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VARIETY PACK

Episode 27: Jet Pack

Host : You are listening to the Slack.

Reporter 2: Variety Pack.

Host : Brought to you by Slack.

Reporter 1 : All kinds of people on all kinds of teams, use Slack to do amazing things.

Host : Hello, welcome to The Slack Variety Pack. On this episode, the pros and cons of working as a digital nomad.

Andrew T : I mean it's hard to work in a hammock for one on a beach with your computer and sand. They don't mix.

Host : One woman's experience working with a humanitarian agency.

Cherie S: Then there is a number of armored tanks and UN military driving around as well, that definitely changes the feeling.

Host : What it takes to be in a successful business partnership.

Julie R: We sort of we had to make a decision whether we were going to really go forward or we were just going to have a couple of studios and kind of call it a nice business.

Host : First, the age-old debate about coffee versus tea. Which one is better? It depends on who you ask, maybe science will make you think twice about your morning beverage routine or maybe not.

Reporter 1 : This is my favorite sound in the world. That's my espresso machine. I love coffee perhaps more than life itself, but I acknowledge that there are those poor unfortunate souls in the world, and probably your office who claim that tea is better. This is my friend Louis. He is one of them. Okay. Which is better, tea or coffee?

Louis: Tea.

Reporter 1 : You're sure about that?

Louis: Absolutely, man.

Reporter 1 : It's a debate that Louis and I have been having for sometime. Of course, when we debate which is better, what we are really asking is which works fast as a caffeine delivery system. Okay. Which do you think delivers more caffeine?

Louis: Oh I know for a fact it's tea.

Reporter 1 : Why?

Louis: It's just it gives me that rush in the head that just like [ulala 00:02:09], and I'm ready to roll.

Reporter 1 : Get rolling. You're saying it's the caffeine buzz you get is as effective from tea as ...

Louis: Oh I think it's better. I think it's better man. It just gets in you and it just flows. You know what I mean?

Reporter 1 : To my surprise Louis isn't the only person who believes that tea gives a better buzz. Google rephrase tea has more caffeine than coffee, and you'll get 835,000 results. All these tea toddlers have shaken my confidence, so to settle the issue once and for all, I've come to the University of Toronto to talk to this guy.

Dr. Ahmed: Yeah. My name is Ahmed El-Soheemy.

Reporter 1 : Ahmed studies how the body absorbs nutrients at the microscopic level. He is the perfect guy to answer the question once and for all, which has more caffeine, coffee or tea? Hang with me, because his answer could get a little technical.

Dr. Ahmed: Coffee.

Reporter 1 : Okay. If it's that simple, why was there any debate in the first place?

Dr. Ahmed: Tea leaves actually have more caffeine than coffee beans. The main difference again between tea and coffee is how much of the caffeine gets leached into the hot water that we use to make the beverages. You end up with about twice as much caffeine in a cup of coffee than you would in a cup of tea.

Reporter 1 : Twice as much, that isn't even a close race. Coffee is the clear winner. See, it's all about surface area. Coffee beans get ground up, so more of the bean meets the hot water causing more caffeine to come out. That's why espresso beans are ground so fine. The finer the grind the more caffeine, but isn't there a difference between how teaching coffee deliver caffeine? Does our body absorb the caffeine differently depending on whether it comes from tea or coffee?

Dr. Ahmed: Caffeine is caffeine. The chemical is identical and our body absorbs it the same way regardless of where it comes from.

Reporter 1 : Which leads me to something I've actually always wondered about, what exactly does caffeine do to us?

Dr. Ahmed: Caffeine is it is the most widely consumed psychoactive substance in the world. By psychoactive I don't mean it makes you hallucinate, but it does have properties on ... effects on the central nervous system. Like increasing alertness, increasing energy, and in some people it actually elevates their mood, and the research shows this. It does this by binding to a receptor in the central nervous system called the

adenosine receptor.

