



Stanford eCorner

Optimism in Overcoming Challenges

Rodrigo Jordan, *Vertical*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1894/Optimism-in-Overcoming-Challenges>

Rodrigo Jordan, Founder of Vertical, describes a challenge in making the first crossing of the Ellsworth Mountains in Antarctica, highlighting the role in optimism in allowing the team to shift their paradigm and successfully cross an ice valley. Jordan then argues that the entrepreneurs he admires have a similar, paradigm shifting optimism: despite the challenges and disappointments that his colleagues inevitably face, these entrepreneurs overcome their challenges with optimism.



Transcript

I just want to go to the main story that I want to tell you about in terms of this paradigm shifts. This is the case ... we have no maps here, we are traversing in Antarctica, as I said this is the first time being done and so much of this territory has never been explored before and you get to a point in which, one day, and this is the exact situation, we had gone into a valley and by the end of the valley as you see was closed, as you see there was no way crossing the other side and this was pretty bad because if we couldn't cross to the other valley we had to go back and go to the next valley and that meant another 3 or 4 or maybe a week of traversing and we're working on the exact amount of resources, of supplies, food, fuel so if we had to do that we would be in serious trouble and as we approach the end of the valley I said, "there is no way out." I was pretty frustrated, angered and couldn't manage my emotions in that circumstance. Finally we decided to stay one extra day and divided in twos, we were four. Two would go to this side, Ernesto and Paulo, and myself and Kiko, went outside the picture to this area over here to explore and see if there was a way out. By mid-day I was back into our tent with Kiko and we hadn't find anything on this side and I could see that no way they going to find a way up here and again, even more, I was frustrated, angered, worried and so what I did was I started cooking soup or something and didn't talk to Kiko and didn't want to know anything about the world, this wasn't working. And then Ernesto and Paulo came back, this is about three o'clock in the afternoon and as they are approaching I see Ernesto coming with this grin and I say immediately without even talking to him, "They found a way out," and I grabbed my camera, took this picture, and then asked immediately, "How did it go?" And with that grin he said, "very bad. Yeah, there is no way out, absolutely there is no way out. We have to go back." "What the hell, why are you grinning then, what are you laughing at?" "So beautiful. I need to thank you, this is great.

And he would show me. Did you see this snow? It looks like the cream on the apple pies or the lemon pies." And this image has been with me since then, this was back in 2002. And this is of course, the classical myth for seeing the full part of the glass rather than the empty part of the glass. But it really flipped not only the image but what happened inside that tent that night. Because of this grin, because of this happiness we started discussing and we said or we asked ourselves, "who said that we couldn't do this? If we have the ropes, cannot we in a creative way find some means of getting across?" And we did. And I think that was due to this face. I generally see and that's what I love about Endeavor, we are all going through pretty difficult times in our companies and you get them and you meet, especially my case, my Chilean fellow Endeavors and they are always laughing, throwing a joke and when you ask them, "how is the company going?" "And you know, oh horrible. We haven't been able to do this and this." But they are always joking and I think that is a way of life that to me is a paradigm shift and I really appreciate that about Endeavor not only because it allows you to do the job, that attitude.