Stanford eCorner

Learning from Failure

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Video URL: http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1387/Learning-from-Failure

Williams talks about some of his biggest failures and what he learned from them. One of the things he has learned is the importance of building, collaborating and motivating a team.

Transcript

My first company actually started with my father and that was a disaster from day one. And we did so many things wrong and he had never really worked, he was a farmer actually and we were a publishing company that turned into an internet company. And I had never worked in a company. So we have no models for really even how things got done and one of the biggest, I guess this is more of a symptom than a specific failure but that cause many, many problems when it's just the lack of defining the roles about who did what. And that's something I've repeated several times and when you have co-founders and it's not, if you don't have the classic, she's the engineer and he's the business guy or whatever it is then there's often you want to start things with people a lot like you and then you find you overlap a lot. And you're unclear about who does what. And at first it's fine because you're both everything and collaborating and then he just start to get people and he start to need to be more efficient and be focusing on things, it gets really messy. So I've certainly done that. So that's sort of a team building. Understanding how to put together the right team at the beginning? It's not just putting together it right, even with the people you have, like you're going to have a great person but it's about actually taking the time to say you're in charge of this, this, and this and I'm in charge of this.

And of course we'll collaborate about big decisions, or you know, pull each other in. But if you have the exact same skills I need to say who's in charge of what if there's more than one founder and not a clear hierarchy about who's in charge. That's, that's a big one.