



Stanford eCorner

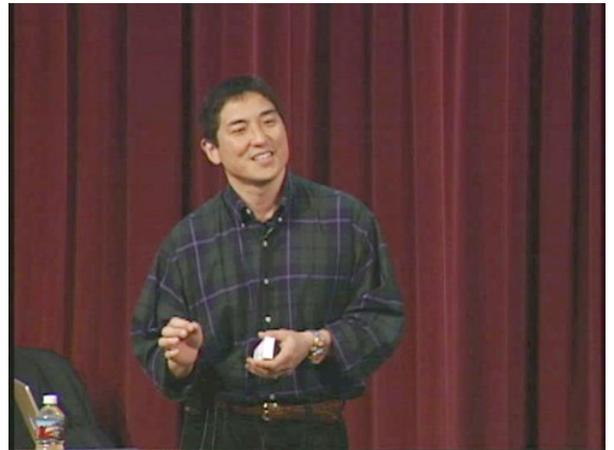
To Get an MBA or Not?

Guy Kawasaki, *Garage Technology Ventures*

February 19, 2003

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/277/To-Get-an-MBA-or-Not>

Kawasaki shares his thoughts on whether or not to get an MBA. The problem with an MBA he says is that you believe you are being taught how to manage, and he generally thinks it is impossible to learn how to manage in school. The only way to learn how to manage, according to him, is to do it in the real-world.



Transcript

The problem with an MBA is that you believe you are being taught how to manage. And I generally feel that it is impossible to learn how to manage. And I think that the only way to learn how to manage is to manage. And so the thought that you could go through a two-year course and learn anything but tools, particularly quantitative tools, is I think dubious reasoning. Now I have an MBA, okay, so I'm not just castigating an entire class of people. I essentially say that about myself. And so I cannot tell you that I've used much from my MBA in my career. I learned much more about business because I worked for a jewelry manufacturer ran by a small Jewish family. I learned more about business from there -- from them and that experience than an MBA. In terms of, you know, when you go to -- when you go and get an MBA you spend six months studying finance so you know all these, you know, statistical models and you know how to reduce the beta coefficients and all that kind of stuff.

I tell you, I'll give you all the math you need to know right now. If you believe in your heart, in your mind that if it costs you a dollar to build something and you sell it for \$5, that your margin is only 20 percent, if you believe that, you will be rich. That's all the math you need. Okay. Costs a dollar, sell it for five, I only made 20 percent. Okay. Keep that in the back of your mind, buy an HP 12, that's all the finance you ever need. Okay, so I just -- you know, I don't want you guys to out and slit your wrist because I'm ragging on MBAs but I just think that the more important thing for startup today is technology. It is much easier to teach a technology person the rudiments of marketing and sales and management than to take someone who "has an MBA" and try to teach them science and technology. It's much easier to teach the other thing.

So I regret that. I have an MBA and I have a psych degree from Stanford. I truly wish that I had a technical degree so that I could hold my own with the engineers as they, shall I say, exaggerate shipping times. Or minimize shipping times. Yes?