



Stanford eCorner

Career Advice

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1280/Career-Advice>

Doerr gives general career advice for those who are planning to start their own businesses. His tips include finding a mentor, networking, and spending some time in a sales or service position.



Transcript

The first is to develop, as I said, and sustain your own lifelong networks, so that you're always networking, always staying in touch. Over-interview, as we said. Call some one person that you didn't need to return a call to everyday for ten minutes. Call you mom once a week whether you need to or not. Go after opportunities that have you externally interacting with people so that you can develop more of your own networks. Find and sustain a couple of mentors. This is a really clear key. If you can find a mentor, in the workplace, even better outside the workplace, who every couple of months, will have breakfast with you and talk about your personal development, someone you really admire. Or two mentors, then you're a very, very lucky individual. And I think you can repay that mentorship only by mentoring others.

The net is go build a web of relationships, and remember that learning is everything. So you take your first assignment based on what you're going to learn, where the factors in that learning are here, your desire and drive, the company you select. I think building a strong and diverse foundations of experiences is key. Carry a bag means take on a sales or support position. Look, all businesses are divided into two parts. There's the part that generates revenue and the part that doesn't, that is expense. And the sales force generates the revenue. So the whole job of everybody else is to support the sales force. Clearly, I may be biased, but I think being able not to shlock around soap flakes, but to be able to solve a customer's technical problem in a consultative way earns you the right to get an order, get business. And that's what makes a market economy, whether it's in China or in America.

You ought to figure out how to launch a product, how to manage some people and see some great management processes. And then, when the time's right, which could be right now, or three years from now, or five years from now, there is such a shortage of great technical talent and great people, then go ahead and swing for the fences. It's going to be OK if you miss. But maybe then is the time to join or start a new venture.