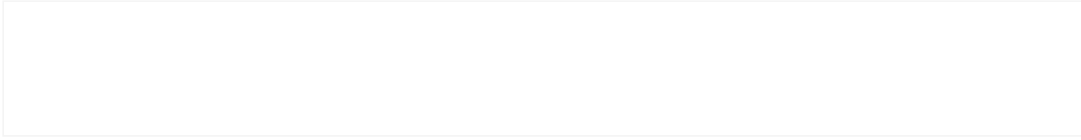
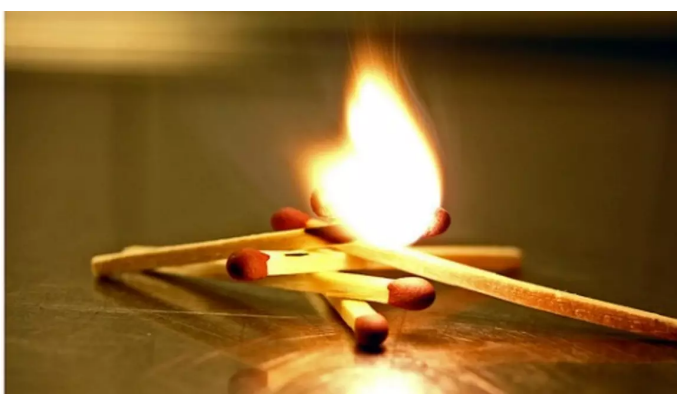


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03-13-12 | **STARTUP REPORT**

8 Reasons To Choose A Startup Over A Corporate Job

Sure, a corporate gig might (initially) pay more than a startup and come with cushy benefits, but there are real, career-defining reasons to heed the siren song of a startup.



BY KERRIN SHELDON
9 MINUTE READ




You've graduated from college, diploma in hand (or in the mail), and you have a couple of job offers on the table. Other than being one of the lucky graduates in a weak economy, you have a choice to make. On one hand is a high-paying entry level position at a reputable brand in your field. On the other hand is a job offer from a small startup that is just kicking off. You've seen their product, believe in their mission, and like their approach, but aren't sure you want to take on the risk of working at a startup. You're leaning toward that corporate job and good pay with nice benefits. The smart choice.

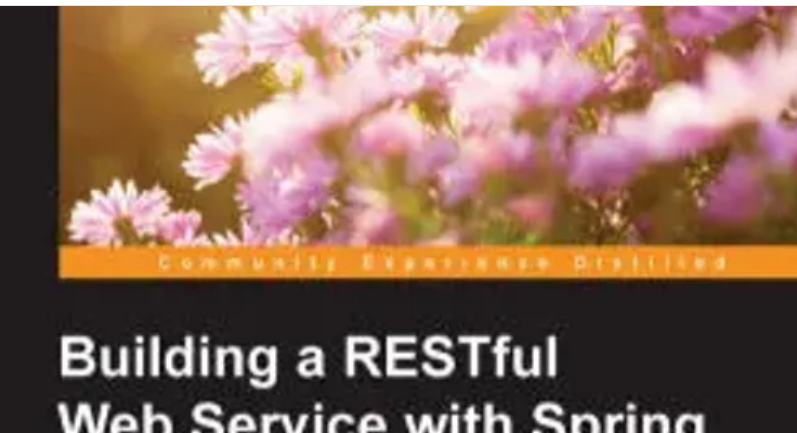
Or is it?

Here are 8 reasons why you should take the plunge and enter the startup world instead.

1. You'll have more responsibility.

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When I joined Wanderfly, the core team was pretty much already in place, with directors of business development, marketing, and site production already on board. However, graduating with a writing degree and having extensive travel experience, I was able to join Wanderfly as a writer, traveler, and content manager to make sure they had a voice and a direction in the travel field (they had the tech-savvy swing taken care of). After just a few weeks, I became the de facto man for writing, editing, and blogging needs. A few weeks later, I was part of a content management division that included me and myself. Content needs, upgrades, and management all came to me and my little island of responsibility. This pushed me to be more versatile, more reliable, and more productive than in any other project I'd undertaken—in other jobs or at any time during school. At a bigger company, I may not have been given the same opportunity or had an entire company rely on the work that I did. Was I the most important part of the team? Definitely not. But was I an integral part of it? For sure. And that's an empowering place to be right out of school.

2. You'll be given more opportunities.

I probably don't need to tell you that most startup jobs won't pay as well as some of the bigger corporate and business jobs. You (or your degree) may be worth more than a startup is able to pay. But working at a startup offers a different type of reward: an incentive-based system that isn't based on dollars, but rather in skills attained and opportunities seized. The experience will outweigh the pay cut. I (almost) guarantee it. When I first started at Wanderfly, all I had to my writer name were a few pieces in local publications. One year on, and I've had a column on the Huffington Post, been featured on *National Geographic*, published over 150 blog posts for Wanderfly, and (look, Mom!) an article on *Fast Company*. Other than being a thinly veiled explain-a-brag, this convinces me that I've had more opportunities to grow as a writer and build toward any future undertaking. I know that if I would have sought out a smaller position at a higher-paying and recognizable travel company I would still be reading through the slush pile of submissions. No thanks.

