



Stanford eCorner

How do you pick clients?

David Kelley, *IDEO*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/689/How-do-you-pick-clients>

Kelley begins by joking that in current times, an individual or business that shows up with the promise of cash is a customer of IDEO. He recounts a previous client categorization schematic IDEO employed to color-code their clients. He also emphasizes the importance of taking on balanced projects which pay well, are innovative and of interest to his designers.



Transcript

In times like this if you show up, you're alive and have the promise of cash, you're a customer of ours. In general, before the last year or so, we had what we called a spider chart where we'd have the things that were important to us around the outside and then we'd rate them green, yellow, red. So we have things like nice people and ability to pay was probably on there. When you were in the fortunate position we had with a strong brand and more work than we could do through the first 20-some years of our existence, we would pick clients that were green, green, green that had at least three of the things that we cared about a lot. We would look at clients as they came in and decide what that was. I had this kind of high powered staff, you have to feed them really good stuff all the time and so it's kind of luck of the draw at IDEO as some IDEOers can tell you what projects you get and so we have to keep those at a very high level in order to keep people satisfied. So even though you might be tempted to take a project that pays well but isn't very innovative or isn't very interesting to your staff, that can come back to hurt you because people won't be kind of thrilled with what they're doing and they'll look for another job at a dot-com that has, not anymore but that was the problem.