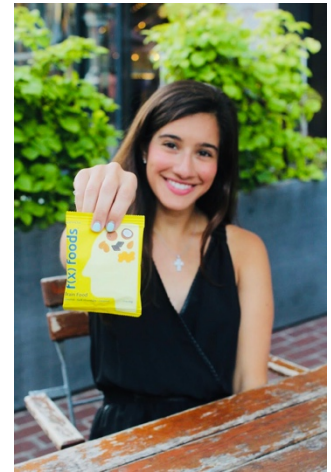


Corporate America or Entrepreneurship? You can do both.

Great grades, outstanding co-op experiences, and a solid college degree helped me land a job on a capital markets trading floor as I entered the workforce nearly four years ago. After two years of an upward learning curve from trading algorithms to corporate culture, I felt ready for a new personal challenge, and embarked on an entrepreneurial journey founding my nutrition bar company, f(x) foods. I recall being hesitant to start my own business while working my corporate job simultaneously. *Will I look uncommitted to work? Will my boss think I am trying to leave? Will my peers question my focus at work?*

To this day, I face judgement from peers on both sides of the spectrum. My peers at work have this perception that I have one foot out the door and could quit at any moment to jump into my venture fulltime. To them, it is not a matter of *if* I will leave, but *when* I will leave. Simultaneously, fellow founders and investors do not think that I am fully committed to my business and go as far as stating that I must not be a true believer in my business or else I would not depend on the security of my corporate salary and benefits.

Over the years, I respond to both groups of critics with growing confidence with the same statement – I **can** do both. Pursuing both paths simultaneously doesn't just *work* for me, but has propelled me forward in my parallel careers. Below, is an outline of how both experiences have done just that.



1. **Multitasking.** Whether I am spread across building a new trading application or designing a new systematic trading model at work, it is rare to be able to focus on solely one thing at a time. When running my business, I am forced to stay on top of exponentially more diverse tasks like creating new bar flavors, managing the sales pipeline, staying on top of the financials, responding to customer inquiries, and fulfilling orders, to name a few. Learning how to maintain focus amidst the endless functions I manage for my company has made any combination(s) of projects I face at work feel very manageable.
2. **Forward-thinking.** As a founder, my job extends beyond the tactical day-to-day responsibilities to placing significant thought on the future state of my business. For example, in the early stages when I baked the bars in my parents' kitchen, I was searching for a commercial kitchen to rent and for a copacker to eventually outsource the production altogether. Today, while I am selling primarily in independent retail shops, I am planning for months in the future, preparing each element of the supply chain for when I crack into the grocery space and am given the green light to proceed. I have applied a similar forward-thinking mentality to my corporate career – continually thinking beyond the current projects I manage and anticipating my next steps & what skills are needed to set myself up for future success.

3. **Professionalism.** There are numerous intangible experiences and qualities I have acquired through working in a corporate environment. While they may seem insignificant, I have learned basics like how to structure an effective business case, present to the senior team, communicate with peers and business partners, and observe what good leadership looks like. As I begin to build out my team in my business, I lean on such skills I have learned from my corporate job to hire good people, encourage their work and share the vision of the company. Simultaneously, I have the confidence to pitch my business effectively and respect my business partners.
4. **Asking for help.** Whether I think back to my first weeks on the trading floor or to the early days of starting f(x) foods, there was far more that I did not know, than I did know (this is still true today). Knowing that I wasn't hired expected to be an expert in electronic trading, I became comfortable asking for help early on to expedite my learnings. From my experience, there were even more unknowns jumping into entrepreneurship, but asking for help early on propelled my company from the start. Utilizing my alma mater, Northeastern University's venture accelerator, IDEA, allowed me to evolve my business from just an idea to an operating business in approximately 6 months – providing support in the areas that I was not an expert in from incorporation assistance, branding & packaging designs, to website development and everything in between.
5. **Time management.** Between both jobs, time holds an increasing value in my life. Limiting the hours that I spend on running my business to nights and weekends has taught me to be extremely efficient with my time and utilize every free moment that I have to accomplish my to-do list. I have applied a similar mentality in my corporate job, being strategic with my available hours and prioritizing tasks effectively.

In summary, my message is simple. The experiences I have acquired by juggling corporate and entrepreneurial careers simultaneously have strengthened my performance as an employee and as a founder. To anyone who is satisfied climbing the corporate ladder but has a desire to start a company of his/her own, know that you can do both - just consume plenty of coffee along the way.

**For more information about f(x) foods, visit www.fx-foods.com and follow us on Instagram @fx_foods.*