The Placement Diaries: Week 32 - What If I…?

22nd April 2022

I think I've reflected on the past a bit too much to the point where it's become extremely repetitive, and to be honest, a bit boring to write about pretty much the same things all the time, so I'm going to try something new. What if I focused on reflecting towards the future instead of always reflecting on the past, and resenting myself for things which I can no longer change? I think it'd open up a whole host of opportunities for me, since it'd be a bit similar to setting goals, just without the restrictions that goals seem to have, plus it'd make me a hell of a lot more curious as a person. I think I'll play around with this type of reflection which I didn't know existed, just to see what happens, since there's a lot of possible outcomes for this.

What if I didn't take this opportunity to do a placement year up? How would I have felt if I just went straight into my final year instead? Would I have done better or worse with my degree? At the moment, I don't really have the answers, but if I did go straight into my final year, I wouldn't have had that all important experience that this opportunity has given to me. Sure, there have been times where I wished I skipped the placement year altogether, but where would that have left me? I would have graduated with hardly any experience, probably having had no choice but to settle for a minimum wage job that you don't need a degree for. However, by having had this chance to try out the world of freelancing and self employment for a year has really thrown me into the deep end, as well as allowing me to test the waters to see if this is something that I well and truly want to do as a career.

At the moment, I'm finding freelancing a bit frustrating since it's basically perpetual job hunting, not to mention the insane amount of uncertainty which comes with it, something I wasn't fully aware of before I got into this. Reading about freelancing (and consequently, watching other people be freelancers) is one thing, but doing it yourself is a completely different thing, since you're experiencing it first hand, with those experiences varying by person. Whilst one person will absolutely love freelancing, another will loathe it, raring to get a normal job just to be able to have some stability in their careers. At the moment, I feel a lot like the latter.

What if I just got a regular job and did that for my placement year instead? It'd probably depend on the job and the company itself. If it was a role that was specifically designed for placement students at a large company, I might have enjoyed it since I would have got paid for it, as well as getting experience within the industry that I wanted to get into, along with seeing if working for that company in that specific industry would have suited

me, as much as I would have thought. However, if I did some random job, not even remotely linked to what I wanted to do, mainly doing that job for the sake of having something to do during the placement year, I wouldn't have enjoyed it since it would end up feeling like a colossal waste of time instead.

What if I didn't choose to go into the creative industries, but chose another industry instead? What would I have chosen to do, and why? I would have probably gone into the tech industry since it is highly lucrative, and since I have a keen interest in some areas within that industry. Jobs would be easier to come by, and there'd be a higher chance of me securing a good job with a good company, along with having that all important job security, however, it's also highly competitive, so my chances of getting in there are highly slim.

What if I did a degree apprenticeship instead of doing just a degree? I'd be getting both the qualification and that all important work experience at the same time, so I'd get the best of both worlds, plus I wouldn't have any student debt looming over me. I'd forgo trying to get a crummy part time job in order to secure some work experience as well as being able to have the money to try to get by, and I'd get into the industry a lot sooner, whilst also getting paid for it.

I'd have about 4 years of actual work experience before I'd graduate, and I guess *this* is what employers mean when they want someone to have a few years of experience just to get that graduate entry level job, something which I've realised way too late, so if I could go back in time, I would have definitely taken this option up. I did consider it before I went to university, but I didn't specifically look at degree apprenticeships (especially with large companies), so instead, I did a regular "apprenticeship" (probably just an excuse to get away with paying me less) at a small business instead, which ended up leaving a sour taste in my mouth, and put me off that option for a long time.

What if I do a degree apprenticeship after I graduate? Well, it'd probably render my current degree useless, but I guess there's no harm in realising that what you originally wanted wasn't cracked up to be, plus it's normal for people to change careers, so I guess I could give it a try, by knowing that I'd be at a job where I'd be constantly learning and improving, which is good, along with this being something that would probably be easier for me to get.

Well, that's it. I could do this all day, but I'm not going to, since I'll end up thinking about these decisions, and how different my life would have been today if I chose to do some of them, a bit similar to a "choose your own adventure" story, where there's multiple endings based on the decisions that you make. If nothing else, it's just food for thought.