



## Stanford eCorner

### Diversity in Innovation

Judy Estrin, *JLABS, LLC*

October 29, 2008

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/2088/Diversity-in-Innovation>

The low-hanging fruit of problem-solving has been plucked, says Judy Estrin, CEO of JLABS, and the remaining modern challenges are so complex, they can only be solved by a group effort. Teams working toward innovation not only require talent, but also a genuine blend of cognitive diversity - members with different backgrounds, varying life experiences, and diverse fields of study. Only through this kind of collaboration can larger, global problems be divided and conquered.



#### Transcript

The other key thing is that talent really, really matters. And when it comes to innovation, talent is not just about skill and aptitude. But it's the combination of skill, aptitude, passion and drive. And I'll come back in a little bit and talk about the core values. But this notion of passion and drive and willingness to have or ability to have the tenacity to keep going is a critical part of innovation. And the other thing is that innovation is no longer about a person inventing in a garage. The problems have become much more complicated than they were. I won't say all the easy problems have been solved but a lot of the easy problems have been solved. And those exciting problems that face us today are more complex and involve teams. And wonderful things happen from small teams of people who are inspired and given grand challenges.

But one thing that's very important about innovative teams is an element of diversity. And here, I'm not talking about gender. I'm not talking about race. I'm not talking about ethnic diversity. I'm talking about cognitive diversity. And so what you really want in your teams to maximize innovation is people who come at a problem from different perspectives. And that may come from different life experiences, from different disciplines of study; but that cognitive diversity in a team is something that is really, really important in terms of maximizing innovation.