Reporter 1 : Adenosine is a drug our body makes to keep us chill and drowsy. The caffeine molecule is the same size and shape, so it sits right there where the adenosine is supposed to go. Caffeine doesn't actually do anything to us. It just blocks the adenosine that would normally make us sleepy. There you go Louis. It sucks to be you. I'm sure that all this new information has changed your mind. Are you going to switch the tea?

Louis: No, I don't care what the truth is. I know what I feel man, and it's going to be tea, and that's it.

Reporter 1 : Louis, you're in tea denial.

Louis: Listen, you know what I'm going to say, tea is it for me. Now get out of my house.

Reporter 1 : Thank you.

Host : Are you cup coffee or cup tea? Tweet us at SlackHQ.

Speaker 8: Channel change, Travel channel.

Host : Many of us have thought of this. If our work consists of opening up our laptops in a half decent internet connection, can we do that work anywhere in the world? This next group of people proves you can, as long as you're open to the curveballs of the nomad lifestyle.

Reporter 2: Location independent, digital nomad, mobile bohemian. Whatever you call it, it's a new way of working and traveling that many people dream of. In the not too distant past, it was difficult work remotely. The tool simply didn't exist, but now powerful laptops and smart phones, fast internet, the cloud, and an abundance of online tools make it easy to work while traveling. Paradise, right? Yes and no. Let's meet the nomads.

Andrew T : My name is Andrew Todd, and I'm a product designer. I'm currently working with a company called Fixel.

Reporter 2: After eight years in the Canadian Navy, Andrew became a digital nomad working mostly in Latin America.

Andrew T : It was actually, I guess, because of a girl. I met somebody that I kind of fell for, and she went away to Guatemala to work on a project down there. That was the first time that I realized that because of the job that I had, I didn't have the freedom to follow this person who I'm interested in. I didn't have the freedom to pursue that.

Reporter 2: This is Trish.

Trish V: Trish [Vandine 00:07:36], and I'm a freelance brand consultant and market research expert.

Reporter 2: Trish lives in a small Mayan town of San Pedro La Laguna, Guatemala with her husband and two-year-old.

Trish V: My husband and I were living in New York, and I have a rule where every year on my birthday I want to be somewhere else. I want to go travel to somewhere that I'm not living. In 2007 he said, "Where do you want to go for your birthday?" I don't know where I got the idea but I just out of my mouth spring, "Guatemala." We came down here. We came down for a visit knowing really nothing about the country at all.

Dagg: I'm Dagg. I was beaten by the travel bug decades ago, but I found it very difficult to afford long-term travel without generating an income at the same time, until technology finally caught up with me. I put everything in the storage and I hit the road. Now there are a lot of misconceptions about this lifestyle. The biggest being that your workday consists of lazing in a hammock beside the beach, tropical umbrella drink in hand.

Andrew T : I means it's hard to work in a hammock for one on the beach with your computer and sand. They don't mix. It's hard to look at a laptop when there is glare from the sun.

Trish V: When I started living in Guatemala, not necessarily knowing the geography or just knowing that I'm living somewhere down sulk, oh [inaudible 00:09:02]. It's wonderful, living on beach, and it's like kind of oh you must just have such a calm, cool, relaxed life. The relaxation part is true at times, but it's also it can be a stressful life.

Dagg: This leads us to the next misconception, that it's easy. It might be easy if you're a comfortable hotel room in the U.S., but most digital nomads choose countries where their money goes a lot further. The trade-off in those countries is less than dependable infrastructure.

Trish V: There's the uncontrollable challenges, particularly where we live. There is constant power outages, as I experienced this morning trying to get ready for this interview.

Andrew T : I guess you have to be more open to the possibility of things going wrong. There's days where you can be on the internet and now there's an electricity outage for the afternoon, maybe a couple of days. Everybody's scrambling to get to the one place that has a generator we're all charging your gadgets.

Dagg: Beyond power and the internet, finding a good place to work is also a huge challenge. The developing world is noisy and surrounded by a symphony of dogs, loud music, traffic, churches, street sellers, rock chippers, promotion vehicles, roosters, and construction.

Trish V: Doing conference calls, so I have a big global debrief presentation and we'll jump on the line and all the clients will be on the call, and the tuk-tuks outside driving by or honking their horns, or there is a rooster next door to us, whose society is going to start crowing, and you just feel unprofessionalism.

