



Stanford eCorner

Serial Entrepreneurship: Redwood Neuroscience Institute

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/45/Serial-Entrepreneurship-Redwood-Neuroscience-Institute>

Hawkins is working on his third start-up. Besides starting Palm and Handspring, Hawkins also followed his passion for theoretical neuroscience, the study of how certain parts of the brain work from an information theory point of view. He started a non-profit research institute called the Redwood NeuroScience Institute. Through this experience, he learned that starting a non-profit is just like starting a business.



Transcript

I have one other thing. So I told you about two start-ups. I was talking about the Gridpad which was an entrepreneurial effort within a company. I had Palm Computing in 1992 and I had Handspring in 1998. I have another theme to my life and I thought I'd mention it tonight, which has been going on in parallel to my work in computing which is neuroscience, specifically theoretical neuroscience. Understanding how certain parts of the brain work from an information theory point of view. And this has been a theme I've been in and out of throughout my life. So actually, I took several years off in the mid 80's where I was at Berkeley's studying the stuff. I was working part-time at it towards the end of Palm. And the last couple of years I've been involved in it more again.

And I've actually started something else. So this time I've started a non-profit, it's called the Redwood Neuroscience Institute. It's located in Menlo Park right above Kepler's Books and Borrone's Cafe. It's a great location. I look out at the train station behind me and I could ride my bike from home which is really important to me. But it's a research institute where we have a number of scientists there. We're going to do programs on the outside and so on. Again, I was reluctant to do this but I had a bunch of neuroscientist friends who really encouraged me to do it and they felt it would be a great thing to do how a place that was focused on some high-level theory, a mathematical theory about cortical function, and which is my passion. And so I did it. And it's surprising starting a non-profit.

It's just like starting a business. You got the same issues of financing and legal structures and lawyers and on employment and the government. And everything else you have to deal with. It's just like deja vu except this time, I'm paying for the whole thing and someone else isn't. So that's my latest entrepreneurial effort if you will. And I'm enjoying it so I'll be glad to talk to you about it. You can go look on the Web, RNI.org if you're interested in it.