



## Stanford eCorner

### Three Most Critical Elements of Venture Success: People, Customers and Sales

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1812/Three-Most-Critical-Elements-of-Venture-Success-People-Customers-and-Sales>

William Sahlman, professor at Harvard Business School, states that people, customers, and sales are the critical ingredients of venture success. Specifically, Sahlman states that, 1) having the right people, 2) focusing on customers rather than technology, and 3) concentrating on sales instead of marketing, are critical elements of corporate health and longevity.



#### Transcript

People, people, people. It just turns out to be, business is simple. It's all about people. And then people do the right things. You have to give them guidance and you have to have ideas, and you have to have all sorts of things to be successful. But the most important thing is to have the right people. Customers. It's amazing, when I talk about Dean Kamen and Segway; I spent four years working with Dean on a variety of projects, and he is a magnificent inventor and a wonderful man. He does some great things in the education field. But the fact is, he thought people ought to buy it because it was cool.

And people don't buy products because they're cool. They buy them because they have some tangible benefit to them. It could be psychic, it could be something in their business. So customers are critical. We often talk in business schools about something called marketing. Marketing is irrelevant. Sales counts. And so selling things is really important. In fact, you're in the selling business. So when you try to get money, you are selling yourselves and selling your ideas and the combination of the two.

So selling is what is an essential skill for every entrepreneur.