

GENESIS

27 February 2021

London, UK

5am

OLIVER TITMUS

12 months ago to the day, I flew my sister to the Seychelles.

I was an FO for one of the large Middle Eastern airlines, where I had been based for almost 5 years. Over the course of 3 months in 2020, I found myself being made redundant, selling c.40% of my possessions and shipping the remainder back in a shipping container; living with my parents whilst my conscious state caught up with my new physical situation.

It would be fair to say that the onset of Covid on our industry was plain to see - flights slowly being replaced with 'SBY', radio chatter highlighting the PoB as less than the total operating crew and landing an Airbus so empty, it could easily have been confused as base training. With a lifestyle based on traversing international borders, aircrew effectively had a prophetic insight into the future as the restrictions spread westward and the pandemic took its toll on our livelihoods.

My story is not unique. Nor was the sense of loss I felt on repatriation back to the UK, both in terms of identity and the financial implications such a reality brought; not because flying defined me as a person - but that the subsequent fallout, lifestyle changes and the pace at which this occurred took some time to accept. It is something echoed across the industry, and not exclusive to me or crew alone.

14 days in quarantine offered time for reflection. For the duration of Covid, I had been grappling with the feeling that I was a passenger in my own life. Where the external forces influencing the greatest changes I was experiencing were beyond my control; outside my sphere of influence. As a pilot this was particularly challenging to accept since there was no contingency planing, lateral offset or upset recovery I could initiate to avoid or remove myself from this undesired state and achieve an alternative outcome.



People start a business for different reasons. Mine was two-fold, firstly to remove myself from the new financial straightjacket I now found myself in and secondly, to utilise the HR phrase, try and 'pivot'; channel some of the frustration with the uncontrollable parts of my life into something where I would have some say over the outcome. And, if it didn't come to fruition, hope that I might learn something on 'the journey' or have a story to tell on my CV. I wasn't alone - according to Companies House, 84,758 more businesses were created in the UK in 2020 vs. 2019 - an increase of 12%. Following a similar theme to evolutionary adaptation, the changing environment, upheaval of a global pandemic and the abundance of time during lockdown has given many the impetus to explore an alternative path.

Theologian Thomas Fuller once commented '*The darkest hour is just before the dawn*'.

The darkest hour being 5am, today on a February morning; the dawn, the initiation of plan B.

So what defines our first step to making an alternative plan?

I've detailed some of my early considerations below.

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First off, know yourself as an entrepreneur before you start. The inside out revolution starts within and understanding your personality traits constructs a good exposé of your own strengths, weaknesses and the skillsets you possess.

Write them down, brainstorm or ask others for input. For most of us, years of competency based learning and discussions about the NDB approach we could have done better with one wing, a disruptive passenger and a hydraulic failure should provide a good foundation for understanding **YOU**.

Spend time reflecting. Sometimes a good idea can materialise when you're making a coffee or walking. Something I've learnt this week is not to consciously put time aside to do this, rather plant a seed and let it subconsciously filter through your mind like a cafetiere of strong roast coffee. It can often be more productive than sitting at a table forcibly thinking about what ideas you might pursue. As pilots, most of us have a conditioned mindset, but from an individual perspective, the idea a friend is pursuing may not be appropriate to you; trawling through LinkedIn can broaden an understanding of what your peers are doing right now, but not all will be applicable to you. So find your superpower and leverage it. If you don't feel you have one, use the time to study a sector and understand it to give you one. I did Geology at degree level so some of my considerations this week came from the skills and knowledge I'd developed here.

In its simplest form -

An insight is really just a 'new thought'.

Mind + New Thought + Consciousness = New Reality.

Understand your motivation, understand your goals. The clearer you are about this, the better your chance of achieving it. Whilst currently working for a supermarket, I recognise that this alone will not be sufficient to pay bills and training loans over the long term and so finance is a key motivator for me. But not the only one. Money alone as a business driver can promote risky strategy - be cautious.

Ask yourself what you wish to achieve. For most of us, the dream of sailing a yacht down the Grand Canal in Venice like Daniel Craig in Casino Royale might be a little far off, but not unachievable. Goal setting will back every decision you make and the direction you will pursue. It's important to understand this early on: understand what is compatible with your current lifestyle situation. Additionally, don't be too rigid in deciding your outcome, businesses evolve, **its important you do to.**



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Finally, understand your interests and passions. You need to be excited about your idea, to pursue the opportunities that will achieve your desired growth. I have a real passion for landscapes, their form, and the outdoors so would not be suited to a static office environment; this something I've drawn into my consideration when thinking about the areas, activities and subjects that engage me. You need to be excited about the big idea, make it an interest which you'll be keen to learn about to separate yourself from your peers when you go out into the field and pitch to the client.

Primarily, identify a problem that needs solving, that you might channel your strengths to solve it. Maintain an open mind and explore opportunities, however out of the box they sound. And try not to be too clever early on.

I've found having a pad nearby throughout the week a really good way of teasing out ideas; it removes the stress of rigidly allocating a time for 'thinking' and lets those thoughts percolate through your head naturally. Some of my ideas have come when I sometimes wake in the night.



There will be little financial gain during the developmental phase so it's important I have something I actively wish to nurture to allow me to retain a focus.

Everyone has the ability to generate value. When out on a walk, I often think about the things I'm finding challenging and seeking some form of solution to improve it. That's all a business is, solving a problem for someone else, usually in return for financial gain.

Of all the ideas I'm considering this week, it's important to stay grounded and remind myself I'm not trying to reinvent the wheel. So, whilst this weeks blog has taken a bit of a theoretical spin, there are some underlying things to consider here.

And what's the point of this?

Well, having a focus early on means you'll maintain enthusiasm and motivation when the business is in its infancy; having an interest and passion will not only bolster your drive to achieve something but offset the potential ebb of motivation when you're not earning much early on in the developmental phase. All this I hope will lay some solid foundations and ultimately serve as a springboard to scale things up quickly if I'm successful.

For the time being though, that yacht in Venice will stay firmly moored to the quay.