Dagg: Working alone can be a struggle too.

Andrew T : One of the biggest challenges I think with working on a remote team, it's harder to get to that sense of community.

Trish V: I think the thing that I might missed out on sometimes is just the general comrade of the office. Not necessary project based but just being in an office and and feeling inspired by the people that you work with on a day-to-day basis.

Dagg: Healthcare and safety are important concerns for both single and family nomad. Some people think that if you're murdered by the drug cartels, you're likely to get some sort of mysterious tropical disease. Healthcare is always a concern when you travel, but that's what insurance is for, although many people don't even bother.

Andrew T : What I found is in places like Guatemala and Mexico, you could see a doctor for really cheap. I could just go to the pharmacy or to the doctor and pay no more than \$20 there, I don't think, out of pocket for some minor injuries or minor infections.

Trish V: Healthcare is quite "reasonable. I had my son here. People go, "Did you have him in the house with a midwife?" Oh my, but no. We had our son in a hospital in Guatemala City that was a very modern hospital. My OB/GYN is probably one of the best doctors I've ever met.

Reporter 2: Choosing a digital nomad, location independent life isn't easy. Do you do far long-term travel until retirement or do you do it now? Is giving up a big home with lots of stuff worth living a life that lacks security and stability?

Trish V: The rewards are definitely worth the sacrifice. I mean thinking back to five years ago living in New York, we were just busy all the time. As much as we thought we were having a great time, we were tired all the time. I think I looked older five years ago than I do now. I do think the reward of being [inaudible 00:12:51] to be here and enjoying this place, and sharing time together with my husband and my son is a big part of that.

Dagg: Have I been tempted to return to real life? Absolutely. I mean there are times when money is so tight that returning to my old life becomes a serious consideration, but not for long, things always seem to turn around. Can you think of another job where you can save 75% of what you make? Try doing that in New York or London or Vancouver.

Andrew T : Six years later, I have a totally new career path that is kind of focused on that idea

of finding something that I can do from anywhere at any time, as long as there is an internet connection.

- Host : Slack, making work less worky.
- Speaker 8: Channel change, Dynamic Duo channel.
- Reporter 3: Starting a business is a challenge, full of tough decisions that can make or break your company. What's even a bigger challenge is starting a business with a complete stranger, but this next team makes it seem easy. Meet these partners who span their business out of nothing, and made it into a giant of the fitness field. Who knows what they'll come up with next.
- Julie R: Hi, I'm Julie Rice and I'm the co-founder SoulCycle.
- Elizabeth C : I'm Elizabeth Culter and I'm the co-founder of SoulCycle.
- Reporter 3: SoulCycle is a 45-minute indoor cycling experience in the dark, by candlelight to be precise. Think of it like doing a workout in a nightclub. The music is thumping and the DJ isn't just your instructor, she's also your motivational speaker, your guru.
- Julie R: Today we ride with the energy with which we would like to lose, if you say so cycle harder! Taking your reverse deep in [inaudible 00:15:12].
- Reporter 3: About 11 years ago before they started their company, Julie and Elizabeth had never met. They were each on the lookout for a fitness experience that didn't really exist.
- Julie R: I had just moved to New York from Los Angeles, and in LA, a big part of my social life was going hiking with my friends, going running with my friends, going surfing. When I moved back to New York, there was just nothing like that. It was really about burning calories, getting it done, and semi-efficiency.
- Elizabeth C : I needed a place that I didn't feel judged. That I felt like I had somebody who could teach me how to the equipment, and I could succeed doing it. That I could piece out and wake up and I do cardio.
- Reporter 3: A mutual friend thought they should meet and set them up on a business blind dates.
- Julie R: We always say it was kind of the best blind date we'd ever been on, because we talked nonstop.
- Elizabeth C : From the very beginning Julie and I share a common vision. Even though our skill sets are different and she is sort of more type A, I'm more type B.
- Julie R: I got in the cab to go back to my office, and I before I even closed the door, my cell

phone rang and it was Elizabeth. She said, "I have an idea. You're going to research towels, and I'm going to look for real estate and I'll call you on Thursday." Five months later we were open.