3. You'll be able to do a lot of different things.

One of the biggest complaints I hear from peers who have entered into a more-structured, corporate position is that they are generally stuck with their main task and don't get to branch out into other areas. Whether it's writing, designing, filling out spreadsheets, or any other task, it's usually a one-person-fits-one-task kind of position. If that sounds like your startup job, then, I hate to tell you, but you're doing something wrong. Working at a startup will allow you to try on a lot of different hats, even that weird one that you didn't think you would ever like, but find out that you did. Looking back on the past year that I've worked at Wanderfly, I've lost track of all the different tasks that I've been able to take part in, from video editing to destination categorization. I came into Wanderfly as a writer, but now I feel comfortable in a lot of different areas, even explaining to the developers how I broke their site and need their help to fix it. All in code-talk.

4. You will learn from true innovators.

People who start their own business have a different mental and professional makeup than those who have never gone off to create something of their own. Entrepreneurs are defined by seeing a problem and thinking of an innovative and original way of addressing it. Because of this innovative nature, entrepreneurs are some of the best people to learn from. They approach problems differently, are constantly finding solutions, and are driven to make the most out of their time and work. The Wanderfly cofounders continually challenge me when I present a problem because they often view it from a different perspective than I do, giving me a wider appreciation for the different avenues that exist for finding solutions. Innovation is more than creativity. It's action and reaction, solving problems in a new, enlightening way. Every successful startup has true innovators, and if you find the right ones, you'll learn plenty.

5. Your work will be recognized (as will your failures).

If I've learned anything from watching TV shows and movies, it's that if you work at a big company, chances are that all of your hard work is going to be ignored by the boss or someone else is going to snag the credit. But at a startup, it's nearly impossible not to notice a job well done or to give credit where credit is due. If you succeed, the small team will recognize it

minimized. And when the rest of the team says “We couldn’t have done it without you,” you can be confident that they mean it.

6. You’ll work in an awesome atmosphere.

Let me count the ways:

- I wear jeans to work. In the summer, I wear shorts and sandals.
- If there isn’t at least one really good joke in an hour, it’s probably a slow day.
- Everyone else who works at a startup has the same drive and excitement for creation as you do.
- The startup community (and, in Wanderfly’s case, the travel community) is a great, close-knit group. All around you, people are coming up with innovative solutions to age-old problems or making that new tool that simplifies or enhances your life in some way. That entrepreneurial spirit is contagious, and if you don’t feel it or catch it, then you’re actively avoiding it.
- You can drink beer at work. But only on special occasions. Wink.

7. You’ll learn to be frugal.

Working at startup probably means that money is tight. Whether you’ve been showered with investor love or the founder has a really wealthy uncle, the company will still be thinking of ways to do more with less. No extravagance, no frills, no extraneous booze cruises (heartbreaking, I know). Instead, the business development intern will learn how to design and code the blog, the writer will sometimes do the dishes, and at the start you’ll find a way to fit nine people around an eight person table (hint: extra chair). This frugality and monetary responsibility will undoubtedly bleed into your own life as well, and you’ll end up finding new ways to find fulfillment other than burning the money you earn. Instead, you’ll probably discover a joy in creating and doing, rather than consuming. You’ll find happiness in being part of a team that is trying to make other people’s lives easier, more fun, and more manageable. Your entire life will take on a meaning of creation, and you’ll be more energized, both physically and mentally, to take on new hobbies and start your own personal projects. In the startup world, it’s all about creating more and consuming less (this does not apply to Thai food or burritos).

8. You’ll be instilled with the value of hard work, ownership, and self-sustainability.

Maybe more important than any other benefit of working at a startup is the realization that hard work, creative thinking, and tenacity are worth a whole lot. Once you’ve created something of your own, something tangible and whole, something you can touch, feel, or use, you really begin to appreciate personal ownership. For those who do not actively create, or are continuously creating for someone else’s benefit, it’s difficult to understand the great importance of personal ownership and the liberty needed to pursue that ownership. Working at a startup and spreading the news of your team’s product, a product that you helped bring into existence, instills the value of that ownership and gives you pride in your work. It is this pride, in your team’s hard-work and ability, that teaches you the importance of protecting those who do create innovative solutions and take risks.

Working at a startup also means that you and your small team are the only people responsible for your success. For some, that may trigger a response to go crawl into a corner and hope someone comes and spoon-feeds them their paycheck. For others, it’s the greatest motivation there is. To be cut off from relying on others to provide for you will undoubtedly surface and a determination that you didn’t know you had. At a startup, that natural wish to be self-sustainable is magnified and

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—Kerrin Sheldon is a writer, photographer, and filmmaker, and is the content manager for [Wanderfly](#). He prefers to be underwater in Belize, but also likes climbing, running, cycling, and is strongly considering taking up flying. Find him on on Twitter [@kerrinsheldon](#) or on the brand new [Wanderfly](#).

[Image: Flickr user [*Kicki*](#)]

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kerrin is the co-founder of [Humanity.TV](#), a new online series focused on authentic travel. A filmmaker, photographer, and writer, Kerrin is currently shooting documentary shorts in Southeast Asia [More](#)

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