



Stanford eCorner

Effective Choices, Not Longer Days

Jeff Hawkins, *Numenta*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/2250/Effective-Choices-Not-Longer-Days>

Throughout his thirty-year career launching four start-up organizations (including founding Numenta), Jeff Hawkins has always sworn that he would be home for breakfast and dinner with his family every day. In this clip, Hawkins dispels the myth that launching an organization requires long office hours and frequent travel.

Entrepreneurs, he says, can be effective without having to work hard. They do, however, have to make the right choices. Any organization that focuses on making better daily decisions will have the opportunity for broad and deep success.



Transcript

Another thing is, and I think this is a little personal pet peeve of mine, it took me a while to understand this myself. There's a belief that being an entrepreneur requires super human effort, super long hours. People say, "You must work really long hours" and I said "Well, I don't really work really long hours, I don't like working long hours." I work, I think all the time. It's not like I play games and stuff. But I don't like sitting in an office and I don't like travel. And throughout the years, all my years that I have worked, I've had this rule that I'd be home for breakfast and dinner with my kids everyday and I would try to minimize the amount of travel. Now not everyone can do that, but I was in a situation where I could and I used to worry about it. And one day Donna Dubinsky, I said "Donna, I really feel bad. The engineers are here all night long trying to get this release out the door and I'm going home at 6:00. And she said "No, Jeff don't worry about it." She said, "Everyone makes their own choices.

Everyone has their own point at that time in their life. This is what they want to do. This is what you want to do now, and you can be effective without having to work hard. And part of that lesson is that success is not necessarily just by working hard. It's about making the right choices, the right decisions. I'd like to say that any company in the world; the local Starbucks, the local vacuum cleaner store could be the largest company in the world if everyday they make a better decision than their competitor. If one decision is better they commit every single day. Look at Nokia, the largest cell phone manufacturing in the world. Do you know what they made for 80 years? They made rubber boots. Now how did the rubber boot company become the largest telecommunications company in the world, well one of the largest? Well, I guarantee that somebody there was smart and made a better decision everyday.

They didn't do it by just making rubber boots faster and harder, they made smart decisions. And so anybody, any company be turned into any size if you could just continue to make better decisions and that's really the key to success. When you're confronted with problems, you have to make a decision on how you're going to solve that problem, which path you take. Making the right decision is the answer not necessarily working really, really hard.