Elizabeth C : It's like when I met my husband and we got together very quickly. My best friends said, what are you waiting for? When you find a good handbag, you know you found a good handbag. I mean why do you have to do shopping for a handbag?

Reporter 3: With that, these two strangers set off on their business adventure together.

Julie R: Everybody thought we were crazy. There was nobody that thought that this was a good idea. First of all, from a business perspective, there was no boutique fitness in New York City, so there was no model for what we were about to create.

Elizabeth C : There are certain instances, we all have them in our lives where if we had over thought it, things would have gone in a different way, but in this case thank God we didn't.

Reporter 3: Julie and Elizabeth had no idea that their business would take off the way it did, and how that success would impact their personal lives.

Julie R: In the beginning when we started SoulCycle and we certainly didn't know that it was going to be this big of a movement, there was a moment where the business was really exploding and we each had young children. We sort of had to make a decision whether we were really going to go forward or we're just going to have a couple of studios and kind of call it a nice business. Elizabeth at the time was really sort of struggling with, she had definitely not thought that this was going to be a 24-hour, 356-day a year kind of a job.

Reporter 3: Business partnerships are like marriages, sometimes there's going to be detention, disagreements, maybe the occasional blowout. Sometimes there is just going to be competition between the partners, but Elizabeth and Julie take competition in stride.

Elizabeth C : We're always trying to up our own game, but I don't think that that means that we compete with each other. It means that we're competing with ourselves, and we're supporting each other in our own competition.

Julie R: We put pressure on each other, there is no doubt about that. There has always been an expectation, at night before you go to sleep, like you get your stuff done, and I'm going to get my stuff done. It's not ever been in a competitive way.

Reporter 3: SoulCycle went from having one location with 35 bikes to 58 locations in growing. Elizabeth and Julie divided up the work naturally. Elizabeth does all the business development, real estate, and technology. Julie focuses on the people tasks, marketing and PR, hiring and training, and the retail side of the business. Julie is the yin to Elizabeth's yang.

Julie R: She is sort of a great risk taker and she'll listen to her gut and she'll really act on it. I will sort of over analyze everything to depth and go back and forth, three years of knocking ourselves. I had actually driven by this amazing location in Tribeca. I had flipped Elizabeth the phone number of the landlord and I said, "You should look into this."

At the time it was one of those things where if it worked, it would have been a business maker, but if it didn't work, it would have taken the whole business down. I said to Elizabeth I just don't think that we should do this. I'm not trying [inaudible 00:19:30] for this like this, and Elizabeth said, "You're wrong. We need to gamble. We need to double down our [missing 00:19:35] and put it all on the line."

Elizabeth C : There have been a number of situations where I did not feel comfortable with something at all. It's like some of these collections that she is on. I'm like really, who is wearing that? She is like just keep quiet. This is great. That's perfect, and the way that we're going to merchandise with this is fantastic, and let me just do this. We would do it, and of course the one piece became the top seller.

Reporter 3: According to Elizabeth and Julie there have been many great complementary moment like that over the years. Their business success comes down to trusting each other's smart decisions and keeping the lines of communication open.

Julie R: We always say no lumpy carpets. We don't sweep things under the rag. We really talk things out to make sure that we're on the same page as we continue to move on. This is the last song. The last is always the worship one, because you're going to reflect on the last 40 minutes, and you want to make this one count more than the first one, right, because you're never a version of the person that walked in. Keep that in mind. I dedicate this one to us.

Elizabeth C : I think the greatest thing for us, and honestly it's been great personally and it's been great for the entire organization, is to learn about listening and to learn about the fact versus the story around the fact and to be generous in the way that we approach each other.

Julie R: We are [a duo 00:21:09] for sure. I always say, when we look back on this business and other business that we might be in the future, I think that the real legacy is the partnership and the way that that has served us.

