



Stanford eCorner

Transitioning from Corporate to Startup

Armen Berjikly, *Experience Project*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1886/Transitioning-from-Corporate-to-Startup>

Armen Berjikly, Founder and CEO of Experience Project, discusses his transition from corporate life to founding his own company. Berjikly talks about the challenges of bootstrapping his company: dealing with the loss of stable income, juggling jobs to make ends meet, and developing the alpha product.



Transcript

I think the first thing you face when you leave your job and your paycheck and your health insurance is how are you going to fill in that gap, all right? Because some people will take the stance at running out of money and depleting your bank account will spur you to work even faster and harder. I'm honestly of that camp because I felt like I would worry so much about that issue. It would out weigh any benefit I got from driving myself harder. So, I actually was lucky enough to be offered a consulting position at my old company. I can never be thankful enough for what that was. I would just go in once or twice a week and help them out with some of their marketing initiatives. It paid some of my bills and gave me some piece of mind in that sense. But also, it's a trade off and I'd love to talk about this perhaps in the Q and A session. It's a huge trade off because psychologically you're still now splitting your mind across two different things. I don't think any of us has got corners in this room.

So you have to face demon. In my case I'm really happy with the way it worked out. So, once you do that, I just had enough run way to start working on this. And I worked on it by myself. You know, literally in a room with a laptop, a \$400 laptop that I still have, for two years. I just plugged away. Plugged away and coded and made sure it works. Bit by bit I would release it, get feedback and roll it back into the name product. And I pushed this all the way to about October of 2006 and you know, sometimes fortunes strikes you. I was at a party that happened to have a reported from CNET there and I mentioned what I was doing vaguely.

The next day he wrote a two page article on it without letting me know. So, suddenly people were coming to this very, very, and very, very pre-offer site and it was exciting and amazing. And I think the email that I sent out forwarding to everyone had 4,000 exclamation points in it. Like "Check this out. I'm on CNET." But at the same time that goes away where I come clean. You realize I've got to actually back up what I've built where I could blow it. So, at that point I decided to double my team and bring on another person who is Neil Shath. He's a great engineer from Stanford. I'm actually BSCS, MS MS&Eas many of you are too. So he joined me in October and then we just basically decided no more publicity.

Let's make sure this product works before we get another round of press. And then we pushed as far as we could without payment until April of this year actually. And at that point we decided to raise a small Angel round.