

The Profile: The entrepreneur who's not sure he's an a**hole and the company allergic to capitalism

OK, I've been thinking about this a lot lately.

How are so many investors, employees, and even customers getting duped by really dysfunctional startups? The most recent example of this trend being [Fyre Media](#), the company that imploded after its disastrous attempt at hosting a music festival in the Bahamas. On [a leaked all-staff conference call](#), it became clear the CEO had been misleading employees, telling them that Comcast had invested money in the startup, when in fact, it had not.

But Fyre is only one example in a string of smoke-and-mirror companies: [Thinx](#) preached feminism while condoning a toxic office culture, [1-Page](#) made false promises about the functionality of its unworkable product, and then there's the catastrophic story of a startup that I'm working on with a colleague as we speak. Stay tuned.

Bottom line: It's so easy to *want* to believe some startup is changing the world. If you hear the CEO repeatedly say they're, "revolutionizing," "democratizing" or "radically transforming" something, run.

In other news, my friend/inspiration/powerhouse Lauren Patrick let me [write a rant about New York](#) on her awesome site called, "[Pretty Southern](#)." If you like mint juleps & Chick-fil-A, you'll love P.S.

People to Know.

The entrepreneur who's not sure he's an ahole:** Uber's CEO Travis Kalanick paces a lot. At the company's HQ, there's a corridor that he calls "the path." "In the daytime you'll see me here," he says. "I'll do 45 miles a week." Now that he's not accidentally showing up to "[Babes & Balls](#)" parties (ok, ok, LAST time I'm referencing it, I promise), he's been doing a lot of thinking and pacing and reflecting. There's a moment in this profile where he asks a pretty interesting question: "Am I an asshole? I'd love to know. I don't think I'm an asshole. I'm pretty sure I'm not." Obviously, there are two bigger questions here. One, do you have to be an asshole in order to build a company like Uber -- or Tesla. Or Apple. Or McDonald's. And two, how far can you go before it backfires? Read his "red line" analogy below and decide for yourself.

"In a car, you can go fast. But you have a red line. You want to push into that red line and see what that engine's made of. You might find you've got more under the hood than you thought. But you can't sit over the red line for too long. And everybody's got their own personal red line."
[\["Riding Shotgun With Uber CEO Travis Kalanick," Fortune\]](#)

The (first) daughter longing for attention: When Ivanka Trump was 9 years old, she walked past a newsstand and saw a headline that said “Love on the Rocks” over a picture of her parents. Divorce isn’t easy for any kid, let alone one so public you have reporters asking you which parent you’d live with after the split. Brutal AF. Her family was falling apart, but this man was her *father*. So Ivanka rewrote the ugly facts into a beautiful story. Her parents were a perfect couple that just grew apart. Their first encounter was a “chance, storybook meeting” (Welllllllll, Donald actually saw her mom with a bunch of models and waved them over to his table. So, you know, more modern-day storybook meeting). She convinced herself the divorce was a good thing because it “brought me closer to my father.” Every day, Ivanka would see him before school, call him during school, and visit him after school. She even memorized the names of all his buildings, who lived there, and how much they paid. This profile shows that unlike the other women in Donald’s life, Ivanka is the only one who has never lost his attention.

“After the divorce, Ivanka made a study of keeping her father fully engaged with her, and now she remains the one woman in the world with whom Donald Trump hasn’t slowly fallen out of love.” [[“The People’s Princess,” New York Magazine](#)]

The president whisperer: Let’s talk about France’s First Lady Brigitte Macron. I’ve heard a lot of people refer to the 24-year age difference between her and her husband/now president as “the most French thing ever.” But after reading this profile, it seems like it’s not. (Background: Brigitte met her future husband, Emmanuel, when he was 15 and she was his 39-year-old drama teacher, married with three children. YEAH.) The French are freaking out, describing her as a “cougar,” a “grandmother,” and a “bimbo.” Brigitte is nothing like the country’s previous first ladies who have been virtually invisible. She’s been active in Emmanuel’s campaign, helping him develop his stance on issues she knows well, including education, culture and women’s rights. They have a nontraditional way of doing things, and don’t expect this to stop.

“She will have a say in what she wants to be. She will have a presence, a voice, a look. She will have it privately by my side as she always has, but she will have a public role because that’s how it goes.” [[“France’s First Lady, a Confidante and Coach, May Break the Mold,” The New York Times](#)]

Companies to Watch.

The do-gooder company under pressure to be more capitalist: Working at Etsy sounds sweet. Here’s a preview: “There are green walls fed by rainwater, solar panels on the roof, and numerous spaces dedicated to yoga, meditation, printmaking, and cooking, among other modes of employee self-actualization.” lol The closest I got to doing yoga at work was when I had to crawl under my desk and reach forward to plug in my charger. ANYWAY. That’s not the point. The point is that Etsy built a reputation for its ethical, do-gooder practices -- so much so that it became a certified B Corp in 2012. On Etsy’s first day on the Nasdaq, its market valued doubled to more than \$3 billion. All great. Yoga continues. BUT. In the next two years, the stock fell 63%.

Not great. This caught the attention of activist investors, who came in and accused the CEO of “overspending and failing to take investors’ concerns seriously.” The CEO was fired, 80 employees were laid off, and the company might have to give up its B Corp status. Bottom line: It’s real hard out there for a socially minded company to thrive in the public markets.

“I’m not crying. I’m just allergic to capitalism.” [[“The Barbarians Are at Etsy’s Hand-Hewn, Responsibly Sourced Gates.” Bloomberg](#)]

The company making it ‘easier for you to be smarter’: Do you guys subscribe to [the Skimm](#)? The Skimm is a daily newsletter with more than 5 million readers, including Sarah Jessica Parker and Oprah Winfrey. Must be good, right? The whole idea is that it breaks down the news of the day into conversational tidbits that are easy to understand. Eighty percent of its readers are young, professional women. In this article (which is entirely too dramatic), the writer says what I’ve heard from many: It’s a little patronizing. Here’s what ends up happening when you’re trying to be cute while explaining complicated topics: “What to say when your friend asks what time you can get drinks after work... I’ll be free earlier than expected. Just like Chelsea Manning.” Or “You’re still hearing a lot about Michael Flynn. Right...who’s he again?” Yet the company has raised \$16 million in venture funding and managed to register more than 100,000 people to vote in the 2016 election. I’m personally not a fan of the tone, but can we really be mad at something aiming to inform people who otherwise may not have gone out of their way to read about Trump’s corporate tax rate plan? [As my coworker Val [pointed out](#), if you’re looking for a replacement, Fortune’s [Most Powerful Women newsletter](#) is killer ;)]

“Some stories weren’t meant to be viewed through a lens of bottomless sangria.” [[“The Skimm Is the Ivanka Trump of Newsletters.” Slate](#)]

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