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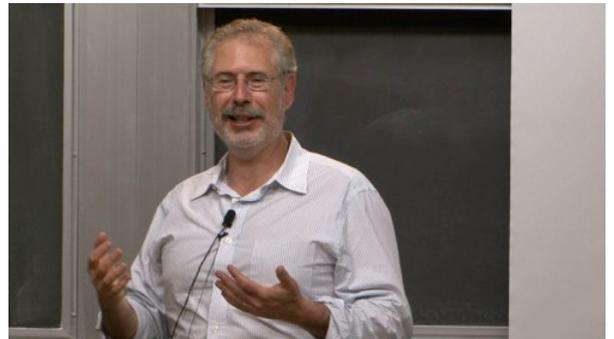
Intimate Customer Understanding

Steve Blank, *Stanford Engineering*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/2064/Intimate-Customer-Understanding>

An entrepreneur needn't be a heart surgeon, but they must have an understanding of the tools a heart surgeon might need. That said, learning a business vertical is the responsibility of a great financier, regardless of its complexity, says Steve Blank, serial entrepreneur. Without this depth of customer understanding - knowing their problems and why they buy - no new venture can succeed.



Transcript

If you look at my career, I was never in the same industry twice - maybe semiconductors. There's nothing about a business that isn't rocket science to understand well enough within a certain period of time. I'm not asking you to become a heart surgeon, but it's not that hard to understand the tools a heart surgeon might need. But you won't do it from inside your building. That is, the job of a great entrepreneur is to become a domain expert, enough to understand the day in the life of their customer, their buyer and anybody else in their organizational chain. If you can't do that, you are just tying one hand behind your own back. And if that sounds like too much of a burden, don't do it and be like every other entrepreneur that goes out of business. Understanding why your customers buy, what's important to them isn't passed. "Gee, I developed a neat idea in my dorm or company." Does that answer your question? Have you ever, from out of your personal experience, ever experienced something where you've actually driven a customer purely by understanding his business model? Sure. It's not that I've driven a customer.

It's the other way around. I've understood that I was talking in Greek and they were speaking in Spanish. That usually it's because I was talking about features and they had a problem they needed me to solve and I wasn't talking about reservoir simulation. I was trying to sell super computers. I wasn't talking about computational fluid dynamics and I was trying to sell them super computers. I wasn't talking about Quark, PageMaker and Illustrator, and I was trying to sell them desktop publishing graphics boards. Usually, when you can connect on a level of what's their need, you actually get a lot further about - let me tell you about the bits or let me show you this great website. Does that answer your question?