



Stanford eCorner

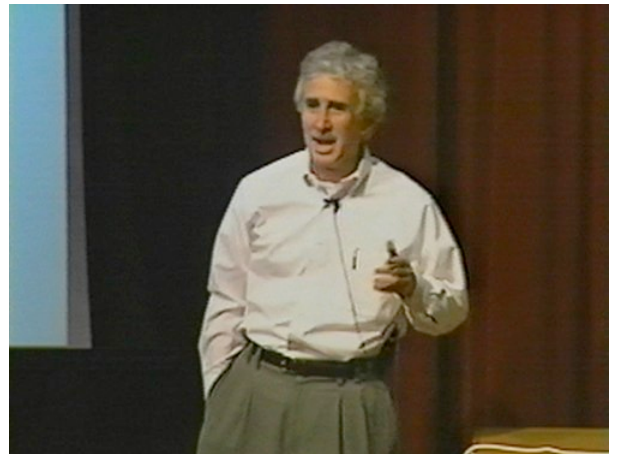
You Need a Supportive Family

Frank Levinson, *Finisar Corporation*

October 31, 2001

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/659/You-Need-a-Supportive-Family>

Number 5 in Frank Levinson's Top 10 Things You Must Have to Start a Business. When starting a business, says Levinson, it becomes your life. Having a family that supports you and understands that they may not see you often is a great benefit. He talks about his family and the way they adapted.



Transcript

You need a supporting family even if they are the Clampetts. Hear of the Clampetts? These were my children. About the age when we started Finisar, that was me. I actually had brown hair in those days. This is my wife. These are my in-laws. I'm telling these stories because I think this is an important part of the talk. You can do this with a family. You can do this while working and serving in your church or things like that. It should be.

You don't want to give up every part of your life. My wife was very creative though. For example, when we were working late nights, she'd bring the kids over at dinnertime. She'd bring a picnic. We'd spread it out on the table. They bring their homework. They'd stay from, say, 6:00 until 9:00. I'd help them with homework. It kept the family going. This is the family today.

I coached two soccer teams for my daughter and three OM teams during this time. The soccer teams, we had a small field across from Finisar in the first building where we were. It wasn't actually in the zone where the soccer league was played but since no other parent would volunteer to even coach the thing, I said you have to bring them to me. So I'd walk across the street, they all drove 20 minutes but we practiced soccer and we had one season where we won every game and lost the championship and one season where we lost every game but somehow won the championship. Who knows? This group of people, right here, these three kids, these two, my wife and I. This is our one Christmas season we were late in shipments to customers because we had one oven where we could burn in every module we were shipping and we can only do I think it was 500 modules a day and we were behind. So literally one Christmas morning before we opened any presents, we took all seven of us in. We emptied the ovens. We took the modules that have been potted on Christmas eve, put them into the ovens and so on and went back home and had Christmas. The point is though we shipped a thousand modules on that next Tuesday or Wednesday or whenever it was as opposed to 500 and we made the delivery to the customer.

So again, we tell that story among each other with a lot of pride. It wasn't a bad thing to help customers on Christmas and yet we're all still together. This is us and the kids turned out just fine. They're all in college now.