



Stanford eCorner

Lowest Lows and Highest Highs

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/872/Lowest-Lows-and-Highest-Highs>

The financial hardships Fluidigm encountered after September 11 were the most difficult stage for the company, says Worthington. The company needed financing quickly or it would disappear - a time that was incredibly physically and emotionally draining for him. Fortunately, the tough times were more than balanced by a number of fantastic highs, including the first major reorder, the first shipping of a complete system and the first success report from a customer, he notes.



Transcript

Highest high and lowest low. Let's see. Well, I got to tell you the period after September 11th almost killed me. It was the hardest thing I've ever done, I've ever had to do, was to make sure that that financing happened. If it didn't happen, the company was dead. There were no two ways about it because you could just tell. If you didn't get across that chasm, you weren't going to if you needed to. So many companies fell away at that time. The thing that I liked about that period is that I know what it's like to be at the very limit of my capabilities. I know what it's like to be to the absolute edge of what it is I can do and to know that if it takes one ounce more of strength than this, something's going to break.

I remember the moment when I realized that actually. I suddenly realized this is it. If I'm called upon to deliver any more than what I'm doing right now, something's going to pop. I don't know what it is. Maybe I'll go nuts. Maybe I'll have a heart attack. Who knows? But I know something's going to break. That was the most difficult time definitely in certainly the company's history that I have experienced, for me, personally. Highest highs, there have been a lot of them. It gets to a point where how do you compare? When we got our first major reorder from GlaxoSmithKlein that was just an incredible moment.

We shipped our first complete system that we've spent almost a year working on when our first customer reported that they had achieved a fundamental result that they were able to do something that they had never been able to do before and were able to publish it. Actually, one of the best times was last year in the second quarter. After having too many beers, I told our VP in sales and marketing, I said if you hit this number, I made up a number that was just ridiculous, there's no way he could hit this number, I'll cut all my hair, I'll shave it. He said I'm going to remember that. On July 14th that was the end of the second quarter, the VP of R&D was up there with the razor taking my hair off as Mike was laughing. That was a great moment definitely, too. If there's success you just savor that.