



Stanford eCorner

Alignment and People

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1402/Alignment-and-People>

Fraser believes alignment is the underlying principle to everything we do. The work has to be fulfilling for the people who work in entrepreneurial ventures, she says. It is important to create an environment where people can excel.



Transcript

'Alignment' is an important word. I use this word a lot in working with the management team of Adaptive Path. We use it kind of across the board. It's sort of an underlying principle to everything we do. Do our outsides match our insides? Are we aligning our brand to our reality? Are we aligning our decision-making to the real kind of economic needs of the business? Or do we have an efficiency there? Is that aligned? So there is the saying, 'all the oars rowing in the same direction'. For me, that all comes down to alignment. So we look for alignment in everything that we do. Because when you have alignment, you have the sense of integrity. I'm hiring for the right things because I know what the values are, so I'm hiring for the right characteristics in my people. So my people are going to deliver exactly the products that we want because those products are completely in alignment with that value statement, with that vision we have for the company.

So we're going to bring the right customers in because our people who are aligned are going to create a product vision that is aligned, so they're going to bring in customers that are aligned. So the whole thing runs much more smoothly because everything is working in constant with one another. In that kind of environment, you still have conflict, but the conflict is meaningful and purposeful and helping everybody to advance toward those values and those goals. Whether they're financial goals or personal goals, it all works much more smoothly. So, alignment. And underlying all of this is people. I've talked a lot about people. We are a company designed for human beings. Every company should be a company designed for human beings. If the work isn't fulfilling for the people who are there, they're not going to have any loyalty.

Especially with entrepreneurial ventures, you need to create an environment--they're giving up a lot. Our people do not get paid market rate. Adaptive Path does not pay top dollar. You're going to make more money if you go to IDO. But people stay with us because we create a much better quality of experience. We know what's going to make this set of people perform incredibly well. So we're an organization that is--my job as the leader is to create an environment where people can excel. And I put my money where my mouth is there. They evaluate me. I had a performance evaluation.

We're only a 22-person company. A dozen people contributed to my performance evaluation. And they told me where I'm doing well and where I'm doing poorly. Where do I need to help them remove barriers so that they can perform more effectively in their job, so that they can have a more fulfilling, more creative, more execution-oriented experience at my company? And as a result of that commitment that I have to being a service leader--I lead by serving--they're retuning that to me in terms of loyalty and in terms of incredible performance and stellar customer feedback. So we have, again, this respect-trust relationship. My employees are my partners. We're creating a partnership here that's really successful. So in terms of creating a company--

we've talked a little bit about the seedling company, the very baby company and the energy that that takes, and the adolescent company and getting over that hump, and now we're at this prime stage. How can we operate in this prime stage forever? How can we create a sustainable, brilliant business? And if we want to have an exit, we want to have that exit be brilliant as well.