Reporter 3: Now that their business baby is all grown up, this dynamic duo is moving on. Elizabeth and Julie have stepped down as SoulCycle's co-creative officers and they're busy planning their next business venture, together. We can't wait to hear what they're doing next.

Host : You're listening to the Slack Variety Pack.

Speaker 8: Channel change, Slice of Life channel.

Host : The woman in our next piece, spends part of your year working as a filmmaker and the other part working for MSF or Doctors Without Borders. Here is a slice of her daily life working in a conflict zone.

Cherie S: I'm Cherie Silvera, and in my regular profession, I'm a documentary filmmaker. When I'm not making films, I double in the humanitarian world. Currently I'm on my second stint working with Doctors Without Borders, and I'm here in the Central African Republic. My job here is a warehouse manager. I'm working on the supply side of things. I manage a lot of our medical stock.

A typical day, I get up at six in the morning, go in at seven to the office with most of my housemates. We leave the office at about 5:36 everyday, six days a week. It's a lot of sleep-work-sleep-work. Working for an organization like MSF is very insular, and so 99% of what I've seen is our house and our work compounds. It's about a 10 to 15 minute drive in between.

It's a small city, and there is sort of bizarre '60s unattractive art deco architecture, a lot of concrete buildings and the main roads are quite wide. There is a lot of taxis and sport utility vehicles that are mostly owned by humanitarian agencies or military agencies. Then there is a number of armored tanks and UN military driving around as well. That definitely changes the feeling. There is an occasional gunship flying around.

When I first arrived here, I showed up at the house at about 6:00, and within the hour everybody disappeared in their rooms and that was the end of the evening here. People spend a lot of time on their own, in their rooms reading, movies. We have about four or five restaurants that we're allowed to go to. We currently have a curfew that's until 10:00 which is quite decadence compared to other places I've been.

My first mission was very challenging at first. I would still forget some rules and the lack of freedom and the lack of creative thinking. I have never really worked in such a bureaucratic environment, so it feels a bit militaristic to me but apparently it's quite liberal compared to the military, so what do I know. After about three months you stop fighting the system and you figure out how to work within the system. As long as you get your work thing, you have a lot of freedom to focus on the aspects of the job that you find challenging or that you find that you want to prioritize, which is about figuring out how to work within that.

I went from completely miserable to enjoying it and enjoying the people I worked with. There was somebody in a team who got sick and rather than just say what was wrong with them, we had to have a big team meeting, and it was briefed that this person isn't well, and was going to the hospital. Whereas at home, you were just asked, "What's wrong with Johnnie?" "He's got epididymitis" or something. Here, like nobody wants to infringe on anybody's privacy, so you're never informed about what it actually is. Sometimes you forget to just be human, like it doesn't

have to be an invasion of their privacy to express concern.

Sunday is a great day because it's your day off. I usually start with a workout and in our local sports club, which is kind of a dilapidated old colonial style club. It's right on the banks of the river. Once you get through noticing all the cracks in the cement and the dust covering everything, it's actually a lovely place, with a swimming pool, and tennis courts, and then anti-gym area.

At the end of day there is usually a pickup volleyball game. The game is interesting because it's very multilingual. There is English, French, Spanish, Arabic, and you name whatever the languages are floating around. The expert community here is either UN on the military side, and humanitarian workers. There is a group there I haven't quite identified. I call them like mining executives are arm's dealers and then you get the Lebanese merchants. There was a group of Russians that was here for the past month.

You're playing this game and you don't know if people are military or humanitarian or something else obscure. We don't really have a chance to ask people about it and talk, and you're like "good serve, nice return." You go home with a completely different mindset here and I do that with a lot of my film projects too. You just put your head down and get the job done, and you make it as good as possible.

Host : That's it for Episode 27 of the Slack Variety Pack. Tune in next time for Episode 28 of fun-filled episode packed full of emoji love. For more information about this podcast, got to Slack.com/varietypack. Subscribe to this podcast on iTunes or Stitcher, rate us on iTunes or let us know what you think at SlackHQ. Thank you for listening.

Reporter 2: Slack Variety Pack.

Reporter 1 : All kinds of teams use Slack to do amazing things.