solution. There's shit people, ideas and businesses out there. You have to be okay with constant change, a workload with fluctuating priorities, lack of structure, limited resources and a lot of freedom that comes with a lot of responsibility. It's certainly not for everyone and that's a good thing. I am one of the lucky ones, but I also battle regularly with my desire for structure and the need to rebel against traditions and authority for authorities sake. I wake up in the morning happy to see my pals at work and I don't get the dreaded Sunday scaries anymore. The days of polyester suits by the water cooler before you sit back in your cubicle thinking about what's for lunch are gone. They're not, but they are for me, and maybe they could be for you too. If you're reading this knowing you're sick of the anxiety you get when your boss messages you ''Quick chat?'' with no context, hanging back so you can walk to Pret without chatting with Mike from Accounts, taking calls at the weekend, feeling undervalued and like your soul is being sucked from your body then keep reading.

At a stage in your life where you're unsure what to do, you don't know who you want to be, you've left university and found yourself in a position for the first time, where you have to make a decision that wasn't already decided for you? Too many subscribe to the mentality of ''I don't have to do anything I don't want to do''. That isn't true. It's never been true. It will never be true.

Let's get one thing straight, there are things you shouldn't do if you don't want to, like pretending to smoke blunts to impress someone or giving your weird uncle Julian a foot rub on Boxing Day. But applying this mentality to everything creates narcissists so fuelled by their own anxiety of failure that going to the big shop requires hours of decompression time. I too have felt the overwhelming presence of the big Tesco panic and its harsh fluorescent lighting, so I'm speaking from experience. It's time we humble ourselves - contrary to what your horoscope says, you're not that special.

That isn't to say you're not smart, talented, liked and capable. You might just need to try a bit harder. That said, it's a tough market out there, so in an instance of charming irony, we're hosting a pizza party! It's actually more of a jobs event where you can come and meet cool founders of super cool brands who are hiring irl. Change your life. Work in a startup. Or for someone who makes coffee out of mushrooms. If you

want to spend your days happier, fulfilled, with people you like and get paid, it's worth a look, isn't it? November 1st. [Get a ticket](#).