



Stanford eCorner

Working in a Start-up

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1541/Working-in-a-Start-up>

Penchina shares his thoughts on the differences in working in a start-up versus a big company and the skills he leveraged while moving from a big company like eBay to Wikia.



Transcript

So my sister asked me that 'cause I've been living in Paris for the last 2 years, about 100 feet from the Eiffel Tower and she's like hey, you have this great job and you're working in a really cool company and you're eating cheese and drinking wine all the time and why did you leave? I was trying to come up with an analogy and I said well it's kind of like I'm on this big aircraft carrier and I have a relatively big business and you have several hundred people working for me. But the end of the day, I have a sale and I'm sitting on an aircraft carrier and I'm trying to turn the aircraft carrier and it turns little tiny bits every month but I can't really feel the impact, all right? I know I'm having a big impact on this big ship and it is fully turning but boy, I don't get that feedback, I don't get the reaction, the sort of fun of feeling excited about the impact and seeing it that I used to. I'm going to go to a startup and having now been consulting with these guys for a few weeks and officially going on board in another few weeks. I have to say I still have the sale but now I'm riding a skateboard and it's really scary because you're constantly changing. You may go 90 degrees one way and 90 degrees the other end and you can really feel the change. You do one thing and the skateboard totally moves and I missed that feedback loop and the excitement that comes with it. Frankly, I almost feel like I have to unlearn skills because I have a lot of big company skills that are actually really bad for startups. So we're talking about the fact that we haven't announced yet that I'm coming on board. I was sort of sitting around and going well, when somebody going to announce it, oh yeah that's me. There's no PR Department, all right? So I'm actually unlearning a lot of skills.

I have to learn this as it may get bigger but skills I learned. So community management I think is a topic I could spend hours and hours and hours talking about with people. It really is a unique skill. I think my knowledge is sort of globalization where we opened an off-shore, last week we opened an off-shore development center in Eastern Europe because I know people there and build an engineering team there and we're all ready in a bunch of languages and we're going to enable the site to quickly be global. I think I learned about globalization and how to do it, learned a lot about community management, I learned from about hardware networks and a little bit about marketing along the way. I say the eBay brand is sort of become a descent one although clearly not a Mercedes quite yet but we're trying.