



Stanford eCorner

The Challenge of Staffing the Team

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Finding the right people to make a medical devices start-up go is the hardest part of putting a new business into motion, says Mir Imran, parallel entrepreneur and CEO of InCube Labs. Hiring is a dynamic process with many moving parts. And, adds Imran, sometimes a venture will even be built to suit the exemplary skills of the right talent.



Transcript

Clearly, you've got all of these ventures going. You need to have really amazing people for each one of them. Do you have a pool of people that you just keep pulling in off the bench for each one of these new projects or do you re-staff each one very specifically? I think it is the latter. I have had several times people who have gone into one company, and seven or eight years later, that company is sold and whatnot. They've come back and gone to another company. But most of the time, I put a team together for that project, and I tell you, that's the hardest thing to do. Is that the hardest part? What are you looking for when you're looking for people? Is it looking for pure technical skills? Are you looking for complementary skills? What are you looking for? I first parse the problem, the project. Generally, it's a development project, and you parse it into its mechanical engineering, material, science, if it has all those elements, or in some cases, biology and chemistry. You look at all these things and figure out what skill sets you need and try and find those. You cannot find the exact skill sets you're looking for.

So what I usually do is I find somebody who is really good. I'll hire them and then modify my plan of hiring the other people. So it's a very dynamic process. Sometimes, I find some really brilliant people, and I say, "I really want to start a company around this person." Have you done that? I've done that once, actually. Tell us the story. You found somebody and you said, "This is an amazing person. I'm going to bring them in and build a company around them." Right. So this guy, his name is Glen McLaughlin. He actually got his Ph.D. at Stanford.

He started to work for me in 1991. He had just graduated from Carnegie Mellon as an undergrad, and he worked with me for five years and then left to get his Ph.D. at Stanford. He was the smartest guy I've ever worked with. You should get him here some time, an amazing guy. When he started his Ph.D. here, I told him, "I'll give you a cubicle and \$1,000 a month stipend. Just hang out here because I'm always working on some problems and we can brainstorm occasionally." He would do that, and back in 1999 or 2000, I came up with an idea for a new way of doing ultrasound imaging, and I decided to form a company. He was still finishing his Ph.D. here and finished it.

I went ahead and started the company. It's called Zonare Medical Systems now. Within a few months, he joined as senior engineer. I knew his potential so I made him chief technical officer. The product has done amazingly well, and the company did 30 million in revenue last year. It's getting ready to go public next year. He is one of those guys where I can get him, I know I can put him in something and he's going to be successful. When I find some of those people, I hang on to them.