

Headline vs. Reality

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5-6 minutes

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Headline: Employee leaves company — things must be wrong.

Reality: Employee leaves company — to follow his heart.

The reality of most employee departures is far more boring than headlines might lead you to believe. I learned that yesterday as I woke up to an article about my decision to leave Lambda School, while on vacation with my wife in Tokyo.

I have gotten many questions about the departure, so I decided to just write about it. I will tell you about my decision to pursue [Chapter One](#) full time and my departure from Lambda School as a full-time employee (I am still a very supportive investor).

I should warn you that the story involves absolutely no drama. If that's your jam as a reader, there are plenty of publications to support these indulgences, but I prefer happy stories to sad stories and Pixar to TMZ.

This story won't sell subscriptions. I am not writing a headline that sits behind a paywall so I can run performance marketing campaigns to drive revenue. That is the business of many publications today who are doing their best to survive in the challenging world of journalism, which I appreciate and understand.

I will instead tell you about my realization that I want to be a full-time investor. I will tell you about how my wife and I want to start a family. And I will tell you about how I basically had three full-time jobs for the past 5 years and simply need time to "do me".

This is literally a story about someone who is following his heart, which I probably should have done much earlier in my career.

December 31st, 2019:

I sat with my family at New Years Eve dinner and we went around the table talking about our 2020 goals. I have a really big family (4 brothers and 3 sisters and most of us are married). We are all super close, so these conversations are always funny, emotional, and honest.

My turn to share 2020 goals. I got really nervous as I told the entire table that I wanted to start a family with my wife, Simone. This was the first time that I *told everyone* and Simone started crying happy tears because she wants to start a family too and I had never said that out loud. It was one of those moments I'll always remember.

The next morning Simone and I talked about what starting a family meant for us and we realized that life is going to change really fast soon. 2020 will be our last year to travel and *do all the things we want to do* before we begin our new life as parents.

The past five years have been crazy for me.

I joined Tinder in 2015 and had an awesome ride. While at Tinder, I was a business school student at UCLA, studying at nights and on the weekends and in any free time that I had. I had also been running my fund, Chapter One.

When I left Tinder, I didn't take a single day off before starting my new job.

More important than any of that, we got married in 2018, bought our first home, and got a dog. A lot of this fell on Simone's shoulders.

I had a realization a few weeks ago at my Grandfather's funeral (not a sad story, he was 95 and lived an amazing life). I was listening to stories about how he started his own company, how he put his family first and worked hard to pursue his own dreams.

Something about the moment made me realize that I haven't had a break in five years. I didn't take one day off between leaving Tinder and starting my new job. And I neglected my own dream of starting a company because I've been on a more traditional career path.

Be a Director of Product. Then become a VP of Product. Then become a Chief Product Officer.

I have been running on the startup treadmill long enough to realize a traditional career path isn't what I actually want.

Life realizations are tough because they often mean you have to say goodbye to friends and teammates and companies that you love. If you work in our industry long enough, this will happen to you.

Could I be an amazing Chief Product Officer? Maybe. Do I care to find out? Maybe not.

I want to be an Investor.

I raised my own fund, Chapter One, and I am building my own business. I am following my heart and creating something from scratch.

"Employee leaves company to follow his heart." This isn't a headline you will read because, frankly, it's not very clickable.

I'm writing this story on a train to Kyoto with my wife, on a vacation I should have taken long ago, as I prepare for my new future.

My story won't drive paywall views or sell subscriptions.

That's because reality is usually much more boring and nuanced than headlines — *and maybe we should all be happy about that.*

I'm the happiest I've ever been and following my heart. I hope this inspires you to do the same.

JMJ