1.2 The Startup Interrogation Room

Startups are not for everyone. Really, they're not. Here are some questions to ask yourself—without the bright light, one-way mirror, and good cop/bad cop routine—to figure out if they're right for you.

1. The Fish: Pond Equation
   Do I prefer working on a large team where everyone has a specialized, more focused role, or a smaller team where projects require the agility of a bullfighter, flexibility of an Olympic gymnast, and high tolerance for (potential) chaos?

2. The Atlas Workout
   Does the idea that my work at a smaller company will account for a larger part of its livelihood excite or intimidate me?

3. Living the Dream
   Am I truly, genuinely, 100% passionate about the companies to which I'm applying and the products or services they offer?

4. Check Mates
   If necessary, would I take a smaller salary to work at a startup that seems like a perfect fit than I could potentially make for a similar role at a larger company?

5. Interior Design
   Am I more productive with the privacy of cubicles and corner offices with floor-to-ceiling windows, or do I prefer a bustling open office with no walls?

6. Clock Work
   Is “9-to-5” a personal requirement, suggested schedule, or cruel joke? (Startups are notoriously unpredictable and flexible with daily schedules.)

7. Clothes Call
   Does “business attire” mean tailored suits, blouses, and button-downs, or simply whatever is clean? (Startups seldom require formal garb, but dressing to impress can be an important factor for some jobseekers.)

8. Where the Wild Things Are
   Are you comfortable with (or allergic to) animals? (Startups are more likely to have the occasional roaming pet, sometimes affectionately referred to as an intern, security, or the VP of Sales.)

9. Your New Best Friends
   Do I like the people with whom I’d be working? I mean, do I really like them? (At a startup, you tend to bond more closely with your coworkers, and even if your role changes, chances are that you will still be working with the same folks. At a larger company, however, changing roles or departments could mean less or even no further communication with certain colleagues.)

10. Security Guard
    Is job security a deciding factor, or are you open to a company that is high-risk/high-reward? (Most startups don't make it, and the end often comes quickly. On the other hand, success can...
be on an unimaginable scale: Yahoo! just bought Tumblr for $1.1 billion, and even powerhouses like Microsoft and Google were once startups.

How Do You Take Your Coffers?
Do you prefer a company that is well-funded, has received some funding, or is bootstrapped? And do you understand how this affects employees' salaries and equity in the short- and long-term?

Game Changers
Is the startup you have your eye on doing something to disrupt the space in which it's operating or to change the world at large?

If startup life doesn't feel quite right for you, fear not; there are, of course, plenty of other options at larger, more traditional companies. But if you find yourself longing for the best of both worlds, it might surprise you to learn that many larger companies have divisions that operate very similarly to startups. For examples, check out @WalmartLabs, Microsoft's Bing Fund, and Google Ventures.