

Episode 95: Differences working for a start-up?

There is a significant difference between working for a start-up and a Fortune 100 company. This time we look at the differences and how to tell which is best for you.

1. The Differences

Might seem obvious but comparisons come down to the number of people in each.

Large companies have more people and people therefore are more specialized.

They have deeper but narrower skills and long chains of command.

You will find more structure and processes, which make them slow to change.

People in smaller organizations tend to have broader skills – jacks of many trades.

They tend to be less formal, more relaxed and able to adapt quickly.

Having worked in both, the biggest difference to me is speed of decisions.

Fortune 100 companies, many people will have opinions and be involved. Start-ups, you make decisions and make them now!

2. Skill, Passion, and Fit

When deciding if a job is right for you, one friend and colleague asks 3 questions:

Do you have the skills? Is it something you are passionate about? Will you fit the culture?

What we are interested in here is not as much skills and passion but FIT. Do you fit a world with less people and moves faster?

No one type is right or wrong – it's what you feel more comfortable with.

Small businesses, like smaller teams, also tend to have more ambiguity.

If you do not like dealing with the uncertain, then the start-up may not be for you.

3. Moving between them

It is often easy to see someone who has moved from one type to another.

As a leader in a large company you often have people to execute your strategy.

In a small company, you are probably the strategy and execution team.

In a small company, you are probably used to making the decision and moving fast.

In a large company, you need to sell people on your idea and others may execute it.

When I first went to work for a start-up they wanted to know if I could cope.

Content was not a concern if I could still do the work myself.

Could I go from a staff of 400 to a team of two? Going the other way, could a start-up person work in a team of 400 others?

Bottom Line: You need to work out how you like to work and make sure you are in an organization that not only uses your skills but fits your style of working.

