



Stanford eCorner

The Importance of Execution

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January 29, 2003

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1125/The-Importance-of-Execution>

Execution is critically important; it is better to have a simple idea that can be easily implemented rather than a complicated idea that has implementation challenges. Drastic changes do not have to be made overnight; it is a long road to success and each change need only take the company to the next step.



Transcript

Execution certainly matters a great deal. And I think that within your question is, in fact, the fact that having simpler ideas that you can execute perfectly is sometimes better than having a grandiose idea that your company can't execute on it. And so, when you get large as a company and when you're trying to do complicated things, in fact, it is best, it is most prudent to keep it simple. Many ideas surface and a lot of people say, "Jensen, why don't you guys do this? Why don't you do this?" Our engineers are asking me, "Why don't we put this feature?" We could have done all that. I mean, it wasn't because we didn't have the ability to have the idea. You have to decide as a company, you have to decide as an engineering team or as an innovator, to say, "You know what? I don't need to change the world overnight. I'm going to change the world over the next 50 years. I don't need to build a killer product overnight. I just need to build a winning product." And the goal of winning is so that you can play again. It's just like pinball.

If you could just play well enough to get another game, you can be there for a long time. Most companies just need to realize that in fact this is a long road and that you can't build that perfect that perfect product. So, once you do that, that you keep the project scope confined, you keep the project now simple, you have a long-term vision, your product definition is rather simple, you execute flawlessly on that because your people now can execute flawlessly on a simple plan and you come back and do it again. And so, I think that certainly is embedded in your question. Now, in terms of what got us to be here whereas in our industry, certainly in Silicon Valley, the discussion about the early days of 3D graphics and the intense amount of competition in this industry and yet NVIDIA survived through it all, there has been quite a bit of lore about that and quite a bit written about that. I would say that our company wanted it more than everybody else. I do believe that as a company and as an entrepreneur, you have to want to succeed more than your competitors want you not to. That is hard to teach. Somebody said recently that I'm the most tenacious CEO they've ever seen. I'm not exactly sure whether that's a compliment or not.

But my will to survive exceeds almost everybody else's will to kill me. And so, I think that that is probably appropriate.