

Do you like Romantic Comedies or Pulp Fiction?

THOUGHT PAPER

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Jill loves the movie “You’ve got mail”. While it does have minor twists and turns, the plot (if you can call it that) and the story-line are fairly simple, straightforward, predictable and pleasant. It leaves you with a sense of fulfillment, joy, and peace.

Jack, on the other hand, is a big fan of Quentin Tarantino’s “Pulp Fiction”. He loves the fact that the movie is a complete roller coaster ride. It is mindbogglingly non-linear in narration, is as complex as complex gets – both in terms of characters and the sub-plots. Even delineating the protagonists vs. antagonist is a bit of a challenge in this movie. When the movie ends, Jack is filled with excitement, an adrenalin rush, and is screaming for more.

Working in a large firm versus a small firm can be as contrasting as the genre of movies above!

A large firm comes with a set of its own advantages

- It rests on its past laurels, a stable brand that continues to attract the attention of prospective employees, clients, and investors.
- The pace and progress is (more often than not) stable and predictable. There are minor twists and turns, and at times some turbulence, but rarely and only in the worst of times, overall things remain steady.
- The management of the firm gives you explicit instructions to do your daily job well, and you know exactly what your schedule would be – for a large part of the next 12 weeks (if not a year).
- Rare exceptions apart, you have a good life. Your family and friends admire you for being part of a large reputed brand, you get a good pay-cheque every month, and you can look forward to retiring peacefully from a job done well.
- The firm typically has deep (ok... if not deep, then well-to-do) pockets, and therefore a lot of support, programs, technology, infrastructure, etc. is taken for granted.
- The challenge is to stand out, as you are typically one amongst the thousands – continuously doing a small part in the greater scheme of things.
- Opportunities come your way as a directive on what next you will work on. The flexibility to choose “what you want to work on”, and “where you want to chart your career”, is fairly limited.

On the other hand, a small firm is not for the faint-hearted

- Working in a small firm can be chaotic and unpredictable, at best. Adrenalin rush of a deal can turn to disappointment the very next day.



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- Strategies change overnight; a single critical deal changes the direction of the firm. Sometimes decisions and outcomes all seem to be completely non-linear.
- Every single person can be (and often is) a leader, innovator, and decision-maker. You are mostly your own boss; you get the opportunity to define not just your own role but many a time the future of the business. Passionate ones clash with logical-thinking-naysayers every day. If you do the right things, you will eventually get all the support you need. But you need to prove your mettle first.
- You rarely know your schedule for the day (let alone a few weeks). But that also allows you to create your own space, paint your own landscape, and define your personal story.
- How many of us want to connect with the CXOs on a personal level? Nothing like a small organization to provide the opportunity literally at every corner.
- Given that you know the right people, networking becomes easier and so does your ability to be on the lookout, searching for, and move into the next big opportunity for you – whether it is the project that you always wanted to be part of, a new skill that you wanted to pick or the role that you think will take your career places.
- You need to be a dreamer, a hard worker, an overachiever – all in one. You have fun if you can thrive in this kind of uncertainty.

But it is not as simple a choice as it seems to be! Factors impacting your choice may include – the appetite for risk, the stage of career you are at, the stage of your personal life, the goal for your career, etc.

So, which movie would you like to watch today?

About the author



Mainak brings over 20 years of experience spanning business and HR roles across geographies. This has given him a unique understanding of the link between HR and business strategy. He also holds a patent for HR capability development.

Mainak's experience includes human capital strategy, culture, talent development (performance, leadership development, career pathing, competency, learning, engagement, diversity), and talent acquisition (including on-boarding and background check). He has also implemented HRIS platform and HR metrics to improve performance.

Recently he has been helping startups set up efficient and effective HR teams and processes. In addition, Mainak is a recognized Executive Coach and Leadership Development expert.

Mainak's previous work experience includes stints/projects with Accenture (Consulting and HR), Hewitt Associates, AbsolutData, Heidrick & Struggles, Evalueserve, Sterlite Technologies, and Upstox.

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