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PARDON THE DISRUPTION

Shannice Singletary '14, co-founder of Friyay, has ideas about how we work.

BY WILL ROTHSCHILD

When Shannice Singletary '14 first set foot on the Furman campus as a high school senior from tiny Lake City, South Carolina, she knew little about the university and even less about how she would fit in there.

"I didn't know whether I should even consider Furman, but my guidance

counselor was a Furman graduate and convinced me to take a tour," Singletary says. "We missed the time for the guided tour and so I was just wandering around the campus at 9 o'clock at night. And the beauty of the campus just struck me. The moon was full, the Bell Tower was lit up, and it all just hit me like a bolt of lightning – this is where I want to be."

Since then, finding unlikely new directions has been a theme for Singletary. Today, the communication studies major is co-founder of Friyay, a cloud-based software startup. Indeed, building a tech company is a long way from what Singletary – or her parents – imagined for herself.

"I think I shocked my poor parents," Singletary says. "My parents both have a very traditional work background. My mother works in education, my father has a small construction firm. So their expectation was very traditional. You find a job in your career field, you do that for 45 years, and everything will be fine. You buy a house with a white picket fence; you get a dog. They thought, 'Great, our daughter got into the best school in the state, she's going to be fine after that,' and I decided I wanted to do something different."

That something is building Friyay into a major player in the crowded productivity and project management software field. Used now mostly by small businesses and freelancers, Friyay offers a range of productivity tools that help teams "set goals, make plans, take action and track progress," Singletary says. And in a world where more work is being done remotely, Friyay has attracted both early adopters and some investors who are helping to further fuel its growth since it launched in July 2021.

Singletary met Friyay co-founder Joost Wentink when she interned for another tech startup in Greenville, South Carolina. They were frustrated by project management tools that all had shortcomings. So they built their own.

"Set goals, make plans, take action and track progress – those are four basic things that most teams are trying to accomplish, and our team was amazed at how many productivity tools didn't do those," Singletary says. "They would do one part, but not the other parts, so we kept running into a wall. Through the course of that experience and trying to problem solve, we had conversations internally about the future of work."

Wentink eventually asked Singletary if she wanted to solve this problem with him and start Friyay. By that time, Singletary had caught the entrepreneurship bug and she jumped at the opportunity.

"I had a lot to learn about what it means to be an owner in a business and be a co-founder," Singletary says. "There has been a fairly high learning curve and I'm still learning how to be a successful leader. But I love the process of building a business. I love working with a team and figuring out how to solve a problem. Before, I had only ever seen a business after it was open and successful. Seeing it on the other end – that has been life-changing." ♦