The Placement Diaries: Week 29 - Having a Niggling Feeling About Becoming a Freelancer

1st April 2022

Never mind the date, it's just a pure coincidence, because what I'm feeling is actually genuine, and it's a feeling that I've had for the past month. It's about my doubts of becoming a freelancer, especially now that I'm working on my second commission, which is to create some logos for a niche social network. I received this opportunity through word of mouth (this time, on a niche platform), and gleefully took it up, because when you're starting out, you have to grab whatever opportunities come your way.

So, I took it up, negotiated a price (£300 for the project, paid in two, where I received half of the money before starting the work, and will hopefully receive the rest once I'm done), and got to work, whilst also dealing with trying to gain traction on the freelancing platforms which I'd signed up for. Sounds pretty straightforward, right?

Well, despite having not one, but (almost) two clients under my belt, I can't help but wonder if freelancing is right for me at all, since it's starting to feel like job hunting x100 where I do some work, and then look out for the next opportunity. Constantly on the lookout for the next opportunity all the time, wondering if it's even possible to have a stable income from freelancing itself since I'm literally scouting out opportunities, essentially throwing my CV into the void, although this time, it's just my portfolio and offers which I'm throwing in there.

I'm also starting to notice that I feel a lot less passionate in creating illustrations, now that there's money and other external factors involved, since I'm longer creating what I want to create.

I'm creating things to satisfy the needs of the client, who will then inevitably and invariably modify the work beyond recognition, in a way which will annoy me, and make me wonder why I even decided to do any of this in the first place. It's probably just teething problems at the moment since I've only been freelancing for a month, but it's more of a gnawing feeling at this point, since I'm beginning to wonder if this is what I well and truly want to do with my life, to monetise the things which bring me joy, which has become the general advice that anyone will give you.

Do what you love, and you'll never have to work a day in your life, they say. Well, I'm doing that right now, especially with freelancing, and let's say that it's slowly becoming something that I don't really enjoy anymore since I know that I'm competing with

countless other freelancers out there, who will inevitably do the work insanely cheap that you begin to wonder if it's even legal to offer your services that low, never mind underselling yourself to the point of exploitation, by working for mere pennies an hour, since it's just a side hustle, and you're doing what you love anyway, so it shouldn't really matter whether you get paid or not, because hey, it's your dream job after all.

I'm also realising that maybe I'm just chasing an old dream, past its due date, similar to eating stale cake which has been on the shelf for the last couple of years, green with mould, you'd be surprised it's still edible, although it does start to leave a sour aftertaste in your mouth (not that I've eaten cake with an insanely long shelf life, nor would I want to). Maybe what my aspirations were a few years ago have now changed, now that I'm living the life that I could only dream of back then.

Pair that with a constantly growing disillusionment towards mainstream social media platforms, and you're ready to just have a plain old normal and stable lifestyle which everyone else constantly runs away from in order to pursue freelancing, especially since freelancing is promoted as an aspirational lifestyle where there's 100% flexibility and freedom because you're working for yourself, and not for a boss. The reality (as I see it, in my experience) is that you're no longer working for a boss. You're working for 100 little ones in the form of clients, both existing and potential ones, all the time. You have to be a one person team, whether you like it or not, working in departments where you'd never normally work in. You have to deal with lots of uncertainty, something which I've come to realise that I'd rather not deal with, since I essentially want structure, and a routing, as well as having a steady income.

I don't care if I'm "playing it safe" in the eyes of hustling power and money hungry entrepreneurs, who essentially live and breathe money. I want to "play it safe" so that I know what to expect, and so that I can have a decent work life balance instead of constantly worrying about money all the time, or just becoming so obsessed with power and money to the point where it's just all I talk about.

Having a steady job with a steady income, so that I can live comfortably, is probably what I want, so that I don't have to constantly market myself (which is what I hate, and don't even get me started on becoming a content creator), and having to monetise my hobbies/favourite past times which would normally bring me joy and clarity, not to mention creating a personal brand, something that I'm so favourably against that I wouldn't wish it upon my worst enemy, since it just flattens you into a one dimensional being who can only do what they say they can do. Maybe I'm meant to be a generalist, constantly scratching that curiosity itch where I do things which I find interesting to the

point where I don't find them interesting anymore, in which I'd move on to something else which I find interesting.

Being a freelancer and having a personal brand is something that I'm starting to resent, since I'm slowly starting to realise that maybe this isn't what I want. All the young folks (I say this like I'm 50, but I'm actually a part of the current young folks, yet it feels like I'm out of place, despite only being 20 years old and having my whole life ahead of me), the idealists, and the hustling money and power hungry entrepreneurs can say what they want about my opinions and experience about realising that self-employment and freelancing isn't really for me, but I don't care what they have to say.

Like most young people, I listened to them, being sold a dream of this alternative lifestyle, and I know that I've been officially doing this for a month, but it didn't turn out how I had imagined it. In fact, it's the complete opposite of what I imagined. It's like having an extremely quiet office job where there's literally nothing going on, where you just have to pretend to be busy in order to make the time pass.

When I say I want to have a job, I don't mean working in a quiet office for a small business (I've been there, done that, and I never want to experience it again), I mean working for a large company (dare I say, a large corporation?) where you know what's going on, and what to expect, as well as having plenty of work to be getting on with, but not a ridiculous amount of work where you have to pull 80 hour work weeks just to get things done, and being constantly on the brink of burnout. What I want is something that's in between, where I can just go to work (like physically go into work), do what I need to do, and to just be able to leave work at work, so that I can have a decent work life balance, whilst also having a decent salary. Is that too much to ask for?

Well, that's been my doubtful week, but I've had to air these feelings, even if no one will read them, because I've had these doubts for a while now, to the point where it's starting to get annoying. However, what I've realised is that the grass isn't always greener on the other side, you're basically damned if you, damned if you don't.

Maybe, what I've realised, is that just because you absolutely love doing something doesn't mean that you have to try to make money off it, because the second you do, it starts to look a lot like a job, and there goes all your fun that you once had by doing that thing, since you've now tied external pressures to it, and you have to do it, whether you want to do it or not. It's a bit ironic since I write an entry weekly, but it's mainly for my own future reference, as well as having a bit of a log for the year. However, I'm doing it for me, and no one else, because if I did it for others, I would have stopped a long time ago. It feels freeing when you do things for yourself.