



Stanford eCorner

Skills Learned in School

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1546/Skills-Learned-in-School>

Penchina describes the exact facts and skills he learned in engineering school and business school that he finds useful today while running his business.



Transcript

What facts or skills, I guess, that I learned either in engineering school or in business school? I've been lucky in one sense in that I always knew I wanted to go run something and with a little bit of a technology bend so I've been able to sort of plan ahead because of that. So in engineering school, frankly, I learned how to think and how to do problems and answer problems. IE is probably not quite as technically challenging as some of the other majors but I learned a lot of computer programming which was really useful. I didn't actually find it very helpful in terms of running a business but it's great in terms of helping you think and structure problems and try to get the logical answers. Consulting is another great way to get some experience doing that. The other thing I did frankly both in undergrad and in business school was I started businesses, both of which helped me see the other side of it. In business school, so it's interesting, when I got accepted to business school, I asked the question one of you did which was what do you wish you would learn 10 years out to some of the people I knew at GE. To a person, every single one of them said I should've learned more about organizational behavior and managing people, like literally it was like a textbook answer from people at GE. I was like okay, so I should probably major in that. I have to say I took all the classes and all it taught me was what questions to ask, not necessarily any of the good answers.

I think you learn the answers by experience and the best proof I have of that is when they had an interview preparation class in business school. They sort of prep you for being a good interviewer. The one thing they said is never cross your legs in an interview because when you do, your leg will fall asleep and when you stand up, you'll fall down. I went well, that's really good advice. Obviously I'm not going to cross my legs and I went in and proceeded to have my leg fall asleep in an interview. So my takeaway is you could learn things in a variety of medium classes, books, anecdotes and friends but until you've actually been kicked in the butt a couple of times, it doesn't really sink in. So when I go back to this question, I know all the questions to ask them but even sometimes when I get the answer, I still don't actually get the answer until I've made a few mistakes.