



Stanford eCorner

Landing the Right Position

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Bonny Simi, an airline pilot and president of Jet Blue Technology Ventures, tells job seekers to be clear about what type of work culture they prefer. She talks about her decision to step away from a senior position at United Airlines and start over as a junior-level pilot at JetBlue because she favored the airline's then-startup culture over that of a large incumbent.



Transcript

- When you get hired somewhere, think about the company and think about the culture. Does it match what you are? And for me, I loved aviation and I decided this is where I belonged. But the culture where I was didn't exactly match what I wanted to do. And I'm not saying that culture is good or bad. Because you can think of culture in terms of countries, you can think of culture in terms of parts of the country. East coast versus west coast. I'm a west coast person. That is also part of my culture piece which was also a bit of a challenge because where I ended up was on the east coast. But ultimately I ended up back here on the west coast. Culture, I'm not saying that where I was at United was bad and where I ended up was good, it was just very different.

I decided to take this move, crazy as it would be, there was a startup. I wanted to work for a startup. It was JetBlue in 2003, it was Jet Who, really, especially around the west coast. It's still not all that big here on the west coast. This is the route structure, I think there's like ten cities there. Says San Francisco but it was really flying to Oakland. I became an airbus first officer, it was an enormous pay cut to go from a senior captain at United to a junior first officer at JetBlue, and people said once again, "You're crazy." But I believed life is more than a paycheck. When I went to JetBlue, part of it was I wanted to do more than fly. I wanted to fly airplanes, I still fly airplanes. I'm still an active captain for JetBlue, but I wanted to do something more and that wasn't possible at my previous employer but it was at a startup.

Because at a startup you get to do all kinds of things. And this is where I started forming my thesis around career. And this will be one of those things I want you to think about. Finding the perfect job. So as I mentioned culture is like table steaks. And that's something that a lot of people don't think about. For example, if you're looking for jobs you think of going to Facebook or Google or Apple. All three of those companies are fabulous companies. All three of them have completely different cultures. So I'll ask you, what are you? Are you more of a Facebook person, are you more of an Apple person, or more of a Google person? And doesn't say that you're good, bad or any of those.

Just figure out what that culture is.