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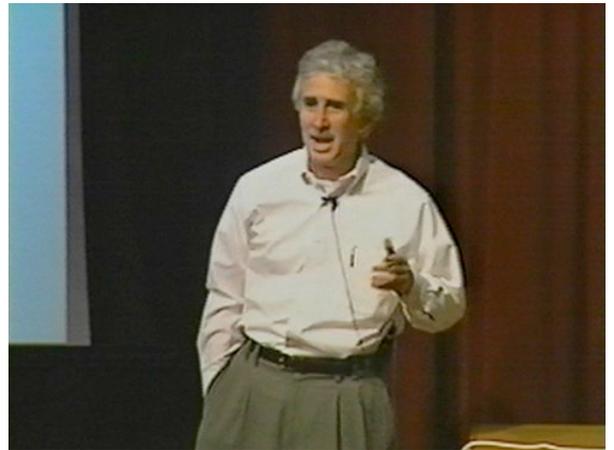
Whatever it Takes to Stay in Business

Frank Levinson, *Finisar Corporation*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/658/Whatever-it-Takes-to-Stay-in-Business>

Number 6 in Frank Levinson's Top 10 Things You Must Have to Start a Business. In the spirit of doing anything to keep your business afloat, Levinson explains why it's important to be open to all opportunities.



Transcript

You need the pride of a fat baby. How many are Lyle Lovett fans in here, anybody? Okay. What do fat babies have? No pride. What does that mean? It means you've got to go do whatever it takes to stay in business. You're in business. You're not doing engineering to please you. You're doing things to please your customers. We had a bunch of early customers. The first thing that came through, it's a really fun story so we'll tell the whole thing for a minute, some guys came to us in August of 1990 and they wanted us to build a video on demand server. They had this patent.

They had invented other things. They were a marketing shell and they hired us to be their engineers. They said by January for the consumer electronics show, can you get this whole thing done? We said maybe, let's try it. We did. They took it to the show. It was a big hit. In that, we actually had our first product which is a fiber optic module. It did some special things at gigabits so we had to invent that along the way. They were funded by U2. I have met Bono.

I've hung out with the Edge. They didn't come to Finisar. We were too scrappy in those days. We had to go over to Oakland to see them. The point was we didn't care what we did. We did a scuba diving computer for a company and I've never scuba dived until spring break or this last summer I learned my way to do it. But I have actually programmed the algorithms on decompression from thousands of people around the world that never knew it. The same processes are used in that was our first patent on how to do smart modules for our company and it's still our most valuable patent today. So the exact processes are there. It's the same one we use in our first module.

It's the same one we use in some modules we still ship. We wired the San Francisco Environmental Protection Agency building with fiber one summer, one winter. We even did a pool computer, not enough with water and computers. We did that. But every one of these things helped us stay alive and they kept us close to customers. They kept introducing new technology to the company. These were not the greatest ones. I mean this was okay but all of them were important because that's why we're here today.