



Stanford eCorner

Make Meaning in Your Company

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Guy Kawasaki, founder and Managing Director of Garage Technology Ventures, believes that those companies who set out to make a positive change in the world are the companies that will ultimately be the most successful. He gives examples of the best way to make meaning: increase quality of life, right a wrong, and prevent the end of something good.



Transcript

The first thing I figured out and learned, sometimes the hard way, about entrepreneurship is that the core, the essence of entrepreneurship is about making meaning. Many many people start companies to make money, the quick flip, the dot com phenomena. And I have noticed in both the companies that I've started and funded and been associated with, that those companies that are fundamentally founded to change the world, to make the world a better place, to make meaning, are the companies that make a difference. They are the companies to succeed. My naive and romantic belief is that if you make meaning, you will probably make money. But if you set out to make money, you will probably not make meaning and you won't make money. So my first thought is you need to make meaning. That should be the core of why you start a company. There are three ways to make meaning. First is to increase the quality of life.

My background is the Macintosh division of Apple Computer, and I can tell you with total certainty that we were not motivated by making money. We were motivated by changing the world to make people more creative and more productive. We were trying to increase the quality of life for the Macintosh user. And that was a great motivation. It kept us going through many many difficult periods. We were waking up in the morning thinking how we could change people's lives. A second way to make meaning is to right a wrong. This fish is going to die after jumping out, but to right a wrong means that you find something that's wrong in the world or you notice that's something wrong and you want to fix that. This might be particularly applicable to not-for-profits where there's pollution or there's crime or there's abuse and their very core is to end that wrong. And the third way to make meaning is to prevent the end of something good.

You see something beautiful, something wonderful, and you just can't stand the fact that it's been eroded, it's being changed, it's being ruined. So I ask you as you start your companies, your not-for-profits, your churches, your schools, whatever you're starting, please have one of those three motivations, one or more of those motivations. If you don't have any of those motivations, I suggest that you rethink what you're doing. I think these three things are the key to starting a great organization.