



Stanford eCorner

Focus

Kim Smith, *New Schools Venture Fund*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/608/Focus>

Smith talks about how focus is crucial for entrepreneurial leadership. It is impossible to do everything so the core beliefs of the venture provide the necessary direction. It is sometimes hard to turn down a project that will help the people you are trying to serve, but a good leader knows what he is able to take on and what he must leave for someone else, she explains. It is important to recognize that change in education is not as easy as moving a policy lever, and therefore entrepreneurs are crucial for spurring the desired change.



Transcript

Focus is crucial for entrepreneurial leadership. You cannot be all things to all people, and if you don't know what your core beliefs are, you can't figure out which things makes sense for you and which things you need to leave for another leader to take on. It doesn't mean you don't support them. It doesn't mean you don't think they're valid but they're not right for you as a leader. I find in the social sector, I think mission creep, strategy creep is a risk everywhere for leaders but it's particularly problematic in the social sector because it's so hard to say no when you know that effort will in fact help the people you're trying to serve. So it's very difficult to leave it for other people. Our core beliefs around the fundamental right to a public education that entrepreneurs are crucial change agents for changing large complex system, change is not linear. People want to believe that it is and if you just go in and move a policy lever, everything flows from that and everything is fixed. Not true. Entrepreneurs are crucial and if you think about Federal Express and the impact it's had on the US Postal Service, you realize it's all the more crucial in the social sector.

The Postal Service is not going to change, absent, some kind of disruptive technology like Federal Express. The same is true we believe about public K-12 education.