



Stanford eCorner

The Challenges of Building a Company

Gajus Worthington, *Fluidigm*

March 07, 2004

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/862/The-Challenges-of-Building-a-Company>

Worthington explains that creating a company puts incredible strain on the founders and calls upon them to do things that people do not normally have to do. The way to get through these challenges is not by talent, but by obsession and determination, he says. Without these qualities, he would not recommend starting a company.



Transcript

I on the other hand suffered mildly. It is not easy building a technology company. I choose the words bleeding edge deliberately. The transitions that a technology company goes through on its way to building a commercial product are tumultuous. They're gut-wrenching. You will be called upon to do things which are not in your nature and it's not because they're bad things. It's just that human beings just normally aren't supposed to have to do this kind of stuff. An example is you're not supposed to have to fire your friends but guess what, you might have to. And if you have to then you better do it and you better do it fast. Human beings are not necessarily supposed to be able to handle the incredible dynamic range of stress and then not show it.

They'll be subjected to the vicissitudes of the market or all the things that you know are going on in the company that could kill it tomorrow but then when you walk in to a room and the rest of the company is there, you need to be calm, cool and collected and exude not one ounce of fear. We're not wired that way really. So we went through these tumultuous periods of trying to figure out how to manufacture our chips and then trying to figure out how to build a product out of it and focusing on a product and then canceling everything that wasn't directly in line with that. Those are difficult things and that was a very, very trying time for me. But I guess I would submit to you, for those of you who are interested in being entrepreneurs, I think I had an essential ingredient which isn't talent, it's obsession and determination. From the beginning, I was obsessed with making this real. It brought me incredible joy to see us make progress in spite of the fact that I might be painfully aware of other failings that were just as big. That was sufficient fuel for me as an entrepreneur, as a founder to be able to power through each of those phases but I would say if you don't have that, if you don't have an obsession that is so deep that you can't keep yourself from doing this, I would not recommend trying to build a company. The odds are too bad. It's too expensive.

You'll waste time and money and the like but if you do have that obsession and you know that you have the determination to follow through with it, I got to tell you it's certainly the most amazing thing I've ever done.