

THE LAST WORD

WHERE TO NEXT?
Somewhere and everywhere, admits our PHILOSOPHICAL digital content and marketing manager, Hannah Silverton.

Emilie highlights three main strengths of a multipotentialite:

1. Idea synthesis

Have you noticed how innovation almost always sits at the intersection of fields? Multipotentialites have the strong ability to combine their knowledge, experience and interests from two or more fields and see solutions and ideas that others rarely could.

2. Rapid learning

Multipotentialites are natural absorbers, recurrent beginners – au fait at being uncomfortable. And each time we change our role, profession or environment, it's clear how transferable (directly or indirectly) the skills acquired from our prior chapter have been.

3. Adaptability

The ability to morph, pivot and shift to meet a given situation is one of the most important requirements for entrepreneurs.

I plan to take Emilie's lead, own my 'multipotentiality', have fun with it, learn from it, and be completely honest the next time somebody asks me, 'So, what do you do?'

But, if none of this sounds like you at all, there's no cause for concern either. Chances are you're a 'specialist': the kind of person who just knew the one thing you were born to do from the moment you left the womb. And, dear specialist, thank goodness for you too because (as most co-founded businesses will attest to), the best teams are usually formed of a multipotentialite and a specialist working together, each playing to their own innate wiring.

Perhaps the bottom line is simply this: to thine own self be true. ■

'I want to be a pilot and a jewellery designer' may be met with a fond chuckle when you're five years old, but it's more likely to be a sceptical eye-roll when you're 25.

Emilie believes this is because, "The notion of a narrowly-focused life is romanticised in our culture. [There's] this idea of destiny or one true calling... but what if you're someone who isn't wired this way?" Indeed for some, life might have had other plans, or for others there might be numerous areas they're intrigued by and passionate about.

This was me. Hell, this is me. As someone who has a constant complex about attempting to fit in everything they want to experience in their lifetime, the term 'slashie' rose to prominence to accommodate folks just like us (you know the type: art director/craft beer brewer/organic candle-maker). Yet it now not only seems to be frowned upon, but also doesn't account for those who jump, one at a time, from one passion to another.

Thankfully, Emilie coined a new term for everyone with more than one dream or path of curiosity – the 'multipotentialite'. But this notion is actually not new at all. Ever heard of a Renaissance person or a polymath? Having multiple interests and disciplines was highly idealised before the industrial revolution streamlined us all into silos. And the qualities that were celebrated then are even more relevant today.

Can you remember the first time you were asked that unavoidable life question: 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' What was your answer? A firefighter? A doctor? A hairdresser? Perhaps a barrister, or what about an actor?

It's a question we've all been forced to ponder, and comes to the forefront as an adult when you're trapped in well-meaning, but inane, small talk at parties. What used to be a topic of excitement, full of unstoppable dreams and possibility, can suddenly turn into an anxiety-inducing existential crisis – and not because of a lack of options, but rather an overwhelming array of them.

In her TEDxBend talk, 'Why Some of Us Don't Have One True Calling', Emilie Wapnick reflects, "While this question inspires kids to dream about what they could be, it does not inspire them to dream about all that they could be. In fact, it does just the opposite, because when someone asks you what you want to be, you can't reply with 20 different things."

Let's be honest; the declaration,