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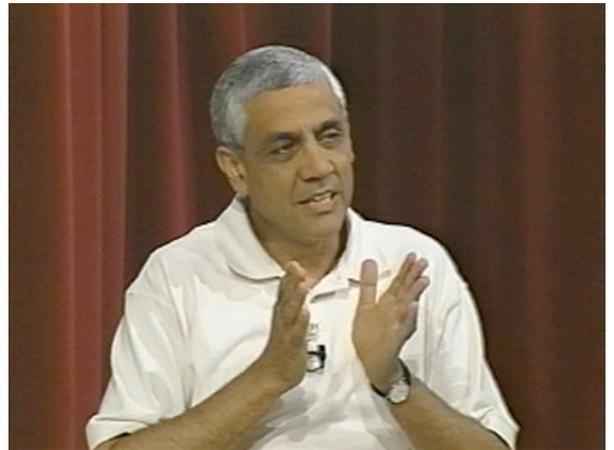
Career: Learning from Failure Early On

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/19/Career-Learning-from-Failure-Early-On>

Khosla talks about his early career development. He first tried to do a company in India based on milk from soybeans. He travelled to Carnegie Mellon, and then to Stanford University. He describes why persistence and evangelism are important. Although he was not admitted to Stanford at first, sought more real-world experience, and was not admitted again, through persuasion and persistence, he was finally accepted.



Transcript

Being honest about it, I first tried to do a start-up in India. In having finished my Electrical Engineering degree, I tried to do a milk equivalent from soybean kind of extract company. Because most people in India didn't have refrigeration, so I tried to create a milk substitute. It didn't get very far. When you're twenty and had no resources it's hard to do a start-up in India. At least back then it was, so I came to Carnegie. I was very interested in bio-medical engineering. I had done some specialization in that as part of my electrical engineering. But the real fact is they agreed to pay for me and that was the only way I was going to get anywhere. So, they offered me a full scholarship and that's what got me to Carnegie.

It sounds very strategic. Now that was very strategic. So once I came to this country, my hope was to come to Stanford and be here and close to the Valley because the legend of the Valley is much of a draw as anything else about the United States for me. And so when I came to Stanford, I actually applied for business school the first year and Stanford turned me down. So first lesson, don't give up. They told me to get a little bit of work experience, which I did in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I landed a couple of jobs and did that and applied the gain. And of course, they turned me down again. Wow. And I talked to the Director of Admission and I yelled and screamed at him.

So he agreed to put me on the wait list. And I was later convinced that he did that just to get me off his back, no intention of letting me into Stanford. So I actually also applied, but then I was getting disheartened as most entrepreneurs do, and applied to Carnegie Mellon and had gotten into the business school there. And I said I'd go to business school there and then come to the Valley but I didn't stop trying to get into Stanford Business School. And over the summer, I got to know everybody in the Admission's Office. There were some really nice ladies there. I talked to them every day. They became my friends. They became my advocates. And evangelism is really important when you're trying to get anything done, especially if you had no right to have it.

So it's a key characteristic of any entrepreneur. And I evangelized my way in, made friends, started with the Admissions Director. But then that time, he had gotten to be friends. Though he still wasn't going to let me in, but sympathetic to me, so he'd always talk to me. Came the week before registration, I was already three weeks into my semester at Carnegie Mellon. And I said, look it's getting late you've got to let me in now. And he just made polite excuses every time. It was Thursday before registration. And I said I've got to come now. I'm just leaving tomorrow morning and whether you like it or not, I'm showing up.

Believe it or not, he said call me back. Friday, he called me and said, OK I can come. And I left within a few hours. I packed

up everything and just left. I didn't have any place to come. Actually, those nice ladies in the Admissions Office put me up for the first month here.